

Queensland Parks
and Wildlife Service
Department of Environment
and Resource Management

Blackwood National Park

Management Plan

2011



Brigalow Belt North Bioregion

Prepared by:

Planning Services Unit

Department of Environment and Resource Management

© State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Resource Management) 2011

Copyright protects this publication. Except for purposes permitted by the *Copyright Act 1968*, reproduction by whatever means is prohibited without the prior written permission of the Department of Environment and Resource Management. Enquiries should be addressed to Department of Environment and Resource Management, GPO Box 2454, Brisbane Qld 4001.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared with all due diligence and care, based on the best available information at the time of publication. The department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions within this document. Any decisions made by other parties based on this document are solely the responsibility of those parties. Information contained in this document is from a number of sources and, as such, does not necessarily represent government or departmental policy.

This management plan has been prepared in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

This management plan does not intend to affect, diminish or extinguish native title or associated rights.

Note that implementing some management strategies might need to be phased in according to resource availability.

For information on protected area management plans, visit <www.derm.qld.gov.au>.

If you need to access this document in a language other than English, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask them to telephone Library Services on +61 7 3224 8412.

This publication can be made available in alternative formats (including large print and audiotape) on request for people with a vision impairment. Contact (07) 322 48412 or email <library@derm.qld.gov.au>.

Front cover and centre right photograph: Steep, rubbly hills on Blackwood National Park. Photo: DERM.

Top right photograph: *Acacia argyrodendron* tree. Photo: DERM.

Bottom right photograph: *Eremophila latrobei* flowers. Photo: DERM.

April 2011

ISSN 1037-4698

MP059

Vision statement

Blackwood National Park will protect a unique collection of endangered and of concern regional ecosystems. Acacia woodlands with clumps of old growth spinifex and pockets of dry rainforest are prevalent across this landscape of undulating hills, stony ridges and alluvial flats. The iconic coolabah tree serves as a reminder of the outback Queensland location.

Blackwood National Park will be managed as a remote and undeveloped park, which provides a quiet refuge for many animals including wallabies, wallaroos, arboreal leaf-tailed geckos and squatter pigeons. Bird species, including the eastern yellow robin, speckled warbler and Lewin's honeyeater, will continue to be found hiding out in the park's closed bendee forest.

Contents

Contents	iii
1. Management intent	1
2. Basis for management	1
3. Location and regional context	1
4. Protecting and presenting the park's values	2
4.1 Landscape	2
4.2 Native plants and animals.....	2
4.3 Indigenous culture	3
4.4 Tourism and visitor opportunities.....	3
4.5 Education and science.....	3
4.6 Partnerships.....	3
5. Other key issues and responses	4
5.1 Pest management.....	4
5.2 Fire management.....	4
5.3 Infrastructure management.....	4
5.4 Climate change	4
6. Hyperlinks	6
7. Appendixes	7
Appendix A – Maps	8
Appendix B – Definitions	10
Appendix C – Regional ecosystems	11

1. Management intent

Blackwood National Park will be managed as a representative sample of Brigalow Belt plant and animal communities that complement nearby national parks.

The intent of this management plan is to permanently preserve, to the greatest possible extent, the park's natural and cultural values, specifically to:

- conserve the natural ecosystems of the park, including regional ecosystems and plant and animal species of conservation significance
- reduce and eradicate pests, where possible, and ensure control methods have no or minimal adverse impacts
- use species of local provenance to the park in rehabilitation and restoration programs
- encourage Indigenous involvement in park management
- ensure visitor information about the park's natural and cultural values is available
- encourage and undertake land management and appropriate research
- undertake an adaptive and co-operative approach with stakeholders to manage the park.

2. Basis for management

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is responsible for the on-ground day-to-day management of Blackwood National Park. This park is primarily managed in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and associated regulations to protect land, wildlife and cultural values. The Nature Conservation Act, in particular section 17, sets the management principles for national parks.

Indigenous people have affiliations with this park and involving Traditional Owner groups is an important part of managing the park. It is acknowledged that Indigenous cultural heritage places are a custodial responsibility of the respective Traditional Owners, and management will be consistent with traditional lore and traditional knowledge. Blackwood National Park is included in an area subject to a native title claim by the Jangga People (QC98/010). This draft plan does not affect this claim.

