

Bluff Hill Area

Management Statement

2013



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

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The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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All due diligence and care has been taken in the preparation of this document based on the information in the 2013 management statement. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties.

The Bluff Hill Area Management Statement 2013 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 statement's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	Bluff Hill National Park—1,806ha Bluff Hill Forest Reserve 2—61ha Bluff Hill State Forest—163ha
Bioregion:	Central Queensland Coast
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Mackay Regional Council
State electorate:	Mirani Whitsunday

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Forestry Act 1959</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
✓	<i>Queensland Heritage Act 1992</i>

Plans and agreements

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Republic of Korea—Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 pest management strategy
✓	Level 2 fire management strategy

Vision

The natural ecosystems, flora and fauna populations within Bluff Hill management area are conserved.

The area is managed with an increased understanding of the diversity of natural environments, ensuring significant species and communities are protected and impacts are minimised.

Partnerships that contribute to the area's ongoing management are established with Traditional Owners, local community, neighbours, lessees, research institutes, conservation groups, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and local councils.

Conservation purpose

The management objectives for the Bluff Hill area are to:

- protect regional ecosystems and species of conservation significance and their habitats
- conserve and protect the management area's natural, cultural and scenic values
- minimise the impact of pests and inappropriate fire regimes on the natural environment
- incorporate the interests and rights of the Traditional Owners and their affiliations to the area by co-operatively protecting and managing areas of cultural heritage significance
- provide and maintain visitor opportunities that are in keeping with the area's natural values
- provide direction and actions to protect the natural, cultural and social values of the area through appropriate research and monitoring
- foster cooperative relationships with interested parties to build stronger partnerships to assist management.

Protecting and presenting the area's values

Landscape

Bluff Hill National Park, Bluff Hill Forest Reserve 2 and Bluff Hill State Forest are located 56 kilometres (km) north-west of Mackay. The management area covers 2,030 hectares (ha) and supports significant landscape features and biological communities of the Central Mackay Coast biogeographic region. Other national parks and State forests in the area include Newry Island, Eungella and Mount Martin national parks and Crediton and Cathu State forests.

Bluff Hill, Mount Ossa and Mount Martin national parks are situated on low granitic mountains that rise from the Central Queensland coastal plain. These mountains and low hills form a semi-continuous link between the Clarke and Connors ranges uplands, the lowland plains and coastal areas. The significance of the parks reflects the elevated, remnant vegetation that lies across climatic, geological and other environmental gradients. Part of Bluff Hill State Forest was gazetted as national park in 2008 in recognition of the areas outstanding natural values.

Much of the adjacent country has been cleared for sugarcane, modified for grazing, or is being developed for housing.

Regional ecosystems

There are seven regional ecosystems in the management area, with two listed as having a biodiversity status of concern and two listed as endangered (Table 1). Three of these regional ecosystems have low representation in protected area estate.

Plants and animals

The management area is located in the Central Mackay Coast bioregion. The diverse geology and landforms, combined with a high rainfall, has contributed to the region's characteristic vegetation communities. The overall integrity of the plant communities is in good condition in the management area, due to the steep geological landforms that limit access and physical disturbance.

The management area is dominated by bloodwood *Corymbia intermedia* open forest, rainforests and vine forests. This vegetation may provide important habitat for the vulnerable rufous owl *Ninox rufa queenslandica* and the endemic leaf-tail geckos *Phyllurus ossa* and *Phyllurus isis*.

Weeping tea tree *Melaleuca leucandendra* and river oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana* communities are found along the rocky creeks and gullies in the area. This vegetation community is known habitat for plant species *Rhamphicarpa australiensis*, *Eulophia bicallosa* and *Lobelia membranacea* listed as near threatened.

There are 11 bird species listed in international agreements that occur or are likely to occur in the management area (Table 2). During the summer months, two migratory species—the pied imperial pigeon *Ducula bicolor* and buff-breasted paradise-kingfisher *Tanysiptera sylvia*—are known to inhabit this area.

Aboriginal culture

Limited information is available about sites of cultural or historic significance or any other heritage values in the management area. No cultural survey has been undertaken in the management area; however, it is reasonable to expect that heritage sites and artefacts occur.

It is important for the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to continue to work with the Traditional Owners to identify cultural connections and ensure appropriate measures are taken to protect known sites in the area. DES will work towards ensuring Traditional Owners are actively participating in the day-to-day management and that cultural heritage is protected by maintaining relationships with the Traditional Owners.

Shared-history culture

The degree of shared-history culture remains largely unknown in the Bluff Hill area and additional information is required to assist with the interpretation and protection of these sites.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

The Bluff Hill area is incorporated in the Mackay Highlands. Enclosed within the Mackay Highlands is approximately 254,832ha of protected area, forests and reserves including the internationally recognised Eungella National Park. Visitors to the area have an opportunity to experience the natural assets of an area of tropical Queensland that remains largely undeveloped. Protected areas throughout Queensland offer a range of tourism opportunities to cater for different types of visitors. These range from a safe and comfortable experience with access to developed facilities through to challenging, wild places away from any sign of development. Eungella National Park provides four-wheel driving opportunities and encourages visitors to undertake short day walks, overnight hikes and to camp in developed campgrounds. The Bluff Hill management area offers remote, self-reliant, outdoor recreation opportunities such as bushwalking, bird watching and photography.

Access to Bluff Hill National Park, Bluff Hill Forest Reserve 2 and Bluff Hill State Forest is via unsealed tracks on private property to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) estate boundary. Permission from landholders must be acquired to traverse through private property to the QPWS estate. Once at the QPWS boundary, visitors can explore the areas by foot. The management area will be managed as a very natural landscape.

