

Department for Environment and Heritage
Management Plan Amendment



Ewens Ponds Conservation Park

2009



AMENDMENTS

Considerations and Strategies within the *Ewens Ponds Conservation Park Management Plan Amendment (1999)*

DELETE:

(pp. 13)

3.2 Visitor Management

Ewens Ponds Conservation Park is a popular destination for both local residents and tourists. It receives an estimated 4000 visitors p.a. with its peak visitation during the summer holiday period. The park offers activities including bird watching, bush walking, scuba diving, and snorkelling. At present however, there is minimal management in place to control the activities of divers and snorkellers. DEHAA is currently preparing a permit system in consultation with key stakeholders for managing the scuba diving and snorkelling activities in Ewens Ponds.

The permit system will better manage diving activities. It will include an annual and daily permit arrangement for scuba diving. An indemnity will need to be signed before the purchase of each permit and a minimal qualification will be required for all scuba divers (Open Water). There are limitations on the number of divers allowed in Pond 1 at any one time and divers are only permitted to swim through the channels with the current flow. There are restrictions on the types of equipment allowed in the ponds unless under specific arrangements (i.e. no weights to be worn by snorkellers) and only training that does not require any skills testing will be allowed.

Public access and safety facilities are sufficient to allow swimming in Pond 1 only. Due to the fragile nature of the pond environments swimmers must take care around the edges of the pond. Swimmers are also reminded that water temperatures in the pond can lead to hypothermia.

Future development of interpretive infrastructure will put emphasis on an appreciation and understanding of the park's natural values. DEHAA will also ensure the use of environmentally safe materials when constructing in and/or near the pond environments.

Objectives

- Provide/Allow visitor use and enjoyment of the park while conserving its natural values.
- Increase public understanding of the park's purpose and ecological significance.

Actions

- Allow swimming in Pond 1 only.
- Implement a permit system to manage diving, snorkelling activities and public safety within the ponds to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the environment.
- Protect the pond environments by prohibiting the use of recreational equipment considered inappropriate, including the following examples: underwater scooters, dive sleds, air lift bags, air compressors and hookahs, shot lines, guidelines, spear guns, sailboards, surfboards, boats, air mattress's and vehicle tubes.
- Assess the state of the landing at the exit of Pond 3. Make necessary repairs.
- Provide entrance signage and brochure plus other appropriate interpretive facilities for park users where a need is demonstrated.
- Investigate the feasibility of an underwater viewing facility/experience.

REPLACE WITH:

(pp. 13)

3.2 Visitor Management

Ewens Ponds Conservation Park is a popular destination for both local residents and tourists. It receives an estimated 9,000 visitors annually, peaking during the summer holiday period. The park offers activities including bird watching, bush walking, and water-based recreation. At present there is a minimal level of management in place to control these activities.

The aquatic vegetation in Ewens Ponds has greatly deteriorated because of a decrease in water flow through the system and an increase in nutrient levels. These changes, together with the effects of recreational activities, have adversely impacted on pond vegetation. Recreational use of the ponds therefore needs to be closely managed to protect the pond environments. To this end, Ewens Ponds will be available for snorkelling and scuba diving only and a permit system will be introduced to improve the management of these activities. The permit system will include the limitation of the number of snorkellers and scuba divers allowed in the ponds at any one time. Other limitations include the requirement for snorkellers and scuba divers to only be permitted to move through the channels in the same direction as the current flow. Restrictions will continue on the types of equipment allowed in the ponds unless under specific arrangements. Inappropriate recreational equipment includes, but is not limited to: underwater scooters, dive sleds, air lift bags, air compressors and hookahs, shot lines, guidelines, spear guns, sailboards, surfboards, boats, air mattresses and vehicle tubes. Use of the springs for summer swimming and mass recreation will be discouraged to protect sensitive ecological areas.

As disturbance to the sediments and aquatic plants predominantly occurs during the initial entry to the water by scuba divers and snorkellers, DEH will install an entry platform at the entrance to Pond 1.

DEH may also trial the closing of the ponds for restoration and rehabilitation.

DEH is giving consideration to the development of interpretive infrastructure that will promote an appreciation and understanding of the park's natural values. DEH will ensure the use of environmentally safe materials when constructing in and/or near the pond environments.

Objectives

Allow visitor use and enjoyment of the park without degrading its natural values.

Increase public understanding of the park's purpose and ecological significance.

Strategies

- Ewens Ponds will be available for snorkelling and scuba diving only.
- Implement a permit system to manage snorkelling and scuba diving activities to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the environment; any form of swimming outside of these activities is not permitted.
- Prohibit the use of inappropriate recreational equipment to protect the pond environments.
- Install an entry platform into Pond 1 to protect the pond environments.
- Investigate the development of interpretive infrastructure that will promote an appreciation and understanding of the park's natural values.
- Liaise with the Department for Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) and Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regarding the water quality and quantity of the ponds.
- Trial the closure of the ponds to restore and rehabilitate degraded areas when necessary.

This plan of management amendment was adopted on **4 August 2009** and was prepared pursuant to section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

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Front Cover: Submerged vascular aquatic vegetation of Ewens Ponds (photo by unknown source).

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