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Conservation planning



Bunga Beach, Mimosa Rocks National Park.

The making of judgments about what to conserve and how best to do this, and the development of processes by which this is done.



Conservation planning

Conservation planning is undertaken by the NPWS in close consultation with the community and other land managers to ensure the conservation of natural and cultural heritage while also providing for people's enjoyment of that heritage. The key objective of NPWS conservation planning activities is to improve the process for establishing conservation priorities for New South Wales to ensure:

- integration of natural, cultural and community values
- consultation and transparency
- responsiveness to threats and change.

The activities addressed in this section include planning related activities through which the NPWS is contributing to the achievement of NSW Biodiversity Strategy objectives.

Biodiversity planning

NSW coastal policy

The NPWS is a member of the NSW Coastal Council which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the government's NSW coastal policy, a whole-of-government approach to protecting and managing the coastal zone of New South Wales.

The NPWS has primary responsibility for the implementation of 24 strategic actions within the policy. NPWS progress in meeting its responsibilities during 2001-02 will be reported in the council's next annual report in late 2002. Council annual reports can be viewed at its website at www.coastalcouncil.nsw.gov.au.

In June 2001 the Premier announced an \$11.7 million coastal package to protect and provide a planning blueprint for the state's coast. The package includes \$8.6 million for a comprehensive coastal assessment (CCA) to be completed over three years. The assessment will involve the systematic study of the environmental, social and economic values of the coast and will determine those parts which are suitable for development and those which require protection. The NPWS will play a key role in the assessment.

Guidelines for biodiversity planning

The NPWS was allocated funds through the NSW Biodiversity Strategy to address Priority Action 56: *Local Biodiversity Action Plans*. This project assists councils to use existing planning mechanisms such as local environmental plans to achieve biodiversity outcomes. The *Biodiversity Planning Guide for NSW Local Government* was launched on 20 June 2001. The guide has received two national awards for excellence in planning from the Planning Institute of Australia. Implementation of the guide is currently being trialed with several local councils across New South Wales, using funding allocated through the NSW Biodiversity Strategy.

During the year the NPWS in association with PlanningNSW and the Planning Institute of Australia presented a series of one day forums in each of five northern NSW regional centres under the theme 'Better Biodiversity Planning'. Each forum featured presentations from NPWS staff addressing topics related to Aboriginal heritage, environmental planning, threatened species, and data updates. The forums provided planners, consultants and ecologists with the latest information from the NPWS to assist in biodiversity planning.

Guidelines for biodiversity planning on farms in central western New South Wales were prepared by the NPWS. These guidelines were developed with the help of a wide range of stakeholders including Catchment Management Boards and catchment managers, Landcare groups, local councils, Greening Australia and scientists in the CSIRO and universities.

Water reforms

The government's water reform program which commenced in 1995 took another major step with the passing of the *Water Management Act 2000*. Subsequently previous broad-scale planning efforts by water management committees were refocused to share water according to a set of priorities. New water-sharing plans outline how water will be shared over a ten year period between the environment, town water, stock and domestic needs, and extractive industries, in that order of priority.



M. COULIN/NPWS

Quantitative surveys of plant species are important in knowing which are threatened or rare. Principal Research Scientist Tony Auld (left) and NPWS officer Tricia Hogbin conduct a survey for the fringe lily, *Thysanotus virgatus*.

CASE STUDY

Oolambeyan homestead

High value conservation land is no longer those ridge tops or scrubby hills. In the west of the state it is under-represented habitats on the plains, which generally means purchasing pastoral stations. 'Oolambeyan' is one such property.

Acquired by the NPWS in late 2001 'Oolambeyan' was only lightly grazed in the past and retains much valuable remnant Riverina grassland and woodland, plus a population of the endangered ground-dwelling bird the plains-wanderer. And with the pastoral station comes all the station infrastructure, including a homestead, quarters for jackaroos and shearers, a woolshed, numerous sheds and windmills.



NPWS

Oolambeyan homestead. The acquisition of the pastoral station conserves a valuable remnant of Riverina grassland and woodland.

