Statement of Management Intent

Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park

1. Introduction

This statement outlines the main values, issues, management directions and priorities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for managing Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park. This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the parks 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

National parks are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation, inspiration and sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment. Under the NPW Act (section 30E), national parks are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, and protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the park’s natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of natural and cultural values
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The primary purpose of national parks is to conserve nature and cultural heritage. Opportunities are provided for appropriate visitor use in a manner that does not damage conservation values.

Regional parks are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas in a natural or modified landscape that are suitable for public recreation and enjoyment. Under the NPW Act (section 30H), regional parks are managed to:

- provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment in natural or modified landscapes
• identify, interpret, manage and conserve the park so as to maintain and enhance significant landscape values
• conserve natural and cultural values
• promote public appreciation and understanding of the park’s natural and cultural values
• provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of natural and cultural values
• provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation or natural and cultural values.

Regional parks are established for the purpose of providing recreational opportunities while protecting natural, cultural and landscape values.

3. Context

Reservation details: Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park were both reserved on 21 May 2010.
Size: Goolawah National Park is 546 hectares and Goolawah Regional Park is 57 hectares. In June 2011, a further 12 hectares of Crown land south of Crescent Head was added to Goolawah National Park.
Goolawah National Park and Regional Park are situated between Port Macquarie and Crescent Head on the mid north coast of New South Wales. The parks fall within the NSW North Coast Bioregion and within the administrative areas of Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council, North Coast Local Land Services and Kempsey Shire Council.

Prior to reservation under the NPW Act, Goolawah National Park and Regional Park were managed by the then Department of Lands as part of Goolawah State Park. Goolawah State Park, established in 2007, was managed primarily for environmental protection and public recreation. Both parks are currently reserved to the mean high water mark. To date, the parks have been managed in accordance with the Goolawah State Park Management Plan prepared by NSW Department of Lands in 2008.

Goolawah National Park is located immediately south of the township of Crescent Head, stretching 7 kilometres to the southern side of Racecourse Headland where it abuts Goolawah Regional Park. The regional park occupies a relatively narrow coastal strip, stretching a further 3 kilometres south to Big Hill Point and is generally bounded to the west by Plomer Road. The parks are surrounded by the Pacific Ocean to the east and to the west there is a mix of Crown land and freehold land, the latter used for grazing, small-scale tourism and residential purposes. Limeburner’s Creek National Park lies immediately south of Goolawah Regional Park.

The Goolawah parks contain eight broad vegetation classes. Maritime grasslands include kangaroo grasslands found on headlands and spinifex strandline grasslands found on the fore dunes. Coastal swamp forests include three different broad-leaved paperbark communities found in swampy and poorly drained areas. Goolawah Lagoon is an extensive coastal freshwater lagoon providing habitat for freshwater wetland communities. Coastal heath swamps are found on clays and clayey sands and wallum sand heaths are dominated by coastal wattle (Acacia longifolia ssp. sophorae).

Coastal dune dry sclerophyll forests dominated by pink bloodwood (Corymbia intermedia) and coast banksia (Bankia integrifolia ssp. integrifolia) are found on sandy dunes and coastal plains and a patch of dry sclerophyll forest is located on the headland immediately south of Crescent Head. North coast wet sclerophyll forest is confined to a narrow drainage depression in Goolawah National Park. There are two distinct littoral rainforest communities in the Goolawah National Park. One is dominated by coast banksia and tuckeroo (Cupaniopsis anacardioides) found in the more protected fore dune areas and the other, more diverse community is found on Racecourse Headland.

