

Tuchekoi National Park and Tuchekoi Forest Reserve Management Statement 2013

Park size:	371ha (national park) 13ha (forest reserve)
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	Sunshine and Fraser Coast
Local government estate/area:	Sunshine Coast Council
State electorate:	Gympie

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

a	South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011
a	Bonn Convention
a	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA)
a	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA)

Vision

Tuchekoi National Park and Tuchekoi Forest Reserve protect a range of regional ecosystems, while preserving the nature-based recreational value of the reserve.

Conservation purpose

Tuchekoi National Park was gazetted from Tuchekoi Forest Reserve in 2009 to conserve the significant regional ecosystems representative of the South East Queensland Bioregion. Thirteen hectares of the park was left as forest reserve as part of the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network. These trails will remain as a narrow strip of forest reserve tenure and are managed under the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011 with the surrounding area being managed as national park under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Prior to 2001, Tuchekoi Forest Reserve was gazetted as Tuchekoi State Forest 963.

The national park is characterised by the prominent Mount Cooroora rising high above the surrounding rural landscape. The mountain has significant historic and social values associated with the 'King of the Mountain' race and provides a stunning view of the surrounding landscape from the summit.

Tuchekoi National Park contains five of concern and one endangered regional ecosystem. The top of Mount Cooroora contains one of the only known occurrences of the vulnerable *Allocasuarina rigida* subsp. *exsul*.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

The Sunshine Coast hinterland area is dominated by the Tertiary period (65 to two million years) volcanic remnants, including Mount Cooroora (the highest at 439m), which stands out from the surrounding country as a conical peak. The mountain is an isolated trachyte plug that forms a backdrop to the small country town of Pomona.

Mount Cooroora has significant landscape, social and economic values to the local township and its vertical columns are an attraction to geologists. The national park contains a diverse geology and has a corresponding high level of botanical diversity. Although no true rainforest is present, the volcanics of Mount Cooroora provide suitable soil fertility and rainforest elements are present at its base and in gullies in the eastern parts (Rider, 1988).

The park is surrounded by semi-rural properties and the eastern portion sits close to the centre of Pomona, terminating near Reserve Street—the main arterial road from the Bruce Highway. It has limited intact vegetation linkages to other protected area estate, but the larger complex of Yurol and Ringtail State forests (now also a significant proportion of Tewantin National Park) is located 2km to the east.

While it is close to Noosa, Tuchekoi National Park sits on the eastern edge of the Mary River catchment. The small tributaries to the west of the mountain flow into Coles Creek and into the Mary River. On the north-eastern side of the park the catchment feeds into Six Mile Creek—another Mary River tributary.

Regional ecosystems

The park contains 11 regional ecosystems. One of these is endangered and five are considered to be of concern (Table 1). In the surrounding landscape the endangered 12.3.1 notophyll vine forest has been extensively cleared for agriculture and is prone to invasion by weeds such as camphor laurel *Cinnamomum camphora*.

Regional ecosystem 12.3.2 *Eucalyptus grandis* tall open forest on alluvial plains is listed as of concern. The habitat in this regional ecosystem has been fragmented by horticulture and rural residential land uses. It is also prone to infestation by weeds particularly lantana.

The of concern regional ecosystem 12.8.19 heath and rock pavement vegetation grows on the exposed rocky slopes of Mount Cooroora.

Native plants and animals

The vulnerable *Allocasuarina rigida* subsp. *exsul* is known to occur near the summit of Mount Cooroora (Table 2). This species is confined to the steep rocky upper slopes of the mountain with a southerly to easterly aspect. It grows in a shrubland community containing *Xanthorrhoea latifolia*, *Monotoca scoparia* and *Leptospermum polygalifolium*. Scattered emergent trees of *Eucalyptus racemosa* and *E. exserta* are also present.

Potential threats to the survival of *Allocasuarina rigida* subsp. *exsul* arise from human interference to the environment, including inappropriate fire regimes and physical disturbance. Monitoring the population to obtain information on the ecology of the species and to gauge the effect of pedestrian traffic and impacts from fire on the population is recommended. It is important that the single location be managed to afford long-term protection to the species (Department of Environment, 1998).

Aboriginal culture

The park is within the native title claim (claim no: QC2013/003) area, of the Kabi Kabi First Nation people. The area holds high importance to Aboriginal people and there are many sites of Indigenous cultural importance across the region. The park has not been formally assessed for Aboriginal cultural heritage values but artefact scatters, scarred trees and burial sites have been found in the surrounding region.

Opportunities exist to improve relationships with local Traditional Owner groups and involve them in park management.

Shared-history culture

Pomona was first settled in the late 1880s. The introduction of the railway in 1891 started the expansion of the agricultural industries in the area. The town became the administrative centre of the Noosa Shire Council from 1909 until 1985 when the council moved to its Tewantin premises. The original headquarters for the shire were constructed in Pomona in 1911 on a site now used (since 1985) by the Cooroora Historical Society and Noosa Museum. The Pomona township contains numerous heritage buildings and landmarks.

