

MOUNT CANOBOLAS STATE CONSERVATION AREA
PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
October 2003

This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for the Environment on 21 October 2003.

Acknowledgments: This plan of management is based on a draft plan prepared by Steve Woodhall, members of the Central West Region Advisory Committee and staff of the Central West Region of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Central West Region Advisory Committee provided significant input into the management decisions contained within this draft plan. Information received from the general public through the consultation phase has also been used in the preparation of this draft plan.

Cover photograph of Mt Canobolas by Steve Woodhall.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

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FOREWORD

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is located about 15 km south west of Orange in the central west of New South Wales. It is 1,672 ha in size and comprises the area previously known as Mount Canobolas Park and Mount Canobolas State Recreation Area. Mount Canobolas is an extinct volcano and, at 1,397 m above sea level, is the highest peak between the Blue Mountains and Perth. Because of its altitude and generally fertile soil, the SCA has a range of vegetation types which are uncommon and poorly conserved in the Central West of NSW.

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area contains 305 plant species, including two rare plant species, and over 60 species of fauna. A number of Aboriginal sites have been found in the state conservation area, including an axe grinding groove, occupation sites and a rock carving. The name Canobolas is derived from the Wiradjuri Aboriginal word for the area meaning "two shoulders" (referring to the two main peaks of Old Man Canobolas and Young Man Canobolas).

Mount Canobolas is an important icon to the city of Orange and surrounding districts. It dominates the landscape and is an important tourist destination.

The emphasis of this plan of management is to protect the natural and cultural values of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area, as well as improving the visitor experience. Priority will be given to continued control of pest animal and plant species, control of vehicle movements within the visitor areas and along management trails, and the upgrading and refurbishment of selected visitor areas.

This plan of management contains the scheme of operations for Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area. In accordance with Section 75A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, this plan of management is hereby adopted.

BOB DEBUS
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires that a plan of management be prepared for each state conservation area.

The procedure for the adoption of a plan of management for a state conservation area is specified in the Act and involved the following stages at the time the plan was prepared:

- The Director-General gives notice that a plan of management has been prepared.
- The plan is placed on public exhibition for at least one month and any person may comment on it.
- The plan and all representations are referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for consideration.
- The Director-General submits the plan of management, together with any comments and suggestions of the Advisory Council, to the Minister for the Environment.
- The Minister may adopt the plan with or without amendment after considering the comments of the Advisory Council or may refer the plan back to the Director-General and Council for further consideration.

A plan of management is a legal document which provides for the protection and use of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area. Once the plan has been adopted by the Minister no operations may be carried out in the state conservation area unless they are in accordance with the plan.

A draft plan of management for Mount Canobolas State Recreation Area was placed on public exhibition for three months from May until August 2002. The exhibition of the draft plan attracted 25 submissions which raised 19 issues. All submissions received were considered by the Advisory Council and Minister before the adoption of this plan.

At the end of 2002, amendments to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* changed all state recreation areas to state conservation areas. Consequently all references to state recreation area or SRA in the draft plan have been changed to state conservation area or SCA in the adopted plan. New objectives for state conservation areas which came in effect in 2002 have also been included in this plan.

Additional information or enquiries on any aspect of the management of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area can be obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Central West Region Office at Level 2, 203-209 Russell St, Bathurst, NSW 2795 (telephone 02 6332 9488).

2. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

2.1 STATE CONSERVATION AREAS IN NSW

State conservation areas are reserved under *the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to protect and conserve areas that contain significant or representative ecosystems, landforms or natural phenomena or places of cultural significance; that are capable of providing opportunities for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment, the sustainable use of buildings and structures or research; and that are capable of providing opportunities for uses permitted under other provisions of the Act.

2.2 MOUNT CANOBOLAS STATE CONSERVATION AREA

2.2.1 Location, Reservation and Regional Setting

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area (the SCA) is located about 15 km south west of Orange in the central west of New South Wales. The SCA is located within Cabonne Shire. It is 1,672 ha in size and was gazetted as Mount Canobolas State Recreation Area in December 1997 over Mt Canobolas Park which was crown land managed by a Trust of local citizens. It is roughly square in shape and is approximately 6 km long and 5 km wide. A significantly sized inholding of cleared grazing country exists in the eastern section of the SCA. The map on the centre pages of this plan illustrates the location and extent of the SCA.

Mount Canobolas is an extinct volcano and at 1,397 m above sea level, it is the highest peak between the Blue Mountains and Perth. The mountain's prominence has attracted a considerable amount of telecommunications infrastructure including air safety, telecommunications, radio and television transmitters.

The commanding views from the summit of Mount Canobolas look out over the rich agricultural country of the central west tablelands and slopes. Sheep grazing for wool production is the main activity on the tablelands while the slopes are also used for crop production such as wheat and canola. The lower slopes of Mount Canobolas also provide for more intensive orchard and vineyard production. The natural vegetation of the central west has been extensively cleared for agriculture and the remaining remnants are highly fragmented. Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area contains a significant remnant of the vegetation which once covered this landscape and the views from the summit illustrate this dramatically. Set amongst the largely cleared agricultural lands, other conservation reserves are visible from the summit. Barton Nature Reserve and Nangar National Park can be seen to the west, Mullion Range State Conservation Area is visible to the north, Conimbla National Park is visible to the south west and Winburndale Nature Reserve can be seen to the east.

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is bounded by radiata pine plantations of Canobolas State Forest to the south and Glenwood State Forest to the west and north west. Private radiata pine plantations, apple and cherry orchards and some native bushland adjoins the northern and eastern boundaries. The apple orchards on the lower slopes of Mount Canobolas to the north of the SCA are a significant economic factor in the prosperity of the Orange region.

The SCA is located in both the Lachlan and Central West (Macquarie) Catchments. Whilst the size of the SCA is small in catchment terms, it contributes to the vegetation and biodiversity targets for both catchments. The SCA protects a large percentage of the sub alpine ecosystems found in both catchments, which is of major importance in fulfilling the goals of the catchment blueprints.

The SCA has long been used as a recreation area for the people of Orange. The Canobolas Regional Parkland Trust provided a number of camping areas, picnic areas and walking tracks within the SCA. Mount Canobolas is represented in the Orange City logo and the summit has long been a destination for travellers from other areas of New South Wales and interstate who are visiting friends in the Orange area or passing through.

2.2.2 Importance of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area

Landscape - Mount Canobolas and its surrounding peaks are an important landmark of the central west. The SCA is visible from all directions from up to 50 km away. There are 360 degree panoramic views from the summit of Mount Canobolas provide extensive views over the central west. The SCA also contains other landforms such as waterfalls, exposed rock platforms, dykes, domes and plugs.

Geology - Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area has an interesting geological past. The SCA was formed by volcanic activity between 13 – 11 million years before present. Geological analysis indicates that Mount Canobolas is related to other volcanic landforms stretching in a chain from Oberon in the south to south east Queensland in the north. The most famous of these are the Warrumbungle Range near Coonabarrabran and the Nandewar Range near Narrabri. These areas of ancient volcanoes are conserved in the Warrumbungle National Park and Mount Kaputar National Park respectively.

