



QUEENSLAND
NATIONAL PARKS
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SERVICE

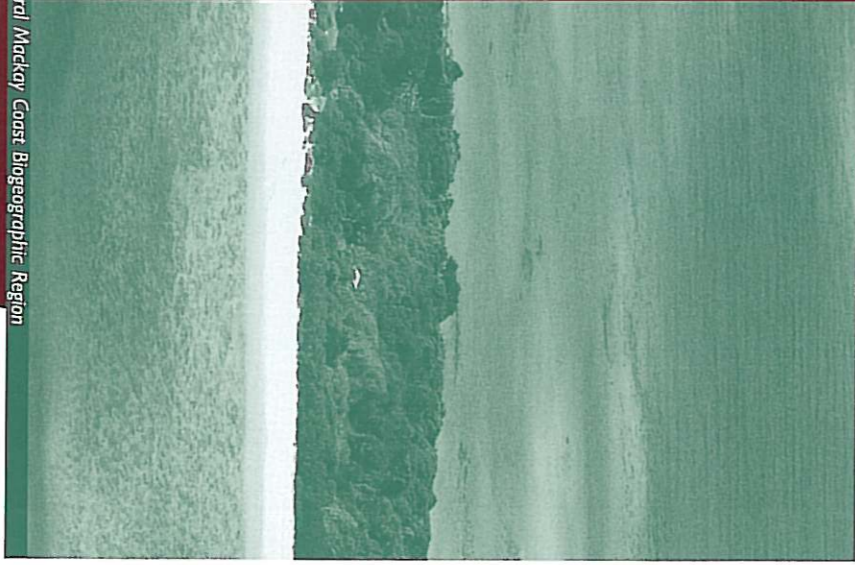
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of Environment



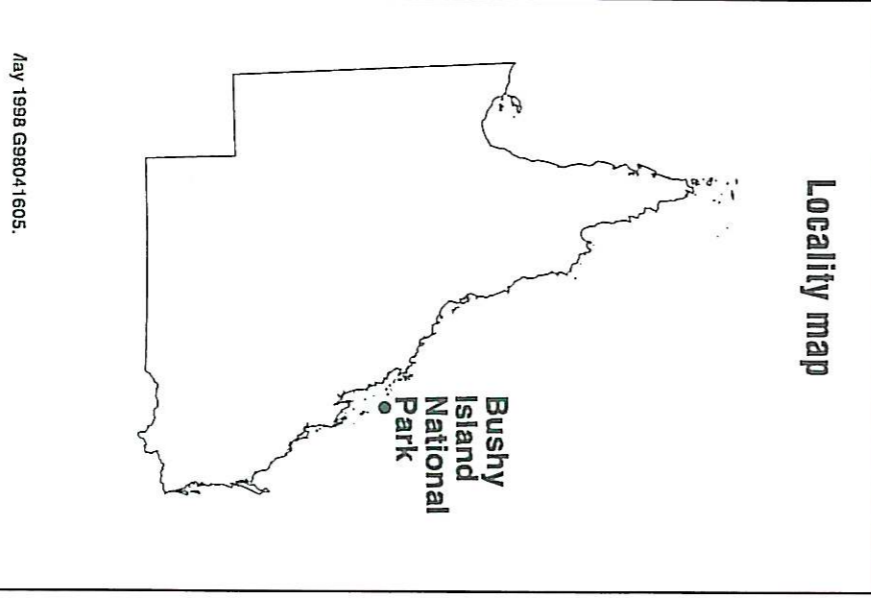
QUEENSLAND
GOVERNMENT

Bushy Island National Park

Central Mackay Coast Biogeographic Region



Management plan



Locality map

May 1998 G98041605.

Summary

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

This plan was prepared in May 1998 and, in accordance with s125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, will be reviewed not later than 10 years after its approval. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment's Northern Regional Centre in Townsville on (07) 4722 5211 during business hours.

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

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1. Management directions and purposes

1.1 Management directions

The management focus of Bushy Island National Park, which is within a World Heritage Area, will be to maintain the high visual amenities of this isolated park while conserving it as a significant breeding habitat for turtles and birds, in particular the orange-footed scrubfowl and the threatened beach stone-curlew.

Commercial recreational use of the park is currently limited, although it has high commercial recreational potential and may be subject to pressure from commercial operators in the future.

