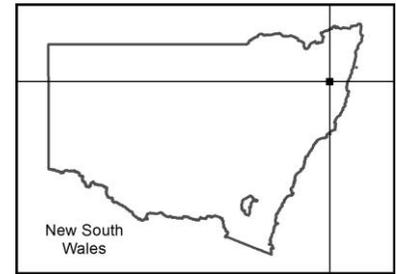


Statement of Management Intent



Serpentine Nature Reserve

1. Introduction

This statement outlines the main values, issues, management directions and priorities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for managing Serpentine Nature Reserve. This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the reserve until a plan of management has been prepared in accordance with the [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 \(NPW Act\)](#). The NPWS [Managing Parks Prior to Plan of Management Policy](#) states that parks and reserves without a plan of management are to be managed in a manner consistent with the intent of the NPW Act and the ['precautionary principle' \(see Principle 15\)](#).

2. Management principles

Nature reserves are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding, unique or representative ecosystems, species, communities or natural phenomena. Under the NPW Act ([section 30J](#)), nature reserves are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, and protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- promote public appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the reserve's natural and cultural values
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The primary purpose of nature reserves is to conserve nature. Nature reserves differ from national parks in that they do not have the provision of visitor use as a management purpose or principle.

Due to the importance of the Aboriginal cultural heritage of this reserve (see below), and with the support of the Aboriginal groups with an interest in the reserve, NPWS is seeking the re-gazettement of Serpentine Nature Reserve as an Aboriginal area, and is currently managing the reserve as an Aboriginal area. This statement of management intent will continue to apply to the reserve if it becomes an Aboriginal area.

Aboriginal areas are reserved under the NPWS Act to identify, protect and conserve areas of natural or cultural significance to Aboriginal people. Under the NPW Act (section 30K), Aboriginal areas are managed to:

- conserve natural values, buildings, places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value to Aboriginal people in accordance with the cultural values of the Aboriginal people to whose heritage the buildings, places, objects, features or landscapes belong
- conserve natural or other cultural values

- allow the use of the Aboriginal area by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes
- promote public understanding and appreciation of the Aboriginal area's natural and cultural values and significance where appropriate
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring, in accordance with the cultural values of the Aboriginal people
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the Aboriginal area's natural and cultural values and the cultural values of the Aboriginal people
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the Aboriginal area's natural and cultural values and the cultural values of the Aboriginal people.

3. Context

Reservation details: Serpentine Nature Reserve was reserved on 26 October 1979.

Size: 723 hectares.



Serpentine Nature Reserve is located approximately 45 kilometres south-west of Dorrigo on the Waterfall Way. It falls within the New England Tablelands Bioregion and within the administrative

areas of Armidale Dumaresq Council, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and Armidale Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The reserve is located between Cathedral Rock National Park, across the Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) to the north, private property to the west and leasehold sections of Styx River State Forest to the south, with Serpentine Creek forming the eastern boundary bordering private property. The reserve provides a habitat corridor linking Cathedral Rock National Park with Cunnawarra and New England national parks to the south-east. Serpentine Nature Reserve straddles the catchment divide between the Oaky River and Styx River catchments and is comprised of a mosaic of granite outcrops, forests, woodlands, heaths and swamps. The park encompasses the remains of a significant and extensive Aboriginal stone arrangement that is highly significant to numerous Aboriginal communities. Prior to gazettal, Serpentine Nature Reserve was Crown tenure used for small-scale grazing and timber production.

