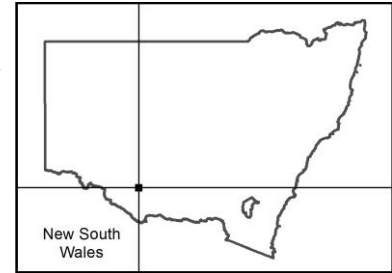


# Statement of Management Intent



## Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks Murrumbidgee Valley Regional Park and part of Murrumbidgee Valley National Park and Murrumbidgee Valley 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 the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks (comprising Murrumbidgee Valley Regional Park and part of Murrumbidgee Valley National Park, and Murrumbidgee Valley Nature Reserve). 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 reuse) 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.

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.

Regional parks are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas in a natural or modified landscape that are suitable for public recreation and enjoyment. Under the NPW Act ([section 30H](#)), regional parks are managed to:

- provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment in natural or modified landscapes
- identify, interpret, manage and conserve the park so as to maintain and enhance significant landscape values
- conserve natural and cultural values
- 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 reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation or natural and cultural values.

Regional parks are established for the purpose of providing recreational opportunities while protecting natural, cultural and landscape values.

### 3. Context

**Reservation details:** Murrumbidgee Valley National Park, Regional Park and Nature Reserve were reserved on 1 July 2010.

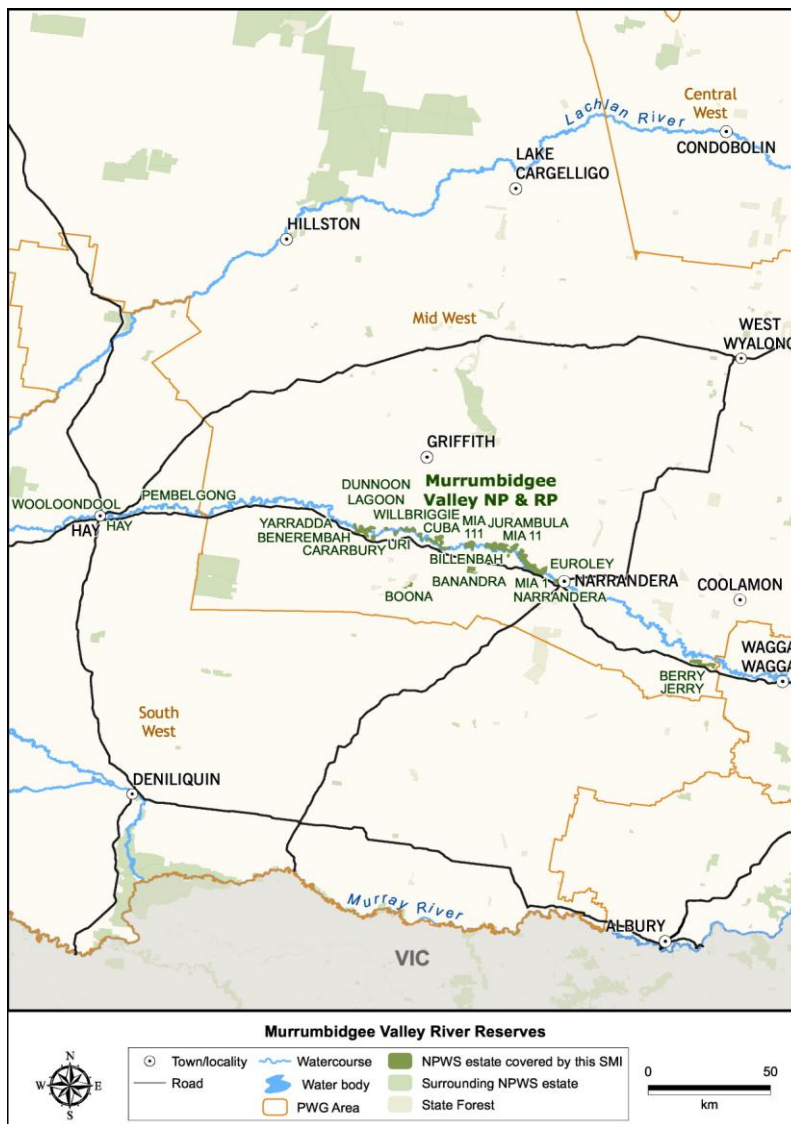
**Size:** The Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks are 13,630 hectares in total area, which comprises 12,379 hectares of national park, 1180 hectares of regional park and 71 hectares of nature reserve.

The parks were identified following an assessment of the Riverina Bioregion by the Natural Resources Commission in 2009, and reserved under the *National Park Estate (Riverina Red Gum Reservations) Act 2010* (Riverina Red Gum Reservations Act).

