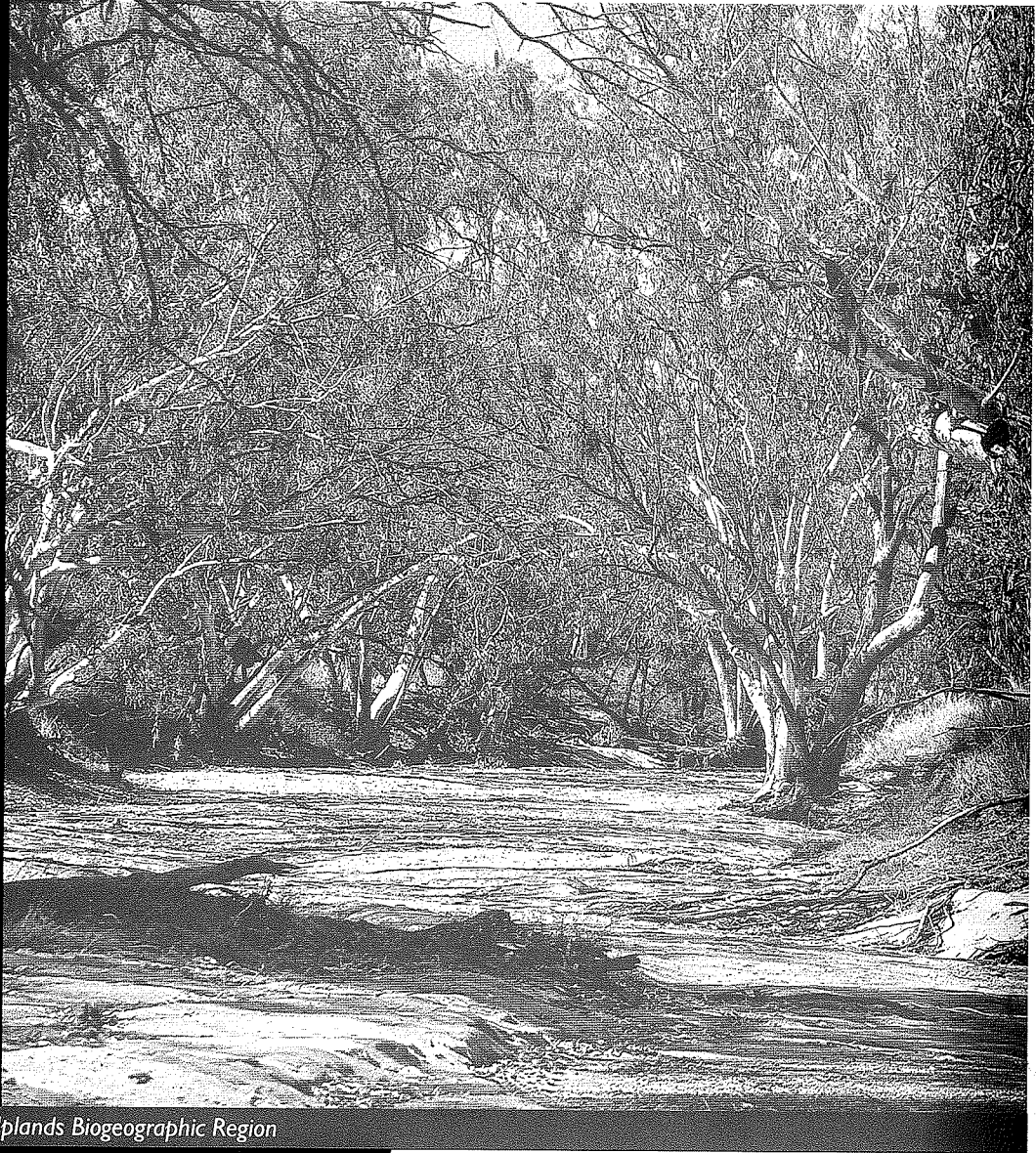


Management plan



Desert Uplands Biogeographic Region

Forest Den National Park

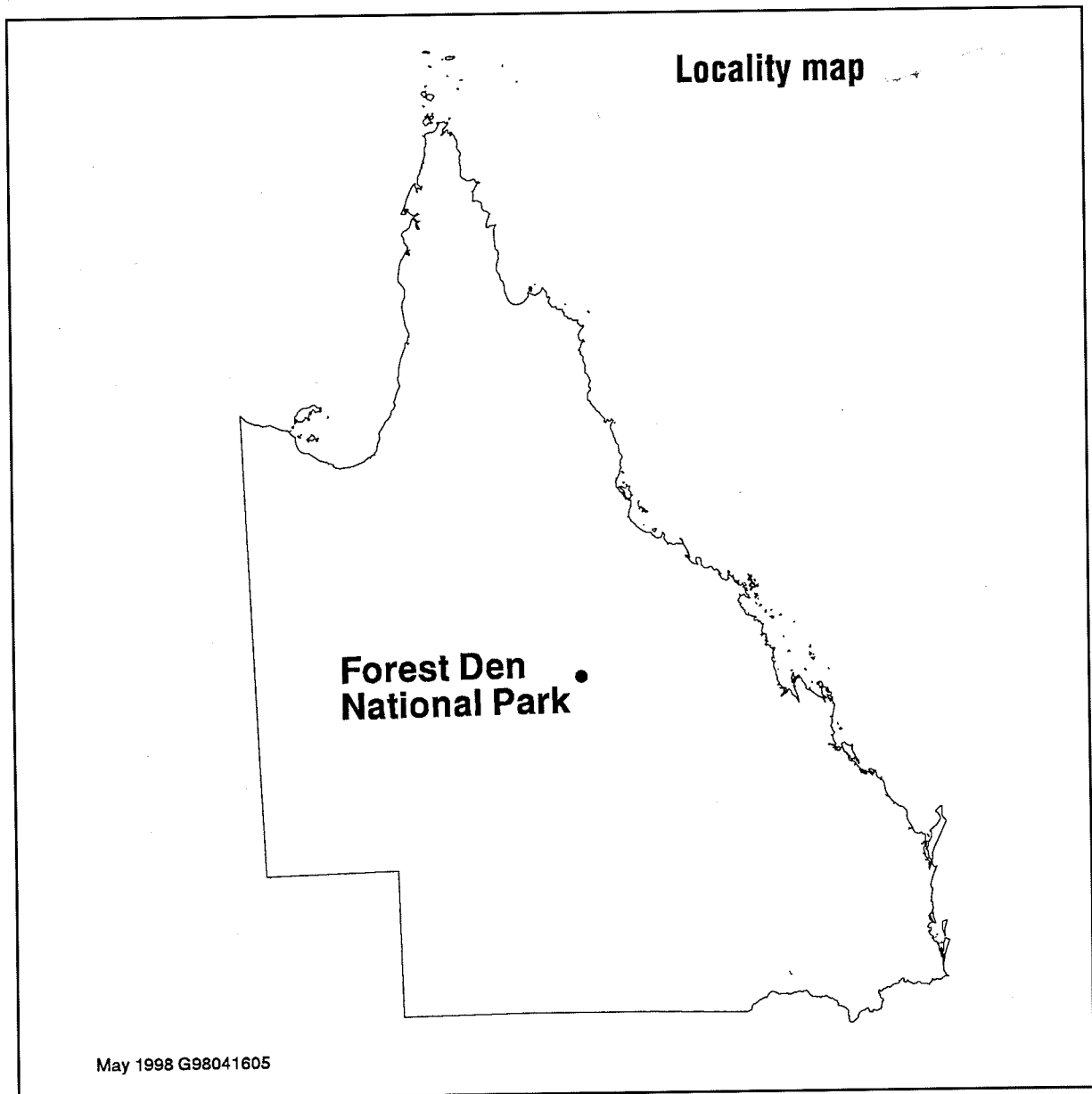


QUEENSLAND
NATIONAL PARKS
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Summary

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

This plan was prepared in May 1998 and, in accordance with s125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, will be reviewed not later than 10 years after its approval. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment's Southwestern Regional Centre in Toowoomba on (07) 4639 4599 during business hours.

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

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Basis for management

Introduction

1.1 PLANNING AREA AND REGIONAL SETTING

Regional context

Forest Den National Park was declared on 24 November 1991 to conserve blackwood *Acacia argyrodendron* woodlands which dominate the park. The national park is approximately 5890ha in area and is located about 100km north of Aramac and 175km north-east of Longreach.

