

WEDDIN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

September 1995

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FOREWORD

Weddin Mountains National Park lies 20km south-west of Grenfell in the Central West of NSW. The park is a prominent mountain range rising 400m above the surrounding plains. Important values of the park include the scenic quality of its landforms and its moderately large size and compact shape which make it important as habitat for plants and animals typical of the residual ranges of the central western slopes.

The primary emphasis in the plan is on protecting Weddin Mountains National Park as an isolated remnant of western slopes plant and animal habitat and promoting the concept of wildlife corridors through liaison with local landholders, councils and relevant government organisations. The plan also recognises the importance of developing specific policies and actions to maintain the genetic diversity of native plant and animal communities of the Weddin Mountains. These include monitoring and research into the status of plant and animal communities and identifying rare and endangered species.

Emphasis is also given to promoting within the local community, particularly neighbours of the park, the importance and purpose of management programmes relating to the protection of natural features and the control of fire, weeds and feral animals. The preparation of a fire management plan is identified as an important management action. Control programmes for feral animals such as rabbits, goats and foxes will also continue to be implemented as a matter of high priority.

Other programmes identified in this plan include minor upgrading of visitor facilities at Holy Camp and Seatons Farm camping areas together with the development of a walking track system to link the two.

To assist visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the park, this plan provides for the preparation of information on its natural and cultural heritage and the recreational opportunities provided by Weddin Mountains National Park.

This plan establishes the scheme of operations for Weddin Mountains National Park. In accordance with the provisions of Section 75 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, this plan of management is hereby adopted.

PAM ALLAN

**Minister for the
Environment**

25-9-95

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1. INTRODUCTION

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

The procedure for the exhibition and adoption of a plan of management is specified in the Act and involves five stages, namely:

The Director-General gives notice that a plan of management has been prepared.

The plan is placed on public exhibition for at least one month and any person may make representations about the plan.

The plan and copies of all representations from the public are referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for its consideration and report to the Minister.

The Director-General submits the plan of management together with any comments or suggestions of the Advisory Council to the Minister.

The Minister may adopt the plan after considering the comments of the Advisory Council or may refer the plan back to the Director-General and Council for further consideration before adoption.

Weddin Mountains National Park plan of management was placed on public exhibition for a period of three months between January and April 1991. The plan of management attracted 18 submissions which raised 27 issues. These were referred to the Advisory Council, with the plan, for its consideration and advice to the Minister. Comments and suggestions of the Advisory Council were, in turn, considered by the Minister in adopting this plan.

The planning process leading to the development of this plan has involved the collection and use of information, which for reasons of document size, has not been included in the plan of management. For additional information or enquiries on any aspect of the plan, please contact the Service's Bathurst District Office at 154 Russell Street, Bathurst 2795; or by phone on (063) 31 9777.

2. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL PARKS IN NSW.

The national park concept was introduced into Australia through the establishment of Royal National Park in 1879, only seven years after the world's first national park was created at Yellowstone in the United States of America.

For the purposes of preparing plans of management, the 1978 International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) definition of a national park has been adopted in New South Wales.

"A national park is a relatively large area; (1) where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest or which contain a natural landscape of great beauty; and (2) where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or to eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have lead to its establishment; and (3) where visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educative, cultural and recreative purposes.11

National Parks are a part of the regional pattern of landuse. The management of a national park aims at, protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Other landuses (eg. agriculture, forestry and mining) are distinguished by an acceptance or encouragement of environmental modification. National parks, therefore, provide for only a limited part of the landuses in any region.

2.2 WEDDIN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK.

2.2.1. Location and Regional setting.

Weddin Mountains National Park is located approximately 430km west of Sydney and 20km south-west of Grenfell and lies within the Weddin Shire. The area was proclaimed a wildlife refuge in 1962 and in 1971 was reserved as a national park. Seatons Farm, near Ben Halls Cave, was added to the park in 1986.

The Weddin Mountains are a crescent shaped range rising above the surrounding plains. The park is 8 361 hectares in area and incorporates virtually the entire Weddin Range. It is adjoined by Bimbi and Weddin State Forests which are intensively managed for white cypress pine production. A series of public roads provide access to the park from all directions.

Very little is known of the past landuse of the area of the park apart from the occurrence of some light grazing. The rugged topography and dense vegetation ensured that the mountains remained relatively untouched by agriculture or other landuse.

The Central West Region is an important tourist destination for visitors, the majority of which come from Sydney and Canberra. Nearby state recreation areas, Hill End Historic Site and other national parks all contribute to the range of recreational opportunities available within the region.

