

**TAPIN TOPS NATIONAL PARK**  
**PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**  
**May 2005**

**This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for the Environment on 10 May 2005.**

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This plan of management was prepared by Kim Luckie with assistance from staff of the Mid North Coast Region of the NPWS, together with valuable assistance from Heather Lloyd and Alison Ramsay. The contributions of the Regional Advisory Committee is greatly appreciated.

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Cover photograph of Potoroo Falls by Scott Calvin.

#### **FURTHER INQUIRIES**

For additional information or enquires on any aspect of the plan, contact the NPWS Mid North Coast Regional office at 152 Horton St, Port Macquarie or by phone on (02) 6586 8300.

**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

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## FOREWORD

Tapin Tops National Park is located approximately 30 km north west of Wingham on the mid north coast of NSW. The park covers an area of 10,828 hectares.

Tapin Tops National Park contains a high biodiversity. Twenty-eight forest ecosystems have been recorded within or on the boundary of the park. Approximately 44% of the park is mapped as old growth forest. Twenty species listed as vulnerable under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1975* and seventeen significant animal species have been recorded in the park. The area was traditionally used by the Biripi people and it is likely that a number of Aboriginal pathways traversed the area, connecting the tablelands with the coastal plains. The park also contains a number of relics and plantings from its past use as State Forest. Recreation activities in the park include camping, picnicking, bushwalking sightseeing, vehicle touring and swimming.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires that a plan of management be prepared for each nature reserve. A plan of management is a legal document that outlines how the area will be managed in the years ahead.

A draft plan of management for Tapin Tops National Park was placed on public exhibition from 14 November 2003 until 23 February 2004. The exhibition of the plan of management attracted 12 submissions that raised 7 issues. All submissions received were carefully considered before adopting this plan of management.

This plan proposes to manage the park as part of a regional network of protected areas and as a wildlife corridor between the coast and the Great Dividing Range. The geological, natural and scenic values of the park, including Rowleys Rock and Potoroo Falls, will be protected, as will the diverse vegetation and native fauna of the park. Opportunities for nature based recreation activities, such sightseeing, walking, camping and vehicle touring, will continue to be provided.

This plan of management establishes the scheme of operations for Tapin Tops National Park. In accordance with Section 73B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, this plan of management is hereby adopted.

**Bob Debus**

**Minister for the Environment**

## 1. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The management of national parks in New South Wales (NSW) is in the context of the legislative and policy framework, primarily the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) and the policies of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Section 72AA of the NPW Act list the matters to be considered in the preparation of a plan of management. The policies arise from the legislative background, the corporate goals of the Service and internationally accepted principles of park management. They relate to nature conservation, Aboriginal and historic heritage conservation, recreation, commercial use, research and communication.

Other legislation, international agreements and charters may also apply to management of the area. In particular, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EPA Act) requires the assessment and mitigation of environmental impacts of any works proposed in this plan.

The plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act. Once the Minister has adopted a plan, no operations may be undertaken within the planning area except in accordance with the plan. The plan will also apply to any future additions to the planning area. Where management strategies or works are proposed for the planning area or any additions that are not consistent with the plan, an amendment to the plan will be required.

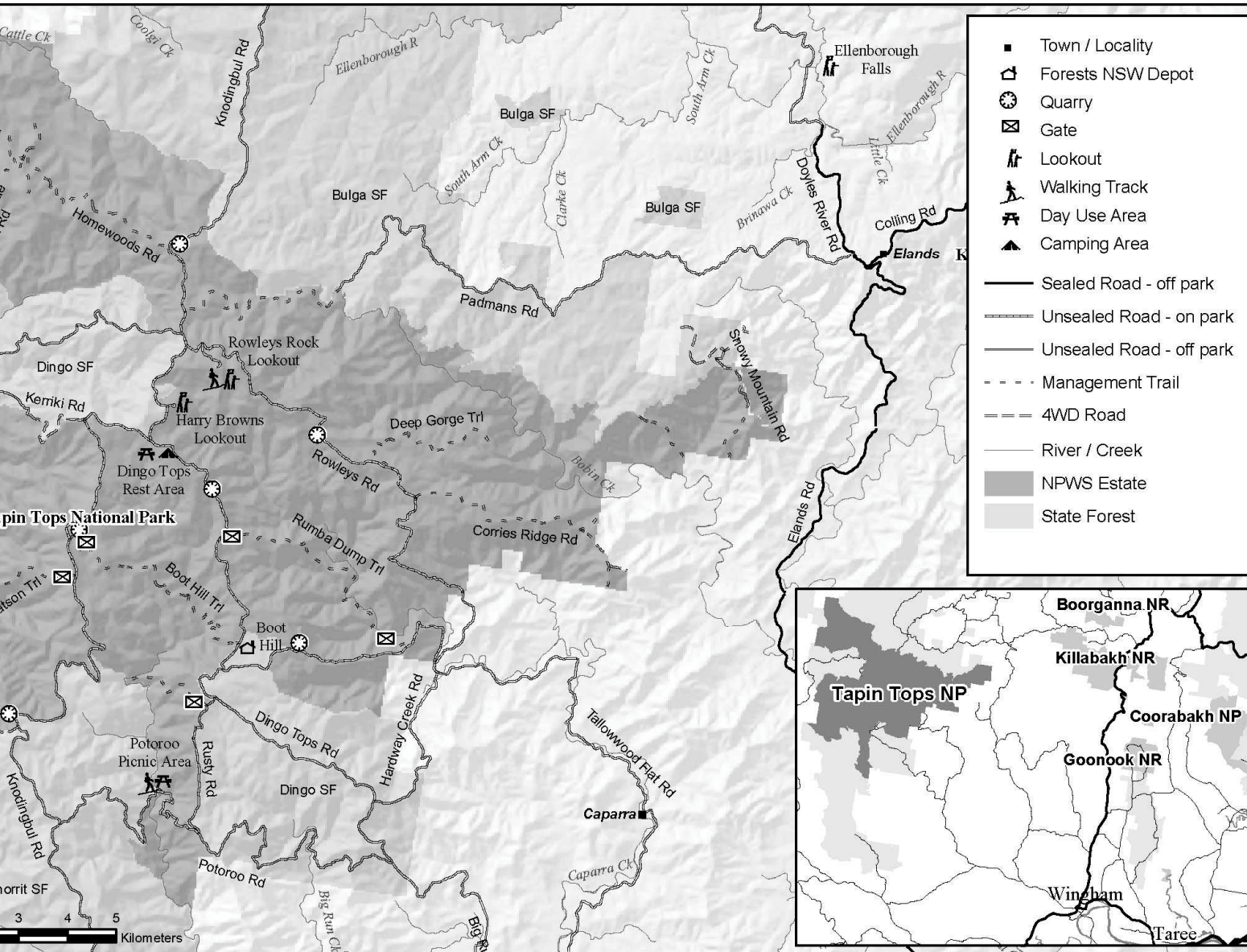
### 1.2 MANAGEMENT PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

