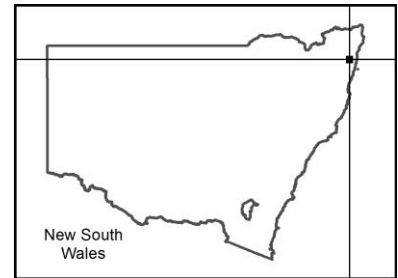


Statement of Management Intent



Everlasting Swamp National Park and State Conservation Area

1. Introduction

This statement outlines the main values, issues, management directions and priorities of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for managing Everlasting Swamp National Park and State Conservation Area (SCA). This statement, together with relevant NPWS policies, will guide the management of the parks 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

National parks are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural or cultural features or landscapes or phenomena that provide opportunities for public appreciation, inspiration and sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment. Under the NPW Act ([section 30E](#)), national parks are managed to:

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

The primary purpose of national parks is to conserve nature and cultural heritage. Opportunities are provided for appropriate visitor use in a manner that does not damage conservation values.

State conservation areas are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas that:

- contain significant or representative ecosystems, landforms or natural phenomena or places of cultural significance

- are capable of providing opportunities for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment, the sustainable use of buildings and structures, or research
- are capable of providing opportunities for uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act.

Under the NPW Act ([section 30G](#)), state conservation areas are managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, protect natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects and features of cultural value
- provide for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act (including uses permitted under section 47J such as mineral exploration and mining), having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted in the area
- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of the area's natural and cultural values and with other uses permitted in the area
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

Land is reserved as a state conservation area primarily where mineral values preclude reservation as another category. The NPW Act requires a review of the classification of state conservation areas every five years in consultation with the Minister administering the *Mining Act 1992*. Everlasting Swamp SCA remained a state conservation area following the [second five-year review](#) due to an exploration title applying at that time. However, there is a need to review the park category again as the exploration licence covering the park was terminated in late 2015.

3. Context

Reservation details: Everlasting Swamp SCA was reserved on 28 February 2007. The national park was reserved on 21 November 2014.

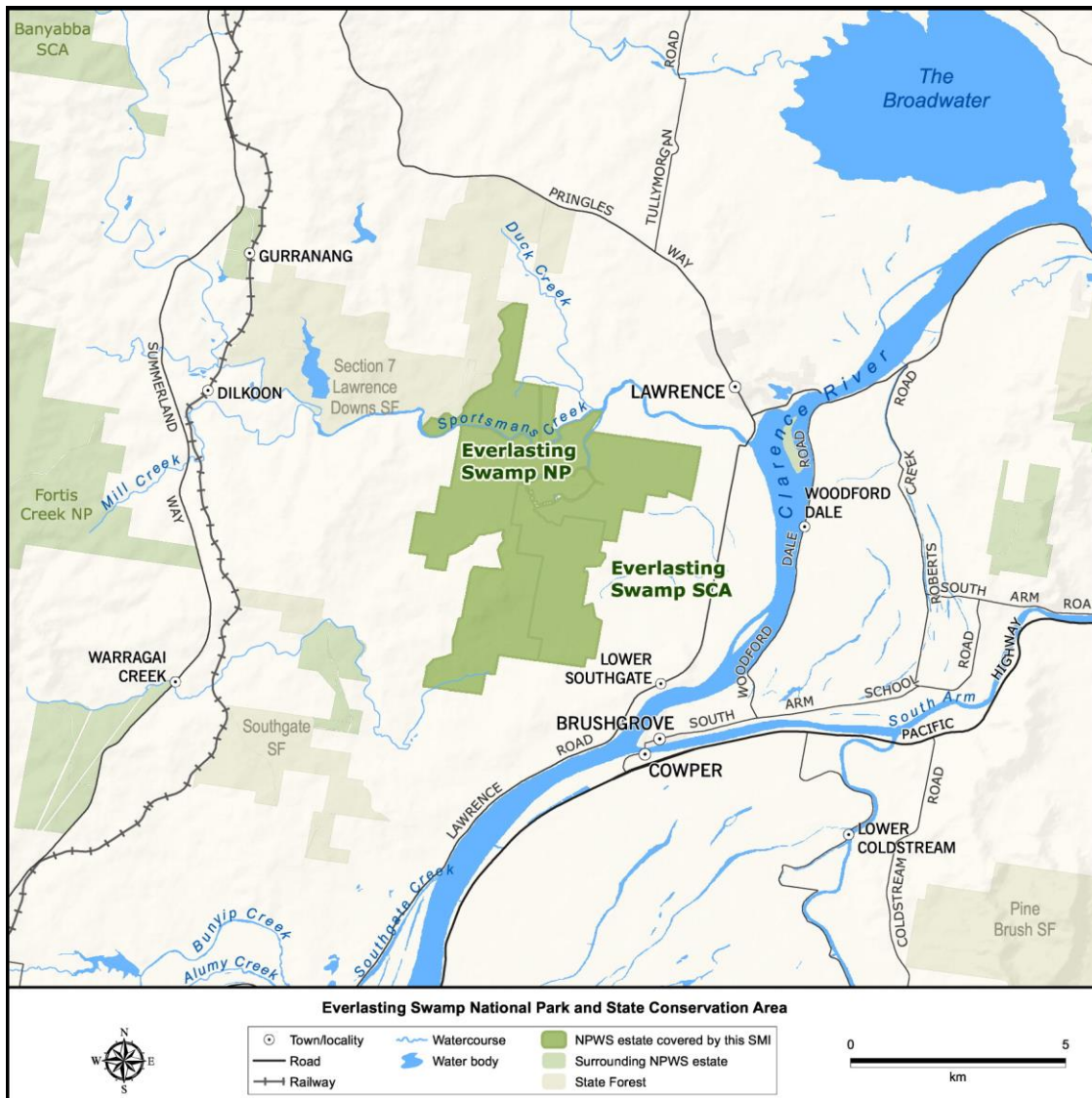
Size: The SCA is 462 hectares and the national park is 1769 hectares – a total area of 2231 hectares.

