

**COCHRAN
HORSE TREKS**

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Adaminaby

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Mr Mick Pettitt

Director

Southern Region Branch

NSW NPWS.

Ref Cochran Horse Treks, Snowy2 Operational impact.

Dear Mick,

Cochran Horse Treks welcome a Federal Government announcement to extend Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme to include Snowy 2 and look forward to working with Snowy Hydro and NPWS to provide for Cochran Horse Treks (CHT) to continue to operate in KNP under licence.

History CHT.

CHT commenced operation at the Cochran Family property "Yaouk" in 1998 as a sole operation doing pack rides into ACT and surrounding mountains. We subsequently applied for and gained a licence to operate in KNP on an annual renewal basis.

In 2003 CHT had our licence to operate suspended due to Bushfires which resulted in substantial financial loss and disruption to the momentum of growth in the business. Similarly with Equine Flu and 2007 fires the business battled for survival. On reflection closer liason and cooperation with Government would have reduced the impact on our business.

Economic.

CHT is a business partnership and currently employs three full time and 5 part time equivalents with volunteers from three states and locals. The business contributes approx. \$200,000 to the Adaminaby and Cooma economy with \$35,000 of that going to the Snow Goose Hotel in the form of accommodation, meals and drinks paid for by guests. Guests also spend in the town and district while holidaying.

Approx 35 horses are managed by CHT employing a farrier casually (\$5000) and vet services from Cooma. Transport operators are occasionally contracted to assist.

Annual treks to Khancoban and return contribute substantially to economies in that region.

CHT is heavily involved in Community activity as a donor to charities and functions.

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Current operational aspects

CHT operate 3 to 5 day rides from a base at Yaouk, predominantly in the northern end of KNP with base camps at Wares Yards (WY), Old Snowy Camp (OSC), Bullocks Hill (BH) and occasionally, Ghost Gully (GG), Long Plain (LP), Rocky Plain (RP) and Cooinbil. It is a neat day ride from Yaouk to WY or OSC and therefore those two camps are generally first day out.

Our average ride length is 25Km per day or less, depending on rider experience with an objective of providing a variety of visual, historic and action experiences in accord with the cultural history of the mountain people over 160 years. Solitude in wilderness is a unique experience to our riders.

Base camp moves require major upheaval of up to 20 tents, camp kitchen, shower unit, horse feed trailer, electric fencing, guest's equipment and personal bedding and clothing. We require three drivers and at least two guides on camp move days. Shifting camp takes up to 8 hours depending on the number of guests. This is often undertaken in inclement weather.

CHT have 2 heavy horse trucks, three 4wds, horse float and two trailers on most moves. Tantangara Road provides access to most camps including OSC. Currently our heavy trucks are unable to cross from OSC via Port Phillip Fire Trail to Long Plain and therefore BH and LP camp without travelling via Tantangara Rd and Snowy Mountain Hwy which for trucks is a two hour drive.

Communication between our camp and vehicles en route, for logistics and for safety is by way of UHF CB and mobile phone from identified select and often remote locations.

Snowy 2.

Neil Thew of Snowy Hydro recently briefed CHT on the schedule for Snowy 2 feasibility study and guestimates of time frames should the project proceed to construction. In anticipation of significant impacts on our operational and logistic requirements we hope to avoid another 2003/ 2007 situation and therefore seek to mitigate against conflict with Snowy Hydro, NPWS and subsequent impact on our business.

Estimate impacts at this early stage are, visual experience, solitude, noise, access, water, safety and communications.

Of particular concern are, substantially increased traffic on Tantangra Rd and construction site around Dam wall, and the affected access to Pockets Saddle Rd and Currango Homestead.

In addition, increased vehicle movement adds risk of accident both with our horse and vehicle transport between camps.

Given current level of activity in addressing the feasibility stage, above concerns may affect our operations as early as October 17 and therefore CHT has prepared a contingency plan.

Short term contingency plan.

Identified issues can be dealt with in the short term by simple amendments to CHT operational licence. CHT will move their geographic operation north during the feasibility study and reconsider viability of the current arrangement when a decision is made by Government to proceed to construction.

Issue. CHT plan to commence treks 30 Sept 17 from Yaouk to coincide with the Oct long weekend.

Action. Letter to NPWS request variation of licence.

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Issue. CHT will minimise travel on Tantangara road (Pockets Saddle Trail) and establish most rides from OSC. Current licence provides for camp to remain in situ for maximum four nights per ride.

Action. Request NPWS vary licence conditions to provide for CHT camp to remain at OSC as operational variations demand. ie.... Minimising use of Tantangara Rd.

Issue. CHT will only use WY camp where weather condition prevent us getting to OSC.

Action. Provision for additional budget costs CHT fuel and travel time to OSC.

Issue. Current access to Long Plain via Port Phillip Fire Trail is blocked to CHT vehicles by the narrow bridge at Murrumbidgee River.

Action. Request NPWS allow CHT to access boom gate on river crossing using key provided.

Issue. Lone Pine Trail is currently closed to CHT except in emergency situations where key provided can be used. Access past the Dam wall may from time to time be blocked for operational purposes.

Action. Request NPWS extend tolerance to provide for occasional logistic access for CHT to Yaouk via Lone Pine or Murrumbidgee River Fire Trail during feasibility study.

Long term operations.

Should Government proceed to construction phase, CHT under current assessment, could continue to operate in the northern section of KNP with consideration of one major infrastructure item. Removal of the current bridge on the Murrumbidgee River on Port Phillip Fire Trail and have it replaced by an appropriate structure to accommodate Heavy Rigid trucks as a minimum.

Although this would increase construction site traffic and have an effect on CHT rider experience it is considered to be a minor sacrifice for safety and convenience. NPWS may also welcome a financial contribution from Snowy Hydro to overcome a perennial issue with Park users generally.

Conclusion.

CHT have outlined a plan to work cooperatively with NPWS and Snowy Hydro to our mutual benefit and look forward to further discussions and amendments to our licence being accepted.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Cochran

(Principal Partner Cochran Horse Treks)