That part of Murrumbidgee Valley Nature Reserve included in the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks was originally reserved as Narrandera Nature Reserve in 1965, changing its name in 2010 under the Riverina Red Gum Reservations Act. Additions to the national park occurred on 1 January 2011 as a result of the reservation of land under the *National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservations) Act 2010*. The remaining areas of the national park and nature reserve are included in the Statement of Management Intent for the Murrumbidgee Valley Yanga Group.

Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks comprise a number of separate precincts spread over a few hundred kilometres along the valley of the Murrumbidgee River, mostly between Collingullie (30 kilometres west of Wagga Wagga) and Hay. The parks fall within the Riverina Bioregion. They also lie within the administrative areas of Wakool Shire, Hay Shire, Murrumbidgee Shire, Leeton

Shire, Griffith City, Carrathool Shire and Narrandera Shire councils and Hay, Leeton & District, Griffith, Balranald and Narrandera local Aboriginal land councils, and Murray, Riverina and Western Local Land Services.



The precincts that make up the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks are generally quite small and narrow and collectively span a large section of river frontage. They consist of a number of former state forests (previously managed by Forestry Corporation of NSW) and as such, have been historically managed primarily for logging and grazing by domestic stock.

Wetlands, river red gum forests, woodlands and grasslands, all of which are found in the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks, are widely acknowledged as among the most threatened ecosystems in Australia. The inclusion of forested wetlands in the national park system is significant given they occur only in riverine corridors and floodplains on rich alluvial soils prized for their timber and agricultural production. The river red gum forests are an important component of the broader Murrumbidgee floodplain ecosystem. They contribute valuable ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, in the otherwise heavily cleared bioregion.

The Murrumbidgee River is highly modified due to irrigation in the region which has altered natural flooding regimes. Land use surrounding the reserves includes dryland and irrigated cropping, grazing of natural and improved pastures, and private forestry harvesting.

## 4. Values

- The Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks protect part of the longest continuous tract of river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) forest in the world.
- Water is a fundamental value of the river red gum forests. River red gum forests are of international significance and they support an ecosystem comprising a multitude of species. The Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks also support physiological, cultural, aesthetic and visual values.
- Threatened fauna species listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) recorded in the parks include the endangered southern bell frog (*Litoria raniformis*) and plains-wanderer (*Pedionomus torquatus*). Other threatened species recorded in the parks include the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), superb parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*), brown treecreeper (eastern subspecies) (*Climacteris picumnus victoriae*), blue-billed duck (*Oxyura australis*), freckled duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*), brolga (*Grus rubicunda*), spotted harrier (*Circus assimilis*), barking owl (*Ninox connivens*), little eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*), bush stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*) and grey-crowned babbler (eastern subspecies) (*Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis*).
- The reserves protect the endangered ecological community Sandhill Pine Woodland in the Riverina, Murray–Darling Depression and NSW South Western Slopes Bioregions. Because this community was often chosen as a site for Aboriginal burials, it has high cultural heritage significance in the region.
- The threatened pine donkey orchid (*Diuris tricolor*) occurs in the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks. The parks may also provide suitable habitat for three other threatened species including floating swamp wallaby-grass (*Amphibromus fluitans*), austral pillwort (*Pilularia novae-hollandiae*) and small scurf-pea (*Cullen parvum*).
- Birds recorded in the mid Murrumbidgee also include species protected under international migratory bird agreements, including great egret (*Ardea alba*), cattle egret (*Ardea ibis*), white-bellied sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), rainbow bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*), Latham's snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) and painted snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*).
- Riverina red gum forests have been special to the Wiradjuri Aboriginal People, the traditional land owners of parts of the Murrumbidgee Valley, for thousands of years. In 2009 the Natural Resources Commission concluded that access to forests and continued practices such as collecting foods and telling stories is critical for cultural survival.
- The parks provide opportunities for visitor activities, including cycling and hiking routes, swimming, picnicking, four-wheel driving, fishing, canoeing, waterskiing and birdwatching. In the precincts designated as regional park, which are located close to the urban areas of Darlington Point, Narrandera and Hay, people have been accustomed to walking their dogs and horse riding. This has been reflected in the decision to designate these precincts as regional park rather than national park.

## 5. Issues

- Terrestrial vertebrate pest species occurring within the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks include wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), feral cats (*Felis catus*), feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) and introduced rodents (*Rattus* spp.).
- The introduced European carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) is an issue within the parks and dominates waterways within the channel and wetland habitats of the Murrumbidgee. Carp are associated with contributing to the decline in the southern bell frog population in the lower Murrumbidgee.

