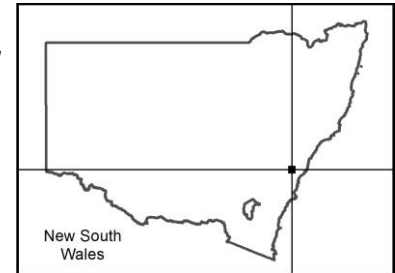


# Statement of Management Intent



## Bents Basin 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 Bents Basin State Conservation Area (SCA). This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the park 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.

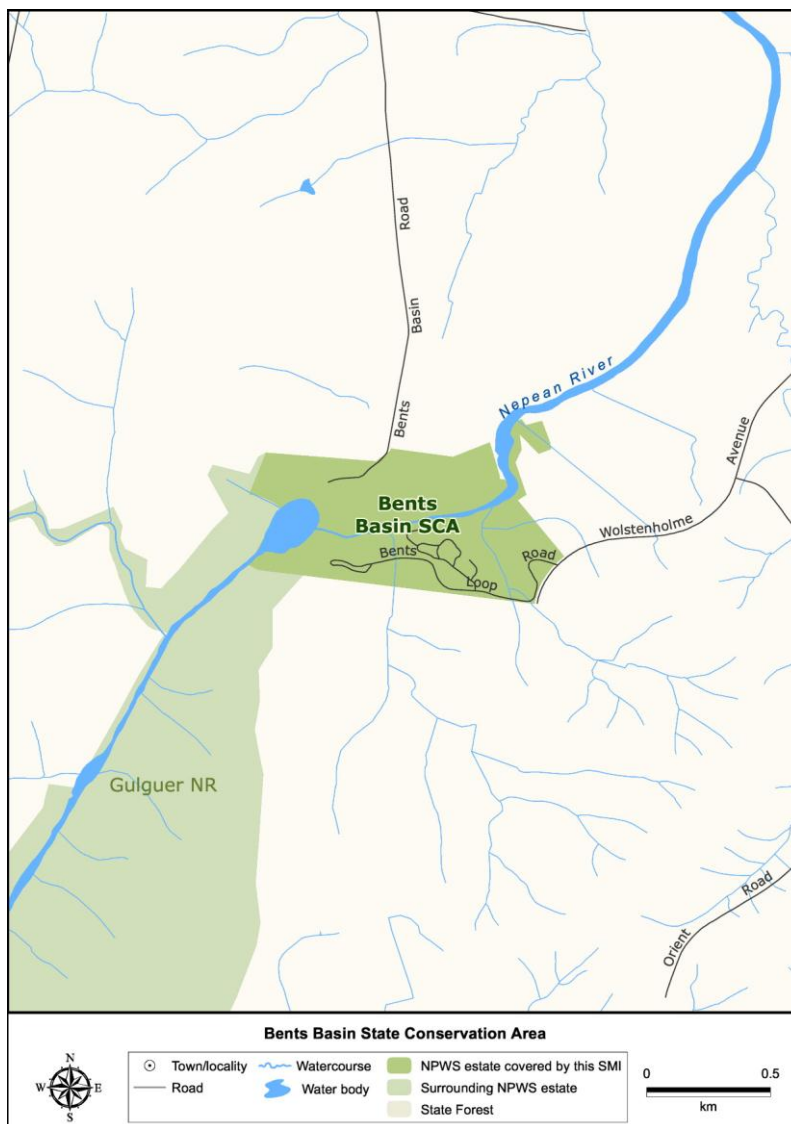
Land is reserved as a state conservation area primarily where mineral values preclude reservation as another category. The NPW Act requires a review of the classification of state conservation areas every five years in consultation with the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*.

### 3. Context

**Reservation details:** Bents Basin SCA was reserved on 21 November 1980.

**Size:** 48 hectares.

An additional 62 hectares to the north and west of Bents Basin SCA is in the process of being acquired and reserved under the NPW Act following a compensatory habitat agreement under section 177 of the *Roads Act 1993*.



Bents Basin SCA is located approximately 33 kilometres south of Penrith and approximately 56 kilometres south-west of Sydney’s central business district. It falls within the Sydney Basin Bioregion and within the administrative areas of Liverpool City and Wollondilly Shire councils, Gandangara, Tharawal and Deerubbin local Aboriginal land councils, and Greater Sydney Local Land Services.

Bents Basin SCA adjoins Gulguer Nature Reserve, which lies south of the park. Both parks were originally reserved in 1980 as Bents Basin State Recreation Area but were divided and reserved as

Gulguer Nature Reserve and Bents Basin State Recreation Area in 1994. In 2002 Bents Basin State Recreation Area was re-categorised as a state conservation area.

Bents Basin SCA contains a deep waterhole known as 'Bents Basin' that is fed by the Nepean River from water that passes through Gulguer Gorge. The pool is just over 22 metres at its deepest point and was created overtime by fast flowing floodwaters exiting Gulguer Gorge.

