

Protecting Conservation Corridors along Lower Ginninderra Creek and the adjacent Murrumbidgee River

Guidelines from *“Protected Area Governance and Management”* and some case histories on sightline protection.

Doug Finlayson, May 2016



This paper seeks to present guidelines for improving the criteria being used to define the conservation corridor boundaries and buffer zones associated with the Riverview urban development of West Belconnen.

Extracts from *“Protected Area Governance and Management”* (Worboys et al, 2015) are presented and some case histories of parkland sightline management are outlined.

The aim is to help create a sustainable conservation park that will benefit the neighbouring urban communities with a focus on world class practice in the design and management of parkland ecology, heritage, education, and visitor experience (the WOW factor).

“Effectively managed protected areas play a key role in the conservation of the Earth’s natural heritage. Through associated ecosystem services, protected areas also support the livelihoods of more than one billion people worldwide and contribute billions of dollars to local, national and global economies.” (Worboys et al, 2016)





Summary

World-wide guidelines derived from numerous national parks, conservation areas and ecological reserves demonstrate that the current Riverview proposals for a conservation park along the Lower Ginninderra Creek and the adjacent Murrumbidgee River corridors do not meet international best practice and leave a lot to be desired.

There are significant enlargements required to the width of the conservation corridors, especially along the Lower Ginninderra Creek, and in the width of buffer zones to protect the conservation park from encroaching urban development.

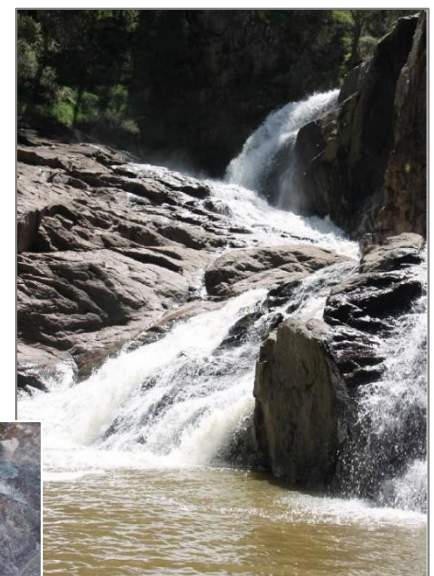
The aim of the conservation corridors is to provide a sustainable parkland setting that will meet ecological, educational, cultural and recreational goals, and be a significant asset of the whole area both for resident communities and tourists alike.

Details of the shortcomings for flora, fauna and heritage (aboriginal and European) are provided by others. In particular -

1. The corridors and buffer zones required by wildlife to enable free access to the river and creek corridors is currently restricted,
2. A sensitive appreciation of both pre-European aboriginal and colonial heritage sites is still lacking, and
3. The appreciation of sightlines required to create a memorable experience for visitors and tourists (the WOW factor) willing and able to pay for the opportunity to visit iconic waterfalls and water holes near Canberra is still lacking.



JOHN SOUTHWELL
DIED 13-11-1858 AGED 3 1/2 HOURS
JANE SOUTHWELL
DIED 8-8-1859 AGED 6 HOURS
INFANTS OF THOMAS JNR
& ELIZA SOUTHWELL (NEE ROFFE)
JOHN SOUTHWELL BOYD
DIED 29-3-1865 AGED 18 DAYS
ALEXANDER BOYD
DIED 1-9-1866 AGED 41 DAYS
LUCY GASSON BOYD
DIED 12-9-1867 AGED 20 DAYS
INFANTS OF JOHN AND
HARRIETT BOYD (NEE SOUTHWELL)



Much of the Worboys' 1000-page Ebook is aimed at the "big picture" world view of conservation and protected areas, as is only natural for an Ebook launched at a world conference of conservation specialists in Sydney during 2015

However, the selected extracts from Worboys' Ebook below are, in my opinion, the most relevant to the proposed development of a conservation area on the boundaries of the Riverview West Belconnen urban development.

I have not necessarily included extracts from all 29 chapters but I have listed the extracts by chapter and in the order I consider relevant to the focus on a West Belconnen conservation park along the Murrumbidgee River and Ginninderra Creek corridors.

ANU EBook

"Protected Area Governance and Management"

Editors: [Graeme L. Worboys](#), [Michael Lockwood](#), [Ashish Kothari](#), Sue Feary and [Ian Pulsford](#)