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The NPWS participated in a number of committees to develop water-sharing plans for 37 regulated and unregulated rivers and groundwater sources. Input was also provided into determining and implementing the Murray-Darling Basin cap levels of extraction on the Barwon-Darling rivers.

Catchment Management Boards

Established in 2000, Catchment Management Boards were formed to improve the quality and sustainability of the state's natural resources and environment. Membership is drawn from the local community, and state and local government. The NPWS is an active participant in these boards, ensuring that biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage protection are considered in the preparation of management plans. The list of boards in which the NPWS participated is found at Appendix B.

Native vegetation reforms

The NPWS continued to be represented on regional and statewide native vegetation management and conservation committees, including the Native Vegetation Advisory Council and its sub-committees and the Minister for Land and Water Conservation's Community Reference Panel and related inter-agency committees.

Issues being addressed by these committees include developing native vegetation conservation targets, the review of clearing exemptions, finalising the Native Vegetation Conservation Strategy, incentives, offsets, integrated property management planning, vegetation mapping and monitoring, and participation on the board of the Nature Conservation Trust.

In the 2001-02 year the drafting of a number of Regional Vegetation Management Plans has progressed to final stages, with the NPWS contributing to their development through participation on regional committees and review of the plans.

Establishment of parks and reserves

During the year 32,410 hectares of new reserves and additions to existing reserves were declared as part of the NSW reserve system, bringing the total land area of New South Wales under reservation to 6.8 per cent. One new park with a total of 185 hectares and four new nature reserves with a total of 2,703 hectares were proclaimed.

An active program of land purchases resulted in a variety of lands from around the state being incorporated into the reserve system during the year. Of particular significance was the acquisition of several large parcels of land comprising high conservation value ecosystems within the more poorly reserved bioregions of western New South Wales.

The boundaries of many of the state's national parks and nature reserves are convoluted, with many freehold lands still lying wholly contained within reserves. The activities currently undertaken in these inholdings and perimeter lands present a range of difficulties for the management of the adjacent reserves.

To improve the management of existing parks and reserves the NPWS has an active program of consolidating parks and reserves through the acquisition of critical inholdings and perimeter lands. A longer-term effect of this program will be financial savings achieved by the removal or diminution of environmental degradation costs associated with the current management of those lands and the adjoining reserves.

During the year a total of 38 areas totalling 29,522 hectares were added to existing reserves throughout the state. Some of these new areas include:

- **Melville Range Nature Reserve** (27 kilometres west of Tamworth) This 837 hectare reserve forms part of the largest remaining natural remnant on the Melville Range representing the best opportunity to conserve biodiversity values on the range. The area comprises a variety of grassy woodlands and shrublands, and of particular significance are the narrow-leaved ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*) and white box (*Eucalyptus albens*) woodlands, which have not been recorded in existing conservation reserves. Fauna habitats are diverse and the vulnerable turquoise parrot (*Neophema pulchella*) has been recorded in the reserve.

CASE STUDY

WISE multimedia and bibliographic software for catchments

This unique software program is now available on CD-ROM for the Barwon-Darling, Hacking, Namoi, Gwydir, Macquarie-Bogan, Paroo and Warrego catchments. The WISE CD-ROM provides access to the most up-to-date published information for each entire catchment. Further, it gives an overview of the catchment, its rivers, wetlands, fauna and flora, national parks and towns in the form of maps, videos and photographs.

These information systems, unique for each catchment can also display an artist's photographic exhibition, historical photo collections, an animation of river flows, and interviews with Aboriginal people and landholders along the river systems. For the first time, someone can access everything ever published for the entire catchment, covering all natural and cultural heritage issues. With powerful search routines, people can find subjects of interest with the most up-to-date information for any wetland, river or creek in the catchment. Publications can be listed and abstracts read to determine their relevance. There is also primary source material under the three key issues identified as important for the entire catchment from the analysis of publications.

The WISE software has been updated and now includes a mapping interface that will be used for catchments currently being assessed.

The bibliographic and publication content of these databases will be available through the NPWS website later in 2002.



Moomba swamp, Nocolche Nature Reserve.



H. Clark/NPWS

A new addition to New England National Park protects an important remnant of *Nothofagus moorei* cool temperate rainforest.