Cultural heritage places in Queensland are legislatively managed under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*. The Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage and The Burra Charter provide detailed guidelines for managing cultural heritage places. The Queensland Heritage Strategy of 2009 provides direction for managing Queensland's heritage and establishes a policy framework for heritage conservation and responsibilities.

Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems are described under the Department of Environment and Resource Management's (DERM) biodiversity status and endangered, vulnerable and near threatened species are listed under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006.

QPWS has a responsibility under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002* to control declared pest plants and animals in protected areas.

3. Location and regional context

Blackwood National Park is situated in Charters Towers Regional Council area and is 15 km north of Belyando Crossing, about two hours or 180km south of Charters Towers on the Gregory Developmental Road (maps 1 and 2, Appendix A). Charters Towers has an annual mean minimum temperature of 17 °C, an annual mean maximum temperature of 30 °C and an annual mean rainfall of 659 mm (Bureau of Meteorology 2009).

The park was once part of Mount Hope Station and was dedicated in 1991 to conserve diverse plant and animal communities in the Brigalow Belt North Biogeographic Region. Blackwood National Park is named after an acacia known as blackwood or black gidyea *Acacia argyrodendron*. The park conserves 1648 ha of rugged hills and gorges, surrounded by undulating sandy clays and black soils.

The region has been extensively cleared to the south and development for cropping and improved pastures is increasing to the north.

There are three other protected areas close to Blackwood National Park: Nairana National Park (Recovery), Nairana National Park and Wilandsprey Conservation Park.

4. Protecting and presenting the park’s values

4.1 Landscape

The predominant landscape values of Blackwood National Park include rugged hills and gorges, small areas of black soil plains that are not represented in association with other landscapes elsewhere in the Brigalow Belt North bioregion, and exposed laterite forms with distinctive hard pan areas that grow limited vegetation.

Soils and landforms of the park are representative of pebbly quartz sandstones with mudstones dating from the carboniferous period. Over millennia, these landforms were created by an ancient river system flowing north from the Springsure area. Tertiary Argillaceous sandstones (which are often laterite) and Quaternary silts, sands and gravels (including black earths) have been deposited widely throughout the area.

Once disturbed, much of the landscape is sensitive to erosion. The steep, rubbly nature of hills in the park results in relatively high run-off during wet weather. This could lead to erosion along tracks and fence lines. The majority of the park exhibits mainly natural erosion processes.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
This landscape remains intact, current tracks are stabilised, and eroded areas are revegetated, where appropriate.	<p>A1. Limit vehicle access to authorised vehicles only for all areas beyond the day-use car parking area.</p> <p>A2. Continue to maintain and repair tracks and fence lines, where required including installing drains, repairing damaged areas and revegetating using local provenance species.</p>

4.2 Native plants and animals

4.2.1 Native plants

Blackwood National Park has diverse plant communities representing a cross-section of the western parts of the Brigalow Belt North biogeographic region. Seventeen regional ecosystems are represented and 137 plant species have been identified, with *Acacia armitii* listed as near threatened under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation.

Vegetation is dominated by acacia and eucalypt communities with diverse native grassland understoreys. Of the 17 regional ecosystems, brigalow *Acacia harpophylla* is endangered and blackwood and paperbark *Melaleuca tamariscina* are of concern under DERM’s biodiversity status (Appendix C). Brigalow also has an endangered status and four communities—blackwood, *Melaleuca tamariscina* shrubland, napunyah *Eucalyptus thozetiana* and river red gum *E. camaldulensis*—have an of concern status under the DERM biodiversity status.

4.2.2 Native animals

Blackwood National Park has high habitat diversity and provides transitional areas between vegetation communities. Consequently, the park supports a variety of native animals, as well as being an important refuge and corridor for native animals. Three frog, two reptile, one mammal and 79 bird species have been recorded in the park.

Bird species include the speckled warbler, which is at the northern limit of its range.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
The range of species and their habitat requirements are protected through active management.	<p>A3. Continue to monitor vegetation to evaluate management actions, including the impact of pest plants and fire (prescribed burns and wildfire) on plant populations and diversity.</p> <p>A4. Maintain and restore habitat corridors, where possible through appropriate management activities, such as pest plant control and fire management.</p> <p>A5. Consider animal requirements, such as breeding, nesting and feeding, in relation to plant community management.</p> <p>A6. Undertake surveys of native animals found in the park, where required, to establish baseline data and to assist in delivering management decisions.</p>

4.3 Indigenous culture

Blackwood National Park is subject to a native title claim (Jangga People Core Country QC98/010). No Indigenous cultural heritage places have been identified on the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Indigenous people with traditional affiliations in the area are involved in managing cultural heritage issues.	<p>A7. Manage Indigenous cultural heritage places and implement protection measures in consultation with Traditional Owners, where possible.</p> <p>A8. Encourage Traditional Owners to help identify, document and protect Indigenous cultural heritage places on the park and provide advice on other cultural interests and concerns.</p> <p>A9. Recognise Traditional Owners through appropriate interpretative materials considered in the Statement of Interpretative Intent for the park, such as signs for welcome to country and the DERM website.</p>

4.4 Tourism and visitor opportunities

Visitor demand for access to Blackwood National Park is currently very low. The park offers low-key, nature-based recreational activities, such as bushwalking and bird-watching only. An existing 15 km network of firebreaks offers experienced bushwalkers views of the scenery and the diverse brigalow ecosystems, flora and fauna. The area is hot and dry and water is not available on the park.

The landscape is highly erodible and that has led to the closure of vehicle tracks and removal of the old campground. Commercially operated camping and caravan facilities are available at Belyando Crossing, approximately 15 km from the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Opportunities for bird-watching and nature appreciation remain available on a day-use only basis.	A10. Day-use visits will be encouraged for bushwalking and nature viewing.
Park visitors are provided with information to allow them to understand the risk to ecological values of the park.	A11. Develop a Statement of Interpretative Intent for the park.

4.5 Education and science

The park's diverse plant and animal communities present many research opportunities, including refining fire management strategies for complex vegetation and landscape patterns. Research projects have been, and continue to be undertaken by James Cook University, and the Townsville Region Bird Observers Club also visit and survey the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Research and specialist observation increases knowledge of the park's ecology and helps to refine management techniques.	<p>A12. Encourage research projects that provide significant benefit to the management of the park and is conditioned to protect the fragile ecosystem on Blackwood National Park.</p> <p>A13. Encourage park visitors to record observations of plants and animals to report their findings to QPWS.</p> <p>A14. Survey populations of <i>Acacia armitii</i> to document its extent and distribution across the park and evaluate its response to fire to ensure continued population stability using aerial technologies only.</p>

4.6 Partnerships

Partnerships are important to effectively manage Blackwood National Park, particularly to manage fires, control pests and interpret cultural heritage values. Good working relationships are maintained with park neighbours, the local council, the Queensland Rural Fire Service, Traditional Owners, Belyando Crossing Landcare Group and other members of the local community with interests in the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Good working relationships have contributed to meeting park management objectives and desired outcomes.	<p>A15. Where required, liaise with Belyando Crossing Landcare Group to develop strategic pest management planning.</p> <p>A16. Liaise with neighbours, Landcare groups and government agencies to help protect critical habitat corridors.</p>

5. Other key issues and responses

5.1 Pest management

While buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* is not a declared pest plant, it is considered a concern to the Blackwood National Park. Rubber vine *Cryptostegia grandiflora* has not been found on the park but is present in the area. Parthenium was present but has been actively controlled and not recorded in recent years. Pest animals found in the park include Class 2 declared pests, such as wild dogs, foxes and rabbits, and non-declared pests, such as cats and cane toads.

QPWS has a responsibility under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act to control declared pests on protected areas. Under this legislation, QPWS has developed a Level Two Pest Management Strategy, which is supported by the QPWS Pest Management System to guide on-ground pest management activities.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>The integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained and the impacts of pest plants and animals on natural and cultural values is minimised through strategic, sustained management.</p> <p>Wild dog populations on the park are not causing significant problems to neighbours.</p>	<p>A17. Implement the Level Two Pest Management Strategy to develop pest management activity proposals for pest species requiring active control and to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the QPWS Pest Management System and ParkInfo to plan, manage, record and monitor all pests and pest management • prioritise long-term control measures for threatened vegetation communities and critical species habitat • ensure pest management does not adversely affect the natural integrity of the park and use the best available scientific and technical knowledge. <p>A18. Actively manage the park to ensure no new declared pest plants become established.</p> <p>A19. Continue to manage wild dogs consistent with the QPWS operational policy Wild Dog Management.</p>

5.2 Fire management

QPWS has developed a Level Two Fire Strategy for Blackwood National Park, with objectives to:

- protect life and property, both on park and on neighbouring properties
- maintain habitat diversity within fire-tolerant communities
- develop and maintain mosaic fire frequency, intensity and season, consistent with the ecological limits of the vegetation community
- apply appropriate fire regimes to conserve and maintain endangered and of concern regional ecosystems
- maintain a proactive burning program to reduce the likelihood of high intensity, broad-scale wildfires that may damage fire-sensitive vegetation, such as lancewood *Acacia shirleyi* and bendee *A. catenulata* forests.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Fire is used to manage fuel loads and to maintain the ecological and cultural values of the park.	<p>A20. Update the Level Two Fire Strategy and review in accordance with QPWS procedures every five years.</p> <p>A21. Continue to develop annual burn proposals in accordance with QPWS procedures.</p>

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
	<p>A22. Avoid planned burns for lancewood and bendee ecosystems.</p> <p>A23. Implement a proactive fire management program in eucalypt woodlands, so that the endangered brigalow community is not degraded by repeated high intensity fires.</p> <p>A24. Avoid moderate or high-intensity prescribed burns for blackwood, brigalow and dry vine thicket ecosystems.</p> <p>A25. Undertake back-burning around dry vine thickets and other sensitive ecosystems to reduce the risk of damage by wildfires.</p> <p>A26. Implement regular low intensity fires in the eucalypt woodlands surrounding the lancewood forests in the very early dry season to protect them against wildfire.</p> <p>A27. Protect the lancewood forests from fire for at least 20 years to allow the post-fire seedlings to mature.</p> <p>A28. Monitor the impact of fires (prescribed burns and wildfire) on native plant communities.</p>

5.3 Infrastructure management

The park has a limited network of management tracks and firebreaks, one locked gate and a day-use parking area. Telstra has a telecommunication repeater station site as an in-holding in the national park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>No new tracks are developed and damage on existing tracks is rehabilitated.</p>	<p>A29. Maintain the welcome sign, locked gate and grid at the park entrance.</p> <p>A30. Maintain fencing, as outlined in the QPWS Good Neighbour Policy.</p> <p>A31. Consult with Telstra about park management issues that may affect the operations of its telecommunications tower, such as weed spread prevention.</p>

5.4 Climate change

Higher temperatures, drought and a consequent change in fire regimes are likely effects of a changed climate that would impact on the area's natural values. Although these impacts are hard to manage and are largely outside the scope of the plan, reducing stresses on the environment could make it more resilient to climate change.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>Understand potential impacts from climate change, particularly on the threatened species and ecosystems.</p> <p>Impacts of invasive species as a result of climate change are minimised.</p>	<p>A32. Promote linking important habitats for climate change-affected species by establishing and maintaining corridors and connections.</p> <p>A33. Reduce unnecessary stresses on ecosystems by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • controlling pest plants that impact on their structure and composition • minimising risk of widespread damaging wildfires • undertaking planned burns for ecological purposes under conditions that promote ecosystem health and the retention of critical flora and fauna habitat values.

6. Hyperlinks

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 <www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

Bureau of Meteorology <www.bom.gov.au>

Bonn Convention <www.cms.int>

DERM website <www.derm.qld.gov.au>

Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 <www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

Nature Conservation Act 1992 <www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006 <www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

Queensland Heritage Act 1992 <www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

The Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage <www.icomos.org>

The Burra Charter <www.nationaltrust.com.au>

7. Appendixes

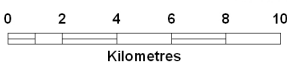
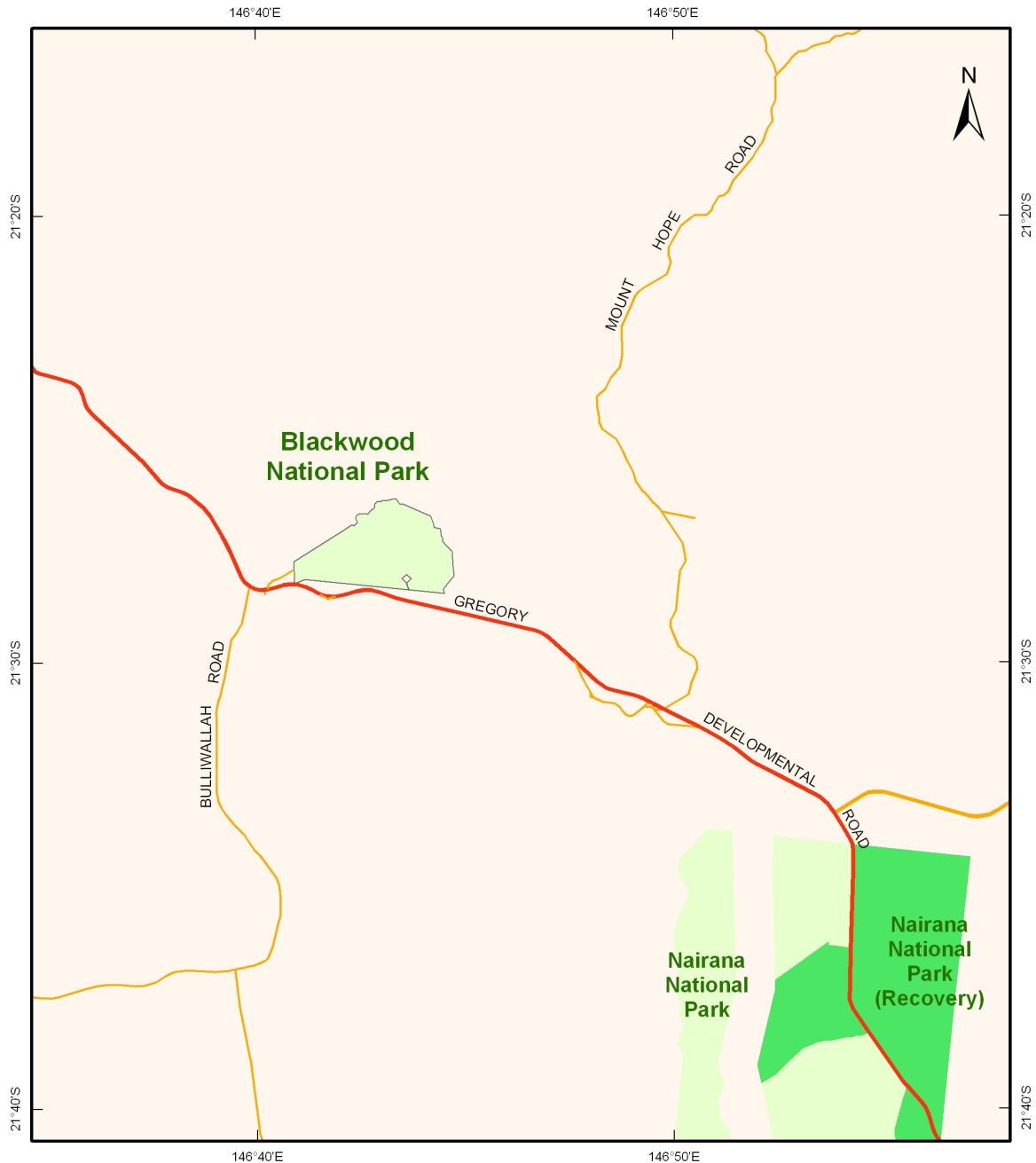
Appendix A – Maps

Appendix B – Definitions

Appendix C – Regional ecosystems

Appendix A – Maps

Map 1 Location



Map Projection:
 Universal Transverse Mercator (MGA) zone 55
 Horizontal Datum:
 Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94)

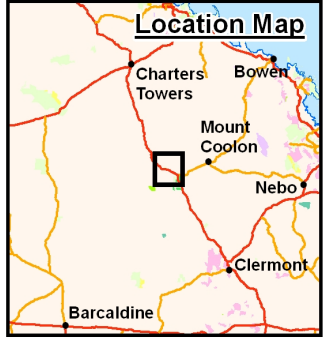
Map Production:
 Spatial Services - Brisbane,
 Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service,
 Department of Environment and Resource Management,
 9 December 2010

Disclaimer:
 This map has been produced for the purposes of discussion and comment. While the map has been prepared with care, neither the Queensland Government nor the Department of Environment and Resource Management accepts any liability for any decisions or actions taken by individuals or organisations on the basis of this map.

Accuracy statement:
 Due to varying source, accuracy or currency of data layers used in this map, the spatial locations of features may not coincide when overlaid.

