

Goal 8

Communities working together for protected areas, forests and wildlife

Actively work with the community in protected area, forest and wildlife management, and recognise, support and respect their contributions.

Why is this important?

To conserve protected areas, forests and wildlife, QPWS depends on the involvement and generous support of the community and on the vital contributions of partners in management and research. Many people and organisations work closely with QPWS, and it is important that these partnerships are recognised and supported.

Just some of the partnerships include close collaboration with agencies such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and local governments—these groups all play a key role in ensuring protected areas, forests and wildlife are well managed. QPWS offices and bases throughout Queensland also build close relationships with local communities and partner organisations.

Research organisations, including academic institutions, provide information to assist in management, and work with QPWS to develop planning and management strategies.

Non-government organisations and volunteers provide valuable assistance with education, track maintenance, weed management, revegetation and other conservation activities. By the end of 2010, 61 volunteer programs were carried out in QPWS-managed

protected areas and surrounds, and more than 870 volunteers were registered with QPWS¹⁶. Volunteers also play a supportive role in rapid response to unforeseen events. For example, volunteers quickly established nesting-boxes for mahogany gliders and feeding stations for cassowaries after Tropical Cyclone Yasi. Volunteers also respond quickly to emergencies such as oil-spills by helping with affected seabirds.

As discussed in Goal 1, the voluntary contribution of nature refuges is extremely important for conservation and land stewardship, and for providing links between QPWS and communities.

Protected areas, forests and wildlife can only be managed in conjunction with the surrounding landscape and seascape as plants, animals, fire, air and water do not recognise tenure boundaries. Management issues shared by local communities and QPWS include pest plants and animals, water

¹⁶ Savage C, 2010, Volunteering in parks Queensland. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Environment and Resource Management, Brisbane.

quality, fire management, pollution and fencing for stock. These issues need to be addressed through cooperation between neighbours, local governments, other community members and QPWS staff. More than 10 000 properties share a common boundary with protected areas and forests, so good neighbour relations continue to be vital for protected area and forest management in Queensland.

QPWS has an important role in Queensland's regional communities. Protected areas, forests and wildlife are vital components of the economic well-being of some communities, attracting tourists and providing local employment. Many QPWS staff work closely with emergency services and the Queensland Police Service when emergencies such as fires, floods and cyclones strike to provide frontline support.

Building relationships between QPWS and communities of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds to address conservation issues is important for this generation and future generations. Without the support of the wider community, the protected area system and a strong wildlife conservation program would not exist. QPWS will build and maintain this support in the community and further encourage feelings of ownership, pride and protection towards Queensland's natural and cultural heritage.

▼ Volunteers assist with vegetation monitoring in Idalia National Park.

What is our approach?

QPWS will be an outward-looking agency known for its extensive and high quality community engagement. Through partnerships with the community, private sector, non-government organisations and local government, QPWS will achieve excellence in protected area, forest and wildlife management while also maximising physical, social and mental health benefits to the public. QPWS will:

- support comprehensive and well-organised volunteer programs.
- commit to broad community consultation and participation in planning and management of protected areas, forests and wildlife.
- enter and maintain a range of partnerships with individuals, communities, private sector, academic institutions, non-government organisations and governments to address protected area and wildlife planning and management issues.
- communicate with nature refuge owners, and support them where possible in the conservation management of their properties and in promotion of their activities.



Chris Mitchell, DERM

What we will do: priorities for 2020

8.1 Expand the QPWS volunteer program.

- a) Expand and reinvigorate the protected area volunteer program by establishing Friends of National Parks groups to encourage community ownership and involvement*. Pending the success of trials, establish groups across the state.
- b) Expand the campground host program to provide a better experience for protected area visitors and an enriching opportunity for trained volunteers.
- c) Explore the possibility of corporate volunteer partnerships for conservation management of protected areas and forests.
- d) Pursue opportunities to partner with conservation and recreation focused groups to provide and manage volunteer opportunities.
- e) Ensure that a variety of volunteer activities are clearly communicated through the internet.
- f) Continue to support volunteer activities for wildlife such as wildlife monitoring and research.
- g) Maintain volunteer job satisfaction by providing training, updates on research, monitoring and management.
- h) Focus volunteer effort towards particular areas of need, such as bushland rehabilitation and revegetation and cultural site restoration.

Targets

- By 2020, campground host programs are establish in all high visitation and remote locations.
- In partnership with the National Parks Association of Queensland, by 2013, Friends of Parks groups are established at four national parks.

* Action from Queensland's draft biodiversity strategy Building Nature's Resilience.

▸ Community partnerships are crucial in times of disaster, here volunteers help to rehabilitate wildlife after an oil spill.

▸ National Parks Association Queensland Volunteers conducting track maintenance at Sundown National Park.

▸ Volunteers assisting with track construction in D'Aguiar National Park.