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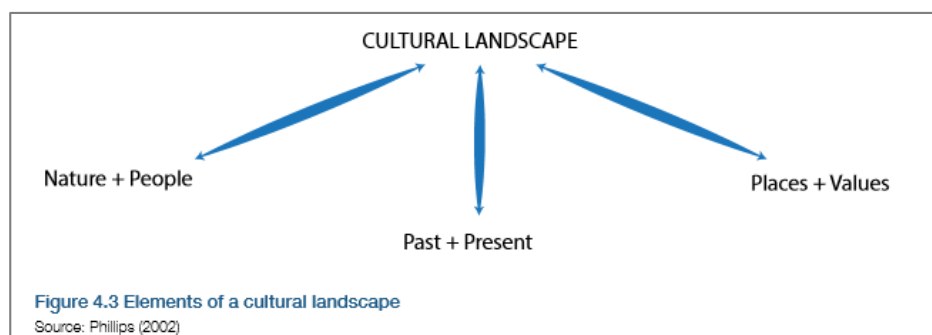
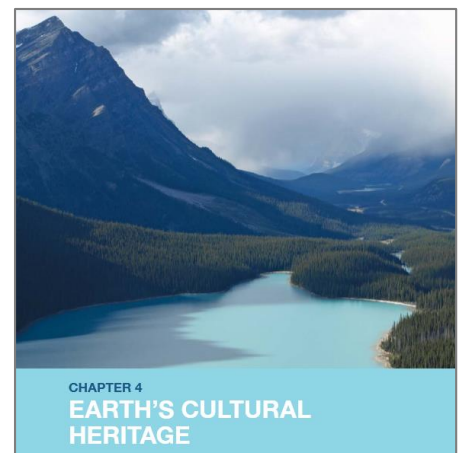
Protected Area Governance and Management – [Whole book](#) (72 MB)

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CHAPTER 4 - EARTH'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Almost any natural feature or combination of natural features can have sacred values, including: geological features: rocks, caves, cliffs, knolls, hills and mountains, water features: springs, wells, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, coastal waters and glaciers, tree features: individual trees or plants, parts of trees, groves and forests, grasslands: meadows landscapes: whole landscapes or elements of them such as valleys and mountains.
- People's social attachment to the natural world is the basis of much of the conflict and debate over protected area management, particularly in relation to access and resource use. Promotion of protected areas for their recreation opportunities requires management responses to ensure against potential environmental degradation and, in some cases, this means exclusion of certain human activities.
- The idea of cultural landscapes offers a conceptual tool that can be applied in protected area management to work towards the integration of natural, cultural, tangible and intangible heritage, and biological and cultural diversity.
- We have shown that throughout the world protected areas have deep cultural values, to the extent that many are seen as flagships of nationality and often the cornerstone of national tourist industries. Protected areas and cultural heritage are not only compatible; they are also inexorably interconnected.



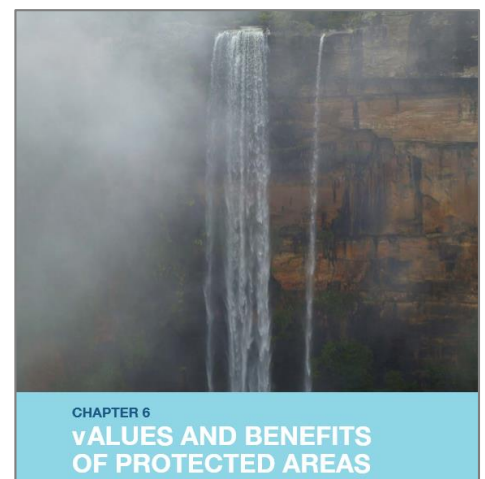
CHAPTER 5 - SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES SHAPING PROTECTED AREAS



- We suggest that in our modern times, custodianship is an area of rapid change, contestation, changing scales and ambiguity, all of which will ultimately play a central role in the effectiveness of protected areas.
 - We give some thought to how humans value nature, why we value nature and how this impacts on the decisions we make and the priorities we establish for ourselves and our political and social systems
 - The research on successful sustainable land and natural resource management continues to point in favour of combining professionalised conservation with good governance and an enabling environment for indigenous peoples and other local custodians.
 - As we enter the 21st century, the pendulum appears to be swinging back from an exclusionary approach to protected areas to a better integration of local custodianship and support from a state-based duty to conserve.
- It is not possible to think about the future of protected areas without giving sufficient attention to economic trends. For decades, the environmental and conservation sector has been grappling with the evident contradictions between the political pressures to grow economies and the need to conserve our natural heritage and ecosystems.
 - Connectivity is not a new technical process of conservation; each case involves substantial engagement with society and interest groups, leading to a new form of social compact that marries diverse interests, cultures and values within an overall paradigm of cooperation.
 - Sustainable protected areas, in the broad sense of the term, require an interaction with those who understand and are competent in other disciplines and areas of expertise that may at first seem remote to wildlife management. Not least amongst these is the ability to develop alliances and solidarity with communities, social movements, economists, influence-makers, those in industry and those engaged in legislation and multilateral treaty systems.

CHAPTER 6 - VALUES AND BENEFITS OF PROTECTED AREAS

- Protected areas are places where conscious efforts are made to preserve not only wild species, but also the ecosystems in which species live.
- There is wide agreement that we have an ethical obligation to maintain the full range of the planet's living diversity—in other words, not to speed up the rate of extinction beyond what would be expected in natural circumstances. We are manifestly failing in this aim at present, with species declining and disappearing all the time, often before they have even been recognised and described by scientists.
- The day-to-day uses of nature for relaxation, exercise and psychological renewal stretch back way beyond recorded history and have been a major driver for protected area creation. Most visitors tend to cluster around the edges of large reserves and keep to footpaths—for walks, family outings, picnics and nature watching. A smaller subset of visitors likes to penetrate much deeper, walking, riding or canoeing for days inside the larger national parks. For these people, the sense of isolation and wilderness is a key part of the attraction.
- With tourism now arguably the world's largest single industry, the potential for ecotourism in protected areas is growing all the time.



