

Mapleton National Park

Management Statement

2013



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

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The Mapleton National Park Management Statement 2013 has been extended in 2024 in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made, including the renaming of the area following the amalgamation of Mapleton National Park (Recovery), into Mapleton National Park on 28 March 2014. There has been no change to the statement's original management intent and direction.

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Park size:	Mapleton NP - 10,064ha
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	Sunshine and Fraser Coast
Local government estate/area:	Sunshine Coast Council
State electorate:	Nicklin

Legislative framework

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

Plans and agreements

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Coxen’s fig-parrot <i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni</i> recovery plan 2001–2005
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	South East Queensland Horse riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011
✓	South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Region Back on Track Actions for Biodiversity

Vision

Mapleton National Park will be managed to conserve and improve on the integrity of the diverse natural landscape which is of state biodiversity significance. It will also be managed to protect the considerable natural and scenic values and cultural heritage sites as well as provide sustainable nature based recreation opportunities for visitors.

The area formally known as Mapleton National Park (recovery) was amalgamated into the Mapleton National Park, and will continue to be managed to ensure foliage collection does not compromise the natural and cultural values.

Conservation purpose

Mapleton National Park was gazetted on 3 June 2011 and is an amalgamation of part of Mapleton Forest Reserve (transferred from State forest tenure under the South East Queensland Forests Agreement in 2003) and Delicia Road Conservation Park. Also gazetted in June 2011, Mapleton National Park (Recovery) was previously Mapleton Forest Reserve and covers those areas required for foliage collection. Mapleton National Park (Recovery) was amalgamated with Mapleton National Park on 28 March 2014. The remaining area of Mapleton Forest Reserve (127ha) contains the South East Queensland (SEQ) horse trail network, communication tower, weir and pipeline, Delicia Road mountain bike area and road revocation.

Mapleton National Park conserves the largest parcel of native forest remaining along the Blackall Range in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. It contains ecosystems and species of conservation value which are of state biodiversity significance and warrant a high level of protection. The addition of Mapleton National Park to the protected area estate acknowledges this significant contribution to retaining areas of high level ecological integrity in South East Queensland.

Horse riding opportunities previously allowed on the State forest tenure are available on Mapleton Forest Reserve which runs through and adjacent to the national park. Management of these horse riding trails will not be covered under this management statement as they are covered under the South East Queensland Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

The parks cover the northern section of the Blackall Range which is from 1,200 to 1,400 feet (450m) in height. The area has volcanic origins with the basalt lavas erupting from volcanoes south-west of Maleny. The subsequent erosion of the basaltic lavas has carved the present landscape resulting in deep gorges, ridges and escarpments on which the parks are located. The basaltic soils in these gorges support remnant cool subtropical rainforests and the ridges and escarpments support tall open forest communities.

The parks are a large natural landscape positioned in rural/residential surroundings with some higher density housing on the south-east boundary. They contain well known scenic corridors such as Mapleton Forest Drive, Buckby Road, Yandina–Cooloolabin Road and the Eumundi–Noosa Road. The numerous waterfalls cascading off the plateau down to the costal lowlands below are of high scenic value.

The parks provide significant water catchment protection. The western portion of the parks contributes to the catchment for the Mary River system. The eastern section forms part of the catchment for Maroochy River, Cooloolabin Dam and Wappa Dam, which supply a large percentage of the water requirements for Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

The creeks also provide significant intrinsic value as habitat for native plants and animals. The East Cedar Creek area was reserved from logging for the protection of its vegetation communities including some extensive gully scrubs.

The protection of the parks' natural systems relies partly on protecting adjacent natural areas to provide a buffer against extreme weather events.

Regional ecosystems

Mapleton National Park conserves the most significant area of native forest remaining along the Blackall Range. It contains ecosystems and species of conservation value which are of state biodiversity significance. The addition of Mapleton National Park to the protected area estate acknowledges the high level ecological integrity of this area for South East Queensland. Eighteen regional ecosystems are represented, of which six are listed as being of conservation significance (Table 1).

The parks comprise a wide variety of vegetation types with over 75% being either blackbutt tall open forest (12.12.2) or a mixed eucalypt open forest (12.12.15) both of which are not of concern. The majority of the remainder is made up of two of concern regional ecosystems—10% is vine forest (12.12.1) and 6% is shrubby

woodland (12.12.14). Tiny patches of the endangered gallery rainforest 12.3.1 occur mostly on boundaries.

