

Mazeppa National Park

Management Plan
2011



Brigalow Belt North Bioregion

Prepared by:

Planning Services Unit

Department of Environment and Resource Management

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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.

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Front cover photograph: Mazeppa Creek, Mazeppa National Park. Photo: DERM.

Top right photograph: Moth nest. Photo: DERM.

Centre right photograph: Gidgee *Acacia cambagei*. Photo: J. Thompson, Queensland Herbarium, DERM.

Bottom right photograph: Pastoral remnants. Photo: DERM.

May 2011

ISSN 1037-4698

MP056

Vision statement

Mazeppa National Park will be managed to conserve a biologically significant section of Queensland's Brigalow Belt North bioregion. The park conserves a large area of brigalow *Acacia harpophylla* and gidgee *Acacia cambagei* woodland, which are both endangered in the area. Maintaining and protecting the natural values of the park and conserving its vegetation communities will be the key focus for management.

Within its regional context, the park will remain a refuge for native animals and plants, with minimal impacts from pests and fire. Mazeppa National Park will operate as a remote, low-key recreation area where visitors must be totally self-reliant.

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1. Management intent

The purposes of management of Mazeppa National Park will be to ensure:

- the ecological integrity of the park's values is permanently preserved
- species of conservation significance are conserved through specific management strategies
- opportunities for ecologically sustainable, low impact, nature-based recreation are maintained in a undeveloped setting
- stakeholder awareness of park management issues is fostered and where appropriate, opportunities are provided for stakeholders to be involved in park management
- appropriate fire management regimes are maintained to protect life and property and maintain and protect plant and animal communities
- impacts from pests on the natural values of the park are minimised.

2. Basis for management

The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) is responsible for the day-to-day management of Mazeppa National Park. The park is primarily managed in accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and associated regulations to protect land, wildlife and cultural values. Section 17 of the Nature Conservation Act specifies the management principles for national parks. The precautionary principle will apply to all aspects of park management.

This management plan recognises the traditional affiliations of the Wangan and Jagalingou people to Mazeppa National Park. The involvement of Traditional Owner groups will form an important component of management. Mazeppa National Park is included in an area subject to a native title claim (Wangan and Jagalingou people QC04/006). This plan does not affect these claims.

Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems are described under the DERM Biodiversity status and endangered and vulnerable species are listed under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006. DERM has a responsibility under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002* to control declared pests on protected areas.

3. Location and regional context

Mazeppa National Park is 80 km north of Clermont on the eastern side of the Gregory Development Road in the Isaac Regional Council (Map 1). Situated in the Brigalow Belt North Bioregion, the park was gazetted in 1972 to conserve 4130 ha of remnant brigalow *Acacia harpophylla* and gidgee *Acacia cambagei* woodlands. The park is in the parish of Mazeppa and the creek that runs through the northern section of the park, is named Mazeppa Creek, hence the park was officially gazetted as Mazeppa National Park.

The park's vegetation is of high conservation significance as it occurs on black soils that are highly valued for their agricultural productivity. Vegetation has been extensively cleared in the area. Nine regional ecosystems are conserved in the park; three of these are endangered and three are of concern (Appendix 8.3).

As the park has no facilities, it is most suited to self-sufficient visitors who wish to engage in minimal impact, nature-based activities in a natural, undeveloped setting. There are three national parks in close proximity to this park; Epping Forest National Park (Scientific) to the west, Narrien Range National Park to the southwest and Nairana National Park to the northwest. Blair Athol, Aspley and Redrock state forests are south of the park.

Surrounding land uses include cattle grazing and grain production. Mazeppa National Park is managed from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's (QPWS) Clermont office.

4. Protecting and presenting the park’s values

4.1 Landscape

Mazeppa National Park lies on a gently undulating Tertiary land surface. This land surface was subject to alluvial deposition that formed cracking clay soils and gilgaied clay soils. The park contains portions of the following four land systems:

- Islay: gidgee plains with gilgaied clay soils on acid clay exposed within the Tertiary weathered zone
- Ulcanbar: clay plains with gidgee and cracking clay soils on shales and acid clay exposed within the Tertiary weathered zone
- Kinsale: brigalow scrub on rolling basalt country with cracking clay soils within the Tertiary weathered zone
- Moray: plains and lowlands with gidgee and cracking clay soils on alkaline clay deposit within the Tertiary weathered soil.

Mazeppa National Park is located in the Sutton River catchment area, and Mazeppa Creek, running through the eastern side of the park, journeys north into Logan Creek, which empties into the Sutton River.

Land use surrounding Mazeppa National Park is dominated by cattle grazing and intensive production of crops such as cotton and grains. In the past, dams and levee banks on adjacent properties have caused sections of the park to become inundated after heavy rains and can cause stubble and trash to wash into the park. DERM has contributed to improving drainage between Mazeppa National Park and adjacent properties, through building drainage/water bars to remove water from neighbours’ roads. There is a dam (turkeys nest) on the park adjacent to Mazeppa Creek. Cropping practices in the region increase pest and native animal populations (such as pigs and broilgas, respectively) in the surrounding area, but this does not seem to have caused any major impacts on Mazeppa National Park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
The natural landscape values of Mazeppa National Park’s soil and landforms are maintained, subject to natural change.	A1. Monitor any impacts on the park’s landscape from pests (see section 5 for more detail). Where appropriate, incorporate new information into management strategies. A2. Monitor the effectiveness of drainage between Mazeppa National Park and adjacent properties, following heavy periods of rain.

4.2 Native plants and animals

4.2.1 Native plants

Mazeppa National Park contains plant communities dominated by mature gidgee and brigalow, remnants of vegetation types once widespread in the region. There are nine Brigalow Belt North regional ecosystems represented on Mazeppa National Park, which contains a number of regional ecosystems listed as endangered or of concern under the DERM Biodiversity status (Appendix 8.3).

Mazeppa National Park’s vegetation has been mapped and more than 150 plant species have been identified. One grass species, *Paspalidium scabrifolium*, is considered rare under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation.

A monitoring program has been established to determine the effects of wildfires on the composition of native vegetation and the extent of any changes that may occur. Incidental records of plant sightings are taken and recorded in listings for the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>The composition and extent of native vegetation types are maintained, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Threatened regional ecosystems are protected.</p> <p>Threatened regional ecosystems that have been damaged by fire are recovering.</p> <p>The scientific and conservation values of the gidgee and brigalow communities on the park are protected.</p>	<p>A3. Maintain vegetation monitoring to evaluate management actions (including using fire and controlling pest plants) on plant populations and diversity.</p> <p>A4. Continue to enter any new plant information into WildNet, ParkInfo and other DERM database systems.</p> <p>A5. Incorporate new information about threatened ecosystems and plants into management strategies, where appropriate.</p> <p>A6. Proactively control pest plant species that directly impact on threatened regional ecosystems.</p> <p>A7. Investigate the feasibility of converting the tenure of Mazeppa National Park from 'national park' to 'national park (recovery)'.</p> <p>A8. Investigate the use of controlled cattle grazing trials to determine its value in reducing or minimising the impact of buffel grass on gidgee and brigalow communities on the park.</p>

4.2.2 Native animals

Native animals inhabiting Mazeppa National Park are significant as they represent a small remnant sample of what was once a more widespread and dominant biota throughout the region before clearing for agriculture and grazing occurred. In this respect, the park is a valuable refuge for sedentary species that persist in the area and a sanctuary for transient species that may occur seasonally in the region.

The park contains diverse habitats, particularly for birds. Native animals observed on the park include the koala *Phascolarctos cinereus*, black-striped wallaby *Macropus dorsalis*, dingo *Canis lupus dingo*, speckled warbler *Chthonicola sagittate* and Australian bustard *Ardeotis australis*.

Two frog, four mammal, three reptile and 64 bird species have been recorded on the park. The squatter pigeon southern subspecies *Geophaps scripta scripta* has a *vulnerable* conservation status under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Incidental records of wildlife sightings are taken and recorded in animal listings for the park.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>The park continues to conserve current native species.</p> <p>The existing knowledge of animal ecology is enhanced and used as the basis for future management decisions.</p> <p>Animal species of significance are protected.</p>	<p>A9. Maintain animal habitat through appropriate management activities, such as pest control and fire management.</p> <p>A10. Continue to enter any new animal information into WildNet, ParkInfo and other DERM database systems.</p> <p>A11. Initiate animal surveys and monitoring to evaluate management actions (including using fire and controlling pest plants) on animal populations and diversity.</p> <p>A12. New information about animals, particularly those of conservation significance, will be incorporated into management strategies.</p>

4.3 Indigenous culture

No Indigenous cultural heritage landscape values, sites or artefacts are known to have been identified at Mazeppa National Park.

The Wangan and Jagalingou people are the registered Native Title claimants for Mazeppa National Park (QC04/006). The plan does not affect these claims.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Indigenous cultural sites are identified and managed in co-operation with Traditional Owners.	<p>A13. Liaise with Traditional Owners about undertaking a cultural heritage survey on the park to determine any evidence of cultural sites.</p> <p>A14. Liaise with Traditional Owners about managing and presenting any cultural sites.</p> <p>A15. Manage identified sites of cultural heritage significance in accordance with the principles of The Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage and The Burra Charter.</p> <p>A16. Respect Traditional Owner knowledge, interest, rights and aspirations.</p>

4.4 Shared-history culture

Prior to its gazettal, Mazeppa National Park was part of a larger pastoral run. Evidence of this land use exists on the park, in the form of remnant stockyards and fencing.

Large holdings were occupied by pastoralists from the early 1850s, although sheep did not arrive in significant numbers until 1859–60. Gold and copper mining occurred in the area after 1861, and coal was first discovered at Blair Athol Station in 1864. The existing Blair Athol open-cut mine contains the world's largest seam of steaming coal.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, hardwood timber was taken from stands of ironbark and rosewood in forested areas of the region.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Built pastoral remnants evident in the park are allowed to age in-situ, subject to natural processes.	<p>A17. Protect pastoral remnants during routine fire management operations.</p> <p>A18. Document evidence of historical pastoral use on the park and enter into appropriate DERM information systems.</p>

4.5 Tourism and visitor opportunities

Mazeppa National Park offers opportunities for nature-based recreation, such as bird and animal watching. Recreational visitor numbers are low and visitor facilities are not provided on the park. Accordingly, visitors to Mazeppa National Park must be self-reliant.

Occasionally, the park is used as a stop-over for travellers using the Gregory Development Road between Charters Towers and Clermont. The main informal camping site is beside Mazeppa Creek, at the eastern end of the park, but the black clay soil can become extremely boggy and impassable when wet.

No open fires are permitted in the management area and it is recommended that campers bring their own gas stoves or barbeques for cooking.

There is currently no visitor information on the DERM website and no onsite interpretive facilities.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>Low key nature-based activities remain the only recreational activities undertaken at the park.</p> <p>Recreational activities have minimal impact on the park's natural values.</p> <p>Visitors are provided with safety advice.</p>	<p>A19. Encourage visitors via the DERM website to come prepared for a self-sufficient experience.</p> <p>A20. Maintain minimal visitor impact on the natural values of the park by promoting self-reliant recreation and maintaining existing levels of infrastructure.</p> <p>A21. Encourage park visitors who record plant and animal observations to report their findings to DERM.</p> <p>A22. Encourage the use of portable gas stoves when camping.</p>

4.6 Education and science

Mazeppa National Park represents the best retained example of remnant vegetation in an otherwise extensively cleared landscape. It provides opportunities for scientific research and environmental education, within vegetation types that are diminishing in the region due to widespread clearing.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
Environmental education and scientific research activities have increased knowledge of the park's environmental values. Where relevant, this knowledge has been incorporated into management strategies.	<p>A23. Support appropriate environmental education and scientific research activities that may expand the knowledge-base of the park's natural values.</p> <p>A24. Any new information about the park's plants, animals or other natural values, derived from education and scientific activities, will be incorporated into management strategies, where appropriate.</p> <p>A25. Encourage park visitors who record plant and animal observations to report findings to DERM.</p>

