

Mount Blarney Conservation Park

Management Plan

2000



Prepared by: **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of Environment and Science**

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The Mount Blarney Conservation Park Management Plan 2000 has been extended in 2023, in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the plan's original management intent and direction.

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Summary

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

This plan was prepared in October 1999, in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s 120G of the Act. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment and Science at ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au.

This management plan was prepared by Department of Environment and Science staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

1. Management directions and purpose

1.1 Management directions

Mt Blarney Conservation Park lies approximately 2.5 kilometres (km) south-west of Sarina. The 72-hectare park will be managed to maintain the integrity of existing ecosystems represented within the park. By keeping the park free of structures and through careful fire management the park's scenic value as a forested backdrop to the township of Sarina will be maintained.

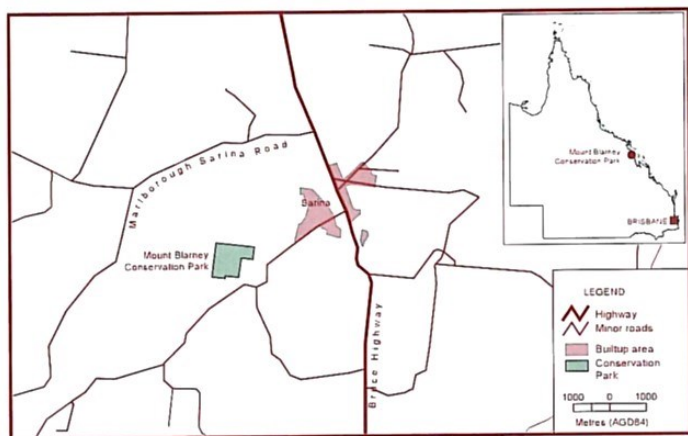
Limited park access allows for minimal recreational use. Only self-sufficient recreational activities which do not impact on the natural values of the park will be permitted.

Increasing the cultural and natural resource knowledge base of the park will be a priority.

1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- rare and threatened species are identified and conserved through specific management strategies
- fire management ensures that areas of grassy woodland/open forest are maintained by preventing rainforest from spreading beyond its present range
- invasive weed species such as lantana are controlled
- grazing impact on the park's edges is minimised
- the visual integrity of the area's landscape is maintained by not permitting developments that impact on its scenic values
- neighbours, local government, Aboriginal groups and other interested parties are made aware of park management issues and are provided with opportunities to contribute to management; and
- self-reliant, nature-based, low-impact recreation is permitted, but not encouraged.



2. Basis for management

Mt Blarney Conservation Park is gazetted under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and must be managed under s 20 of the Act to:

- conserve and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values;
- provide for the permanent conservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and
- ensure that any commercial use of the area's natural resources, including fishing and grazing, is ecologically sustainable.

2.1 Regional and management context

Mt Blarney Conservation Park lies in the Sarina--Proserpine Lowlands natural province of the Central Mackay Coast biogeographic region. Mt Blarney is its highest point. The park consists of remnant vegetation and provides a scenic background to neighbouring properties and to the Sarina township. It is largely rainforest and grassy woodland/open forest, and is surrounded by cleared grasslands.

Management of the park is undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Mackay District office. The park has no permanent ranger presence.

Gazetted road access to the park exists on two sides via Rainforest and Bella Roads. However, these roads have not been formed to the park boundary and access is by foot.

Most neighbouring properties comprise less steep terrain that has been cleared for grazing and rural residential purposes.

2.2 Values of Mt Blarney Conservation Park

2.2.1 Geology and landform

Mt Blarney Conservation Park covers most of two low ridges and an intervening valley formed by the Palaeozoic Carmila Beds. The ridges run in a general northerly direction. The dominant soil type is a lithosol, being shallow, stony, and dominated by the presence of underlying rock material. This soil type is of low fertility and susceptible to erosion. The summit of Mt Blarney rises to 275 metres.

2.2.2 Plants and animals

The park is dominated by two ecosystems. The notophyll vine forest/microphyll rainforest, which comprises coastal hills and ranges, is a major rainforest type of the central Queensland coast. A number of rare and threatened flora species occur within this type of ecosystem and may exist on the park.

A smaller area of open forest containing gum, ironbark and bloodwood species occurs on the eastern slope of the western ridge of the park. In the absence of fire, such open forest is readily invaded by rainforest species. This invasion degrades the habitat value of open forest and may result in decreased plant and animal diversity.

The conservation status of both ecosystems is not considered to be of concern at present.

2.2.3 Cultural heritage

No information is available regarding the traditional use of the area by Aboriginal people or its cultural heritage significance. No places of European or Aboriginal heritage value are known to occur within the park. However, such values may be present and will be taken into account in the future management of the park.

Given the history of the sugar industry in the area and anecdotal evidence that South-Sea Islanders may have used higher park lands for agriculture, cultural artefacts of significance to South-Sea Islanders may exist.

2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

Mt Blarney Conservation Park presents a uniform canopy from most viewpoints. There are no obvious rock outcrops or peaks. Its scenic value is accentuated by clearing which has occurred in the foothills up to the park boundary, and it remains a pleasant backdrop to the township of Sarina and to the many residences in the immediate vicinity.

