

Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park

Management Statement 2015

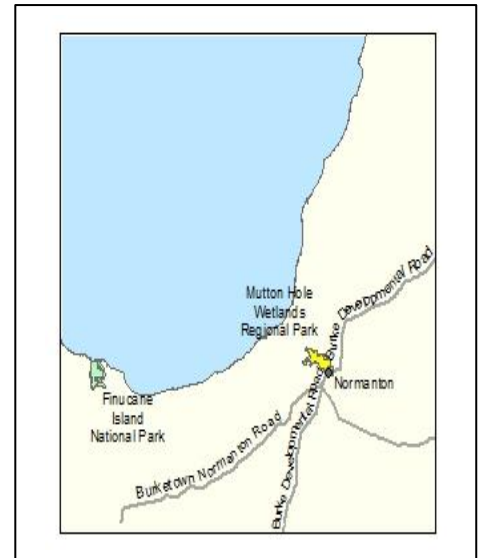
Context

Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park is part of the largest continuous estuarine wetland aggregation of its type in northern Queensland. It offers significant wildlife observation opportunities. Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park has both diverse and complex habitats from fresh to hypersaline while also being a crocodile breeding habitat.

The primary purpose for conserving Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park is its varied and complicated system of estuarine and freshwater wetlands that supports an outstanding number of waterbirds. It is a significant breeding, feeding, resting, and moulting waterbird site while also being an important dry season refuge for waterbirds and water fowl.

Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park lies within the Southern Gulf Aggregation which is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA). It is included in and surrounded by the Gulf Plains Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) due to its significance as a bird habitat. Eleven species of internationally conservation significant bird species have been recorded in the area.

There are currently no registered native title claims or indigenous land use agreements (ILUA) that cover the park. The Kukatj and Gkuthaarn tribes both have documented linkages to the area. QPWS is building relationships with Indigenous people in the area and attempting to identify the correct people to represent the Traditional Owners.














Bioregion	Gulf Plains	Area	7 860ha
Local Government Area	Carpentaria Shire Council	State electorate	Mount Isa
Designations over the Park	Trustee – Carpentaria Shire Council		
Management Obligations	China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA), Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA), Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA), Convention for Migratory Species (CMS)		

This management statement provides high level strategic direction for the protection and management of key park values. Management will be undertaken in accordance with the management principles for the tenure as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and supporting regulations, other appropriate legislation including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, ILUA, government policies, procedures, and protocols.






Key park values

While all parks are important, and all values help make parks worthwhile, management needs to focus on protecting and presenting the most important values – the key values. These are the values that will form the basis of ongoing evaluation of management effectiveness. Protecting these key values will help frame the purpose of management for each park. The table below shows how each key value’s condition is represented, how the condition is trending and the confidence in the information used to make the ratings. Details of key values are listed in **Table 1** and illustrated in **Map 1**.

Key to condition, trend, and confidence icons

Condition	Good	Good with some concern	Significant concern	Critical
Description	 <i>The value is in good condition and is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current conservation measures are maintained.</i>	 <i>The value is likely to be essentially maintained over the long-term with minor additional conservation measures to address existing concerns.</i>	 <i>The value is threatened by a number of current and/or potential threats. Significant additional conservation measures are required to preserve the value over the medium to long-term.</i>	 <i>The value is severely threatened. Urgent additional large-scale conservation measures are required or the value may be lost.</i>
Trend rating	Improving 	Stable 	Deteriorating 	No consistent trend 
Confidence	Inferred 	Limited 	Adequate 	

1. Wetlands




Description	Condition		Trend	Confidence	
	2015:	Desired:		Condition	Trend
Complex system of estuarine and freshwater wetlands. Provides habitat for outstanding number of regionally significant waterbirds. Important habitat for internationally significant migratory bird species.					

Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park is part of the largest continuous wetland in northern Queensland. It lies within the Southern Gulf Aggregation which is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA). It is made up of a complex system of mangroves, samphire flats, grassland, woodland, closed forest, sedgeland, and freshwater aquatics. It is a significant dry season refuge for waterbirds and water fowl and therefore is included in and surrounded by the Gulf Plains Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA). It provides habitat for eleven migratory species of internationally significant birds.