National parks are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation and inspiration and sustainable visitor use.

Under the Act, national parks are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes;
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value;
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations;
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the park's natural and cultural values;
- provide for sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of natural and cultural values;
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of natural and cultural values; and
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

## 2. MAP: TAPIN TOPS NATIONAL PARK



### 3. TAPIN TOPS NATIONAL PARK

#### 3.1 LOCATION, GAZETTAL AND REGIONAL SETTING

Tapin Tops National Park (referred to herein as 'the park') is located approximately 30 km north west of Wingham on the mid north coast of NSW (see map). The park is situated south of the Bulga Plateau among ranges that form the eastern extension of the escarpment in the Manning River catchment.

The park covers an area of 10,828 hectares which was previously part of Bulga, Dingo and Knorrit State Forests and included Rowleys Rock Flora Reserve. Rowleys Rock Flora Reserve was dedicated in 1972 to preserve sections of old growth forest and associated threatened plants and animals. The park was dedicated in 1999 and is situated in the Greater Taree City Council (GTCC) area. The name 'tapin' means dingo in the local Aboriginal Kattang language.

The park is situated close to the villages of Elands, Caparra, Wherrol Flat and Mount George. The park borders Bulga State Forest to the north, Knorrit State Forest to the south, and Dingo State Forest to the north and south. Other reserves in the locality include Cottan-Bimbang and Biriwal Bulga National Parks, and Ellenborough Falls, a crown reserve managed by Greater Taree City Council.

Forestry and grazing are important rural land uses of the surrounding area, though over recent years, a range of other activities have developed in the area such as organic and biodynamic farming, deer and goat production and plant nurseries (Truyard Pty Ltd, 1992).

As well as the gazetted reserve, the planning area includes several Ministerial roads which are vested in the Minister for the Environment on behalf of the Crown for the purposes of Part 11 of the NPW Act. They were created under the *Forestry and National Parks Estate Act 1998* to ensure that the access arrangements (such as for timber hauling and private property access) which existed immediately before the reserve's creation could continue. The management of these roads is subject to the provisions of this plan, the NPW Regulations and the requirements of the EPA Act.

#### 3.2 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Natural and cultural heritage and on-going use are strongly inter-related and together form the landscape of an area. Much of the Australian environment has been influenced by past Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal land use practices, and the activities of modern day Australians continue to influence bushland through recreational use, cultural practices, the presence of introduced plants and animals and in some cases air and water pollution.

The geology, landform, climate and plant and animal communities of the area, plus its location, have determined how it has been used by humans. The area was traditionally used by the Biripi people and was probably used as a pathway connecting the tablelands with the coastal plains. Timber harvesting operations commenced throughout the region in the early 1900s and escalated during and after World War II. The Dingo Tops Rest Area was previously a forestry work camp.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people place cultural values on natural areas, including aesthetic, social, spiritual, recreational and other values. Cultural values may be attached to the landscape as a whole or to individual components, for example to plant and animal species used by Aboriginal people. This plan of management aims to conserve both natural and cultural values. For reasons of clarity and document usefulness natural and cultural heritage, non-human threats and on-going use are dealt with individually, but their inter-relationships are recognised.

### **3.3 MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS**

The following specific management directions apply to management of the park:

- management of the park as part of a regional network of protected areas and as a wildlife corridor between the coast and the Great Dividing Range;
- protection of the geological, natural and scenic values of the park, including Rowleys Rock and Potoroo Falls;
- conservation of native vegetation including threatened and regionally significant species, old growth forests and rainforest communities;
- conservation of the diverse native fauna of the park including twenty vulnerable animal species;
- preservation and documentation of cultural heritage including relics from timber harvesting and forestry operations, community involvement in conservation of the area and Aboriginal heritage;
- management of the park is in consultation with the Biripi people, the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council, and relevant Elders groups;
- control and where possible elimination of pest species in the park, in consultation with relevant authorities and neighbouring landholders;
- promotion and education on the natural and cultural heritage values of the park to the community; and
- provision of opportunities for nature based recreation activities such as sightseeing, walking, camping and vehicle touring, which have minimal impact on the environment and which complement the other surrounding recreational facilities.