Forest Den is the smallest national park in the Longreach District in the Department's Southwestern Region. As no staff are positioned on the park, staff from the Longreach District Office carry out regular inspections. The park is not actively promoted for recreation purposes due to the lack of on-site management and its small size.

The park lies 90km south of Moorrinya National Park, which is in the Department's Northern Region. Staff from Moorrinya regularly inspect Forest Den.

The park's vegetation is dominated by blackwood woodlands, Mitchell grass and bluegrass tussock grasslands. The tree canopy layer has been undisturbed and is in good condition. However, the area was once used as a sheep holding paddock for a shearing shed to the north.

Management obligations

Forest Den National Park is designated under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as a national park and will be managed by the Department of Environment in accordance with s17.1 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 Department and other agencies will be met where necessary.

1.2 MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS AND PURPOSE

Directions

Forest Den National Park will be managed as an undeveloped, semi-remote national park. Conservation of the blackwood woodlands and Mitchell grass plains will remain a high priority.

The main recreational opportunities for park visitors will be 4WD-based camping, bushwalking and birdwatching. Visitors will be required to be totally self-sufficient as no public facilities will be provided.

Forest Den National Park will continue to be used as a site for pasture research and monitoring.

Purpose

The major purpose of management will be to ensure that:

Conservation

- Blackwood woodland communities are carefully monitored and protected.
- The variety and diversity of vegetation communities found on Forest Den National Park are preserved.
- Environmental weeds, feral animals and straying stock are controlled in consultation with park neighbours.
- The biological integrity of plant and animal communities is promoted through the responsible use of fire.
- The quality and integrity of natural landscapes on Forest Den National Park are maintained.

Recreation

- Wilderness-based recreational activities such as 4WD-based camping, bushwalking and birdwatching are provided for on the park.
- Sites posing a significant risk to visitor safety are identified and effective control measures instigated.

Research and scientific

- Organisations involved in scientific research are encouraged to use the park for research.

Community involvement

- Neighbours are involved in the decision-making process of park management and made aware of activities that may be of relevance to them (e.g. fencing, fire management and weed and feral animal control).
- Aboriginal groups with an interest in Forest Den National Park are identified and involved in the management of sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

1.3 VALUES AND RESOURCES

Natural

Forest Den National Park contains five main land units:

- river red gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and coolibah *E. coolabah* on river channels and floodplains;
- coolibah woodlands and woodlands of mixed species on alluvial sandsheets;
- Mitchell grass *Astrelba* spp. tussock grasslands throughout the cracking grey clay soils;
- blackwood *Acacia argyrodendron* on cracking alluvial clay soils; and
- ironwood *Acacia excelsa*, beefwood *Grevillea striata* and Reid River box *E. brownii* on aeolian sandplains.

The park is situated on Torrens Creek and is part of a continuous corridor of habitat that extends through much of the south-east portion of the Prairie-Torrens Creeks Alluvial Province. Naturally vegetated grazing properties surround the park on all sides.

Two semi-permanent waterholes are located on the national park (Boggy Creek Waterhole and Four Mile Waterhole). These attract wildlife and provide a refuge in drier times for waterbirds, frogs and other aquatic-based animals.

Cultural

Forest Den was part of the Corinda Pastoral Holding, which was settled in the 1860s. Corinda homestead was located in what is now the north-west corner of the park, adjacent to Boggy Creek Waterhole. The area comprising the park was originally divided into five small paddocks and the remains of gateways and fences can still be found.

A derelict round timber bridge over Torrens Creek is located on the road through the park and may be of historical interest.

The presence of semi-permanent waterholes suggests the likelihood of previous Aboriginal occupation, but this has yet to be confirmed.

Recreation

Forest Den offers opportunities for nature-based recreation such as vehicle-based camping and picnicking for local communities and for travellers along the Torrens Creek–Aramac road. Visitors driving through the park gain a good insight into the area's natural values and can enjoy birdwatching at the park's two waterholes.

Research and education

The Department of Primary Industries has set up a number of monitoring sites as part of its Mitchell grass regional condition assessment project. The park is an important control site for grass research as it has remained relatively free of stock since its gazettal. Its small size allows effective inspection of boundary fences and early detection of straying stock.

