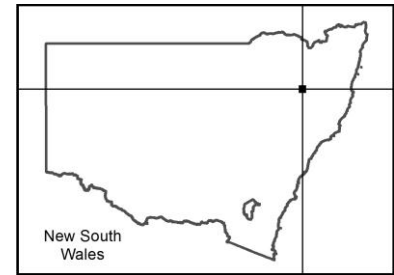


Statement of Management Intent



Watsons Creek State Conservation Area

1. Introduction

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

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:

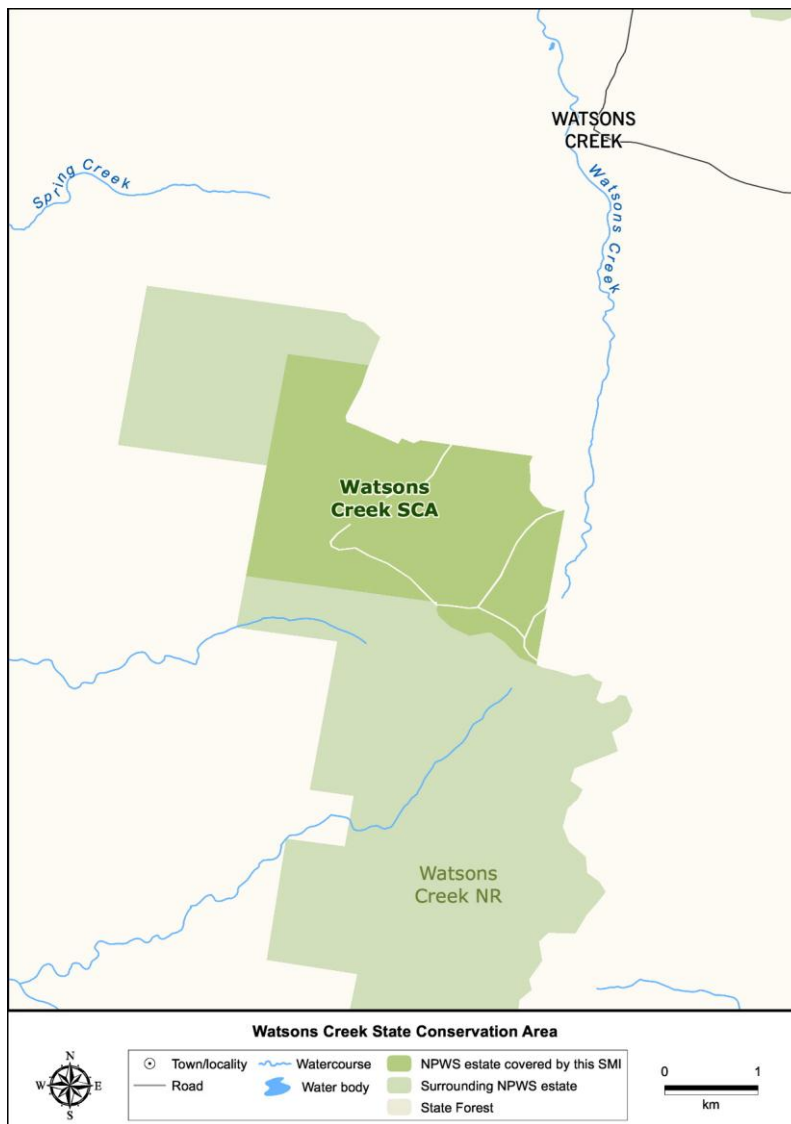
- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem functions, protect natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects and features of cultural value
- provide for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of the NPW Act (including uses permitted under section 47J 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*.

3. Context

Reservation details: Watsons Creek SCA was reserved on 23 December 2005.

Size: 520 hectares.



Watsons Creek SCA is located approximately 37 kilometres north of Tamworth and approximately 15 kilometres north-west of the town of Bendemeer. It falls within the New England Tablelands Bioregion. It also falls within the administrative boundaries of Tamworth Regional Council, Tamworth Aboriginal Land Council and North West Local Land Services.

This area was declared a goldfield in 1889 and is known to contain mineral deposits such as tin, manganese and antimony. It has been subject to a range of mining activities over many years and prior to its reservation as a state conservation area in 2005, these lands were subject to a mining lease.

Watsons Creek SCA sits between, and connects, the northern and southern sections of Watsons Creek Nature Reserve creating a larger contiguous area of reserved land, benefiting the movement of fauna across the reserves. Much of the surrounding land is cleared and used for grazing and other rural activities.

4. Values

- Watsons Creek SCA provides habitat for threatened bat species including the eastern false pipistrelle (*Falsistrellus tasmaniensis*) and greater broad-nosed bat (*Scoteanax rueppellii*).
- Native orchids are well represented in the region. There are 20 orchid species recorded within the adjoining Watsons Creek Nature Reserve including rare species such as the long-tailed greenhood (*Pterostylis woollii*). Watsons Creek SCA expands the habitat opportunities for these species.
- Watsons Creek SCA supports dry sclerophyll woodland habitat including communities dominated by red stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*), cypress pine (*Callitris* spp.), apple box (*E. bridgesiana*) and white box (*E. albens*).
- There is a heritage-listed tin mining complex located within the adjacent Watsons Creek Nature Reserve. The nature reserve contains remnants of scoop buckets and old mechanical gear associated with the mine that was in operation between 1898 and 1985. It appears that shafts and tunnels are the only remnants of mining activities in the SCA.
- Although no known Aboriginal sites are recorded within Watsons Creek SCA, there is evidence of Aboriginal occupation in close proximity including art deposit sites, shelters and rock engravings.

5. Issues

- Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), feral goats (*Capra hircus*), feral cats (*Felis catus*), rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and wild dogs (*Canis lupus* spp.) occur within the SCA, reflecting the widespread occurrence of these species across the broader landscape.
- Watsons Creek SCA currently has infestations of blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and isolated occurrences of prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.).
- Past mining activities have degraded parts of the adjoining Watsons Creek Nature Reserve and heavy metals may be polluting Giants Den Creek. Watsons Creek SCA mine sites may require some rehabilitation; however, gradual revegetation and natural settling over time appear to be addressing any surface stabilisation issues.
- Illegal pig hunting occurs sporadically within Watsons Creek Nature Reserve. It is unknown whether this activity is also occurring within Watsons Creek SCA. Efforts to monitor this activity include cooperation with neighbouring landowners.

6. Key management directions

- Fire is managed in accordance with the Watsons Creek Nature Reserve and State Conservation Area [Fire Management Strategy](#).
- Pest management programs will be implemented in accordance with the [NPWS Regional Pest Management Strategy](#): Northern Tablelands Region. Current priorities for the SCA include pigs, goats, foxes, wild dogs and rabbits.
- A safety assessment of derelict mine sites within Watsons Creek SCA will be undertaken in liaison with the relevant NSW Government department to identify rehabilitation options.

- 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 SCA. 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 SCA by promoting and raising public awareness of its special values.

For additional information or enquiries about any aspect of this SCA or this statement, contact the NPWS Armidale Office on 02 6738 9100 or 145 Miller Street, Armidale, NSW 2350.

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

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