2.2.2 significance of Weddin Mountains National Park.

The Weddin Mountains National Park is one of a number of small to moderately sized conservation areas on the central and south-western slopes of NSW which sample early to mid Palaeozoic rocks of the Lachlan Fold Belt of Eastern Australia. These include the Conimbla Range, Cocopara and Nangar national parks and the Currumbenya, Cocopara, The Rock and Table Top nature reserves. Other large national parks, Kosciusko, Deua, Wadbilliga and Kanangra-Boyd also occur within the Lachlan Fold Belt but lie within the tableland and/or coastal regions of the State.

The Weddin Mountains are composed of mid to late Devonian siltstone, sandstone, shale and conglomerate laid down in a large geological structure known as the Hervey Terrestrial Basin between 350 and 370 million years ago. At this time major-land building events were taking place in what is now the central part of NSW where sediments previously laid down beneath the sea were uplifted and distorted into a range and basin type of landscape. The Hervey Terrestrial Basin was one of two major basins developed in these older marine deposits within NSW and received large amounts of eroded material from surrounding highlands. The older marine basement rocks outcrop to the east and north of the Weddin Mountains, for example around Grenfell. They are buried in the close vicinity of the park by unconsolidated Quaternary sediments.

The scenery of the Weddin Mountains derives from the rocks and the geological structure of this part of the Hervey Terrestrial Basin. The strata of the range dip to the west and south with an abrupt scarp formed by erosion facing north and east. The right angled curve in the range is formed around a prominent anticline. This semi-circular structure may represent part of the eroded south-western rim of the Hervey Terrestrial Basin. All the prominent peaks of the Weddin Mountains lie on this eastern and northern facing scarp.

The national park rises abruptly out of the plains. It is a residual highland of an ancient landscape, most of which is now buried beneath the surrounding Quaternary sediments. These sediments have originated in only Recent times, partly from the local ranges and hills but also, in great measure from the eastern tablelands and montane regions of NSW.

These great outwash fans were transported by the westward flowing ancestral Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray river systems during periods of high rainfall and snow melt following the various Pleistocene ice ages in Australia. These fans buried the central and south-western slopes and plains as far west as a line between Balranald and Ivanhoe.

Grenfell and its surrounding region, including the Weddin Mountains National Park, falls within the central western slopes, a biophysical sub-region of the western slopes of NSW. The western slopes grade from the undulating to hilly slopes of the Great Dividing Range in the east to western plains covered by a mantle of Quaternary deposits. The western slopes are dominated by white box (*Eucalyptus albens*) woodlands. This biophysical sub-region is also characterised by a uniform rainfall pattern; in contrast to the adjacent south-western slopes which tend to have a winter maximum rainfall.

White box woodlands occur on all the geological and landform types of the central western slopes. Other communities within the sub-region are more specialised and reflect differences in geology, aspect soils and drainage. In particular, Weddin Mountains is characterised by mugga ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*) open forest and woodland communities which also include tumbledown gum (*E. dealbata*), kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneum*), black cypress pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) and some white cypress pine (*C. columellaris*). These communities are typical of the rugged areas of the metasediments and metamorphic rocks of the central and eastern parts of the sub-region.

Weddin Mountains National Park is not therefore typical of the original vegetation of the slopes and plains of the central west of NSW, which have long been cleared for agricultural purposes, but does provide refuge for a number of plant and animal communities that occur on the ranges and hills of this part of the State.

The alluvial lands surrounding Weddin Mountains National Park are rich agricultural country and have been intensively modified for commercial agricultural purposes. Not only is the Weddin Mountains an "island" in a buried landscape but also an "island" of naturalness in an agricultural landscape.

The importance of Weddin Mountains National Park stems only in part from its intrinsic conservation value; its greater importance is as one of a number of conservation areas that protect a system of natural features across the broad climatic, vegetation and faunal zones of the central western slopes of NSW. These remaining natural areas will become increasingly important for the conservation of native plant and animal communities in the face of accelerated climatic change.

Little evidence of pre-European human activities have been found in the park. The Weddin Mountains National Park is

part of the territory of the Wiradjuri group of Aborigines. Evidence of their occupation includes numerous open sites on the flatlands surrounding the range.

Weddin Mountains National Park contains 10 historic places which demonstrate past European landuse of the mountains. Many of these sites are associated with the gold rush era and bushranger activities and include fences, foundations, caves and early roads. In 1986 the Service acquired Seatons Farm, near Ben Halls cave. This valuable historic resource is an interesting example of nineteenth century farming and highlights the vernacular techniques employed by early settlers in an isolated area.