8.2 Work with neighbours and local communities.

- a) Foster cooperative relationships between QPWS and neighbouring landholders to build stronger partnerships.
- b) Continue to work closely with protected area and forest neighbours to manage issues of concern to both production and conservation values, particularly fire, environmental weeds and feral animals.
- c) Exchange advice and technical assistance with protected area and forest neighbours and local communities.

8.3 Partner with research and academic organisations.

- a) Work with academic organisations to identify information gaps and research needs for protected area and wildlife management.
- b) Foster and support the development of research partnerships through active communication between researchers and QPWS staff.
- c) Examine the information gaps regarding management implications of climate change on protected areas, forests and wildlife. Establish research partnerships to address these needs.
- d) Support research activities where possible and appropriate with in-kind support such as advice, data sharing, accommodation or transport assistance.

8.4 Involve the community in management and planning.

- a) Involve and consider the interests of neighbours, local communities and other stakeholders in management planning.
- b) Continue to liaise with NRM bodies, local communities and other stakeholders to enhance understanding of regional concerns and issues, to target threat management, and to ensure efforts inside and outside protected areas and forests are coordinated and complementary.
- c) Consider the establishment of a protected area advisory committee, and the scale at which this would be most appropriate (local, regional or state level).
- d) Continue to develop Memorandums of Understanding with community and recreation groups to support protected area and forest operations.

8.5 Pursue sponsorships and partnerships for protected areas and wildlife.

- a) Continue to seek private sector and philanthropic investment in a range of specific protected area and wildlife initiatives, including land purchase, revegetation, habitat restoration, research and threatened species.



Befriend a national park

With the vast expanse of protected areas across Queensland's landscapes and seascapes, QPWS values the contribution made by volunteers towards maintaining natural and cultural diversity. QPWS has been investigating opportunities to increase community participation in protected area management and activities. One opportunity involves a formal Friends of Parks partnership with the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ).

NPAQ is a long standing and well respected conservation organisation. NPAQ volunteers have worked with QPWS in the past on projects such as revegetation at the Boombana section of D'Aguiar National Park—this relationship has been rewarding for both organisations.

The Friends of Parks concept will be trialled over two years at Girraween, Sundown, Currawinya and Carnarvon, and will then be more widely applied in other parts of the state. NPAQ volunteers will assist rangers with management activities such as weed removal and revegetation, tree planting, track repair and maintenance, flora and fauna surveys, guided walks and public talks on park values.

Lessons learned from the Friends of Parks program will help develop other volunteer programs such as campground hosting.

The Government's Towards Q2, 2020 commitments include increasing national parks by 50 per cent and increasing volunteering by 50 per cent in Queensland. Apart from the immediate improvements to management, some of the less tangible benefits of volunteer programs include:

- promotion of nature conservation
- capacity building for community involvement in managing Queensland's national parks
- increased community support for QPWS and nature conservation
- increased feeling of connection with and ownership of national parks by Queenslanders
- benefits to volunteers, including a chance to make a positive difference to the environment, meeting of new friends, training and development of new skills.

Cravens Peak Nature Refuge— a biodiversity haven

Philanthropic groups and State and Commonwealth governments have come together to aid conservation of Cravens Peak Nature Refuge, a key biodiversity site in Queensland. Situated on the Queensland/Northern Territory border, the 233 000 hectare property is home to more than 220 species of animals, including nine threatened species, and 21 major plant communities.

Bush Heritage Australia established the property in October 2005 after receiving Australian Government assistance to purchase the cattle station. Bush Heritage and the North Australian Pastoral Company (NAPCO) collectively own four adjoining nature refuges in western Queensland, bordering Simpson Desert National Park. Together the national park and nature refuges span around one third of the Queensland–Northern Territory border.

The nature refuge supports a number of important vegetation types including spinifex grasslands, bloodwood, grevillea, coolibah and the rarely seen pituri shrub. The land provides habitat to the greatest diversity of reptile species of any desert in the world, including

the near threatened woma desert python which is now restricted to just a fraction of its former range.

Cravens Peak is also rich in human history, forming part of the ancient Pituri Track which stretched from South Australia to the Gulf of Carpentaria. This track was used by Aboriginal people for trade, including the local Traditional Owners, the Wangkamadla people. Many rock paintings and significant sites to the Wangkamadla Traditional Owners are throughout the reserve.

Bush Heritage's first step toward conservation was removal of cattle and wild camels to reduce damage to the Mitchell grass plains and wetlands. Management of feral species, in particular cats and foxes, is also underway.

Fire management is another priority, aiming to restore habitat richness through mosaic burning to avoid large destructive wildfires.

Bush Heritage is working closely with the Wangkamadla people to ensure appropriate management of cultural values in Cravens Peak Nature Refuge, which was formally gazetted by the Queensland Government on 16 July 2010.



Wayne Lawler