

Culgoa Floodplain National Park

Management Plan

1998

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

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The Culgoa Floodplain National Park Management Plan 1998 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 plan's original management intent and direction.

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Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Culgoa Floodplain National Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in May 1998, in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s120 G of the Act. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment and Science at ParkManagementPlans@des.qld.gov.au.

This management plan was prepared by Department of Environment and Science staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

1. Management directions and purpose

1.1 Management directions

Culgoa Floodplain National Park is dedicated under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and must be managed in accordance with section 17 of the Act:

- to provide for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent
- to protect and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values; and
- to ensure that the only use of the area is nature-based and ecologically sustainable.

The park conserves samples of many of the plant communities found in the Darling-Riverine Plan and Mulga Lands Biogeographic regions. It is significant due to the vegetation diversity that occurs in a relatively small area. It is an area of relatively intact vegetation in an otherwise disturbed and cleared landscape.

A major management direction will be to ensure that environmental flows reach the floodplains of the park. This is particularly important as the water storage areas upstream of the park are large enough to restrict small and medium flood events further downstream.

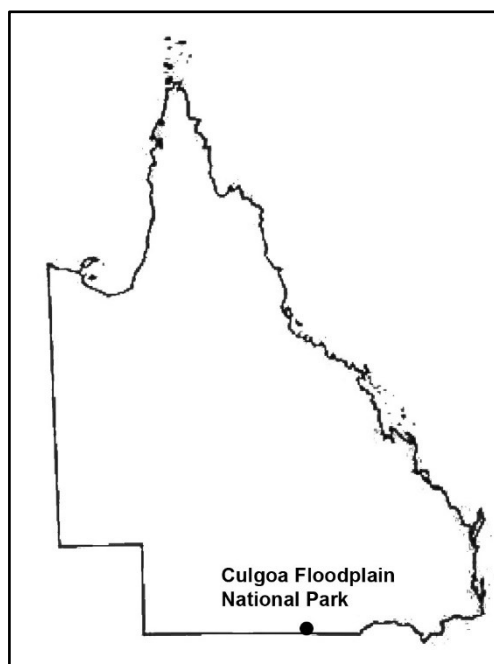
Flood events are critical to sustain the ecology of the Culgoa Floodplain National Park.

The park is also close to the Brigalow Belt South Biogeographic Region. Thus the park contains representative examples of plant communities which occur in three biogeographic regions. The gidgee woodlands represent the species towards its eastern limits of distribution in Queensland. The park includes good examples of black box woodlands, which are confined to small areas associated with the Paroo and Culgoa Rivers and are close to the northern limit of their distribution in Queensland.

1.2 Purpose

The major purposes of management will be to ensure:

- plants and animals are managed appropriately
- the natural values of the park are managed in accordance with the various vegetation community needs, eg fire management and the management of waterflow across the floodplain
- control of feral animals such as goats, pigs, foxes and cats are ongoing and these animals are controlled or removed from the park
- control of weeds such as prickly pear are ongoing and that these weeds are controlled if not eradicated; and
- that appropriate recreation opportunities are provided, including bird watching and bush camping in a natural environment.



2. Basis for management

2.1 Bioregional context

Culgoa Floodplain National Park is located approximately 130km south-west of Dirranbandi on the Queensland-New South Wales border. It was dedicated in 1994 and has an area of 42 856ha. The park is within two catchments, being that of Culgoa River which is part of the Maranoa Balonne Catchment and the Mungallala, Wallam and Nebine Creeks which run into the Warrego Paroo Catchment.

Adjacent to the park is the New South Wales Culgoa National Park. The parks are complementary as both represent several different land systems in a relatively small area.

2.2 Values of Culgoa Floodplain National Park

2.2.1 Geology and landform

Culgoa Floodplain National Park is situated on the alluvial floodplains of the Culgoa River, Wallam, Mungallala and the Nebine Creeks. These plains are formed from recent Quaternary alluvial deposits and are composed of very deep, brown to grey, alluvial clays which may be inundated during major floods. Numerous claypan areas are associated with these plains.

On the western side of the Byra section of the park, upland plains and low hills with a relief of less than 10 m border the alluvial plains. These upland areas mostly consist of late Quaternary to early Tertiary deposits, with minor areas of late Cretaceous sediments in the south-west corner. The associated soils are predominantly shallow to moderately deep, loamy red earths which may have a surface layer of silcrete gravel. In areas where Quaternary quartz sand deposits overlie the Tertiary land surface, minor sandplains occur with sand red earth soils. Texture contrast soils may occur throughout the upland areas in run-on flats and drainage systems.

The Myola and East Burrenbah sections include red earth, stony ridges and brigalow scrub extending into hard mulga country at the north-west end of the park.