The Pomona Forestry Depot was established when the forestry manager's residence was shifted to the then Tuchekoi State Forest in 1969 and a new office building was built alongside. A number of men were employed in this area for many years, replanting trees for use by future generations. The site also contains a shed and a house. The site was used as an operational base for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) from 2002 until 2008. However, the buildings and facilities are no longer fit for operational purposes. The site and buildings have no recognised heritage listing value. Future site management will be in the context of minimal QPWS investment. The annual 'King of the Mountain' race was first held in 1959. The idea of holding such a race followed the effort of a local railway porter, Bruce Samuels, who ran the course on 22 March 1958 to settle a bet that it couldn't be done in less than an hour. His time was 40 minutes. On 2 June 1959, the first organised race was held. Professional runners and climbers entered the event. There was a checkpoint on the top of the mountain where contestants were handed specially marked envelopes to signify that they had reached the summit. In September 1979, the Cooroy–Pomona Lions Club, in conjunction with the 'Festival of the Waters' committee from Noosa and Radio Station 4GY from Gympie, revived the 'King of the Mountain' race—now an annual event. The race has historical significance and economic significance for the town.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

The annual Pomona 'King of the Mountain' running race is held in July every year. The event is attended by local and international competitors and has become a popular festival for the town of Pomona. QPWS issue a group activity permit to the Cooroy–Pomona Lions Club for the event. Approximately half of the official race route follows an older route up to the summit that is now closed to the general public. The older route is opened by QPWS exclusively for the purposes of the 'King of the Mountain' group activity permit. The race enters and leaves the park off Mountain Street. In the months leading up to the race, visitation may increase with competitors training for the event.

Mount Cooroora is a popular site in the cooler months for visiting tourists climbing to the summit to appreciate excellent views looking east to the Sunshine Coast. Locals also use the climb as part of their daily or weekly exercise routine. A council picnic area at the base of the mountain adjoins the park, providing parking and picnic facilities.

Like most of the popular summit hikes on the Sunshine Coast, Mount Cooroora suffers from heavy visitor impact along its summit access trail. Track widening and erosion impacts on the geology and flora and has created a prominent scar on the eastern face of the mountain.

In 1998, 10 galvanised steel staircases, numerous concrete steps and accompanying chain and steel handrail were installed on the track to alleviate some of the risk to hikers and reduce visitor impact. QPWS subsequently carried out remedial works on the steps in 2010 to comply with an engineer's assessment. The handrail and steps are regularly inspected and maintained by QPWS. A review will be required to determine the end of their useful life.

Local horse riders use the forest reserve as part of the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network. The trails also provide a linkage for the Noosa Trail Network from Pomona to Cooran. The trails provide a range of outstanding horse riding opportunities that are safe and sustainable and are consistent with protecting the conservation values of the surrounding protected areas.

Mountain biking is a popular recreation in the Noosa hinterland and it is permitted on the forest reserve trails as part of the Noosa Trail Network. Until 2009, sections of the forest reserve were used as part of the Noosa Enduro—an annual cross-country mountain bike race. The event was not continued after 2009. Several commercial operators are permitted to run mountain bike tours through the forest reserve.

A low level of unauthorised motorbike and vehicle use is known to occur in the park. Illegal motorised access causes unnecessary impact on management roads and conflicts with non-motorised recreation use.

Partnerships

QPWS has a cooperative arrangement with Noosa Council in the management and maintenance of Horse Trails on QPWS estate, including the Noosa Trail Network.

Noosa Council manage wild dog control programs for the area. QPWS participate in the wild dog programs as

required, as part of cooperative approach to wild dog management across the landscape.

The car park for the Tuchekoi National Park visitor access is located on adjacent Noosa Council land. Council also provide a day-use area with picnic facilities.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Weed species in Tuchekoi National Park and Tuchekoi Forest Reserve include camphor laurel *Cinnamomum camphora*, lantana *Lantana camara*, groundsel *Baccharis halimifolia*, Singapore daisy *Sphagneticola trilobata*, and cassia *Senna* sp. Control of lantana along Jampot Creek Road is undertaken periodically when the road is overgrown.

Foxes, wild dogs and cats are the main animal pest species. Wild dog baiting occurs and there have been issues in the past with large mobs of dogs being seen along tracks and roads.

A pest management strategy is currently being prepared which will guide pest management in Tuchekoi National Park and Tuchekoi Forest Reserve.

Fire management

Frequent burning under historical forestry practices has modified understorey vegetation. However, regeneration is occurring naturally. Uncontrolled frequent wildfire running from the base of the mountain to the summit has the potential to adversely impact on fire sensitive vegetation.

The endangered regional ecosystem 12.3.1 gallery rainforest (notophyll vine forest) to the west of the mountain is fire sensitive and not to be burnt deliberately. Any planned burns should not create running fires into these communities.

