

# Poona National Park

**Management Plan**

2000



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

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The Poona National Park Management Plan 2000 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 Poona 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 October 1999, in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Act). In 2023 the plan was extended, in keeping with s 120G 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](mailto: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

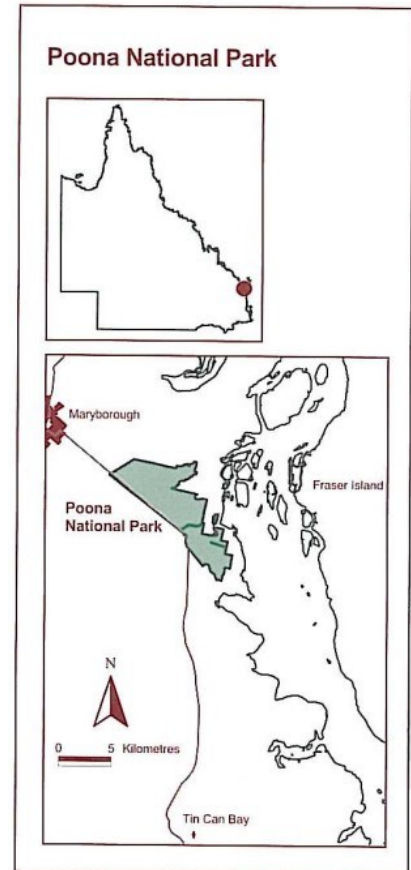
## 1.1 Management directions

Poona National Park lies 6 km south-east of Maryborough and covers an area of approximately 5010 hectares. The park will be managed to conserve coastal lowland and wallum plant communities in their natural condition, with impacts from recreation and other uses kept to a minimum. The park will act as an example of the natural heathland that existed in the Maryborough/Hervey Bay area prior to European settlement. The park will be a refuge for plants and animals in an area currently undergoing rapid development and associated disturbance.

## 1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- appropriate fire management regimes protect plant and animal communities from the adverse effects of wildfires
- sensitive habitats and threatened species are identified and monitored and their requirements are reflected in management programs
- adjacent land use has minimal impact on the natural values of the park
- problem weeds are actively managed and their spread is significantly reduced;
- limited nature-based recreation opportunities are provided
- vehicle access through the park has minimal impact on the park's natural values; and
- neighbours, local government, Aboriginal people with traditional links to the area and other interested parties are made aware of park management issues and are provided with opportunities to be involved in park management.



## 2. Basis for management

Poona National Park is gazette d under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as a national park and will be managed in accordance with s 17 of the Act which sets out the following principles for management:

- to provide to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and values
- to 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 requirements of other legislation administered by the Service and other State and Commonwealth agencies will be met where necessary.

### 2.1 Bioregional context

Poona National Park lies within the local authority area of Maryborough City Council. The park covers an area north and east of the Maryborough-Boonooroo Road. The park also contains two small sand islands in the Great Sandy Strait, adjacent to the township of Maaroom. The park is located in the Burnett-Curtis Coastal Lowland province of the South East biogeographic region. This province is based upon the sedimentary rocks of the Maryborough Basin and marine and alluvial sediments. It is drier than the Great Sandy and Southern Coastal Lowlands provinces to the east and south and adds a tropical component to the biota. The park lies in the Boonooroo Wet Heath Area, a site on the Register of the National Estate.

Poona National Park was gazetted in 1991. Further acquisitions in 1994, 1995 and 1996 have increased the park's size to its current extent. Prior to gazettal the area was state forest and unallocated State land until local conservationists lobbied for its gazettal as national park to conserve the 'wallum' heath. Surrounding land use includes residential development, forestry pine plantations, a quarry, cattle grazing and a waste management area.

Poona National Park is listed in Schedule 2 of the *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994* as a national park where fish, invertebrate animals and mud crabs may be taken, but only from Kalah Creek and only in accordance with the conditions listed in part 2 of the schedule.

## 2.2 Values of Poona National Park

### 2.2.1 Geology and landform

The park contains portions of the Elliott and Maryborough Formations comprising sandstone, mudstone and conglomerates. These formations, deposited in the Tertiary and Lower Cretaceous periods, are largely covered by more recent sands and mud associated with the Great Sandy Strait and the Mary River.

The area consists of a flat to gently undulating low-lying coastal plain which was formerly part of the Mary River delta. The soils deposited by the Mary River are fine textured and poorly drained. The water table lies close to the surface and soils may be waterlogged for prolonged periods. The most poorly drained soils have developed gleyed horizons, which are bluish/grey and compact in nature, and indicate low oxidation. River gravels also occur in the area.

Poona National Park forms a significant component of the catchment for Kalah Creek which empties into the Great Sandy Strait.

### 2.2.2 Plants and animals

The park contains large areas of wallum heath associated with melaleuca, eucalypt, and angophora open forest. The major vegetation types found in the park include:

- tall open melaleuca woodland with mixed eucalypt/corymbia containing broad-leafed paperbark *Melaleuca viridiflora* with pink bloodwood *Corymbia intermedia*, Queensland peppermint *Eucalyptus exserta*. and smooth-barked apple *Angophora leiocarpa*
- open melaleuca forest containing *Melaleuca viridiflora* with *Banksia robur*, *Banksia aemula*, *Melastoma affine*, *Blechnum indicum*, *Lepironia articulata*, and *Lomandra longifolia*
- tall open Eucalyptus tereticornis woodland
- banksia woodland with emergents containing *B. aemula* and *B. robur* with emergents of *M. viridiflora* and *C. intermedia*
- heathland without emergents
- mangroves; and
- open chenopod shrubland.

The park contains plants which are listed as rare or threatened under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 1994* including:

- *Macrozamia pauli-guilielmi* (endangered)
- *Boronia keysii* (vulnerable); and
- *Prasophyllum exilis* (rare).

Numerous species of terrestrial orchids are found in the wallum and open forest communities of this park. Presently 17 different species have been identified of which one is classified as rare and another's conservation status is still to be determined. Special management consideration will be given to these plants, especially with regard to fire management and any new infrastructure development.

The park contains one of the most southern occurrences of a pure *Melaleuca viridiflora* plant community. The mixture of the tropical *M. viridiflora* with typical elements of the wallum flora of the south is an interesting feature of the park.

The park provides valuable habitat for a range of animals, particularly birdlife. While the vulnerable ground parrot *Pezoporus wallicus* was noted as being on the park in the past, its current presence is not yet confirmed. The wallum heath provides habitat suitable for ground parrots.

### 2.2.3 Cultural heritage

Currently no significant Aboriginal, South Pacific Islander or European cultural sites have been identified to the park's managers.

### 2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

The heathlands of the park present spectacular wildflower displays in Winter and Spring. The wildflowers can be observed by travellers along the Boonooroo Road. The park contains the upper reaches of Kalah Creek which is an attractive area containing rocky ledges, mangroves and melaleuca wetlands.

### 2.2.5 Scientific and educational

The park is close and accessible for students based in Maryborough wanting to study wallum and coastal lowland plant communities. The park has scientific interest as it contains plants at their northern or southern limit of distribution.

### 2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

The park currently experiences a low level of day-use recreation. Visitor activities include recreational fishing at Kalah Creek, birdwatching, photography and the viewing of wildflowers. No visitor facilities exist on the park. Vehicle access is limited to 4WDs with roads becoming impassable in wet conditions. Visitors can also access the park by boat or on foot.

### 2.2.7 Economic

Protected areas can make a substantial contribution to regional development by providing natural resources that attract visitors to regional areas of Queensland. Poona National Park has the potential to contribute to the local economy in combination with other significant protected areas in the region. Presently no commercial tourist operators visit the park.

## 3. Management strategies

### 3.1 Native plants and animals

#### Current situation

There is a plant list for the park, but it is currently incomplete. Terrestrial orchids are located at a number of key sites. *Macrozamia pauli-guilielmi*, *Boronia keysii* and *Prasophyllum exilis* are rare or threatened plant species that have been recorded on the park.

There is a fauna list for the park which has been composed from incidental sightings and past fauna surveys. This fauna list is currently incomplete.

#### Desired outcomes

- The composition and extent of native vegetation types are maintained, subject to natural change.
- The species composition and density of the animal communities are maintained, subject to natural change.
- A current list of plants and animals and their conservation values is available.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Continue to collect and upgrade natural resource information for the park.
- Develop a vegetation map for the park.
- Develop a monitoring program for plants and animal communities on the park.
- Encourage research related to the rare or threatened plants and animals which occur on the park, and modify management based on any new information that arises.
- Identify disturbed or degraded areas and undertake appropriate revegetation.

**3.2 Introduced plants and animals****Current situation**

Major weeds on the park include groundsel and slash pine. These weeds continue to invade the park from the neighbouring state forest and adjacent lands.

Feral animals found on the park include foxes, dogs, cats, hares, and pigs. Foxes are likely to be having a significant impact on the park's birdlife. A fox and pig baiting program is conducted in liaison with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Common starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* are nesting in open woodland within 5 km of the park. This species may have an impact on hollow-nesting native avifauna.

**Desired outcomes**

- Introduced plants are controlled and, where practical, eradicated from the park.
- The impact of introduced animals on the park is reduced.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Investigate and implement the most effective measures for the control of weeds. Declared noxious species will be eradicated if possible.

Monitor feral animal numbers as part of general duties and through liaison with neighbours. Action will be taken if feral animal numbers are determined to be significant. Common starlings will be destroyed if located on the park.

- Continue the fox and pig baiting program in association with DNR.

**3.3 Fire management****Current situation**

Wallum heath is highly combustible during dry periods. Burning of heath too frequently results in a change of the composition of vegetation communities and a reduction in species diversity.

The park has habitat that is suitable for ground parrots. These parrots require habitat with specific burning regimes.

There is a fire management strategy for the park and a set of wildfire response procedures. There have been fire monitoring sites established on the park.

There has been a number of wildfires on the park since it was gazetted. Some of these fires were deliberately lit by visitors. Some wildfires were a result of fires entering the park from adjacent land.

Some of the tracks on the park are used for fire management purposes. Park staff liaise with neighbours over fire management issues in the area.

Tuan State Forest, which contains extensive exotic pine plantations, is adjacent to the park. Fire management of the plantations and state forest impacts on fire and ecological management of the adjacent national park.

**Desired outcomes**

- Fire management is based on regionally adopted fire management practices.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Maintain and implement a fire management plan composed of a fire management strategy, a fire management program and a wildfire response procedure.
- Develop a strategy for monitoring fire on the park as part of the fire management planning process. The effectiveness of the system of fire tracks on the park will be reviewed as required.
- Help neighbours maintain fire lines around the park and assist and participate in cooperative protection burns.
- The Ranger-in-Charge will liaise with park neighbours, in particular Forestry representatives and the local rural fire brigade, concerning QPWS fire management practices.

**3.4 Landscape, soil and catchment protection****Current situation**

The park contains a number of drainage channels used to drain water off Boonooroo Rd, and there are also some drains associated with draining water off/on adjacent land. The drains along Boonooroo Rd are maintained by the Maryborough City Council. The council has used herbicides to control regrowth and is developing a set of profiles and a management plan for the drains. The drains are impacting on native vegetation and causing habitat degradation. People also drive down the drains, and this is an inappropriate access to the park. Weeds enter the park in drain water that settles in disturbed soil.

There is a concern that ground water within the park is being contaminated by adjacent waste management areas.

There is a powerline that crosses the park from Boonooroo Rd to Maaroom and Telstra have been given permission to install a fibre optic cable along the powerline route. The powerline is used by QPWS as a firebreak.