5. Other key issues and responses

5.1 Pest management

5.1.1 Pest animals

Pest animals found in the park include Class 2 declared pests (feral pigs, wild dogs) and non-declared pests (cattle, cats and cane toads). A pest animal control program has been implemented at Mazeppa National Park. Up to mid-2009, no cattle or evidence of intrusions had been sighted on the park. Feral pigs frequent the park seasonally, with sporadic sightings and widespread evidence of their on-site existence. A combination of methods including poison grain at specified sites, poison baits and trapping has been used to control feral pigs. Liaising with neighbours has resulted in a strategic approach to this shared problem. Pig shooting and dogging is also a concern when people enter the park, as these activities are illegal on protected areas.

The spur-throated locust has historically used the park as a winter roosting site, forming swarms so dense they can break branches. Locusts breed during the summer wet season in the cleared open plains surrounding the park. Extensive clearing has greatly increased the area suitable for summer breeding, and during winter this population concentrates in remnant forested areas like Mazeppa National Park. Consequently, more locusts may invade the park than in the past. While the swarms cover only a small part of the park at one time, during the long winter dry season, they cause substantial damage by breaking tree branches and defoliating vegetation. Swarming locusts can also cause substantial damage to crops on nearby agricultural properties. In 1995, the spur-throated locusts reached plague proportions at Mazeppa National Park with recorded densities of 1000 individuals per square metre. No serious impacts from locusts have been reported since 2001. There continue to be seasonal increases of locusts in the area, but no recent reports of crop damage.

5.1.2 Pest plants

Pest plants found at Mazeppa National Park include *Harrisia cactus* *Harrisia martini*, parthenium *Parthenium hysterophorus* and prickly pear *Opuntia* spp., all declared Class 2 pest plants, and buffel grass *Pennisetum ciliare*, a non-declared pest plant.

In 2003, mealy bug, a biological control agent, was introduced to Mazeppa National Park to control *Harrisia cactus*. Subsequent incidental inspections have revealed very little *Harrisia cactus* in the park. *Cactoblastis* was introduced as a control measure, prior to mealy bug in 2002, as small, sporadic prickly pear infestation occurs in less vegetated areas of the park. *Parthenium* has been controlled through regular spray treatment. This control work mainly occurs on the fireline around the park boundaries, where *parthenium* is most concentrated. Buffel grass can cause significant impacts on brigalow and gidgee communities by increasing the frequency and severity of fires. Buffel grass is the most serious environmental weed on the park, and has altered fire regimes and destroyed a significant proportion of the endangered acacia-dominated regional ecosystems.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>The natural values of the park are not threatened by the presence of pests.</p> <p>Implementing effective management practices results in minimal presence of pests on the park.</p> <p>Implementing effective management practices minimises the threat of fire to the vegetation communities.</p>	<p>A26. Manage pests in accordance with the QPWS Pest Management System.</p> <p>A27. Maintain co-operative efforts between DERM and park neighbours to minimise pest invasion, through appropriate management practices.</p> <p>A28. Continue implementing pest plant control practices.</p> <p>A29. Monitor extent of buffel grass on the park and implement effective control options.</p> <p>A30. Continue implementing the pest animal program, including co-operative efforts with park neighbours.</p> <p>A31. Monitor seasonal increases of spur throated locusts on the park. Should numbers reach plague proportions, enact appropriate management responses, in accordance with DERM Locust Control Operational policy.</p> <p>A32. Where practicable, restrict pig shooters/doggers entry into the park. Report any illegal activities to police.</p>

5.2 Fire management

Fire is a natural part of many landscapes and is important in maintaining biodiversity within and between fire-adapted vegetation communities. Vegetation communities susceptible to disturbance by fire may be more vulnerable to pest invasion and post-fire events. Inappropriate fire regimes can also threaten the long-term integrity of some vegetation in these areas.

Wildfire is a major problem in Mazeppa National Park, due to the fire sensitivity of brigalow and in particular the gidgee woodlands. The non-declared pest plant buffel grass has markedly increased fuel loads and enabled fires to penetrate the brigalow and gidgee communities and kill canopy trees.

Since 2004, a Draft Fire Management Strategy has been used as a guide to manage fire at Mazeppa National Park. Fuel reduction burns along the highway reduce the risk of fire entering the park. Wildfire response procedures are updated annually and fire lines are maintained through grading and spraying, and upgraded regularly. Fire lines at the front of the park have been increased to better protect the park from wildfires and arson.

A monitoring program will determine the effects of wildfires on the composition of native vegetation and the extent of changes that may occur. DERM maintains regular contact with neighbours about park fire management, and joint control burning is conducted on the road verge.

Desired outcomes 2021	Actions and guidelines
<p>Life, property and national park neighbours are protected from the impacts of fire.</p> <p>Fire is managed to promote the biological diversity and integrity of native flora and fauna communities, particularly for species of conservation significance, in fire-adapted vegetation types.</p> <p>The risk of wildfires that enter or exit the park is minimised.</p> <p>Fire is excluded from the fire-sensitive vegetation communities.</p> <p>Fire-sensitive vegetation communities that have been impacted by fire are recovering.</p>	<p>A33. Formalise the Fire Management Strategy for the park, beyond draft status.</p> <p>A34. Maintain fire lines and fuel reduction burns.</p> <p>A35. Maintain annual updates of wildfire response procedures.</p> <p>A36. Continue monitoring the effects of wildfires on the composition of native vegetation, and the extent of any changes.</p> <p>A37. Maintain regular contact with park neighbours and local rural fire brigade regarding fire management activities and undertake co-operative burning activities, where appropriate.</p> <p>A38. Monitor extent of buffel grass on the park and implement effective control options to minimise fire risk.</p>

6. References

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, 2001, *Montreal non-indigenous cultural heritage inventory project report: Clermont State Forests, Central Queensland*, Brisbane, Queensland Government.

Sattler, P. and Williams, R. (eds) 1999, *The conservation status of Queensland's bioregional ecosystems*. Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Government, Brisbane.

7. Hyperlinks

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

Department of Environment and Resource Management website < www.derm.qld.gov.au >

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 < www.environment.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 >