CASE STUDY

New nature reserve for Narrabri area

Surrounded by a sea of prime agricultural land, the nature reserves of the Narrabri area afford valuable islands of remnant vegetation and habitat to a wide variety of flora and fauna. Recently the existing 11 nature reserves were boosted with the addition of two parcels of land to the NPWS estate near Mungindi in the state's north.

'Athlone' (2,922 hectares) and 'Thorndale' (1,058 hectares) have historically been managed as low intensity grazing properties in an area between the MacIntyre and Boomi rivers. Recent vegetation mapping has demonstrated these lands provide an important vegetation corridor between the two rivers in an otherwise highly cleared area.

Significant vegetation communities on the new reserve include areas of old growth Carbeen (*Eucalyptus tessellaris*) and Mitchell grassland. Carbeen open forest community is listed as an endangered ecological community on the Darling Riverine Plains and Mitchell grasslands have been largely eliminated from the region with the remaining stands highly modified by grazing. Woodlands dominated by coolibah, river red gum and belah occur along the floodplains and large intact areas of Queensland bluegrass are also present.

- **Koorawatha Nature Reserve** (approximately two kilometres south-east of Koorawatha and 27 kilometres south-west of Cowra in the South West Slopes Bioregion) This 961 hectare property comprises plant communities dominated by mugga ironbark, black cypress, Dwyers red gum and bundy gum as well as small areas of grassy white box – grey box woodlands. There is a diversity and abundance of native grassland species and several species have not been recorded in other reserves. The plant communities present are important habitat for a number of endangered and threatened species that have been recorded on or near this land. Koorawatha Nature Reserve forms part of the NPWS Dananbilla Protected Area Network project that focuses on a landscape approach to ecosystem conservation within the highly fragmented and high conservation priority South West Slopes Bioregion.
- **Jerilderie Nature Reserve** (adjoining Jerilderie township on the western side) This 37 hectare reserve contains a diverse sample of Riverina grasslands (*Enteropogon-Stipa* community) which occurred extensively prior to settlement. It includes one endangered species *Sclerolaena napiformis* and two vulnerable species: *Swainsona murrayana* and *Swainsona plagiotropis*. The latter has only been found in the Jerilderie area. Educational values exist for this site as it is close to the town and primary school and is easily accessible to travellers on the Newell Highway.
- **Torrington State Recreation Area addition** (70 kilometres north of Glenn Innes) This 680 hectare addition has high conservation values with the presence of poorly conserved woodlands dominated by *Eucalyptus caleyi* ssp. *ovendenii* ironbark. Three additional rare and threatened plant species are known from the property including *Macrozamia plurinervia*, *Phebalium rotundifolium* and *Hibbertia* sp. B. The property also provides additional habitat for a number of endangered fauna species.
- **Bald Rock National Park addition** (20 kilometres south of Tenterfield) This 1,344 hectare addition provides a valuable example of a range of tableland communities. New England blackbutt forests are found on the high undulating areas, New England stringybark forest and woodland on steep slopes and at lower elevations on broad valley bottoms, woodlands of wattle-leaf peppermint and New England peppermint are interspersed with sedge swamp and wet heath.
- **New England National Park extension** (15 kilometres south-west of Dorrigo) This 83 hectare addition to the World Heritage-listed New England National Park is one of the few areas on the Dorrigo Plateau where *Nothofagus moorei* cool temperate rainforest remains on the plateau surface. It is contiguous with the park area along the top of the Bellinger Escarpment, and hence forms the upper end of a forested gradient extending upward from the Bellinger River. The Dorrigo area is the core area for this type of rainforest which reaches its optimal development on the plateau surface. This forest type is poorly conserved on such sites.
- **Bundjalung, Mimosa Rocks, Hat Head, Queens Lake and Myall Lakes national parks** Significant additions to these coastal parks have helped to enhance their integrity and management by consolidating reserve boundaries as well as adding important ecological communities to the state's reserve system.
- **Guy Fawkes River, Washpool and Yengo national parks** Substantial additions were made to these parks across the ranges and tablelands. The inclusion of a number of large inholdings and perimeter lands into these parks has enhanced their wilderness values and assisted in their management as wilderness areas.

