

West Hill National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	1,080ha
Bioregion:	Central Queensland Coast
QPWS region:	Central
Local government estate/area:	Isaac Regional
State electorate:	Mirani



West Hill Island. Photo: NPRSR.

Vision

West Hill National Park will conserve ecosystems, habitat and species; especially those of State, national and international conservation significance and with an increased understanding of the diversity of natural environments.

Visitor experiences and recreation opportunities are in keeping with the undeveloped natural environment of the management area.

Partnerships with the local community, Traditional Owners, neighbours, research institutes and conservation groups are established and contribute to the area's ongoing management.

Conservation purpose

The objectives of management for West Hill National Park are to:

- conserve the management areas natural, cultural and scenic values
- incorporate the rights and interests of the Traditional Owners and their affiliations to the area and manage cultural heritage of significance
- provide for low-impact, nature-based recreation

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Marine Parks Act 2004</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 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

- provide direction and actions to protect the natural, cultural and social values, through appropriate research and monitoring
- foster cooperative relationships with neighbouring land holders to build stronger partnerships
- continue to build on the co-operative broad-scale land management activities with neighbours, interested parties and the local community.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

West Hill National Park is located 10 kilometres (km) north-east of Carmilla and 70km south of Mackay on the central coast of Queensland. West Hill Island is approximately 700 metres (m) from its mainland section. The mainland section comprises 685ha while the island is 397ha. The hill itself is a prominent landscape feature along the coast line. The northern boundary of the mainland section of the park runs along the southern side of West Hill Creek. It is with the Central Queensland Coast Bioregion. The island section was gazetted as national park in 1938 and the mainland section was included in 1978.

The park contains coastal sand dunes and estuarine country poorly conserved elsewhere in the local area. Pockets of dune scrub occur on the mainland section with extensive marine samphire and mangrove areas. Low lying inland areas are seasonally inundated. The island section contains extensive areas of dry rainforest.

Native plants and animals

All but two regional ecosystems mapped for West Hill National Park have a status of endangered or of concern (Table 1). The mangrove ecosystem, although not formally recognised as significant, provides habitat for a number of significant animal species including; water mouse *Xeromys myoides* a vulnerable species under State and Commonwealth legislation, estuarine crocodile *Crocodylus porosus* vulnerable under State legislation, sooty oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus* near threatened under State legislation as well as a large number of species listed under international agreements (Table 3).

The samphire ecosystem contains wetland indicator species such as bead weed *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* and provides habitat for species such as the near threatened sooty oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus* and the endangered little tern *Sternula albifrons*.

The marine grassland ecosystem identified on regional ecosystem mapping provides habitat for significant migratory bird species as well as the threatened water mouse. This ecosystem occurs in small patches adjacent to salt pans and mangroves and is threatened by agricultural or urban development, heavy grazing and is vulnerable to disturbance caused by vehicle use.

Aboriginal culture

Traditional Owners are an important part of effectively managing the area as they have a strong desire for continued involvement in its cultural and sustainable use. There are isolated stone artefacts and flakes along creek lines; however no sites of significance are identified.

A joint initiative between Queensland Government, Reef Catchments and the Gia, Ngaro, Yuibera, Koinjmal, Wiri and Juru people through the Mackay/Whitsunday Indigenous Protected Areas Co-Management Project, has developed protocols for the co-management of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) estate in the Mackay region. These protocols are detailed in the document 'Working together on country' (2011).

It is important for QPWS to continue to work with Traditional Owners to identify cultural connections and ensure appropriate measures are taken to protect known sites in the area. QPWS 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.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

West Hill National Park provides an opportunity for nature-based appreciation of the natural, cultural and scenic values and supports low-impact recreation opportunities such as bushwalking, fishing and photography. The area will be managed as a remote-natural area.

Visitor use in the management area is low. Visitors to the area come for the opportunity to explore the area's remote and natural setting and must be self-reliant. There are currently no commercial activity permits in the

national park. Commercial and tourism activities that are low key, have minimal impact, do not require visitor infrastructure, and are in keeping with the natural setting; will be encouraged.

Public access is limited, with no gazetted vehicular access. Both the mainland and island sections can be accessed via boat from nearby boat ramps.

Education and science

Research permits have been issued for the national park for monitoring and collecting data on nesting turtles and hatchlings by local turtle watch associations.

Research has been undertaken into beach scrub communities in the past. There are opportunities at West Hill for research into water mouse, northern quoll *Dasyurus hallucatus* and bat populations. It is currently unknown whether these species occur in the national park or to what extent.

Partnerships

QPWS is directly responsible for planning, managing and regulating activities in the national park. Working with neighbours, Traditional Owners, organisations, user groups and individuals with similar interests in managing the park is highly desirable to achieve the vision. Efficiencies in resource sharing, improved communications, decision making and enhanced on-ground outcomes; is to be facilitated, where possible, through working partnerships.

QPWS has a working relationship with Queensland Rural Fire Service, Isaac Regional Council, neighbours and community and conservation groups to assist in the management of fire, pests and grazing.

Pest management

A bioregional pest strategy exists for the Central Queensland Coast bioregion.

Lantana *Lantana camara* occurs on both the island and mainland and is spread by birds. It can dominate disturbed areas, compete with native vegetation, increase biomass and impact on the intensity of fire events and decrease scenic amenity. Need to monitor populations in the sensitive beach scrubs.

