A Regional Approach to Flying Fox Management

Hunter Region Case Study
59 Flying-fox Camps

300,000 Animals

Numerous outraged communities

11 Local Councils

1 Joint Organisation of Councils

Limited resources (staff and money)

An origin story
Regional Context

59 Camps across the Hunter, Central & Lower North Coast region
- 54 have been included in at least one Flying Fox Census Count since 2012
- 16 Camps are Covered by Camp Management Plans or Local Flying-fox Management Strategy

Media stories
- 320 stories in 2016 for NSW
- 229 stories in 2015 for NSW

2015/16 and 16/17 season
- Increased animal numbers due to climatic conditions and food resources.
- Community concern grew from background levels.
- Incidents of large numbers in Camps, restricted use of Community land for residents, increased impacts on amenity
Regional Flying-Fox numbers

Flying Fox Census Results Across the Hunter, Central & Lower North Coast

- Total # of Flying Foxes
- Cape Hawke

Number of Flying Foxes

- Nov-12 to Jul-16

Graph showing fluctuations in the number of flying foxes from November 2012 to July 2016, with peaks in January and July.
Complex Issue

**Legislative**
- Responsibility?
- Threatened Species
- Habitat is also protected
- NSW Camp Management Policy
- Lower Hunter Grey Headed Flying-Fox Strategy

**Social**
- Noise
- Smell
- Mess
- Community and animal health

**Environmental**
- Nomadic pollinators
- Highly exposed to risks
- Roam +20km for food
- Annual migration

**Political**
- Resources
- Community Concern
- Land Management Responsibilities
Flying-foxes have always been in the region. Councils manage the impacts. 2015 saw increased impacts and awareness. A massive number of flying foxes is present in the region. Political intervention (Batemans Bay) was involved. Local political requests for HJOC project. Local engagement with councils and OEH. Successful funding applications.
Thinking simplistically, there are two ways to legally manage conflict between Humans and Flying-foxes

1. Preserve or restore habitat in areas of no (or low) conflict (long-term solution)
   - Required to protect habitat in current locations

2. Support residents to reduce impact of camps (short term solutions)
Hunter Region’s Approach

Collaboration
- Staff / Officer level
- Director level
- General Manager / Mayoral level
- State Agency Officers
- Volunteer Organisations / Rehabilitators

Data collation

Grant application development

* The first phase was unfunded, but vitally important
Regional Flying Fox Grant Projects

Councils of the Region and the Hunter JO are party to a number of Flying Fox projects:

- **Regional Flying Fox Strategy** *(Unfunded but resourced)*
- **ARC**
  - Linkage project *(project partner)* *(Grant Funded)*
- **NSW Environmental Trust**
  - Community Education *(Grant Funded)*
- **LGNSW**
  - Camp Management Plans *(Grant Funded)*
- **National Science Foundation**
  - Hendra research *(supported project)* *(Grant Funded)*
Outputs
Maps and Models
Maps and Models
Maps and Models
Maps and Models
Maps and Models
The Honest Truth

Meaningful Drivers for action
– Increased community concern
– Initial political and GM support
– Availability of funding (although limited)
– Willingness of Agency staff to participate and assist
– HJOC history of delivery and ability to respond quickly to political need
Barriers or issues

– 11 Councils all participating at different levels of interest and resource availability
– Grant reporting requirements
– Grants do not fully cover work required
– Individual actions not driven by Strategic requirements, but political response and funding availability
– Local politics!
Important Outcomes

- General Managers hear about Flying-fox projects each month (Mayors bi-monthly)
- Directors receive bi-monthly reports (more detailed)
- 10 of the 11 Councils in the region have at least 1 camp managed by a CMP
- Local Office of OEH is committed to working with Councils and HJOC to develop an umbrella Strategy that builds on existing work
Where to next?

Continued support to Councils on Flying Fox matters through

– Facilitation of Flying Fox Managers Group and liaison with State and Local OEH office

– Partnering with neighbouring regions to expand work and link outcomes which build intelligence on species movements and impacts

– Develop Community Engagement materials to provide regionally consistent response to residents

– Develop materials and resources for Council staff to incorporate Flying Fox management into Strategic and Land Use Plans
Effectively manage the Bat / Human interaction to reduce conflict:

– Increased community acceptance
– Effective land use planning protecting important foraging and roosting areas
– Integrated management across jurisdictions to ensure pressures in one region do not cause impacts in another
– Continued persistence of the species, and delivery of the Ecosystem Services they provide
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