Natural features - The native vegetation of the central west is highly fragmented. Only 25% of the original native vegetation cover remains across the region and much of this is in poor or declining condition. In this type of landscape, areas such as Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area are highly significant for conservation.

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is an isolated high altitude remnant in relatively good condition. It contains one of the largest remnants of sub-alpine vegetation in the central west and a number of species which are poorly represented in the Central West. Most of the plant communities are at the north western limit of their known distribution and some of these communities are highly significant.

A total of 305 plant species have been recorded, two of which are endemic to the reserve. One of these species (*Eucalyptus canobolensis*) is listed as threatened under the *Threatened Species Conservation (TSC) Act 1995*, the other (*E. saxicola*) is newly discovered and described. The *Xanthoparmelia* lichen community found on the exposed rock ledges and outcrops has recently received a preliminary determination as an Endangered Ecological Community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. Three other plant species are considered significant because they occur in the SCA near the limits of their distribution or are restricted in distribution.

Seventy-six fauna species have been recorded comprising 43 bird species, 11 reptile species, three amphibians, five ground dwelling mammals, five arboreal mammals, five micro bats and four introduced species.

Cultural heritage – A small number of occupation sites and stone tools have been recorded in the SCA but it is likely that, because of its prominence, the mountain was of significance to the Wiradjuri people.

Recreation and tourism – Mount Canobolas is a highly significant tourism and recreation resource in the central west. Previous visitor studies have revealed the SCA to be the second highest visitor destination in the central west after the Western

Plains Zoo. The 360 panoramic views from the summit are a major draw card to visitors from outside the region as well as locals. The mountain is considered an important tourist attraction by both Cabonne and Orange City Councils.

Scientific and educational values – The SCA is an important scientific reference site and presents opportunities for studies into natural ecosystem processes. The geological history of the SCA is of particular interest and has been the subject of scientific study in the past.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT

3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Under the Act, 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 mineral exploration and mining, having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area;
- provide for sustainable visitor 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; and
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR MOUNT CANOBOLAS STATE CONSERVATION AREA

In addition to the above general objectives, the management of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area will be subject to the following more specific objectives:

- The protection of the SCA as a representative sample of high altitude woodland containing many plant species and communities at their northwestern limit.
- Management of native vegetation to:
 - maintain natural floristic and structural diversity;
 - conserve threatened and other significant species known to occur in the SCA;
 - conserve communities of significance known to occur in the SCA; and
 - maximise habitat values for native animals, particularly threatened species.
- Protection of Aboriginal sites and involvement of the local Aboriginal community in the management of the SCA.
- Investigation, recording and protection of European heritage within the SCA.
- Provision and maintenance of a range of environmentally sustainable recreation and ecotourism opportunities based on the special features of the SCA.
- Protection of the SCA's scenic landscape values through the sensitive location and design of infrastructure.
- Promotion of public awareness and appreciation of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area with emphasis on:
 - vegetation communities and their habitat value for native fauna;
 - geological origins and influences on the native plants and animals of the SCA;

- the SCA as an island refuge and the need for retention and sympathetic management of off park conservation;
- the Aboriginal cultural value of the SCA and its importance to the Aboriginal community; and
- the appropriate recreational use of the SCA.

3.3 OVERALL STRATEGY

It is recognised that the SCA is a significant remnant in a largely modified surrounding environment. The protection of the existing native plant and animal communities will be achieved by reducing threats to these communities, in particular from pest animal and plant species. A fire regime and associated protection works will be adopted in the fire management plan which is consistent with protecting the SCA's vegetation and animal communities.

Aboriginal sites and places will be managed in close liaison with the relevant Aboriginal communities. Knowledge of Aboriginal resources in the SCA will be increased through future survey work.

Management of historic places within the SCA will be in accordance with the provisions of the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1992).

Much of the present infrastructure is in poor condition and under utilised, suffering degradation from vandalism and vehicle movement. Some picnic areas will be closed and rehabilitated, whilst the facilities at others will be upgraded to make them more attractive to park visitors and campers. Recreation activities will in general be passive in nature and concentrate on quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the bushland setting.

Interpretive material will be provided at selected visitor destinations and may be augmented with face to face interpretive programs in periods of high public use such as school holidays and the summer months. Emphasis will be placed on explaining the natural and cultural features of the SCA. Where appropriate, recreation and tourism opportunities will be promoted in conjunction with regional tourism strategies and initiatives.

4. POLICIES AND FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT

This chapter contains the policies and framework for the management of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area together with relevant background information.

The policies established in this plan of management will provide the framework for management consistent with anticipated resources available to the Service.

Where not specifically provided for in this plan, management will be in accordance with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and with general Service policies.

4.1 MOUNT CANOBOLAS STATE CONSERVATION AREA: ITS NATURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

4.1.1 Geology, Landform, Soils and Climate

The geology of the SCA is one of its most interesting features and governs the vegetation, soils and landform of the SCA. The geology and landform of the SCA is the result of past volcanic activity. About 13-11 million years before present, at least three separate eruption events are believed to have occurred. The first formed a large shield volcano and spread magma over hundreds of square kilometres forming the basis for the rich agricultural soils in the Orange\Cudal\Milthorpe area. The second and third eruptions produced slower moving lava which formed steep sided features such as domes, vents, dykes and plugs as they cooled. The softer outer rocks have eroded over many thousands of years leaving the present day landforms of relatively hard domes and plugs. These domes form the tops of the rounded peaks such as Young Man Canobolas, Old Man Canobolas and Towac Peak. Over 50 volcanic features such as domes, plugs, dykes and vents have been recorded in the central volcanic area. These volcanic features are predominantly formed from trachyte rock material.

The SCA straddles the boundary of the Macquarie and Lachlan catchments. Water falling on the eastern side of the SCA flows into the Macquarie River, whilst water falling on the western side of the SCA flows into the Lachlan River.

As would be expected from the landform and geological history, soils vary throughout the SCA. Deeper soil deposits are found on the lower slopes and gullies, while thinner, skeletal soils occur at the rocky outcrops and higher peaks. The soils on rolling and steeper slopes are formed from trachyte and basalt parent material, whilst skeletal sand and loams are found on the thinner upper slopes. Red earths and krasnozems are found on the lower slopes. Soils are generally stable and there is little evidence of erosion.

Mount Canobolas is the dominant geographic feature in the Orange district being visible for at least 50 kms from many directions. Whilst bushland dominates the skyline and upper slopes, its rich soils are evident in the variety of land uses on the lower slopes such as orchards, vineyards and pine plantations. The telecommunications towers on the summit are visually striking and bear witness to the significance of the mountain to our modern lifestyle. The summit of Mount Canobolas offers outstanding views of the surrounding countryside and is a major drawcard for visitors to the SCA. A major aim of this plan is to protect the scenic values of the SCA through the protection of native vegetation and management of appropriate development.