Upon expiry of the existing commercial activity permit, commercial and private recreational use will not be permitted until a Sensitive Site Plan is prepared.

1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- native plant and animal communities are preserved;
- areas around the expired lease area are rehabilitated to a natural state;
- rare and threatened species are identified and conserved through specific management strategies if appropriate;
- local government, Aboriginal groups with an interest in the area and other interested parties are made aware of park management issues and are provided with opportunity to be involved in the process of managing the park; and
- the area remains in a natural state — no additional infrastructure will be built.

2. Basis for management

2.1 Bioregional context

The park is about 4.5ha and lies approximately 60km east of Mackay. It is within the Mackay/Capricorn section of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and is surrounded by State marine park from high to low water mark and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park beyond low water. The zoning of these adjoining marine parks is State Marine National Park B, while outer waters are General Use A.

Bushy Island National Park is a geographic and biological anomaly being the only wooded cay within a 900km section of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The closest other such islands are North Reef Island to the south and Green Island to the north.

2.2 Values of Bushy Island National Park

Geology and landform

Bushy Island is unusually high, recorded as being 12m above the reef flat. This is higher than any other cay within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Plants and animals

Bushy Island is the only island to contain an almost mono-specific stand of *Pisonia grandis* over the 1200km distance from North Reef Island in the south to Douglas Island, east of Cape York Peninsula, in the north.

It is the only coral cay in the Great Barrier Reef supporting a population of orange-footed scrubfowl and is an important green turtle rookery. The park provides a nesting habitat for the vulnerable beach stone-curlew.

Bushy Island is an important seabird roosting area with estimates of 10 000 birds roosting overnight with the potential to become a more substantial nesting area.

Adjacent Redbill Island is an important nesting area for the bridled tern and white-bellied sea-eagle and has a significant population of roosting and nesting reef herons.

Bushy Island has a significant population of waders including pied and sooty oystercatchers, along with seasonal migratory birds.

Historical

The park was used as a base for trochus shell collecting.

Scenic and aesthetic

The unique height above sea level of the cay, combined with its white beaches, extensive fringing coral reefs, and its relative remoteness makes the park an important part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Scientific and educational

The combination of scenic and aesthetic values makes Bushy Island unique on the Great Barrier Reef. For this reason, the scientific and educational values of the island and the surrounding fringing reef are potentially significant.

Recreation and tourism

The combination of a terrestrial park backdrop, associated beach and an extensive fringing reef offers good opportunity for recreation and tourism. However, due to the remoteness of the park and the fact that it offers little shelter, the scope for opportunity to visit the cay is limited. Most recreational opportunity exists within the associated fringing reef i.e. snorkelling and diving.

Economic

The combination of the park's remoteness and its unique natural values make it a requested site for commercial operators to visit. While Bushy Island is vulnerable to the effects of use, the surrounding marine park has potentially high economic value for low-key tourism.