- Legend**
- Road Network**
 - Highways
 - Secondary roads
 - Local access
 - Tenure**
 - National Park
 - National Park (recovery)

Source Material:
 •QPWS Estate - DERM; June 2010
 •State Digital Road Network (SDRN); September 2010
 © Pitney Bowes Business Insight 2010



© The State of Queensland
 Department of Environment and Resource Management, 2010



Map 2 Assets and adjoining tenure



Map Projection:
 Universal Transverse Mercator (MGA) zone 55
 Horizontal Datum:
 Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94)

Map Production:
 Spatial Services - Brisbane,
 Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service,
 Department of Environment and Resource Management.
 9 December 2010

Disclaimer:
 This map has been produced for the purposes
 of discussion and comment. While the map
 has been prepared with care, neither the
 Queensland Government nor the Department
 of Environment and Resource Management
 accepts any liability for any decisions or actions
 taken by individuals or organisations on the
 basis of this map.

Accuracy statement:
 Due to varying source, accuracy or currency
 of data layers used in this map, the spatial locations
 of features may not coincide when overlaid.



Scale



Queensland Government

Source Material:
 • Protected Areas of Queensland, DERM; 2010
 • DERM Digital Data current state; 2009
 • State Digital Road Network (SDRN); September 2010
 © Pitney Bowes Business Insight 2010

Legend

Tenure

- National Park
- Freehold
- Land Lease
- Telecommunications Tower

Visitor Infrastructure

- A Day use area

Road Network

- Highway
- Street

Appendix B – Definitions

Endangered and vulnerable (species)

At the state level, these species are listed as endangered under schedule 2 of Queensland's Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006. At the national level, they are species listed under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Management principles for national parks

Under Section 17, *Nature Conservation Act 1992*:

- (1) A national park is to be managed to—
 - (a) 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
 - (b) present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values
 - (c) ensure that the only use of the area is nature based and ecologically sustainable.
- (2) The management principle mentioned in subsection (1)(a) is the cardinal principle for the management of national parks.

Of concern (regional ecosystems)

For biodiversity planning purposes, regional ecosystems are assigned a DERM biodiversity status of concern if 10–30 per cent of its pre-clearing extent remains unaffected by moderate degradation and/or biodiversity loss. Moderate degradation and/or biodiversity loss is defined as floristic and/or faunal diversity being greatly reduced but unlikely to recover within the next 20 years, even with the removal of threatening processes; or soil surface is moderately degraded.

Regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystems were defined by Sattler and Williams (1999) as vegetation communities in a bioregion that are consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, landform and soil. Readers should refer to this publication for background information about regional ecosystems and the bioregional planning framework used in Queensland.

Compilation of the information about regional ecosystems presented in Sattler and Williams (1999) was derived from a broad range of existing information sources including land system, vegetation and geology mapping and reports. However, the framework is dynamic and is regularly reviewed as new information becomes available. During the past few years the Queensland Herbarium has developed a program for explicitly mapping regional ecosystems across Queensland. This has resulted, and will continue to result, in updates to the descriptions and status of regional ecosystems. The descriptions are maintained in DERM's Regional Ecosystem Description Database.

Species of conservation significance

Species of conservation significance refers to those species that are threatened (that is, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened species), and may also refer to other species that are subject to threats at a regional or local level.

Vulnerable (species)

At the state level, these species are listed as vulnerable under schedule 3 of Queensland's Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006. At the national level, they are species listed under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Appendix C – Regional ecosystems

Table 1: Of concern or endangered regional ecosystems for Blackwood National Park.

Regional ecosystem number	Regional ecosystem name	DERM biodiversity status	Reason for status and the threats to ongoing sustainability
11.5.10	Paperbark <i>Melaleuca tamariscina</i>	Of concern	Naturally restricted ecosystem, with remnant extent <10 000 ha.
11.7.1	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cristata</i> and <i>Eucalyptus thozetiana</i> or <i>E. microcarpa</i> woodland on lower scarp slopes on Cainozoic lateritic duricrust	Of concern	Habitat for threatened flora species including <i>Cadellia pentastylis</i> .
11.11.13	Blackwood <i>A. argyrodendron</i>	Of concern	10–30 % of pre-clearing extent remains.
11.11.16	<i>Eucalyptus cambageana</i> , <i>Acacia harpophylla</i> woodland on old sedimentary rocks with varying degrees of metamorphism and folding.	Of concern	Extensively cleared for pasture.
11.11.19	Napunyah <i>E. thozetiana</i>	Of concern (under review)	Naturally restricted ecosystem, with remnant extent <10 000 ha.