4. Values

- The parks hold both traditional and contemporary significance for Aboriginal people, particularly the Dunghutti and Birpai people. The story of Aboriginal occupation in the parks is preserved through numerous cultural sites and objects. Past sand mining is likely to have destroyed a great deal of archaeological evidence, particularly shell middens and burial sites.
- Over 270 species of native plant have so far been identified in the parks. Two threatened plant species have been recorded from the national park: Austral toadflax (Thesium australale) and white-flowered wax plant (Cynanchum elegans). An additional three have been recorded in the locality: scented acronychia (Acronychia littoralis), dwarf heath casuarina (Allocasuarina defungens) and milky silkpod (Parsonsia dorrigoensis).
- The parks contain three endangered ecological communities: Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions; Themeda Grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions; and Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.
• Twenty-one threatened animal species have been recorded from the parks: beach stone-curlew (Esacus magnirostris), comb-crested jacana (Irediparra gallinacea), eastern osprey (Pandion cristatus), glossy black-cockatoo (Calyptrorhynchus lathamii), little lorikeet (Glossopsitta pusilla), little tern (Sternula albifrons), rainbow bee-eater (Merops ornatus), regent honeyeater (Anthochaera phrygia), rose-crowned fruit-dove (Ptilinopus regina), varied sittella (Daphoenositta chrysoperta), white-bellied sea-eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster), white-throated needletail (Hirundapus caudacutus), wompoo fruit-dove (Ptilinopus magnificus), sooty oystercatcher (Haematopus fuliginosus), common blossom-bat (Syconycteris australis), eastern bentwing-bat (Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis), eastern cave bat (Vespadelus troughtoni), eastern long-eared bat (Nyctophilus bifax), greater broad-nosed bat (Scoteanax rueppelli), grey-headed flying-fox (Pteropus poliocephalus), koala (Phascolarctos cinereus), little bentwing-bat (Miniopterus australis).

• European use of the parks has included commercial and recreational fishing, recreational camping, farming and sand mining. No historic items have so far been registered within either of the parks.

• The parks provide access to clean, sandy beaches, unspoilt headlands and rocky shores and have a very long history of recreational use, particularly for fishing, surfing and camping. Aboriginal families have been using camp sites in Delicate Camping Area for years.

• The parks provide a basic, low-key, rustic camping experience in a coastal setting. Activities currently undertaken within and adjacent to the parks include camping, fishing, swimming, surfing, canoeing, cycling, walking, birdwatching, whale watching, horse riding, snorkelling, scuba diving and picnicking. Camping areas are provided at Delicate and Racecourse. Delicate campground is one of the few on-park beach camping areas in northern New South Wales to allow dogs. A number of walking tracks are also provided as well as a number of pedestrian beach access tracks.

• Commercial operators within the parks, operating under a consent or licence issued under the NPW Act, include a mobile coffee kiosk at Delicate and Racecourse camping areas. Other non-commercial group events or activities also occur and require consent under the NPW Act.

5. Issues

• Weeds species posing the most significant threat to park values include bitou bush (Chrysanthemoides monilifera ssp. rotundata), lantana (Lantana camara) and winter senna (Senna pendula var. glabratra); aquatic weeds such as water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) and salvinia (Salvinia molesta); exotic grasses such as couch (Cynodon dactylon), broad-leaved paspalum (Paspalum distichum), kikuyu (Pennisetum clandestinum) and panic veldtgrass (Ehrharta erecta); and exotic vines such as coastal morning glory (Ipomoea cairica) and Asparagus spp. New weeds are also inadvertently introduced to the park by travelling visitors. Species including Coolatai grass (Hyparrhenia hirta), spiny burr grass (Cenchrus incertus) and beach daisy (Arctotheca populifolia) have been recorded.

• Pest animals known from the parks include wild dogs (Canis lupus ssp.), feral pigs (Sus scrofa), foxes (Vulpes vulpes), rabbits (Oryctolagus cuniculus), hares (Lepus europaeus) and feral honeybees (Apis mellifera). Cattle (Bos taurus) frequently stray into the parks and can have a range of impacts on park values.

• Dingos and wild dogs can be drawn to camping areas (attracted by food scraps, discarded fish frames etc.), where individual animals may become habituated to humans. This can result in dingos altering their normal behaviour, with the potential for aggressive interactions with people and domestic dogs (which are permitted at Delicate Camping Area).
• Myrtle rust (a plant disease caused by the exotic fungus *Uredo rangelii*) is known to occur within the Kempsey local government area and has been detected in the parks, although impacts currently appear to be minor.

