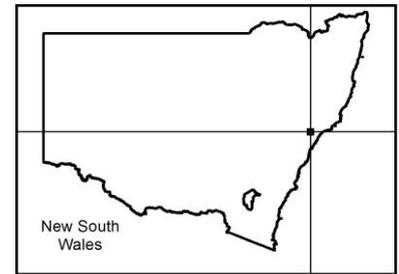


Statement of Management Intent



Werakata National Park and Werakata 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 Werakata National Park and Werakata State Conservation Area (SCA). 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.

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: Werakata National Park was reserved on 1 January 1999 (originally as Lower Hunter National Park) and Werakata SCA was reserved on 1 July 2007 with additional lands added to the SCA in 2011 and 2014.

Size: Werakata National Park is 3336 hectares and Werakata SCA is 2642 hectares.

Werakata National Park and Werakata SCA are located approximately 20 kilometres south-west of Maitland and approximately 60 kilometres west of Newcastle. They fall within the Sydney Basin Bioregion and within the administrative areas of Cessnock City Council, Hunter Local Land Services and Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The parks comprise a number of different sections of vegetated land in and around the city of Cessnock. Werakata National Park is in close proximity to the vineyards of the Hunter Valley with Lovedale vineyards adjacent to a part of its north-west boundary.

The parks were formerly part of Aberdare State Forest, originally dedicated in 1963, and Cessnock State Forest, originally dedicated in 1942. Werakata National Park and Werakata SCA protect areas of highly ecologically significant land that is comprised of a variety of endangered ecological communities, threatened and significant species.



4. Values

- The parks protect habitat for the endangered swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and critically endangered regent honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*). Other threatened species include the gang-gang cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*), little lorikeet (*Glossopsitta pusilla*), powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*), yellow-bellied glider (*Petaurus australis*), squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*), grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), varied sittella (*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*), eastern bentwing-bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis*), glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*), black-chinned honeyeater (eastern subspecies) (*Melithreptus gularis gularis*), eastern false pipistrelle (*Falsistrellus tasmaniensis*), brown treecreeper (eastern subspecies) (*Climacteris picumnus victoriae*), masked owl (*Tyto novaehollandiae*), flame robin (*Petroica phoenicea*), black-breasted buzzard (*Hamirostra melanosternon*), grey-crowned babbler (eastern subspecies) (*Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis*) and square-tailed kite (*Lophoictinia isura*).
- The endangered shrub species Bynoe’s wattle (*Acacia bynoeana*) occurs within Werakata National Park. Other threatened flora species recorded within the park and SCA include the heath wrinklewort (*Rutidosia heterogama*), netted bottle brush (*Callistemon linearifolius*), Parramatta red gum (*Eucalyptus parramattensis*) and small-flower grevillea (*Grevillea parviflora* subsp. *parviflora*).

- Four endangered ecological communities listed under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) are found in the parks, including Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion; Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion; Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions; and River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.
- There is an old forestry hut located within Werakata National Park providing evidence of past forestry operations and timber industry in the region which has an interpretive value for visitors. There are several historic railway line corridors in the park which contain some relics from the original railway line.
- The parks are popular among visitors from nearby towns and areas. Recreational activities within the parks include mountain-bike riding, four-wheel drive touring, trail-bike riding, horse riding, birdwatching and picnicking at Astills Picnic Area. There are also Discovery-led guided tours conducted within the park.
- There is a volunteer group in the park known as ‘Friends of Werakata’ which undertakes volunteer Discovery guiding, water monitoring and other projects as required.