Weddin Mountains National Park offers a regionally important opportunity for camping in a bushland setting in the central western slopes area of NSW. Other similar camping opportunities are provided in the Towyal, Cumbidjowra, Nangar and Weddin State Forests and in Conimbla National Park.

Tourism in the central west is increasing because of its close proximity to the population centres of Sydney and Canberra. An important aspect of this tourism is a widespread interest in the gold mining period and its colourful bushranger history.

The significance of the Weddin Mountains National Park is summarised below:

Regional conservation significance: The park is one of a group of conservation areas that protects a representative sample of habitats once widespread in the central western slopes of NSW.

Regional Recreational and Tourist Value: The park offers opportunities for both day use and camping in a natural setting for both the local community and visitors to the region.

Local Ecological Value: The Weddin Mountains National Park protects remnant plant and animal communities typical of the ranges and hills of the central slopes of NSW.

Scenery Value: The dramatic scenery of the Weddin Mountains is protected in the national park.

Historical Value: Several sites of importance in the history of early settlement, including bushranging, are protected in the national park.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT

The following general objectives relate to management of national parks in New South Wales:

The protection and preservation of the scenic and natural features.

The conservation of wildlife.

The preservation of Aboriginal sites and historic places.

The provision of appropriate recreational opportunities.

The encouragement of scientific and educational enquiry into the natural and cultural heritage of the park.

In addition to these general objectives the following specific objectives also apply to the management of the Weddin Mountains National Park:

The protection of a representative sample of range and hill country of the central western slopes and plains and its associated plant and animal communities as part of an overall natural heritage conservation strategy to be developed for this region of NSW.

The protection of rare, endangered and/or isolated plant and animal species and communities by preparing and implementing, where appropriate, specific management programmes.

The protection and interpretation of historic places.

The concentration of visitor use in the northern margins of the park by the provision of a day use and camping facility on each of the north-western and north-eastern boundaries and the development of a walking track system between them.

The protection of opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation in the balance of the park.

The promotion of the park for environmental education purposes.

The emphasis within interpretation programmes of:

the importance of the Weddin Mountains National Park as one of a number of conservation areas protecting remnant samples of the range and hill country of the central and south-western slopes and plains of NSW; and

the historic places within the park which demonstrate aspects of the early settlement of the district.

The development of community relations programmes, particularly involving neighbours of the park, which emphasis the importance and purpose of management programmes relating to the protection of natural features and the control of fire, weeds and feral animals.

The enhancement of the value of the Weddin Mountains National Park as a wildlife conservation area by promoting the concept of wildlife corridors through liaison with local landholders, councils and relevant government organisations.

4. POLICIES AND FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT

This chapter contains the policies and framework for the management of Weddin Mountains National Park together with relevant background information. Policies are summarised under the following headings:

Natural heritage;
Cultural heritage; and
Use of the area

The policies established in this plan of management will provide the framework for management consistent with anticipated resources available to the Service and with anticipated community trends, for the next five to ten years. The actions identified are those immediate proposals which are to be undertaken in the next five years. Other management actions may be undertaken over the life span of this plan consistent with the policies set out in the plan.

4.1 NATURAL HERITAGE

4.1.1 Geology, Landforms, Hydrology and Soils.

Weddin Mountains National Park consists of a 19km long crescent shaped range rising sharply above the surrounding plains. It is disrupted mid-way by a geological feature called the "Weddin-Gap". The northern and eastern side is dominated by a series of cliff-lines and escarpments while the southern and western flank has a more gentle slope but is dissected by many deep gullies.

The soils are generally skeletal, being developed on steep slopes from sandstone parent rocks. They are red-brown in colour, porous in character and consist of quartzite and gravels. There are no perennial surface streams within the park due to the narrowness of the range and the porosity of the sandstone. The porous and dispersible soils are susceptible to gully and sheet erosion from heavy rain, especially in winter. This scouring is most evident on the lower slopes below the range on the northern boundary of the park, and if unchecked will encroach onto the park.

The continuation of natural processes acting on the park's landscape is an important objective of management. Disruption of these processes has arisen from both past and present management of the area and includes:

- fire control and prevention;
- the provision of recreational facilities;
- inappropriate recreational activities such as trail bikes;
- grazing pressure from feral animals and domestic stock; and
- road construction and maintenance.

Policies

No development will be permitted within Weddin Mountains National Park which impairs the scenic viewscape and the natural skyline within the park.

Areas subject to current or to past accelerated soil erosion will be restored as required.