Expanding the reserve network in western New South Wales

The development of the reserve system in New South Wales to date has favoured environments in the eastern part of the state. On average 27 per cent of each of the east coast bioregions is reserved. In western New South Wales only three per cent on average is reserved within each bioregion. The total area reserved in the high priority bioregions of the Riverina and Darling Riverine Plains is less than one per cent.

In an attempt to redress this imbalance and in line with the NSW government's *Action for the Environment Statement* (2001) the NPWS has maintained its program of land acquisition, specifically targeting western lands of high conservation priority and focusing on those ecosystems under-represented or as yet unrepresented in the NSW reserve system as well as lands of high cultural heritage significance.

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Five areas totalling 106,390 hectares have been purchased this financial year and these areas will be formally added to the reserve system in the 2002-03 financial year. The land purchased in western New South Wales this year includes:

- **'Mt Murchison'** and **'Wilga'** (90 kilometres north-east of Wilcannia) – 80,361 hectares of land to protect substantial areas of the Darling River floodplain which are also significant to local Aboriginal people
- **'Taringa'** (8 kilometres north of Coolatai) – 1,339 hectares of a floristically rich area protecting the threatened semi-evergreen vine thicket vegetation community.

Mrs Laura Kelly with NPWS Anthropologist Jo Erskine at the declaration of Diplo Ceremonial Ground in Balranald as an Aboriginal Place. These declarations recognise the importance of conserving Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Acquisition of wilderness

Dunphy Wilderness Fund

The Dunphy Wilderness Fund (DWF) was initially established in September 1996 in memory of Milo Dunphy and his father Myles, to purchase freehold and leasehold land to add to existing wilderness. The initial government funding commitment was \$1 million each year for five years from 1996-97 until 2000-01. The Premier extended this commitment with an additional \$5 million provided for the fund over three years from July 2001 until June 2004, with \$2 million provided in the 2001-02 financial year. The fund has exceeded this commitment in two of the six years of its operation and the total spent to date on Dunphy Wilderness Fund acquisitions is approaching \$7.72 million.

The fund is overseen by the Dunphy Wilderness Fund Reference Group (DWFRG) which includes representatives from the NPWS, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the Colong Foundation for Wilderness and the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife. The DWFRG provides advice on acquisition criteria, reviews the acquisition program and promotes the fund.

The DWFRG has developed a marketing strategy this year to raise awareness of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund. The strategy aims to encourage donations from both corporate and individual donors to continue the purchase of land to enhance wilderness areas in New South Wales.

Through the Dunphy Wilderness Fund the NPWS has acquired 42 properties and an additional six properties are in the final stages of purchase. These acquisitions will bring the total area purchased under the Dunphy Wilderness Fund over its six years of operation to 49,983 hectares. Acquisitions for 2001-02 will form additions to the Yengo, Washpool, Wollemi, Tuggalo, Cataract, Binghi and Timbarra wilderness areas.

Additional freehold and leasehold properties within identified wilderness have been purchased by the NPWS under other land acquisition programs including the Occupational Permit Fund.

Declaration of Aboriginal Places

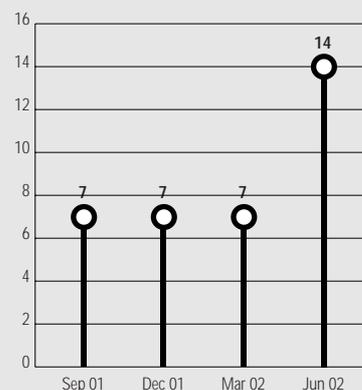
The 2001-02 Aboriginal Place program has resulted in the declaration of five new Aboriginal Places including Three Brothers Mountains (Port Macquarie), White Lady Rock (Tibooburra), Diplo Ceremonial Ground (Balranald), Hannibal Hamilton's Grave (Tumut) and Upper Kedumba Valley (Katoomba). The number of Aboriginal Places declared throughout New South Wales has now reached 37.

Five Aboriginal Place nominations are currently in the finalisation stage including Chinaman's Creek (near Tabulam), Dennewan Mission site (adjoining Culgoa National Park), Farquar Park (Taree), Tabulam Burial site (Tabulam) and Dandaloo Mission site (near Dubbo).

