

Our Ref: BNE438-10
BNE2005/3875
E/05/02204
Your Ref: 433-05

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 24 February 2005 forwarding a copy of a petition received by the House on 23 February 2005 concerning recreational duck and quail hunting in Queensland.

A limited season for the shooting of some species of native duck and quail has historically occurred in Queensland within the parameters of a Conservation Plan developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The current plan has effect until 1 September 2005.

Recreational duck and quail harvesting continues to be a contentious issue and public opinion surrounding this issue is strongly divided. Concerns have been raised about the ecological sustainability of recreational hunting, impacts of hunting on non-target species, contamination of the environment by lead shot and the appropriateness of hunting as a sport in our society. Animal welfare also continues to be a major consideration in certain areas of the community.

Alternative views supporting the recreational harvest as sustainable, humane and necessary for the protection of agricultural crops have also been expressed.

The EPA determines whether or not a harvest period should occur based primarily on ecological sustainability, although animal welfare concerns are also considered. The ecological impacts of recreational harvesting are not considered significant.

The declaration of a season is based on the guidelines set out in the management program and scientific data related to sustainability issues, and takes into consideration population abundance and distribution of waterfowl, conduct of the previous season and seasonal conditions.

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Several changes have been progressively implemented over recent seasons, including better bird identification tests and the mandatory use of non-toxic shot for waterfowl hunting in Queensland. This meets Queensland's commitments to Wetlands International and RAMSAR (international wetlands convention) and removes the risk of water birds being exposed to lead poisoning through ingesting lead pellets.

Prior to any determination of an annual harvest period, the Duck and Quail Management Advisory Committee meets to review available data on duck populations and seasonal conditions.

The Committee considers if, and under what conditions, a harvest period should be declared. The Committee met on 16 March 2005 and I have received advice from the meeting about the sustainability of a season for this year.

In consideration of that advice, and based on the science and seasonal data available, the Chief Executive of the EPA has decided there will not be a harvest season during 2005.

I note that the petition seeks a statutory ban on recreational duck and quail hunting in Queensland. The pending expiry of the Conservation Plan gives me an opportunity to examine the matter of recreational duck and quail hunting further and to ensure that a decision concerning the practice is made that reflects the needs and interests of the community as a whole. The option of banning recreational duck and quail hunting will be considered.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Desley Boyle MP
Minister for Environment
Minister for Local Government and Planning
Minister for Women