

Finucane Island National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	7,670ha
Bioregion:	Gulf Plains
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Bourke Shire Council Carpentaria Shire Council
State electorate:	Mount Isa



Habitats of Finucane Island. Photo: NPRSR.

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>

Vision

Finucane Island National Park is managed to conserve the integrity of an example of the mangrove and coastal communities of the Gulf of Carpentaria and provide habitat for migrating waders.

Conservation purpose

Originally a public purposes reserve, Finucane Island became a national park in 2008 to conserve estuarine ecosystems and associated low lying grasslands and woodlands. These community types have a very limited representation within the Gulf bioregion.

Deep soft sediments deposited from the Leichhardt River in flood provide significant feeding grounds for migratory waders along the coastal side of the park. The hypersaline flats and mangrove communities provide roosting and feeding opportunities for wader species.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Finucane Island National Park is located on an expansive coastal plain 30 kilometres north-east of Burketown. Despite its name, it is part of the mainland situated between the Leichhardt and Albert rivers along the coast of the

Gulf of Carpentaria (Gulf). An anabranch links the two rivers creating an island.

The Leichhardt River catchment is one of the larger catchments feeding into the Gulf. The significant sediment load in the Leichhardt River during the wet season builds the advancing coastline of the park. This is typical of those processes found throughout the south-eastern Gulf.

The Albert River is an extensive estuarine system that provides a flood outlet for both the Leichhardt and Gregory rivers.

Old shorelines are evident through the park in the form of old ridges. These ridges provide diversity and slight changes in the relief in this extensive flat delta.

Due to limited local rainfall and low topographical relief, the park is dominated by saline flats.

There is no evidence of development within the park.

Regional ecosystems

Finucane Island National Park conserves mangrove communities, extensive saline flats and low coastal sand ridges supporting coastal she-oak *Casuarina equisetifolia* and broad-leafed paperbark *Melaleuca viridiflora* communities.

Most of the park is covered by saline flats with small areas of low woodland and grassland. Mangrove communities line the rivers and drainage channels. Seven regional ecosystems have been mapped for Finucane Island National Park. These regional ecosystems are listed as no concern at present under their biodiversity status.

In some areas, the forest communities have been invaded by rubbervine *Cryptostegia grandiflora* and Jerusalem thorn *Parkinsonia aculeata*.

Native plants and animals

The animals of the park have not been directly surveyed and remain largely unknown. However, the Gulf is one of the four most important feeding grounds for migratory waders in Australia. Being situated at the mouth of the Leichhardt and Albert rivers, the coastline of the park is likely to provide some of the most productive wader feeding habitats in Australia.

Finucane Island National Park is part of an Important Bird Area recognised by Birdlife Australia and Birdlife International.

It is likely that other significant fauna, like the star finch *Neochima ruficauda clarescens*, occur on the park, as they are present in similar habitat at Karumba, in the Gulf. The potential absence of predators like feral cats *Felis catus* may result in the park holding small but important populations of fauna. Further survey work and field collections are needed to develop an understanding of the species found on the park.

Aboriginal culture

The Gangalidda and Garawa peoples have a registered Native Title claim over the area of Finucane Island National Park to the west of the Leichardt River (Gangalidda and Garawa People #2 – QC2005/003). The park to the east of the Leichardt River is currently under claim by the Gkuthaarn and Kukattj People (QC2012/019). An Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) is currently under negotiation.

Traditional Owners are actively involved in managing the park through the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers project hosted by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, based out of Burketown. Currently no formalised management arrangements have been established with the Traditional Owners.

It is unknown whether any places of Aboriginal material culture or cultural significance exist on Finucane Island National Park.

Shared-history culture

No known relics of a shared cultural existence are known from Finucane Island National Park.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Due to access constraints, Finucane Island National Park offers few tourism or visitor opportunities. Access to the park is currently limited to vessels.

Education and science

Knowledge gained from research and monitoring programs is an integral part of adaptive park management. The collation of existing information and conduct of ongoing monitoring and survey work improves staff knowledge and guides future park management.

Baseline surveys should be actively encouraged within the park, particularly with the involvement of the Traditional Owners, giving consideration to the logistical challenges.

Partnerships

Where possible, flora and fauna surveys, and fire and pest management activities are coordinated with the Traditional Owners, through the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers in Burketown.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Rubbervine *Cryptostegia grandiflora*, Jerusalem thorn *Parkinsonia aculeata*, calotrope *Calotropis procera* and mimosa bush *Acacia farnesiana* are the pest plants of most concern. Rubbervine and calotrope are extensive across the park, while Jerusalem thorn and mimosa bush are currently only scattered.

This rubbervine population forms part of a high priority control zone to stop the spread of the species into the Northern Territory.

No pest animals have been noted on Finucane Island National Park.

Fire management

The ecosystems of Finucane Island National Park have evolved, and can be maintained, in the absence of regular fire.

Fire is being used primarily to contain and reduce rubbervine and Jerusalem thorn infestations within woodland and grassland environments.

Other management issues

Finucane Island National Park is managed remotely as part of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Savanna Management Unit. Closest staff are situated at Boodjamulla National Park and as such, QPWS management and presence will always be limited at this park.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>The health and diversity of plant and animal communities on the park is maintained.</p>	<p>A1. Implement fire regimes that achieve pest plant management outcomes while maintaining the health of the woodland and grassland communities involved.</p> <p>A2. Continue to prioritise pest plant management on rubbervine and Jerusalem thorn.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Traditional Owners are involved in park management.</p>	<p>A3. Establish and implement a formal joint management regime with Traditional Owners</p> <p>A4. Continue to involve Traditional Owners in all on-ground park management activities facilitated through the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.</p>