



Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Blackwood National Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in May 1998 and, in accordance with s125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, will be reviewed not later than 10 years after its approval. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Environmental Protection Agency's Northern Regional Centre in Townsville on (07) 4722 5211 during business hours.

This management plan was prepared by Environmental Protection Agency staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

south and development for cotton and improved pastures is increasing to the north. The surrounding land use is mostly grazing. Other parks in the region are not as diverse as Blackwood, although they have some common, complementary values.

The park is 15km north of the Belyando Crossing, about two hours south of Charters Towers on the Gregory Development Road. Increasing visitation has resulted since the last section of this road was sealed. The dry, erosion-prone environment will not sustain large scale development and use.

The park was formerly part of Mt Hope Station and has a Stock Grazing Permit issued for cattle grazing until 2001 which commits access via park management roads beyond 2001.

Telstra has a telecommunication repeater station site as an inholding within the national park. This area is small and may be influenced by fire management activities.

**2.2 Values of Blackwood National Park**

**Geology and landform**

The park contains rugged hills and gorges comprised of predominantly pebbly quartz sandstone with mudstones dating from the Carboniferous period. These were deposited by a large river system flowing north from the Springure area. Tertiary Argillaceous sandstones which are often laterised, and Quaternary silts, sands and gravels, including black earths have recently been deposited widely throughout the area. Exposed laterite forms distinct hard pan areas that grow limited vegetation. Much of the landscape is sensitive to erosion once disturbed. The majority of the park has not been impacted by other land uses and exhibits mainly natural erosion processes. The park protects small areas of black earth which are not represented in association with other landscapes elsewhere in the Brigalow Belt North biogeographic region.

**Plants and animals**

Eleven vegetation communities containing 137 plant species have been identified on Blackwood National Park. Mapping is incomplete and additional communities may be identified. The existing communities represent a cross section of the western parts of the Brigalow Belt North biogeographic region. The park has a high habitat diversity and a number of transitional areas between vegetation communities. These provide additional habitats for a wide variety of animals. Vegetation is dominated by acacia and eucalypt communities with diverse native grassland understoreys and represents examples of the only undisturbed and uncleared lancewood *Acacia shirleyi*, blackwood *Acacia argyrodendron*, bendee *Acacia catenulata*, Reid River box *Eucalyptus brownii* and dry vine thickets in the area. The blackwood, dry vine thickets and Reid River box are endangered regional ecosystems.

1. Management directions and purposes

1.1 Management directions

Blackwood National Park conserves 1648ha of rugged hills and gorges surrounded by undulating sandy clays and black soils containing a selection of eucalypt, acacia, and dry vine thicket vegetation communities. The management priority will be the maintenance of the habitat types through a program of fire management which will also assist in the control of weeds. Strategic weed control programs will be planned with the Belyando Crossing Landcare Group. Visitor management will focus on day use and low levels of camping. No facilities are provided, but simple camping facilities for self-reliant, nature-based recreational activities are planned. An information brochure will be available at the camping area. Conventional drive vehicles can reach the existing camping area with walking access beyond there. The park has no permanent Ranger presence and is patrolled from Charters Towers.

A Stock Grazing Permit, which expires in 2001, covers the park. Grazing activities may result in some limits on visitor access during the term of the permit.

1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- rare and threatened regional ecosystems, plant and animal species are conserved;
- diversity and interaction of acacia and eucalypt communities are maintained;
- dry vine thicket communities are protected, enabling migrating animals to transport seeds between adjoining thickets;
- natural geological processes are not altered by inappropriate visitor or management activities;
- camping opportunities cater for small visitor numbers in bush setting;
- research into the park's natural values is encouraged and undertaken;
- information about the park's natural values is available to the public; and
- grazing is able to continue under an existing Stock Grazing Permit until 2001.