All management activities will incorporate soil erosion and sedimentation control principles and practices developed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management of NSW.

Action

The advice of the Department of Conservation and Land Management will be sought and necessary works implemented to control gully and sheet erosion near the northern boundary of the park.

4.1.2 Native and Introduced Plants

The Weddin Mountains National Park conserves one of the largest areas of native plant communities remaining in a relatively undisturbed state on the central western slopes of NSW. The vegetation in the park is diverse and comprises grassland, heath, shrubland, woodland and open forest.

Recent vegetation surveys of the park have identified 12 plant communities and 250 plant species; of these, the following vegetation types are poorly conserved in the nature conservation system but are found in Weddin Mountains National Park:

large areas of woodland and open forest dominated by mugga ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*);

areas of woodland dominated by white box (*E. albens*), Blakely's red gum (*E. blakelyi*), grey box (*E. microcarpa*) and fuzzy box (*E. conica*). Fuzzy box is particularly important as it is not protected elsewhere in NSW; and

large areas of heath dominated by *Allocasuarina diminuta* ssp. *diminuta*.

The park's location on the western boundary of the central western slopes means that the park contains a mixture of species associated with western and eastern NSW. Several species are on the extreme edge of their distribution:

Most easterly distribution:

garland lily (*Calostemma purpureum*)
shrub violet (*Hybanthus floribundus*)

Most westerly distribution:

wild iris (*Patersonia serieca*)
 pixie caps (*Acianthus fornicatus*)
 autumn wings (*Eriochilus cucullatus*)
 blunt greenhood (*Pterostylis curta*)
 small leaf daisy bush (*Olearia microphylla*)
 prostrate bush pea (*Pultenaea procumbens*)
 mountain Dampiera (*Dampiera purpurea*) and
 giant trigger plant (*Stylidium laricifolium*)

The park is also an important conservation area for species which occur mainly on the central western slopes including Boorman's greenhood, (*Pterostylis boormanii*), *Pterostylis hamata* and sandstone boronia (*Boronia glabra*). The Weddin Mountains is the major refuge for these plants, which are not well represented in any other reserve.

The recently acquired Seatons Farm is the only area of Quaternary alluvials included in the national park. It is currently revegetating and its continued regeneration will be promoted.

Weed invasion into the Weddin Mountains consists mainly of species associated with agricultural pastures, particularly cape weed (*Arctotheca calendula*) and Paterson's curse (*Echium platagineum*). These have spread into the park from surrounding areas by wind and the movement of animals. Infestations are generally light with the exception of cape weed and bamboo in the Seatons Farm area.

Fire is an integral part of the natural environment of the park and directly influences the structure and composition of its plant communities. The frequency and intensity of fire within the park has altered since the clearing of the surrounding lowlands. The Weddin Mountains are now vulnerable to infrequent but high-intensity, wide-spread fires.

Five major fires have occurred this century. In 1913 and in 1927 the entire range was burnt out. In 1940 the area north of the Weddin Gap track was burnt and in 1961 the southern half of the park was burnt. The last major fire in 1975 again burnt out the entire range. Due to variations in terrain and aspect the impact on the vegetation of fires such as these is not uniform.

Weddin Mountains National Park is surrounded by agricultural and forestry lands and it is recognised that wildfire presents a potential threat to the park's natural and cultural resources as well as to areas adjacent to the park. Consequently it is an aim of fire management to minimise any impact of wildfire on life and property outside the park as well as within it. For fire suppression to be successful and effective it is essential that co-operative fire suppression capabilities are developed with local fire authorities and neighbours of the park.

The steep terrain of the park means that the construction of fire trails into the Weddin Mountains is difficult. The primary objective of fire suppression in this area is to stop the spread of fire, either from entering the park or escaping from it. Consequently fire breaks and fire trails will be concentrated on the perimeter of the park. Given the value of the Weddin Gap track in the containment of fires in the past, it will also be maintained for fire control purposes.

Policies

Native plant communities will be protected and the regeneration of disturbed areas promoted.

Research, including inventory, into the ecology and distribution of native plants, including locally rare and endangered species will be encouraged.

Only plant species endemic to Weddin Mountains National Park will be used in landscaping and revegetation work. As far as possible plant material will be propagated from communities found within the area to be treated.

Except as specified in the Conservation Plan for Seatons Farm, non-native plants will be controlled and where possible eliminated in consultation with the appropriate authorities.

Control of introduced species will be by techniques that cause minimal disturbance to the environment. Domestic stock will be excluded from the park.

As far as possible unscheduled fires will be excluded from the national park. Naturally occurring wildfires (lightning strikes) will be controlled as quickly as possible.

