



GENERAL WORKING PLAN FOR FLORA RESERVES MANAGED BY NPWS

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INTRODUCTION

From 2017 the NSW Government began allocating management of new and existing flora reserves to National Park and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Many of these new reserves protect important koala habitat. Others support potential habitat or movement corridors. Most make significant biodiversity contributions to the NSW and national reserve systems.

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the terms of section 25 of the *Forestry Act 2012* with the objective of providing for the future management of flora reserves within gazetted State Forests of NSW. It is written using a template provided by FCNSW. Minor changes have been made to accommodate the practicalities of local NPWS staff managing small reserves in a landscape containing much larger NPWS reserves.

This plan identifies a generic approach to managing the suite of flora reserves managed by NPWS. It is supported by reserve-specific plans detailing the values of individual Flora Reserves and providing actions and guidelines to protect those values.

Outlined below are management objectives and actions that will be applied, unless otherwise stated in the reserve-specific working plans, to all flora reserves managed by NPWS.

MANAGEMENT

1.1 Objectives of Management

- To preserve native flora and fauna species, particularly the maintenance of populations of rare and threatened flora and fauna species.
- To protect examples of forest ecosystems in the area and contribute to a Comprehensive Adequate and Representative reserve system
- To maintain reference stands within the natural forest to provide for scientific study, and for assessing the effects of alternative land use in surrounding areas.
- To provide for appropriate and safe public recreation in a natural setting.
- To conserve soil resources and water catchment capabilities.
- To minimise harm by inappropriate fire regimes and to protect adjoining lands from wildfire.
- To protect Indigenous archaeological and cultural values.

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- To respond to the expectations of the community with respect to the management of the Flora Reserves, consistent with Forestry Act and Government policy.

1.2 Management Strategies (Policies)

Under Forestry Corporation's Forest Management Zoning (FMZ) system Flora reserves are zoned FMZ 1 and therefore contribute to the dedicated (formal) Comprehensive Adequate and Representative reserve system in NSW.

Minister for Forestry approval, by notice in the Gazette, is required for new declarations, revocations or boundary amendment.

The following management policies will be adopted generally for all the flora reserves, subject to any additional management directions identified in the reserve-specific working plans for an individual reserve:

1.2.1 General

- Except as otherwise specified below, no logging, leaf harvesting or other activities likely to disturb the flora or fauna of the reserve shall be permitted, and any such activities carried out adjacent to the reserve should be performed in a manner so as not to cause damage or disturbance to the reserve.
- Native flora and fauna in the reserve will be completely protected, except for trapping or collecting in the course of scientific studies approved by NPWS, and where necessary minimal vegetation clearing, including trees, may be required to allow for boundary fences to be maintained.
- Activities that lead to alterations of the natural flow regime of streams will be prohibited and any works required to be undertaken within or adjacent to the reserves will be undertaken in accordance with the applying legislation and policies.
- Sale or removal of soil, rocks, sand or gravel will be prohibited.
- Grazing by domestic stock will be excluded. No new grazing permits will be issued for reserves and any existing grazing permits will be phased out.
- Weed and pest animal control will be undertaken in the reserve where necessary. Any pesticide application will be applied in accordance with NSW and NPWS procedures and policies, and pesticide label conditions.
- Where appropriate, conduct pest and weed management works in collaboration with FCNSW, Local Land Services and neighbouring property owners.

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- Maintain reserve public roads and trails shown on the specific working plan maps to the standards described in those documents consistent with the plans of management associated with the reserves.
- Maintain management trails to the standards identified in fire management strategies.
- All roads, management trails and other park infrastructure will be recorded in the NPWS asset management system.
- Roads and trails with public access within Flora reserves may be reviewed for any requirement to temporarily or permanently restrict public vehicular access via the Reserve-Specific Working Plan.
- NPWS may temporarily or permanently restrict public vehicular access to the publicly accessible roads and trails where necessary for park operations or where access presents a risk to the public.
- Where necessary, additional barriers and gates preventing unauthorised vehicle access to internal roads and trails may be constructed. Signage alerting people to the conservation values of the Flora Reserve should accompany any such barriers and gates.
- Maintenance will be carried out on internal roads and trails where necessary. This may include, but is not limited to road and trail surfaces, drains and sediment control structures and vegetation encroachment.
- Any internal road or trail that was not managed by FCNSW as a formal public access and not required for management may be closed or made dormant.
- Snig and other informal roads or tracks such as those previously used for harvesting activities may be classified as 'dormant' and closed to public access. These decisions will be reviewed in any update of the applying reserve fire management strategy.
- NPWS will follow standard road maintenance and roadside rehabilitation procedures, including soil erosion control practices and soil hygiene protocols. Any vegetation planting will be with endemic flora species in accordance with NPWS best practice.
- Reserve management activities, including fencing, signage, infrastructure maintenance, unsafe tree removal, habitat rehabilitation and pest animal and weed control in accordance with applying guidelines and procedures.
- Pest and weed control and management in the reserve will be undertaken in accordance with legislative requirements, NPWS guidelines, regional pest and weed management strategies and other applicable guidelines, plans and strategies.