### 3.4 NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

#### 3.4.1 Hydrology, Geology and Soils

The park lies within the Manning River catchment. Major rivers and creeks in the park include Rowleys and Nowendoc Rivers, Dingo, Bobin, Caparra, Wild Cattle and Little Run Creeks.

The geology of the park is primarily metasediment and metamorphosed sediment, consisting of sandstone, schist, phyllite, slate, chert, jasper, basalt, and amphibolite (Truyard, 1992). The eastern section of the park contains some sections of sedimentary rocks including conglomerate, sandstone, mudstone, felsic and intermediate volcanics and limestone. Soil types are generally podzolic duplex soils having a loam to clay loam topsoil and a light to medium clay subsoil (Forestry Commission of NSW, 1990). There are some krasnozems soils located north of the Bobin Creek area.

The geology at Rowleys Rock is of metamorphic and sedimentary derivatives of the Lower Devonian period.

#### 3.4.2 Topography

Topography of the park is generally steep. Rowleys Rock is located at the head of the Caparra Creek catchment and at 1018m is a predominate landscape feature of the park. Head and Shoulders Cliff, which is situated south of Rowleys Rock, falls in a series of steep cliffs to the Caparra Creek.

#### 3.4.3 Native Plants

Twenty-eight forest ecosystems have been mapped within or on the boundary of the park. The main ecosystems that dominate the park include high elevation ferny blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), rainforest, mid north coast wet brushbox-tallowwood-blue gum (*Lophostemon confertus-Eucalyptus microcorys-Eucalyptus saligna*), wet shrubby brushbox-tallowwood, dry foothills blackbutt-turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) and escarpment tallowwood-bloodwood (*Corymbia intermedia*). Collectively these account for over three quarters of the park's vegetation.

High elevation ferny blackbutt is close to its southern distribution and is most extensive in the mid elevation areas between Little Run Creek and south of Bobin Creek. Rainforest is extensive throughout the park, in particular along drainage lines and the higher elevation areas east of Knodingbul Road around Tapin Tops Rest Area and north of Bobin Creek. Table 1 lists the main forest ecosystems mapped in the park.



**Table 1. The main forest ecosystems in Tapin Tops National Park.**

Forest Ecosystem	Area (ha)	Proportional Representation (%)
High elevation ferny blackbutt	2530	23.0
Rainforest	2216	20.2
Mid North Coast wet brushbox-tallowwood-blue gum	1232	11.2
Wet shrubby brushbox-tallowwood	1052	9.6
Dry foothills blackbutt-turpentine	705	6.4
Escarpment tallowwood-bloodwood	656	6.0
Dry grassy tallowwood-grey gum	363	3.3
Wet New England blackbutt-silvertop stringybark	363	3.3
Moist escarpment New England blackbutt	353	3.2
Open coastal brushbox	304	2.8

Escarpment red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), listed as a vulnerable ecosystem under the Comprehensive Regional Forest Assessment (CRA), occurs in the north west corner of the park near Wild Cattle Creek. Escarpment red gum has been determined as a vulnerable ecosystem under nationally agreed criteria for the establishment of a reserve system for forests in Australia (JANIS, 1997).<sup>1</sup> In addition, this ecosystem is regionally significant as only just over three percent of escarpment red gum is currently conserved within protected areas in NSW. An area of 6ha of escarpment red gum has been mapped in the park however further investigation may identify additional areas.

Approximately 44% of the park is mapped as old growth forest. Stands of old growth forest are found west of Knodingbul Road, north of Little Murrays Creek, between Dingo Tops Road and Rowleys Forest Road in the Caparra catchment, and north of Rowleys Road in the Bobin Creek catchment.

The vegetation at Rowleys Rock (previously the Rowleys Rock Flora Reserve) is represented by subtropical rainforest and sclerophyll forest. The rainforest is structurally black booyong (*Argyrodendron actinophylla*) subtropical rainforest with a mix of warm temperate rainforest species. The sclerophyll forest is mostly moist species such as brush box and tallowwood. A heath community dominated by an unusual occurrence of yellow tea tree (*Leptospermum flavescens*) occurs on the stony exposed sites near the trig station at Rowleys Rock (Forestry Commission, 1987).

Currently, there are no recorded threatened plants listed under the TSC Act although a number of threatened and significant plant species have been predicted as likely to occur within the park. High quality modelled habitat is predicted for the endangered climber (*Cynanchum elegans*), endangered forest twiner (*Tylophora woollsii*), vulnerable ravine orchid (*Sarcophilus fitzgeraldii*) and vulnerable climber (*Parsonia dorrigoensis*) (NPWS, 2002a). The vulnerable orchid (*Sarcochilus hartmanii*) is recorded north east of the park boundary at Ellenborough Falls.

<sup>1</sup> The status for a vulnerable forest ecosystem is defined as “one which in the next 25 years, is likely to become endangered unless the circumstances and factors threatening its extent, survival or evolutionary development cease to operate” (JANIS, 1997).

There are two records of the herb *Goodenia fordiana* in the park, which is listed as rare under ROTAP (Rare or Threatened Australian Plants) (Briggs and Leigh, 1996).<sup>2</sup>

### 3.4.4 Native Animals

The park contains a large number of threatened fauna species which are listed under the TSC Act. There are twenty vulnerable species and seventeen significant animal species recorded in the park. Table 2 lists the vulnerable species recorded in the park.