Prickly pear *Opuntia* spp. occurs within beach scrub communities and populations will be monitored. It is capable of dominating these communities and is hard to control due to access difficulties along the coast and the strength of the chemicals required. Biocontrol is not an option close to the coast due to restricted access.

Pigs *Sus scrofa* occur on both the island and mainland sections however populations are seasonally variable. They damage turtle nests, feed on turtle eggs and crustaceans, cause erosion in mangrove communities and pose a disease risk. Opportunities to control are limited, however, any control must be undertaken collaboratively with neighbours in order for it to be successful.

Predation of native animals by foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and cats *Felis catus* is suspected within the park. They pose a potential threat to water mouse, northern quoll, marine turtle and ground nesting bird populations by feeding on nests and young.

A natural water source on top of West Hill poses an opportune location for pest animals to thrive; with limited access for the purposes of control.

Fire management

A fire management system has been adopted state wide by QPWS which 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. A level 2 fire management strategy exists for West Hill National Park.

The main objectives for fire management are; protection of life and property on the reserve and neighbouring properties, protecting fire sensitive communities from adverse effects of planned burning, maintenance of habitat diversity within fire-tolerant communities, develop and maintain mosaic of fire frequency, intensity and season consistent with the ecological limits of the vegetation community and broadly maintain the current distribution of vegetation types and provide for a diverse range of habitat conditions.

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>Plant species and communities and animal species of significance are protected.</p> <p>The composition and extent of vegetation is maintained or increased.</p>	<p>A1. 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>A2. Manage activities to be consistent with the high scenic landscape values. Activities that compromise these values, and cannot be mitigated or managed, will not be permitted.</p> <p>A3. Minimise threats to values through the development and implementation of fire regimes and pest plant and animal control.</p> <p>A4. Maintain relationships with neighbouring properties to ensure collaborative management of fire and pests.</p> <p>A5. Encourage and allow access for the implementation of research programs, particularly those that will benefit conservation management.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Visitor use is low-impact and self-reliant, in the absence of permanent facilities.</p> <p>The effectiveness of future management is strengthened through cooperative partnerships.</p>	<p>A6. Allow access for low-impact and self-reliant recreation use. Adapt management as visitor needs change.</p> <p>A7. Continue to build relationships with the local community, Traditional Owners, organisations, visitors and interest groups to improve knowledge of the management area, and to highlight its significance to the region.</p>

Tables – Conservation Values Management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
8.1.2	Samphire open forbland to isolated clumps of forbs on salt pans and plains adjacent to mangroves	Of concern
8.1.3	<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i> grassland on marine sediments. Estuarine wetland	Of concern
8.1.5	<i>Melaleuca</i> spp. and/or <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> and/or <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> woodland to open forest (estuarine wetland) with a ground stratum of salt tolerant grasses and sedges, usually in a narrow zone adjoining tidal ecosystems	Endangered
8.2.1	<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> open forest to woodland with <i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i> and <i>Spinifex sericeus</i> dominated ground layer on foredunes	Of concern
8.2.2	Microphyll vine forest on coastal dunes	Endangered
8.2.6	<i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> + <i>Acacia leptocarpa</i> + <i>Banksia integrifolia</i> + <i>Melaleuca dealbata</i> + beach scrub species open forest on coastal parallel dunes	Of concern
8.2.11	<i>Melaleuca</i> spp. woodland in parallel dune swales (wetlands)	Of concern
8.3.2	<i>Melaleuca viridiflora</i> woodland often with emergent eucalypts and grassy/herbaceous ground layer, on seasonally inundated alluvial plains with impeded drainage	Endangered
8.3.3	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i> or <i>M. fluviatilis</i> +/- <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
8.3.6	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> , <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> and <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> (or <i>C. tessellaris</i> dominant) open forest on alluvial levees and lower terraces	Endangered
8.3.13	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> and/or <i>Corymbia tessellaris</i> and/or <i>Melaleuca</i> spp. open woodland to open forest on alluvial and old marine plains, often adjacent to estuarine areas	Endangered
8.12.13	<i>Xanthorrhoea latifolia</i> subsp. <i>latifolia</i> or <i>Imperata cylindrica</i> grassland, including some areas recently colonised by <i>Timonius timon</i> shrubland, on slopes of islands and headlands, on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks and Tertiary acid to intermediate volcanics	Of concern

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track species prioritisation framework
Animals				
<i>Caretta caretta</i>	loggerhead turtle	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	green turtle	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Critical
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	estuarine crocodile	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i>	northern quoll	Least concern	Endangered	Medium
<i>Denisonia maculata</i>	ornamental snake	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	leatherback turtle	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Eretmochelys imbricate</i>	hawksbill turtle	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Critical
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	sooty oystercatcher	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	olive ridley turtle	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Natator depressus</i>	flatback turtle	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Critical
<i>Xeromys myoides</i>	water mouse	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	Bonn	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	red-necked stint	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	great knot	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Caretta caretta</i>	loggerhead turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	lesser sand plover	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	green turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	estuarine crocodile	✓	-	-	-
<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	leatherback turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	hawksbill turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	white-bellied sea-eagle	-	✓	-	-
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian tern	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	olive ridley turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	black-tailed godwit	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Natator depressus</i>	flatback turtle	✓	-	-	-
<i>Pandion cristatus</i>	eastern osprey	✓			
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	little tern	✓	✓	✓	✓

Bonn: Bonn Convention
 JAMBA: Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

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