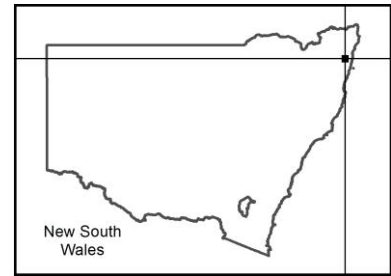


# Statement of Management Intent



## Everlasting Swamp State Conservation Area

### 1. Introduction

This statement outlines the main values, issues, management directions and priorities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for managing Everlasting Swamp State Conservation Area (SCA). This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the SCA until a plan of management has been prepared in accordance with the [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 \(NPW Act\)](#). The NPWS [Managing Parks Prior to Plan of Management Policy](#) states that parks and reserves without a plan of management are to be managed in a manner consistent with the intent of the NPW Act and the ['precautionary principle' \(see Principle 15\)](#).

### 2. Management principles

State conservation areas are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas that:

- contain significant or representative ecosystems, landforms or natural phenomena or places of cultural significance
- are capable of providing opportunities for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment, the sustainable use of buildings and structures, or research
- are capable of providing opportunities for uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act.

Under the NPW Act ([section 30G](#)), state conservation areas are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, protect natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects and features of cultural value
- provide for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act (including uses permitted under section 47J such as mineral exploration and mining), having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted in the area
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with other uses permitted in the area
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

Land is reserved as a state conservation area primarily where mineral values preclude reservation as another category. The NPW Act requires a review of the classification of state conservation areas every five years in consultation with the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*.

### 3. Context

**Reservation details:** Everlasting Swamp SCA was reserved on 28 February 2007.

**Size:** 460 hectares.



Everlasting Swamp SCA is situated approximately 20 kilometres north-east of Grafton, on the Clarence River floodplain midway between Grafton and Maclean along the Lawrence Road. It falls within the South Eastern Queensland Bioregion and the administrative areas of Yaegl Local Aboriginal Land Council, North Coast Local Land Services and Clarence Valley Council.

Everlasting Swamp SCA was privately owned agricultural land prior to acquisition under the community component of the National Reserve System program. The park currently protects about 20 per cent of the larger Everlasting Swamp wetland. Everlasting Swamp is surrounded by private landholdings, many of which are mapped under State Environmental Planning Policy 14 – Coastal Wetlands.

Despite damage done to the wetland by the drainage works and the acid sulfate soil problems, the swamp remains a highly significant waterbird habitat used by many species of migratory birds. Everlasting Swamp is listed on the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia.

#### 4. Values

- The park protects part of Everlasting Swamp which is of one of the largest remaining coastal floodplain freshwater wetlands in New South Wales.
- The wetlands of the Clarence floodplain, including the Everlasting Swamp, are habitat for a large number of wetland birds listed on migratory bird agreements.
- Everlasting Swamp SCA includes significant feeding and breeding grounds for a number of threatened birds, including the endangered black-necked stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), and the vulnerable brolga (*Grus rubicunda*), magpie goose (*Anseranas semipalmata*), eastern osprey (*Pandion cristatus*), comb-crested jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*) and black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*).
- A diverse system of rare wetland vegetation types are protected in the SCA including examples of swamp oak forests (*Casuarina glauca*), rushland (*Cyperus polystachyos*, *Eleocharis equisetina* and *Juncus* spp.), tea-tree stands (*Melaleuca linariifolia* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia*) and freshwater meadows (*Paspalum distichum*). Approximately 80 per cent of the floodplain extent of *Eleocharis equisetina* rushland in the lower Clarence is found at Everlasting Swamp.
- The immense birdlife that frequents the area makes it an attractive tourist location and a potential educational resource. It is the largest breeding area for black swans (*Cygnus atratus*) in the Clarence Valley.