- A 'sense of place' is also a useful concept for describing and understanding the attachments some people form with protected areas. Such place attachments can include emotional and functional aspects even for communities who have only recent connections with a protected area.
- The cultural and historical values found within protected areas are also often very important although sometimes rather difficult to define. In the same way that iconic buildings, writers, musicians and football teams can come to embody the heart of a nation or region, so too can special views, landscapes or wild species.
- The overall value of the natural world to humans consists of both economic values and broader cultural and other non-economic values.
- A comprehensive assessment of protected area benefits is likely to build on a combination of qualitative, quantitative and monetary indications of value.
- A key aspect of protected area management is to understand the synergies and conflicts between the wants and needs of different users and to manage the trade-offs and build on the opportunities that result.
- One key aspect of successful management is to make sure that people understand and appreciate the wide range of benefits from protected areas.
- Communication is therefore critical. Protected areas have the opportunity to reach a wide variety of visitors, and along with information on wildlife and walking trails, a growing number are telling people about the other values they contain.

CHAPTER 7 - GOVERNANCE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

- Whether we believe we are exercising power over nature or feel that nature is controlling us, whether we seek power from nature or simply feel at peace within it, we all live with nature and make sense of that interaction in order to survive and add meaning to our lives.

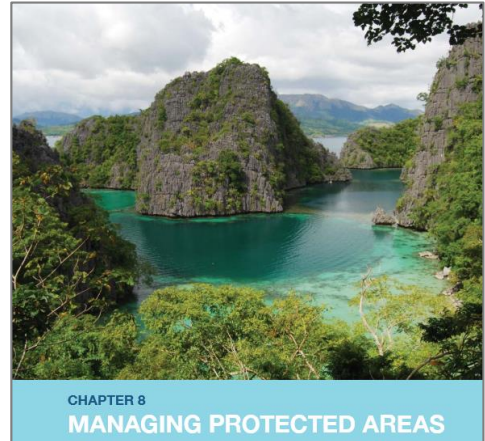


CHAPTER 7
GOVERNANCE FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF NATURE


- For a given natural area, the constituent act of an area-based measure for conservation originates when a relevant authority establishes a vision for it and some clear objectives about how the vision can be achieved.
- The broad definition of a protected area; - 'a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.'
- Establishing and maintaining governance institutions that enjoy broad acceptance and appreciation in society and ensuring that all rights-holders and stakeholders concerned receive appropriate and sufficient information, can be represented and can have a say in advising and/or making decisions.
- In recent decades, protected areas are more commonly established and managed at provincial, regional and local levels, where arrangements may be simpler, more flexible and better connected with local actors, including through innovative governance arrangements that directly involve civil society.
- Adopting an adaptive governance approach means allowing institutions to mature through time. For instance, after an emphasis on legality and technical expertise, a governance organisation may evolve towards enhanced legitimacy, more widely shared responsibilities or supporting the development of new associations among rights-holders.
- A wise governance setting is one in which decisions of meaningful scope are taken, which enhance the common good and solidarity and which not only allow, but also foster, the engagement of all relevant actors in society.

CHAPTER 8 - MANAGING PROTECTED AREAS

- Protected areas constantly face threats such as climate change effects, introduced species, visitor impacts, vandalism, poaching, pollution events, development and extractive activities, civil unrest, incidents such as extreme storms and wildfire events and other issues. Being responsive in a planned and effective way is critical.
- There are usually social and political issues associated with land-use change that need to be managed. Protected areas are a relatively new concept and in the 2010s there are many individuals, neighbours and communities who are directly experiencing this [change in] land use for the first time.
- Planning is a key function of management. It is based on the very best environmental, social, cultural, historical, managerial and political context information and, by including modelling and analysis of data, planning can identify both preferred futures and the circumstances and conditions within which they may be facilitated.
- Management is an intuitive concept and it is part of what we do in our everyday lives. For official management actions, we usually need to be more organised, and this chapter has reinforced the importance of a process of management and four underpinning functions of management: planning, organising, implementing and evaluating.



CHAPTER 12 - LEADERSHIP AND EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

- It is absolutely clear that now, more than ever, strong and firm leadership is essential to achieve the effective conservation of protected areas around the world. Leadership is required in order to direct the course of the institution in charge of protected area management.
- 
- CHAPTER 12
LEADERSHIP AND EXECUTIVE
MANAGEMENT
- Without a deep and abiding belief by the leader that conservation and preservation are essential to our survival, all decisions will be seen as shallow and motivated by external factors.
 - Use the best available sound science and other scholarly information. Maintain accurate fidelity to the law. Act in the long-term public interest.
 - At the landscape scale, networks of interconnected protected areas can create corridors for wildlife and build long-term resilience into the ecosystem.
 - Protected areas, whether private or public, are run by people, depend on people and, as a societal construct, are for people.
 - Along the way to making decisions, executive managers negotiate through alternative and in some cases conflicting views. The decision needs to account for the source of the views while keeping track of the overall strategic direction and overall plans.
- The protected area manager should regularly interact with communities on topical issues such as resource extraction and use, management zoning, infrastructure development, service provision, monitoring, law enforcement and tourism developments, through dialogue that feeds into planning.
 - When it comes to justifying the existence of protected areas in economic terms, protected area managers often resort to tourism. For many countries, protected areas possess many tourist attractions including unique and spectacular landforms, rare plants and plant communities and a diversity of wildlife.

