



**AMENDMENTS TO
BIG SCRUB NATURE RESERVES
PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Part of the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW)

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AMENDMENTS TO BIG SCRUB NATURE RESERVES PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The *Big Scrub Nature Reserves Plan of Management* (the plan), which was adopted in 1997 and subsequently amended in 2001, includes Andrew Johnston Big Scrub, Victoria Park, Davis Scrub, Hayters Hill, Boatharbour and Wilson Nature Reserves.

This Amendment consists of three sections: **Amendment A** which proposes closure of facilities in Boatharbour Nature Reserve; **Amendment B** which includes fire planning into the Plan of Management; and **Other Amendments** that address a number of minor operational issues and corrections to the Plan.

The procedure for the exhibition and adoption of an amendment is specified in the Act and involves the following stages:

- The draft amendment is placed on public exhibition for at least 90 days and any person may comment on it;
- The amendment and submissions received on the amendment are referred to the Regional Advisory Committee for consideration;
- The amendment, submissions and any advice from the Regional Advisory Committee are referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for consideration;
- The amendment, submissions and the recommendations of the Advisory Council are referred to the Minister for the Environment, and a copy referred to the Regional Advisory Committee;
- After considering the submissions, the recommendations of the Advisory Council and any advice from the Regional Advisory Committee, the Minister may adopt the amendment to the plan or may refer the amendment back to the NPWS and Council for further consideration.

Draft amendments the plan of management for Big Scrub Nature Reserves were placed on public exhibition from 1 July until 10 October 2005. The exhibition of the draft amendments attracted 4 submissions which raised 4 issues. All submissions received were carefully considered before adopting these amendments.

These amendments were adopted by the Minister for the Environment on 17th July 2006 in accordance with Section 73B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974*.

AMENDMENTS TO BIG SCRUB NATURE RESERVES PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

Justification for Amendment A:

This amendment proposes the closure and removal of all facilities, including the car park, toilets, platform and track within Boatharbour Nature Reserve, and the restoration and rehabilitation of these areas with locally indigenous rainforest communities.

The Big Scrub Nature Reserves Plan of Management was previously amended in March 2001 to reduce the recreational area and facilities within Boatharbour Nature Reserve (the reserve) and emphasise a larger commitment to restoration and rehabilitation of the reserve. The reserve contains *Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion* which was listed in 1999 as an endangered ecological community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act).

A key component of the previous amendment was the relocation of the visitor car park to adjacent to the main road. This was in an attempt to improve connectivity of the rainforest vegetation and make it more visible and thereby reduce and/or eliminate anti-social activities within the reserve. Unfortunately these activities have continued and the level of use by the general community for nature appreciation and recreation has diminished in the reserve.

The toilet facilities and the reserve as a whole have been continually subjected to regular vandalism and anti-social activities that are the dominant use of this area. There are numerous informal tracks from the car park through native vegetation, including through areas of the thorny pea (*Desmodium acanthocladum*), which is listed as a vulnerable plant species under the TSC Act. These tracks appear to be used by persons undertaking inappropriate activities, as indicated by the associated rubbish regularly found on and beside the tracks. These activities cause damage to the rainforest vegetation and become strong deterrents to the general community for passive recreation use of the area.

Amendment A:

1. Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Boatharbour Nature Reserve:

Insert a sentence at the end of the 4th paragraph:

“There are numerous informal tracks from the car park through rainforest vegetation which includes areas of the vulnerable plant species *Desmodium acanthocladum* (refer to section 4.3.2).”

2. Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Actions:

Insert as action 2:

- “Fence and rehabilitate any other disturbed areas in the reserve. Retain the track to the river to provide access for rehabilitation work. Once this work is completed the track will be closed and rehabilitated taking into consideration access requirements and amenity of park neighbours. Neighbours will also be consulted if there is likely to be any interruption to services such as power or other utilities.”

3. Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities – Boatharbour Nature Reserve:

Delete the entire section and *replace* with:

“Facilities are located on the northern side of the Wilson River in Boatharbour Nature Reserve. These facilities, which include a platform, walking track, toilets and car park are continually subjected to vandalism and anti-social activities. The toilet facilities have been closed since 2001 due to a major leak in the main water supply and structural damage due to vandalism. Vandalism resulting in further structural damage has continued to occur.

The car park was moved to its current location near the north-eastern boundary of the reserve in 2001 in an attempt to improve connectivity of the rainforest vegetation and make it more visible and thereby reduce and/or eliminate anti-social activities within the reserve. Unfortunately these activities have continued and numerous informal tracks from the car park have been established through the native vegetation.