**Table 2. Vulnerable fauna species listed under the TSC Act recorded in Tapin Tops National Park.**

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Mammals</b>	
Common bent-wing bat	<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>
Little bent-wing bat	<i>Miniopterus australis</i>
East Coast freetail bat	<i>Mormopterus norfolkensis</i>
Greater broad-nosed bat	<i>Scoteanax rueppellii</i>
Greater long-eared bat	<i>Nyctophilus timoriensis</i>
Large-footed myotis	<i>Myotis adversus</i>
Yellow-bellied sheath-tail bat	<i>Saccolaimus flaviventris</i>
Spotted-tailed quoll	<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>
Koala	<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>
Yellow-bellied glider	<i>Petaurus australis</i>
Parma wallaby	<i>Macropus parma</i>
Red-legged pademelon	<i>Thylogale stigmatica</i>
<b>Birds</b>	
Glossy black cockatoo	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathamii</i>
Wompoo fruit-dove	<i>Ptilinopus magnificus</i>
Powerful owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>
Masked owl	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>
Sooty owl	<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>
<b>Amphibians</b>	
Sphagnum frog	<i>Philoria sphagnicolus</i>
New England tree frog	<i>Litoria subglandulosa</i>
Stuttering frog	<i>Mixophyes balbus</i>

Source: (SFNSW, [2001], Environment Australia [1999], NPWS Wildlife Atlas).

Two endangered species, the Hastings River mouse (*Pseudomys oralis*) and the bush-stone curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*) are predicted as likely to occur in the park.

Modelled habitat has predicted the following vulnerable species may also occur: the large pied bat (*Chalinolobus dwyeri*); squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*); brush-tailed phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*); common planigale (*Planigale maculata*); eastern false pipistrelle (*Falsistrellus tasmaniensis*); olive whistler (*Pachycephala olivacea*); rufous scrub-bird (*Atrichornis rufescens*); square-tailed kite (*Lophoictinia isura*); and Stephen's banded snake (*Hoplocephalus stephensii*). Maternity camps for the vulnerable grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) are also predicted for the park.

<sup>2</sup> ROTAP is a reference list for the national status of threatened species, particularly rare and poorly known species, which may not be formally recognised under protected species legislation.

Dingoes (*Canis lupis*) have been recorded in the park and the park is identified as a dingo management area under the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1998* (RLP Act). Dingoes are considered to be part of the native fauna by NPWS, and as such the NPWS aims to conserve core populations of dingoes within NPWS estate while also controlling wild dogs (NPWS, 1988). Populations of purebred dingoes in the park need to be confirmed to determine the occurrence of crossbred dingoes and wild dogs (refer also section 3.2).

### 3.4.5 Aboriginal Heritage

The area was traditionally used by the Biripi people and it is likely that a number of Aboriginal pathways traversed the area, connecting the tablelands with the coastal plains (Collins and Morwood, 1991).

Prior to 1990 no Aboriginal sites in the Wingham Management Area were recorded. An archaeological survey in 1991, prepared as part of the environmental impact assessment of the area, identified one Aboriginal site (a modified tree) in the park (Collins and Morwood, 1991). It is likely that there may be other Aboriginal sites and places of cultural significance in the park.

Aboriginal communities have an association and connection to the land. The land and water biodiversity values within a landscape are central to Aboriginal spirituality and contribute to Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal communities associate natural resources with the use and enjoyment of foods and medicines, caring for the land, passing on cultural knowledge and strengthening social bonds. Aboriginal heritage and nature are inseparable from each other and need to be managed in an integrated manner across the landscape. Recent consultation with the local Aboriginal community has identified that an area in the vicinity of Potoroo Picnic Area has cultural significance to the local Aboriginal community.

### 3.4.6 History Since European Occupation

The park was previously in part of the State Forest Wingham Management Area and included the Dingo, Bulga and Knorrit State Forests. The Wingham Management Area has a long history of timber harvesting. Timber operations commenced throughout the region in the early 1900s and a number of sawmills were established in the surrounding villages such as at Elands, Mt George, Caparra and Wingham. Forestry operations escalated during and after World War II, with activities dependent on road access. Approximately 95% of accessible subtropical and warm temperate rainforest in the Wingham Management Area was harvested (Forestry Commission of NSW, 1990).

The Dingo Tops Rest Area was previously a forestry work camp. A number of exotic trees were planted including a row of California redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) along Dingo Tops Road, which were planted in the 1960s. Other introduced trees have been planted around the rest area including radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*), jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*).

There is a display of historic relics in the rest area including a dobbie (a logging arch used to haul logs off the ground), tractor and horse drawn grader. This machinery was used in the early settlement of the area for road construction and forestry operations. The rest area also has an old sheltered table with a shingle roof and a large timber stump which have heritage value. Harry Browns Lookout, is named after the SFNSW

foreman who was involved in the early construction of the picnic area at Dingo Tops Rest Area.

From the late 1980s until the late 1990s there was a period of intensive logging protests in the Wingham Management Area. Protestors from across NSW and local communities such as Elands and Bobin were involved in protests, mainly against the harvesting of 'old growth forest' in the area. In June 1990, the State government placed a moratorium on further harvesting in the most sensitive old growth stands in 14 management areas across NSW (which included the Wingham Management Area). The Forestry Commission was then required to prepare an environmental impact assessment (EIS) for each of these management areas (Truyard Pty Ltd, 1992).