The topographical relief and altitude of Mount Canobolas affects local weather patterns. Mount Canobolas rises some 500 metres above the surrounding tablelands which produces a strong orographic rainfall effect. Annual rainfall is approximately

200-400 mm higher in the SCA than in the surrounding country. It is common to receive 2-3 snowfalls per year, which causes problems for vehicle access to the summit for 2-3 days at a time. Snow can persist for up to three weeks on the sheltered southern aspects. Cloud formation above the summit is not unusual and the summit can often be shrouded in cloud while the surrounding countryside is clear. This contributes to the higher annual rainfall figures through the production of dew.

Throughout the year, the temperature at the summit is usually noticeably lower than the surrounding countryside, a fact which is immediately apparent to visitors on exiting their car at the summit. The wind chill factor is also significant, especially during the cooler months in exposed areas. During spring and autumn, the weather can be highly variable during the day, which may cause problems for visitors not prepared for sudden rain and temperature drops.

4.1.2 Native Vegetation and Introduced Plants

Native vegetation

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is a relatively undisturbed, high altitude, isolated remnant in a highly modified landscape and, as such, is a highly significant conservation reserve. 305 plant species have been recorded in the SCA representing 69 families and 93 genera.

The reserve lies within the South Eastern Highlands Bioregion and the vegetation communities largely reflect this fact, although there are some affiliations with northern tablelands communities as well. A number of the plant communities are at the north western limit of their known distribution. The vegetation communities in the SCA are considered to have developed in isolation from other high altitude area which has led to a degree of uniqueness.

Seven plant communities have been documented in the SCA by Hunter (2000). The vegetation communities range from tall open forests and grassy woodlands, through to heathy and grassy rocky outcrops. There is a high degree of intergrade between the grassy woodland communities and tall open forests which are the dominant communities. The communities associated with the rocky outcrops are significant because of the assemblage of associated plants and are probably restricted to the SCA (although they are considered well conserved within the SCA).

The woodland and tall open forest communities are dominated by *E. pauciflora* (snow gum), *E. dalrympleana* (mountain gum) and *E. canobolensis*, whilst *Poa sieberiana* (snow grass) is the most dominant understorey species. Lack of major fire has probably been an important factor in the development of the vegetation communities. Previous fire history would indicate that high intensity fire has been relatively infrequent and where it has occurred, it has promoted shrubby understorey species at the expense of the grass species. Careful management of fire in the future is required to ensure the diversity of vegetation communities is maintained.

Significant Communities and species

Significant Communities

A number of the plant communities found within the reserve are significant either because they are at the edge of their known range, have unusual or rare plants or are not adequately conserved across their known range. Table 1 identifies these communities.

Community	% of SCA	Importance	Significant species
Red stringybark (<i>E. macrorhyncha</i>) – peppermint (<i>E. dives</i>) Shrubby open forest and woodland	26%	Adequately conserved but at northern and western limit of its known range. Unusual assemblage of associated species	<i>E. canobolensis</i> <i>E. saxicola</i>
Fringe myrtle (<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>) – mountain mirbelia (<i>Mirbelia oxyloboides</i>) Outcrop heaths and shrublands	About 2 %	Restricted to SCA and possibly surrounding areas of native bush	
Snow gum (<i>E. pauciflora</i>) – mountain gum (<i>E. dalrympleana</i>) Grassy woodlands and tall open forests	51.5 %	Whilst adequately conserved across its range, this community is at the limit of its known range	<i>E. canobolensis</i>
Grasslands and open grassy woodlands – snow gum (<i>E. pauciflora</i>) – Canobolas candlebark (<i>E. canobolensis</i>)	15 %	Poorly conserved across its range	<i>E. canobolensis</i>
<i>Xanthoparmelia</i> lichen community	About 2 %	Restricted to SCA and possibly surrounding areas of native bush	<i>X. canobolasensis</i> , <i>X. metstrigosa</i> , <i>X. sulcifera</i> , <i>Cladia fuliginosa</i>

The *Xanthoparmelia* lichen community is listed in Part 3 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Significant species

There are two rare and endangered species. One (*Eucalyptus canobolensis*) is listed on Schedule 2 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. The second is a new species (*E. saxicola*) which has only recently been described. Both species are only known to occur within the SCA. *E. canobolensis* is widespread throughout the SCA, from its lower levels almost to the summit. The estimated population size is approximately 40,000 individuals and it is the second most abundant tree in the SCA after *E. pauciflora*. *Eucalyptus saxicola* is much more restricted and is only known from 1 location within the SCA.

Three other significant species occur within the SCA. *Astrotricha linearis* (narrow leaved star hair) is a low growing shrub. The population is near its western limit of distribution and is rarely found in the Central West of NSW.

Olearia chrysophylla (daisy bush) is usually found at higher altitudes from Point Lookout on the Northern tablelands, south to the Blue Mountains. The population within the SCA is a disjunct population and at the western limit of its known range.

Pultenaea sp. F. is an erect to trailing shrub which is relatively common within the SCA. This species is restricted to the Central Tablelands and Central West Slopes south of Rylstone and Orange. The occurrence of this species at such high numbers within the SCA is significant.

Introduced Species

A range of introduced plants occur within the SCA. An introduced species is defined in this plan as any plant or animal species not native to the state conservation area. Introduced species within the SCA and on adjoining land are of concern because they have the potential to detrimentally affect ecological values and can spread to and from neighbouring land.

Whilst the native vegetation is on the whole in healthy condition, some 47 introduced plants have been recorded in the SCA. It is important to undertake strategic control of weeds as weeds affect native ecosystems in three ways. They impact on the abundance and diversity of native species and effect the function of the ecosystem. Most of the introduced weeds occur in restricted areas and at low densities, however three species present a more serious problem. Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) is widespread through the reserve and has invaded undisturbed areas, whilst St Johns wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) are concentrated in disturbed areas.

Encroachment of weeds into and out of the SCA occurs along many of the SCA's boundaries, particularly those adjoining pine plantations.

The *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* places an obligation on public authorities to control noxious weeds on lands that they occupy to the extent necessary to prevent such weeds spreading to adjoining lands. An established and continuing weed control program concentrating on noxious weeds is in place. Central West Region is currently preparing a Region wide Pest Management Strategy, which will set the overall directions and priorities for dealing with introduced plant species.

Policies

- Native vegetation will be managed to:
 - maintain floristic and structural diversity;
 - conserve endangered or uncommon communities and species;
 - maximise habitat values for native animal species.
- Introduced plant control programs will reflect the balance between the need to use the most effective control techniques and a desire to minimise non target effects. Integrated control programs using a variety of techniques will be adopted where possible.
- Priority for treatment will be given to declared noxious weeds, particularly where they may affect neighbouring lands and where weeds may affect rare and threatened species and communities.

Actions

- Introduced plant species will be controlled. Priority will be given to blackberry, St John's wort and serrated tussock.
- The cooperation of other authorities and park neighbours will be sought in implementing weed control programs.
- The establishment of a volunteer bush care group will be explored.

