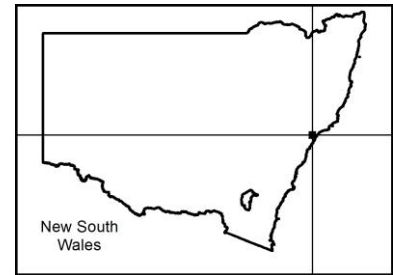


Statement of Management Intent



Sugarloaf State Conservation Area

1. Introduction

This statement outlines the main values, issues, management directions and priorities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for managing Sugarloaf State Conservation Area (SCA). This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the SCA until a plan of management has been prepared in accordance with the [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 \(NPW Act\)](#). The NPWS [Managing Parks Prior to Plan of Management Policy](#) states that parks and reserves without a plan of management are to be managed in a manner consistent with the intent of the NPW Act and the ['precautionary principle'](#) (see [Principle 15](#)).

2. Management principles

State conservation areas are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas that:

- contain significant or representative ecosystems, landforms or natural phenomena or places of cultural significance
- are capable of providing opportunities for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment, the sustainable use of buildings and structures, or research
- are capable of providing opportunities for uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act.

Under the NPW Act ([section 30G](#)), state conservation areas are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, protect natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects and features of cultural value
- provide for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act (including uses permitted under section 47J such as mineral exploration and mining), having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted in the area
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with other uses permitted in the area
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

Land is reserved as a state conservation area primarily where mineral values preclude reservation as another category. The NPW Act requires a review of the classification of state conservation areas every five years in consultation with the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*.

3. Context

Reservation details: Sugarloaf SCA was reserved 1 July 2007.

Size: 4160 hectares.



Sugarloaf SCA is located approximately 23 kilometres west of Newcastle and lies within the Sydney Basin Bioregion. It also lies within the administrative areas of Awabakal and Biriban local Aboriginal land councils, Hunter Local Land Services and Lake Macquarie and Cessnock city councils.

The SCA comprises three discontinuous parcels of land. The largest section located to the north is bisected by the Sydney to Newcastle Freeway. The SCA was reserved under the *National Park Estate (Lower Hunter Region Reservations) Act 2006* and is comprised of former sections of Heaton and Awaba state forests, which currently form the western and southern boundaries of the SCA.

The SCA features high-quality, tall open forest and is part of a green corridor stretching from the Watagans Ranges through to Hexham Swamp, the Hunter River estuary and the coastal plains of the Tomago Sandbeds, Stockton Bight and Port Stephens. In the northern section of Sugarloaf SCA there is a small parcel of Crown land that is under the care of Lake Macquarie City Council which contains picnicking facilities and telecommunications towers.

4. Values

- Sugarloaf SCA protects habitat for a variety of threatened species, including the critically endangered regent honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) and threatened glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*), little lorikeet (*Glossopsitta pusilla*), brown treecreeper (eastern subspecies) (*Climacteris picumnus victoriae*), black-chinned honeyeater (eastern subspecies) (*Melithreptus gularis gularis*), powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*), masked owl (*Tyto novaehollandiae*), sooty owl (*Tyto tenebricosa*), spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*), yellow-bellied glider (*Petaurus australis*), koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), eastern freetail-bat (*Mormopterus norfolkensis*), golden-tipped bat (*Kerivoula papuensis*), large-eared pied bat (*Chalinolobus dwyeri*), eastern false pipistrelle (*Falsistrellus tasmaniensis*), little bentwing-bat (*Miniopterus australis*), eastern bentwing-bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis*), greater broad-nosed bat (*Scoteanax rueppellii*), little eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*) and Stephens' banded snake (*Hoplocephalus stephensii*).
- Sugarloaf SCA protects habitat for the threatened shrub species black-eyed Susan (*Tetradlea juncea*), small-flower grevillea (*Grevillea parviflora* ssp. *parviflora*), leafless tongue-orchid (*Cryptostylis hunteriana*), and the heath wrinklewort (*Rutidosis heterogama*).
- The SCA also protects the following endangered ecological communities: Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion; Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast Bioregion; and Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.
- The SCA provides a range of recreational opportunities including mountain-bike riding, horse riding and four-wheel drive touring. Picnic facilities are available at the council-managed day-use site located on Crown land in the northern part of the SCA.
- Organised off-track bushland activities such as orienteering and rogaining are popular in the SCA with schools, clubs and associations.