The park is suitable for small-scale environmental field trips from schools at Torrens Creek, Muttaborra and Aramac.

Scenic and aesthetic

The vegetation and waterholes found on the park provide an attractive setting for remote, vehicle-based sightseeing and camping. The roads wind through flat country dominated by mature blackwood open forests and Mitchell grass plains. Creeks lined with coolibahs and river red gums provide pleasant picnic or camping sites.

Management strategies

2 Management of natural and cultural resources

2.1 NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Background information

Forest Den National Park forms part of a wildlife corridor of riverine vegetation that extends along Torrens Creek in a north-south direction. The conservation of native plants and animals is an integral component of the long-term ecological management of the park.

Native plants

A vegetation survey, resource document and vegetation map have been compiled for the park. This information enables realistic long-term assessments to be made of the security of all plant species and communities found within Forest Den.

The five main vegetation communities on the park are:

- the channels and floodplains of Torrens Creek, which are lined by river red gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and coolibah *E. coolabah*. Coolibah also occurs on the higher flood channels, along with blackwood *Acacia argyrodendron* and flowering lignum *Eremophila polyclada*;
- the alluvial sandsheets found in the northern portion of the park, which support coolibah woodlands and woodlands of mixed species. The species include river red gum, quinine *Petalostigma pubescens*, supplejack *Ventilago viminalis* and bauhinia *Lysiphyllum gilvum*. These mixed woodlands are biologically unusual and are regarded as a restricted vegetation community type;
- Mitchell grass *Astrebla squarrosa* and bluegrass *Dichanthium* spp., which are dominant throughout the cracking grey clay soils of the higher plains. Blackwood woodlands and low open woodlands are also found in this community in a 'patchy plain' pattern;
- the cracking alluvial clay soils to the south, which support predominantly an open blackwood woodland. Coolibah, leopardwood *Flindersia maculosa*, ironwood *Acacia excelsa* and scattered beefwood *Grevillea striata* are also prominent. The mid-storey consists of false sandalwood *Eremophila mitchelli*, currantbush *Carissa lanceolata* and *Senna* spp. with a patchy grass understorey; and
- the finer-textured soils of the aeolian sandplains with a mixed woodland of Reid River box *Eucalyptus brownii*, bauhinia, ironwood and beefwood.

The general condition of plant communities in the park is considered to be good. Monitoring by DPI has shown a relatively constant and undiminished species diversity over the past few years.

Native animals

The native animal records for Forest Den National Park remain incomplete and knowledge of the park's small mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians is extremely limited.

Over 60 species of birds have been sighted on the park. Of particular significance are sightings of the rufous-throated honeyeater *Conopophila rufogularis*, well south of its normal distribution in the tropical north. The two waterholes (in particular, Boggy Creek Waterhole) are noted for their abundance of nesting waterbirds such as royal spoonbills *Platalea regia*, darters *Anhinga melanogaster* and Pacific herons *Ardea pacifica*.

Turtles and several species of frogs are known to occur in Torrens Creek.

Red kangaroo *Macropus rufus* and eastern grey kangaroo *M. giganteus* are commonly found on the park. Short-

beaked echidnas *Tachyglossus aculeatus* have been recorded throughout the park while common brushtail possums *Trichosurus vulpecula* and sugar gliders *Petaurus breviceps* occur predominantly along the watercourses.

Dingoes occur infrequently on the park.

Management outcome

- To maintain the natural abundance, distribution and diversity of native plants and animals on the park.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Continue long-term vegetation monitoring of blackwood woodlands and grasslands in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries. Management practices will be modified in line with research results to ensure that management outcomes are being achieved.
- Provide a part-time management presence to ensure compliance with regulations and meet the needs of monitoring and natural resource management.
- A more comprehensive native animals survey will be carried out. All wildlife information will be collated and added to the resource document for the park.
- Dingo control will be done through negotiation between the Department, Aramac Shire Council, Rural Lands Protection Board and park neighbours in accordance with the Good Neighbour Policy.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS

Background information

The presence of environmental weeds is a management concern. The control of pest plants is essential if the park's natural values are to be preserved and the ecological and economic viability of surrounding properties is to be maintained.

The major weeds found on the park include parkinsonia *Parkinsonia aculeata*, Noogoora burr *Xanthium pungens* and Bathurst burr *X. spinosum*. They have established mainly along the watercourses. Their eradication is difficult, if not impossible, because of constant replenishment of seed stock from areas upstream.

