

Management plan



Mt Blarney Conservation Park

1. Management directions and purposes

1.1 Management directions

Mt Blarney Conservation Park lies approximately 2.5km south-west of Sarina. The 72ha park will be managed to maintain the integrity of existing ecosystems represented within the park. By keeping the park free of structures and through careful fire management the park's scenic value as a forested backdrop to the township of Sarina will be maintained.

Limited park access allows for minimal recreational use. Only self-sufficient recreational activities which do not impact on the natural values of the park will be permitted.

Increasing the cultural and natural resource knowledge base of the park will be a priority.

1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- rare and threatened species are identified and conserved through specific management strategies;
- fire management ensures that areas of grassy woodland/open forest are maintained by preventing rainforest from spreading beyond its present range;
- invasive weed species such as lantana are controlled;
- grazing impact on the park's edges is minimised;
- the visual integrity of the area's landscape is maintained by not permitting developments that impact on its scenic values;
- neighbours, local government, Aboriginal groups and other interested parties are made aware of park management issues and are provided with opportunities to contribute to management; and
- self-reliant, nature-based, low-impact recreation is permitted, but not encouraged.

2 Basis for management

Mt Blarney Conservation Park is gazetted under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and must be managed under s 20 of the Act to:

- conserve and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values;
- provide for the permanent conservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and
- ensure that any commercial use of the area's natural resources, including fishing and grazing, is ecologically sustainable.

2.1 Regional and management context

Mt Blarney Conservation Park lies in the Sarina-Proserpine Lowlands natural province of the Central Mackay Coast biogeographic region. Mt Blarney is its highest point. The park consists of remnant vegetation and provides a scenic background to neighbouring properties and to the Sarina township. It is largely rainforest and grassy woodland/open forest, and is surrounded by cleared grasslands.

Management of the park is undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Mackay District office. The park has no permanent ranger presence.

Gazetted road access to the park exists on two sides via Rainforest and Bella Roads. However these roads have not been formed to the park boundary and access is by foot.

Most neighbouring properties comprise less steep terrain that has been cleared for grazing and rural residential purposes.

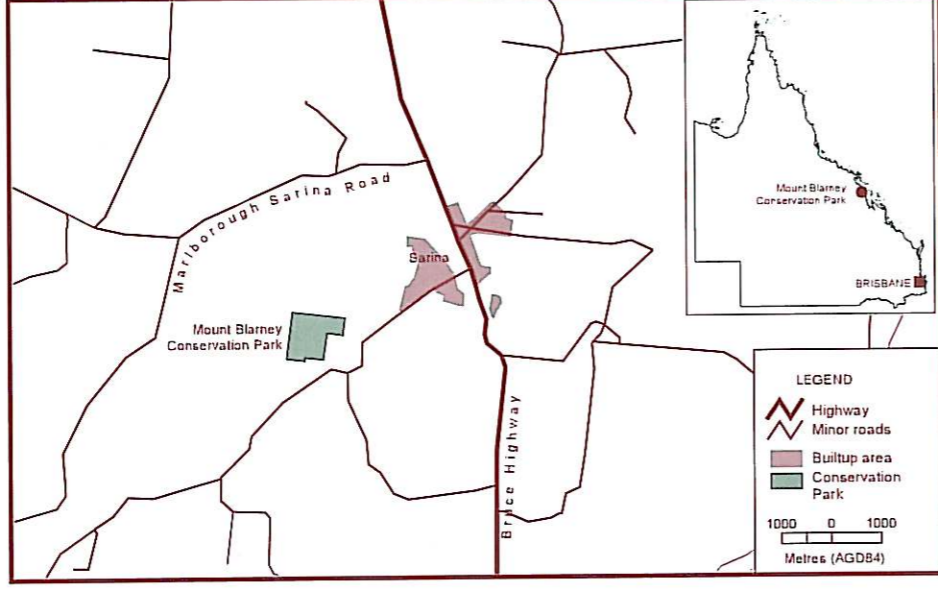
2.2 Values of Mt Blarney Conservation Park

Geology and landform

Mt Blarney Conservation Park covers most of two low ridges and an intervening valley formed by the Palaeozoic

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Scientific and educational

The park contains remnant vegetation and may be of scientific interest as a genetic repository, or as a tool for comparing genetic diversity across regions. Until the park's flora and fauna are examined in more detail, scientific significance is difficult to estimate. Access difficulties limit the park's suitability for educational purposes.

Recreation and tourism

The park has a low level of recreational use and is generally used by enthusiastic local bushwalkers. No visitor facilities exist within the conservation park.

Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Mt Blarney Conservation 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 October 1999 and, in accordance with s 125 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 Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Central Regional Office in Rockhampton on (07) 4936 0567.

This management plan was prepared with the assistance of Michael Overland, Bill Lavack, Martin O'Malley, David Marshall, Bill Fisher and Rose Trapnell. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

Plants and animals

The park is dominated by two ecosystems. The notophyll vine forest/microphyll rainforest, which comprises coastal hills and ranges, is a major rainforest type of the central Queensland coast. A number of rare and threatened flora species occur within this type of ecosystem and may exist on the park.

A smaller area of open forest containing gum, ironbark and bloodwood species occurs on the eastern slope of the western ridge of the park. In the absence of fire, such open forest is readily invaded by rainforest species. This invasion degrades the habitat value of open forest and may result in decreased plant and animal diversity.

The conservation status of both ecosystems is not considered to be of concern at present.

Cultural heritage

No information is available regarding the traditional use of the area by Aboriginal people or its cultural heritage significance. No places of European or Aboriginal heritage value are known to occur within the park. However, such values may be present and will be taken into account in the future management of the park.

Given the history of the sugar industry in the area and anecdotal evidence that South-Sea Islanders may have used higher park lands for agriculture, cultural artefacts of significance to South-Sea Islanders may exist.

Scenic and aesthetic

Mt Blarney Conservation Park presents a uniform canopy from most viewpoints. There are no obvious rock outcrops or peaks. Its scenic value is accentuated by clearing which has occurred in the foothills up to the park boundary, and it remains a pleasant backdrop to the township of Sarina and to the many residences in the immediate vicinity.

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3 Management strategies

Current situation	Desired outcomes	Policies, guidelines and actions
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Little detailed information on the park's plants and animals is available. The presence of rare and threatened species is undetermined.</p> <p>Areas of grassy woodland/open forest are prone to invasion by rainforest and weeds. They also have the ability to rapidly accumulate volatile grass and leaf litter fuels.</p> <p>Rainforest plants are readily destroyed by fire.</p>	<p>The composition and extent of flora and fauna types are maintained.</p> <p>An updated list of flora and fauna and their conservation values is available.</p>	<p>Undertake and/or encourage qualitative plant and animal surveys.</p> <p>Undertake and/or encourage periodic monitoring of key components of plant and animal communities and their habitats.</p> <p>Identify threats to plants and animals within the park. Use the information to review and improve management strategies outlined in this management plan.</p>
<p>Introduced plants and animals</p> <p>The type and degree to which weeds are invading the park is not fully known, although lanтана is prominent and widespread.</p> <p>The presence of feral animals or stock within the park is not known, but it is likely that feral pigs and cane toads, at least, are present.</p>	<p>Improved knowledge exists of the nature and extent of plants and animals introduced into the park.</p> <p>Introduced plants and animals, including stock, have no significant impact on the native plants and animals found in the park.</p>	<p>Conduct periodic surveys to determine the presence and types of introduced plants and animals.</p> <p>Stock grazing on the park will not be permitted.</p> <p>Liaise and negotiate with neighbours to prevent stock gaining access to the park. A stock proof fence may be required along some boundaries. If required, the fence will be constructed and maintained in accordance with the Service's Good Neighbour Policy.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Vegetation communities on the park have different fire management requirements. Eucalypt woodlands require fire to maintain their distribution and structure. Rainforest is vulnerable to fire and may require protection from high intensity fires.</p>	<p>The biological diversity and integrity of native plant and animal communities is maintained by appropriate fire management.</p> <p>Human life, park infrastructure and neighbouring properties are protected as far as possible from fire that either originates within the park or enters the park from neighbouring properties.</p>	<p>A fire management plan will be developed.</p> <p>Fire management will focus on maintaining current distributions of vegetation types occurring within the park, controlling weed infestations and reducing the risk of fire originating on or escaping from the park.</p> <p>As resources permit, firebreaks will be constructed in appropriate areas.</p> <p>Neighbours will be consulted and notified prior to initiation of controlled fires.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>The park is an important relatively undisturbed part of the Aboriginal landscape which may be culturally and spiritually significant for traditional owners of the area.</p> <p>No Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations have been conducted in the park but it is possible that there are significant places for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Given the history of the sugar industry in the area and anecdotal evidence that South-Sea Islanders may have used higher lands within the park for agricultural purposes, cultural artefacts of significance may exist.</p> <p>Traditional owners have made a number of native title claims over lands which include the park to have their native title rights recognised.</p>	<p>Traditional owners have ownership, control and/or management of their cultural heritage.</p> <p>Cultural sites are identified and protected in accordance with the wishes of Aboriginal people with an interest in the area.</p> <p>Native title rights are not limited or compromised by this plan.</p>	<p>Keep open lines of communication with traditional owners and people with a historic connection to the park.</p> <p>After any successful native title determination, traditional rights to the land will be recognised and traditional owners will be involved in joint management of the park, including the protection of their cultural heritage.</p>
<p>Recreation and tourism</p> <p>No visitor facilities are provided.</p> <p>Although the current visitor level is not known, it is thought to be low.</p> <p>No formal park entrance exists. Directional and boundary signs are not provided.</p>	<p>Recreational use has no significant impact on park values.</p>	<p>Camping on the park will not be encouraged. No visitor facilities will be provided within the park.</p> <p>No restrictions will be placed on recreational day-use of the park unless monitoring programs suggest that flora, fauna or the physical habitat is being significantly disturbed.</p> <p>Any proposals for commercial use of the park will be considered and approved only if they have no significant impact on the natural environment.</p> <p>While there continues to be road access limitations, no formal park entrance or boundary signs will be provided.</p>
<p>Education and interpretation</p> <p>Difficult access makes the park unsuitable for educational purposes.</p> <p>No interpretive material on the park is currently available.</p>	<p>Visitors to the area are informed about the park and its recreation opportunities and/or restrictions.</p>	<p>A park information sheet will be prepared.</p>
<p>Resource use and scientific research</p> <p>No commercial use of the park is currently authorised.</p>	<p>Opportunities for low-impact relevant scientific research are available.</p>	<p>Scientific research will be permitted, provided it is of low impact and provides valuable information to managers.</p> <p>No use of park resources will be permitted, except those proposed within this management plan.</p>
<p>Plan implementation and monitoring</p> <p>This is a little-used park which requires only minimal input for management. Priorities are clearly to ensure that an appropriate fire regime maintains habitat diversity and information on the park's natural and cultural resources is increased.</p>	<p>The park is being managed in line with the provisions of this plan.</p>	<p>Priority will be given to fire management and to the collection of information on the park's plants, animals and cultural resources. Information collected as a result of the implementation of this plan will be used to modify management strategies as required.</p> <p>The final plan will be implemented as resources permit.</p> <p>Ranger-in-charge to submit a brief annual report on the success of the plan's implementation.</p> <p>Review the management plan within 10 years of approval according to s 125 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992.</p>