CHAPTER 13 - PLANNING

- The purpose of planning is to establish how to get from where we are today (here) to where we want to be tomorrow (there). In order to do this we need to be clear about where we are, where we want to get to and our proposed path to get there.
- Corporate plans at the highest level will typically state the overall objectives of the organisation and usually include a statement about how the organisation would like things to be in the future (a vision statement).
- Environmental and socioeconomic systems are always changing. Different, and often conflicting, values and perspectives are usually involved in resource allocation and use decisions.
- An approach that seeks to overcome the challenges of uncertainty and change is adaptive planning. This approach analyses problems systematically, integrates new information and learning insights continuously, and adjusts the management response accordingly.
- Along with adaptive planning it is increasingly recognised that participative ways of planning are essential to protected area management. Participation has become a basic principle of protected area planning, since it has been recognised that without participation by the beneficiaries of the plan, implementation and outcomes will often fail.

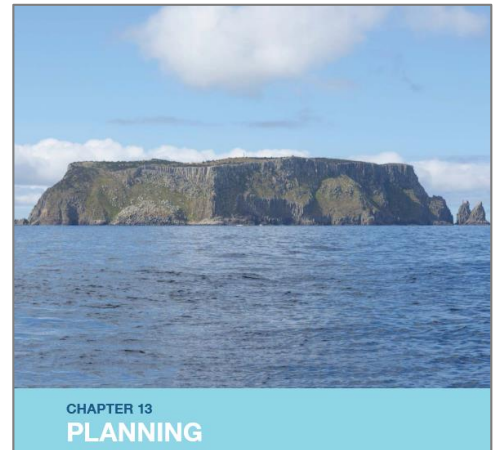


Figure 13.2 Rational, adaptive and participatory planning process
Source: Adapted from Lookwood (2006)

CHAPTER 14 - ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT: WHO, WHY, HOW AND WHEN?

- Protected areas are but one sector and profession where, in recent years, we have seen increasing requirements to collaborate with a diversity of stakeholders.
- Community engagement and collaborative management are in some situations required to some degree in formal planning and policy processes.

- Managers must establish relationships with neighbouring landholders, other government agencies, visitors and NGOs. This adds social considerations to the mix of natural, legal, financial and institutional considerations to be recognised and dealt with.



CHAPTER 14
ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION
IN PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT:
WHO, WHY, HOW AND WHEN?

- Adaptive governance explicitly includes multiple stakeholders and admits their role in setting goals and strategic directions.
- Engagement with communities and other organisations is not singular in its purpose, but is undertaken to allow the realisation of different goals held by different individuals and groups.
- Protected areas have many values, and thus are of interest to many individuals, communities and organisations who may be located nearby or at a distance.
- Protected area managers must recognise these multiple interests and be thorough in identifying and engaging all those who have a stake in the protected area/s in question, whatever their interest.
- Different individuals and groups will have distinctly different reasons for being engaged with protected area management, whether invited to do so by park management or wishing or demanding to do so.

- Engagement with communities and other organisations is not singular in its purpose, but is undertaken to allow the realisation of different goals held by different individuals and groups.
- Adaptive management is most likely to succeed if the knowledge and skills of communities can be harnessed as well as communities being supportive of management initiatives.

CHAPTER 18 - GEOCONSERVATION IN PROTECTED AREAS

- Geoheritage comprises those elements of the Earth's geodiversity that are considered to have significant scientific, educational, cultural or aesthetic value.
- Many protected areas are designated because their geological and geomorphological features are visually and scenically dominant in the landscape, and quite often have an iconic significance in the cultural history of the area.
- Geoconservation in protected areas delivers many important contributions to biotic nature and to society.
- Geodiversity provides the foundation for life on Earth and for the diversity of species, habitats, ecosystems and landscapes.
- Geoconservation interests will be included in sites managed for various aspects of biodiversity conservation or for ecosystem services or for cultural reasons.
- The identification of core and surrounding buffer zones should be an important element of the management arrangements for geoconservation. The two concepts are closely linked and the buffer is a necessary complement to the core zone, as without it, it will be much more difficult to protect the features in, and the integrity of, the core zone.
- A buffer zone surrounds or adjoins the core areas, and is used for cooperative activities compatible with sound ecological practices, including environmental education, recreation, ecotourism, and applied and basic research.
- Buffer zones can have their own intrinsic, 'stand-alone' functions for maintaining anthropogenic, biological and cultural diversity. They can also have an important connectivity function in a larger spatial context as they connect biodiversity components within core areas with those in transition areas.

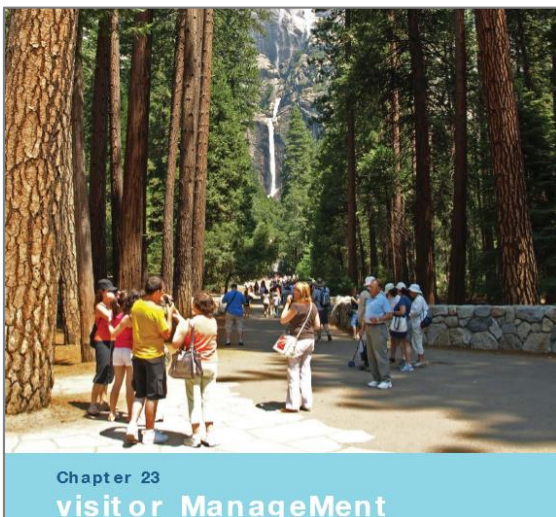


CHAPTER 18
GEOCONSERVATION IN
PROTECTED AREAS

- In practical terms, identification and management of core and buffer zones for geoconservation protected areas depend on the specific reason for designation and therefore the type of area being protected.
- The definition of the boundary will depend on the need to control external activities that will have a detrimental effect on the site, such as excessive visitor numbers, geological investigations for research or education requiring removal of large samples, or vegetative growth that would obscure the interest.
- Activities that damage the key interests being protected should be prohibited in the core area and similarly restrictions imposed in the buffer area.
- The buffer should be defined as the area needing conservation management to protect the features and forms, and the systems and processes that are the reason for the protection.
- Large commercial residential developments will affect the natural processes and could lead to permanent loss of protected areas. Attempts should be made to retain these areas within developments and ensure an adequate buffer zone is designated to safeguard their integrity.
- Alongside site protection and management, raising wider awareness and involvement through education and interpretation is a key part of geoconservation. The purpose should be to inform and entertain as well as to educate.
- Geodiversity is an essential consideration in protected area management, particularly in the context of managing for nature, both abiotic and biotic. Geoheritage is constituted by those elements of geodiversity that have significant scientific, educational, cultural or aesthetic values.

Chapter 23 - VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- There are many different types of visitors to protected areas. They may be official guests to a national park; researchers working in a strict nature reserve; volunteers assisting with a national park work program; educational groups learning about special natural or cultural heritage; or people who conduct their business within a protected area including contractors and shop owners. Importantly, visitors also include tourists and recreationists.



- Visitor use of protected areas is an integral part of the day-to-day operation of protected areas. Visitor use provides educational opportunities, delivers recreational benefits, develops public support for protection and may deliver benefits to resident and local communities consistent with the other objectives of management.

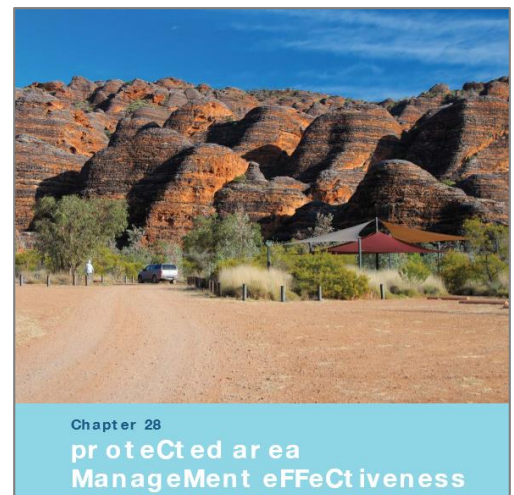
- Strong guidance [is required] for visitor use of protected areas. The objectives of management are to manage visitor use for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes at a level which will not cause significant biological or ecological degradation to the natural resources, and 'to contribute to local economies through tourism.

- Active tourism management in protected areas is crucial to ensure that the natural and cultural resources they protect can be enjoyed by future generations. The major risk of nature tourism is that it also threatens to destroy the resources on which it depends.
- Socially sustainable use may also have a heightened sensitivity in protected areas, especially where there is the potential for impacts to communities within protected areas or where crowding may result in a less satisfying visitor experience.
- Well-managed tourism can contribute to protected area management by raising the profile of the protected area at local, national and international levels and bringing visitors to the protected area, particularly people needing services and facilities to make the journey.

- To make a protected area an effective tourism destination, it should have signature experience(s), often referred to in the tourism sector as a heroic or iconic experience because it stands out as totally reflecting the brand and leading the way in attracting visitor interest and satisfying visitors.
- Visitor use and official use of protected areas are integral parts of protected area management. Working in partnership with the tourism industry is very important.

Chapter 28 – PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

- As far back as 1746, the British statesman Philip Stanhope gave his son the advice that ‘whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well’.
- A developing approach to management effectiveness evaluation examines the outcomes of protected area management based on detailed monitoring and reporting on the condition and trend of protected area values, especially biodiversity values.
- Evaluations can enable and support an adaptive approach to management by providing essential information to managers at all levels about the extent to which management interventions are being implemented and are being successful.
- Evaluations that are integrated into management culture and processes are more successful and effective in improving management performance in the long term.
- Protected area management practice has increasingly moved towards the recognition of the rights of local communities, neighbours and other stakeholders in planning and decision-making.
- The best evaluation study will be ineffective or have negative impacts if there is no follow-through to result in improved management, or if the process of evaluation causes serious friction and loss of trust between the parties.
- Ensure communication of results is positive and timely and undertaken in a way that is useful to the participants.
- Management effectiveness evaluation has become an integral part of good protected area management. Increasingly, policymakers, senior managers, donors, stakeholders and protected area managers on the ground are looking to this information as a key part of their planning and decision-making armoury. Most importantly, the process of management effectiveness evaluation is becoming institutionalised within management systems.



Sightlines – some case histories



Is this the sort of view you would like to see destroyed by urban development of any kind?

(Photo - Doug Finlayson - Pigeon House and Budawang National Park)

Case history – 1

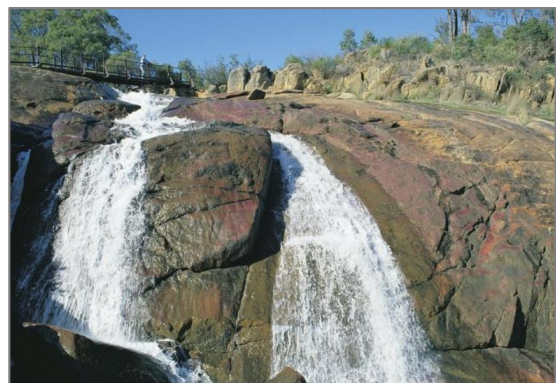
John Forrest National Park, WA – Management Plan Sightline Emphasis

John Forrest National Park is located on the edge of the Darling Scarp, adjacent to the Great Eastern Highway, 25 km from the Central Business District of Perth. It is accessible to many people living in hills communities and nearby country areas, as well as the Perth metropolitan area. John Forrest has long been favoured as a site for a day-trip from Perth, with its variety of plant communities and wildlife and being a starting point for many walk trails. There are outstanding views from the lookout point on the scenic drive and a wide variety of attractions and facilities that make it a popular venue for families and groups.

The historical heritage of the Park is important. It is one of Australia's earliest national parks and is an area of great Aboriginal significance. The Park was established in 1898 on the recommendation of a past Surveyor General, H. F. Johnston. The Park's natural attributes, which helped to secure its status and its placement on the National Estate Register, have been enjoyed by many generations.

VISUAL LANDSCAPE

The objective is to plan and implement management activities to complement the visual qualities of the Park's landscapes. John Forrest National Park's visual landscape is one of its most valuable resources. The landscape includes native bushland, valleys and undulating hills covered with a diversity of vegetation interspersed with granite outcrops, waterfalls and stream courses, and historic and cultural landscape elements such as the picnic shelters.



Visual changes to the landscape occur continually. Natural changes are generally subtle and harmonious. Human imposed changes, however, can either visually intrude upon natural or cultural landscape elements and can appear disharmonious and alien, or enhance the surrounding landscape elements and increase its visual quality.

It is also pertinent that modifications to the visual landscape can be perceived as positive or negative depending upon a number of variable factors, including viewer position, length of time that changes are obvious, view distances and type of landscape alteration. The ability of the landscape to absorb change without loss of scenic value also varies and this depends upon topography, soils and vegetation cover. It is thus obvious that visual landscape management involves extensive broad scale and on-site analysis, project impact evaluation, together with sensitive design and construction methods.

Broad Scale Landscape Assessment

A broad scale landscape assessment was carried out for the Darling Scarp which included John Forrest National Park. This study follows CALM's Landscape Management System as described in Revell (1991). The majority of the Park's landscape is classified as high scenic quality characterised by the presence of granite rock outcropping, Jane Brook Valley, waterfalls, and a high diversity of vegetation. The remaining landscape is considered moderate scenic quality and is characterised by gently undulating topography and moderate vegetative diversity.

The broad scale landscape management areas for John Forrest National Park were identified and delineated by compiling mapped information on the Scenic Quality Classes (or the physical landscape component), and the Public Sensitivity - Seen Area maps (the social landscape component). This compilation has resulted in the landscape being categorised into broad areas of visual importance for management.

VALUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Values

The Park's conservation values are significant, and include:

- geographically restricted flora, species gazetted as threatened, and species at their northernmost limit;
- geographically restricted fauna, and species gazetted as threatened or in need of special protection;
- a reserve of high conservation value close to a capital city;
- species of flora and fauna representative of the ecological ecotone between the Swan Coastal Plain and the Darling Plateau;
- protected habitat for flora and fauna species affected by urban development; and
- diversity of vegetation associations including heathlands, wandoo woodlands, granite complexes and riverine areas that provide habitat for species specially adapted to these environments.

The Park's recreation and cultural values are also significant, and include:

- a natural environment in close proximity to Western Australia's capital city and over 80% of the State's residents;
- an area rich in Aboriginal cultural values;
- natural features such as Jane Brook, the associated waterfalls, forested hills and granite outcrops;
- a variety of vegetation, particularly wildflowers during flowering time, and wildlife such as kangaroos;
- extensive views across the Swan Coastal Plain and the Darling Scarp;
- nature based recreation opportunities such as barbecuing, picnicking and walking;
- historic relics that were associated with the east-west rail route such as the tunnel, bridges, embankments and relics where stations once stood;
- rock works built by sustenance workers in the 1930s which contribute to the character of the main recreation area;
- the provision of a range of facilities including the provision of access and opportunities for people with disabilities.



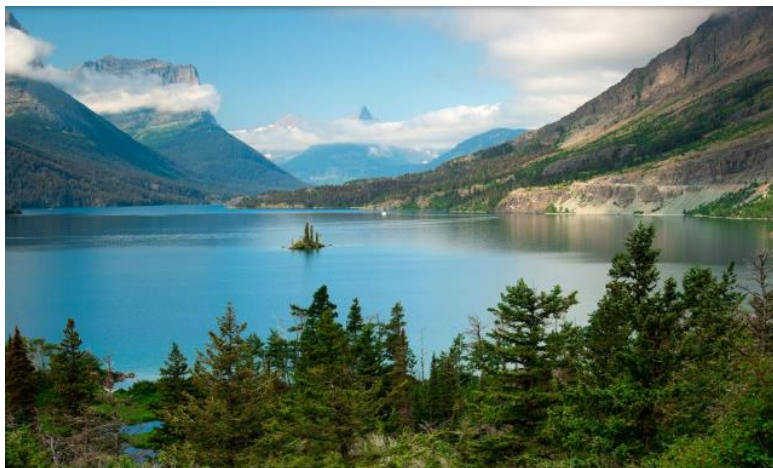
The Park provides opportunities to increase visitor awareness and understanding of the natural, recreational and cultural values, and management issues. Such opportunities could be integrated with

interpretive programs introduced elsewhere in CALM's Swan Region, and within the Hills Forest. The opportunities include:

- developing a sense of caring of responsible behaviour and of stewardship;
- interpretive programs that are accessible to people with disabilities; and
- interpretive programs designed to meet the needs of tourists who do not have the time for extended Park tours.

“In America the best views aren’t going anywhere. From canyons and coastlines to peaks and parks, Americans have a proud history of preserving their special places for future generations.”

Can we say the same in Australia?



Case History - 2

USA - National Park Service struggles to restore and protect historic sightlines

The First Battle of Bull Run (First Manassas) was fought near Manassas, Virginia, on July 21, 1861. The Second Battle of Bull Run (Second Manassas) was fought over nearly the same ground during August 28-30, 1862. Now officials at Manassas National Battlefield Park are fighting to restore the battlefield’s Civil War era sightlines and protect them from encroaching development.

The two battles commemorated at the 5,100-acre park, both Confederate victories, were fought less than 30 miles southwest of our nation’s capital in an area of northern Virginia that has experienced tremendous economic growth over the past few decades. Fast-growing Prince William and Fairfax counties are now so heavily developed that green space and large trees have become comparatively scarce in many areas.

Given that area residents have become very protective of the remaining mature trees, it was a foregone conclusion that there would be a public outcry when the National Park Service made plans to cut down numerous trees at the Manassas National Battlefield Park. Many trees have been removed already, but some residents and county officials continue to grumble that the Park Service has let the need for historical authenticity trump the need for mature trees and the many benefits they produce.

Restoring historic sightlines in the Civil War battlefield parks has been a Park Service goal for many years. As Civil War buffs are keenly aware, many areas that had an open character at the time the battles took place are now mantled with trees or thickets after nearly a century and a half of unchecked or poorly managed vegetative growth. (Of course, the opposite is also true; some battlefield areas that were groves or thickets in the early 1860s now offer unobstructed views.)

In the case of the Manassas Battlefield, the project would entail widening and heightening an already existing power transmission line along the park boundary. Superintendent Clark told me that the new towers would protrude at least 15 feet above the existing tree line and be visible from the Brawner Farmhouse. This would be a sightline intrusion of considerable magnitude

Case History - 3

USA - Keeping history honest when it comes to sight lines in Civil War-era National Parks is not without controversy

When General Robert E. Lee's troops were battling the Union forces at Fredericksburg, Virginia, on December 13, 1862, his cannons atop Lee's Hill and nearby Howison Hill had clear lines of fire.

National Park Service managers are now pretty careful when it comes to dealing with troublesome trees. Historically, the Park Service's role has been to be thoughtful when it comes to tinkering with the environment. Here's the mandate Interior Secretary Franklin Lane gave the fledgling Park Service in 1918:

You should not permit the cutting of trees except where timber is needed in the construction of buildings or other improvements within the park and can be removed without injury to the forests or disfigurement of the landscape, where the thinning of forests or cutting of vistas will improve the scenic features of the parks, or where their destruction is necessary to eliminate insect infestations or diseases common to forests and shrubs.

In the construction of roads, trails, buildings, and other improvements, particular attention must be devoted always to the harmonizing of these improvements with the landscape. This is a most important item in our programs of development and requires the employment of trained engineers who either possess a knowledge of landscape architecture or have a proper appreciation of the esthetic value of park lands. All improvements will be carried out in accordance with a preconceived plan developed in special reference to the preservation of the landscape, and comprehensive plans for future development of the national parks on an adequate scale will be prepared as funds are available for this purpose.

Case history - 4

New Zealand National Parks

Backpacking holidays in New Zealand are legendary around the world among the younger generations. The whole country makes the effort to ensure that overseas visitors return to their home country with unforgettable memories of huge landscapes.

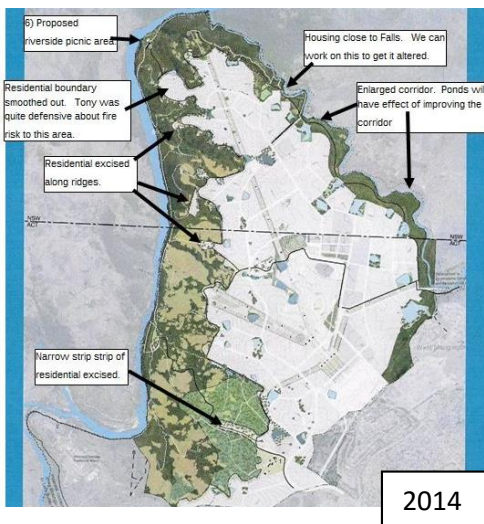
Landscapes and sightlines matter to the New Zealand economy.



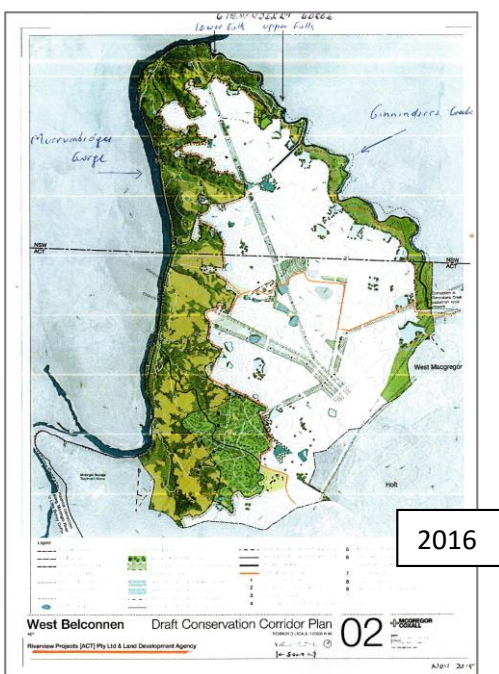
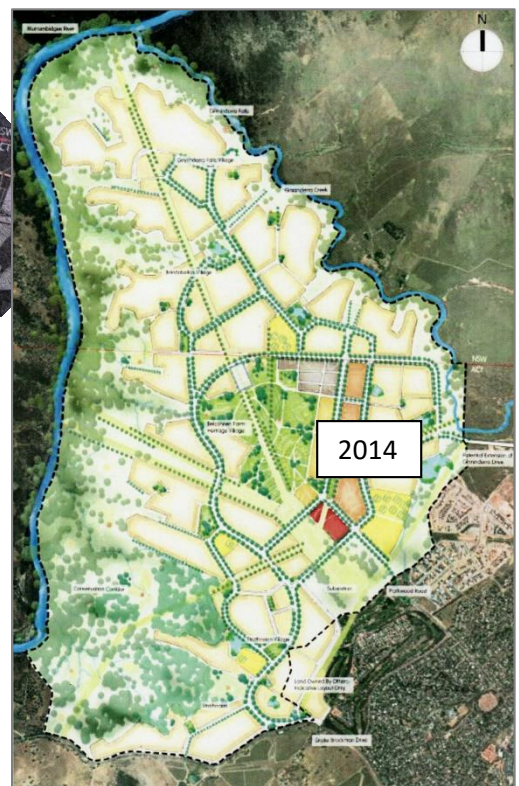
Current (May 2016) proposed Riverview West Belconnen conservation areas

The current proposals for conservation areas on the fringes of the West Belconnen urban development have not changed for many years despite consultations and discussions with many concerned community groups including Ginninderra Falls Association, Ginninderra Catchment Group, National Trust (ACT), Belconnen Community Council, Conservation Council (ACT), National Parks Association (NSW). Current and previous conservation area boundaries are shown on the maps below. There are generous river corridors along the Murrumbidgee River within ACT but the corridors along the Lower Ginninderra Creek are very narrow, less than 100 metres in places. Corridors and buffer zones have been sacrificed to squeeze in more housing blocks.

Using the international guidelines set out earlier to enable planning of sustainable conservation parks for ecological, heritage, educational and visitor/tourist recreational purposes, these Lower Ginninderra Creek conservation park corridors and buffer zones should extend at least 250-300 metres from the waterways everywhere.



Left and below – 2013-2014 Riverview planning documents



Left - 2016 proposed Riverview conservation areas.