The facilities in the reserve were developed to provide the community with opportunities to increase awareness of, and enjoy the conservation and cultural values of the Region. Due to the vandalism and anti-social activities in the reserve, use by the general community for nature appreciation and recreation has been deterred and has diminished over time.”

4. Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities – Actions:

Delete the 3rd action and *replace* with:

- “No facilities or infrastructure will be provided in Boatharbour Nature Reserve. All existing facilities and infrastructure, including the car park, toilet facilities, platform, interpretative signage and track within the reserve will be removed and these areas will be rehabilitated and revegetated (refer to section 4.1.2).”

5. Boatharbour, Victoria Park and Wilson Nature Reserves are identified throughout the plan as reserves where facilities will be provided and Discovery ranger activities can be undertaken. These sections will be amended to *delete* reference to Boatharbour Nature Reserve as follows:

- Management: Section 2.2.2 Significance of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves – For Recreation and Aesthetics, 1st paragraph, 1st sentence.
- Section 3 Objectives of Management, last sentence.
- Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Action 1.
- Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities, 1st paragraph, last sentence.
- Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities – Policies 1 and 2.
- Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities – Action 6.
- Section 5 Plan Implementation Activity Table – Medium priorities 4 and 11.

6. Davis Scrub, Hayters Hill and Andrew Johnston Big Scrub are identified throughout the plans as reserves where facilities will not be provided. These sections will be amended to *include* reference to Boatharbour Nature Reserve as follows:

- Management: Section 2.2.2 Significance of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves – For Recreation and Aesthetics, 1st paragraph, 2nd sentence.
- Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities, last paragraph.
- Section 4.3.2 Promotion and Recreation Opportunities – Policy 3.

7. Section 5 Plan Implementation Activity Table:

Insert as a high priority:

“Progressively remove all facilities, including the car park, platform, interpretative signage, toilets and track within Boatharbour Nature Reserve.”

Delete low priority 3: “Investigate the feasibility of providing access across the Wilsons River at Boatharbour Reserve.”

8. Amend Map 2 ‘The Boatharbour Nature Reserve’ to reflect the closure of the car park and removal of platform and toilet facilities and the proposed closure of the track once the rehabilitation and revegetation programs are completed.

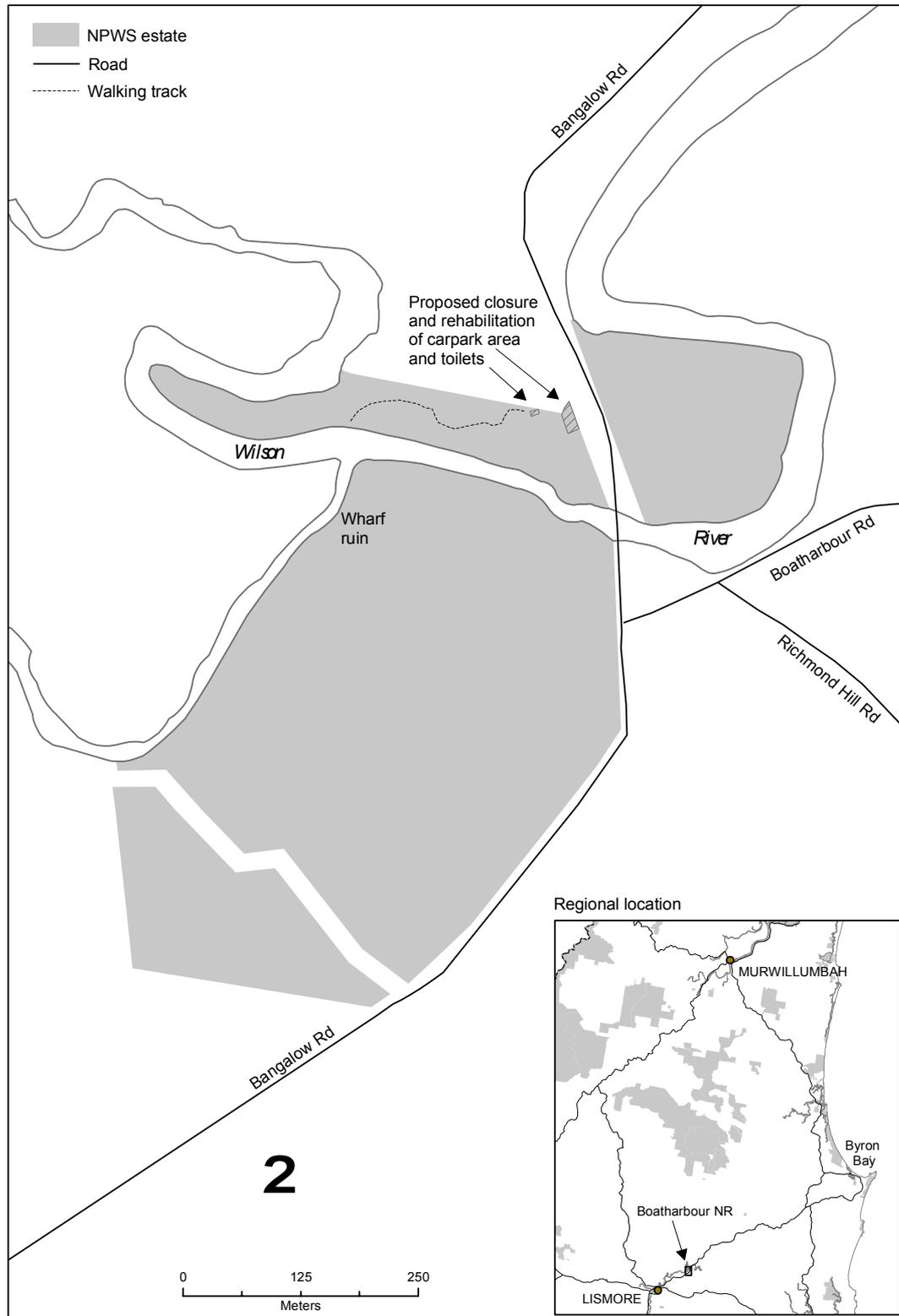
9. Section 5, Plan Implementation Activity Table – High Priority:

Insert:

“Liaise with relevant neighbours about fencing requirements.	4.1.2”
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Insert:

Map 2: Boatharbour Nature Reserve (24 ha)



Justification for Amendment B:

A recent review of fire management throughout the NPWS has resulted in a modified approach to fire based on the level of complexity involved. In regard to the Big Scrub Nature Reserves, the NPWS considers that it is appropriate to include the specific fire management strategies for the reserves in this plan of management.

Amendment B:

9. Reference to fire management in the plan will be *deleted* as follows:

- Section 4.1.2 Native Plans and Animals – 4th paragraph
- Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – 4th policy

10. To reflect the modified approach to fire management, a new section will be *inserted* in Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals as follows:

“Fire Management

The specific fire management strategies for the Big Scrub Nature Reserves are included in this plan of management as NPWS considers that due to the location, vegetation and surrounding land use there is not a high level of complexity involved in fire management and planning.

NPWS uses a system of bushfire management zones for bushfire management in NPWS reserves. These zones are compatible with the system adopted by the Bushfire Coordinating Committee for use in District Bushfire Management Committee (DBFMC) bushfire risk management plans.

NPWS has assessed the Andrew Johnston Big Scrub, Victoria Park, Davis Scrub, Hayters Hill and Boatharbour Nature Reserves and Wilson Nature Reserve for fire management planning purposes and has zoned the reserves as a Heritage Management Zone. The primary fire management objectives within this zone are to prevent the extinction of all species that are known to occur naturally within the reserve, and to protect culturally significant sites.

The protection of life, property and natural and cultural values

Andrew Johnston Big Scrub, Victoria Park, Davis Scrub, Hayters Hill and Boatharbour Nature Reserves pose little threat to life and property and require no specific extra actions to address the level of threat. The bushfire combat agencies maintain response capabilities proportional to this level of threat.

Part of the northern boundary of Wilson Nature Reserve adjoins houses on City View Drive. There are currently no formal arrangements in place with adjoining landholders with regard to maintaining existing control advantages on adjoining tenures that interface with houses near the eastern boundary and northern boundary of Wilson Nature Reserve.

Mown areas around visitor facilities in Victoria Park and Wilson Nature Reserves contribute to fire management as fuel reduced control advantages.

Appropriate fire regimes for flora and fauna

The Big Scrub Nature Reserves primarily contain rainforest flora and fauna, which have little or no adaptations to fire and are fire intolerant. Fire should be excluded from rainforest communities.

Some parts of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves contain areas of wet sclerophyll forest, which is adapted to a regime of infrequent fire that may require application of prescribed fire in the future.

Fire spread into and from the reserve

There is little or no recorded history of fire in the Big Scrub Nature Reserves and little opportunity for fire to spread into or from the reserves. The reserves are small, isolated remnants of mostly rainforest surrounded by cleared pasture, other agricultural land or urban development. The vegetation in these reserves has a low bush fire potential, and in most conditions is unable to support bushfire. Maintenance of the identified control advantages on the reserves and on key adjoining lands, as well as most of the existing adjoining land use practices, minimise the potential for ignitions and spread beyond the reserves.

Eucalypt plantations adjacent to some of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves may increase the potential for spread of fire into the reserves, in particular where control advantages are not in place within the plantations.“

11. Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Policies

Insert the following policies:

- “Fire will be excluded from rainforest communities, and other vegetation communities will be managed with appropriate fire regimes.
- Andrew Johnston Big Scrub, Victoria Park, Davis Scrub, Hayters Hill, Wilson and Boatharbour Nature Reserves will be managed as Heritage Management Zones.
- The NPWS will continue to actively participate in the relevant Bush Fire Management Committees and will maintain contact and cooperation with other fire authorities and reserve neighbours to ensure integrated fire management.”

12. Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Actions:

Insert the following actions:

- “Liaise with adjoining landholders to formalise and maintain the existing control advantages on adjoining tenures that interface with the houses near the eastern boundary and northern boundary of Wilson Nature Reserve.
- Maintain mown areas around visitor facilities in Wilson and Victoria Park Nature Reserves.
- Liaise with adjoining eucalypt plantation managers to establish appropriate control advantages within existing plantations and any new plantations adjoining the reserves.
- Promote coordinated and cooperative fire suppression and fuel management through participation in the Bush Fire Management Committees and direct liaison with Rural Fire Service and neighbours.”

13. Section 5 Plan Implementation Activity Table:

Insert as a high priority:

“Liaise with adjoining landholders to formalise and maintain control advantages on adjoining tenures near the eastern boundary and northern boundary (east of City View APZ) of Wilson Nature Reserve.	4.1.2
Maintain mown areas around visitor facilities in Wilson and Victoria Park Nature Reserves.	4.1.2”

Insert as a medium priority:

“Liaise with adjoining eucalypt plantation managers to establish appropriate control advantages within plantations adjoining the reserves.	4.1.2
Participate in the Bush Fire Management Committees and liaise with Rural Fire Service and neighbours.	4.1.2”

Other Amendments:

14. Boatharbour is incorrectly spelt in Section 4.1.2 Native Plants and Animals – Boatharbour Nature Reserve – 4th paragraph:

Delete “Boat Harbour” and *insert* “Boatharbour”.

15. It is incorrectly stated in the plan that the endangered *Austromyrtus fragrantissima* occurs in Andrew Johnston Nature Reserve. This should state Wilson Nature Reserve.

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals – Wilson Nature Reserve – 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence:

Delete reference to “Andrew Johnston” and *replace* with “Wilson”.

16. The plan currently states that grazing will be phased out of Boatharbour Nature Reserve. The former land use of the reserve was grazing, which was allowed to continue on the newly acquired reserve in 1987. However, this use of NPWS property was only allowed for a very short term and is no longer permitted.

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals

Delete the second last sentence before the heading ‘Boatharbour Nature Reserve’: “The only alien use of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves is a grazing licence for the paddock on the southern portion of Boatharbour Nature Reserve”.

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals – Boatharbour Nature Reserve:

Delete the last sentence in the last paragraph: “The existing licence for grazing will be progressively phased out as reforestation works are commenced.”

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals – Actions:

Insert: “The cleared area in the southern section of Boatharbour Nature Reserve will be regularly slashed and in the longer term progressively rehabilitated.”

Section 5, Plan Implementation Activity Table – High Priority:

Delete high priority 6: “Phase out grazing at Boatharbour as reforestation works progress.”

Section 5, Plan Implementation Activity Table – Medium Priority:

Insert:

“Remove internal fences in Boatharbour Nature Reserve and regularly slash the cleared area in the southern section of the Reserve.	4.1.2”
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17. A track across the southern section of Boatharbour Nature Reserve provides access to adjoining properties. This track provides the only practical access to these properties. While this access has occurred for many years, and continued access is proposed, there is a need to formalise the access arrangements under section 153B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals – Boatharbour Nature Reserve:

Insert as the last sentence in the last paragraph:

“Access to properties which adjoin the southern section of Boatharbour Nature Reserve occurs on a track through the Reserve. There currently are no formal access licences between NPWS and the neighbouring landholders.”

Section 4.1.2. Native Plants and Animals – Actions

Insert:

- “Formalise access licences with neighbours on the southern boundary of Boatharbour Nature Reserve.”

Section 5, Plan Implementation Activity Table – Low Priority:

Insert:

“Formalise access licences with neighbours on the southern boundary of Boatharbour Nature Reserve.	4.1.2”
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