2.2.2 Plants and animals

Areas subject to flooding support black box *Eucalyptus largiflorens* or coolabah *E. coolabah* woodland to open woodland in which never-fail grass *Eragrostis setifolia* is the dominant ground layer species. On lower slopes the plains form a mosaic with gidgee and brigalow communities. A red earth ridge running through part of Byra section supports mulga communities with scattered western bloodwood *Corymbia terminalis*. Poplar box becomes dominant in run-on flats and drainage lines and forms grassy and shrubby open woodlands in which mulga also occurs.

Over 150 species of birds, amphibians, fish, invertebrates and many other mammals and reptiles are found on the park. This is supported by the range of diversity of vegetation on the park. Artificial waters have contributed to an increased density of large macropods such as red kangaroo. The painted honeyeater *Grantiella picta*, Major Mitchell's cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri* and several other species are at their distributional limit. The pale-headed rosella *Platycercus adscitus* also occurs on the park.

2.2.3 Cultural heritage

Aboriginal cultural sites in the form of clay ovens and small stone tools and associated scatters occur on the park's clay pans. Aboriginal people in the area maintain an active interest in the park. Other cultural elements are associated with the area's previous pastoral use. Sites of note are the Hillview Homestead and Redbank House.

2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

The variety of vegetation ranging from the dense brigalow forests to the open coolabah woodlands and intermediate mulga and gidgee areas on a variety of coloured soils contrast to the surrounding landscape of grazing and cropping. The park has abundance birdlife and other wildlife which contributes to its aesthetic values.

2.2.5 Scientific and educational

The park has research and scientific value due to its vegetation diversity, bioregional setting, abundance of birdlife and the presence of rare and threatened species.

2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

Recreation use of the park is low with an estimate of less than 200 campers and day visitors per annum. Many of these visitors are keen birdwatchers.

3. Management strategies

3.1 Native plants

Current situation

Plant communities are maintained by the soils and the floodplain receiving water from regular flooding. Maintenance of this water flow and supply is critical to the long-term health of floodplain communities.

A small area of Mitchell grass occurs at the western end of the park.

An area of about 500 ha in the East Burrenbah section of the park dominated by coolabah *Eucalyptus coolabah* has long been inundated by an uncontrolled bore drain. Most trees in this area have died.

Desired outcomes

- The biological health and diversity of natural plant communities and the ecological processes underlying them are maintained.
- Degraded plant communities are rehabilitated.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Monitoring programs will be established to assess long-term changes in the distribution and health of native plant communities. These will be undertaken in order to establish whether current management regimes are providing the desired outcome of maintaining plant community health and diversity.
- Locations of rare plants shall be recorded and periodic inspections undertaken to determine their existence or absence on the park.
- Control the water flowing onto degraded areas in the East Burrenbah section of the park. Monitoring and remedial action of the damaged vegetation area will be undertaken as necessary to ensure recovery.

3.2 Native animals

Current situation

During flood events and very wet periods many wetland bird species also visit the park.

Bird species of note are the Major Mitchell's cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri*, painted honeyeater *Grantiella picta*, ground cuckoo-shrike *Coracina maxima* and the blue-winged parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*.

The park supports a range of mammals, reptiles, and other fauna, none of which are listed as threatened.

Desired outcomes

- Native animals and their associated habitats are protected.
- The long-term survival of species of conservation significance is enhanced.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Further fauna surveys will be conducted on the park with the emphasis on species of conservation significance.
- Management actions will be developed for any such species to enhance their continued presence on the park.
- Macropod activity on the park will be monitored to assist with appropriate management.

3.3 Introduced plants and animals

Current situation

Weed species identified on the park are Bathurst burr *Xanthium spinosum*, noogoora burr *Xanthium pungens*, prickly-pear *Opuntia* spp., variegated thistle *Silybum marianum*, scotch thistle *Cirsium vulgare* and star thistle *Centaurea calcitrapa*.

Feral animals on the park are goats, pigs, cats, foxes, hares, starlings and sparrows and, to a lesser degree, rabbits. Control through trapping and water control has significantly reduced the number of goats on the park but invasion from adjacent properties does occur.

Desired outcomes

- Introduced plants and animals are controlled and where practical eradicated from the park.
- Where appropriate, areas degraded by feral animal activity are rehabilitated.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Routine patrols of the park will note the presence of weed species and efforts shall be made to control or eradicate these species.
- Particular attention will be placed on prickly pear in the short term. Other weeds shall be controlled as per the weed action plan.
- Feral animals will be controlled as per the feral animal action plan.

3.4 Fire management

Current situation

Over 150 years of grazing by domestic stock has impacted on the structure of the grassy understorey of neverfail and kangaroo grass in the coolabah and black box communities. In these areas, woody species such as salt bush and lignum are becoming dominant. There has been no ongoing fire management of these communities. Large areas have been cleared. Fire breaks are maintained around the perimeter of the park. A wildfire response plan has been prepared and is updated annually.