Co-operative fire management with other authorities, including the Bush Fire Council, the Forestry Commission, Weddin Shire Council and landholders will continue to be developed through the local district fire prevention committees.

Walking tracks will be used as possible fire control lines in the northern end of the range.

Actions

A vegetation map for the park will be prepared. A fire management plan will be prepared by June 1993.

Records and maps of all fires occurring on the park will be maintained.

Hazard reduction by mechanical means will be undertaken around recreational facilities.

The feasibility of developing a fire trail around the northern end of the park connecting Seaton's Farm with Holy Camp will be investigated.

Cape weed on Seaton's Farm will be controlled and possible infestations of the weed in other areas will be monitored and controlled where necessary.

The bamboo stand adjacent to Seaton's house will be contained and managed in accordance with the conservation plan to be prepared for the farm.

The existing regenerating areas of Seaton's Farm will be kept fire free to allow the recovery of native plants to a mature state.

4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals

Two small scale fauna surveys were carried out in Weddin Mountains National Park in 1978 and 1988. These surveys together with individual observations, particularly of avifauna, are the sources for the current list of animals known to be found in the park. These lists record a total of 19 native mammals, 151 birds and 14 reptiles but are certainly incomplete. Further systematic surveys are required to complete the record of animals in the park.

The park is remarkably rich in birdlife. The Weddin Mountains provide an important habitat for breeding and nesting, especially for birds at the extreme of their range as well as for vagrant birds. The park is utilised by a number of species identified as rare in Schedule 12 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act including the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), turquoise parrot (*Neophema pulchella*), superb parrot (*Polylelisis swainsonii*), and regent honeyeater (*Xanthanyza phrygia*). It is important that their habitat requirements are understood to ensure their survival.

Eastern grey kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) can be seen grazing the pastures in Seaton's paddock and red-necked wallabies (*Macropus rufogriseus*) are also common. The wallaroo (*Macropus robustus*) and the swamp wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) are present in lesser numbers. Reports of unusual colouration and physical characteristics of macropods in this area, in particular the swamp wallaby, wallaroos and red-necked wallaby, are of special interest. This may suggest some variation of individuals that has resulted from the isolation of small groups of animals from major populations.

Other, less readily noticed species that inhabit the park include the common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), common ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*), echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*)

and the yellow footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*). The existence of some of these animals has been confirmed by fox scat analysis.

Groups of sedentary animals in the park are effectively isolated from other populations of their species by the surrounding agricultural lands. In the absence of any supplementation of genetic material from the larger populations there is a danger that some species may be lost. This risk is compounded by predatory pressures, particularly from cats and foxes, on small populations of native animals. To ensure the long term survival of such native animals, further investigation into methods of maintaining genetic diversity are required. An important consideration is the provision of wildlife corridors which link isolated populations of native animals, thus allowing the freer interchange of genetic material.

Introduced animals of particular concern are the feral goat (*Capra hircus*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). Goats, cats and foxes in particular, are impacting on plant and animal communities in gullies. Rabbits are impinging upon the natural regeneration in Seatons paddocks as well as undermining some of the farm buildings. Cats are present but are not in sufficient numbers to yet cause major concern.

Policies

Important avifauna breeding areas, including the Holy Camp and Eualdrie Trig areas, will be recorded and protected.

As part of its overall natural heritage conservation strategy for the central western slopes, the Service will liaise with local landholders, Weddin Shire Council and other relevant authorities regarding co-operative landuse practices to protect wildlife corridors linking the park to the other naturally vegetated areas in the district.

The Service will promote the protection of natural lands in the area surrounding the park by means of local environmental plans, regional environmental plans and by objection to the disposal of travelling stock routes.

A program to control and where possible eliminate feral animals will be developed with local landholders and in consultation with other relevant authorities.

Priority for the control of introduced animals will be directed at those with the greatest actual or potential impact upon the natural and cultural heritage of the park.

Domestic animals will not be permitted in the park with the exception of guide dogs for the blind.

Actions

The existing goat control program will be continued.

Rabbits on Seatons farm will be eradicated.

A fox control and if possible eradication program will be undertaken in conjunction with park neighbours.

4.2 Cultural Heritage

The Weddin Mountains lie within the territory of the Wiradjuri people and appear to have been named after an Aboriginal word meaning "stop or remain". One Aboriginal site, a surface scatter of chert artifacts, is known to occur in the park.

This limited record of Aboriginal sites in the park is most likely to reflect the absence of systematic archaeological surveys to date. Further surveys would be expected to locate more sites in the park. Open sites on level land and archaeological deposits in rock shelters are the most likely type of site to occur in the park.