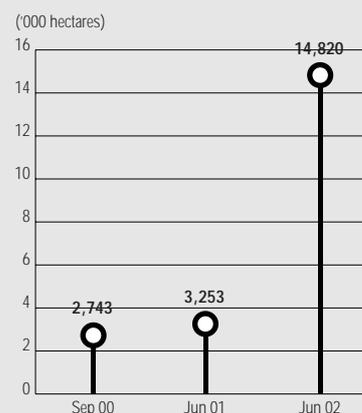
The 2002-03 Aboriginal Place program will see the finalisation of these Aboriginal Place nominations and the investigation of new Aboriginal Places with a particular focus in the western region of New South Wales.



Total number of off-park Aboriginal Place declarations



Off-park Aboriginal Place declarations (hectares)





P. Green/NPWS

Bald Rock National Park was the subject of one of nine plans of management adopted by the Minister for the Environment during the year.

Energy Australia/National Trust Award

In April 2002 the NPWS won the 2002 Energy Australia/National Trust Award in the Indigenous Heritage category for its work with landholders and the Aboriginal community on the Mt Drysdale Aboriginal Place declaration.

Plans of management

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires that a plan of management be prepared for each national park, nature reserve, historic site, karst conservation reserve, Aboriginal area, state recreation area and regional park. A plan of management is a legal document outlining how the area will be managed in the future. The procedures for exhibition and adoption of plans of management are laid down in the Act.

During the last year nine plans of management were adopted by the Minister for the Environment for the following 13 areas:

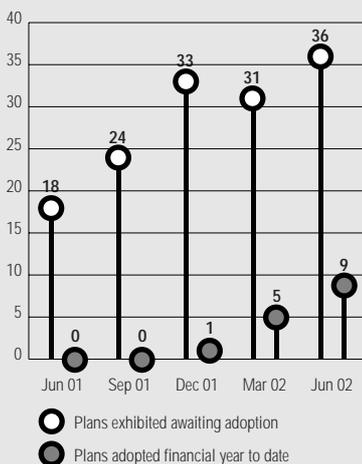
- Goobang National Park
- Bald Rock National Park and Boonoo Boonoo National Park
- Maryland National Park
- Brigalow Park Nature Reserve
- Tuckean Nature Reserve
- Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Lion Island, Long Island and Spectacle Island nature reserves
- Botany Bay National Park
- Uralba Nature Reserve
- Cathedral Rock National Park.

In addition, amendments were adopted to the plans of management for Morton National Park, Towra Point Nature Reserve and Murramarang National Park.

The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council has specific responsibilities under the National Parks and Wildlife Act to consider and advise the Minister for the Environment on plans of management and any representations received in response to public exhibition of a plan. The advisory council considered and reported on 15 plans of management for 16 NPWS-managed areas during 2000-01.

Corporate performance target

Increase in the number of plans of management placed on public exhibition (a plan of management may cover more than one park/reserve)



Number of NPWS areas for which there is:

	An adopted plan of management	A plan exhibited or finalised for exhibition*
National parks	65	21
Historic sites	8	2
Nature reserves	67	24
State recreation areas	10	6
Aboriginal areas	1	-
Regional parks	-	2
Total (206)	151	55

*Includes 8 new plans to replace existing plans of management



M. Cullen/NPWS

Captain Cooks Landing Place in Botany Bay National Park. A plan of management for the park was adopted in 2002.

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Threatened species planning

Recovery plans

Over the last twelve months 18 recovery plans have been approved by the NSW Minister for the Environment, bringing to 40 the total number of approved recovery plans at 30 June 2002. A total of 54 threatened species are covered by these recovery plans. Recovery plans approved by the Minister for the Environment during the year are listed at Appendix K.

In addition to these approved recovery plans, at 30 June 2002 15 draft plans were or had been on public exhibition and 27 draft plans had been completed and were awaiting exhibition. A further 140 recovery plans were in preparation. In total over 300 threatened species, populations and ecological communities are currently being addressed in draft and approved recovery plans.