From May to July 1993, an area near Bobin Creek was the focus of extensive anti old growth forest logging activity. These protests were largely orchestrated by the Wingham Forest Action Group and assisted by forest activists from all over NSW. A 'prohibited area' was established in the forest in an attempt to stop logging protesters and over 70 protestors were arrested for entering the prohibited area.

The EIS for the Wingham Management Area was the first to be prepared in NSW and the outcomes of the EIS was determined by then the Minister for Planning. Harvesting was allowed to continue in certain areas under set of conditions".

In 1995, the Government's "Old Growth Decision" effectively resulted in the cessation of logging in old growth forests. This was followed by the CRA process in which comprehensive studies resulted in major land use decisions including the creation of Tapin Tops National Park in 1999.

### **3.5 VISITOR USE**

Knodingbul Road is the main access road running the full length of the central ridge and connecting Mount George in the south to the Oxley Highway in the north. Other roads used to access the park include Dingo Tops Road from the southeast, Padmans Road from the east and Kerriki Forest Road from the west.

The diverse landscape and unique scenic resources of the park provides for a range of recreational opportunities. Recreation activities include camping, picnicking, bushwalking, sightseeing, vehicle touring and swimming. The draft recreational planning framework for national parks in the Northern Directorate (NPWS, 2002b) identifies most of the park (other than the visitor recreation areas such as at Dingo Tops Rest Area) as a zone 3 recreation area, where visitors can expect a natural setting, in which facilities and good access are provided, with a moderate level of social interaction.

The Dingo Tops Rest Area provides camping and day use facilities, including pit toilets, picnic facilities and a galley kitchen. Park user fees for camping at the rest area applies. There are also two rainforest walks at Dingo Tops Rest Area: a 15 minute short walk just south of the main camping ground, and a 35 minute walk on the northern side of the rest area. The latter walk is currently closed due to fallen limbs and overgrown vegetation.

Potoroo Picnic Area is located near Little Run Creek off Potoroo Road. The current walking track to the Potoroo Falls is poorly defined and involves a number of creek

crossings. The track originates near Little Run Creek off Potoroo Road and meanders in and out of the Dingo Tops State Forest and the park. The largest watergum (*Tristaniopsis laurina*) in NSW is recorded in the Dingo Tops State Forest just beside the walking track.

Two lookouts are also provided in the park. Harry Browns Lookout located near Dingo Tops Rest Area provides impressive views of Rowleys Rock and Head and Shoulders Cliff. A small area of vegetation at the site is regularly pruned to maintain views to these landscape features. There are currently no facilities other than a small parking area.

A second lookout, Rowleys Rock Lookout, is located off Rowleys Road in the north of the park. A strenuous 45 minute walk from the carpark to the lookout traverses a range of vegetation communities including subtropical and warm temperate rainforest, sclerophyll forest and heath. The lookout is situated on top of a heath-covered rocky outcrop and a viewing platform provides 360 degree views over the landscape.

Car touring and sightseeing is undertaken in the area, incorporating both the park and neighbouring areas. In addition to the above sites in the park, popular destinations include the Doyles River State Forest, Ellenborough Falls at Elands and Cottan-Bimbang and Biriwal Bulga National Parks. Visitors often access these areas from Wingham via Elands Road and from Wauchope / Port Macquarie via Comboyne.

In recent years, car rallies have been undertaken in the neighbouring Dingo and Bulga State Forests. Although rallies are not undertaken within the park, park roads are occasionally used as a transport route for vehicles. Consent must be obtained prior to the event to use the park for transportation of rally vehicles.

### **3.6 MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS**

Knodingbul, Dingo Tops, Rowleys, Kerriki, Potoroo, Tallowwood Flat, Corries Ridge, Homewoods and Little Wild Cattle Creek Roads are 'Ministerial roads,' which are vested in the Minister for the Environment to ensure the continuation of access arrangements, which existed immediately before the gazettal of the park. All Ministerial roads will be maintained to a standard outlined in an agreement with relevant reserve neighbours (refer 3.1 Location, Gazettal and Regional Setting).

In addition to roads available for public vehicle access, there is a network of management trails in the park (see map). The primary purpose of the management trail system is for fire management. Management trails also provide access for other essential operations such as pest control, research and access for other authorities such as SFNSW, and neighbouring landholders. These trails are not available for recreational vehicle use.

A cleared grassed area is maintained at Dingo Tops Rest Area for use as a helipad during emergency and management operations. It is a suitable location for helicopters to refuel and gain access to water from a dam near the site.

There are five quarries in the park which are used for the maintenance of roads and management trails in the park. An assessment of the resources available from each quarry has been undertaken. With prior consent, NPWS will allow SFNSW to access quarries for maintenance of roads that lead to the park.

A trig station is located at the top of Rowleys Rock Lookout.

The pit toilets located at the Dingo Tops Rest Area have been identified as being in poor condition under the Northern Field Branch's Sewerage Strategy (NPWS, 2001). As funds become available, these toilets will be upgraded.

The SFNSW Boot Hill Depot in the neighbouring Dingo State Forest is occasionally used by NPWS for management operations such as storage of supplies and as a base during fire events.