Threats: The primary threatening process is the replacement of native plants by introduced weeds such as lantana, rubber vine, buffel, and parkinsonia. The secondary threatening process is the disturbance of the wetland habitat by visitors using inappropriate access tracks causing damage and disturbing resting or breeding sites of birds. Feral pigs are also considered a threat due to the damage they cause to the wetland ecosystem.

Strategic management directions: Aim to improve the condition of the wetlands habitat by reducing the impacts of introduced animals and plants within the park, manage invasive weeds through targeted planned burning, and minimising visitor impacts from the use of inappropriate access tracks.

Table 1. Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park — Strategic management directions for key values

Condition	Trend	Key threatening process	Strategic management directions: Values	Priority (1-5)
1. Wetlands				
2015: 		Introduced weeds and animals Recreation	Reduce impacts of feral pigs, lantana, rubber vine, buffel grass, and parkinsonia within the wetlands. Manage invasive weeds through targeted planned burning.	1
Desired: 			Minimise visitor impacts from the use of inappropriate access tracks.	

Levels of service

Levels of service (LOS) standards have been developed to identify the current and desired future standards for a range of critical management elements and associated performance measures. Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park has been assessed as requiring a basic level of service for most aspects of management based on the identified:

- values
- threats and pressures
- community interface challenges
- special management intervention.

The desired LOS standards for nine management elements have been identified to guide the level of management effort required for Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park within a state-wide context. These nine elements reflect the most common management activities undertaken by QPWS across all protected lands and waters and include Indigenous cultural heritage management and engagement, fire and pest management, visitor management and natural values management.

For further detail on the levels of service standards for Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park, refer to **Table 2**.

Table 2. Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park – Strategic management directions for levels of service

Management element	Current level of service	Desired level of service (target state)	Strategic management directions (bridging the gap)	Priority
1. Fire	Base	Base	Implement planned burns as per the Planned Burn Guidelines.	2
2. Pest	Base	Base	Increase the priority on managing pests impacting on the key value. Develop an inventory of existing pests and the extent of incursion on park.	2
3. Natural values	Base	Base	Improve research and understanding of natural values. Create and implement park guidelines to mitigate threats to the key natural value.	4
4. Indigenous cultural heritage and engagement	Base	Medium	Identify the correct Indigenous people to represent the Traditional Owners. Form a relationship with the Indigenous people that still use the wetlands for camping and hunting. Trustees (Carpentaria Shire Council) and QPWS will engage with Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.	1
5. Historic cultural values	Base	Base	Identify key historic heritage sites.	5
6. Community and commercial engagement	Medium	Medium	Maintain an inclusive management relationship with the trustees. Continue to ensure effective communication between senior rangers and trustees. Continue to establish structured arrangements with trustees including formally appointed management contractual arrangements for some park management service delivery.	2
7. Visitor	Base	Base	Provide visitor interpretations at key points within the park.	3

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Management element	Current level of service	Desired level of service (target state)	Strategic management directions (bridging the gap)	Priority
8. Field management capability	Base	Base	Increase routine management inspections to every six months. Implement critical priority initiatives identified in annual operational business plans.	2
9. Operational planning and management	Base	Base	Undertake the basic planning process in accordance with the LOS standard including the development of appropriate thematic strategies.	1

Thematic strategies

Each protected area will require one or more thematic strategies depending on the complexity of the values and service issues. The levels of service prescriptions provide guidance for each individual element to indicate the requirement for a thematic strategy and its appropriate level.

Thematic strategies cover key park management detail, values and significant service issues. They provide a linkage between the strategic approach and operational services. Thematic strategies present detailed objectives which are specific to the protected area developed from the strategic management directions – levels of service.

Thematic strategies required for Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park

- Fire strategy
- Pest strategy

Evaluation and reporting

Management effectiveness will be evaluated for Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park as part of a monitoring framework. This will guide an adaptive management approach to set clear benchmarks for management, ensure the condition of key values is within acceptable thresholds, deliver transparent and accountable reporting and inform future management. Management effectiveness will be measured against:

- condition and trend for key values
- achievement of levels of service standards
- implementation of management actions
- outcomes of strategic management directions.

Map 1: Mutton Hole Wetlands Regional Park - key values

