

**Submission
No 106**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Crop Pollination Association Inc.

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Date received: 2/08/2012



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Secretary

31 July 2012

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
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02 AUG 2012
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SUBMISSION TO

Management of public land in New South Wales Inquiry

Background

About The Crop Pollination Association

The Crop Pollination Association includes members from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Our members provide pollination services in all these states. Crops pollinated include nuts, citrus, fruit, vegetables, vegetable and pasture seed production also oil crops such as canola and olives. The seed production that takes place in Australia provides seed for food and pasture production throughout the world. As beekeeper pollinators we know we are helping to provide FOOD SECURITY and not just within Australia.

Commercial beekeepers use European Honey Bees (*Apis Mellifera*) for honey production and pollination. Very few beekeepers use native bees commercially due to their honey production being less than 3% of the European honey bee. European honey bees were introduced into Australia during the 1700's on the first or second fleet.

Honey bees are normally transported at night to the next flowering event or pollination job. This ensures all bees are home from their days work and helps prevent bees flying off the truck. When working bees - beekeepers use smoke as a management tool to keep them calm.

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Chemical Effects on Honey Bees

Honey bees are negatively impacted when exposed at even very low levels of chemicals whether they be heavy metals, herbicides, insecticides or fungicides. Research has shown that levels as low as 3-4 parts per billion have a negative effect on honey bees.

Managed Honey Bees On Public Lands

Beekeepers lease a bee site (normally 1.5km square) from the Public land managers. The only bee sites that are in National Parks (NP) areas are sites where the site was leased by a beekeeper when the State Forest became a National Park. The bee site was kept by the beekeeper and management was transferred over to the National Park and Wildlife service (NPWS).

Bee sites that were vacant in the State Forest when it became a National Park were lost to beekeepers due to NPWS denying managed honey bees access to National Parks (other than sites transferred across).

Public Land Management Concerns from a Beekeeper Perspective

Public Land Access

Our members have experienced difficulty accessing leased bee sites in State Forests, National Parks, Travelling Stock Reserves and Crown Land. Access problems relate to issues such as:

Locked gates,

Locks on gates changed,

The building of large spoon drains that trucks cannot negotiate,

Permanent barricades across tracks/roads, and

Bridges and roads not maintained for truck access.

In emergencies and bush fire these maintained tracks can be used by emergency and fire vehicles as well as act as a potential fire break.

Creation of Beekeeper and Public Conflicts

While rare this has happened. This has been created by public land managers creating picnic areas near or where a leased bee site exists. In National Parks, the bees have to be placed IAW a GPS reading. This gives the beekeeper no leeway to place the bees further away from the new public picnic area.

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If a large tree falls across the bee site the beekeeper can not clear the tree or place his bees elsewhere. The beekeeper has to work around the fallen tree. Normally in hot seasons the beekeeper is looking to put the bee hives in the shade to help keep them cool. In cooler months the beekeeper places the hives in good sun and out of the wind. This is not possible where the bee hives have to be placed down IAW a GPS reading.

Overgrown Bee Sites in National Parks

Over time bee sites can become overgrown due to natural regeneration. Beekeepers are not allowed to clear bee sites in National Parks. This becomes a safety problem for the beekeeper trying to place bees down on site and work the bees. A clear bee site has less risk of a fire from a bee smoker.

In times of bushfires these cleared level bee sites would be useful for:

Helicopter landing pads,

Turn around points for vehicles,

A vehicle bypass area on narrow tracks,

Rest areas for fire crews, and

A water tanker replenishment area.

Change of Bee Site Management Office Location

Our members have experienced difficulty contacting the bee site manager for different public lands as they regularly change locations or land managers. Beekeepers are sometimes not formally told of the change in arrangements.

Over Logging in State Forests

State Forests logging coups are heavily harvested to less than 5% canopy cover. The biggest and best formed trees are harvested. Left are the poorly formed and/or stunted trees (that have the lowest timber yield) to become the gene pool for regeneration. For bees the biggest trees are the most beneficial.

After harvesting operations the bee site (which is often used as a log dump) is left in a mess. This includes ripped up bee sites and/or harvesting debris left on the site. This then takes a lot of time for the beekeeper to clear the site to make it safe to work.