The NPWS is also progressing the implementation of recovery plans and is currently undertaking or has successfully completed more than 700 recovery actions. Many of the actions are being undertaken prior to the completion of the recovery plan and are referred to as 'pre-recovery plan' actions. The range of actions being undertaken includes community and landholder awareness, feral plant and animal control, site protection (including fencing), habitat restoration, off-park conservation, monitoring, research and surveys.

Threat abatement plans

Several weeds and vertebrate pests have been recognised as key threatening processes under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. These include predation of native fauna by foxes, feral cats and plague minnow (*Gambusia holbrooki*), competition and grazing by rabbits, and invasion of native plant communities by bitou bush.

Foxes

The NPWS has completed a *Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by the Red Fox*. The plan was endorsed by the Minister for the Environment in December 2001 and is now being implemented across the state by the NPWS, State Forests of NSW and the Department of Land and Water Conservation. It is the first threat abatement plan to be completed under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

Implementation of the plan represents a fundamental change in the way fox control is undertaken for the conservation of native fauna in New South Wales. In particular, the plan indicates priorities for management across all land tenures by identifying which threatened species are at greatest risk of population impacts from fox predation and at which sites fox control for these species is most critical.

Eighty-one priority sites for fox control have been identified across New South Wales, providing recovery actions for 34 threatened species (11 mammals, 15 birds and 8 reptiles). Undertaking collaborative fox control programs across all land tenures at these sites is the central action of the plan.

In addition the plan identifies best practice guidelines for fox control which seek to maximise the effectiveness of control programs while minimising the impact of control methods on non-target species. Research actions to refine these practices are identified in the plan.

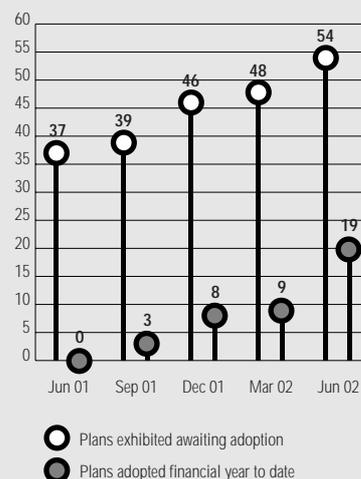
Finally, the plan outlines monitoring programs to measure the response of threatened species to fox control. The main objective of these experiments is to test whether populations of threatened species targeted for fox control are limited by fox predation. Such monitoring programs are fundamental to improving the effectiveness of the management of threatened species.

Bitou bush

The national and NSW bitou bush strategies were launched on 22 August 2001 by the Director-General Brian Gilligan and the Chair of the NSW Coastal Council, Professor Bruce Thom.

Corporate performance target

Increase in the number of threatened species recovery plans and threat abatement plans placed on public exhibition



J. Bean/NPWS



Pest Control Officer Kerry Holmes explains the value of exclusion fencing in the recovery of threatened flora to a Discovery tour group. Custom-designed fencing keeps kangaroos, rabbits and goats out, allowing plants to re-establish themselves.



CASE STUDY

Plague minnow

The plague minnow (*Gambusia holbrooki*) is a small introduced fish common throughout NSW waters. Predation by plague minnow has been listed as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. A draft threat abatement plan has been prepared by the NPWS and was placed on public exhibition.

The plan identifies key sites for those threatened frog species most likely to be impacted by predation or competition from plague minnow and research actions to reduce the impacts on these species. The plan provides a strategy to ameliorate the impacts of plague minnow by minimising their spread and where possible controlling populations at key sites.



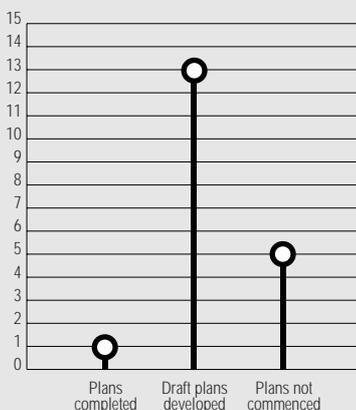
The plague minnow threatens the survival of threatened frog species such as the green and golden bell frog.