The control of parkinsonia, noogoora burr and Bathurst burr continues.

To date, park visitors have not been a significant factor in the spread of introduced plant species because visitor numbers have been low.

Stock travelling north through the park currently use an access route located to the east of the designated stock route. Although the impact of stock movement through the park has not been monitored to date, stock are likely to facilitate the spread of burr seeds.

Management outcomes

- To eradicate environmental weeds posing a serious threat to park values.
- To ensure no new weed infestations occur on the park.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Develop and implement an annual weed control plan for the park, consistent with the provisions of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985*. The plan will state:
 - major weed species occurring on the park;
 - locations and severity of infestations;
 - intended control measures for the current year;
 - equipment and staffing requirements;
 - timing of control treatments;
 - the method of monitoring the success of control measures; and
 - the nature and extent of involvement of park neighbours, the Rural Lands Protection Board and the Aramac Shire Council.

- The annual weed control plan will be reviewed to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of control measures used.
- The Department's Good Neighbour Policy will be adhered to and adjacent properties will be encouraged to participate in control programs.

2.3 FERAL ANIMALS

Background information

Introduced animals can cause degradation of valuable wildlife habitat and compete with native animals for food and shelter. It is important to manage feral animals to maintain the biological health of the park.

Feral pigs which move freely throughout the park pose the main feral animal threat at Forest Den National Park. Their numbers fluctuate depending on the season and water availability, so the damage they inflict on the park is both seasonal and irregular. Trapping of feral pigs is undertaken as resources permit.

Foxes, feral cats, rabbits, house mice and cane toads have also been found on the park.

Management outcome

- To minimise — through eradication, where possible — damage caused to the park's natural values by feral animals.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- A feral animal control plan will be developed and implemented. The plan will state:
 - the feral animals species on the park and their distribution;
 - the control measures to be used for each species;
 - the timing of control measures;
 - the personnel responsible for enacting these control measures;
 - the control costs and equipment requirements; and
 - the nature and extent of involvement of park neighbours, the Rural Lands Protection Board and the Aramac Shire Council.
- The effectiveness of the control program will be reviewed annually and management activities will be modified where necessary.
- The effectiveness of various control techniques will be investigated in consultation with experienced Departmental staff. Trapping, shooting and aerial control options will be considered.

2.4 FIRE MANAGEMENT

Background information

The objectives of fire management are to promote the ecological diversity of communities that are ecologically fire-adapted and to lower fuel levels to reduce the incidence and intensity of wildfires.

Fire management practices should aim to create a diverse mosaic of plant communities in all stages of regeneration while protecting plant communities that are considered fire-sensitive.

The park has had minimal build-up in ground fuel levels due to high grazing pressure in the past and no outbreaks of wildfire have been recorded. However, as grazing is prohibited on the park, fire management considerations may assume far greater importance in the future.

A 4m firebreak is maintained around the park's perimeter.

The fire requirements of most plant communities and wildlife within the park are not fully understood. Further research into fire management is required to ensure that fire is used successfully as an ecological tool in this semi-arid environment.

Mitchell grass communities may require special attention as they have a high propensity to carry fire in certain seasons. The chances of a fire spreading from the main road to the park are high in times of high fire danger.

Management outcomes

- To promote and protect the biological diversity and integrity of native plant communities through the responsible management of fire.
- To protect human life, park infrastructure and neighbouring properties from the effect of fire.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Research and close liaison with the Department of Primary Industries will be encouraged, to determine appropriate fire regimes for the park's plant communities.
- Researchers will also identify key indicator species to be used to monitor the long-term effects of fire.
- Develop and implement an annual fire action plan which includes:
 - plant communities' ecological requirements and proposed fire regimes to maintain their ecological health;
 - details of seasonal timing and location of prescribed burns;
 - staffing and firefighting equipment requirements for prescribed burns;
 - procedures to be followed if a wildfire breaks out on the park or on a neighbouring property;
 - contact numbers of the District Fire Warden and other firefighting bodies;
 - list of firefighting equipment held at the Longreach District Office; and
 - list of firefighting equipment available to the park from neighbouring properties (including the costs of hiring equipment).
- Fire access routes and firebreaks around the boundaries of the park will be maintained.