Everlasting Swamp National Park and SCA are situated approximately 20 kilometres north-east of Grafton on the Clarence River floodplain midway between Grafton and Maclean, west of the Lawrence Road. The parks fall within the South Eastern Queensland Bioregion and the administrative areas of Yaegl Local Aboriginal Land Council, North Coast Local Land Services and Clarence Valley Council. For the purposes of the [Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995](#) (TSC Act), the parks fall within the NSW North Coast Bioregion.

Everlasting Swamp SCA was privately owned agricultural land before its acquisition with funding assistance from the National Reserve System Programme. The lands within Everlasting Swamp National Park comprise: just over 1400 hectares of privately owned agricultural land purchased with funding from the critical corridors and landscapes component of the NSW Environmental Trust Fund; approximately 300 hectares of freehold land transferred from Forestry Corporation of NSW; and about 40 hectares of land transferred through a memorandum of understanding in accordance with the [State Environmental Planning Policy \(Three Ports\) 2013](#).

The parks protect over 80% of the larger Everlasting Swamp wetland. They are mostly surrounded by private landholdings, some of which are mapped under [State Environmental Planning Policy 14 – Coastal Wetlands](#). There is also an area of state forest adjacent to the north-west boundary. Everlasting Swamp drains to the Clarence River, primarily via Sportsmans Creek, with a small section draining via Harrisons Creek.

Despite some impacts to the wetland through drainage works and issues associated with acid sulfate soils, the swamp remains a highly significant waterbird habitat used by many species of migratory birds. Everlasting Swamp is a nationally significant water bird habitat, listed in 1978 on the Register of the National Estate and listed in *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*. The swamp contains a variety of suitable habitats for wetland birds featuring large deep pools, broad areas of shallow water, large stands of rushes and *Casuarina* forest.



4. Values

- The parks protect the majority of the Everlasting Swamp which is one of the largest remaining coastal floodplain freshwater wetlands in New South Wales.
- The wetlands of the Clarence Floodplain, including the Everlasting Swamp, are habitat for a large number of wetland birds listed on migratory bird agreements.
- The parks include significant feeding and breeding grounds for a number of threatened birds including the endangered black-necked stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) and the vulnerable brolga (*Grus rubicunda*), magpie goose (*Anseranas semipalmata*), eastern osprey (*Pandion cristatus*), comb-crested jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*) and black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*).