S. Cohen/NPWS

Corporate performance target

Regional cultural heritage strategies developed for New South Wales by June 2003

19 plans scheduled for development



The *National Bitou Bush and Boneseed Strategic Plan* identifies priorities and provides direction at the national level and will also be used by the Commonwealth to determine priorities for applications seeking funding from the Natural Heritage Trust. The *NSW Bitou Bush Strategy* is closely linked to and expands on the national plan, for the management of bitou bush across all public and private lands in New South Wales. It was developed after exhaustive consultation with local councils, coastal weeds committees and community groups.

The key outcomes of the NSW strategy are:

- preventing the introduction and/or further spread of bitou bush
- minimising the adverse impacts of bitou bush on biodiversity
- expanding commitment to the management of bitou bush.

The NSW strategy recommends where resources should be directed to address the most critical issues. The focus is on improving control techniques, refining and adopting integrated management strategies and coordinating actions at the state, regional and local level. Priority is given to enhancing community involvement by developing partnerships between stakeholders, with specific recognition of the important role of volunteers.

A high priority identified in the *NSW Bitou Bush Strategy* is the preparation of a threat abatement plan to identify and protect populations of threatened species most at risk from bitou bush invasion or competition. A draft threat abatement plan is nearing completion.

Fire management plans

The NPWS is a member of a multi-agency group comprising State Forests of NSW, the Department of Land and Water Conservation and the Rural Fire Service. This group develops bushfire risk management plans across the state and provides a cooperative framework for fire management, reinforcing conservation objectives for fire management across the landscape.

Planning work undertaken during the year included:

- public exhibition and advisory committee consideration of Munmorah, Yengo/Parr/Dharug and Popran fire plans
- preparation of a preliminary draft of the Wollemi National Park fire plan
- preparation of a draft of the Blue Mountains fire plan.

Cultural heritage planning

Heritage students' involvement in conservation management planning

For the sixth year running the NPWS worked in partnership with the University of Sydney's Master of Heritage Program, run through the Department of Architecture, Planning and Allied Arts, to prepare Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for historic heritage places on NPWS estate.

The partnership provides an opportunity for the NPWS to have innovative CMPs prepared and offers the students a chance to see historic heritage management on-park while engaging and inspiring them with many beautiful and interesting places and landscapes managed by the NPWS. It also provides the students with practical learning and input from NPWS cultural heritage specialists and regional staff in the application of heritage and conservation management concepts.

Projects completed in 2001-02 were Cable Station and La Perouse Headland at La Perouse and Dripping Rock Homestead in Nangar National Park. Projects commenced for three precincts within Scheyville National Park.

Cultural heritage policies and guidelines

During 2001-02 the following cultural heritage policies and guidelines were endorsed:

- Cultural Heritage Strategic Policy
- Cultural Heritage Information Policy
- Cultural Heritage Community Consultation Policy
- Schedule 14: Guidelines for the Assessment of Reserve Lands.

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During 2001-02 reviews commenced of the following policies and guidelines:

- Part 6 (s87 and s90) Permits Policy and Guidelines
- Cultural Heritage Conservation Policy
- Moveable Cultural Heritage Policy
- Return of Aboriginal Remains Policy
- Return of Moveable Cultural Heritage Items Policy
- Preparation of Conservation Management Plans Guidelines
- Heritage Asset Maintenance Program (HAMP) Guidelines
- Aboriginal Heritage Protection (AHP) Program Guidelines.

Marine park planning

Marine park planning is undertaken by the Marine Parks Authority which comprises the Director-General of the Premier's Department (Chairperson), the Director-General of the NPWS and the Director of NSW Fisheries. The authority ensures that the principal aim of conserving marine biodiversity and maintaining ecological processes can be met while also allowing for the sustainable use of the marine environment.

The NPWS actively participated in and contributed to a number of activities during 2001-02. These included:

- planning for Solitary Islands Marine Park, Jervis Bay Marine Park and Lord Howe Island Marine Park
- development and public release of a discussion paper outlining several zoning options for Lord Howe Island Marine Park
- development and public release of a consultation paper *Developing a representative system of marine protected areas in NSW – an overview*, which outlined a proposal to establish a marine park in the waters between Lennox Head and Brunswick Heads
- bioregional assessments under way for the Hawkesbury Shelf, Batemans Shelf and Twofold Shelf bioregions.