Education and science

The management area offers learning opportunities in geology and biology. Any research conducted on QPWS estate must be undertaken under the appropriate permit. Results from research and monitoring can benefit the area's management and educate staff and the community.

Further surveys would provide improved direction on the protection of plant and animal species and the impact of threatening processes of inappropriate fire regimes, pest animal and pest plant species.

Partnerships

DES is directly responsible for planning, managing and regulating activities in the management area. DES will work with neighbours, Traditional Owners, councils, user groups and individuals to achieve the vision. Efficiencies in resource sharing, improved communication, decision making and enhanced on-ground outcomes will be facilitated, where possible, through working partnerships.

A working relationship with the Traditional Owners is essential so that their views and aspirations for the land can be included in planning and management. Traditional Owners have a role to protect cultural heritage in the management area and a role to educate DES and visitors on cultural heritage management.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

A pest management strategy for the management area exists. This strategy helps to prioritise pest plant and animal controls, guide operational work plans and evaluate the effectiveness of control actions on QPWS estate. Pest plant and animal surveys and monitoring have been limited in the management area. Further information is required to understand the impacts of pests on the integrity of the area.

Sicklepod *Senna obtusifolia* is a threat to the Bluff Hill area. It is a declared Class 2 species under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Chemical control has been ongoing to remove the infestation from the management area. Lantana *Lantana camara* is a declared Class 3 pest plant within the Weeds of National Significance Database. The aim is to identify and map the areas of infestation and identify management options where possible.

Feral pigs *Sus scrofa* are a declared Class 2 pest under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. They cause significant damage and degradation to waterholes, spread pest plants and diseases, consume native species including frogs and cause significant losses to neighbouring properties. The aim is to monitor impacts and cooperatively work with neighbours to manage impacts.

Fire management

DES has a state-wide fire management system. DES is the primary agency for fire management on protected areas and State forests. Fire strategies provide the overall framework and direction for fire management and are the foundation from which planned burn programs are developed. The management area has a level 2 fire management strategy. A level 1 fire management strategy is required.

The main threats to the Bluff Hill area are inappropriate fire regimes and wildfires. The long-term fire management aim for the area is to maintain the current diversity of vegetation communities, native flora and fauna species, while allowing for natural change. The intention is to conserve fire sensitive ecosystems and species. Rainforests and weeping tea tree dominated ecosystems are fire sensitive and fire should be generally excluded from these communities. These communities have experienced wildfires previously, however, the extent of impacts is not known. The encroachment of various weeds species is a concern for several of the vegetation communities. A coordinated approach to fire management with surrounding neighbours will be maintained to ensure fire is managed appropriately.

DES has a responsibility to protect its neighbours from damaging effects of fire and will work closely with neighbours and lessees to manage fire.

Resource use

Exploration and mineral development approvals exist over Bluff Hill State Forest.

Exploration permits and mineral development licences are assessed in accordance with the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and *Mineral Resources Act 1989*. All mining and exploration permits and licences issued on DES estate are assessed by the Department of Resources and Mines with advice from DES in relation to management of sensitive areas and protection of significant species, habitat and biodiversity values.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Natural values</p> <p>The full range of naturally occurring biological diversity, ecological processes and landscape dynamics are maintained.</p>	<p>Monitor the impacts from natural processes, pests, fire and recreation. Use the information to guide management decisions and amend current and future plans and strategies.</p> <p>Manage activities to be consistent with the high scenic landscape values. Activities that compromise these values, and cannot be mitigated will not be permitted.</p> <p>Review and implement the pest management.</p> <p>Conduct a comprehensive plant and animal survey and accurately map regional ecosystems in the management area.</p> <p>Develop and implement a Level 1 fire management strategy.</p>
<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Facilities in the management area are correctly authorised under the relevant legislation and do not significantly impact on the areas values.</p>	<p>Authorise future grazing and other leases in the management area to be consistent with the management strategies and plans and in accordance with the Forestry Act and the Nature Conservation Act.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Visitor use provides for a remote and self-reliant experience while maintaining the natural and cultural values of the Bluff Hill management area.</p>	<p>Manage visitor access and activities to be environmentally and culturally appropriate and in keeping with a remote, self-reliant experience.</p>
<p>Partnerships</p> <p>The effectiveness of future management is strengthened through cooperative partnerships.</p>	<p>Continue to build relationships with the local community, organisations, visitors and interest groups to improve knowledge of the management area, and to highlight its significance to the region.</p> <p>Encourage and support Traditional Owners in conducting a comprehensive cultural heritage survey including recording sites, stories, language names and cultural heritage places.</p> <p>Encourage and allow access for the implementation of research programs, particularly those that will benefit conservation management.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
8.3.1a	Semi deciduous notophyll/mesophyll vine forest fringing watercourses on alluvial plains	Endangered
8.3.3a	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i> or <i>M. fluviatilis</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i> open-forest to woodland, fringing watercourses	Of concern
8.3.5	<i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i> +/- <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> +/- <i>Eucalyptus platyphylla</i> woodland, or <i>E. platyphylla</i> woodland on alluvial plains	Endangered
8.12.19	Complex notophyll feather palm vine forest with <i>Argyrodendron actinophyllum</i> subsp. <i>diversifolium</i> and subcanopy of <i>Myristica globosa</i> subsp. <i>muelleri</i> , on moist, low to moderate, coastal and subcoastal ranges on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks	Of concern

Table 2: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Apus pacificus</i>	fork-tailed swift	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Ardea ibis</i>	cattle egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Ardea modesta</i>	eastern great egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Latham's snipe	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle	-	✓	-	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	barn swallow	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>	satin flycatcher	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rostratula australis</i>	Australian painted snipe	-	✓	-	-

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement