Department of Environment and Science

Coalstoun Lakes National Park

Management Plan

2000

Queensland Government

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

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The Coalstoun Lakes 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 or direction.

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Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Coalstoun Lakes 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.

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

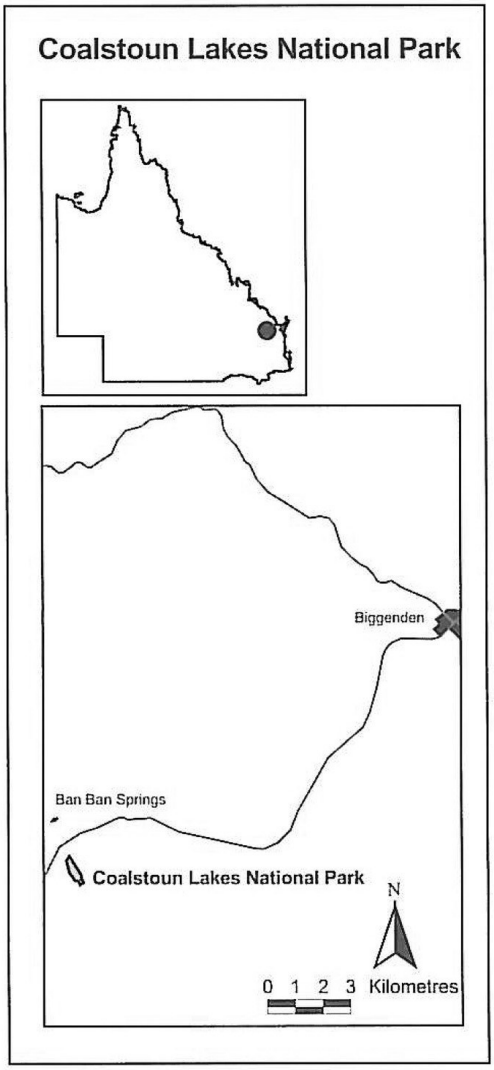
1.1 Management directions

Coalstoun Lakes National Park lies 21 kilometres (km) south-west of Biggenden and covers an area of approximately 26 hectares. The park was gazetted in 1929 to conserve an area of geological significance. The park contains flora that is a valuable remnant of a now rare vegetation type. The park will be managed to conserve the remnant vegetation by reducing current threats such as weeds, cattle grazing and wildfires. Degraded areas will be rehabilitated and revegetated. Visitor access will be upgraded in liaison with the local authority, and the park's unique geological and scenic values will be interpreted to the public.

1.2 Purpose

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- the park is kept free from disturbance caused by the encroachment of cattle.
- areas that have suffered degradation from weed invasion, cattle grazing, and past clearing are rehabilitated.
- areas of dry vine thicket are conserved.
- problem weeds are actively managed, and their spread significantly reduced.
- appropriate fire management regimes protect plant and animal communities from the adverse effects of wildfires.
- visitor access to the park is provided and the park's natural and cultural values are interpreted; and
- Aboriginal groups, neighbours and the local community are aware of management issues and provided with opportunities to be involved in management.



Map 1. Location map of Coalstoun Lakes National Park

2. Basis for management

Coalstoun Lakes National Park is gazetted 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

Coalstoun Lakes National Park lies within the Biggenden Shire. The park is located in the South East biogeographic region which contains some of the richest and most diverse flora and fauna species in Australia.

The park's mountain has two well-developed craters containing shallow lakes. The lakes were named in 1893 by Wade Brun, manager of Ban Ban Station, after Coalstoun, his ancestral home in Scotland. While local Aboriginal legend told of the lakes' existence, their location remained a mystery to Brun for several years. Each year during quiet periods Brun sent a few indigenous employees to search for the lakes, and eventually they were located and shown to him.

The original vegetation of the area appears to have been various types of vine scrub, but now only small, isolated patches of this survive among cultivated farmland, and the most significant remnant lies within the craters. Coalstoun Lakes is listed on the Register of the National Estate maintained by the Australian Heritage Commission. The nearest protected area to Coalstoun Lakes is Mt Walsh National Park which lies 15 km to the north-east. Boompa/Coongara Rock State Forest lies approximately 8 km to the south-east and conserves areas of dry rainforest.

The small farming township of Coalstoun Lakes, which is 2 km south-west of the park, lies in the centre of a broad valley floor with fertile red volcanic soil which supports intensive farming operations for grain, peanuts and cattle.

2.2 Values of Coalstoun Lakes National Park

2.2.1 Geology and landform

The park contains the centre of Mt Le Brun which is a volcanic cone with a double crater. Mt Le Brun is a prominent local landmark. The craters, which contain shallow semi- permanent circular lakes, are elongated along a north-west south-ease line and their rims intersect. The composite crater rim is lowest on the south-east side where it has been breached by a basalt flow forming a ramp that extends to the valley floor. Upper Cainozoic olivine-basalts have been traced approximately I00 km from several centres near Coalstoun Lakes down the valleys of Barambah Creek and the Burnett River. These flows contain other significant geological formations such as the Dundurrah lava tube. Mt Le Brun stands 200 metres (m) above the surrounding countryside and was responsible for most of the volcanic activity in this area, which ceased possibly only 600 000 years ago. This makes Mt Le Brun one of Australia's youngest volcanoes and the site of the most recent volcanic eruption in southern Queensland.

2.2.2 Plants and animals

Within the craters vegetation type varies with slope and position. The lakes contain sedge and grasslands. A distinct band of river teatree *Melaleuca bracteata* with scattered bluegum *Eucalyptus tereticornis* occurs on the lake’s shores. The slopes above support softwood scrubs, a type of dry rainforest. This scrub has a layer of emergent trees 10-20 m call above a dense closed canopy 4-12 m tall. The most common tall tree is southern sir is *Archidendropsis thozetiana*, readily distinguished by its small compound leaves and creamy-brown scaly bark. Other emergents include the broadleaved bottle tree *Brachychiton australis*, Queensland bottle tree *Brachychiton rupestris*, leopard ash *Flindersia collina*, crows ash *Flindersia australis* and small-leaved fig *Ficus obliqua*. The closed canopy is very diverse. Some of the more abundant trees include the white tamarind *Elattostachys xylocarpa*, celery wood *Polyscias elegans*, native pomegranate *Capparis arborea* and cocaine tree *Erythroxylum australe*. Shrubs include *Micromelum minutum* and square-stemmed broom *Spartothamnella juncea*. Vines are conspicuous throughout the scrub. Zigzag vine *Rauwenhoffia leichhardtii*, native hoya *Hoya australis*, distinctive for its very thick, fleshy rounded leaves and native bryony *Diplocyclos palmatus*, which has attractive round red fruit with white stripes, are three characteristic species. Epiphytes are present but not abundant. Tongue orchid *Dendrobium linguiformis* and rock felt fern *Pyrrosia rupestris* are examples.

Little is known about the park's animals. The vulnerable black breasted button quail may occur and migratory rainforest birds and raptors use the park as a refuge. The park may also be an important location for butterflies at certain times of the year.

2.2.3 Cultural heritage

Coalstoun Lakes has significance to local Aboriginal people. The park falls within an area subject to native title claim applications made by the Wakka Wakka people and the Wakka Wakka Jinda people.

2.2.4 Scenic and aesthetic

Mc LeBrun is a prominent feature on the local landscape. Excellent views of the surrounding countryside can be gained from the edge of the craters within the park. The crater lakes are unique to the area and when they contain water, they attract birds and other wildlife.

2.2.5 Scientific and educational

The unique geology and presence of remnant dry rainforest means the park has considerable scientific and educational significance. The Geological Society of Australia reported on the park in 1974 and stated "the area is considered of considerable geological importance due to the very young age of the volcanic activity and consequent good examples of volcanic features that are present relatively unaltered by erosion. The episode is the most recent volcanic activity in southern Queensland, and the only areas of similar features in Australia are in north Queensland and western Victoria". Local school groups visit the park to examine its biological and geological features.

2.2.6 Recreation and tourism

The park is 1 km off the Isis Highway, which runs between Biggenden and Ban Ban Springs, making it a readily accessible site for tourists. Visitors can access the craters by a rough track on the northern side of the mountain or through private property on the southern end however, there are no facilities or walking tracks on the park. Visitors will be intrigued by the thick vegetation within the craters which contrasts strongly to the surrounding cleared agricultural landscape. Superb views are available from the crater rim and the site presents opportunities for birdwatching and photography.

2.2.7 Economic

Protected areas can make a substantial contribution to regional development by providing natural resources that attract tourists to the region. Coalstoun Lakes, with proper planning and management, could offer significant economic benefits to the Biggenden Shire and to the local communities of Coalstoun Lakes and Biggenden.

3. Management strategies

3.1 Native plants and animals

Current situation

There is a limited amount of resource information available for the park. A plant list compiled in 1992 lists 152 plant species. No rare or threatened plant species are known to exist on the park although the rare *Muellerina myrtifolia* may be present. Some areas within the park boundary have been cleared and grazing has reduced the ability of the native vegetation to regenerate. There is a bird list for the park and fauna surveys have been conducted.

Desired outcomes

- The composition and extent of native vegetation types are maintained, subject to natural change.
- Areas within the park boundary which have been degraded or cleared are restored to their appropriate vegetation type.
- 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.
- Identify disturbed or degraded areas and undertake revegetation in association with weed control and erosion control programs.
- Establish monitoring sites within the park to follow changes in vegetation communities that occur as a consequence of grazing removal and weed control.

3.2 Introduced plants and animals

Current situation

Major weeds on the park include lantana, creeping lantana, rubbervine, groundsel, prickly pear, green panic and variegated thistle. Past weed control programs have focussed on controlling groundsel, lantana and prickly pear. Feral animals include foxes, hares, rabbits, cane toads and the house mouse. A lack of fencing has enabled cattle to graze the park for many years.

Desired outcomes

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

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Cattle grazing on the park will not be permitted.
- Rationalise the boundary of the park to make fencing more practical and cost effective. Complete park fencing as soon as practical to exclude cattle. Liaise with neighbours to ensure all cattle are removed from the park.
- 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.

3.3 Fire management

Current situation

Rainforest plants are not tolerant of fire, which can readily destroy them. There is no recorded history of wildfires on the park. Park staff liaise with neighbours over fire management issues in the area. There has been no fire management planning conducted for the park.

Desired outcomes

- Fire management is based on regionally adopted fire management practices.
- There are no fires on the park.

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.
- The primary fire management strategy will be to exclude fire from the park.
- Help neighbours maintain fire lines around the park. Assist and participate in cooperative protection burns.
- The Ranger-in-Charge will liaise with park neighbours and the local rural fire brigade concerning QPWS fire management practices.

3.4 Landscape, soil and catchment protection

Current situation

Vegetation clearing around the perimeter of the crater rims has caused soil erosion. Cattle entering the craters have created a myriad of trails which, in several places, have eroded into channels. Accelerated siltation of the lakes is likely to have occurred as a result of erosion caused by clearing and cattle grazing. There is a quarry adjacent to the southern crater that had a mining operation for the extraction of scoriaceous basaltic material.

Desired outcomes

- Park soils and landforms are conserved and protected.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Develop and implement an erosion control program for the park. Stabilisation of eroded areas will be carried out as required.

3.5 Cultural heritage

Current situation

No cultural survey of the park has been undertaken and no cultural sites have been identified. Coalstoun Lakes has significance to local Aboriginal people who have legends associated with the area. The park falls within an area subject to native title claim applications made by the Wakka Wakka and Wakka Wakka Jinda people.

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 with links to the area regarding cultural site management.
- Aboriginal interest in the park will be identified, and those groups or individuals will be provided with the opportunity to participate in park management.

3.6 Recreational and tourism

Current situation

The park has no walking tracks or visitor facilities. Visitors do access the northern end of the park from the Isis Highway. Generally, visitors park their cars approximately 500 m from the boundary, at the outer base of the crater, and walk up a steep incline to the crater rim. There is no parking area and vehicle access from the highway is unsuitable in wet conditions.

Although there is a gazetted road to the park boundary from the north, the track does not always follow the gazetted road alignment and visitors currently access the park through private property. There is access to the park from the south through private property however, visitors may find it difficult to locate the route and it is likely this access is only used by people with local knowledge.

Presently no commercial tourist operators visit the park.

The local authority and community are interested in promoting the park as a tourist destination.

Desired outcomes

- Visitor park access is of a suitable standard.
- Visitors to the park have opportunities to experience the scenery of the surrounding countryside and the craters.
- Recreation has a minimal impact on the park's natural values.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- The focus of recreation will occur on the northern crater.
- Visitor access to the park will be from the northern end and follow the current gazetted access. Liaise with the local authority to provide safe vehicle access and carparking facilities adjacent to the northern end of the park.
- Develop a walking trail from the carpark to the northern crater rim along the gazetted road alignment. Investigate establishing a walking trail around the northern crater rim.
- No camping will be permitted on the park.
- Maintain access to the southern end of the park for management purposes only.

3.7 Education and interpretation

Current situation

Coalstoun Lakes was identified as a site to visit in the QPWS publication 'Introducing Dry Rainforests'. There is currently no other QPWS visitor information available on the park. There are no interpretive facilities on the park. The park is of interest as a site for environmental education and is used by local schools.

Desired outcomes

- Visitors are aware of and appreciate the park's biological, geological and cultural values, and the importance of protecting them.

Proposed policies, guidelines and actions

- Visitor interpretive needs will be considered by the development of a public contact plan. This plan will identify the major interpretive themes for the park, the manner of their presentation and infrastructure requirements.
- Liaise with the local community, the local authority, and relevant Aboriginal representatives over the public presentation of the park's values.

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

Geological Society of Australia 1974. *Preservation of areas of geological significance: Coalstoun Lakes/Gayndah District, Southeast Queensland*. Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage 1995. Introducing Dry Rainforests