**Desired outcomes**

- Park soils and landforms are conserved and protected.
- There is minimal impact from adjacent land use on the park's landscape values and ground water.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Prevent vehicle access along drains and encourage revegetation of inappropriate drains.
- Liaise with neighbours and the Maryborough City Council over the management of drains on the park. Encourage the development and approval of a management plan for the drains, ensuring there is an emphasis on the minimal use of herbicide and a preference for annual slashing in the maintenance program.
- Monitor the park's ground water for contamination and take action to identify the source, and remedy the situation if contaminants are detected.
- Any future utilities to the township of Maaroom will only be permitted to traverse the park along the existing service corridor.

**3.5 Cultural heritage****Current situation**

No cultural survey of the park has been undertaken and no cultural sites have been identified.

**Desired outcomes**

- Cultural sites are identified and protected in accordance with the wishes of the appropriate Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal people with traditional links to the area are involved in park management.

**Proposed policies, guidelines and actions**

- Survey and map any cultural sites on the park.
- Liaise with Aboriginal groups affiliated with the area regarding cultural sites management.
- Aboriginal interest in the park will be identified, and those groups or individuals will be provided with the opportunity to participate in the management of the park on a long-term basis.



## 3.6 Recreation and tourism

### Current situation

The park has no visitor facilities.

There are numerous sand tracks throughout the park which are used by visitors for access, in particular to Kalah Creek. The tracks are also used by QPWS staff for access to implement weed and fire management programs.

Many of the tracks through the wallum heath become impassable in wet conditions. Vehicle use of some tracks has caused significant erosion problems. This is particularly a problem in the tidal areas of the mangrove system adjacent to Kalah Creek.

Widespread clearing of wallum for coastal development and agriculture in the Wide Bay area has reduced opportunities to view wildflowers. Poona has become a popular location for viewing wildflowers. There is a problem with visitors removing native plants or cutting wildflowers.

Presently no commercial tourist operators visit the park.

Two huts have been removed from the islands in the park. There is still a hut on the park in the vicinity of Kalah Creek.

### Desired outcomes

- Visitors to the park have opportunities to experience the scenery and observe native plants and animals.
- Recreation has a minimal impact on the park's natural values.
- Access to specific locations within the park is maintained to a suitable standard for visitors.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Rationalise the track system and close many existing tracks to vehicle traffic. A circuit through the park will provide access to Kalah Creek from both the Boonooroo Road and Maaroom township. This will provide a range of recreational experiences for vehicle-based park visitors. This track will be maintained to a standard suitable for 4WDs but may be closed in wet conditions to prevent erosion. A number of existing tracks will remain accessible for pedestrian use only, and some tracks will be used by QPWS staff for management purposes only.
- A low level of development will occur at Kalah Creek to restrict vehicles from sensitive habitats and improve the visitor experience.
- Unless visitor use of this area increases significantly, no toilet facilities will be provided.
- All huts will be removed from the park.

## 3.7 Education and interpretation

### Current situation

There are no interpretive facilities on the park. There is no visitor information available for the park.

### Desired outcomes

- Visitors are aware of, and appreciate, the coastal wallum community on the park and the importance of protecting this vegetation type.
- Appropriate use of the park is encouraged through signage and interpretive material.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Visitor interpretive needs will be considered, and a public contact plan will be developed. This plan will identify the major interpretive themes for the park, the manner of their presentation and infrastructure requirements. Signs will be used to inform visitors of appropriate access routes, road closures and changed conditions. The public contact plan will outline which signs will be required and where they should be located.

## 3.8 Plan implementation and monitoring

### Current situation

The park is managed by a QPWS management unit in Maryborough that is responsible for managing protected areas in the shires of Tiaro, Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Woocoo, Biggenden and Gayndah.

### Desired outcomes

- The management plan is an effective set of operational guidelines.

### Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Ranger-in-Charge to submit a brief annual report on the success of the plan's implementation.
- Review the management plan within 10 years from approval according to s 125 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

## 4. References

Australian Heritage Commission 1998. *Register of the National Estate Database. Boonooroo Wet Heath Area*, Maryborough Qld.