### **3.7 THREATS TO THE PARK VALUES**

#### **3.7.1 Pest Plant Species**

Pest plants in the park are mainly confined to areas of previous disturbance and along roadsides. Pest plant species recorded in the park include crofton weed (*Ageratina adenophora*), giant Parramatta grass (*Sporobolus indicus var. major*) and lantana (*Lantana camara*). Crofton weed and giant Parramatta grass are recorded as noxious weeds in the Greater Taree City Council area.

The exotic trees (associated with the area's past use as a forestry work camp) at Dingo Tops Rest Area are an important landscape and historic feature of the park (refer section 3.4.6). Currently there is no evidence of these trees spreading in the surrounding bush.

Before dedication as a national park, a radiata pine plantation of less than 2ha was planted on the eastern and western sides off Knodingbul Road. The plantation is near Bobin Creek Road and is surrounded by dense rainforest. An assessment of plantations in the Northern Directorate is currently being undertaken to determine appropriate removal and rehabilitation programs for plantations in parks and reserves. This program will include time frames and methods for rehabilitation.

#### **3.7.2 Pest Animal Species**

Pest animal species recorded in the park include the wild dog (*Canis familiaris*), rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), cat (*Felis catus*) and fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). Predation by the feral cat and the fox are both listed as threatening processes to native animals under the TSC Act and the *Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPB Act).

Wild dogs, including dingoes, have been declared as pest animals throughout NSW under the RLP Act. Hence, the NPWS has a statutory obligation to control wild dogs on its estate. Under the RLP Act, however, public lands, which are considered to contain high quality dingo habitat, have been listed as dingo management areas. This includes the park. The RLP Act requires public land managers, such as the NPWS, to assist in the preparation of a wild dog management plan for dingo management areas. These plans are to identify methods for the control of wild dogs and the conservation of dingoes in these areas, and are to be approved by the Gloucester Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB).

### 3.7.3 Fire

The NPWS regards fire as a natural phenomenon and one of the continuing physical factors influencing the Australian environment. Inappropriate fire regimes have been identified as a key threatening process effecting the biological diversity of NSW. Vegetation communities in the park such as rainforests and wet sclerophyll forest are sensitive to fire.

The most recent fires in the park occurred in 2002 near Homewards Road and Boot Hill Trail, and 2001 near Knodingbul Road and Dingo Tops Road. It is of concern that fire in the park is often caused by incendiaryism.

Since 1980, the Forestry Commission maintained records of wildfires, which occurred in the Wingham Management Area. This mapping history shows that the majority of wildfires have occurred near the boundary between the forest and private property (Truyard Pty Ltd, 1992). The mosaic of rainforests throughout the park help to restrict the spread of wildfires by providing a network of moist forest corridors that will generally not carry fire except in extremely dry periods.

A recent review of fire management throughout the Directorate by NPWS has resulted in a modified approach to fire planning based on the level of complexity involved. In regard to Tapin Tops National Park, the NPWS considers that the park requires separate, map based fire management strategies. Annual hazard reduction programs are also submitted to the district Bush Fire Management Committees.

#### 4. MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

Current Situation	Desired Outcomes	Strategies	Priority
<p><b>Native plants</b></p> <p>Twenty eight forest ecosystems have been identified in the park including significant areas of rainforest and old growth forest.</p> <p>Escarpment red gum, (listed as a vulnerable ecosystem) occurs in the park, but the full extent is not known. <i>Goodenia fordiana</i> listed as rare under ROTAP has been recorded. A number of threatened and significant plant species have been predicted to occur in the park.</p> <p>The Rowleys Rock Lookout area supports a number of sensitive plants as well as subtropical and warm temperate rainforest. An unusual occurrence of yellow tea tree within the heath community is located on the rocky outcrop.</p> <p>There are significant areas of native vegetation remaining on private land in the upper catchment of the Bobin and Caparra Creeks, and north of Padmans Rd near Elands.</p> <p>Previous activities in the park such as forestry operations have resulted in some areas of disturbance to native vegetation.</p> <p><b>Native animals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An improved knowledge of threatened and significant plants, ecology and habitat requirements.</li> <li>• Native plant species and communities are conserved.</li> <li>• Natural processes, such as succession of regenerating forest communities in the park continues.</li> <li>• Areas of previous disturbance are revegetated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage surveys to confirm status and distribution of old growth forest, escarpment red gum, and predicted threatened and significant plant species.</li> <li>• Protect the sensitive vegetation at Rowleys Rock Lookout, by confining public access to the walking tracks and lookout platform.</li> <li>• Liaise with neighbours to encourage the retention and appropriate management of key habitat and corridors adjacent to the park through Voluntary Conservation Agreements or other appropriate strategies.</li> <li>• Allow natural regeneration of disturbed areas and monitor for weed growth.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>