#### 5. Issues

- The Everlasting Swamp has been managed for over 100 years for agriculture, chiefly beef cattle production, and in recent years as a tea-tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*) plantation. This management has sought to minimise the incursion of saltwater (tidal) flows into the system and also control the escape of freshwater flows from the system following rainfall. The current management regime has been in existence since the 1920s when the Clarence River County Council commenced construction of a complex system of levees and gated drains on the Clarence River floodplain to restrict natural flows. As a result, in dry times water is retained in the swamp, whereas in wet times, the drains are used to quickly drain the swamp.
- The key management issue revolves around how this artificial system can best be managed to conserve biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem functions. The water regime associated with the current drainage program has detrimental consequences including exposure of acid sulfate soils, encroachment of native tree species into swamp areas (thereby reducing suitable habitat for water birds) and a reduction in water quality.
- There are issues with scattered populations of feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) and straying livestock (cattle and horses) within the SCA.
- Aquatic areas of Everlasting Swamp SCA have infestations of salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and surrounding land has isolated patches of groundsel bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), lantana (*Lantana camara*) and crofton weed (*Ageratina adenophora*).
- Everlasting Swamp SCA lies within an area covered by a petroleum exploration licence.

## 6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Everlasting Swamp State Conservation Area [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- A right of access to the SCA over neighbouring private property was secured as part of the initial purchase agreement. Access to critical points within the reserve itself is facilitated by the pre-existing system of levee-top trails which are maintained in accordance with the fire management strategy.
- Pest management programs are implemented in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Northern Rivers Region.
- Acid sulfate soil problems are managed in accordance with the Everlasting Swamp Acid Sulfate Soil Remediation Management Plan with Clarence Valley Council.
- A feral pig control program is continuing to protect the values of Everlasting Swamp SCA. A biological control program targeting salvinia is ongoing to prevent further spread and limit detrimental impacts of this weed on the endangered freshwater wetland ecological community.
- Vegetation management programs will continue to allow rehabilitation of degraded swamp vegetation communities and access into management areas. These programs will use novel approaches to reduce negative swamp impacts from weed and native tree species encroachment.
- Biodiversity surveys of the area are encouraged, given the unique nature of the area and the potential for specialised management and conservation actions within the SCA, including research into the rehabilitation of flood-gated wetlands.
- The return of natural flow regimes back into the swamp is the long-term management objective. Works or management actions to achieve this objective (such as levee bank and drain modifications or floodgate manipulation) may be required, but any change to the current situation depends on the agreement of adjacent neighbours and the Clarence Floodplain Committee. Research and monitoring is needed to predict and manage the impact of a return to natural flow regimes.
- As part of the purchase agreement, the former owner had an access licence (valid until 2025) for the infrequent movement of cattle through the SCA to neighbouring lands. This allowed the transfer of cattle by vehicle on a designated route up to six times in any calendar year, which could be refused during wet weather periods to reduce impacts on the SCA. The access licence will terminate if the licensee sells the property neighbouring the SCA and is not transferable.
- Subject to available resourcing, assistance may be provided to neighbours to install stock-proof park boundary fencing in accordance with the NPWS Boundary Fencing Policy.
- Applications for petroleum (gas) exploration or production in the SCA will be subject to environmental impact assessment and approvals.
- All management activities will be preceded by the preparation of an environmental assessment or heritage assessment where this is a requirement of NPWS policy or legislation.
- Environmental repair and threat management programs, such as erosion mitigation measures, pest management, and activities arising from threatened species requirements may be implemented in accordance with NPWS policies and procedures.
- Non-intrusive works may be undertaken where necessary to protect cultural heritage items from further deterioration, to ensure the safety of visitors, to protect wildlife or to prevent damage to park assets.

- A plan of management will be prepared to set out the ongoing management objectives for the SCA. The plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act which will be available for public comment. NPWS will also encourage the community to contribute to the ongoing conservation of the SCA by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this SCA or this statement, contact the NPWS Grafton Office on (02) 6641 1500 or Level 4, 49 Victoria Street, Grafton or PO Box 361, Grafton NSW 2460.

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**Disclaimer:** This is a statement of intent to guide the management of the SCA prior to the development of a plan of management. Any statements made in this publication are made in good faith and do not render the Office of Environment and Heritage liable for any loss or damage. Provisions in the final plan of management may vary from those identified in this document as a result of new information and community consultation. The maps in this statement are intended to show the SCA's location and basic features only, and are not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within parks.

Published by:

Office of Environment and Heritage  
59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
PO Box A290, Sydney South NSW 1232  
Phone: (02) 9995 5000

ISBN 978 1 74359 468 1  
OEH 2014/0156  
May 2014