- Introduced weed species occurring within the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks include spiny burrgass (*Cenchrus* spp.), Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*), African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), sweet briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*), willows (*Salix* spp.), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*), white horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), athel tree (*Tamarix aphylla*), lantana (*Lantana camara*), wild tobacco bush (*Solanum mauritianum*), lippia (*Phylla canescens*), St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), African olive (probably *Olea europaea* ssp. *cuspidata*), asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), peppercorn (*Schinus molle* var. *areira*) and goat weed (*Ageratum* sp.). Further survey work will inevitably add to the list of pest plant species.
- River regulation and diversion has altered the hydrology of the Murrumbidgee River and connected floodplains and flood-dependant ecosystems. Hydrological change is one of the biggest threats impacting on the wetlands and river red gum forests within the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks.
- Lack of floods and low river flows have a widespread impact, affecting river red gum health along the Murrumbidgee system with trees dying and limited recruitment of young saplings. Waterbird habitat and associated breeding events are dependent on the timing, extent and duration of natural river flooding events that have been altered.
- River red gum forests within the parks are also being impacted by illegal firewood collection, damage to fire trails and signage, illegal motorbike use, illegal shooting, dogs and rubbish dumping.
- Stock grazing can incur heavy impacts on riparian zones and wetlands of the Murrumbidgee River due to their concentration around water, and on other ecologically sensitive areas such as Sandhill Pine Woodland.
- Beekeeping is a long-term use carried out in the river red gum forests under occupation permits previously granted by Forestry Corporation of NSW; it is considered an existing use under the NPW Act.

## 6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Murrumbidgee Valley Regional Park, Murrumbidgee Valley National Park and Murrumbidgee Valley Nature Reserve [Fire Management Strategies](#).
- Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the NPWS [Regional Pest Management Strategy: Western Rivers Region](#). Current priorities focus on protecting riparian landscapes including river red gum habitat, and mitigating pest impacts on threatened species within the parks. Weed and pest control programs will be conducted in cooperation with neighbouring landowners and organisations including Riverina Local Land Services, Landcare groups, and relevant local councils.
- Options for the control of carp will be investigated including the use of water management infrastructure, harvesting and possible biological controls.
- Relevant strategies in the NSW *Threatened Species Priorities Action Statement* and recovery plans for identified threatened species will be implemented.
- NPWS will participate in relevant water management forums and processes including development of the Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Sharing Plan.
- River red gum and other significant vegetation communities throughout the parks will be managed using an adaptive management approach which restores ecological function and community health. Research and ongoing monitoring of river red gum health and condition will continue to inform park management activities.

- Regulatory enforcement and patrols will continue to be carried out to reduce the occurrence of illegal activities within the parks.
- Actions from the [NSW River Red Gum Nature Tourism Action Plan](#) that are relevant to the parks will be implemented.
- An interpretation strategy will be developed for the Murrumbidgee Valley River Parks which includes information about the change of tenure and the implications this has for visitor behaviour and expectations (e.g. dog walking and lighting of fires).
- Where appropriate, a licensing system will be implemented for domestic firewood consistent with the NPWS Collection and Removal of Firewood from River Red Gum Reserves Policy.
- The condition of boundary fencing will be assessed. Subject to available resourcing, assistance may be provided to neighbours to install park boundary fencing in accordance with the NPWS Boundary Fencing Policy.
- Apiary sites in the parks will be licensed and managed in accordance with licence conditions and the NPWS Beekeeping Policy.
- Grazing by domestic stock in the river red gum parks under existing occupation permits will be managed in accordance with licence conditions and NPWS policy.
- Sites, places, objects and values of indigenous cultural significance within the parks will be identified and protected.
- An Aboriginal consultative committee comprising the relevant local Aboriginal land councils has been initiated. This group will continue to engage community members in survey training, capacity building and community engagement.
- All planning and programming of works in the parks likely to impact on indigenous cultural heritage will include consultation with the Aboriginal community.
- A program will be developed for recording Aboriginal cultural heritage values, including Aboriginal oral histories.
- 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 Hay Office on (02) 6990 8200 or 339A Murray Street, Hay NSW 2711; or the Griffith Office on (02) 6966 8100 or 200 Yambil Street Griffith NSW 2680.

---

**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.

Published by:

Office of Environment and Heritage  
59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
PO Box A290, Sydney South NSW 1232  
Phone: (02) 9995 5000

ISBN 978 1 74359 518 3  
OEH 2014/0206  
June 2014