<p>The park contains a diverse fauna population and a number of species listed under the TSC Act. Twenty vulnerable species and seventeen significant animal species have been recorded within the park and other threatened species may also occur.</p> <p>The park is identified as a dingo management area and has high quality habitat for dingoes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The habitat for native fauna is conserved.</li> <li>• Threatened fauna populations do not decline.</li> <li>• There is improved knowledge of threatened and significant animals, ecology and habitat requirements.</li> <li>• Populations of purebred dingoes in the park are conserved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement recovery plans for threatened species when they are prepared.</li> <li>• Encourage surveys for threatened animal species predicted for the park.</li> <li>• Undertake surveys in the park to determine presence of purebred dingoes.</li> <li>• Assist the RLPB in the preparation and implementation of a wild dog management plan to identify methods for the control of wild dogs and the conservation of dingoes (refer Pest Species).</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Pest plant and animal species</b></p> <p>Pest plant species are mainly confined to areas of previous disturbance and along roadsides. Crofton weed is a noxious plant recorded in the park. A draft Regional Pest Management Strategy for the region has been prepared which prioritises pest species control programs.</p> <p>There is currently no pest management strategy for the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pest species are controlled and if possible eradicated.</li> <li>• Appropriate pest management techniques are implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a pest management strategy for the park, which identifies potential invasive plants and animals and control programs.</li> <li>• Undertake pest species control and regeneration works in accordance with the Regional Pest Strategy. Encourage surrounding landholders and SFNSW to be involved in joint weed maintenance programs.</li> <li>• Target noxious weeds and areas of disturbance such as roadways, trails and quarries for priority weed control programs.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>

<p><b>Pest plant and animal species continued</b></p> <p>The exotic trees at Dingo Tops Rest Area are important landscape and historic features of the park. They are not currently spreading in the park or surrounding locality.</p> <p>Noxious plants recorded in the park are crofton weed and giant Parramatta grass.</p> <p>A 2ha radiata pine plantation occurs in the park.</p> <p>Pest animal species recorded in the park include wild dog, rabbit, cat, and fox. There have been no wild dog baiting programs undertaken in the park, though land adjacent to the park including private property, Biriwal Bulga and Cottan-Bimbing National Parks are occasionally baited for wild dogs.</p> <p>Wild dogs, including dingoes, have been declared as pest animals under the RLP Act. The park is also identified as a dingo management area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of pest species on native species and neighbouring lands is minimised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the exotic trees at Dingo Tops Rest Area and the surrounding locality for any spread of seedlings. Control and eradicate any seedlings if they occur.</li> <li>Control, and where possible eradicate, other introduced plants.</li> <li>Remove the pine plantation in accordance with the NPWS Northern Directorate strategy for the management of plantations, which is currently in preparation. Control and eradicate any wildings.</li> <li>Undertake wild dog baiting programs on a needs basis and in consultation with SFNSW, RLPB and surrounding landholders.</li> <li>Assist in the preparation and implementation of a wild dog management plan to be approved by the Gloucester RLPB.</li> </ul>	<p>Low</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal heritage</b></p> <p>Although only one Aboriginal site (a modified tree) has been recorded in the park, consultation with the local Aboriginal community has identified the possibility of other cultural sites in the park particularly in the Potoroo area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal cultural heritage in the park is recognised and protected in partnership with the local Aboriginal community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an Aboriginal cultural heritage study/site investigation of the park with priority on the Potoroo walking track and day use area (refer also recreational use). Consult with the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council and relevant Elders groups.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>

<p><b>Aboriginal heritage continued</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of the local Aboriginal community are actively involved in Aboriginal heritage management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Giuiwan Elders, the Biripi people and other relevant persons in aspects of management of cultural heritage sites, places and values.</li> <li>Ensure that any information on Aboriginal cultural heritage in the park is provided to the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council and remains confidential where requested.</li> <li>Encourage interpretation of the cultural heritage values of the area by the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council, Elders groups and relevant Indigenous persons. Preference will be given to relevant indigenous persons to undertake interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the park.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>
<p><b>European heritage</b></p> <p>Historic relics from previous forestry activities are located at Dingo Tops Rest Area and include a dobbie, tractor and horse drawn grader. A shingled roof table, large tree stump and a number of exotic trees also occur at the site.</p> <p>Children visiting the park often use the logging relics as play equipment, which may be unsafe and damage relics. There are also concerns about the safety of visitors crossing Dingo Tops Road to access the logging relics.</p> <p>The area previously known as the Wingham Management Area has a history of intense logging protests and community activism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The community and other relevant persons are involved in the preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage sites and information.</li> <li>Cultural heritage features are identified, conserved and managed in accordance with their significance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain historical items at Dingo Tops Rest Area including exotic trees, the old shingled roof table and the large tree stump and implement appropriate conservation works and interpretation of the items. Discourage the public from climbing on historic relics via appropriate signage and if necessary a small fence around the relics. Improve signage along Dingo Tops Road.</li> <li>Provide interpretation of the history of logging and community activism in the area.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p>

<p><b>Fire management</b></p> <p>Vegetation communities in the park such as rainforests, old growth forest and wet sclerophyll forest, are fire sensitive.</p> <p>There is currently no fire management strategies for the park.</p> <p>Most fires in the park have been caused by incendiarism and escaped rural burns. Fire can damage infrastructure and threaten neighbouring land, persons and property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life, property including adjoining dwellings, and park infrastructure are protected from fire.</li> <li>• Fire is excluded from rainforest, old growth forest and wet sclerophyll forest.</li> <li>• Fire frequencies are appropriate for conservation of native plant and animal communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and implement fire management strategies for the park, which identifies appropriate fire regimes and infrastructure. Manage fire regimes to protect biodiversity in accordance with the identified fire frequency thresholds for vegetation communities and any fire sensitive communities. This includes excluding fire from rainforest, old growth forest and wet sclerophyll communities.</li> <li>• Install locked gates where necessary to reduce the incidence of incendiarism and to assist in the maintenance of management trails.</li> <li>• Continued to participate in Greater Taree District Bush Fire Management Committee. Maintain coordinated and cooperative arrangements with the Rural Fire Service Brigades, GTCC, SFNSW and surrounding landholders with regard to fuel management and fire suppression.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p>
<p><b>Recreational use</b></p> <p>The park has a range of recreational opportunities including camping, walking sightseeing and swimming.</p> <p>At Dingo Tops Rest Area, there are camping and day use facilities. Separation of these activities is required to provide equitable access to facilities. Collection of firewood is discouraged in the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational opportunities meet visitor expectations without impacting on the natural and cultural heritage values of the park.</li> <li>• There is minimal risk to visitor safety in the park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage day visitors to use the picnic tables provided near the shelter shed and designate the eastern end of the rest area for camping only and signpost accordingly.</li> <li>• Monitor firewood collection in the Dingo Tops camping and day use area. Encourage visitors to bring their own wood. If unacceptable impacts occur implement a policy of fuel stoves only.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>