4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals

Native Animals

Seventy two species of native animals have been recorded in the SCA. This species list is considered incomplete, however, as there has never been a systematic fauna survey of the whole park. It is likely that mammals and reptiles are particularly under represented in this list. The range of vegetation communities offers particularly good habitat for arboreal mammals in the moister gullies, with greater gliders being particularly widespread throughout the SCA.

Because of the SCA's altitude and vegetation communities, it is likely to contain species that are less common in the central west. This may be counterbalanced by its small size and isolation from other remnant vegetation, which may have reduced species richness over time. Historical reports indicate that yellow bellied gliders (*Petaurus australis*) (Schedule 2, TSC Act) were present in the SCA in the early 1980s. If still present, this would be a significant recording as this species is only known from Winburndale Nature Reserve within Central West Region.

Introduced species

Four introduced animal species have been recorded in the SCA. These are European red fox, feral pig, rabbit and goat. Although not yet recorded, feral cats and dogs are likely to be present in the SCA. Pest animals impact on the natural ecosystems through direct predatory pressure, competition with native species for feeding and habitat resources, increasing the potential for disease transmission, causing problems with soil erosion and reducing species diversity.

Pigs and foxes move throughout the SCA whilst the goats and rabbits are more limited in range. Pigs and foxes can spread introduced plants throughout the reserve. Pigs disturb the soil allowing invasive plants to spread, whilst foxes eat blackberries in season and spread the seed throughout the reserve. The presence of pigs also encourages illegal pig hunting using dogs in the SCA.

A pest species plan is being prepared for the whole of Central West Region which will spell out priority noxious weeds and pest animals for control. Pest animal control programs for the SCA will be undertaken in accordance with this regional plan.

Policies

- The diversity and high quality of habitats for native animals occurring in the state conservation area will be conserved.
- Surveys will be encouraged with particular emphasis on yellow bellied gliders.
- Pest animals will be controlled. Pest species control programs will give priority to pigs, foxes, goats and rabbits and other priority pest species described in the Regional Pest Management Strategy. Control programs will be designed to avoid impact on non-target species and will be undertaken in cooperation with the Molong Rural Lands Protection Board and neighbouring land holders where appropriate.

Actions

- Undertake control programs for pigs, foxes, goats and rabbits. Methods and techniques used will be outlined in the regional pest management strategy.
- Undertake systematic fauna surveys.

4.1.4 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage includes both indigenous and non-indigenous history. It comprises important components of the environment that may have aesthetic, historic, scientific and social significance to present and future generations.

Aboriginal Sites

The NPWS currently has limited information on the indigenous values of Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area. However, the SCA is within the country of the Wiradjuri people and as such is likely to have contributed to their social, economic or ceremonial life, and is likely to have economic and cultural significance to contemporary indigenous communities.

While the Service presently has legal responsibility for the protection of Aboriginal sites it acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people to make decisions about their own heritage. Aboriginal communities must be consulted about decisions regarding the management of Aboriginal sites and related issues and how the Aboriginal culture and history of an area will be promoted and presented.

Mount Canobolas lies within Wiradjuri country. Very little is known about past Aboriginal use and occupation of the SCA. Since European settlement, most of the local Wiradjuri people were removed from the Orange district, returning only relatively recently and much of their local knowledge has been lost. The local Aboriginal community is embarking on an oral history program which it is hoped, amongst other things, will reveal more information about the significance of Mount Canobolas. At present only six Aboriginal sites have been recorded in the SCA, four of these are open campsites, one is a grinding groove stone and the sixth is a rock carving.

Surveys of Aboriginal sites within the SCA are required, particularly in areas of likely Aboriginal use/occupation and areas which may have been subject to disturbance such as picnic and camping areas. Car movements, at Federal Falls Camping Area, The Walls Picnic Area and Towac Picnic Area are presently impacting three Aboriginal sites. Protection of these sites through redevelopment of parking and visitor use arrangements is a high priority.

Policies

- The Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations will be consulted and actively involved in all aspects of management of Aboriginal sites and values in the state conservation area.
- Aboriginal people will be permitted to carry out culturally relevant activities in the state conservation area related to their traditional links to the mountain. Any such activities must comply with the objectives and policies of this plan of management, legislative provisions and have minimal environmental impact.
- Aboriginal sites will be protected from disturbance or damage by human activities.
- The location of Aboriginal sites will not be publicised except where:
 - the agreement of the Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations has been obtained;
 - a conservation study has been prepared and any management works necessary to protect the site from damage have been implemented; and
 - the site will be interpreted to promote public knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal culture.

- Subject to the above policy, selected sites may be interpreted to the public to encourage an understanding and awareness of Aboriginal culture and the prehistory of the state conservation area. Impacts of such use will be monitored and their use will be regulated if necessary to alleviate adverse impact.

Actions

- Liaise with Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations in relation to management and interpretation of Aboriginal sites within the SCA.
- Undertake Aboriginal sites surveys.
- Undertake Aboriginal site protection works at Federal Falls Camping Area, The Walls Picnic Area and Towac Picnic Area and other areas as identified.

Historic Places

Little is presently known about past European usage of the state conservation area and further work is required to increase our understanding. The first recorded ascent of Mount Canobolas by a European was by Thomas Mitchell in 1835. Since then, the SCA has reputedly been used for some small scale timber harvesting, stock grazing, and it was the site of a proposed water supply for the city of Orange (test foundation holes were dug). The remains of a hut have been located in the northeast section of the SCA, however its origins and use are unknown.

Further research into the historical use of the SCA is required and will be undertaken. Appropriate management of any significant sites will be undertaken in accordance with NPWS policy.

Policies

- The historic places of the state conservation area will be conserved in accordance with the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS.
- Historic structures and places will be recorded.
- Research into past European use will be encouraged.

Actions

- Undertake research into the hut on the SCA.
- Record historic structures and places.

4.1.5 Fire Management

Fire is regarded as a natural process, one of the established physical factors of the Australian environment to which native plant and animal communities have become adapted. The correct management of fire is essential to avoid the extinction of native plant and animal species.

A draft Fire Management Plan is in the early stages of preparation for Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area. Fire management plans provide direction to

park managers on activities required to meet the fire management responsibilities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. They are based on analysis of fire history, vegetation types and fuel patterns and potential threats to life and assets within or adjoining the SCA.

Wild fire frequency in the SCA is poorly recorded, however it is believed to be quite low. The floristic composition of the SCA suggests that the vegetation has evolved largely in the absence of regular intense fire, probably because of the SCA's altitude and relatively high rainfall. Further research is needed into fire events, to gain an understanding of fire history.

Available fire records show that a major fire in 1967 affected 415 ha in the northern section of the SCA. This fire originated on a private property inholding within the SCA and was at the end of a period of seasonal drought. One major wildfire affected 414 ha in the western part of the SCA in 1982 and another major fire to the south of the SCA in 1985 was controlled near the southern boundary after burning 83 ha of SCA. Both these latter fires originated some kilometres outside the SCA and entered the SCA under extreme weather conditions during years of below average rainfall. Information from local land holders indicates that the mountain was subjected to annual low intensity burning by previous occupiers to maintain fresh feed for their stock during the 1940's and 1950's.