5. Issues

- To facilitate effective fire management operations, a small section of management trail needs to be extended in the recent additions to the SCA. This trail extension is approximately 120 metres and will link Pelaw Main Loop Trail to an unnamed four-wheel drive trail to the north.
- Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.) and feral deer (various species) occur within the parks. Feral cats (*Felis catus*) and rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) have also been recorded.
- Due to the close proximity of the parks to urban areas, there are high occurrences of domestic rubbish and asbestos dumping, illegal firewood collection, arson events, unregistered trail-bike use and off-road driving causing the destruction of vegetation and erosion problems within the parks.
- There are isolated occurrences of myrtle rust (*Uredo rangelii*) within Werakata National Park and SCA.
- Weeds species known to occur within the parks include lantana (*Lantana camara*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*, agg.), bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), privet (*Ligustrum* spp.), crofton weed (*Ageratina adenophora*), burrs (*Xanthium* spp.), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), mother of millions (*Bryophyllum delagoense*) and pampas grass (*Cortaderia* spp.).
- Austar mining company operates a long-wall (underground) mining operation in the SCA. Occasional subsidence occurs in the SCA as a result of this activity and at times some areas may need to be closed to public access and to enable remediation of the site.
- Hunter Enviro Mining Company operates a coal waste recovery facility on Crown land in the middle of the park and has consent to use Kearsley Powerline Trail to access its operations. As part of the consent agreement this company is required to maintain the Kearsley Powerline Trail.
- There are transmission and electricity easements in the parks which are managed by TransGrid and Ausgrid. TransGrid operates under a formal easement granted under section 153(1) of the NPW Act. Transmission lines and associated infrastructure can cause impacts to the parks from clearing or trimming of native vegetation, use of herbicides, vehicle access and the maintenance of access trails, as well as the visual impact of the lines and towers.

- There are two areas in the parks subject to occupation permits: one for an archery club and the other a safety zone for an adjacent rifle club. These are identified as existing interests under the NPW Act. There are limited facilities in these permit areas and impacts on park values are minimal.
- The roads and associated trails in the parks are regularly used for four-wheel driving and trail-bike riding and in some sections there is significant erosion from inappropriate and high levels of use.
- There are a few roads in the parks that are regularly used by neighbours to access properties because they provide the only practical access to their lands. The relevant reservation acts contain special provisions to protect the right of the public to use roads that provide the only practical access to private property.

6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Werakata SCA [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- Roads and management trails within the park will be maintained in accordance with the fire management strategy. A small section of management trail in the recent additions to the SCA is to be constructed to allow fire management operations. This trail extension is approximately 120 metres and will link Pelaw Main Loop Trail to an unnamed trail to the north.
- Pest management programs, including the control of weeds, will be implemented in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Central Coast Hunter Region, and focus on protecting endangered ecological communities.
- Wild dogs within Werakata National Park and Werakata SCA are managed in accordance with the Cumberland Wild Dog Management Plan. This is a cooperative control program, coordinated by Local Land Services, that covers surrounding NPWS parks, state forest and adjoining private land.
- Deer within Werakata National Park are managed using a strategic shooting and monitoring program with the priority being to protect crops on adjacent lands.
- Work with volunteer groups will continue, such as with Friends of Werakata, to undertake volunteer projects within the parks.
- Liaison with TransGrid will continue, regarding access and maintenance needs in accordance with the existing agreement. Consents for vegetation management and access to transmission lines will continue to be issued to Ausgrid for line maintenance.
- Consultation and work with Austar Coal will continue, to undertake mine rehabilitation works within Werakata SCA and ensure that NPWS management needs for the park are considered. Work will be undertaken with Austar mining company to monitor and remediate any land within the SCA affected by underground mining and to ensure the SCA is managed in accordance with the principles of the NPW Act to conserve and protect biodiversity. Where required, areas in Werakata SCA affected by underground mine subsidence and remediation works may be temporarily closed to the public due to safety concerns.
- Management of the consent allowing Hunter Enviro Mining Company to use and maintain Kearsley Powerline Trail will continue, to ensure this trail is maintained to an appropriate standard.
- Management of the occupation permit for the archery and rifle club safety zone in the parks will continue.

- Trails no longer required for management purposes will be closed, and where required, gates will be installed on trails to minimise inappropriate use and prevent unauthorised access and illegal rubbish dumping.
- Where roads through the parks provide the only practical access to private land, access to these lands will continue to be maintained to the levels that existed at the time of reservation. Pets and other animals may be transported on these roads as long as they remain in a vehicle. Any upgrade of an access road will be subject to the formalisation of access arrangements, such as the issuing of a consent or licence. Where a road is no longer required for private property access, it may be gated and designated as a management trail.
- 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 Lower Hunter Area/Newcastle Office on 02 4946 4100 or at Hunter Wetland Centre, Sandgate Road, Shortland NSW or PO Box 351, Jesmond NSW 2299.

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.

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