Native plants and animals

Around 215 plant species have been recorded including 16 species considered conservation significant (Table 2). Many species are also found at their limits of distribution or with disjunct populations. Three endangered plants need on ground assessments to establish their location and any threats to their population(s) health:

- *Plectranthus torrenticola* (last recorded 1998)
- *Triunia robusta* (last recorded 2002)
- *Phaius australis* (last recorded 1990).

The parks are rich in native plant species with 14 frogs, 90 birds, 10 butterflies, 21 mammals and seven reptiles being recorded. This includes 14 species of conservation significance (Table 2) and six bird species listed under international agreements (Table 3). In addition there are also three priority species under the South East Queensland biodiversity planning assessments—the platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* (an indicator of water quality), the greater glider *Petauroides volans* (an indicator of old growth forest value) and the short-eared possum *Trichosurus caninus* (range limit).

Suitable habitat for the endangered Coxen's fig parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni* occurs in the Mapleton area. Ongoing field surveys to determine currently occupied localities are part of the recovery plan actions.

Aboriginal culture

The Aboriginal heritage value of the parks is connected to the value of the entire Blackall Range, which is important spiritually, physically and socially for the Aboriginal community. Scarred trees and many isolated artefacts and scatters are known to occur in Mapleton National Park but the exact location of these places and relevant documentation on the park has not been qualified.

The Jinbara People have a successful native title determination over Mapleton National Park. An Indigenous Land Use Agreement has been made between the State of Queensland and the Jinibara People Aboriginal Corporation in March 2013. The geographic area includes, but is not limited to, the traditional interests of Jinibara, Kabi Kabi and Gubbi Gubbi people.

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

Shared-history culture

Six non-Aboriginal sites are listed, however only the physical evidence of three remain. The Point Glorious Lookout is the most significant in terms of its social value. It affords a 180-degree view of Mount Eerwah and the surrounding countryside. The Old Mill Road Apiary Site 5 is undisturbed, while the Mapleton Forest Station site/picnic area is now used as a picnic area on the Forest Drive and is marked by the original fruit trees planted.

The rainforest walk in the park was named after Linda Garrett who generously donated 44ha of land to the Maroochy Shire Council in the late 1980s. Ms Garrett purchased the land from developers with a view to preserving it for the Mapleton community and, at Ms Garrett's request, the reserve was officially gazetted as Delicia Road Conservation Park under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* on 16 December 1994. Delicia Road Conservation Park was amalgamated with the Mapleton National Park in June 2011 and the walking track name remains as a reminder of Ms Garrett's generosity.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

The parks' significant size enables the most diverse array of recreation opportunities offered on any protected area in the Sunshine Coast region. These include bushwalking, camping and picnicking through to higher impact activities such as forest drives, mountain biking, trail bike riding, and abseiling. Horse riding is provided for on an extensive trail network contained in the Mapleton Forest Reserve; these horse riding trails weave through the national park.

A major portion of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk is located in the national park. A circuit walk traversing along Gheerulla Creek past Gheerulla Falls and returning via Gheerulla Bluff and escarpment is one of the highlights. A short detour along Pilularis walk leads to Mapleton Forest day-use area and provides one of a number of alternate entry points for the great walk. This great walk provides an opportunity for more serious walkers who are self reliant. Camp grounds at Ubajee, Gheerulla and Thilba Thalba allow for overnight stays while completing the walk.

The Gheerulla trail bike area, comprising 26km of trails provides one of only a few single use trail bike areas in

Queensland. The trail bike area is accessed from trail heads on both the Mapleton and Kenilworth sides of the park.

The Mapleton day-use area provides a hub for one of the first multi-use trail systems to be developed in South East Queensland. The continued increase in recreational demand has seen this concept expanded with proposed additional multi-use trail systems being suggested, based around the SEQ Water Cooloolabin Dam day-use area and the new SEQ horse trail head facility on Cooloolabin Road on the eastern entry to the park.

As there is such a complex array of visitor opportunities on the parks it will be necessary to develop a recreation action plan to outline appropriate levels of recreational access, activities and development which is sustainable. There is a history of dog walking on the urbanised borders of the parks. Dog walking is allowed on the horse trail network.

Education and science

With an extensive range of disparate and intertwined ecosystems and varying fire regimes and fire history, the national park offers extensive opportunities for research. Some initial research interest has focused on fire monitoring in the Gheerulla scribbly gum community and Swains Peak areas but further fire management research opportunities need to be encouraged.