4. Values

- The Serpentine Stone Arrangement is a major feature of the reserve. The Serpentine Stone Arrangement complex forms part of a continued cultural tradition of the Anaiwan, Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti–Thunghutti peoples which is expressed through elaborate and complex stone arrangements. The Serpentine Stone Arrangement is widely considered to be the best preserved example in New South Wales.
- The Serpentine Stone Arrangement complex forms part of a broader network of Aboriginal ceremonial sites including Cathedral Rock, Point Lookout and Petroi which are associated with the practice of particularly ‘high-level’ Aboriginal Lore.
- Anaiwan, Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti–Thunghutti people maintain strict access restrictions and rules of behaviour at sites of spiritual significance. At Serpentine, these are based on gender, custodianship and purpose. Such rules enforce the cultural responsibilities of Aboriginal custodians and are expressed within current reserve management arrangements.
- The reserve contains a diverse range of associated Aboriginal heritage sites including a stone artefact scatter; coolamon, shield and ceremonial trees; grinding stones and a bora ring. These provide continued opportunities for the practice of cultural traditions and site management by Aboriginal custodians.
- Serpentine Nature Reserve protects habitat for the threatened glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*), turquoise parrot (*Neophema pulchella*), powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*), koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and New England tree frog (*Litoria subglandulosa*). Two rare plants have also been recorded in the reserve: *Persoonia procumbens* and New England swamp orchid (*Diuris* sp. aff. *alba*). Small stands of Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus moorei*) also occur within the reserve.
- There are heritage-listed wooden tank traps located within Serpentine Nature Reserve. These tank traps were constructed at strategic points along possible routes between the coast and the tablelands and provide evidence of past defence programs carried out during World War II.

5. Issues

- The Aboriginal communities associated with Serpentine Nature Reserve have a strong interest in the management of the reserve, particularly the preservation of the stone arrangements and the maintenance of associated customs. Discussions regarding joint management of the reserve are in progress with relevant Aboriginal communities.
- The Serpentine Stone Arrangements are highly vulnerable to disturbance by people, stray stock and mining exploration on neighbouring properties.

- There are European red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) in the reserve.
- Wild dogs including dingos (*Canis lupus* spp.) occur in the reserve. Under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*, NPWS has a statutory obligation to control wild dogs on its estate. Certain areas of public land that provide high quality dingo habitat, including Serpentine Nature Reserve, have been listed as 'dingo management areas' under the *Local Land Services Act*.
- A number of weeds occur in the reserve, including blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and exotic grasses.
- Two powerlines traverse the park, and infrastructure associated with a water diversion is located on an easement within the park (including a management trail).

6. Key management directions

- Work with the Anaiwan, Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti–Thunghutti Aboriginal communities will continue, to:
 - protect the Serpentine Stone Arrangements
 - pursue Aboriginal joint management arrangements for the park
 - facilitate continued use of the reserve for cultural purposes by local Aboriginal people and groups
 - incorporate Aboriginal customs and protocols associated with the Serpentine Stone Arrangements into the management of the reserve.
- Fire is managed in accordance with the Cathedral Rock National Park and Serpentine Nature Reserve [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- The fire management strategy will be amended to include an exclusion zone for firefighting activities, including helicopter water-bucketing and heavy machinery, around the stone arrangements.
- Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): North Coast Region.
- Wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.) within Serpentine Nature Reserve are managed as part of a coordinated program carried out on neighbouring properties and NPWS parks in the region with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services. NPWS will continue to participate in the planning and implementation of cross-tenure wild dog control programs as required.
- In general, visitors will not be permitted in the park. Aboriginal people and groups will be permitted to access the reserve through appropriate cultural protocols and cultural purposes.
- Access for use and maintenance of the powerlines will continue under the existing agreement with TransGrid.
- Authorisation for the easement associated with the water diversion scheme will continue.
- Management trails, gates and other park management facilities will be maintained.
- All management activities will be preceded by the preparation of an environmental assessment or heritage assessment where this is a requirement of NPWS policy or legislation.
- Environmental repair and threat management programs, such as erosion mitigation measures, pest management, and activities arising from threatened species requirements may be implemented in accordance with NPWS policies and procedures.

- Non-intrusive works may be undertaken where necessary to protect cultural heritage items from further deterioration, to ensure the safety of visitors, to protect wildlife or to prevent damage to park assets.
- A plan of management will be prepared to set out the ongoing management objectives for the reserve. The plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act which will be available for public comment. NPWS will also encourage the community to contribute to the ongoing conservation of the reserve by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this reserve or this statement, contact the NPWS Dorrigo Rainforest Centre on (02) 6657 2309 or Dome Road, Dorrigo NSW 2453.

Disclaimer: This is a statement of intent to guide the management of the reserve prior to the development of a plan of management. Any statements made in this publication are made in good faith and do not render the Office of Environment and Heritage liable for any loss or damage. Provisions in the final plan of management may vary from those identified in this document as a result of new information and community consultation. The maps in this statement are intended to show the reserve's location and basic features only, and are not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within parks.

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