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- Volunteer organisations will be allowed to undertake environmental work and/or maintenance in the reserve with appropriate, ongoing assistance and support provided by NPWS.
- Hunting of game and feral animals may be allowed in the reserve, subject to any declaration of the relevant State Forest for hunting under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act, 2002*, in accordance with Forestry Corporation and NPWS policies and procedures and other NSW Government agreements.
- As opportunities arise, NPWS will encourage or undertake native flora and fauna surveys to improve existing knowledge of biodiversity values in the reserve. Priority will be given to threatened species, regionally significant species and species recovery after fire and logging.
- Local observations and reporting will be undertaken annually on the condition of values, management effectiveness and public use of the reserves. Of primary interest is any change in native vegetation communities following the cessation of logging.
- Separate approval may be sought for cultural use in exemption to the above.
- NPWS will work with FCNSW, the police and other land management authorities to suppress unauthorised uses and ameliorate their impacts.
- NPWS may engage the community on shared issues, for example, with Aboriginal groups about Aboriginal heritage. NPWS will also continue to work with FCNSW, Local Land Services and other stakeholders as required.
- Mostly stakeholder engagement will occur via any processes set out in the relevant plan of management and/or in accordance with the general requirements of the NPWS Parks Management Framework.

1.2.2 Fire

- Fire management including hazard reduction and wildfire response on NPWS-managed reserves will be conducted in accordance with the applying reserve fire management strategy. These will be updated over time to include the needs of the flora reserves.
- The overall goals of NPWS fire management in the flora reserves are to protect life and property, reduce the incidence of unplanned fire events, exclude fire from mature age forest where possible and meet fire frequency thresholds for all vegetation types as per NPWS Guidelines for Ecologically Sustainable Fire Management (2004) and/or any other emerging state guidelines on the protection of biodiversity in bushfire prevention operations.

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- The use of large scale back burns and fire breaks to control advancing wildfire will be avoided in the flora reserves unless deemed absolutely necessary.
- The lighting of unauthorised fires will be prohibited. Appropriate signage restricting the use of fire will be provided as necessary.

1.2.3 Recreational

- Mountain bike riding and walking will be permitted on existing public vehicle tracks. The development of new walking and bike riding tracks will be prohibited.
- Camping in the reserves will be prohibited. Where required signage alerting people of this will be provided.
- Horse riding will only be permitted on existing roads and fire trails.
- NPWS may restrict or prohibit any recreational activity carried out in the reserve where it breaches the objectives of management outlined in 1.1 Objectives of Management.

1.2.4 Protection of other significant biological values

- FCNSW and NPWS will support survey work to locate any previously unknown biology within the reserve.
- If other significant biological values in the reserve are identified, NPWS will incorporate these values into future management. Where necessary, NPWS may place restrictions on any permitted activities or alter management in the reserve to protect and/or enhance such values.
- Where feasible FCNSW and NPWS will support programs to investigate the ecological characteristics and requirements of threatened or significant native plants and animals and the threats to these within the flora reserves.

1.2.5 Activities Not Permitted

The following activities are not permitted:

- Timber harvesting
- Removal of forest products and materials

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- Grazing by domestic stock
- Gravel or hard rock quarrying
- Mineral and petroleum exploration and mining
- Recreational vehicle access on closed roads and trails or off trail.
- Use of unregistered vehicles
- Lighting of camp fires and any other unauthorized fires.
- Camping
- Entering with domestic dogs

1.2.6 Activities Permitted with Standard Conditions

The following activities will be permitted subject to standard conditions consistent with the all applying codes of practice, protocols, policies, approvals environmental impact assessment requirements:

