

Department for Environment and Heritage

Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones



South Australian
Code of Management



Government
of South Australia

- 1.1 This Code is the Wilderness Code of Management prescribed in the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.
- 1.2 Any terms used in this Code have the same meaning as those used in the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.
- 1.3 A wilderness area means land constituted under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* as a Wilderness Protection Area or Wilderness Protection Zone.

Objectives of wilderness management

- 2.1 To maximise the naturalness and remoteness, i.e. the wilderness quality, of wilderness areas, and in particular:
 - (i) protect and, where practicable, enhance wilderness quality;
 - (ii) protect wildlife and ecological processes;
 - (iii) control and, where practicable, eradicate non-indigenous plants and animals;
 - (iv) protect geographical features;
 - (v) protect sites of scientific significance;
 - (vi) protect sites of historical significance;
 - (vii) protect sites of Aboriginal cultural significance;
 - (viii) provide for public use and enjoyment where compatible with maximising wilderness quality; and
 - (ix) promote public awareness of, and education in, the natural features of and proper use of wilderness protection areas and wilderness protection zones.

3.1 General principles

- (i) All management operations will be carried out in a manner consistent with maximisation of wilderness quality except where provided for in this Code (see 3.10).
- (ii) A plan of management will be prepared for a designated wilderness area as soon as practicable after the area's constitution. The plan will provide clear direction for the protection and management of the wilderness area, in particular:
 - (a) proposals to achieve the management objectives ((ii) above);
 - (b) priorities for actions, including:
 - the removal of existing incompatible uses and/or structures except those permitted under this Code;
 - appropriate rehabilitation to be undertaken following the removal of structures and incompatible uses;
 - (c) recognition of the need to review management if indicated by results of monitoring and research.
- (iii) No additional incompatible uses and/or structures will be permitted except those provided for in this Code.
- (iv) Nothing in this Code derogates from any rights exercised in mining tenements in wilderness protection zones. In relation to mining operations in wilderness protection zones, environmental protection policies in section 5 of this Code will apply.

3.2 Access and transport

- (i) The use of vessels, motorised or wheeled transport will be permitted only on prescribed access routes, and for emergency and essential management operations (see 3.10) when alternative measures which do not degrade the wilderness quality of an area are unavailable.
- (ii) Access routes may be prescribed in a plan of management for use by vessels, motorised or wheeled transport in circumstances where this type of transport is essential for effective management.
- (iii) Construction of vehicle or walking tracks will be permitted only where re-direction of existing access requires construction of alternative tracks or for management works to achieve objectives identified in a plan of management. The construction of vehicle tracks for specific operations as provided for under 3.6(iii), 3.10 and 5.0 may be permitted on the basis that they will be rehabilitated as soon as possible.
- (iv) Vehicle and walking tracks that are not essential for management purposes as specified in 3.10, or for mining operations in wilderness protection zones (see 5.0) will be closed and rehabilitated as prescribed in a plan of management.
- (v) Over-flying for recreational purposes under an altitude of 1500m above ground level will be prohibited.
- (vi) The landing of aircraft will be prohibited, except by permission of the Director and for emergency and essential management operations. Helipads and airstrips that are identified as essential for emergencies and management operations will be maintained. All other strips or helipads will be rehabilitated as soon as possible or allowed to regenerate naturally.

3.3 Tourism

- (i) Commercial tours may be accommodated where their size and planned activities are compatible with maintenance of wilderness quality. Those permitted will have obtained a licence and will be conducted in accordance with licence conditions, the Visitor Management Strategy for the wilderness area (see 3.4), and the Minimum Impact Code. Tour groups will be monitored and regulated where necessary to prevent significant adverse impacts on wilderness quality and opportunities for solitude.

3.4 Recreation

- (i) The level and type of visitor use and visitor conduct will be managed in accordance with the objectives stated in section 2.0 of this Code.
- (ii) A visitor management strategy that specifies an acceptable level and type of visitor use and visitor conduct will be included in the management plan for each wilderness area.
- (iii) Visitor management strategies will include the promotion of the Minimum Impact Code and the distribution of any information about the wilderness values of particular wilderness areas.

The following information should be used as a basis for monitoring the effectiveness of each strategy:

- (a) the long-term limits of acceptable change for environmental (wilderness quality) and social (opportunities for wilderness dependent experiences) conditions within the wilderness area; and
 - (b) change in environmental and social conditions within the wilderness area.
- (iii) Constructed walking tracks, signs, track markers and other management devices or structures will be used only for essential management operations (see 3.2 (ii) and 3.10).
 - (iv) Recreation will be in accordance with the Wilderness Protection Regulations and the Minimum Impact Code.

3.5 Cultural heritage

- (i) Places, sites and objects of significance to Aboriginal people are protected under State and Commonwealth Aboriginal heritage legislation.
- (ii) Access by Aboriginal people to their sites of significance and protection of these sites will, as far as possible, be by methods compatible with the maintenance of wilderness quality.
- (iii) Nothing in this Code prevents Aboriginal people from doing anything in relation to Aboriginal sites, objects or remains in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. Further this Code does not prevent the taking, by Aboriginal people, of native plants, protected animals or the eggs of protected animals in accordance with the relevant provisions in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.
- (iv) Sites of historic significance will be conserved, using access and methods compatible with maintenance of wilderness quality in the long-term.
- (v) Non-Aboriginal structures and artefacts that are of no historic significance, as determined by the relevant authority, will be removed or allowed to deteriorate naturally. Removal will not be undertaken if the only method of removal significantly reduces wilderness quality in the long-term.

3.6 Fire

- (i) Fire management will be based on continuing research into the fire history of the area, the relationships between fire and the natural communities occurring within the area, and on the maintenance of wilderness quality.
- (ii) Deliberately lit fires will be used only in emergency situations, and in essential management operations as listed in 3.10 and subject to (i) above.
- (iii) Other human caused fires should, where practicable, be extinguished consistent with maintenance of wilderness quality.
- (iv) Naturally caused fires will be extinguished when, in view of the direction, intensity and extent of the fire and the fire suppression techniques available, they pose a threat to human life and property, and to habitats requiring protection.
- (v) Where fire suppression action is required, the methods utilised will be, wherever possible, those which will have the least long-term impact on wilderness quality.
- (vi) The use of heavy machinery for fire suppression within a wilderness area will be prohibited except:
 - (a) where it is considered to be the only way of preventing greater long-term loss of wilderness quality;
 - (b) where specific machinery use techniques, that do not result in significant disturbance to the landscape or create a new access network, are considered the only feasible method of preventing long-term loss of wilderness quality; or
 - (c) to mitigate hazard to human life, where alternative measures which do not impact on the wilderness quality of the area are unavailable.
- (vii) Wherever possible, fire management practices designed to protect land adjacent to or within a wilderness area will be conducted outside the wilderness area.

3.7 Research

- (i) Research that will contribute to the implementation of the objectives of wilderness management will be encouraged.
- (ii) Research that will not affect wilderness quality and cannot be carried out elsewhere may be permitted.
- (iii) Research not covered under (i) and (ii) will not be permitted.

3.8 Biological conservation

- (i) Management of threatened species, communities and habitats will, as far as possible, be consistent with maintenance of wilderness quality.
- (ii) Action will be taken to maintain and, where possible, restore natural processes, communities and habitats.

3.9 Non-indigenous species

- (i) Non-indigenous species which significantly affect the wilderness quality of a wilderness area will be controlled or eradicated.
- (ii) Action will be taken to prevent the establishment of non-indigenous species.

3.10 Emergency and essential management operations

- (i) All emergency and essential management operations will be carried out with the least possible impact on wilderness quality.
- (ii) Actions that cause short-term degradation of wilderness quality but are necessary for emergency and/or essential management operations will be permitted. The only specific situations acknowledged in this Code as possibly requiring such actions are:
 - control or eradication of non-indigenous species;
 - conservation of threatened species, communities and habitats;
 - protection of fire-sensitive species and communities;
 - management of visitor use;
 - management action or use of devices to mitigate hazard to human life;
 - restoration of natural processes, communities and habitats; and
 - research.

Where degradation has occurred as a result of these activities, rehabilitation will be undertaken as soon as practicable.

3.11 Wilderness protection zones

Protection of wilderness quality in wilderness protection zones will be negotiated with tenement holders on the basis of the environmental protection policies in section 5. Management undertakings will be incorporated in a plan of management.

External influences

- 4.1 Close liaison with adjoining landholders and managers will be established to ensure that adverse impacts on the wilderness quality of an area resulting from activities outside that area are minimised or prevented.
- 4.2 Where a wilderness area does not comprise a whole catchment, close liaison with upstream landholders and relevant authorities will be established to encourage the maintenance of water quality and flow regimes as close as practicable to their natural state.
- 4.3 Wherever possible management activities essential to the maintenance of the wilderness quality of a wilderness area are to be on land outside the wilderness area.

Exercise of mining rights in wilderness protection zones

The holder of a mining tenement shall:

- 5.1 have regard to the provisions of the plan of management under section 31 of the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*; and
- 5.2 in undertaking any operations:
 - (i) protect native flora and fauna;
 - (ii) avoid the pollution of land, water and air;
 - (iii) avoid disturbance to known sites of natural, scientific, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural significance;
 - (iv) minimise the potential for wind and water erosion;
 - (v) avoid unnecessary track creation;
 - (vi) avoid introduction of non-indigenous species;
 - (vii) establish environmental monitoring and rehabilitation programs; and
 - (viii) upon completion of the operation remove or obliterate all structures and materials used in the carrying out of mining operations.

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