Desired outcomes

- The biological diversity and integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained through responsible fire management. Human life and park infrastructure are protected from fire.
- Neighbouring properties are protected from fire originating on the park.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- A fire management plan will be developed as appropriate for the various vegetation communities of the park.
- Fire regimes will be carefully re-introduced into fire dependent communities. An appropriate monitoring program to determine vegetation structural, species composition and diversity changes will be undertaken. Such a fire regime will contribute to a mosaic of burn intensities, with temporal and spatial variation and a range of successional stages across these communities.
- Staff responsible for the park will receive appropriate fire training.
- Copies of the wildfire response plan shall be distributed to officers of the local Bush Fire Brigades and other relevant organisations.
- Visitors to the park shall be informed of fire conditions and appropriate behaviour under extreme fire conditions.

3.5 Landscape, soil and catchment protection

Current situation

Artesian bores, bore drains, and earth water storage tanks are located throughout the park. All artesian bores on the park are controlled under a water rehabilitation project managed by the Department of Natural Resources.

Floodplain areas of the park receive much of the annual water budget from rains that fall upstream and reach at the park via Nebine, Mungallala and Wallam Creeks, and the Culgoa River.

Reduced water availability due to water harvesting during upstream flooding has limited or stopped floods across the floodplain.

Desired outcomes

- To minimise the impact of park operations on the quality of ground and surface water in the national park catchment area.
- To maximise the potential for overland water flow during flooding across the park's floodplain areas.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Dams and unused bore drains in the park will not be maintained. This action is consistent with the intention to restore the ecology of the park to as close as possible to its original state.
- Fences around dams will be maintained to assist with management of feral goats and pigs and macropods.
- Man-made elements affecting overland water flow. Such as bore drains, will be assessed as to their impact on the ecology of the park. If required, remedial action will be taken.

3.6 Cultural heritage

Current situation

Aboriginal people with a possible interest in the area are the Morrawari, Koamu and Badjiri people.

Aboriginal cultural sites in the form of clay ovens and small stone tools and associated scatters occur on clay pans. Other sites of significance may be identified following further surveys.

The Redbank hut (1906) and Hillview hut (1932) are both in a rundown state and present a risk to people using these buildings. Other items of the pastoral history of the area are the earth tanks, stock yards, bore heads, bore drains and fences that occur on the park.

Desired outcomes

- To involve Aboriginal people with traditional affiliations in the area, in the management of the national park.
- To present Aboriginal cultural values of the park to visitors, if appropriate.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- The interests of the Koamu, Morrawari and Badjiri people and others will be identified and those groups and individual will be provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning and management of the park on a long-term basis.
- Aboriginal cultural values on the park may be included in visitor interpretation information after consultation with the relevant Aboriginal groups.
- Redbank and Hillview hut will be protected by fencing. Signs will be located to advise visitors of the significance and safety issues of these places.
- Cultural elements on the park will be assessed to determine the level of local and regional significance. Appropriate items will be managed in accordance with the Burra Charter principles.

3.7 Recreational and tourism

Current situation

Birdwatching is the most popular visitor activity on the park.

No formal campsites are provided, with visitors being able to use a number of camping options. Movement within the park is by 4WD vehicle on service tracks and roads. No walking tracks are provided.

Desired outcomes

- To provide opportunities for nature-based recreation which is sustainable.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- The present a low-key style of visitor facilities will be maintained.
- Visitor impacts will be monitored, and more intensive management will be undertaken if impacts are unsustainable.

- Directional markers may be placed on key 4WD track junctions to direct visitors to key interest points or restrict traffic to specific areas.
- Consideration will be given to use of the old shearers' quarters as visitor facilities.

3.8 Education and interpretation

Current situation

Visitor information for the park is available from park staff or the District Office in Roma. This level of information service is appropriate at this time due to the small number of park visitors. Low-impact, nature-based activities such as birdwatching and nature photography are currently the preferred use for the park.

Desired outcomes

- To present the values and management needs of the park to neighbours and the community.
- To develop visitor behaviour appropriate with responsible use of the park.
- To secure community support and involvement in park management.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Initially, information about the park for visitors will be by direct contact. Park staff can provide an on-site information about the park.
- If visitor numbers increase and demand is such that the above is not practicable, a visitor information sheet will be prepared.
- Prepare a visitor information sheet for the park.

3.9 Resource use

Current situation

Water extraction from artesian bores has occurred. These bores are now controlled and no water is taken by adjacent properties.

Desired outcomes

- To manage and control any legitimate resource use of the park such that the park values remain protected.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Bores on the park that have been capped shall not be opened for pastoral use.
- Maintenance of unused bore drains shall not be undertaken.