The flooded gum *Eucalyptus grandis* forest (12.3.2) may be burnt in a low-intensity mosaic burning regime to maintain understory floristic diversity, but requires a moderate to high intensity fire every 20+ years to maintain floristic structure. *E. grandis* forest is difficult to burn outside of fire season and, conversely, burns extremely well in dry, hot weather. This presents potential threats to property in the rural/residential zones during severe fire seasons.

Tuchekoi National Park is currently managed for fire under an approved Level 2 Fire Management Strategy.

Other management issues

A water storage facility is located on the national park off Jampot Creek Road. The facility was constructed to supply water to the Noosa–Cooroy area in the 1960s and was previously managed by the incumbent shire or regional council, administered by occupation permit under the *Forestry Act 1959*. It is now managed by Unity Water. QPWS and Unity Water are currently in the process of formalising an authority for the facility under Section 35 of the Nature Conservation Act.

Other utilities on the national park include power lines and water line facilities. These services were permitted under the *Forestry Act*. QPWS is currently in the process of formalising authority for these facilities under the Nature Conservation Act.

As a State forest, Tuchekoi previously supported several stock grazing permits under the *Forestry Act*. These permits expired at the time of conversion from forest reserve to national park.

There are four apiary sites in the park, established when the park was State forest. These apiary sites continued to be managed under QPWS apiary site management.

Due to accessibility of the park to isolated local roads, there are ongoing problems with rubbish being dumped along tracks, including garden waste and household rubbish. Evidence of perpetrators of illegal littering and dumping will be followed up with Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP).

References

Rider E 1988 *Report on the Management Priority Area Zoning Considerations for the Pomona State Forestry Grid (Especially in Regard to Ecology/Conservation)* Queensland Department of Forestry, Gympie.

Department of Environment – Queensland/Commonwealth CRA RFA Steering Committee 1998 *Survey of Threatened Plant Species in South East Queensland Biogeographical Region*.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape</p> <p>Catchment protection services are maintained.</p>	<p>A1. Monitor changes in vegetation structure to identify potential erosion issues and mitigate impacts.</p> <p>A2. Maintain walking tracks, roads and bridge crossings in good condition.</p> <p>A3. Monitor and undertake enforcement of illegal vehicle use in the park.</p> <p>A4. Rationalise management roads and fire breaks.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Information on plant, animal and ecosystems is comprehensive and current.</p>	<p>A5. Review currency of species records and conduct surveys where needed to inform management decisions.</p> <p>A6. Review mapping of regional ecosystems and facilitate improvements to mapping refinements where needed.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>Traditional Owners have meaningful involvement with park management planning and direction.</p> <p>Shared-history cultural values are identified and protected.</p>	<p>A7. Facilitate Traditional Owners' identification and documentation of values, sites, artefacts and places of cultural heritage significance so that management strategies and decisions relating to fire regimes, access and track maintenance minimise potential threats to these values.</p> <p>A8. Support any assessment of the shared-history cultural values of the park.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>The park retains its natural state for the use of visitors.</p> <p>Infrastructure is appropriate for level of use.</p>	<p>A9. Manage visitor use with the following intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · maintain infrastructure in keeping with the retention of the landscape setting of the park · horse riding and bicycle riding is restricted to approved trail networks. <p>A10. Monitor and manage impacts of horse riding and mountain bike riding on approved trails.</p> <p>A11. Review the summit track and facilities in light of recent successful projects with similar issues such as Mount Coolum Summit Track and Mount Ngungun Summit Track.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>Impacts from pests and cattle grazing on the park are managed effectively.</p>	<p>A12. Complete a pest management strategy and implement control programs as identified.</p> <p>A13. Work with neighbours to mitigate the impact of encroaching grazing stock.</p> <p>A14. Continue cooperative feral animal control programs with neighbours and regional councils as required.</p> <p>A15. Complete a Level 2 Pest Management Strategy for the park.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Appropriate fire management practices.</p>	<p>A16. Manage the park for fire according to the current approved Level 2 Fire Management Statement.</p>
<p>Other management issues</p> <p>Illegal dumping is successfully stopped.</p>	<p>A17. Gather evidence and address illegal dumping with advice from EHP Illegal dumping unit</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem	Description	Biodiversity status
12.3.1	Gallery rainforest (notophyll vine forest) on alluvial plains	Endangered
12.3.2	<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i> tall open forest on alluvial plains	Of concern
12.8.19	Heath and rock pavement with scattered shrubs or open-woodland on Cainozoic igneous hills and mountains	Of concern
12.8.20	Shrubby woodland with <i>Eucalyptus racemosa</i> or <i>E. dura</i> on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.8.25	Open forest with <i>Eucalyptus acmenoides</i> or <i>E. helidonica</i> on Cainozoic igneous rocks especially trachyte	Of concern
12.12.3	Open forest complex with <i>Corymbia citriodora</i> , <i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i> or <i>E. crebra</i> or <i>E. decolor</i> , <i>E. major</i> and/or <i>E. longirostrata</i> , <i>E. acmenoides</i> or <i>E. portuensis</i> on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks	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 status
Plants				
<i>Allocasuarina rigida</i> subsp. <i>exsul</i>		Vulnerable	-	Low