A long-term research and monitoring project was commenced in 1994 in the Delicia Road section to investigate stream-dependent frogs.

In general the parks provide opportunity for increased education and research activities, including pest, fire and sustainable visitor management.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

Pest plant invasions are fairly extensive along the tracks and previous logging trails. Species such as lantana *Lantana camara* extend up to 50m in depth along these tracks. Mistflower *Ageratina riparia* and silver-leaf desmodium *Desmodium uncinatum* occur along the creek edges. Control of track side lantana, morning glory *Ipomoea cairica* and silver leaf desmodium occurs as part of ongoing pest management.

Exotic grasses particularly whiskey grass *Andropogon virginicus* and broad leaved paspalum *Paspalum mandiocanum* are increasing along the tracks and disturbed areas. Control of these species is vital before they become more dominant and spread into the vegetation. Giant rat's tail grass *Sporobolus pyramidalis* is present in the park and on other managed tenures including Cedar Creek Road, Cedar Creek Road East and the power line access track north of tower 5203. It is a declared class 2 species and requires control. The spread and extent of pest plants is likely to increase with more extreme weather events.

Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, feral cats *Felis catus* and dogs *Canis familiaris*, cane toads *Rhinella marina*, black rats *Rattus rattus* and deer occur within the reserve but there is no detailed information on their abundance and distribution. Baiting of dogs occurs in coordination with regional councils baiting program (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and adjoining landholders). Monitoring of cats and cane toads occurs incidentally.

Fire management

Previous forestry practices for the parks were varied with some sections being burnt 2–3 yearly and other sections not experiencing any fire, due to remoteness or being surrounded by fire suppressing vegetation types. Adjacent landowners burn on a regular basis with the fires sometimes escaping into the reserve. This frequency of fires has affected the open forest communities in particular and may be adversely impacting on the fire sensitive species.

The Delicia Road section of the park has reportedly not been burnt since 1923 and provides a valuable reference site for fire related studies on the forest communities.

With the improved vegetation mapping capabilities, QPWS is developing a fire management statement that best recognises the fire ecology requirements of different ecosystems with a balanced approach to limiting potential fire threat to adjacent properties. This approach should result in longer fire free intervals for some areas.

Partnerships

QPWS maintains partnerships with a number of organisations.

The Sunshine Coast Council is active in promoting recreational and tourism opportunities with specific brochures highlighting mountain bike and horse riding trail networks. Liaison and ongoing works between QPWS and council staff occurs regularly to monitor and manage pest plant and pest animal issues.

SEQ Water relies almost entirely on the parks as a catchment area for its Cooloolabin, Wappa and Kureelipa dams and weirs.

QPWS work in partnership with Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the rural fire brigade to best manage fire in this environment especially with the increasing rural residential development adjacent to the parks.

Resource use

Mapleton National Park and the adjacent Mapleton Forest Reserve have a number of resource uses which occur on the protected areas.

Forty two apiary sites occur, mainly on Mapleton Forest Reserve. These sites have an influence on the management of the national park particularly in relation to fire and access trail management.

A special lease over 0.25ha on Mapleton Forest Reserve (Lot 6 AP19232) exists for a communication tower and road. This lease requires further action to resolve a number of issues including the future tenure arrangements. There are two major high voltage power lines on the protected areas. Powerlink has a line running from Kureelipa through to Cedar Creek Road and Energex have a line running from Cooloolabin Road north to Burtons Road. These lines and associated clearing provide for a major fire break but create opportunities for pest plant and pest animal invasion. The dumping of rubbish and inappropriate motorised recreational use has also been experienced in these corridors.