<p><b>Recreational use continued</b></p> <p>There are two walking tracks through the rainforest at Dingo Tops Rest Area. The walk on the northern side of the rest area is currently closed due to fallen limbs and overgrown vegetation.</p> <p>There is a newly constructed lookout platform at Rowleys Rock Lookout.</p> <p>Harry Browns Lookout has the potential to provide disabled access.</p> <p>The walking track to Potoroo Falls is currently poorly aligned and overgrown in sections. The largest watergum in NSW is near the walk in the nearby State Forest. Consent has been obtained from SFNSW to allow interpretation of the watergum to be incorporated into the upgrading of the walking track network.</p> <p>Cycling is activity occasionally undertaken in the park.</p> <p>Recreational horse riding is not known to occur in the park.</p> <p>Car rallies occur in the neighbouring State Forests and sections of the park are used as a transport stage for rally vehicles.</p> <p>Neighbouring areas in the surrounding locality offer recreational opportunities for visitors to the park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking tracks are maintained to a suitable standard and provide opportunities not available elsewhere in the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear vegetation, undertake minor works on steeper sections and reopen the northern walking track at Dingo Tops and provide interpretation signs on the rainforest plants. Manage the track for low visitor numbers in a natural setting.</li> <li>• Provide a lookout platform with disabled access at Harry Browns Lookout. Retain the current carpark, which caters for 2-3 cars and clear vegetation as necessary to maintain views.</li> <li>• Define the route of the walking track to incorporate the watergum tree, subject to SFNSW approval and consultation with the Aboriginal community. Manage the track for low visitor numbers in a natural setting. Monitor visitor use of the walking track and provide picnic facilities and a toilet in the day use area subject to environmental assessment.</li> <li>• Cycling is permitted on public roads, park roads and management trails, but is not permitted on walking tracks. Horse riding is not permitted in the park.</li> <li>• Prohibit car rallying, including marshalling points in the park. Require consent for use of the park as a transport stage for car rally vehicles.</li> <li>• Provide interpretation material, including an information board at Dingo Tops Rest Area, on the historical significance of the area including the timber industry, logging protests and history of conservation in the area, in consultation with the local community, GTCC and SFNSW.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
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<p><b>Management operations</b></p> <p>There is a network of management trails in the park used by NPWS for fire management and other essential management purposes (see map).</p> <p>A grassed area at Dingo Tops Rest Area, is occasionally used as a helipad for emergency operations such as fire fighting.</p> <p>Five quarries in the park, are used for the maintenance of roads and management trails in the park and by SFNSW.</p> <p>Pit toilets at the Dingo Tops Rest Area have been identified as being in poor condition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management trails are appropriately maintained and gated where necessary.</li> <li>• The helipad is maintained for management purposes.</li> <li>• Quarries in the park have minimal impact on park values.</li> <li>• Facilities meet OH&amp;S standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain network of management trails as shown on the map pending completion of fire strategies for the park. Close any trails not essential for fire management under the fire strategies.</li> <li>• Only authorised vehicles will be permitted on management trails. Recreational vehicle use will not be permitted on management trails.</li> <li>• Maintain the grassed area at Dingo Tops Rest Area for emergency and management operations.</li> <li>• Liaise with State Forests about their use of the park quarries to maintain public roads that lead to the park.</li> <li>• Allow natural revegetation of areas in the quarries no longer required for extraction.</li> <li>• Develop a strategy for road maintenance and quarry use with a view to minimising impacts in the short and long term.</li> <li>• The pit toilets at Dingo Tops Rest Area will be replaced with a suitable non-polluting system.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>Research is needed to improve understanding of the park's natural and cultural heritage, the processes that affect them and the requirements for management of particular species.</p> <p>Currently, limited studies have been undertaken in the park and most research has been as a result of forestry operations. T</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge is increased on the park's natural and cultural heritage values and this information is incorporated into management decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage research into the following topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. knowledge of threatened species distribution and habitat requirements;</li> <li>II. the status of purebred dingoes in the park;</li> <li>III. surveys of predicted threatened species in the park; and</li> <li>IV. information on the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the park and associated landscape.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>

The limited research undertaken has focused on flora and fauna surveys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research programs are conducted in a sustainable manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and/or undertake research to improve knowledge and management of natural and cultural heritage of the park.</li> </ul>	Low
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**High** priority activities are those imperative to achievement of the objectives and desired outcomes. They must be undertaken in the near future to avoid significant deterioration in natural, cultural or management resources.

**Medium** priority activities are those that are necessary to achieve the objectives and desired outcomes but are not urgent.

**Low** priority activities are desirable to achieve management objectives and desired outcomes but can wait until resources become available.

## 5. REFERENCES

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