Changing the Forest Tree Species Mix

In mixed forests current logging practices combined with the timing of hazard reduction burns are changing the tree species mix/ratio in State Forests. If there is an autumn hazard

reduction mix this year then science has shown that it should be a spring hazard reduction next burn. This ensures a mix of species germinating and surviving to grow.

Currently the focus is on autumn hazard reduction burns. Continual autumn burns will change the forest species mix.

Different forest species flower at different times of the year and it can also be during different years. Many marsupials, butterflies, moths and birds rely on this staggered flowering for their survival.

Poor Timing for Harvesting

Background – Most Eucalypts that are beneficial for beekeepers only flower approximately every 3- 4 years. It can be much longer than this between flowering. These trees can carry their buds anywhere from three – 24 months depending on the species. Beekeepers pay their bee site lease monies every year and only use the site when the trees are flowering.

The Problem – it is a common occurrence for timber harvesting to take place as a species of tree is about to or is flowering. The beekeeper is then requested to move his bees off the site. The beekeeper has paid his money every year waiting for the species to flower then is told you cannot harvest the pollen and nectar.

It is as if the State Forests land managers do not know what is happening in the forests they manage. Given it should be 20 years (but seems to be less than 10 years) between harvesting on sites there should be more flexibility on harvesting times. Beekeepers, seed collectors and timber harvesters are all valid users of the forest.

Many marsupials and birds also go to this flowering to gather nectar and pollen.

Poor Timing on Hazard Reduction Burning

When trees are budded a hazard reduction burn that is not a cool burn will most times cause the tree to drop its buds. It is as if the land managers do not know what is happening in the forest. Given that burns are done in a mosaic pattern there should be flexibility to have the burn after flowering or conduct the burn the following year.

Again many marsupials and birds also go to this flowering (if the buds did not drop) to gather nectar and pollen.

In Victoria some Public land managers issue a three year draft hazard reduction plan to beekeepers for comment. Sometimes beekeepers ask that the hazard reduction burn is delayed or bought forward. Most times this request is acted upon. It would be good to see the same degree of communication and cooperation from NSW Public land managers.

Lost Bee Sites

Many Australian agricultural systems are using the new systemic pesticides which are neurotoxins. These are a pesticide that remains in the soil and can be used by the next crop or leached out into surface water. Bees working these crops are exposed to these neurotoxins. Research in both France and the USA has proven that at a very low level exposure to these chemicals (3-4 parts per billion) is detrimental to the bee and ultimately the hive.

It is important for beekeepers to build their beehives up again after pollinating crops or exposure to these crops. It is normal during most pollination work for beehives to run down (gradually lose bee numbers in the hive). The best and quickest way to build the beehive up so that it is suitable for pollinating again is to move the bee hives. Beehives need to be moved to where there is quality nectar and pollen with minimal exposure to chemicals.

State Forests and National Parks are such places. The bee sites lost from National Parks in the past are now negatively impacting on the ability of the beekeeper to provide quality hives for pollination.

Feral Animal/Insect Management

There is insufficient feral pig control in National Parks and State Forests. Feral pigs destroy beehives to get the honey. Better feral animal control will reduce this event.

To our knowledge European wasps are not controlled in either National Parks or State Forests. European wasps kill honey bees to steal the pollen and honey from the hive. European wasps kill all insects in an ever increasing circle centred on their nest. This has the potential to reduce insect diversity in European wasp areas.

One large European wasp nest in New Zealand did not have one insect (this includes ants) within 300 m of the wasp nest.

Conclusion

Beekeeping is a legitimate user of public lands as are timber harvesters and seed collectors. Beekeepers would like our needs to be considered when making decisions on timber harvesting and hazard reduction burning timetables.

Improved lines of communications between public land managers and beekeepers would be appreciated.

Members of our committee would like to present in front of the inquiry board.

As the vice president and secretary of the Crop Pollination we have been authorized to sign this document. The committee has seen this submission prior to mailing.

David Mumford
Vice President

31st Jul 2012

Stephen Targett  SM
Secretary

31 Jul 2012