An open site is a type of archaeological deposit where stone artifacts are concentrated either on the surface or in shallow deposits. In the open lands surrounding the Weddin Mountains such sites tend to occur within loom of a water source on level ground such as a river flat or creek bed. In hilly locations archaeological deposits are likely to be found in rock shelters and caves which are above local cold air drainage basins and are sheltered from prevailing winds.

In 1817 the explorer Oxley became the first European to see the Weddin Mountains. Since that time the Weddin Mountains has figured prominently in early European history. In Oxley's second expedition two convicts, Scotchie and Witton, escaped and used the mountains as a hide-out.

For many years thereafter the Weddin Mountains area was used as a favourite hide-out for bushrangers; in particular, it became the base for Ben Hall and his gang. These outlaws made good use of the many caves hidden in the sandstone ridges and gullies. Ben Hall's cave is a popular destination for visitors to the park.

Pastoral settlement began on the alluvial flats below the Weddin Range in the 1830's, although some limited use of the area which is now part of the park occurred before this time. In a local newspaper issued after the gold rush in 1866 these mountains were called the "Widden" mountains, but in the 1870's the name Weddin was given to an area 10km south of Grenfell. It was adopted as the name of the shire in 1906.

Seatons Farm on the north-western edge of the national park is an interesting example of the vernacular architecture of

early settlers in the area. The farm was established in 1936 and the house built in 1940. The farmhouse is of five rooms and is constructed of corrugated and other sheet iron with iron windows on hinges. Only one room has floorboards; the rest have dirt floors.

The farm surrounds include various rustic outbuildings and an avenue of pines and kurrajongs which lead to the house. A conservation plan will be prepared for the farmhouse and its curtilage which will address not only the conservation and use of the historic structures but also the management of surrounding vegetation.

Recording of, and research into, historic places is required to assess their significance and value in interpretative programmes. Many of the original settlers still have descendants who have knowledge relating to the history of the Weddin Mountains. Much of this information could be preserved through an oral history program.

Policies

The Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council will be consulted prior to the implementation of management decisions regarding Aboriginal sites in the park.

Surveys for Aboriginal sites and the assessment of their significance will be encouraged.

Historic places and artefacts will be conserved in accordance with the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance*, (*The Burra Charter*), and the Heritage Act, 1977.

Historic places and artefacts will be managed in accordance with their cultural significance.

No structure or cultural landscape will be altered or destroyed without an assessment of its heritage significance.

The history of Weddin Mountains National Park will be promoted for park visitors through interpretation and education programmes.

The impact of interpretive actions on the cultural significance of sites will be determined prior to managing the site.

The collection of information on the historic heritage of the park and its interpretation will be encouraged.

Actions

A conservation plan to determine the conservation policies and specific management actions for Seatons Farm will be prepared.

Pending the completion of the conservation plan for Seatons Farm, priority will be given to its protection and stabilization.

Interpretation works for Ben Halls Cave will be undertaken.

An oral history of the Weddin Mountains will be undertaken.

4.3 Use of the Area

It is an important aspect of the management of the Weddin Mountains National Park to ensure that its use - whether by the general public, special interest groups, Service managers or other authorities - is appropriate, i.e., in conformity with the Act and the management objectives and policies outlined in this plan of management.

The major categories of use that can be appropriate, to varying degrees, on Service areas are:

- certain types of recreation;
- education and promotion of the area, the Service and the conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- scientific research; and
- management operations, by the Service itself and other authorities with statutory responsibilities in the area

The extent to which these categories of use are appropriate to Weddin Mountains is indicated below.

4.3.1 Promotion of the Park

Weddin Mountains National Park offers an attractive setting for outdoor recreation and provides a place for the study of natural resource management, environmental change and island ecosystems.

The local community surrounding Weddin Mountains National Park is an important park visitor group and one which has a direct interest and concern in the management of the park. An important emphasis in the programme of community relations for the park will be to demonstrate the wider principles of conservation and park management to this group of visitors.

There are opportunities to interpret the historic as well as the natural features of the park. In addition to providing

interesting samples of nineteenth and twentieth century rural life, Seatons Farm also provides examples of natural revegetation. These two aspects make Seatons Farm a valuable educational asset.

Information and data sheets on the resources of the park will assist visitors to understand and appreciate its values and may shape their behaviour and conduct in this and other parks they visit. Similarly, guided walks by park staff stimulate interest and respect for park resources and management practices.