2.5 SOIL AND LANDSCAPE REHABILITATION

Background information

The soils of Forest Den National Park are predominantly deep, brown and grey cracking clays of Cretaceous origin (136 million years). The park also has areas of silt, sand, clay and gravel Quaternary deposits (1.8 million years) which are associated with the flooding of Torrens Creek.

Extensive sandsheets are found to the north-east of the park with a patchy distribution of sand, clay and silt. These sheets merge with the alluvial plains of Cornish Creek and its tributaries. Gilgais are prominent where blackwood woodlands communities are dominant.

Forest Den National Park offers visitors the chance to explore an area of semi-arid woodland and Mitchell grass plains in a remote setting. Its waterholes, lined with majestic river red gums and coolibahs, provide a peaceful and shady contrast to much of the surrounding area and therefore are desirable sites for remote camping.

Scalding has occurred, most notably on the alluvial fine-textured soils and on the areas adjacent to the park's watercourses. Feral pigs and stock travelling along the stock routes have caused erosion damage to creek banks and waterhole edges.

Vehicular traffic, grazing pressure and the flow of Torrens Creek have caused severe erosion to areas north of Four Mile Waterhole and south of Boggy Creek.

Some sections of the current road are in areas susceptible to erosion. Visitor numbers are very low at present, but an increase could exacerbate erosion of roadways. Camping activities along the watercourses could also compound the impact of erosion in these areas.

Forest Den's natural landscapes have essentially been protected but some temporary scars have resulted from the impact of stock, feral animals and environmental weeds. Much of this disturbance is evident along the watercourses and particularly around the semi-permanent waterholes.

The main access routes on the park also serve as unfenced stock routes. As these areas provide visitors with their initial impressions of the park, it is important that they be managed to complement the park's values and management regime.

Management outcomes

- To minimise disturbance or modification to the park's soils and landforms.
- To rehabilitate areas eroded by stock and human activities to a state as near as possible to their original condition.
- To preserve the quality and integrity of landscape values within the park.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Degraded areas of the park will be rehabilitated by natural plant colonisation from surrounding areas. Severely degraded sites will be actively revegetated through direct seeding or planting of local species found on the park. A range of cost-effective methods of rehabilitation will be investigated and the most effective methods implemented.

Stock impacts

- The movement of stock along stock routes will be in accordance with the *Stock Act 1915*.
- Grazing is prohibited on the park in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.
- Boundary fences will be inspected and repaired on a regular basis.

Visitor impacts

- Appropriate signs will direct visitors to the visitor area adjacent to Four Mile Waterhole and impacts will be monitored through regular park inspections.
- The condition of roads will be maintained by grading. Access to the park will be closed to the public during wet seasons to prevent soil erosion (other than through traffic to Corinda Station). Other vehicle movements during wet periods will be negotiated with Corinda station.
- The main road leading to the visitor area will be stabilised and visitors will be restricted to this road. All other tracks on the park will be used only for access by Department staff.

2.6 CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Background information

A bore drain feeds into Boggy Creek from north of the park, substantially increasing the volume and degree of permanency of Boggy Creek Waterhole. In flood times, this water backflows into Four Mile Waterhole, artificially prolonging its life. These waterholes are of great benefit to much of the local wildlife, especially in dry periods.

The tail end of another bore drain which originates on the property Marengo is located within the park, approximately 700m from the western boundary.

It is anticipated that the Department of Natural Resources will cap the two bores currently draining onto the park as part of its program to prevent bore water entering natural watercourses. This is expected to affect the volume of the park's waterholes.

As camping activities will be centred around the semi-permanent waterholes, degradation of the stream banks and edges may adversely affect the water quality of the park's watercourses.

Management outcome

- To maintain the quality of water resources in the catchment.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- The capping of bores will affect the quality and duration of surface water in the park waterholes. A monitoring program to assess water quality in the park's watercourses and waterholes will be developed and implemented.
- Visitor camping areas will be established at least 30m away from the water's edge to minimise camping impacts.

2.7 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Background information

The Department currently has little information about Aboriginal cultural sites or the importance of the area to Aboriginal people. The semi-permanent nature of the water and the presence of scarred trees at Four Mile Waterhole suggest previous Aboriginal occupation.