In recent times the main occurrence of fire in Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area has been due to the dumping and burning of stolen cars. None of these has developed into a serious fire because of prompt action by local fire fighters and the relatively moist conditions usually found on the mountain.

Repeated or large fires would threaten a number of assets in the SCA. These include the SCA's ecological values, telecommunications infrastructure located on the summit of Mount Canobolas, recreational facilities and cultural sites within the state recreation area.

Policies

- Fire within the SCA will be managed:
 - to conserve all native species that occur naturally within park;
 - to maintain ecosystem processes associated with the native species and communities in the SCA;
 - to reduce risk of bushfires spreading to areas outside the SCA;
 - to prevent damage to Aboriginal and historic sites;
 - to minimise risk to assets inside the SCA;
 - co-operatively with neighbours, Canobolas Zone Bushfire Committee, rural fire brigades and State Forests.

Actions

- A Fire Management Plan will be prepared for the SCA by the end of 2004.
- Actions within the approved Fire Management Plan for Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area will be implemented.
- Pending preparation of the Fire Plan, fire in Mount Canobolas will be managed to minimise the extent of any unplanned fire.
- Fire trails will be maintained.

4.2 USE OF THE AREA

Certain public and private uses may be appropriate in Service areas provided that they do not conflict with the primary purpose of conservation of natural and cultural heritage and are consistent with the objectives and strategy of the plan of management. The major categories of use that can be appropriate in Service areas are:

- education and promotion of the SCA, the Service and the conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- involvement of the public in aspects of management;
- certain types of recreation;
- research; and
- management operations by the Service, private industry and other authorities with statutory responsibilities in the SCA.

The extent to which these categories of use will be provided for in Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is indicated in the following sections.

4.2.1 Promotion and Interpretation

Promoting public awareness of the Service's conservation responsibilities, the values of the SCA and recreational opportunities is a major aspect of management of visitor use. It assists the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the state conservation area and increases the enjoyment and satisfaction of visitors. Visitor surveys conducted by NPWS staff in 1999 indicate that most visitors appear to be unaware of the recreational opportunities available in the SCA and only visit the area for the views from the summit. Further public education effort is required to make people aware of the full range of recreational opportunities available. Information at the summit is particularly important, as it will be seen by most SCA visitors.

Mount Canobolas is viewed as an important tourist resource within the local community. The Service will work cooperatively with local government tourism organisations to ensure the SCA is appropriately promoted as part of the tourism opportunities in the local area. This may include inclusion of the SCA in regional tourist drives, appropriate signposting to the SCA as well as installation of information and interpretive displays at strategic locations within the SCA.

The Service's Discovery Ranger program can be an effective way to introduce the general public to the values of the SCA. A Discovery Ranger Program may be developed for the SCA, concentrating on peak holiday periods and expanding in scope subject to available resources and demand.

Policies

- Understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area by the public will be promoted. The following themes will be emphasised in interpretation programs:
 - Significance of the SCA's plant communities including the presence of endemic species and communities at the limit of their distribution.
 - Value of a relatively large remnant in a largely cleared landscape.
 - Aboriginal use.
 - Geological history and relationship to other volcanic areas.
- Promotional material and interpretive programs will be designed to introduce visitors to the values of the SCA and promote care for the environment.

- The Service will work cooperatively with local tourism organisations to maximise appropriate tourism awareness of the SCA.

Actions

- Develop an interpretation/education plan for the SCA in conjunction with interested stakeholders.
- Develop a Discovery Ranger Program for the SCA.
- Liaise with local tourism organisations in relation to appropriate promotion of the SCA within its regional setting.
- Install interpretive displays at the Summit, Orange View Picnic Area and The Walls Picnic Area.
- Investigate incorporating public access roads within tourist drives.
- Progressively upgrade signage at facilities.

4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities

The SCA is a highly significant passive recreation resource because of its natural values, infrastructure and proximity to a major city. Activities undertaken include picnicking, camping, bushwalking, photography and non commercial horse riding. The potential for increased use of the SCA is high if infrastructure is upgraded and promotion increased. The SCA offers a level of facilities in a bushland setting not available elsewhere in the central west. The SCA contains seven picnic areas, two camping areas, three lookouts and approximately 20 km of walking track on seven different trails. Whilst the summit receives high visitation, many of the other recreation sites are little used at present. This is probably because much of the infrastructure is in poor condition and the SCA is not extensively promoted.

The summit of Mount Canobolas is a significant destination for tourists and visitors to the region. NPWS visitor surveys during peak periods in 99/00, have revealed that nearly 75% of visitors to the summit originate from outside the Orange region. Most visitors to the SCA only visit the summit for the view and then depart the SCA. Relatively few stay to use the picnic areas and walking tracks.

Based on traffic counter and vehicle surveys, it is estimated that between 60,000 – 70,000 people visited the summit during 99/00. Previous surveys have estimated visitor numbers as high as 120,000 people per annum. Visitation is generally higher in the warmer months of summer and autumn, with a decrease of visitors during the colder months of winter and spring. Public holidays and long weekends are particularly popular times for visitors. 93% of vehicles use the Canobolas Way from Towac to reach the summit.

Vehicle access

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area has approximately 13 km of roads available for use by the general public. This includes two public roads (Canobolas Way and Old Canobolas Rd) which are administered by Cabonne Council and are not part of the SCA. It also includes Towac Way and Mitchells Way which are managed by the NPWS. A number of management trails are also located in the SCA which are not available for motorised vehicle access. The map in the centre of

this plan shows the public vehicle access system and the management trail system. All roads in the SCA may be temporarily closed from time to time for operational reasons where access to the roads may present a danger to the public.

Policies

- The public and park roads on the map (centre pages) will be available for vehicle access by the general public. The management trails shown on the map are not available for vehicle access by the general public.
- Roads within the SCA may be closed from time to time for essential management purposes.

Picnic areas

The SCA presently has eight picnic areas which were in place when the SCA was gazetted in 1997. Much of the infrastructure associated with these areas is now in a dilapidated or vandalised state, vehicle access is uncontrolled and the areas are unattractive to visitors. Many of these areas are little used by park visitors and some have difficult or dangerous vehicle entry points. It is proposed to rationalise the number of picnic areas to reduce maintenance costs and improve infrastructure in the remaining picnic areas. All picnic areas are accessible by conventional vehicle, therefore it is reasonable to expect visitors to provide their own cooking facilities and water and to remove their rubbish when they leave.

A recent investigation into the extent of Aboriginal artefacts at The Walls Picnic Area has implications for the continued use of this picnic area. A Review of Environmental Factors will be undertaken prior to a final decision being undertaken on the closure and/or redevelopment of picnic areas. The results of this investigation may require a reassessment of the provision of picnic areas throughout the SCA.