The NPWS also participated in the development of the Solitary Islands Marine Park zoning plan which was finalised and announced by the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Fisheries in April 2002. Formal gazettal of the plan as a regulation is expected to occur in August 2002. The zoning plan represents an important step forward in marine conservation in New South Wales, incorporating 12 per cent of the marine park in sanctuary zone, compared to the less than one percent when the park was established from the former marine reserve. Stakeholder meetings, submissions regarding the draft and a revised draft zoning plan were used to develop the final zoning plan.

Other conservation planning

Snowy corporatisation

The NPWS has been one of the many NSW agencies involved in the negotiations relating to the corporatisation of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. These negotiations have led to the development of more than 40 agreements, of which the NPWS is principally involved in seven.

These seven agreements include the Snowy Park Lease, Schedule of Existing Developments, Snowy Management Plan and Regulations, a Roads Maintenance Agreement, and deeds for major and minor former scheme sites.

The Snowy Park Lease is a commercial lease that in association with the Schedule of Existing Developments details all of the scheme's current assets and activities and provides tenure over those areas. The Snowy Management Plan (SMP) recognises that the current Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management does not adequately provide for the existence and operation of the scheme within the park.

The SMP and Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management are related documents although the SMP deals exclusively with the operation of the hydro scheme in the park. A significant part of the management plan is an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) which will be developed by Snowy Hydro Limited (SHL) and approved



NPWS Aboriginal Sites Officers, Badger Bates and Christine Tester sieve for Aboriginal remains disturbed during construction work at Wilcannia Hospital. Members of the local Aboriginal community help with the recovery.



At the announcement in April of a new zoning plan for the Solitary Islands Marine Park. From left: Environment Minister Bob Debus, Marine Park Manager Libby Sterling and Fisheries Minister Eddie Obeid.



by the NPWS. This EMP will impose environmental obligations and responsibilities on SHL for its traditional activities. The SMP Regulation will be an amendment to the existing NPWS (Land Management) Regulation and will enforce the obligations of the SMP. The Roads Maintenance Agreement provides maintenance arrangements for those roads used by SHL within the park.

The corporatisation project has also led to the identification and listing of up to 450 former scheme sites within the park. They are sites resulting from either construction or operation of the scheme which still require some form of rehabilitation. Of these, 36 have been designated 'major' sites requiring extensive rehabilitation. The NPWS is to manage these works and SHL has allocated \$25 million (\$5 million per year over five years) to the NPWS for the project. Major sites range from large to medium-sized spoil dumps and quarries, to former landfills. The primary issue associated with these sites is potential instability and lack of vegetation regrowth. The process for rehabilitation will be a risk-based approach with extensive planning being undertaken prior to implementation.

The remaining sites fall into the 'minor' sites category. These also require rehabilitation, although to a lesser degree, with weeds being the main issue. A total of \$7 million has been allocated from SHL to the NPWS for rehabilitation of these sites. NPWS staff will generally undertake minor site rehabilitation works within the normal operational context. For all sites SHL retains responsibility for any liability arising under the NSW *Contaminated Land Management Act 1997*, with the NSW government and the NPWS assuming all other liabilities.

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority was corporatised on 28 June 2002 and became Snowy Hydro Limited, jointly owned by the NSW, Victorian and Commonwealth Governments.

Environmental planning

The NPWS continued its statutory responsibilities as a concurrence authority and approval body under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The NPWS has provided submissions and advice to PlanningNSW regarding PlanFirst and other environmental planning matters. The NPWS has also provided advice on environmental impact assessment for fisheries management strategies for NSW Fisheries and advice to other agencies as required.

The NPWS plays an essential role in advising local government and other government agencies on natural and cultural heritage conservation and management through the strategic planning and development control processes and the provision and assessment of Species Impact Statements. Examples of the NPWS role include commenting on residential and tourist developments and proposed rezoning applications, presenting and chairing expert panels at public inquiries and providing submissions to commissions of inquiry into proposed developments.