- Everlasting Swamp includes the largest concentrations of brolga in the Clarence Floodplain and has supported some of the largest flocks seen in New South Wales in recent years. It is also the largest breeding area for black swans (*Cygnus atratus*) in the Clarence Valley.
- Three vegetation communities in the park are considered part of endangered ecological communities (EECs) listed in New South Wales: Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions; Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions; Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions.
- A diverse system of wetland vegetation types include forests of swamp oak (*Casuarina glauca*) and tea-tree (*Melaleuca linariifolia* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia*), rushland (mainly of *Cyperus polystachyos*, *Eleocharis equisetina* and *Juncus* spp.) and freshwater meadows of water couch (*Paspalum distichum*). Approximately 80% of the floodplain extent of *Eleocharis equisetina* rushland in the lower Clarence is found at Everlasting Swamp. The vulnerable herb, *Maundia triglochoides*, has been recorded in the national park.
- The immense birdlife that frequents the area makes it potentially an attractive tourist location and educational resource.

5. Issues

- Everlasting Swamp has been managed for over 100 years for agriculture, chiefly beef cattle production and, in recent years, some areas were managed as a tea-tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*) plantation. This management sought to minimise the incursion of saltwater (tidal) flows into the system and control the escape of freshwater flows from the system following rainfall. The current management regime has been in existence since the 1920s when the Clarence River County Council commenced construction of a complex system of levees and gated drains on the Clarence River floodplain to restrict natural flows. As a result, in dry times water is retained in the swamp, whereas in wet times, the drains are used to quickly drain the swamp.
- The water regime associated with the current drainage program has had detrimental consequences, including exposure of acid sulfate soils, encroachment of native tree species into swamp areas (thereby reducing suitable habitat for water birds) and a reduction in water quality.
- There are issues with scattered populations of feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) and straying livestock (cattle and horses) within the parks.
- Some wetland areas, particularly the creeks and drains, have infestations of salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*), parrot's feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). The surrounding drier areas have isolated patches of groundsel bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*), cockspur coral tree (*Erythrina crista-galli*), lantana (*Lantana camara*), prickly pears (*Opuntia* spp.) and crofton weed (*Ageratina adenophora*).

6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Everlasting Swamp National Park and State Conservation Area [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- A right of access to the SCA over neighbouring private property was secured as part of the initial purchase agreement. Access to critical points within the reserve itself is facilitated by the pre-existing system of levee-top trails which are maintained in accordance with the fire management strategy.

- Acid sulfate soil problems are managed in accordance with the Everlasting Swamp Acid Sulfate Soil Remediation Management Plan with Clarence Valley Council.
- Pest management programs are implemented in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Northern Rivers Region. A feral pig control program is continuing to protect the values of the parks. A biological control program targeting salvinia is ongoing to prevent further spread and limit detrimental impacts of this weed on the Freshwater Wetland EEC.
- Vegetation management programs will continue to encourage rehabilitation of degraded swamp vegetation communities while maintaining adequate vehicle access to the parks for management. These programs will involve a range of approaches to reduce the negative impacts of weed and native tree species encroaching into freshwater meadows and other open wetlands.
- Biodiversity surveys of the area are encouraged, given the unique nature of the area and the potential for specialised research into management and conservation actions within the parks, including research into the rehabilitation of flood-gated wetlands.
- The return of natural flow regimes back into the swamp is the long-term management objective for the parks. Works or management actions to achieve this objective (such as levee bank and drain modifications or floodgate manipulation) may be required, but any change to the current situation depends on the agreement of adjacent neighbours and Clarence Valley Council. Research and monitoring is needed to predict and manage the impact of a return to natural flow regimes. NPWS is a member of the Clarence Floodplain and Estuary Partnership, and has established a technical working group with state, local and university representatives to advise and guide wetland restoration programs in the parks.
- Subject to available resourcing, assistance may be provided to neighbours to install stock-proof park boundary fencing in accordance with the [NPWS Boundary Fencing Policy](#).
- Applications for any mineral exploration or extraction in the SCA will be subject to environmental impact assessment and approvals.
- 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 parks. 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 parks by promoting and raising public awareness of their special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of these parks or this statement, contact the NPWS Grafton Office on (02) 6641 1500 or Level 4, 49 Victoria Street, Grafton or PO Box 361, Grafton NSW 2460.

Disclaimer: This is a statement of intent to guide the management of the parks 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 parks' location and basic features only, and are not suitable for use when navigating to or exploring within parks.

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