Policies

- The number of picnic areas will be reduced.
- Facilities at remaining picnic areas will be upgraded to provide an enhanced experience for park visitors. Generally, facilities will be low key and restricted to defined car parks and picnic tables, but where appropriate, this may also involve the provision of toilets, picnic shelters and installation of interpretive displays.
- Wood fires will not be permitted in picnic areas. Visitors will be required to supply their own cooking facilities.
- Garbage bins will not be provided at picnic areas and visitors will be requested to remove their rubbish when they leave the SCA.

Actions

- The Walls Picnic Area – will be retained and facilities upgraded.
- Orange View Picnic Area – will be retained and facilities upgraded.
- Towac Picnic Area – will be retained and facilities upgraded.

- Yuranighs Picnic Area – will be closed and rehabilitated.
- The Pines Picnic Area – will be closed and rehabilitated.
- Spring Glade Picnic Area – will be closed and rehabilitated. Consideration will be given to relocating facilities adjacent to the start of the Spring Glade Walking track if future usage warrants it.
- Junction Picnic Area – will be closed and the present picnic shelter and bbq will be removed. The toilets will be retained and may be upgraded if resources permit.
- Boree Picnic Area – will be closed.
- Wood burning fireplaces will be removed from all picnic areas.
- Water taps from the defunct water system will be removed.
- The impact of wood collection around camping areas will be monitored.

Camping areas

The SCA presently has two camping areas which were in place when the SCA was gazetted in 1997. Much of the infrastructure associated with these areas is now in a dilapidated or vandalised state and requires upgrading. Both camping areas are accessible by conventional vehicle, therefore it is reasonable to expect visitors to provide their own water and to remove their rubbish when they leave. Wood fireplaces will be provided for the use of campers.

Federal Falls Camping Area is located in the centre of the SCA and offers a bushland setting, as well as track heads for a number of walking tracks. The present use and vehicle access is degrading the area and impacting on an Aboriginal site. The Service will undertake site protection works including provision of a new car park. Subject to agreement with the Aboriginal community, camping and day use will continue and facilities and interpretation will be upgraded. In the event that Aboriginal site protection and continued camping and day use cannot be reconciled, provision of access to the Federal Falls walking track will be maintained and car parking will be provided.

The Tea House Camping Area offers a more open setting on the edge of the SCA. The area is used occasionally for camping by itinerant fruit pickers during harvest times but little at other times. The need for camping at this area will be reviewed during the life of this plan and alternative uses considered. Suggested alternative uses include redeveloping the area as a gateway to the SCA, including car parking and interpretive display and removing infrastructure, establishment of an Aboriginal Heritage Centre or closure and revegetation.

Policies

- Camping will be permitted at the Federal Falls and Tea House camping areas subject to an assessment of the archaeological significance, agreement with local Aboriginal community groups and a review of the need for camping at the Tea House Camping Area.
- Pedestrian access to the Federal Falls and Hopetoun Falls walking tracks will be retained.

- Garbage bins will not be provided at camping areas and visitors will be requested to remove their rubbish when they leave the SCA.
- Wood burning fireplaces will be provided for the use of campers.

Actions

- Aboriginal site protection works will be undertaken at Federal Falls Camping Area and will include the provision of a new car park.
- Federal Falls Camping Area – Discussions will be held with local Aboriginal community groups about the continued use of the area for camping and day use. Provided that Aboriginal site protection requirements and continued camping and day use can be reconciled, camping and day use will be retained and facilities will be upgraded and may include, toilets, interpretive facilities, a cooking shelter with gas bbqs and campfire rings. Existing wood burning fireplaces and the tap from the defunct water system will be removed.
- Tea House Camping Area – the need for camping will be reviewed and alternative uses of the area investigated.
- Consideration will be given to changing the name of the Tea House Camping/Picnic Area.

Summit Area

The Summit of Mount Canobolas offers commanding views of the surrounding region and is the major visitor destination in the SCA. Facilities at the summit include: car parking, access to the walking track network, a viewing area, a picnic table and an interpretive display. The present layout of the summit is unattractive and uninviting to visitors and provides inadequate visitor facilities. Subject to resource availability, the summit area will be redeveloped in a low key manner to provide an improved visitor experience and safety. This will include improved traffic flow and parking arrangements, toilet facilities, lookout platforms and interpretive displays. All facilities will be wheelchair accessible. Because of the importance of Mount Canobolas to the wider community, a public consultation program will be undertaken prior to finalising new layout plans and construction of facilities.

Policies

- The summit area will be redeveloped to improve visitor experience. Redevelopment will be low key concentrating on visitor safety and viewing opportunities.
- Redevelopment will be undertaken in consultation with the wider community.

Actions

- Redevelopment options for the summit area will be prepared.
- A public consultation program will be undertaken prior to finalisation of the redevelopment plans.
- Visitor facilities on the summit will be redeveloped.

Walking tracks

The SCA has approximately 20 km of walking tracks in seven trails which were in place when the SCA was gazetted in December 1997. These trails range in length and difficulty providing access to a wide area of the SCA and some of its major natural attractions. Car park areas are provided at the start of the Spring Glade and Towac Walking tracks. The walking tracks and car parks are in various states of repair and require considerable maintenance, upgrading and in some cases, minor re routing works. It is proposed to retain all existing walking tracks and upgrade them to an acceptable standard. Use of tracks will be limited to walkers only to reduce potential conflicts between park users. Horses, motorbikes and bicycles will not be permitted on walking tracks.

While the Service does not propose to construct any new walking tracks during the life of this plan, members of the public have proposed two new tracks. The first is along the "old bridle track" which may link the Tea House Camping Area with the summit. The route of this track is yet to be investigated by Service staff. At present, walkers wishing to walk from the SCA entrance to the summit must walk along the Canobolas Way, which presents a danger from passing traffic. The second is a proposed track from Lake Canobolas to the Summit of Mount Canobolas. The route of this walk has attracted a great deal of public controversy. Should community attitudes change, consideration will be given to where this track should enter the SCA to link up with the existing trail network.

Policies

- Existing walking tracks and car parks will be retained and upgraded to Service standards as resources permit. This may include the provision of lookout platforms in appropriate locations.
- No new walking tracks will be developed, however minor rerouting of some existing tracks may take place for safety and environmental protection reasons.
- Potential routes for new walking tracks may be investigated.

Actions

- Maintenance and upgrading of walking tracks and car parks will be undertaken on a priority basis.
- Part of the Nature Track will be re routed away from the rock outcrop near The Walls Picnic Area. A lookout platform may be provided below The Walls Picnic Area.
- Close liaison with the community will be maintained over the proposed Lake Canobolas to Mount Canobolas walking track.

Horse riding

Horse riding is an activity which has been undertaken for many years in the SCA. It has tended to be low key and infrequent, consisting of individuals, small groups and the occasional organised club event. The horse riding has tended to be restricted to the public access system and the Gum Ridge fire trail in the south west of the SCA. Other trails have also been used occasionally such as Pine Ridge trail. Pine Ridge trail passes through adjoining private property and its continued use would require consent by these landholders. Most of the organised longer rides are conducted

through the surrounding state forests and have used the Gum Ridge fire trail as a short cut to gain access to the base of Federal Falls via the state forest road network. There is no evidence of damage being caused by this low frequency of activity. Horse riding will continue to be permitted in the SCA subject to a number of restrictions which reflect previous use patterns. These restrictions will affect the number and size of groups, designated routes and frequency of organised group rides.

Policies

- Limited non commercial horse riding will be permitted in restricted areas of the SCA. These areas will be limited to the public access system, Gum Ridge and possibly the Pine Ridge fire trails.
- Riders in groups of five or less will be deemed as casual riders and will not need approval prior to the ride.
- Groups containing more than 5 riders will need approval from the Service prior to the ride. A maximum limit of 16 riders will be permitted on any ride.
- Clubs undertaking organised rides will require appropriate public risk insurance.
- Club events using other management tracks may be arranged with the Service on a limited basis of 1-2 events per annum. These events may cater for groups larger than 16 horses. The Service reserves the right to refuse these rides.
- Riders may not use camping or picnic areas, car parks, walking tracks, or ride off tracks.
- Overnight camping of horses in the SCA will not be permitted.
- Commercial horse riding operations will not be permitted.
- The Service will monitor the impact of horse riding activities and review the level of horse riding activity if damage to the SCA becomes apparent.

Actions

- Liaise with horse riding organisations regarding horse riding within the SCA.
- Liaise with adjoining landholders about possible horse riding on the Pine Ridge fire trail.
- Management trails will be signposted designating which roads and trail are available for horse riding and which trails are excluded from horse riding.
- Cavaletti gates will be installed where required.
- Monitor impact levels of horse riding activities.

Commercial recreational activities

At present there are no licensed or known commercial recreation activities in the SCA. Demand to conduct commercial operations has been extremely low, however some potential may exist in the future.

Policies

- Commercial operations will not be licensed where the potential exists to damage the natural values of the SCA or interfere with the enjoyment of the SCA by other park visitors. Licences will be altered or revoked if unacceptable environmental impacts are found to occur.
- Activities such as bus tours, bushwalking and mountain biking may be considered for commercial licensing. As the mountain is a focal point for Orange and surrounding districts, activities linked to local festivals may be permitted. Any licensing of commercial activities will be done in accordance with NPWS Policy and Procedures.
- Commercial horse and similar (eg camel) riding will not be permitted within the SCA.

4.2.3 Research

Little research has previously been undertaken in the SCA apart from vegetation community distribution, which was the subject of systematic survey in 1999\2000. Much of the known information has been derived from the experience of previous trust members and ad hoc or limited surveys.

The purpose of scientific study in the state conservation area is to improve understanding of its natural and cultural heritage and the processes which affect them. Research also establishes the requirements for management of particular species and cultural resources.

The Service has only limited staff and financial resources for research and efforts must be directed towards the areas of greatest need. Research by other organisations and students may also provide valuable information for management. A prospectus will be prepared to encourage involvement of other organisations in priority research areas.

Policies

- Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area will be available for appropriate research under licence.
- Service conducted research will aim to provide information on the natural and cultural heritage and on human use in order to facilitate management of the SCA. Topics for research include:
 - Flora and fauna;
 - Aboriginal site/significance;
 - Historical use;
 - Geological research; and
 - Visitor use.
- Researchers from other organisations will be encouraged to design programs which provides information of direct use for management purposes.
- Liaison will be maintained with researchers to obtain as much mutual information and assistance as possible. The results of research will be required to be provided to the managers of the SCA.
- Research structures and markers must be placed in locations which will minimise their visual impact and be removed upon completion of the research.

Actions

- A prospectus will be prepared as a guide to preferred research projects in the state conservation area. Preferred topics will be those of direct relevance to management and will include:
 - Fauna survey linked to vegetation communities and significant species.
 - Flora.
 - Aboriginal site/significance.
 - Historical use.
 - Geological research.
 - Visitor use.

4.2.4 Management Operations

Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area is managed by staff from Central West Region.

Two public roads enter the SCA. Canobolas Way from Towac in the east extends to the summit. Old Canobolas Road enters the SCA from Nashdale to the north of the SCA and joins Canobolas Way approximately half way to the summit. Both of these roads are maintained by Cabonne Council and are not part of the SCA. Cabonne Council has a policy of gradually sealing the entire length of Canobolas Way. Mitchell's Way is a gravel road which enters the SCA from Glenwood State Forest to north west. Maintenance for this road is shared between the Service and State Forests.

Management track system

The management track system was constructed a number of years ago and was inherited when the SCA was gazetted. These trails provide a high degree of access to the SCA for management purposes. All trails will be retained. Most trails will be maintained to a standard suitable for use during fire fighting operations and will be identified in the Fire Management Plan. These trails are shown on the map. Some trails required for fire control are presently below standard. These boundary trails will be upgraded and access arrangement with adjoining land holders and bushfire brigades will be arranged.

Some trails, which are of little strategic value for firefighting because their location, will be maintained to a lower standard for other management purposes such as weed and feral animal control. These trails are not shown on the map. All trails will be managed to minimise erosion and maximise stability. The management track system is not available for motorised use by the general public. Access will be permitted for emergency vehicles for fire fighting purposes, Service staff and contractors for essential management purposes and researchers undertaking scientific studies. Management tracks will be available for bushwalking and mountain bike riding. Some designated management tracks will be available for horse riding.

Vehicle access to "The Crater" and one neighbour on the northern boundary is via management tracks that will not generally be open to the public. The Service will enter into access licences with the affected landholders.

Policies

- All trails will be maintained to a standard suitable for their required use.
- Access and upgrading of boundary trails will be arranged with adjoining property owners and local bushfire brigades.

Actions

- Erect gates or signs on management tracks.
- Management tracks will be upgraded where required.
- Access licences will be entered into with the two neighbours who require access via the management track system.

Telecommunication infrastructure

Because of its strategic location and height, a substantial amount of telecommunication infrastructure is located on the summit of Mount Canobolas. These towers contain a wide range of services including television, radio, telephone, mobile phone, emergency services, private radio networks and air navigation beacons. The towers on the northern side are within the SCA, while the towers on the southern side are on federal government land and are not part of the SCA. The National Parks & Wildlife Act does not allow the construction of new towers within Service estate.

Five organisations manage the telecommunications infrastructure (including power and telephone) within the SCA. Lease negotiations have commenced with some of the managers and leases will be entered into with all managers of the infrastructure for their occupancy and maintenance of the grounds on the summit.

A powerline to the summit of Mount Canobolas enters the SCA from the north generally along Old Canobolas Rd. This powerline supplies power to the telecommunications infrastructure on the summit of Mount Canobolas. Upslope of the Canobolas Way, a natural surface 4wd track runs adjacent to the powerline to the summit. This track will be retained for powerline maintenance purposes only. An easement and maintenance agreement for this power line through the SCA will be established with electricity supply authority. Options for partial or complete burial of the powerline will be investigated for fire protection purposes. Burial may be undertaken where it is deemed appropriate, necessary and environmentally acceptable.

Policies

- Occupancy for all telecommunications infrastructure existing at the time of park gazettal will be formalised under lease or easement.
- No new towers will be permitted in the SCA, however other works within the existing buildings and compound may be permitted subject to environmental impact assessment.

