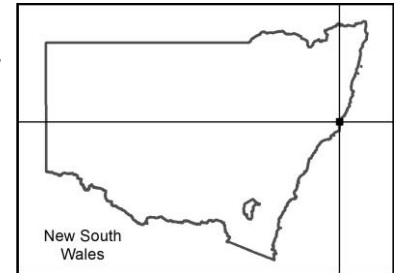




Statement of Management Intent



Darawank Nature Reserve

1. Introduction

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

2. Management principles

Nature reserves are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding, unique or representative ecosystems, species, communities or natural phenomena. Under the NPW Act ([Section 30J](#)), nature reserves are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, and protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- promote public appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the reserve's natural and cultural values
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The primary purpose of nature reserves is to conserve nature. Nature reserves differ from national parks in that they do not have the provision of visitor use as a management purpose or principle.

3. Context

Reservation details: Darawank Nature Reserve was reserved on 5 March 1999.

Size: 1191 hectares.

Darawank Nature Reserve is located approximately seven kilometres north of Forster. It falls within the NSW North Coast Bioregion. It also lies within the administrative areas of the Great Lakes and Greater Taree City councils, Hunter Local Land Services and the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The reserve adjoins Nine Mile Beach to the south and Diamond Reef Beach to the north. The eastern boundary of the reserve is the mean low water mark and so the reserve includes the intertidal zone of the beach.

Darawank Nature Reserve is surrounded by Crown land and the coastal villages of Hallidays Point and Diamond Beach. Recent acquisitions to the reserve to the west include part of the Darawakh Wetlands and Frogalla Swamp catchments, formed by the tributaries of Wallamba River and Darawakh Creek. The western sections of the reserve include areas rehabilitated by infilling drainage canals and removing other waterway infrastructure with the specific intent to manage runoff from acid sulfate soils impacting on the water quality of Wallamba River.



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The reserve contains high-conservation value wetland and coastal forest communities that support a diverse assemblage of threatened species. Vegetation communities include rainforests, wet sclerophyll forest dominated by flooded gum (*Eucalyptus grandis*), dry sclerophyll forest dominated by blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), swamp sclerophyll forest dominated by swamp mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*) and coastal heath dominated by coast banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*). In the past, the area surrounding the Darawakh Wetlands has been severely impacted by highly reactive acid sulfate soils, and it is regarded as a 'hotspot' for acid sulfate soil discharge.

4. Values

- Darawank Nature Reserve protects habitat for threatened shorebird species including the Australian pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*) and little tern (*Sternula albifrons*), and provides a nesting site for the endangered black-necked stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*).
- The reserve protects habitat for a variety of threatened species that occur within and in the vicinity of the reserve including the wallum froglet (*Crinia tinnula*), black bittern (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*), eastern grass owl (*Tyto longimembris*), eastern pygmy-possum (*Cercartetus nanus*) and the common blossom-bat (*Syconycteris australis*).
- The area supports a diversity of wetland and coastal vegetation communities including two that are recognised as endangered ecological communities: Littoral Rainforest in the New South Wales North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions, and Lowland Rainforest in the NSW North Coast and Sydney Basin Bioregions, the latter being subtropical rainforest dominated by cabbage palms (*Livistona australis*).
- The eastern sections of the reserve provide significant recreation values, with visitors using the beach for fishing, four-wheel drive access and recreational horse riding. The beach is also used for commercial horse training, though this activity is currently unlicensed.
- There are remnants of the historically significant Tuncurry Afforestation Camp within Darawank Nature Reserve. The afforestation camp was the first in New South Wales; prisoners carried out tree planting and established the State's first pine plantation. The prison camp was built in 1913 and abolished in 1938.
- There is evidence of Aboriginal occupation and use in areas nearby Darawank Nature Reserve. Sites include Aboriginal artefacts, earth mounds (middens), scarred trees and ceremonial areas and it is likely that the freshwater wetlands provided a significant resource for indigenous groups in the area.

5. Issues

- Wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.), European foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and feral cats (*Felis catus*) are known to occur throughout Darawank Nature Reserve.
- Weed species known to occur in the reserve include lantana (*Lantana camara*), coastal morning glory (*Ipomoea cairica*), cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*), bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides monillifera* ssp. *rotundata*), asparagus fern (*Asparagus aethiopicus*) and exotic pines. Glory lily (*Gloriosa superba*) is located on lands adjacent to the reserve and therefore poses a significant risk of invasion into the reserve.
- Inappropriate recreational use and uncontrolled access to the reserve, including four-wheel drive and motorbike use, and illegal rubbish dumping are negatively impacting on reserve values. The reserve is also subject to frequent uncontrolled bushfire which is negatively impacting on ecological values.
- Nine Mile Beach (including that part within Darawank Nature Reserve) has a history of four-wheel drive use providing access for recreational fishing and other activities. Great Lakes Council regulates four-wheel drive use on the adjacent sections of Nine Mile Beach through a permit system. There are no practical options for preventing vehicle access along the section of Nine Mile Beach within Darawank Nature Reserve.
- Nine Mile Beach (including that part within the reserve) has a history of use for recreational horse riding and training of commercial race horses. There are no practical options for preventing horse riding activities on the section of Nine Mile Beach within Darawank Nature Reserve. Horse riding activities of a commercial nature require licensing under the NPW Act.

6. Key management directions

- Manage fire in accordance with the Darawank Nature Reserve [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the priorities of the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#) Lower North Coast Region. Weed species will be controlled in combination with bush regeneration, with the primary focus on protecting the littoral rainforest endangered ecological community and other coastal dune and scrub communities. Wild dog programs will be undertaken as required in accordance with the Great Lakes Area Draft Wild Dog Plan.
- Continue to consult with the local community about weed management issues and rubbish removal from Darawank Nature Reserve, and continue ongoing cooperation with the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council regarding cooperative works undertaken within the reserve.
- Continue to implement and investigate options to limit access to fire management trails within Darawank Nature Reserve through the installation of gates and appropriate signage.
- In the western section of the reserve, continue to manage acid sulfate soil runoff impacting the water quality of the Wallamba River and its high-conservation values.
- Explore options for the recategorisation of the eastern section of Darawank Nature Reserve as national park while retaining the western section (divided by The Pines Road) as nature reserve. This recategorisation is subject to approval by the NSW Parliament.
- All management activities will be preceded by the preparation of an environmental assessment or heritage assessment where this is a requirement of NPWS policy or legislation.
- Environmental repair and threat management programs, such as erosion mitigation measures, pest management, and activities arising from threatened species requirements may be implemented in accordance with NPWS policies and procedures.
- Non-intrusive works may be undertaken where necessary to protect cultural heritage items from further deterioration, to ensure the safety of visitors, to protect wildlife or to prevent damage to park assets.
- A plan of management will be prepared to set out the ongoing management objectives for the reserve. The plan of management is a statutory document under the NPW Act which will be available for public comment. NPWS will also encourage the community to contribute to the ongoing conservation of the reserve by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this reserve or this statement, contact the NPWS Great Lakes Office (Pacific Palms) on 02 6591 0300 or "The Ruins" Camping Ground, Booti Booti National Park, The Lakes Way, Pacific Palms NSW 2428.

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

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