The SCA is a popular recreation area and is one of only a limited number of places open to public recreation on the Nepean River. The park is popular for swimming, kayaking, bushwalking, camping, barbecuing, picnicking and fishing. It is conveniently located close to urban Sydney suburbs and is popular for day trips.

#### 4. Values

- The significance of the varied landscape and landforms of Bents Basin SCA and Gulguer Nature Reserve comprises plateau, gorges and a floodplain that are acknowledged on the non-statutory National Trust Register (1986). The SCA is also recognised as a small but valuable remnant of the former vegetation of the western margin of the Cumberland Plain.
- Bents Basin SCA provides a range of habitats for the endangered ecological communities River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions; and Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest; and the critically endangered ecological community Cumberland Plain Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion.
- The threatened Camden white gum (*Eucalyptus benthamii*) occurs within Bents Basin SCA and is one of only two known naturally occurring populations.
- Bents Basin SCA protects habitat for threatened species including the powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*), eastern freetail-bat (*Mormopterus norfolkensis*), eastern bentwing-bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis*), large-eared pied bat (*Chalinolobus dwyeri*), and the endangered Cumberland Plain land snail (*Meridolum corneovirens*). There are also good populations of the common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*).
- Bents Basin SCA is of regional significance because visitors travel there to access open water with picnic facilities; this opportunity is limited in western Sydney and along the Nepean River. Visitation levels are high, with approximately 200,000 visits a year, and will likely increase with further urban expansion in the region. Picnic and barbecue facilities are provided along with camping facilities with a capacity in excess of 100 tent sites, walking trails, lookouts and an education centre with a commercial kitchen. Selected facilities can be hired out for exclusive use.
- Bents Basin SCA is located within the area of the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra language groups. Aboriginal people were drawn to the area because of its proximity to the Nepean River and the plentiful supply of food and water. The land on which the SCA lies is believed to have been a traditional meeting and trading place between Aboriginal groups. Bents Basin has spiritual and cultural significance to Aboriginal communities. Culture camps are held from time to time to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal people to connect with the land, each other and their culture.
- Bents Basin Inn was located within the park and is listed on the NSW State Heritage Inventory and in *Liverpool Local Environmental Plan 2008*. The Inn was destroyed in the 1950s and its approximate location is marked by an old pepper tree (*Schinus areira*). The Inn was constructed in the 1860s and the site is of local significance; it provides details of the local history of western Sydney, early road networks and the rise and fall of smaller semi-rural settlements in the region.

## 5. Issues

- The majority of the SCA is flood prone. During flood events the SCA is either fully closed or partially closed to all water-based activity because the conditions are hazardous for water-based activities and infrastructure can be inundated and damaged.
- Flow regulation upstream of the Nepean River alters the hydrology and reduces the amount of water flowing through to Bents Basin. When high flows enter Bents Basin, increased weed spread and erosion of the riverbank occurs which impacts the habitat of some animals including wombats, platypus (*Ornithorhynchidae*) and water rats. Erosion also causes vegetation to collapse into the river, increases sedimentation and turbidity in the river.
- The Nepean River receives runoff from a mix of agricultural and urban land use and so Bents Basin SCA is susceptible to upstream pollution spills and effluent discharge. This results in declining water quality which can limit water-based recreation activity, particularly when the Basin is not flushed.
- Bents Basin can be a hazardous swimming location, particularly during periods of high water-flow. A Risk Treatment Plan has been prepared by NPWS for periods of increased water turbulence following rain events.
- High and increasing visitation due to urban expansion in the region is placing pressure on the SCA, its values and its existing infrastructure. Sensitive planning is required to address existing and future recreation demands while conserving cultural and natural values.
- Significant resources are required to either maintain the sewerage system in its current configuration or replace it with a modern, higher capacity system.
- Feral deer (*Cervidae* family), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), Indian mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*), feral cats (*Felis catus*), European honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) and rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are present in Bents Basin SCA. Deer have been identified as a critical priority for control.
- Bents Basin SCA has problematic weed infestations, many of which have arrived as propagules via the Nepean River and associated tributaries. High weed density occurs along the banks of the Nepean River where alluvial soils accumulate below the Basin. Critical priority weed species include African olive (*Olea europaea* ssp. *cuspidata*), honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), privet (*Ligustrum* spp.), alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), prickly pear (*Opuntia stricta*) and exotic vines.
- There are occurrences of vandalism of park infrastructure and the natural environment, and anti-social behaviour can disrupt other park users.
- Moveable heritage is inadequately curated, interpreted and presented to enhance the visitor experience and the historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the SCA are not well understood.
- Mature trees which provide visitor amenity such as shade can become potentially dangerous as they age and drop branches.
- Bents Basin is one of the most popular water-based picnic areas in south-western Sydney. It attracts a variety of visitors from a multicultural community. Language barriers can present communication barriers for effective management.
- A variety of fences delineate the park boundary and some require replacement.
- The new acquisition areas have been fenced with post-and-cable fencing; these fences are occasionally crossed for illegal motorbike and trail bike activity.
- Rubbish can often be found scattered widely around the day-use and camping areas and occasional rubbish dumping occurs from Bents Basin Road.
- An encroachment exists on the north-eastern portion of the SCA.