Policies

The use of the park for both formal and informal environmental education purposes will be promoted amongst the local communities.

Two major themes will be emphasised in the programmes developed for the promotion, interpretation and understanding of the park:

the importance of the park as one of a number of conservation areas protecting remnant samples of the range and hill country of the central and south-western slopes of NSW; and

the historic places within the park which demonstrate aspects of the early settlement of the district.

Actions

Interpretive signs explaining the park's outstanding features, its bush ranger history and the processes of natural area regeneration will be provided at Seatons farm.

Public awareness of the park will be promoted through:

- the production of information leaflets;
- seasonal ranger programs;
- talks and seminars; and
- attendance at local shows.

Direction and information signs within and approaching the park will be upgraded.

4.3.2 Recreation opportunities

Weddin Mountains National Park provides the only opportunity for car based camping and bush walking within a national park in the Central West. Access to the park is from both the east via Holy Camp Road and from the west via Nowlands Road. These access roads are unsealed and are for dry weather use only.

Two broad categories of visitors to the park have been identified:

local users from the general area encompassed by Grenfell, Forbes, Young and to a lesser degree, Cowra and Cootamundra who visit the park on day trips; and

tourists travelling through inland NSW, often from Sydney, Canberra or Melbourne who are likely to camp for a short period in the park

The park has also long been a popular birdwatching area.

Recreational facilities have been provided in the northern section of the park at Holy Camp and Seatons Farm. This area contains spectacular scenery, interesting historic features and ideal camping areas. In recent times visitor numbers have increased because of the popularity of Ben Hall's cave and the development of nearby Seatons camping area. Holy Camp has also become a well used recreational area.

A walking track exists to Eualdrie Trig near Holy Camp and an extended walking track system along Basin and Black Gin Gullies, near Seatons Farm, will connect the two camping areas and provide improved pedestrian access into the park.

There are no public roads within the park. Three management tracks are maintained for management purposes and will be promoted as part of the walking track system.

Policies

Facilities for outdoor recreation will be limited to the northern section of the park in the vicinity of Eualdrie Trig and within the catchments of Black Gin Gully and Basin Gully.

Holy Camp will remain as a low key day-use area with some provision for limited camping.

The balance of the park will be managed to provide opportunities for solitude and self reliant recreation.

Visitors will be encouraged to remove their own garbage from the park.

Fires will be permitted in the park only in authorised fireplaces and subject to any fire prohibition specified by the relevant authorities.

Horse riding will not be permitted within the park.

Actions

Seatons camping area will be upgraded to provide a barbecue area and short walking tracks.

The walking track network will be expanded to link Seatons camping area with Holy Camp area through Black Gin Gully and Basin Gully.

The Black Spring Mountain track will be rehabilitated and maintained as a walking track.

Erosion control works will be undertaken on the Eualdrie Trig walking track above Holy Camp camping area.

4.3.3 Scientific Research

The purpose of scientific study in the park is to improve the understanding of its natural and cultural heritage and the processes that affect them. Research will also establish the requirements for the conservation of specific species of native plants and animals. The results from research studies and surveys in the park are used in management programmes wherever applicable.

The insular nature of the park means that there is virtually no influx of new genetic material to maintain native plant and animal communities. A certain rate of extinction is inevitable if the park remains an island isolated from other important natural areas. The ecological security of the park will be increased if the park is linked to other remnant natural areas by wildlife corridors.

Weddin Mountains National Park, therefore, has a number of features which could make it attractive for long term research into native plant and animal communities and species:

- it is the largest remnant of hill and range country preserved in the central western slopes biophysical sub-region of NSW;

- it offers opportunities for comparative studies with other remnant areas on the central western slopes of NSW; and

- it is presently isolated from all other natural areas and consequently has value for the study of genetic change in a closed ecological system.

Because of its isolation, the impact of human activities both in the management of the park itself and from landuses adjacent to the park can be far reaching.

The Service does not, however, presently have the resources to undertake any long term research in this area. There are a number of tertiary institutions in the Central West, the Riverina and adjacent regions which have the capacity to do so. As part of the proposed Central Region Nature Conservation Strategy a prospectus will be prepared as the basis for the involvement of such organisations in research in Weddin Mountains National Park.

Policy

Priority will be given to research within Weddin Mountains National Park into:

the ecology, status and distribution of species and communities, particularly with respect to their isolation from other natural areas;

comparative studies of Weddin Mountains National Park and other conservation areas in the central western; and

the impact of management programmes, particularly fire, on the ecology of the park.

Actions

A prospectus will be prepared as a guide to preferred research projects on the park.

The feasibility of establishing wildlife corridors will be investigated in accordance with the Conservation Strategy being developed for the Central West.

Additional surveys of native animals will be carried out with emphasis on the importance of bird breeding sites and on the genetic effects of isolation on the populations of macropods in the park.

4.3.4 Management Operations

Management facilities in Weddin Mountains National Park are limited to the management track system. Because of the size and shape of the park only three management tracks are required and maintained:

- major management access into the park is via the Weddin Gap track;
- the Holy Camp track follows the eastern boundary of the park from the end of Holy Camp road to the northern tip of the park; and
- a track along the south-eastern boundary between the Stock Route road and Weddin Gap.

These tracks provide access for fire suppression, weed and feral animal control, search and rescue and for research surveys. The most effective tracks for fire control are along the boundaries of the park and, subject to the co-operation of neighbours, the existing system of perimeter tracks is proposed to be extended.

There are no leases, licences or other occupancies granted under the National Parks and Wildlife Act extant within the park.

Policies

Subject to the co-operation of neighbours the existing system of management tracks for fire management purposes on the perimeter of the park will be extended.

The use of the management track system for recreational vehicle use will be prohibited. Only vehicle use authorised by the Officer in Charge of Weddin Mountains National Park will be permitted.

Actions

The Weddin Gap trail will be upgraded to a standard suitable for fire fighting.

Existing roads and tracks will be cross drained and regularly maintained in consultation with the Department of Conservation and Land Management in order to minimise erosion.

Routes suitable for perimeter access and fire control purposes will be surveyed.

5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This plan of management is part of the system of management developed by the Service. The system includes the National Parks and Wildlife Act, field management policies and established conservation and recreation philosophies, as well as and strategic planning at corporate, regional and district levels.

The orderly implementation of this plan will be undertaken within the annual programmes of the Service's Bathurst District. Priorities, determined in the context of district and regional strategic planning, will be subject to the availability of necessary staff and funds and to any special requirements of the Director or Minister.

District programmes are subject to ongoing review, within which works and other activities carried out at Weddin Mountains National Park are evaluated in relation to the objectives laid out in this plan.

The environmental impact of all development proposals will continue to be assessed at all stages of their implementation and any necessary investigations undertaken in accordance with established environmental assessment procedures.

Section 81 of the Act requires that this plan shall be carried out and given affect to, and that no operations shall be undertaken in relation to the national park unless they are in accordance with the plan. However, if after adequate investigation, operations not included in the plan are found to be justified, this plan may be amended in accordance with section 76(6) of the Act.

As a guide to the orderly implementation of this plan, relative priorities for programmes identified in the plan are summarised below:

PROGRAMME	PRIORITY	PLAN REFERENCE
Promote the establishment of wildlife corridors linking the park to other remnant natural areas.	Medium	4.1.3/3.3
Prepare a fire management plan for the park.	High	4.1.2
Eradicate rabbits from around Seatons Farm.	High	4.1.3
Upgrade visitor facilities at Seatons Farm and Holy Camp.	High	4.3.2
Upgrade the Weddin Gap fire track.	High	4.3.4

Construct walking tracks along Black Gin and Basin Gully.	High	4.3.2
Prepare a conservation plan for Seatons Farm.	High	4.2
Provide interpretive signs in the Seatons Farm/Ben Halls cave area in accordance with the conservation plan.	High	4.2
Prepare a vegetation map for the park.	High	4.1.2
Identify native plant and animal communities with special management requirements.	High	4.1.2
Continue goat eradication programme.	High	4.1.3
Investigate routes for perimeter fire break connecting Holy Camp to Seatons Camping Area.	High	4.3.4
Revegetate Seatons Farm area	High	4.1.2
Revise information leaflets.	High	4.3.1
Upgrade directional and information signs within and approaching the park.	High	4.3.1
Monitor the effects of introduced plants and animals.	Medium	4.1.2/3
Undertake fox control where required.	Medium	4.1.3
Produce an oral history of the area.	Medium	4.2
Rehabilitate the Black Spring Mountains track.	Medium	4.3.2
Undertake erosion control measures in the vicinity of Holy Camp	Medium	4.1.1
Upgrade the Eualdrie trig track.	Medium	4.1.1
Undertake long-term, comparative fauna surveys. ,	Low	4.1.3/3.3
Survey the park for aboriginal sites and historic places.	Low	4.2
Undertake research into the impact of fire on plant and animal communities.	Low	4.1.2/3.4
Control bamboo near Seatons house.	Low	4.1.3
Control Cape weed around Seatons farm.	Low	4.1.2

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