5. Issues

- Historic and current underground mining in the SCA has resulted in a range of impacts such as ground subsidence, fracturing, surfacing cracking, vertical block movement and cliff falls. Certain areas are required at times to be closed to the public due to safety concerns, and long-term closure at some sites may be required where there is a high level of disturbance and extensive rehabilitation is required.
- Pest species known to occur in the SCA include foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.), feral goats (*Capra hircus*) and feral cats (*Felis catus*).
- Weed species of concern known to occur in the SCA include lantana (*Lantana camara*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.).
- The SCA contains six telecommunication towers at a number of locations. Current occupancy agreements are in place with the various telecommunication companies for these towers.
- There are a number of transmission and electricity easements in the SCA managed by TransGrid, Ausgrid and a private company. TransGrid operates under a formal easement granted under section 153(1) of the NPW Act.

- Telecommunication towers, transmission lines and associated infrastructure can cause impacts to the SCA from clearing or trimming of native vegetation, use of herbicides, vehicle access and the maintenance of access trails, as well as the visual impact of the lines and towers.
- The SCA contains an easement for the Sydney-to-Newcastle gas pipeline.
- There is an occupational permit for an archery club in the park which is identified as an existing interest under the NPW Act. There are limited facilities within the archery area and impacts on park values are minimal.
- There is also an occupational permit for a motorcycle track which is on land vested in the Minister administering the NPW Act ('Part 11' land). The facilities include a fenced motocross track which is used regularly. Such an activity is not consistent with the management principles of the NPW Act, and NPWS is investigating the sale of this area of land.
- There are occurrences of illegal rubbish dumping (including asbestos) and visitors causing damage to infrastructure.
- The Sugarloaf Range and associated trails are regularly used for four-wheel driving and trail-bike riding, and in some sections there is significant erosion from inappropriate and high levels of use.
- There are a small number of roads in the SCA that are regularly used by neighbours to access properties as they provide the only practical access for their lands. The relevant reservation acts contain special provisions to protect the right of the public to use roads that provide the only practical access to private property.

6. Key management directions

- Manage fire in accordance with the Sugarloaf State Conservation Area [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- Implement pest management programs in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Central Coast Hunter Region.
- Work with mining companies operating within Sugarloaf SCA to monitor and remediate land affected by underground mining within the SCA, and to ensure the SCA is managed in accordance with the management principles of the NPW Act to conserve and protect biodiversity.
- Where required due to safety concerns, temporarily close to the public the areas in Sugarloaf SCA affected by underground mine subsidence and remediation works. Long-term closures at some sites may be required where there is a high level of disturbance and extensive rehabilitation is required.
- Ensure the existing telecommunications towers are managed in accordance with occupational agreements. Any new telecommunications facilities proposed (including additional antennae on existing towers) will require NPWS consent. Any new users will require a licence under the NPW Act and be subject to environmental impact assessment requirements.
- Continue to liaise with TransGrid regarding access and maintenance needs in accordance with the existing agreement.
- Continue to manage easement agreements or work with authorities to ensure appropriate access and maintenance arrangements are undertaken for utilities in the SCA.
- Close management trails no longer required for management purposes, and where required, install gates on trails to minimise inappropriate use and prevent unauthorised access and illegal dumping.

- Where roads through the SCA provide the only practical access to private land, continue to maintain these access roads to the levels that existed at the time of reservation. Pets and other animals may be transported on these roads as long as they remain in a vehicle. Any upgrade of an access road will be subject to the formalisation of access arrangements, such as the issuing of a consent or licence. Where a road is no longer required for private property access, it may be gated and designated as a management trail.
- Where appropriate, issue a consent for large, organised group activities such as orienteering and rogaining events.
- Continue to manage the occupational permit for the archery club.
- Investigate the sale or lease of the Part 11 lands currently occupied by the motorcycle track. In the interim continue to manage the occupational permit for the motorcycle track.
- All management activities will be preceded by the preparation of an environmental assessment or heritage assessment where this is a requirement of NPWS policy or legislation.
- Environmental repair and threat management programs, such as erosion mitigation measures, pest management, and activities arising from threatened species requirements may be implemented in accordance with NPWS policies and procedures.
- Non-intrusive works may be undertaken where necessary to protect cultural heritage items from further deterioration, to ensure the safety of visitors, to protect wildlife or to prevent damage to park assets.
- A plan of management will be prepared to set out the ongoing management objectives for the SCA. The plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act which will be available for public comment. NPWS will also encourage the community to contribute to the ongoing conservation of the SCA by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this SCA or this statement, contact the NPWS Lower Hunter Area/Newcastle Office on 02 4946 4100 at Hunter Wetland Centre, Sandgate Road, Shortland NSW or PO Box 351, Jesmond NSW 2299.

Disclaimer: This is a statement of intent to guide the management of the SCA prior to the development of a plan of management. Any statements made in this publication are made in good faith and do not render the Office of Environment and Heritage liable for any loss or damage. Provisions in the final plan of management may vary from those identified in this document as a result of new information and community consultation. The maps in this statement are intended to show the SCA's location and basic features only, and are not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within parks.

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