- Illegal collection of firewood has the potential to reduce the natural values of the SCA.
- Exploration titles apply to the SCA.

## 6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Bents Basin State Conservation Area and Gulguer Nature Reserve [Fire Management Strategy](#). The fire management strategy will be revised in accordance with the NPWS Fire Management Manual and include new reserve acquisitions and associated fire trail requirements.
- Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the NPWS [Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Metro South West Region.
- Support for the implementation of a wombat health and monitoring program within the SCA will continue.
- A targeted survey will be undertaken for endangered ecological communities and threatened plant species within all new acquisition areas. Known threatened species and communities within the SCA will be periodically re-surveyed to update population records.
- A qualified arborist will be commissioned to investigate the health and sustainability of all amenity trees within day-use and camping areas, to identify potentially dangerous trees and appropriate strategies for either maintaining or removing them.
- Illegal collection of firewood will be monitored, and educational information provided for visitors about the impacts of removing timber on native plants and animals.
- A hydrological engineer will be commissioned to examine water flow issues, the vulnerability of all existing infrastructure to potential flood damage, and possible impacts and solutions to reduce or manage risk. Where feasible the recommendations will be implemented, e.g. locating and designing infrastructure to minimise the impacts of flooding.
- The current sewerage facilities and wastewater management practices will be reviewed, based on current day-use and camping practices, and a system that is appropriate and feasible for existing and future demand will be determined.
- A Precinct Management Plan for Bents Basin SCA will be prepared in consultation with key stakeholders. This will incorporate a landscape management plan and consideration of the draft Visitor Facilities Upgrades Plan (Environmental Partnership 2012), and hydrology reports, to address future recreation demands.
- The Risk Treatment Plan will be reviewed regularly. Signage which clearly identifies site-specific risks will continue to be provided.
- Interpretive signage upgrades will be completed, and updated visitor information produced to promote facilities within the SCA and increase community awareness of the SCA's natural and cultural values. Funding will be sought for translating and producing visitor information for non-English speaking visitors.
- The local Aboriginal community will continue to be consulted and involved in the management of the SCA, and support will continue for culture camps and other activities that support research, preservation, interpretation and presentation of Aboriginal culture and provide an opportunity for Aboriginal people to connect with the land, each other and their culture.
- Historic heritage features and values, including moveable heritage, will be protected, managed and interpreted according to their significance. Opportunities to undertake research and enhance community education and awareness of historic values will be investigated.

- NPWS will work with relevant authorities to ensure the SCA is a safe environment, free of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
- An assessment of adaptive reuse and refurbishment options for the education centre and the vacant residence will be prepared, including investigating suitable commercial and community uses. Appropriate small-scale commercial opportunities in the day-use and camping precincts will be considered, such as cafés and bike hire facilities.
- Community groups and discovery guides will be encouraged and supported to promote community engagement and stewardship within the SCA.
- The bridge below Bents Basin will be load-tested in order to obtain a precise load rating for the bridge. The delaminating concrete, spalls and concrete abutments will be repaired to prevent further erosion.
- Impacts associated with management trails and unauthorised tracks will be monitored and managed as required.
- A carry-in-carry-out rubbish policy will be implemented for the day-use area. Rubbish collection and heat-bead disposal facilities will be reviewed regularly.
- The boundary of the SCA will be surveyed where encroachment is occurring. NPWS will liaise with neighbours to determine appropriate measures to rectify the encroachment.
- The feasibility of implementing erosion mitigation works along the Nepean River will be investigated. Riparian areas subject to inundation will remain vegetated or be revegetated to prevent riverbank slumping.
- Roads, tracks and trails will be monitored for erosion, and works undertaken to manage water runoff and alleviate soil erosion and associated impacts. Such works may prohibit visitor access while rehabilitation occurs.
- NPWS will continue to work with neighbours, local councils and Greater Sydney Local Land Services in relation to weed and pest control programs and water quality improvements and monitoring in the region, in accordance with the Hawkesbury–Nepean Catchment Action Plan 2007–2016.
- Ensure that powerline easement maintenance is carried out in accordance with established agreements and protocols.
- Fencing along the boundary of the SCA and the new acquisition areas will be reviewed. Subject to available resourcing, assistance may be provided to neighbours to install boundary fencing in accordance with the NPWS Boundary Fencing Policy.
- 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 park. 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 park by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this park or this statement, contact the NPWS Nattai Office on (02) 4774 6800 or Wolstenholme Avenue, Greendale NSW 2745.

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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.

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