• Water quality in Goolawah Lagoon is being negatively impacted by runoff from the council-managed Point Plomer Road. Water quality and weed impacts in Goolawah Lagoon are also exacerbated by the almost permanent closure of this lagoon to the sea following sandmining in the area. An aquatic weeds control plan for Goolawah Lagoon has been developed by NPWS. This has identified a possible need to re-open Goolawah Lagoon to the ocean.

• Further works are required at Delicate Camping Area to address erosion from roads and pedestrian pathways within the camping area which are causing sedimentation of the creek line. Also, the southernmost beach access track terminates above an Aboriginal midden which requires protection and documentation. The impacts on Aboriginal heritage values in this location need to be investigated further.

• During peak holiday periods, camping areas are at full capacity. This can impact locally on park values, contribute to user conflict and diminish the visitor experience.

• Sites will continue to be available for Aboriginal families for cultural camping. A cultural camping strategy for the Goolawah parks is needed to facilitate continued cultural camping opportunities.

• Under NPWS policy and the NPW Regulation, domestic animals are not permitted in national parks. Additions made to the northern end of Goolawah National Park in 2011 included traditional dog walking trails that provided access to a council-managed, leash-free dog exercise area on Goolawah Beach. Transitional provisions are currently in place to enable continued access to the beach using trails through the park.

• Frontal dune vegetation in the parks is susceptible to damage from four-wheel drive vehicles and trail bikes venturing off established access tracks or away from the intertidal zones of the beach.

• The parks have a history of relatively unregulated camping, particularly around the two current camping areas at Delicate and Racecourse.

• Adjacent land use has placed pressure on the parks and there have been occurrences of rubbish dumping, predation by straying pets, impacts from straying stock, stormwater drainage, encroachments and unauthorised recreational activities.

6. **Key management directions**

• Where appropriate, the Goolawah State Park Management Plan (NSW Department of Lands 2008) may provide guidance in the management of the parks.

• Fire is managed in accordance with the Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park Fire Management Strategy.

• Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy: North Coast Region.

• NPWS will liaise with Kempsey Shire Council to develop and implement a program to minimise sediment loads entering lagoons and wetlands from public roads.

• The feasibility of re-establishing the seaward entry of Goolawah Lagoon will be investigated, to restore the pre-mining frequency of the lagoon’s opening to the sea.

• The key breeding, feeding and roosting sites for shorebirds, and other native animals susceptible to disturbance from four-wheel drive vehicles and domestic or wild dogs, will be identified. Areas will be signposted and fenced as required, with priority to protecting wildlife breeding areas.
• Community-driven and partnership programs that support conservation of native animals, including management, survey and monitoring work, will continue to be supported, and existing partnerships strengthened.

• A cultural camping strategy for the Goolawah parks will be developed in consultation with Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council.

• Walking opportunities will be appropriately promoted and interpreted, including via directional signage to beach access tracks. Walking tracks that are damaging park values, impacting Aboriginal cultural values, unnecessarily replicating access or are a safety risk will be closed and rehabilitated.

• The arrangements regarding access through the national park to the council leash-free dog exercise area on Goolawah Beach require review, and outcomes will be incorporated into the new plan of management. Commercial recreation providers will continue to be licensed as appropriate.

• Dingos and their interactions with people around high visitation areas will be monitored, and control and education programs will be implemented as required.

• 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 parks. 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 parks by promoting and raising public awareness of their special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of these parks or this statement, contact the NPWS South West Rocks (Trial Bay Gaol) Office on (02) 6566 6168 or Arakoon National Park, Cardwell Street, South West Rocks NSW 2431.

**Disclaimer:** This is a statement of intent to guide the management of the parks 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 parks' location and basic features only, and are not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within parks.