- Scientific studies (e.g. fauna surveys including trapping)
- Maintenance of existing roads and fire trails within, and if under agreement, adjacent to the reserve
- Limited tree removal for safety reasons, weed control or the maintenance of any boundary fences only
- Pest animal and weed control potentially including non-endemic problem native species.
- General access for activities such as bush walking, swimming and photography
- Beekeeping, by way of a license (permits for existing set-down sites only. New set-down sites will not be approved)
- Bushfire risk management activities and suppression of wildfire
- Construction of communication towers and associated infrastructure
- Mountain bike, orienteering or similar recreational events, subject to issue of a Forest Permit, in accordance with section 61 of the *Forestry Act 2012*. Mountain bike events are restricted to the use of existing vehicular tracks
- Construction and maintenance of boundary fences, including appropriate vegetation clearing

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- Installation/maintenance of barriers, fences and signage to restrict or control access
- Group recreational activities involving more than 40 people
- Adventure activities (including rock climbing, abseiling, canyoning)
- Aboriginal use of forest products - an Aboriginal person may be permitted to carry out forest product operations within the reserve. This authorisation will only occur where no other land is reasonably accessible to the person and the scale and intensity of the activity is consistent with the maintenance of the conservation values to be protected in the reserve.

1.2.7 Activities Permitted with Special Conditions

The following activities will be permitted subject to special conditions approved by the NPWS Branch Director and consistent with the Codes of Practice, Operational Circulars, protocols, licenses and Management/ Recovery Plans:

Construction of New Roads and Trails

The construction of new roads and fire trails will be permitted with special conditions. Construction will only be permitted in exceptional instances and consistent with the following principles:

- No practical alternative is available
- The values of the reserve will not be significantly compromised as indicated by an initial environmental impact assessment process
- Opportunity is provided for public comment on the proposal
- Ministerial approval is given for the proposal

Construction of communication towers and associated buildings

These will be determined on a case by case basis and must meet the requirements of the relevant NPWS plan of management applicable to the surrounding NPWS estate and environmental impact assessment requirements.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The reserve will be administered by the relevant NPWS Branch, who shall ensure:

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- The reserve is managed consistently with this generic working plan and the relevant site-specific working plan;
- Occupation and Special Purposes permits are issued only for activities consistent with the management objectives for the reserve.

REVIEW, EVALUATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The NPWS managed flora reserves are mostly small parcels of land enclosed by, adjoining or near to national parks, nature reserves or state conservation areas. Accordingly, the flora reserves will be managed consistently with the plans of management for those reserves. This includes managing for biodiversity, heritage, pests, weeds, bushfire and visitation. This management approach must be enabled via the working plans to comply with the Forestry Act.

In general, NPWS will make observations the flora reserves and record the condition of key values, the condition of tracks and roads, the compliance of users, the outcomes of any scientific research and the integrity of its boundaries. This information will be used in review and evaluation. The NPWS 'State of the Parks' platform may be applied.

Review of a working plan for a NPWS managed flora reserves will occur every 10 years or when the associated plan of management for adjacent or nearby NPWS reserves are reviewed and or rewritten, whichever comes first.

Management of the reserves will be undertaken in accordance with the OEH [Adaptive Management Position Statement](#). In simple terms this means implementing safe and suitable management actions while learning about which actions and techniques are most effective at achieving the required objectives.

An adaptive management model NPWS uses to meet the needs of reserve management planning is shown in Figure 1. For each flora reserve, NPWS proposes to apply an adaptive approach via the reserve specific working plan's 'adaptable works program' and/or also via its associated plan of management, if applicable.

The adaptable works program is a set of 'live' actions appended to each site-specific working plan. These actions have been developed to meet specific management objectives and they can be changed by local NPWS Branches should they be found to be not meeting the objectives well.

In the longer-term, evaluation may determine that the objectives of the working plans are not suitable and require changing. Newly discovered values, significant emerging threats or a reduction in management resources could also trigger such a need. Changes to the objectives would require an amendment of the working plans and adoption by the Minister for Lands and Forest.

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	Element	Description
→ 1	Objectives	Set clear objectives and measurable performance indicators for management.
→ 2	Process model	Describe the threats and processes that influence the objectives. Describe how management actions are expected to achieve objectives.
→ 3	Plan	Plan which management actions will be trialled. Plan how management actions will be implemented in the field. Plan monitoring of management effectiveness.
→ 4	Implement and feedback	Carry out the implementation and monitoring plans. Analyse and evaluate monitoring data. Update the process model and use the information in management decisions.

Figure 1. Elements of an adaptive management process for management plans (OEH 2017)

REFERENCES

State Forests of NSW, Operational Circular 99/10 (1999). **Managing our Forests sustainably: Forest Management Zoning in NSW State Forests**

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