3 Management strategies

Current situation

Desired outcomes

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

<p>Native plants</p> <p>Native plant communities are degraded in the general area of an expired lease. However, over recent years extensive natural rehabilitation has occurred. Remaining vegetation is in a pristine state. Future impacts from potential tourist operations may pose a threat to the vegetation, particularly the <i>Pisonia</i> forest, due to the small size of the island.</p>	<p>Degraded plant communities are rehabilitated.</p> <p>The composition and extent of the vegetation types are maintained subject to natural change.</p> <p>A list of plants and their conservation values is available.</p>	<p>Monitoring programs will be established to assess long-term changes in the distribution and health of native plant communities.</p> <p>Removal of the hut which remains within the expired lease area will be investigated. Rehabilitation with appropriate native vegetation will be undertaken if required.</p> <p>A comprehensive plant survey will be undertaken.</p>
<p>Native animals</p> <p>The island park provides an important rookery for up to 100 green turtles each nesting season.</p> <p>The island park has a small population of nesting sea birds. However, it has been reported to have been a substantial nesting area in the past. The current small numbers may be a result of human activity during early trochus shell collecting.</p> <p>The intertidal area is closed each year from October 1 to March 31 to protect nesting seabirds.</p> <p>The island supports beach stone-curlew breeding pairs.</p> <p>A population of the orange-footed scrubfowl is present.</p>	<p>The native animals and their associated habitats are protected.</p> <p>The long term survival of threatened species is ensured with special reference to the beach stone-curlew.</p> <p>The number of nesting seabirds increases.</p> <p>A comprehensive database on all animals is prepared.</p> <p>The current population of orange-footed scrubfowl is maintained.</p>	<p>The intertidal and terrestrial area of the island will be closed between October 1 and March 31. This will be achieved by regulatory signs on the beach and preparation of interpretive information.</p> <p>Management actions will be developed for species of conservation significance to enhance their continued presence on the park.</p> <p>Monitor nesting seabird activity and develop strategies to increase numbers.</p> <p>Undertake a comprehensive animal survey of the park.</p>
<p>Introduced plants and animals</p> <p>No current record exists of exotic plants on the park.</p> <p>Introduced cockroach is known to significantly infest the island. These have the potential to change the ecology of the island.</p>	<p>The park is free of introduced plants and animals.</p>	<p>Undertake weed eradication and feral animal control programs if required.</p> <p>Undertake surveys to identify the size of the cockroach infestation and any effects this may be having on native insect species. Undertake a cockroach eradication program and monitor the outcome.</p> <p>Seek external funding to research the effects of cockroaches and to determine methods to eradicate them.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>No evidence exists that fire has ever occurred on the island. Plant and animal communities appear to have no adaptations to cope with fire.</p>	<p>Fire is not having any impact on the park's plant communities.</p>	<p>Fires will not be permitted.</p>
<p>Landscape, soil and catchment protection</p> <p>Degradation of plant communities has occurred in the vicinity of an expired lease area. Erosion on the cay is not a problem.</p>	<p>The impact of park use is causing no significant erosion.</p>	<p>Develop strategies to rehabilitate any degraded areas.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>Little is known of Aboriginal cultural sites on the island, but it is likely to have been little used as it is so far offshore.</p>	<p>Cultural sites are identified and protected in accordance with the wishes of appropriate Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Any native title rights are not compromised by management actions.</p>	<p>Existing Aboriginal interests in the park will be identified, and those groups or individuals will be provided with the opportunity to participate in management of cultural issues.</p>
<p>Recreation and tourism</p> <p>Visitor activity on the park is limited. However, due to its scenic values and associated fringing reef it is a requested site for commercial operations.</p> <p>One commercial activity permit exists for the park. It provides for access by seaplane.</p> <p>Tourism is focused on the associated fringing reefs.</p> <p>No visitor facilities are provided.</p>	<p>No impact occurs from human activity until the values of the park and surrounding reef are fully determined.</p> <p>Approved future uses are ecologically sustainable.</p>	<p>Produce a Sensitive Site Plan for the park and the associated marine parks.</p> <p>Implement a regulatory notice under section 255 of the <i>Nature Conservation Regulation 1994</i> to prevent human activity on the park.</p> <p>Do not re-issue the commercial activity permit. No further permits will be issued until the completion of a Sensitive Site Plan.</p> <p>Maintain the seasonal closure of the intertidal area between October 1 and March 31 each year.</p>
<p>Education and interpretation</p> <p>No on-site signs or other interpretation exists, with the exception of standard park name signs.</p> <p>The island has educational values, but the possible fragile, natural values and the remote location make it unsuitable for large scale educational groups.</p>	<p>Interpretive material for recreational users which describes the uniqueness of the park is available.</p>	<p>Ensure that the public is aware of the closure of the island.</p> <p>Produce a visitor information sheet.</p>
<p>Research and monitoring</p> <p>Preliminary surveys have been undertaken on seabirds, turtles and vegetation. These indicate that the vegetation and surrounding reef areas are of interest scientifically and that rare and threatened species occur.</p>	<p>Provision of opportunities for low-impact research which contributes to baseline information on the park's resources and management.</p> <p>Preparation of a Sensitive Site Plan to determine the carrying capacity of the park. The plan will also measure significant changes to island and reef ecosystems and identify their causes.</p>	<p>Apply to appropriate grant programs for funding assistance for scientific research and monitoring</p>
<p>Plan implementation and monitoring</p> <p>This is a little used park requiring only minimal input for management. Priorities are to obtain more information on the park's natural and cultural resources.</p>	<p>The park is being managed in line with the provisions of this plan.</p>	<p>Priority will be given to the accumulation of information on plants, animals and cultural resources of the park.</p> <p>Use of the island will be prevented in the short-term until there is sufficient information to make decisions on use over a longer-term.</p> <p>The final plan will be implemented as resources permit.</p>