A pipeline and weir (Lot 7 AP19232) exist on Mapleton Forest Reserve. These uses require further action to resolve a number of issues including future tenure arrangements. A foliage collection permit exists covering five zones in Mapleton National Park.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Landscape The integrity of the landscape including the creek systems is maintained.</p>	<p>Integrate QPWS catchment management objectives with the efforts of local land care groups, local government, individual property owners and river trusts. Close and revegetate tracks not essential for management purposes.</p>
<p>Regional ecosystems The ecological requirements for maintaining healthy regional ecosystems are met.</p>	<p>Undertake fire monitoring of the scribbly gum community. Encourage connectivity between other areas of native vegetation through state government conservation initiatives such as nature refuges and voluntary conservation agreements.</p>
<p>Native plants and animals Conservation significant species are protected through management measures.</p>	<p>Determine the occurrence, distribution and requirements of the conservation significant species, particularly the endangered plants, to enable development of protective management measures. Continue to support long term population monitoring and habitat assessment of the stream dependant frogs. Facilitate a comprehensive native plant survey for the Delicia Road section.</p>
<p>Aboriginal cultural Traditional Owners play an important role in the management of the parks and appropriate interpretation of their cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Establish a working group with the Jinibara People Aboriginal Corporation to implement the Indigenous Land Use Agreement. Encourage Traditional Owners to identify values, sites, artefacts and places of cultural heritage significance to ensure these values are not compromised by fire, access and track management.</p>
<p>Shared-history cultural Cultural heritage values are identified and protected.</p>	<p>Access to tracks and sites with significant cultural heritage values must be managed to mitigate potential impact.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitor opportunities Recreation opportunities for the parks are consistent with natural and cultural values.</p>	<p>Develop a visitor management strategy for the parks to ensure levels of recreational access, activities and development is sustainable and consistent with natural and cultural values.</p>
<p>Education and science Educational opportunities increase visitor understanding of park environments. Research continues to improve knowledge for better park management.</p>	<p>Continue to support use of the parks for educational and scientific research purposes and encourage further research efforts that contribute to understanding and managing conservation significant communities and species.</p>
<p>Resource use Resource use of the parks is managed to minimise impacts on park values. Exclusive requirements for resource users are self-funded.</p>	<p>Review foliage collection sites and opportunities. Ensure road access to resource user sites is maintained by the permit holder in liaison with QPWS and in compliance with permit conditions.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	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
12.3.11	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i> , <i>E. tereticornis</i> , <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> open forest on alluvial plains usually near coast	Of concern
12.8.8	<i>Eucalyptus saligna</i> or <i>E. grandis</i> tall open forest on Cainozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.12.1	Simple notophyll vine forest usually with abundant <i>Archontophoenix cunninghamiana</i> (gully vine forest) on Mesozoic to Proterozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.12.14	Mixed shrubby woodland of rocky near coastal areas 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>Bosistoa transversa</i>	three leaved bosistoa	Least concern	Vulnerable	-
<i>Genoplesium cranei</i>	orchid	Vulnerable	-	-
<i>Genoplesium sigmoideum</i>	orchid	Near threatened	-	Data deficient
<i>Gossia inophloia</i>		Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Macadamia ternifolia</i>	bopple nut	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Low
<i>Marsdenia coronata</i>	slender milkvine	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Low
<i>Nothoalsomitra suberosa</i>		Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Pararistolochia praevenosa</i>	Richmond birdwing vine	Near threatened	-	High
<i>Papillilabium beckleri</i>	orchid	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Phaius australis</i>	orchid	Endangered	Endangered	Critical
<i>Plectranthus torrenticola</i>		Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Romnaldia strobilacea</i>		Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Taeniophyllum muelleri</i>		Least concern	Vulnerable	-
<i>Thismia rodwayi</i>		Near threatened	-	Medium
<i>Triunia robusta</i>		Endangered	Endangered	High
<i>Westringia blakeana</i>		Near threatened	-	Low
Animals				
<i>Adelotus brevis</i>	tusked frog	Vulnerable		Medium
<i>Litoria pearsoniana</i>	cascade treefrog	Vulnerable		Low
<i>Mixophyes iteratus</i>	giant barred frog	Endangered	Endangered	Medium
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>	grey goshawk	Near threatened		Low
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	glossy black-cockatoo	Vulnerable		
<i>Climacteris erythroptis</i>	red browed treecreeper	Near threatened		Low
<i>Erythrotriorchis radiatus</i>	red goshawk	Endangered	Vulnerable	High
<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	cotton pygmy goose	Near threatened		Low
<i>Tyto tenebricosa tenebricosa</i>	sooty owl	Near threatened		Low
<i>Podargus ocellatus plumiferus</i>	plumed frogmouth	Vulnerable		Low
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	koala	Vulnerable		
<i>Potorous tridactylus tridactylus</i>	long-nosed potoroo	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Medium
<i>Pseudomys oralis</i>	Hastings River mouse	Vulnerable	Endangered	High
<i>Ornithoptera richmondia</i>	Richmond birdwing butterfly	Vulnerable		Critical

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Ardea ibis</i>	cattle egret	-	✓	✓	-
<i>Falco cenchroides</i>	nankeen kestrel	✓	-	-	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	✓	✓	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-
<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	black-faced monarch	✓	-	-	-
<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	rufous fantail	✓	-	-	-

BONN (CMS) – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement