

**CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK
PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

**NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
NOVEMBER 1997**

Acknowledgements This plan of management was written by staff of the Planning Unit in conjunction with the Bathurst District of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Crown Copyright 1998: Use permitted with appropriate acknowledgment.

ISBN 0 7310 7607 9

Adopted and published in November 1997. Online version updated with original map in June 2020.

FOREWORD

Conimbla National Park is located on the central western slopes of NSW between Grenfell, Canowindra and Cowra, approximately 400 km west of Sydney. It has an area of 7 590 ha and covers part of a low system of ranges which support a variety of forest, woodland and heath communities.

The park is important for the conservation of a sample of the plant and animal communities of the central west, an area which has largely been cleared and developed for agriculture. Conimbla National Park also provides habitat for several species of threatened fauna and conserves populations of a number of plant species and communities which are now uncommon or rare because of clearing.

The park contains very attractive scenery, including a number of clifflines, a small gorge and several waterfalls. These ranges and peaks are important landscape features in the district.

As it is one of the few naturally vegetated areas remaining in the district the park has the potential to be a valuable educational and recreational resource for locals and tourists.

The plan of management provides for protection of the biodiversity and habitat values of the park by control of fire, introduced species and human disturbance.

Opportunities will be provided for low key picnicking, walking, pack camping and nature study. Existing facilities will be upgraded and, subject to an environmental and financial assessment, the Ironbark Track will be extended into the Cherry Creek Gorge.

The importance of the park will be promoted amongst neighbours and the local community as a matter of high priority to increase public awareness of its existence and values and to encourage educational and recreational use.

This plan of management establishes the scheme of operations for Conimbla 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

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT	2
2.1 NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES	2
2.2 CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK	2
2.2.1 Location, Reservation and Regional Setting	2
2.2.2 Importance of Conimbla National Park	2
3. OBJECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT	5
3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR NATIONAL PARKS	5
3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK	5
3.3 OVERALL STRATEGY	5
4. POLICIES AND FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT	7
4.1 NATURE CONSERVATION	7
4.1.1 Geology, Soils and Landscape	7
4.1.2 Native and Introduced Plants	8
4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals	10
4.1.4 Fire Management	12
4.2 CULTURAL HERITAGE	14
4.2.1 Aboriginal Sites	14
4.2.2 Historic Places	15
4.3 USE OF THE AREA	15
4.3.1 Promotion and Interpretation	16
4.3.2 Recreation Opportunities	17
4.3.3 Research	19
4.3.4 Management Operations	19
5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	21
SELECTED REFERENCES	23
SUMMARY MAP	Centre pages

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 that outlines how the area will be managed in the years ahead. The procedures for the adoption of a plan of management are specified in the Act and involve five stages:

- * 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 comment on it.
- * The plan and copies of all representations are referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for its consideration.
- * The Director-General submits the plan, together with the recommendations of the Advisory Council, to the Minister.
- * The Minister may adopt the plan with or without alteration after considering the recommendations of the Advisory Council or may refer the plan back to the Director-General and Council for further consideration.

A draft plan of management for Conimbla National Park was placed on public exhibition for a period of three months ending 22nd September 1995. During the period of public exhibition, twenty eight representations were received which raised sixteen issues. The representations were referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council for review and report to the Minister. The comments and suggestions of the Advisory Council were in turn considered by the Minister when adopting this plan.

For additional information or enquiries on any aspect of the management of Conimbla National Park, please contact:

The District Manager
National Parks and Wildlife Service
154 Russell Street
BATHURST 2795

Telephone (063) 31 9777

2. MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The national park concept was introduced into Australia through the establishment of Royal National Park in 1879.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) in 1994 defined a national park as:

“A natural area of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area, and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.”

National parks are part of the regional pattern of land use. The management of a national park aims at minimising disturbance to natural and cultural resources. Other land uses, such as 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 range of land uses in a region.

2.2 CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK

2.2.1 Location, Reservation and Regional Setting

Conimbla National Park is located on the central western slopes of NSW between Grenfell and Cowra, approximately 400 km west of Sydney.

Establishment of the park was first proposed in 1963 by Waugoola Shire Council. The park comprises two sections, with a total area of 7 590 ha; the eastern section, reserved in 1980, covered the former Kangaroo State Forest, some vacant crown land and some purchased leasehold land and the western section was reserved in 1982 over lands which were formerly Yambira State Forest.

The Central West Region is an important tourist destination in NSW; the majority of visitors coming from Sydney and Canberra. Conimbla is one of four national parks in the region, the others being Weddin Mountains, Goobang and Nangar national parks. Hill End Historic Site, Burrendong and Wyangala state recreation areas, limestone caves and a number of historic towns are other attractions.

Most of the region has been cleared for grazing and cropping.

2.2.2 Importance of Conimbla National Park

Natural Systems

Conimbla National Park, along with several other small to moderately sized conservation reserves on the central and south-western slopes of NSW, samples part of the Lachlan Fold Belt. As well as Weddin Mountains, Goobang and Nangar National Parks, these conservation areas include Cocoparra National Park and Yathong, Currumbenya, Cocoparra, The Rock and Table Top nature reserves. A number of large national parks including Kosciusko, Deua, Wadbilliga and Kanangra-Boyd also occur within the Lachlan Fold Belt but are within the Snowy Mountains and southern tableland regions of the state.

Because of intensive clearing for agriculture on the western slopes, few natural areas remain and many of these have been affected by grazing. The park is therefore important for their conservation, including conservation of threatened species, and as a scientific reference area. The park is particularly important for the conservation of species which occur mainly on the central western slopes, including Boorman's greenhood (*Pterostylis boormanii*) and sandstone boronia (*Boronia glabra*). In addition, a number of interesting heath species occur in the Keewong Creek area of the park, including flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthii*), which are rare in the central western slopes region of NSW.

The open forests of the park contain a great diversity of terrestrial orchids, including the only known population of *Genoplesium systemum*, a recently described species.

Several plant species in the park are near their limits of occurrence. Mugga ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) is near its eastern limit while red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*), pixie caps (*Acianthus fornicatus*), blunt greenhood (*Pterostylis curta*), small leaf daisy bush (*Olearia microphylla*) and prostrate bush pea (*Pultenea procumbens*) are near their western limits.

The park provides spectacular spring wildflower displays. Wildflower locations are uncommon on the western slopes because of clearing and grazing. They are important for their scientific and recreational interest.

The park has a relatively high biological diversity which includes a large number of bird species and native animal species which are uncommon in the region, particularly arboreal and small ground mammals. The park is important to many migratory bird species.

Threatened fauna listed in Schedule 1 or 2 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995 and which occur in the park include the regent honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*), glossy black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*), turquoise parrot (*Neophema pulchella*) and superb parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*). The superb parrot is at the eastern edge of its distribution. The squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*) is also likely to occur. There are records of brush-tailed rock wallabies (*Petrogale penicillata*) being sighted in the park but it is not known whether they still occur.

Fossil fish dating as far back as the Late Devonian period are present in sandstone outcrops in the park and surrounding areas. The fossils are of the *Groenlandaspis*, *Bothriolopsis* and *Remagolepsis* genera and include at least two new species. They are of international geological significance because of their early age and are the focus of current scientific research.

Landscape

The ranges of the park rise from undulating to flat country which has been extensively cleared and developed for agriculture. The peaks lie approximately 470m above the surrounding plain and are conspicuous landmarks from surrounding areas. Yambira Mountain within the park is the highest peak in the district.

Rock ledges and waterfalls have formed along some of the creeklines. The most spectacular is Cherry Creek which lies within a small gorge, headed by a waterfall. Clifflines along the Warrumba Range and the peaked Yambira Mountain are interesting landscape features.

Recreational and Educational Values

As one of the few naturally vegetated areas in the district the park is valuable for recreation and for educational study. The spring wildflower displays, large numbers of birds and the waterfalls are special and unusual features in the largely cleared and relatively flat surrounding countryside.

The park is not well known and has had little development of signs and facilities. It has the potential, with promotion, to become an important recreational and educational resource for people of the district, particularly residents of Cowra, and also to be an attraction for tourists to the Central West.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT

3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR NATIONAL PARKS

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

- * protection and preservation of scenic and natural features;
- * conservation of wildlife;
- * maintenance of natural processes as far as is possible;
- * preservation of Aboriginal sites and historic features;
- * provision of appropriate recreation opportunities; and
- * encouragement of scientific and educational inquiry into environmental features and processes, prehistoric and historic features and park use patterns.

3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK

In addition to the above general objectives, the management of Conimbla National Park will be subject to the following specific objectives:

- * maintenance of biodiversity and the populations of plants and animals occurring in the park, in particular threatened plants and animals and those species and communities which are restricted to the central western slopes;
- * protection of the high landscape value of the park;
- * to increase knowledge about Aboriginal use of the area;
- * promotion of awareness of the existence and value of the park in the local community;
- * provision of opportunities for low key recreational use;
- * provision of opportunities for educational use and scientific research; and
- * encouragement of sympathetic management of adjacent land and minimisation of any adverse effects of park management practices on neighbouring lands.

3.3 OVERALL STRATEGY

The park will be managed primarily to retain its variety of plant and animal communities and protect populations of threatened plants and animals by:

- control of introduced species, particularly goats, pigs, foxes and cats;
- management of fire in accordance with a Fire Management Plan; and
- encouragement of retention of areas of natural vegetation on private land close to the park or which join the park to other extensive naturally vegetated areas.

Low key recreation facilities will be provided in suitable locations which encourage appreciation of the park's variety and values.

Promotion and interpretive programs will be undertaken to increase community awareness of the park, its values and its recreational opportunities.

4. POLICIES AND FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT

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

- 4.1 NATURE CONSERVATION
- 4.2 CULTURAL HERITAGE
- 4.3 USE OF THE AREA

The objectives and policies established in this plan of management will provide the framework for management consistent with anticipated resources available to the Service. The park will also be managed in accordance with the Service's Field Management Policies which are not repeated in the plan.

The actions identified are those to which priority will be given in the foreseeable future. Other management actions may be developed over the life span of this plan consistent with the objectives and policies set out in the plan.

4.1 NATURE CONSERVATION

4.1.1 Geology, Soils and Landscape

Conimbla National Park, along with Weddin Mountains, Goobang and Nangar national parks, consists of residual ranges formed of mid to late Devonian sediments of the Hervey Group. These sediments were laid down in a large geological structure known as the Hervey Terrestrial Basin between 350 and 370 million years ago.

The Hervey Basin was one of two major basins developed in older marine deposits in what is now central NSW. The basin received large amounts of eroded material from the surrounding highlands which was subsequently uplifted and eroded into a series of ranges. Together these are known as the Hervey Range, which stretches from Grenfell/Cowra to north of Parkes. The southern area, including Conimbla and Weddin Mountains National Parks, is separated from more northerly ranges by the Lachlan River.

The eastern section of the park covers most of the Conimbla Range and the western section lies on the southern part of the Warrumba Range. The ranges are part of a series of long north-south ranges with areas of ridge and undulating plateau.

The ranges are primarily composed of layers of sandstone and siltstone with some shale and conglomerate. The two ranges are divided by a geological fault running along the Kangaroooby Creek valley. The surrounding lower country outside the park is on Middle and Lower Devonian granite and volcanic sediments and much more recent Quaternary sediments.

Late Devonian fossil fish present in sandstone areas of the park (see section 2.2.2) are vulnerable to damage by track construction and collection by visitors. Any works proposed for the park must provide for their protection.

The Conimbla Range rises steeply along its western side but falls gently along the eastern side. The southern end is an undulating hilly area joining the Conimbla Range to two smaller ranges, the Bumbaldry Hills and the Broula Range. The highest points in the eastern section of the park are Barabigal Trig at 621m near the northern end and a hill on the southeastern corner at 645 m.

The Warrumba Range rises in two steps along its western side. It is dominated by a high narrow ridge which peaks at the southern end at Yambira Mountain, 760m high. The eastern side of the range, largely outside the park, is an undulating area dissected by a number of small creeks.

The main creeks in the park run parallel with the ridges. These are Hunter, Grenfell and Keewong Creeks in the western section and Cherry Creek and Pipe Clay Creek in the eastern section. The creeks run only after rain.

Soils within the park are generally shallow and sandy. They are subject to erosion during heavy rain. In some areas, such as on the ridge west of Cherry Creek, deeper silty soils have developed. The silty soils become extremely soft after heavy rain and will not support vehicles.

Policies

- * The high scenic value of the park will be maintained by appropriate siting and design of any development or works. No development will be permitted which affects the natural skyline of the park.
- * Fossil sites in the park will be protected from disturbance. The Service will consult with the Department Mineral Resources to check for the presence of fossils prior to any works involving disturbance of sandstone outcrops.
- * All works will be designed and undertaken so as to minimise soil erosion.
- * No extraction of gravel or other material will be permitted within the park.

4.1.2 Native and Introduced Plants

The vegetation of the park is typical of the original vegetation of the ranges and hills of central western NSW but not of the slopes and plains, which were dominated by white box (*Eucalyptus albens*) woodland.

The park supports mainly open forest, with some areas of woodland and heath. The area has been logged in the past, mainly for mugga ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*), but there appears to have been little timber removal in the last 40 years. Extensive fires have not occurred in the ranges for more than 60 years and in most areas the vegetation is in near climax condition.

The ridgetops and dry western slopes carry low open forest dominated by black cypress pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) and western scribbly gum (*E. rossii*), with occasional red box (*E. polyanthemus*) and other species. Most areas have a sparse shrub layer. Common shrubs include *Allocasuarina distyla*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Cassinea laevis*, *Acacia uncinata*, *Grevillea lanigera* and *Persoonia rigida*.

Broad ridges with deep silty soil such as the area west of Cherry Creek support open forest of white box, mugga ironbark, black cypress pine, western scribbly gum and bundy (*E. goniocalyx*). Shrubs include *Helichrysum diosmifolium*, *Grevillea floribunda*, *Acacia buxifolia* and *Baekia cunninghamii*.

Slopes and gullies carry mixed open forest which varies considerably. Many species are the same as those on the ridge tops but the trees are generally taller. Tumbledown gum (*E. dealbata*), white box, bundy, red box and black cypress pine occur on the slopes while apple box (*E. bridgesiana*), red stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) and mugga ironbark are more common on sheltered slopes and gullies. The lower areas have a dense shrub and grass layer. Shrub species include *Pultenea procumbens*, *Bossia foliolosa*, *Indigofera australis*, *Daviesia spp.*,

Persoonia sericea and *Hakea decurrens*, plus some grass trees *Xanthorrhoea australis*.

Small areas of woodland occur on rocky slopes. Black cypress pine is the most common species and there is a dense shrub layer of similar species to the forest associations. Along the Warrumba Range a woodland of western scribbly gum and red stringybark is quite extensive.

There are small areas of heath amongst the low open forest. In silty soils where water absorption is impeded, the heath is dominated by *Allocasuarina distyla*. Wattles (*Acacia spp.*), *Styphelia triflora*, *Oxal stricta*, *Stypantra glauca*, *Leucopogon virgatus* and *Epacris microphylla* are also common. More extensive areas of heath and shrubland occur along Keewong Creek where drainage is impeded by large expanses of surface rock. This area has a wide range of species but is dominated by *Acacia doratoxylon*.

Information on the threatened and significant plants in Conimbla National Park is relatively scarce. A vegetation survey of four protected areas in the Service's Bathurst District (ERM Mitchell McCotter 1996) of which Conimbla National Park was one, revealed the presence of several plant species at their distributional limits and resulted in several new records for the Central Tableland and Central Western Slopes Botanical Subdivisions. The location for one species listed on the national Register of Threatened Australian Plants, *Pseudanthus divaricatissimus* was also confirmed in Conimbla National Park. Further searches are needed to gain an adequate profile of the threatened and significant plants in Conimbla National Park for an understanding of sound conservation management. In particular, the location and abundance of threatened and significant plant species, their population size and response to fire should be further researched.

The discovery of several new records for the Central Western Slopes in creek systems in Conimbla National Park is of particular interest. These creeks are recommended to be targeted in future survey work.

Extensive areas of native vegetation also occur along the ranges close to the park in private ownership. Encouraging land owners to retain as much as possible of this native vegetation, in particular vegetated links between the eastern and western sections of the park, is vital for the conservation of biodiversity and the viability of the natural systems of the park and of the wider area.

Most of the park is covered by mature native plant communities with little disturbance. There are few weeds in the park and none which currently require intensive control programs. The main areas at risk from weed invasion or spread are along the creeks and lower slopes, such as the open flats along Hunter Creek where there are a number of pasture weeds and along roadsides and disturbed areas.

The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 took effect from 1st July 1993. The Act places an obligation upon public authorities to control noxious weeds on land that it occupies to the extent necessary to prevent such weeds spreading to adjoining lands. Other weeds may be of concern because they have the potential to have detrimental effects on ecological values and can spread to and from neighbouring land.

A Weed Management Plan for the district has been prepared which details weed control and monitoring programs and methods, but a survey is needed to identify weeds present in Conimbla National Park and determine control programs needed in the park.

Policies

- * The floristic and structural diversity of the park's vegetation will be maintained.
- * Populations of threatened plants will be identified and protected from disturbance.
- * Neighbouring land owners will be encouraged to retain areas of natural vegetation on their land. In particular, possibilities for voluntary conservation agreements over private land between the two sections of the park and over other lands adjacent to the park will be investigated.
- * Introduced plant species will be controlled if they have the potential to invade areas of native vegetation or are declared noxious under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993.
- * Weed control programs will be carried out in cooperation with neighbouring land owners and relevant authorities.

Actions

- * The location, abundance and population size of threatened and significant plant species, including those found along creek systems in Conimbla National Park, will be surveyed and mapped.
- * Research into the response to fire of rare, threatened and significant plant species will be encouraged.
- * A survey will be undertaken to identify weeds present in the park and control and monitoring programs will be included in the District Weed Management Plan.

4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals

More than 150 species of birds have been recorded in the park and at least 15 of these are known to breed. The park supports bird species which are mainly found along the tablelands and coast and as well as bird species of the drier inland.

Bird species recorded in the park include the common bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*), sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*), shining bronze cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*), striated pardalote (*Pardalotus striatus*), chestnut-rumped heathwren (*Hylacola pyrrhopygius*), diamond firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*), white-browed babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) and several species of flycatchers and honeyeaters. Rufous whistlers (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), buff-rumped thornbills (*Acanthiza reguloides*) and yellow-tufted honeyeaters (*Lichenostomus melanops*) are particularly common.

Raptors recorded include the little eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*), wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*), brown falcon (*Falco berigora*) and whistling kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*).

Mammals occurring in the park include the eastern grey kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), wallaroo (*Macropus robustus*), swamp wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*), red-necked wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*), echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), little red flying fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*), pygmy possum (*Cercartetus nanus*), feathertail glider (*Acrobates pygmaeus*) and sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*). Bandicoots, a number of bats and an *Antechinus* species have been sighted. Native rodents and marsupial mice are also likely to occur

Many species of snakes, lizards and frogs are likely to occur in the park but there has been no recording of individual species other than the shingle-backed lizard (*Trachydosaurus rugosus*) and carpet snake (*Morelia spilota*).

Little is known about the habitat requirements of the threatened fauna listed in section 2.2.2. They occur throughout the park and the need for any specific management actions will be reviewed. Species Recovery Plans have been drafted for regent honeyeaters and superb parrots.

Feral goats (*Capra hircus*), pigs (*Sus scrofa*), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), cats (*Felis catus*) and rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) occur in the park. Goats and pigs are subject to control programs. Numbers are not high but on-going control is necessary. Rabbits occur in very small numbers in areas of deeper soil such as along Hunter Creek. Foxes and cats are likely to have a significant impact on native animals in the park.

It is Service policy to control introduced animals occurring on Service managed areas so as to minimise the impacts of such animals on both natural values and neighbouring properties. Wherever possible control programs are carried out in cooperation with neighbours to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Boundary fencing along adjacent grazing properties is frequently in poor condition but escape of stock into the park is currently not a significant problem. Fencing assistance will be given to the extent that Service resources permit.

As stated in section 2.2.2 and sub-section 4.1.2 above the Conimbla Range area is one of the few remaining areas of natural habitat in the central western region and is largely isolated from other areas by cleared agricultural land. The long term conservation of many of the animal species in the park depends upon the protection of large areas of habitat both on and off park. Isolated populations are at risk and some species may be lost from the park unless links to other areas can be maintained.

Policies

- * The habitats of threatened fauna will be identified and protected.
- * Introduced animal species will be controlled where they pose a threat to native species and neighbours. Priority will be given to goat control.
- * On-going liaison will be carried out with neighbours regarding introduced animal control and programs will be undertaken in cooperation with neighbours and relevant authorities where appropriate. Neighbours will be advised prior to such programs being undertaken on the park adjacent to their properties which may frighten stock in adjoining paddocks
- * Control programs will be designed and implemented in such a manner as to minimise the impact on non-target species.
- * Boundary fencing assistance may be provided where funds are available and in accordance with Service policy.

Actions

- * A survey of native animals will be undertaken, with emphasis on threatened fauna.
- * An introduced animal species management plan will be prepared for the park identifying and prioritising introduced species and describing methods and programs for control, monitoring and evaluation.

4.1.4 Fire Management

Fire is a natural feature of the environment of Conimbla National Park and is a major factor in determining the structure and species composition of the park's vegetation.

The pre-European settlement fire regime is not known but it is likely that clearing of surrounding areas has reduced the frequency of severe fires. The last major fire in the park was in 1957 when approximately 1700 ha of the western section of what is now the park was burnt. Minor fires have been known to occur in recent years, generally as a result of lightning strikes during late summer and early autumn after the curing of grasses. Sparks from farm machinery, burning off on adjacent agricultural land, arson and escaped campfires are other potential sources of fire.

It appears desirable that native plant communities of the western slopes of NSW remain unburnt for at least 20 - 40 years. Some areas, particularly the gullies, should remain unburnt for as long as possible. A fire-free period of at least 15 years and preferably up to 30 years is needed for maturity and adequate seed production by cypress pine and probably other species in the park. Nearby Weddin Mountains National Park has a history of more frequent severe fires and the long fire free period in much of Conimbla provides an opportunity to compare the natural systems of the two areas.

Prescribed burning is generally not appropriate in the park on both operational and environmental grounds. It would be difficult to establish effective control lines for a prescribed burn and the potential impact on rare species is largely unknown.

Under the Rural Fires Act, 1997 the Service is a fire authority and is responsible for controlling fires on Conimbla National Park. This includes the control and suppression of fires and the implementation of fuel management programs to protect life and property. The Service may also assist with the control and suppression of fires adjacent to the national park. Fire suppression on Conimbla National Park is generally undertaken by local fire brigades and National Parks and Wildlife Service staff.

District Bush Fire Management Committees have been set up in Cowra and Weddin Shires under Section 52 of the Rural Fires Act to develop and coordinate cooperative fire management between fire authorities. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is a member of these committees which are responsible for both the development of cooperative fire fighting and programs for the reduction of bush fire hazards. The two district bush fire management committees have prepared Section 52 fire plans as required under the Rural Fires Act.

The park's boundaries are irregular and generally do not coincide with readily identifiable fire management boundaries. Cooperative fire management with neighbours is therefore very important.

Control of fires is hindered by the rugged topography and inaccessibility of many areas. It is not possible in most locations to construct internal fire breaks because of the steep, rocky topography. Through the Cowra Shire District Bush Fire Management Committee a network of fire trails has been established along the eastern edge of the Conimbla and Broula Ranges, both within the park and on

adjoining private lands. This network is a strategic line for preventing fires escaping from the park.

A similar system of fire control exists for the Yambira area via an unused trail that links the properties Hillview and Bedrock. Re-establishment and maintenance of this trail would provide a valuable defensive fire line for fires burning from the western section of the park.

All the above information will be incorporated into a fire management plan for Conimbla National Park.

Policies

- * Fire will be managed to ensure:
 - protection of human life and property;
 - conservation of species habitat and diversity; and
 - conservation of structures, objects and places of cultural heritage significance.
- * Fires will be managed in accordance with Section 52 plans required under the Rural Fires Act, this plan of management and the fire management plan to be prepared for the park.
- * All wildfires will be suppressed as quickly as possible.
- * Use of heavy machinery for fire suppression will be avoided in the vicinity of rare plants and Aboriginal sites and areas of high erosion potential.
- * Areas disturbed by fire suppression operations will be rehabilitated as soon as practical after the fire.
- * On-going liaison will be maintained with district bush fire management committees, bushfire brigades and adjacent land owners with regard to fire management issues and to ensure coordination in suppression of wildfire in the park and adjoining land.
- * Limited prescribed burning may be used where necessary to protect property at risk. It will not be undertaken in the vicinity of threatened plant species or the habitat of threatened fauna unless in accordance with species management plans and/or the fire management plan for Conimbla National Park.
- * Records and maps will be prepared and maintained for all fires within the park.

Actions

- * In accordance with Service policy a fire management plan will be prepared detailing fire management for Conimbla National Park. The fire management plan will be placed on exhibition for public comment before its final adoption by the Service.

4.2 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cultural resources are important components of the environment that may have aesthetic, historic, scientific and/or social significance to present and future generations. Cultural heritage includes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history.

4.2.1 Aboriginal Sites

The area of the park was part of the area occupied by the Wiradjuri people, the largest Aboriginal group in NSW. Their lands extended from the Murray River north along the ranges to Dunedoo, and west to Trangie, Condobolin and Hay. The Wiradjuri were known as the Tribe of the Three Rivers.

There is still much to be learnt about the Aboriginal history and economy of central NSW. Most evidence of Aboriginal occupation has been found along rivers and it has been suggested that the dry ranges were visited only to obtain stone for tools and to hunt in good seasons. Because of the modification of a large proportion of the district for agriculture, any sites located within the park would be valuable for improving understanding of Aboriginal use of central NSW.

Little survey has been undertaken for Aboriginal sites in the park. Scattered artefacts have been found along some of the creeks and it is probable that additional sites are present, particularly along creeks and ridges. Sites recorded elsewhere in the district include camp sites, occupation shelters, stone arrangements, scarred trees, carved trees, ceremonial grounds and mythological sites.

The strong attachment of Aboriginal people to the land has been acknowledged in recent years. Archaeological sites are important to Aboriginal people as they are a testament to their culture's great antiquity. The park lies within the area of the Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Policies

- * The Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Wiradjuri Elders Committee will be consulted and actively involved in management of any Aboriginal sites found in the park.
- * All Aboriginal heritage and sites in the park will be recorded and conserved.
- * Any Aboriginal sites found in the park will be protected from disturbance by human activities.
- * The location of Aboriginal sites will not be publicised except where:
 - the Local Aboriginal Land Council and relevant Aboriginal community organisations are in agreement with the proposal;
 - a conservation study has been prepared and any management works necessary to protect the site from damage have been implemented; and
 - the site will be interpreted to promote public knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal culture.
- * Works with the potential to impact on Aboriginal sites will be preceded by an archaeological assessment.

Action

- * Aboriginal site survey will be undertaken to improve understanding of the location and types of Aboriginal sites present in the park.

4.2.2 Historic Places

The first Europeans to visit the Cowra-Grenfell district were Surveyor George Evans who discovered the Lachlan River in 1815 and Surveyor General John Oxley who further explored the Lachlan in 1817.

Pressures to find new grazing land led to the occupation of land in the district by squatters during the early 1830s. Two of the earliest were John Wood who squatted on the rich flats along Brundah Creek and Native Dog Creek, south and west of the Warrumba Range and William Dixon Owens who occupied land at Bumbaldry, south of the Conimbla Range (Lloyd, 1988).

Following the Robertson Land Act of 1861 the large runs began to be carved up by the selection process. Land was further subdivided during the early 1900s and for soldier settlement following World War I.

One of John Wood's shepherds discovered gold on the current site of Grenfell, west of the park, in 1866. This began a gold rush and proved to be one of the richest reefs in NSW during the period 1867 to 1871. Within 3 months of the discovery of gold a town of 5000-7000 people had been established.

The area of the park was a source of timber for development of the district. During the early part of the twentieth century the village of Bumbaldry, just south of the park, was a centre for sleeper cutting. Timber cut in the park was used for railway lines in the district and other parts of NSW and later for the Cowra World War II Prisoner of War Camp.

Known places of historic interest in the park consist of tracks, fence lines, a set of split-post yards, Yambira Trig and the site of two fibro huts adjacent to Cherry Creek which were removed by the Service in 1980. The age and use of the huts is not known but they were possibly World War II army huts. The fences and yards are in poor condition.

Policies

- * The historic values of the park will be conserved in accordance with the Burra Charter of Australian ICOMOS.
- * Historic places will be removed or altered only in accordance with a conservation assessment which examines their cultural significance, and will be recorded before undertaking any work.

4.3 USE OF THE AREA

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

- education and promotion of the area, the Service and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage;
- certain types of recreation;
- 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 will be provided for in Conimbla National Park is indicated below.

4.3.1 Promotion and Interpretation

Conimbla National Park is a relatively small park and lacks large dramatic features which would encourage public knowledge and visitation. It has also had little development of signs or promotion programs. The park is virtually unknown outside the local area and many locals are unaware that the park exists or where the boundaries are. Park facilities and signs have in the past been extensively vandalised, further compounding the lack of community awareness of the value of the area.

Erection of more boundary and direction signs, provision of information on natural values and recreation opportunities and promotion amongst local and tourist organisations are needed to encourage community support and fulfil the area's potential as a recreation and educational resource.

The district receives large numbers of tourists, including international tourists visiting Cowra because of the presence of the prisoner of war camp and the break-out of Japanese prisoners during the Second World War. Nearby Weddin Mountains National Park is a better known tourist destination, primarily because of Ben Halls Cave, located at the northern end of the park. Conimbla National Park has a similar potential to attract tourists to enjoy its natural scenery.

Adult education organisations have made some use of the park for environmental education programs and educational use is likely to increase as the park becomes known by local schools.

Policies

- * The importance of Conimbla National Park will be promoted among the local community and tourist organisations.
- * The following themes will be emphasised in promoting and interpreting the park:
 - the geological significance of the park;
 - its botanical diversity and spring wildflower displays;
 - the remnant nature of the habitats and extremely high value as one of the few remaining natural areas in the region;
 - its value for threatened and uncommon plants and fauna;
 - the large number and variety of birds;
 - landscape features such as peaks, cliffs and waterfalls; and
 - opportunities for walking, picnicking and nature study in a varied and attractive natural area.

Actions

- * Directional signs will be provided on approaches to the park along Barryrenie Road and from Goolgong.
- * Information and interpretive signs will be provided at the beginning of the Wallaby and Ironbark walking tracks.
- * A program of community liaison, distribution of brochures, media releases, field days and similar activities will be undertaken to promote awareness of the park and its values.
- * A new information leaflet will be prepared for the park.

4.3.2 Recreation Opportunities

A regional perspective has been used to plan recreational opportunities within the park. Conimbla National Park is small and has a number of important conservation features which are sensitive to impacts such as increased fire frequency. Picnic and camping areas are provided on private property adjacent to Conimbla, in Weddin Mountains National Park and other locations in the district. Conimbla will cater primarily for low key day use.

It is estimated that the park currently receives only a few hundred visitors per year, primarily local day visitors.

Access is via unsealed public roads which run north from the Mid-Western Highway between Cowra and Grenfell, or along Barryrenie Road between Cowra and Goolgong.

Existing recreation facilities are a small picnic area with barbecues and two short to moderate length walking tracks, located along the Barryrenie Road. Construction of toilets is needed at the picnic area.

Wood collection for picnic and camp fires can have a significant environmental impact by trampling vegetation and removing habitat for insects, reptiles and small mammals, particularly in the dry climate of the park. It also increases the risk of fire escaping into the park. The use of fuel stoves will be encouraged.

The two walking tracks, Wallaby Track and Ironbark Track, connect, allowing a longer walk. Further loop walks can be undertaken by using the Cherry Creek Fire Trail and Barryrenie Road. The tracks require upgrading to improve drainage and prevent erosion. The Ironbark Track takes walkers to a lookout over the Cherry Creek Gorge.

Cherry Creek is a popular local walking route to a waterfall upstream of the lookout. Extension of the Ironbark Track to include the waterfall and provide access into the gorge would add greatly to its interest. The proposed extension of the Ironbark Track will be subject to environmental and financial assessment.

No recreation facilities are currently provided within the western section of the park. At present some unauthorised public vehicle access occurs along the Yambira Fire Trail, although as it is not a through trail this has not developed into a major use. Hunter Creek, which flows beside the trail, receives some use for low key camping and Yambira Mountain is occasionally visited by walkers.

The risk of escape of fire from the Yambira Mountain or western area of the park is of concern. Additionally, the open vegetation and remote location have encouraged a significant amount of illegal activity including firewood collection, shooting of

protected fauna and use of unregistered vehicles. Trail bikes have caused unacceptable damage to trails and surrounding vegetation.

The western section of the park has considerable potential for walking and pack camping. Closure to public vehicle use of the Yambira Fire Trail would create an attractive area for extended bushwalking and walk-in camping, while preventing damaging illegal activities. Opportunities for medium and long distance bushwalking are in short supply in the district.

Accordingly it is proposed to formally close the Yambira Fire Trail to illegal public vehicle use and provide at the terminus of the road, a small car park in the vicinity of the park boundary for visitors who walk and camp in the western section of the park. A marked walking route will be surveyed to enable visitors to reach Yambira Mountain.

The park has been used for horse riding for many years, particularly for club activities on the Yambira Fire Trail. Horseriding has the potential to introduce weeds, result in erosion and create a danger to walkers. Riding on the Yambira Fire Trail is considered acceptable, however, because of the good condition and moderate grades of this trail.

Policies

- * Low key day use recreation facilities will be provided in the eastern section of the park at the Wallaby Picnic Area and Wallaby and Ironbark walking tracks.
- * The western section of the park will be managed to provide primarily for bushwalking and walk-in camping with no facilities. No public motor vehicle access will be permitted but organised horse-drawn vehicle events may be permitted along the Yambira Fire Trail by prior arrangement with the District.
- * Walk-in camping will be permitted within the park more than 500m from public access roads, walking tracks and picnic areas.
- * Orienteering and rogaining will be permitted in Conimbla National Park in accordance with the Land Management Regulations and with Service policy.
- * Horseriding will be allowed on the Yambira Fire Trail. Riding will not be permitted in the park other than on this track and horse camping will not be permitted.
- * Visitors will be encouraged to use fuel stoves as a substitute for the use of wood, through brochures, information signs and other appropriate means.

Actions

- * Yambira Fire Trail will be closed to unauthorised public vehicle use.
- * A car parking area will be provided at the terminus of the public road along the Yambira Fire Trail and a marked trail surveyed to Yambira Mountain.
- * The Wallaby and Ironbark Tracks will be upgraded where necessary to prevent erosion.
- * Subject to acceptable environmental and financial assessment, Ironbark Track will be extended to the waterfall on Cherry Creek.
- * Toilets will be provided at the Wallaby Picnic Area.

4.3.3 Research

Research into the park's natural and cultural features and their protection and maintenance requirements can contribute to the development of improved management programs. The Service has only limited resources available for research and therefore encourages appropriate survey and research by other organisations, students and interested members of the community.

Research carried out in the park to date includes small scale vegetation surveys by students, observations by bird watching groups and some plant and Aboriginal site surveys by interested locals. Priority future research topics are listed below

Policies

- * The park will be available for appropriate research.
- * Liaison will be maintained with researchers to obtain as much mutual information and assistance as possible. The results of research will be required to be provided to the managers of the area.
- * Researchers will be encouraged to design programs to provide information useful for management purposes.
- * Visitors and locals who are interested in undertaking plant and animal survey will be encouraged to discuss their proposals and to provide the Service with a record of their findings

Action

- * A prospectus will be prepared as a guide to priority research projects in the park and circulated to tertiary institutions and appropriate organisations. The prospectus will include the following priority topics:
 - the distribution and management needs of threatened plant and animal species;
 - the fire response of plant species and communities present in the park and the impact of various fire regimes;
 - the distribution and types of Aboriginal sites in the park and Aboriginal use of the area; and
 - the history of non-Aboriginal use of the park area.

4.3.4 Management Operations

The only management facilities within the park are three vehicle tracks, the Cherry Creek, Pipe Clay Creek and Yambira fire trails. These are maintained by local councils as part of the district fire trail system. The Yambira Trail provides access to private property along Hunter Creek.

The Central West County Council maintains a power line along Barryrenie Road which crosses the park at several locations. A formal easement is needed to establish legal conditions for vegetation clearing and other maintenance operations.

Policies

- * Existing management tracks will be maintained.
- * No new management tracks will be constructed.
- * Temporary fire control trails may be constructed where essential for fire suppression and where environmental impact will be minimal. Trails will be rehabilitated following control of the fire.
- * Access will continue to be permitted along the Yambira Fire Trail for local bushfire brigades and neighbouring landholders.

Actions

- * Maintenance activities along powerline easements must be undertaken in accordance with the Powerline Maintenance in National Parks and Wildlife Service Lands Agreement with the Electricity Association.
- * A licence will be arranged with the adjacent land owners providing for private vehicle access along the Yambira Fire Trail.

5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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

The implementation of this plan will be undertaken within the annual programs 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-General or Minister.

District programs are subject to ongoing review, within which, works and other activities carried out in Conimbla 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 development 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 effect to, and that no operations shall be undertaken in relation to Conimbla 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 implementation of this plan, relative priorities for identified activities are summarised below:

Activity	Plan ref
High priority	
. Undertake vegetation and fauna surveys	4.1.3
. Control pigs and goats as needed	4.1.3
. Prepare fire management plan	4.1.4
. Undertake promotion of the park amongst neighbours and the local community	4.3.1
. Close Yambira Fire Trail to unauthorised use	4.3.2
. Issue licences to authorised vehicle users of the Yambira Fire Trail	4.3.2
. Record Aboriginal sites	4.2.1
Medium priority	
. Produce new information leaflet	4.3.1
. Provide directional signs from Goolong and Barryrenie Road	4.3.1

- . Upgrade Ironbark and Wallaby tracks 4.3.2
- . Signpost walking route to Yambira Mountain 4.3.2
- . Investigate extension of Ironbark Track 4.3.2
- . Construct toilets at Wallaby picnic area 4.3.2
- . Provide parking area on Yambira Trail 4.3.2

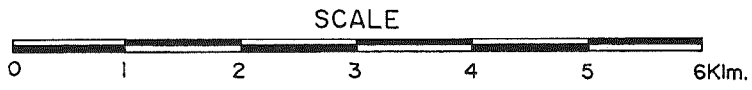
Low priority

- . Approach tertiary institutions about research 4.3.3
- . Investigate methods for control of foxes and cats 4.1.3
- . Formalise power line easement 4.3.4

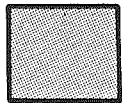



SELECTED REFERENCES

- Harden, Gwen J., (ed) (1993) **Flora of New South Wales** Vols 1-4. National Herbarium New South Wales University Press.
- Leigh, J., Boden, R and Briggs, J. (1984) **Extinct and Endangered Plants of Australia** Sun
- Marquis-Kyle, P., Walker, M., (1992) **Australia ICOMOS The Illustrated Burra Charter.** Australia ICOMOS
- Marriot, J. (ed.) (1988) **Cowra on the Lachlan**, Cowra Shire Council, Cowra.
- ERM Mitchell McCotter (1996) **Bathurst District Vegetation Survey.** Report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bathurst District).
- Mitton L. (1988) **A History of Grenfell and the Weddin Shire**, Weddin Shire Council, Grenfell.
- Packham, G.H., (ed), (1969) **The Geology of NSW.** Geological Society of Aust. Inc.
- Strahan, Ronald. (ed) (1983) **Complete Book of Australian Mammals; The National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife.** Australian Museum.

CONIMBLA NATIONAL PARK



LEGEND

-  LAND RESERVED N.P.W.S.
-  PUBLIC ROADS
-  MANAGEMENT TRAILS
-  WALKING TRACKS