2. Basis for management

2.1 Bioregional context

The park was dedicated in 1991 to conserve a diverse range of plant and animal communities in the Brigalow Belt North biogeographic region. This region is extensively cleared to the

3 Management strategies

Current situation	Desired outcomes	Proposed policies, guidelines and actions
<p><b>Native plants</b></p> <p>Complex vegetation patterns have developed in response to geology, soil and fire influences. Of the three endangered regional ecosystems in the park, dry vine thickets are smallest in area and have little ability to buffer a serious fire.</p> <p>Vegetation monitoring plots have been established, but not in all community types. A vegetation map exists but requires additional work. A well developed park herbarium exists.</p>	<p>The composition and extent of the vegetation types is maintained subject to natural change.</p> <p>Threatened regional ecosystems and species are protected.</p>	<p>Vegetation mapping will be finalised. Vegetation monitoring will continue. Additional plots will be established for communities without monitoring plots and where visitor or management activities may result in significant impact. Continued development of the park herbarium will assist in plant identification and monitoring.</p> <p>Dry vine thickets will be protected from fire. New information about other threatened plants will be incorporated into management strategies.</p>
<p><b>Native animals</b></p> <p>Limited wildlife survey work has been undertaken. Some threatened species are identified, but their survival relies on the protection of their habitat and corridors on areas outside the park. This is particularly important in relation to migratory birds using dry vine thickets.</p>	<p>Animal populations are maintained and threatened species are protected.</p> <p>Habitat corridors continue to exist.</p>	<p>Surveys will continue to gather data on the park's animals.</p> <p>Protection of threatened animals will focus on habitat management. New information about threatened animals will be incorporated into management strategies.</p> <p>Liaison with neighbours, Landcare groups and government agencies will continue to assist in the protection of critical habitat corridors along water courses and other key locations.</p>
<p><b>Introduced plants and animals</b></p> <p>The park does not have any major weed or feral animal infestations. Weeds recorded in the park include prickly pear, buffel grass and parthenium. Control programs have included mechanical and chemical treatments and the use of fire. Some evidence of feral pigs exists. The park is located in a catchment that contains rubber vine, harrisia cactus and mother-of-millions.</p> <p>DoE staff and the Belyando Crossing Landcare Group are working to identify weeds in the catchment and approach control on a strategic and co-ordinated basis.</p>	<p>The effects of weeds and feral animals are not significant on the natural resources of the park.</p> <p>Weeds adjoining the park do not become established in the park.</p>	<p>Prepare an action plan to detail weed and feral animal threats, map distributions and develop strategic control and monitoring programs.</p> <p>Continue membership of the Belyando Crossing Landcare Group and provide input into strategic weed mapping and control.</p>
<p><b>Fire management</b></p> <p>Fire intensity and frequency are important in maintaining existing vegetation communities and animal habitat. Various habitats respond differently to fire.</p> <p>Fire history of the park is not well documented however a mosaic pattern of fires is evident from old fire scars.</p> <p>A fire action plan has been developed for the park and details a range of strategies to protect park values, life and property, including liaison with neighbours. A Stock Grazing Permit is valid until 2001 and management burns must consider grazing values.</p>	<p>Fire is being used as a management tool to maintain ecological processes and protect threatened communities where appropriate.</p> <p>The impact of fires on plant communities is monitored.</p>	<p>The park's fire action plan will be reviewed annually to plan the annual burn program.</p> <p>Back-burning around dry vine thickets will be undertaken to ensure that these are not damaged by prescribed burning programs.</p> <p>Equipment used for controlling wildfires and prescribed burns will be available for immediate response.</p>
<p><b>Landscape, soil and catchment protection</b></p> <p>The steep, rubbly nature of hills in the park results in relatively high runoff during wet weather. This impacts on tracks and fence lines, areas where stock have grazed heavily or soil compaction exists. An old gravel pit near the highway is affected but is revegetating well.</p>	<p>The effects of non-natural erosion are not significant.</p> <p>Badly eroded areas are revegetated.</p>	<p>Vehicle access will be limited to essential management requirements only for all areas beyond the camping area.</p> <p>Repairs to tracks and fence lines will include installation of drainage, repair of damaged areas, closing sections that duplicate access and revegetating some track sides.</p> <p>Hard pan areas will be scarified to encourage regrowth. Selected areas of the old quarry and the hard pan adjoining exposed laterite near Tank Hole will receive priority attention.</p>