Forest Den was the name of one of the original paddocks of Corinda Pastoral Holding, which was taken up over 100 years ago. The paddock is now located in the park.

Management outcomes

- To identify and conserve Aboriginal and post-settlement cultural heritage values and sites found on the park.
- To identify Aboriginal people with cultural links to the park and facilitate their involvement in its management.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Historical records will be collated as resources permit. With the co-operation of local landholders, these will include written records from Corinda and the surrounding holdings.
- Aboriginal cultural heritage values will be assessed with help from and involvement of Aboriginal custodians, if possible.
- The wishes of Aboriginal people will be a paramount consideration in the management of all sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

3 Management of recreation

3.1 RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND VISITOR USE

Background information

The park provides opportunities for nature-based recreation for owners of 4WD vehicles in a relatively remote setting. Self-sufficient camping opportunities are provided at the semi-permanent waterholes located on the park.

Access to Forest Den National Park is via the Torrens Creek–Aramac road.

The Torrens Creek road and Corinda access road (located on the park) are gazetted rights of way. Aramac Shire Council is responsible for their maintenance. These roads become very boggy during and after periods of wet weather.

A number of the park's internal roads lead from the Torrens Creek road to private property. The park's boundaries are not identified to visitors travelling on these roads and it is easy for them to trespass onto private property.

Although very little camping occurs on the national park at present, travellers using the Torrens Creek road can use the park as there are no public campsites elsewhere in the area.

Although Forest Den National Park has no formal walking tracks, it is well suited to nature-based activities such as bushwalking and birdwatching. The park's size lessens the risk of visitors becoming lost.

Management outcome

- To provide low-key nature-based recreation opportunities that are ecologically sustainable and promote Forest Den National Park's special character.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Signs will be placed on park boundaries to identify the park and the main road so that visitors do not trespass on adjoining properties. Boundary roads will be marked 'service road only' and visitors will be discouraged from using them.
- Access to the park will be closed in wet weather after consultation with Aramac Shire Council and local landholders.
- A designated camping area will be developed at least 30m away from the edge of Four Mile Waterhole. Visitor impact will be monitored to ensure that any degradation of the site is detected and dealt with.
- No visitor infrastructure (such as toilet and shower facilities) will be placed on the park as visitor numbers are not expected to increase greatly. Recreational use of the park will be recorded and monitored.
- Appropriate signs will be developed to orientate visitors and advise of designated camping areas and permitted activities on the park.
- Visitors will be advised to take all rubbish off the park. No rubbish bins will be provided.
- A visitor information sheet will be provided and made available from the Longreach District Office. This sheet will include:
 - information on recreational opportunities offered by the park;
 - information on entry and camping permit requirements and suggested preparation;
 - a map of the park to enable basic orientation; and
 - suggested walking routes.

3.2 SAFETY

Background information

Even if every effort is made to reduce naturally occurring hazards, the act of entering a remote, natural area carries with it a certain element of risk which park management cannot fully control. Where possible, identified hazards will be managed in such a way as to minimise or negate any danger. It is important to stress that in a remote locality such as Forest Den National Park visitors must be safety-conscious, carry suitable safety equipment and behave responsibly.

The main dangers to visitors on the park arise from the use of vehicles on dirt roads and recreational activities such as swimming in natural waterholes.

Even though the park is small, it is possible that people may be lost and/or injured. There is a public expectation and management requirement that adequate resources and procedures be put in place to respond to search and rescue situations.

Management outcomes

- To minimise the risk of injury to park staff and visitors.
- To conduct search and rescue operations in an efficient and timely manner.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Areas of the park subject to visitation will be assessed for safety hazards and appropriate risk management instigated.
- A comprehensive emergency action plan will be developed for the park. It will outline:
 - general visitor safety;
 - procedures for search and rescue;
 - procedures for evacuating, treating and hospitalising visitors; and
 - the contact details of various authorities and neighbours who can lend assistance in the case of emergencies.
- Search and rescue training of park staff will be conducted in conjunction with the local State Emergency Service branch and St John Ambulance Brigade.

4 Management of sustainable use

4.1 GRAZING, STOCK ROUTES AND ILLEGAL SHOOTERS

Background information

With no permanent management presence at Forest Den National Park, the occurrence of unauthorised activities is a continuing problem.