2.2.5 Scientific and educational

The park contains remnant vegetation and may be of scientific interest as a genetic repository, or as a tool for comparing genetic diversity across regions. Until the park's flora and fauna are examined in more detail, scientific significance is difficult to estimate. Access difficulties limit the park's suitability for educational purposes.

2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

The park has a low level of recreational use and is generally used by enthusiastic local bushwalkers. No visitor facilities exist within the conservation park.

3. Management strategies

3.1 Native plants and animals

Current situation

Little detailed information on the park's plants and animals is available. The presence of rare and threatened species is undetermined.

Areas of grassy woodland/open forest are prone to invasion by rainforest and weeds. They also have the ability to rapidly accumulate volatile grass and leaf litter fuels. Rainforest plants are readily destroyed by fire.

Desired outcomes

- The composition and extent of flora and fauna types are maintained.
- An updated list of flora and fauna and their conservation values is available.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Undertake and/or encourage qualitative plant and animal surveys.
- Undertake and/or encourage periodic monitoring of key components of plant and animal communities and their habitats.
- Identify threats to plants and animals within the park. Use the information to review and improve management strategies outlined in this management plan.

3.2 Introduced plants and animals

Current situation

The type and degree to which weeds are invading the park is not fully known, although lantana is prominent and widespread.

The presence of feral animals or stock within the park is not known, but it is likely that feral pigs and cane toads, at least, are present.

Desired outcomes

- Improved knowledge exists of the nature and extent of plants and animals introduced into the park.
- Introduced plants and animals, including stock, have no significant impact on the native plants and animals found in the park.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Conduct periodic surveys to determine the presence and types of introduced plants and animals.
- Stock grazing on the park will not be permitted.
- Liaise and negotiate with neighbours to prevent stock gaining access to the park. A stock proof fence may be required along some boundaries. If required, the fence will be constructed and maintained in accordance with the Service's Good Neighbour Policy.

3.3 Fire management

Current situation

Vegetation communities on the park have different fire management requirements. Eucalypt woodlands require fire to maintain their distribution and structure. Rainforest is vulnerable to fire and may require protection from high intensity fires.

Desired outcomes

- The biological diversity and integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained by appropriate fire management.
- Human life, park infrastructure and neighbouring properties are protected as far as possible from fire that either originates within the park or enters the park from neighbouring properties.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- A fire management plan will be developed.
- Fire management will focus on maintaining current distributions of vegetation types occurring within the park, controlling weed infestations, and reducing the risk of fire originating on or escaping from the park.
- As resources permit, firebreaks will be constructed in appropriate areas.
- Neighbours will be consulted and notified prior to initiation of controlled fires.

3.4 Cultural heritage

Current situation

The park is an important relatively undisturbed part of the Aboriginal landscape which may be culturally and spiritually significant for traditional owners of the area.

No Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations have been conducted in the park, but it is possible that there are significant places for Aboriginal people.

Given the history of the sugar industry in the area and anecdotal evidence that South-Sea Islanders may have used higher lands within the park for agricultural purposes, cultural artefacts of significance may exist.

Traditional owners have made a number of native title claims over lands which include the park to have their native title rights recognised.

Desired outcomes

- Traditional owners have ownership, control and/or management of their cultural heritage.
- Cultural sites are identified and protected in accordance with the wishes of Aboriginal people with an interest in the area.
- Native title rights are not limited or compromised by this plan.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Keep open lines of communication with traditional owners and people with a historic connection to the park.
- After any successful native title determination, traditional rights to the land will be recognised and traditional owners will be involved in joint management of the park, including the protection of their cultural heritage.

3.5 Recreational and tourism

Current situation

No visitor facilities are provided.

Although the current visitor level is not known, it is thought to be low.

No formal park entrance exists. Directional and boundary signs are not provided.

Desired outcomes

- Recreational use has no significant impact on park values.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Camping on the park will not be encouraged. No visitor facilities will be provided within the park.
- No restrictions will be placed on recreational day-use of the park unless monitoring programs suggest that flora, fauna or the physical habitat is being significantly disturbed.
- Any proposals for commercial use of the park will be considered and approved only if they have no significant impact on the natural environment.
- While there continues to be road access limitations, no formal park entrance or boundary signs will be provided.

3.6 Education and interpretation

Current situation

Difficult access makes the park unsuitable for educational purposes. No interpretive material on the park is currently available.

Desired outcomes

- Visitors to the area are informed about the park and its recreation opportunities and/or restrictions.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- A park information sheet will be prepared.

3.7 Resource use and scientific research

Current situation

No commercial use of the park is currently authorised.

Desired outcomes

- Opportunities for low-impact relevant scientific research are available.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Scientific research will be permitted, provided it is of low impact and provides valuable information to managers.
- No use of park resources will be permitted, except those proposed with in this management plan.

3.8 Plan implementation and monitoring

Current situation

This is a little-used park which requires only minimal input for management. Priorities are clearly to ensure that an appropriate fire regime maintains habitat diversity, and information on the park's natural and cultural resources is increased.

Desired outcomes

- The park is being managed in line with the provisions of this plan.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Priority will be given to fire management and to the collection of information on the park's plants, animals and cultural resources. Information collected as a result of the implementation of this plan will be used to modify management strategies as required.
- The final plan will be implemented as resources permit.
- Ranger-in-charge to submit a brief annual report on the success of the plan's implementation.
- Review the management plan within 10 years of approval according to s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.