<p><b>Cultural heritage</b></p> <p>Surveys of the park have not identified any Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage sites. Surveys have not been comprehensive and sites may yet be identified.</p> <p>The Kutjala people are believed to have traditional interests in the district, including the park. An earlier native title claim was withdrawn and no claims currently exist. The Midwest Reference Group of the Central Queensland Land Council in Charters Towers is the representative body co-ordinating native title claims in the area. Park management requirements are not compromising potential native title rights.</p>	<p>Aboriginal people with traditional affiliations to the area are involved in the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage matters.</p> <p>Any native title rights are not compromised by management actions.</p>	<p>Sites of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal significance will be identified and management will ensure protection measures are implemented.</p> <p>Kutjala people will be encouraged to assist in identifying, documenting and protecting Aboriginal sites on the national park and to provide advice on other traditional cultural interests.</p> <p>Work programs will ensure native title rights are not compromised.</p>
<p><b>Recreation and tourism</b></p> <p>Demand for recreation and tourism opportunities has been limited, but are increasing due to the sealing of the Gregory Development Road. An interim visitor information sheet for the park has been prepared.</p> <p>Camping without a permit and illegal vehicle access along management roads is occurring.</p> <p>Commercially operated facilities are available at nearby Belyando Crossing. The neighbouring Plain Creek Station offers farm stays.</p> <p>No visitor facilities are provided and development has been limited due to the existing stock grazing arrangements and low visitor numbers.</p>	<p>Opportunities for nature-based recreational day use and camping with minimal facilities or in self-reliant settings are available.</p> <p>The use of private facilities at Belyando Crossing and nearby properties offering farm stays is encouraged.</p>	<p>Liaison with the Department of Main Roads, Dalrymple Shire Council and proprietors of Bundaburroo Station will result in improved vehicle access and signs on the Gregory Development Road.</p> <p>An assessment of environmental impacts caused by any proposed developments in the park will be undertaken.</p> <p>Consider establishing a low-key camping area in a rehabilitated section of the old gravel quarry. Camping areas will be defined with low profile fencing to protect vegetation. Other facilities will include a pit toilet, signs, self-registration station, access for walking in the park and parking for day visitors adjoining the camping area. Fires will be prohibited. Removal of rubbish will be the responsibility of the visitor.</p> <p>Nature-based recreational experiences will be encouraged. Excess demand for camping will be redirected to nearby commercial establishments. Information about commercial accommodation will be incorporated into park visitor information brochures and signs.</p>
<p><b>Education and interpretation</b></p> <p>No education and interpretation programs exist for the park. An interim visitor information sheet has been developed.</p>	<p>Park visitors are provided with appropriate information to allow them to understand their obligations and enjoy their visit.</p>	<p>The interim visitor information sheet will be upgraded to DoE standards.</p> <p>A sign plan will be developed.</p>
<p><b>Resource use</b></p> <p>The park has a limited network of management tracks which are prone to erosion. Some tracks do not perform any useful function.</p> <p>Telstra has a telecommunications tower within, but excluded from, the park. Access is via a gazetted road from the Gregory Development Road.</p> <p>A boundary fence in good repair exists around the park and is maintained as part of the existing Stock Grazing Permit which expires in 2001.</p> <p>An old gravel quarry is located on the park. It is partially rehabilitated. Some gravel stockpiles remain and will be used to maintain park tracks.</p>	<p>Suitable vehicle access is available to the camping area.</p> <p>No new tracks are developed and unneeded tracks are rehabilitated.</p> <p>Telstra infrastructure within the park is protected.</p> <p>Cattle are no longer on the park after 2001 and a stock-proof fence is built.</p>	<p>Management tracks will be signed with Authorised Vehicles Only regulatory signs beyond the camping area. Tracks will be available for walking.</p> <p>Three small link tracks between the central firebreak and northern boundary fence will be rehabilitated. Existing tracks will be maintained. No new tracks will be developed.</p> <p>Telstra will be consulted on park management issues that may affect the operations of its telecommunications tower.</p> <p>The existing boundary fence will be upgraded. A fencing agreement will be developed with neighbours. The park will be de-stocked in 2001.</p> <p>The old gravel quarry will be rehabilitated. Gravel may be extracted from existing stockpiles for use within the park.</p>