Grazing and associated activities

The national park is currently recovering from the impacts of years of grazing. Even though grasses and chenopods are regenerating well, some sections of boundary fence are in a poor condition and stock are regularly found on the park.

Two unfenced stock routes run through the park and grazing is permitted in these areas. The north-south stock route is maintained by The Springs holding, and Aramac Shire Council maintains the east-west stock route. In the past, stock have been moved down the road east of Torrens Creek rather than down the gazetted stock route.

Aramac Shire Council is responsible for regulating the use of stock routes. The Council's guidelines stipulate that users must advise park management 24 hours before entering the park and must move stock at a rate of 10 km per day. As the stock routes are only 5km long, stock should use the park for only half a day at any one time.

Shooting

The original Corinda holding was divided into a number of separate properties and the area of the park became part of Kyong station before its gazettal as national park in 1991. As the park block was four hours' drive from Kyong and impractical for the owners to manage, it was used for agisting cattle from an adjacent property. Consequently, the block has had no management presence for several years.

The park's proximity to the Torrens Creek-Aramac road and absence of on-site management allows illegal users (such as spotlight shooters) relatively easy access. Neighbours have reported the activities of illegal pig and kangaroo shooters on the park. These activities pose a potential danger to legitimate park users.

Management outcomes

- To ensure that all use of stock routes within the park complies with the guidelines set down in the *Stock Act 1915* and is in accordance with the wishes of Aramac Shire Council.
- To control any unauthorised use of the park.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Fences will be inspected and maintained regularly.
- Liaison will be conducted with park neighbours to establish an effective recovery of straying stock from the park.
- Consultation will be undertaken with graziers on the issue of stock routes to determine a mutually agreeable arrangement. Graziers will still be required to abide by the guidelines set out in the *Stock Act 1915* which is regulated by the Aramac Shire Council.
- Neighbours will be encouraged to provide details of observed shooting incidents to the Longreach District Office. This will provide some indication of the frequency of shooting in the area and may provide the basis for better understanding of the problem and appropriate control techniques.
- Incidental park inspections will be made at night in an attempt to identify illegal users of the park.

4.2 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Background information

Scientific research on national parks often forms the basis of park planning and management. As Forest Den National Park is a remote park with low visitor numbers, it is a suitable site for long-term research and monitoring.

Mitchell grass, blackwood and coolibah exist on both the national park and on surrounding properties, providing an opportunity for scientific assessment of grazed and ungrazed plant communities. The Department of Primary Industries has set up four pasture monitoring sites within the Mitchell grass alluvial flat country, two within the blackwood woodland community and one in the coolibah country. These sites are studied every 12 months and compared to adjacent properties where grazing occurs.

Apart from the pasture monitoring research, no scientific permits have been issued for any other studies.

Management outcomes

- To protect scientific research sites in order to add to existing knowledge of natural processes occurring within the national park.
- To promote research that results in more effective park management practices and an ecologically sustainable grazing industry.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Pasture monitoring research conducted by the Department of Primary Industries will continue.
- Scientific investigation into the ecology and biology of the park will be encouraged.
- Research results will be collated in a central location and assessed periodically to ensure that necessary changes are made to natural resource management practices used on the park.

4.3 PARK ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Background information

At present the Longreach District Office administers the park and is also responsible for making regular park inspections.

Forest Den National Park lies approximately 90km south of Moorrinya National Park, a newly gazetted park in the Department's Northern Region. The two staff members who run that park also patrol Forest Den and conduct incidental native animal surveys in the area.

Forest Den National Park has four neighbours who are all contacted at least once a year. Although most have some concerns about being neighbours to a national park, many of these concerns are effectively dealt with through regular liaison.

Management outcomes

- To ensure that management guidelines identified in this plan are implemented.
- To administer the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and other subordinate legislation.

Proposed guidelines and actions

- Forest Den National Park will be managed in accordance with the guidelines contained in this management plan. The plan is expected to remain in force for the next ten years.
- The possibility of management assistance from staff at Moorrinya National Park will be investigated.
- Park neighbours will be contacted at least twice a year and meetings will be arranged with due respect given to the timing of property work schedules. Departmental officers will consider the concerns and perspective of neighbours and, where possible, deal with problems that arise.