Actions

- Leases will be negotiated with the managers of telecommunications infrastructure on the summit of Mount Canobolas.

- New works, facilities or operations proposed by any organisation or individual will not be permitted unless they are consistent with the purposes of reservation of the SCA, this plan of management and are subject to an environmental impact assessment.
- An easement for the power line to the summit will be negotiated with the electricity authority.
- An easement for the telephone cables to the summit will be negotiated with the telecommunications provider.
- Investigate and support burial of the powerline where appropriate.

5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This plan of management is part of the system of management developed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The system includes the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the Service's Corporate Plan, associated strategies and management policies. It also includes Directorate and Regional operational planning.

The implementation of this plan of management will be undertaken within the annual programs of the Service's Central West Region. Priorities will be determined during the development of these programs and will be subject to regional priorities, the availability of funding and staff and to any specific requirements of the Director-General or the Minister.

Regional programs are subject to on-going review within which works and any other activities carried out in Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area will be evaluated in relation to objectives laid down in this plan.

The environmental impact of all development proposals will be assessed in accordance with established environmental assessment procedures.

In accordance with Section 81 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* this plan shall be carried out and given effect to and no operations shall be undertaken in relation to Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area unless those operations are in accordance with the plan of management. If after adequate investigation operations not included in the plan are found to be justified, the plan may be amended in accordance with Section 75A of the Act.

As a guide to the implementation of this plan, relative priorities for identified activities are summarised on the following pages. The following criteria have been used to allocate priorities:

High Priority: programs that need to be done in the immediate to near future on the basis that to not undertake these works will result in unacceptable degradation of the resource and/or greatly increased costs associated with rehabilitation at a later date. Also included as high priority are programs which are given a high priority for legal or public safety reasons.

Medium Priority: programs which are important but can be deferred without unacceptable loss of natural and/or cultural heritage values.

Low Priority: programs which will be undertaken only after high and moderate priority programs have been completed or which can be undertaken by other means such as volunteers, grant, concession operation, sponsorship or similar.

Priorities for Implementation

Activities	Priority	Plan Reference
Undertake weed control.	High	4.1.2
Cooperation of other authorities and park neighbours will be sought in implementing weed control programs.	High	4.1.2
Undertake control programs for pigs, foxes, goats and rabbits.	High	4.1.3
Liaise with Orange Local Aboriginal Land Council And other relevant Aboriginal community organisations in relation to management and interpretation of Aboriginal sites within the SCA.	High	4.1.4
Undertake an Aboriginal Sites survey.	High	4.1.4
Undertake Aboriginal site protection works at Federal Falls Camping Area and The Walls Picnic Area and other areas as identified.	High	4.1.4
Develop an Interpretation/education Plan for the SCA.	High	4.2.1
Develop a Discovery Ranger Program for the SCA.	High	4.2.1
Liaise with local tourism organisations in relation To appropriate promotion of the SCA within its regional setting.	High	4.2.1
Prepare a Fire Management Plan for the SCA.	High	4.1.5
Actions within the finalised Fire Management Plan for Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area will be implemented.	High	4.1.5
The Walls Picnic Area will be retained and facilities upgraded.	High	4.2.2
The Pines Picnic Area will be closed and rehabilitated.	High	4.2.2
Spring Glade Picnic Area will be closed and rehabilitated. Consideration will be given to relocating facilities adjacent to the nearby Spring Glade Walking track head if future usage demands warrant it.	High	4.2.2
Junction Picnic Area will be closed and the present picnic shelter and bbq will be removed. The toilets will be retained and will be upgraded if resources permit.	High	4.2.2

Activities	Priority	Plan Reference
Boree Picnic Area will be closed.	High	4.2.2
Federal Falls Camping Area – Subject to Aboriginal site protection considerations, camping and day use will be retained and facilities will be upgraded and may include, toilets, interpretive facilities, cooking shelter with gas bbqs and campfire rings. Existing wood burning fireplaces and the tap from the defunct water system will be removed.	High	4.2.2
Redevelopment options for the summit area will be prepared.	High	4.2.2
A public consultation program and Review of Environmental Factors will be undertaken prior to finalisation of the redevelopment plans.	High	4.2.2
Maintenance and upgrading of walking tracks and car parks will be undertaken on a priority basis.	High	4.2.2
Part of the Nature Track will be re routed away from the rock outcrop near The Walls Picnic Area. A lookout platform may be provided below The Walls Picnic Area.	High	4.2.2
Liaise with horse riding organisations regarding horse riding within the SCA.	High	4.2.2
Management trails will be signposted designating which roads and trail are available for horse riding and which trails are excluded from horse riding.	High	4.2.2
Erect gates or signs on management tracks.	High	4.2.4
Management tracks will be upgraded where required.	High	4.2.4
Leases will be negotiated with the managers of telecommunications infrastructure on the summit of Mount Canobolas.	High	4.2.4
New works, facilities or operations proposed by any organisation or individual will not be permitted unless they are consistent with the purposes of reservation of the SCA, this plan of management and are subject to an environmental impact assessment.	High	4.2.4
Undertake a systematic fauna survey.	Medium	4.1.3
Undertake research into past European use of the SCA.	Medium	4.1.4
Install interpretive displays at the Summit, Orange View Picnic Area and The Walls Picnic Area.	Medium	4.2.1

Activities	Priority	Plan Reference
Investigate incorporating public access roads within tourist drives.	Medium	4.2.1
Progressively replace signage at facilities.	Medium	4.2.1
Orange View Picnic Area will be retained and facilities upgraded.	Medium	4.2.2
Towac Picnic Area will be retained and facilities upgraded.	Medium	4.2.2
Yuranighs Picnic Area will be closed and rehabilitated.	Medium	4.2.2
Wood burning fireplaces will be removed from all picnic areas.	Medium	4.2.2
Monitor impact of wood collection	Medium	4.2.2
Visitor facilities on the summit will be redeveloped.	Medium	4.2.2
Monitor impact levels of horse riding activities.	Medium	4.2.2
Install caveletti gates where required	Medium	4.2.2
Enter into access licences with neighbours who require access via the management track system	Medium	4.2.4
An easement for the power line to the summit will be negotiated with the electricity authority.	Medium	4.2.4
An easement for the telephone cables to the summit will be negotiated with the telecommunications provider.	Medium	4.2.4
Water taps from the defunct water system will be removed.	Low	4.2.2
Tea House Camping Area – requirement for camping may be reviewed and alternative uses of the area investigated.	Low	4.2.2
Consideration will be given to changing the name of the Tea House Camping Area if camping is retained.	Low	4.2.2
Close liaison with the community will be maintained over the proposed Lake Canobolas to Mount Canobolas walking track. No action on this track will be undertaken without neighbour and community support.	Low	4.2.2
Prepare research prospectus of preferred research topics in the state conservation area. Preferred topics will be those of direct relevance to management.	Low	4.2.3
Investigate and support burial of the powerline	Low	4.2.4

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