Regional ecosystems <www.derm.qld.gov.au>

The Burra Charter <www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au>

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

8. Appendixes

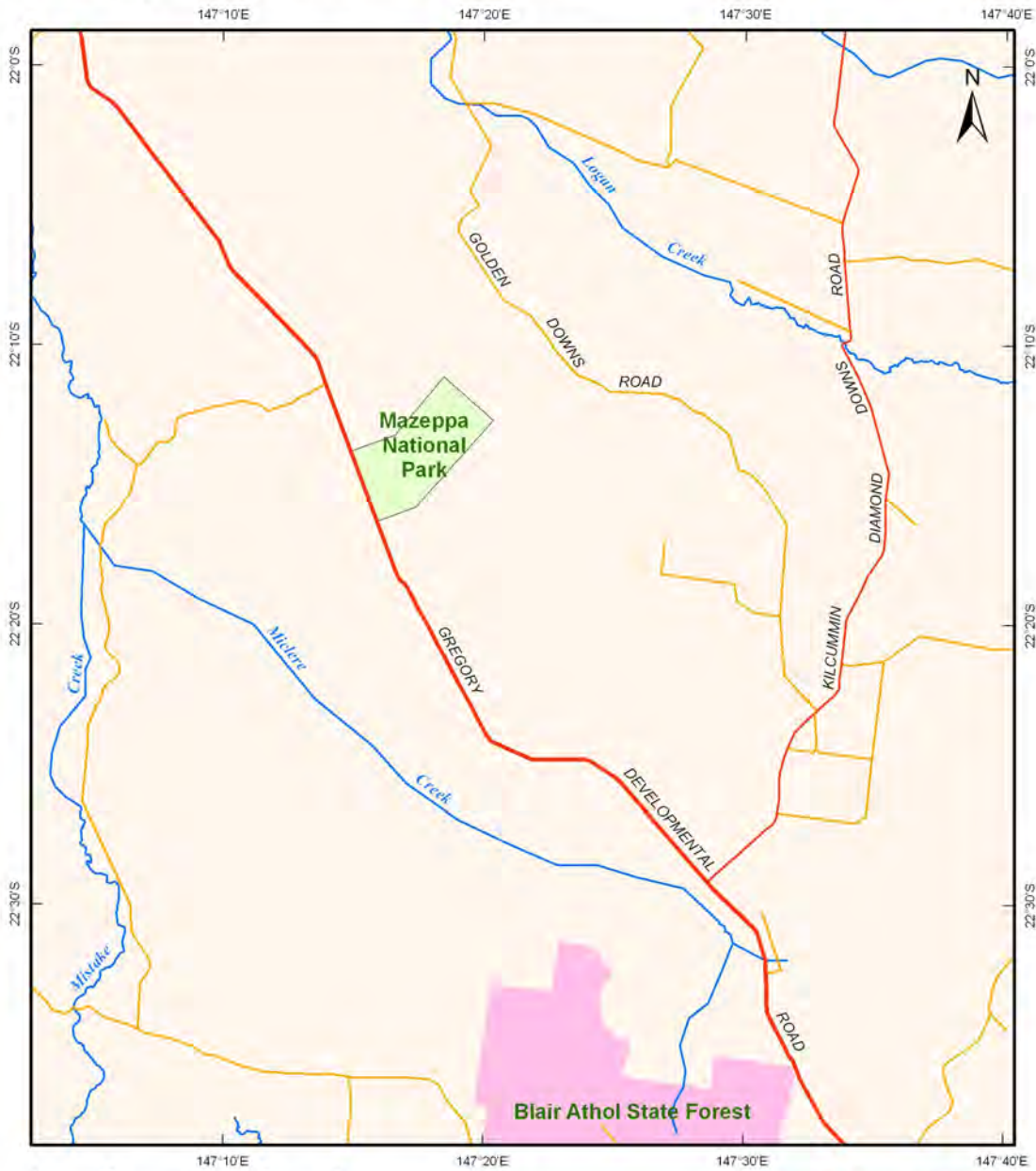
Appendix A – Map

Appendix B – Definitions

Appendix C – Regional ecosystems

Appendix A – Map

Map 1 – Location



Map Projection:
 Universal Transverse Mercator (MGA) zone <5>
 Horizontal Datum:
 Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94)

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

- Road Network**
- Highways
 - Secondary roads
 - Local connector
 - Local access
- Drainage network**
- Rivers and Creeks
- Tenure**
- National Park
 - State Forest

Source Material:
 • Protected Areas of Queensland, DERM; September 2010
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 • State Digital Road Network (SDRN); September 2010
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Appendix B – Definitions

Endangered

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

Management principles for national parks

These are specified in Section 17 of the *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.

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. Therefore updated regional ecosystem descriptions in the format of Sattler and Williams (1999) are maintained in the Regional Ecosystem Description Database.

Vulnerable

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

Water bar (also known as invert)

A low profiled surface drain constructed, across the width of a road or track to divert water off the downhill side of the track. (Water that has collected on the high side of the track or is flowing down the track can be diverted off the track by using a water bar).

Appendix C – Regional ecosystems

Table 1: Regional ecosystems listed as endangered or of concern under the DERM biodiversity status.

Regional ecosystem number	Regional ecosystem name	DERM biodiversity status
11.3.1	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> and/or <i>Casuarina cristata</i> open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
11.3.3	Eucalyptus coolabah woodland on alluvial plains	Of concern
11.3.5	<i>Acacia cambagei</i> woodland on alluvial plains	Of concern
11.4.6	<i>Acacia cambagei</i> woodland on Cainozoic clay plains	Endangered
11.4.9	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> shrubby open forest to woodland with <i>Terminalia oblongata</i> on Cainozoic clay plains	Endangered
11.4.11	<i>Dichanthium sericeum</i> , <i>Astrebla spp.</i> and patchy <i>Acacia harpophylla</i> , Eucalyptus coolabah on Cainozoic clay plains	Of concern

