



# Cape Conran Coastal Park



Management Plan October 2005

This Management Plan for Cape Conran Coastal Park is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management of the park until the plan is reviewed.

A Draft Management Plan for the park was published in October 2003. Twenty-one submissions were received and have been considered in developing this approved Management Plan.

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### **Copies**

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**CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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**October 2005**

Published in October 2005 by Parks Victoria  
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-publication entry

Parks Victoria  
Cape Conran coastal park management plan.

Bibliography  
ISBN 0 431 18340 1

1. National parks and reserves – Victoria – Management. 2.  
Cape Conran Coastal Park (Vic.) – Management. 1. Parks Victoria.  
333.783099456

Cover: Cape Conran Coastal Park (Photo: David Jones).

### **Acknowledgement of *Country***

In their rich culture, Indigenous Australians are intrinsically connected to the continent — including the area now known as Victoria.

Parks Victoria recognises that the park is part of *Country* of the Traditional Owners.

### Note

Technical terms used in this plan are explained in the Glossary at the end of the plan.

### **Disclaimers**

This plan is prepared without prejudice to any negotiated or litigated outcome of any native title determination applications covering land or waters within the plan's area.

It is acknowledged that any future outcomes of native title determination applications may necessitate amendment of this plan; and the implementation of this plan may require further notifications under the procedures in Division 3 of Part 2 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwth).

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this plan is accurate. Parks Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

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## FOREWORD

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Cape Conran Coastal Park is a favourite place for many Victorians. As a natural coastal playground of outstanding beauty, the park has much to offer. The sweeping golden beaches, multi-coloured heaths, exposed headlands and tranquil estuaries are a delight.

The park features a wealth of natural and cultural attributes of conservation importance and of significance to Indigenous peoples. Diverse vegetation types, ranging from mixed forest to coastal swamps, intermingle with extensive heathlands, providing habitat for a correspondingly diverse array of fauna.

Visitors to the park pursue a variety of activities including walking, surfing and picnicking. Bush camping at Cape Conran is a traditional family activity, and the 'Conran cabins' offer a relaxing holiday experience that is unique to the park.

Sydenham Inlet on the Bemm Heritage River teems with wildlife, and its superb estuary fishing is renowned.

The plan provides a clear management framework that will maintain an appropriate balance between the protection and conservation of park values, and park use, well into the future. It also establishes a number of exciting directions, including visitor facility upgrades, education initiatives and the greater involvement of Indigenous and local communities.

I thank those individuals and organisations who made submissions on the draft plan, and I look forward to the community's ongoing support for, and participation in, the management of this park.

**JOHN THWAITES MP**  
**Minister for Environment**

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## APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

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This Management Plan has been prepared under Section 18 of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.) and is approved for implementation.

This plan provides the basis for the future management of Cape Conran Coastal Park. It was finalised following consideration of 21 submissions received on the Draft Management Plan.

**PROF. LYNDSEY NEILSON**  
Secretary to the Department of  
Sustainability and Environment

**MARK STONE**  
Chief Executive  
Parks Victoria

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## SUMMARY

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Cape Conran Coastal Park (11 700 ha) protects an important section of East Gippsland's unspoilt 'Wilderness Coast' and is noted for the rich array of natural and cultural heritage it contains.

The park includes extensive heathlands, wetlands, riparian and forest vegetation communities, and is home to several significant species of orchids and other threatened flora. Numerous species of threatened fauna find refuge in the park, including the Little Tern, Smoky Mouse, Ground Parrot, White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Australian Grayling. There are a number of landforms of geomorphological significance, including the Dock Inlet catchment, a pristine coastal stream system terminating in a freshwater coastal lagoon.

Indigenous tradition indicates that areas of the park are parts of *Country* of the Gunai and Kurnai peoples, and the Bidwell people, and that other Indigenous people including the Monaro Ngarigo had an association with the coastal region. At the time of publication there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas of the park. The park includes important archaeological sites.

The park's highly scenic coastline, excellent beaches and diverse range of recreation opportunities attract an estimated 200 000 visitors per year. Cape Conran has long been a favoured destination for both day visitors and campers, and the cabin accommodation provides a unique experience. Sydenham Inlet on the lower reaches of the Bemm Heritage River offers excellent boating and fishing, while the more remote central area of the park is increasingly used for extended or overnight walks. The park is a valuable resource for nature-based tourism in East Gippsland.

Future management aims to provide enhanced sustainable opportunities for visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the park while maintaining and protecting park values.

Key management directions and strategies for the park are summarised below.

- Application of special protection measures to Dock Inlet and its catchment to minimise the impact of visitors and management activities on its fragile environs and unique values.
- Protection of park fauna and maintenance of populations of threatened species, through the application of well-researched control programs aimed at reducing populations of introduced predators.
- Application of appropriate ecological burning operations to sustain a diversity of vegetative structures and species in heathlands.
- Protection of Indigenous cultural places and objects, and appropriate protection and conservation of historic places and relics.
- Respect for *Country*, and appropriate reflection of the Traditional Owners' cultural lore, and interests, rights and aspirations for the area, in the planning and management of the park.
- Encouragement and support for appropriate survey, research, promotion and interpretation of Indigenous culture relating to the park, and for the appropriate participation of Indigenous peoples in the park's management.
- Upgrading of visitor facilities at key sites, in particular at Salmon Rocks, Point Ricardo, Yeerung Beach and Pearl Point, to protect the environment and cultural places and objects, and to cater for increasing levels of use.
- Improvement and promotion of opportunities and facilities at the existing camping and roofed accommodation areas at Cape Conran, and enhancement of their informal bush character through a vegetation management strategy and landscape plan.
- Improvement of camping opportunities at Binn/Gunnai Beaches and Pearl Point in the eastern end of the park.
- Improvement of the supply of information and interpretation to visitors, including provision of park orientation displays.

- Designation of an Education Zone close to accommodation areas at Cape Conran to encourage greater use of the park for scientific study by schools.
- Subject to engineering feasibility, risk assessments and satisfaction of native title legislative requirements, construction of an additional jetty at the West Cape boat ramp to improve boating safety.
- Exploration of options to reduce the visual intrusion of the power line between Cape Conran and Bemm River into the park's natural landscape.
- Enhancement of the community's awareness of the park's values and programs, and encouragement and support for the appropriate participation of Friends, interest groups and the local community, in the park's management.
- Collaboration with the proposed adjoining Rural Learning Centre in the implementation of appropriate projects linking the campus and the park.
- Encouragement for the establishment of an Indigenous reference group of representatives of the Traditional Owners, and the scheduled Aboriginal community, to work with Parks Victoria in reflecting the Traditional Owners' culture in planning and managing the park.



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Location and planning area

Cape Conran Coastal Park (11 700 ha) is on the East Gippsland coastline east of Marlo, about 320 km east of Melbourne (figure 1).

The park is bounded by Marlo Coastal Reserve to the west, Croajingolong National Park to the east (eastern shore of Sydenham Inlet), State forest and private property to the north, and the Tasman Sea, at low water mark, to the south. It includes Sydenham Inlet but excludes the foreshore reserve and an area of 100 metres around each of the public jetties at the Bemm River township. The Sydenham Inlet and the lower reaches of the Bemm River are also part of Bemm Heritage River.

## 1.2 Creation of the park

Cape Conran Coastal Park was included in Schedule 3 of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.), as a result of the *National Parks (Amendment) Act 1997* (Vic.), on 4 July 1997.

The park is based on the recommendation of the former Land Conservation Council (LCC) in its *East Gippsland Area Review Final Recommendations* (LCC 1986) for a Cape Conran–Sydenham Inlet Coastal Park, with some minor boundary adjustments in the vicinity of Marlo Aerodrome Reserve (section 2.5).

The park also includes the land recommended by the LCC for the Cape Conran Education Area (780 ha). The LCC recommendations for all areas comprising the park were given effect by Executive Order (Governor-in-Council) on 15 December 1987. The former Cape Conran Foreshore Reserve (500 ha), temporarily reserved and managed by a Committee of Management between 1988 and 1997, is now part of the park.

## 1.3 The management plan

This Management Plan is a strategic guide for future management of the Cape Conran Coastal Park. As a public document, this plan establishes how Parks Victoria will protect the area's natural and cultural values and, consistent with this, provide the services and facilities to help visitors to enjoy, appreciate and understand the park. The plan will also

serve to inform adjacent land managers about the planning area's management, and encourage them to participate with Parks Victoria in co-operative, community-based land management programs.

As a working document for the park, the plan informs Parks Victoria's development of Corporate Plans, serves as a framework for subsequent detailed planning and governs management activities.

### Plan development

This approved management plan has been prepared after a process of research, planning and consultation with key stakeholders, including the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), other government agencies, park neighbours and community groups.

The Draft Management Plan was published for public comment in 2003, and 21 written submissions were received. Where necessary, further consultation with the community and key stakeholders was undertaken. Key changes made to the Draft Plan in preparing this final Management Plan included:

- An enhanced focus on partnerships with community groups and agencies with common goals relating to the area.
- Inclusion of additional strategies to acknowledge, engage and involve the relevant Indigenous communities in managing Indigenous cultural heritage.
- Improvement and promotion of opportunities and facilities at the existing camping and roofed accommodation areas at Cape Conran.
- Recognition of scope for enhanced environmental education and partnership projects linking the proposed adjoining Rural Learning Centre and the park.
- Recognition of a need to consider ecological burning in near-coastal heathlands for maintenance of biodiversity and landscape values.
- Greater recognition of the fire-prone nature of the park environment and the importance of educating park visitors

about fire risks and co-operation with park neighbours on matters of strategic fire protection.

- Greater recognition of the role that the park fulfils as a major tourist destination in regional tourism, and the need for agencies to adopt a co-operative approach when promoting the park.
- Recognition of special values of certain features and locations within the park, including the Yeerung River and Joiners Channel.
- Inclusion of a framework for future review of Sydenham Inlet entrance opening protocols in consultation with the local community, relevant agencies and the relevant Indigenous communities.
- Acknowledgement of recent post-settlement history, particularly in relation to the Cape Conran holiday settlement.
- Acknowledgement of the inclusion of much of East Gippland, including the entire park, on the Register of the National Estate.

### **Plan implementation**

A range of approaches will be used to implement strategies in this plan. Some will be undertaken as part of routine management activities such as ranger visits; others will be addressed as part of regional programs undertaken across the State each year.

A priority list of strategies will be used to guide routine management, and identify strategies to be proposed for inclusion in annual regional programs. The selection of strategies for regional programs varies from year to year, depending on available resources and government priorities. Once regional programs are approved, strategies and where necessary detailed actions will be included in works programs for the park.

At the end of each year, progress towards implementing strategies in the plan will be reviewed and a priority list updated. Staff report internally against 'on time and within budget' delivery of regional programs and whether the completed strategy has achieved the objective. Parks Victoria reports annually to the State Government on the overall delivery of regional and divisional programs.

This broader reporting on management performance is available in the National Parks Act and Parks Victoria annual reports.

During implementation of the plan, Parks Victoria will consult with Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community. Ongoing collaborative activities with the Traditional Owners, interested members of the community, scientists and agencies in realising the vision and management directions for the park will be especially important, as outlined in following sections of the plan.

Implementation of the plan will be consistent with Parks Victoria's commitment to sustainable practices, which involves the delivery of operations, services and facilities in an ecologically and socially responsible manner with minimal use of expendable resources and minimal generation of waste.

In implementing the plan, management will respond to monitoring and research information as it emerges. Parks Victoria's environmental management framework makes this possible. Based on the International Standard for Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001), the framework ensures that the future condition of values is considered in identifying threats and developing actions to ameliorate them. Over time the success of actions is reviewed against set objectives to ensure ongoing learning and refinement of management. The selection of actions and treatments of threats are guided by the precautionary principle. Management options are evaluated on the basis of least impact on the environment. Treatment of threats with a potential for serious damage that are not addressed in the plan will not be postponed for lack of information.

Parks Victoria will use a variety of means to report to the community about the progress of implementation of the plan. The primary means will be through routine liaison between Parks Victoria, interested groups and individuals from the local community and relevant government agencies. In addition to giving regular updates, there will be opportunities for input by interested members of the community into annual priority setting and feedback on management performance. Park open days, and community and volunteer forums, will offer similar opportunities for

reporting and discussions about annual programs.

The results of monitoring and research work will continue to be available to the community as technical reports on Parks Victoria's 'website, [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)'.

Parks Victoria will also report on evaluation of the plan at the start of the new or revised plan, through routine liaison and community forums and in the subsequent draft plan.

Future State of the Parks reports, which will be available on Parks Victoria's website, '[www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)', will also include information on management performance in the park.

### **Plan amendment**

During the 10-year life of the plan, amendments to the plan may only be made by the Secretary to DSE, following an authorised process which includes community consultation.

Circumstances that might lead to amendment of the plan include:

- the results of monitoring or research, management experience or new information (such as greater understanding of new threatening processes) which indicate the need for a change in management direction
- significant changes in visitation or use
- a change in policy that calls into question plan objectives
- new legislation including significant changes (e.g. boundary changes).

The plan may also be amended if an activity, development or use which conflicts with the provisions of the plan is approved by government (such as native title outcomes).

### 2.1 Regional context

Cape Conran Coastal Park, Croajingolong National Park, Nadgee Nature Reserve (NSW), Ewing Marsh Wildlife Reserve and various reserves around the Snowy River estuary, form part of the largest contiguous protected area on the south-east coast of mainland Australia. Together they encompass more than 115 000 ha along 150 km of coastline. The terrestrial parks and reserves are complemented by the recently proclaimed Point Hicks and Cape Howe Marine National Parks and Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary. The park also complements the Croajingolong Biosphere Reserve designated by UNESCO, which includes Croajingolong National Park and Nadgee Nature Reserve to the east.

The extensive ocean beaches, rocky headlands and estuaries that characterise the park contrast with the tall forests, rugged terrain and mountain streams further inland.

Indigenous tradition indicates that areas of the park are parts of *Country* of the Gunai and Kurnai peoples, and the Bidwell people, and that other Indigenous people, including the Monaro Ngarigo, had an association with the coastal region. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas of the park.

Far East Gippsland is a region attracting an increasing number of visitors seeking diverse natural attractions in relatively remote settings. Key tourism strengths of the region include adventure activities and touring.

Other popular destinations in the region include:

- Croajingolong National Park – a magnificent coastal national park featuring pristine estuaries, dramatic rocky shorelines and desolate sandy beaches. This park provides a range of camping, boating, fishing and touring opportunities. Overnight walking through some of the State’s most beautiful coastal scenery is popular.
- Snowy River National Park – a diverse area offering scenic grandeur, wilderness and a sense of remoteness. Spectacular

rugged terrain and gorges provide a backdrop for activities including white-water rafting, camping and four-wheel-drive touring.

- Errinundra National Park – a plateau featuring very significant areas of rainforest, high elevation wet forests, undisturbed catchments and granite outcrops. Car-based touring is a popular activity along with picnicking, walking, camping and fishing. An interpretive rainforest walk, numerous waterfalls and escarpment views are key attractions.

### 2.2 Park values and significance

Cape Conran Coastal Park makes a valuable contribution to Victoria’s park system, which aims to protect viable, representative samples of the State’s natural environment on public land. It also provides opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values and makes an important contribution to tourism and the economy of local coastal settlements.

The park is assigned the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Category II (National Parks) in the United Nations’ list of National Parks and Protected Areas. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and appropriate recreation. In recognition of the area’s natural, historic and Indigenous cultural values, much of East Gippsland, including the entire park, is included on the Register of the National Estate.

The area included in the park is significant to many people in the broader community. The area has particular significance to the Traditional Owners as a part of *Country*. The significant features of Cape Conran Coastal Park are summarised below:

#### Natural values

- rich and diverse vegetation, including damp and lowland forest, woodlands, various types of heathland, swamp, coastal and riparian communities
- the Dock Inlet catchment, a pristine example of a coastal stream system with

associated wetlands terminating in a freshwater coastal lagoon

- the undisturbed Yeerung River supporting predominantly native fish is one of only two entirely lowland rivers in the region draining directly to the sea
- almost 50 species of threatened fauna including six endangered nationally, and 14 bird species listed under international migratory bird agreements
- at least 40 species of threatened flora, including the Bonnet Orchid and Leafless Tongue-orchid which are both vulnerable nationally
- extensive heathland areas in excellent condition harbouring populations of threatened fauna, including the Ground Parrot and Smoky Mouse
- Sydenham Inlet, part of the Bemm Heritage River corridor, supporting expansive seagrass meadows that provide important habitat for fish and waterbirds
- high scenic values associated with the diverse geological formations of the park's headlands, its coastal estuaries and heathy plains
- excellent examples of coastal dynamics such as sand movement, wave action and river outflows.

#### **Cultural values**

- an extensive pre and post-settlement history of Indigenous occupation with more than 50 recorded important Aboriginal archaeological sites, including numerous middens
- Cape Conran and Pearl Point are two of the most significant Indigenous places on the Victorian coast for archaeological research, and culturally important to the Traditional Owners
- seascapes of high traditional cultural significance to Indigenous peoples
- the legendary burial sites of shipwrecked sailors at Sailors Grave, providing a link with the numerous shipwrecks which lie in waters adjacent to the park
- a special place for the many local families and fishermen who stayed in the small

holiday village that existed at East Cape prior to the mid 1980s.

#### **Tourism and recreational values**

- excellent opportunities for sightseeing, picnicking, viewing wildlife and camping in natural coastal settings
- a range of easily accessed beaches suited to surfing, swimming and fishing activities
- the popular bicentennial commemoration cabins and lodge accommodation near Cape Conran, set in natural Banksia Woodland overlooking the beach
- access to offshore waters for small boats at the West Cape boat ramp, with excellent opportunities for ocean fishing and diving
- a range of short walking opportunities including the spectacular East Cape Boardwalk, which protects and interprets sensitive Indigenous places
- suitability for licensed tour operations such as horse riding, canoeing, four-wheel-drive tours and guided walks
- outstanding opportunities for cultural and environmental education.

#### **2.3 Past land use**

Cape Conran Coastal Park has a history of Aboriginal occupation dating back at least 6000 years. Numerous middens provide physical evidence of widespread use of shellfish by Indigenous peoples (section 5.1).

The northern plains of the park and areas around Cape Conran were previously grazed. It is not known how much of other parts of the park were grazed.

In the 1880s, a small settlement existed in the vicinity of the Yeerung River near the Old Coast Road. This possibly related to early gold mining of the quartz-rich deposits found in the area.

The coastal area has long been popular with local residents for fishing, duck hunting and camping activities. Fishing and boating on Sydenham Inlet have always been important in the Bemm River township, and in years gone by townsfolk would have extracted minor forest produce from the areas now included in the park.

Past logging of areas now within the park was minimal because of the lack of suitable forest types. Gravel and marl were quarried from a number of sites, many of which are now revegetated. Honey production remains a minor use of the park.

The sealing of the Marlo–Conran Road at the close of the 1960s resulted in a rapid growth in visitation to Cape Conran. The West Cape boat ramp became an important facility for recreational anglers and professional abalone and cray fishermen. Until the mid-1980s when the area was redeveloped for day visitor use, a number of private interests used sites in the East Cape area primarily for holiday dwellings under permissive occupancies. In recent decades, recreation and to a lesser degree education have been the predominant uses of the lands now included in the park.

The Old Coast Road was the main link between Marlo and Cann River prior to construction of the Princes Highway.

## **2.4 The Park visitor**

The park is a popular destination for visitors to the region as well as residents, particularly those from the townships of Orbost, Marlo and Bemm River. The park receives relatively high levels of visitation due to its good access and diverse natural attractions. A highly scenic coastline, excellent beaches and a wide range of recreation opportunities attract an estimated 200 000 visitors to the park each year. The Cape Conran cabins and campground account for approximately 35 000 visitor nights annually. Local schools use the park regularly.

Two key destinations, Cape Conran and Sydenham Inlet, traditionally attract family campers and fishing groups from Melbourne and greater Gippsland. Some families have been returning to these areas for their annual summer holiday for more than 30 years. Locals tend to use the park for surfing, boating, fishing, walking and picnicking all year round.

A major change to park visitation occurred after the Cape Conran cabins were constructed and visitor access infrastructure was upgraded in the mid-1980s as part of the nation's bicentennial celebrations (CFL 1986). The cabins proved instantly popular, particularly

with young families who were prepared to travel from Melbourne for an extended weekend. Approximately one third of overnight stays are in the Cape Conran cabins and lodge complex, which sustains an annual occupancy rate of over 60 per cent. The complex receives a moderate level of mid-week patronage from schools and conference groups.

Cape Conran Coastal Park plays a complementary role to the larger national parks in East Gippsland, providing for more intensive recreational use. The bush camping and cabin accommodation provided in the park provides visitors with a coastal base from which they can explore the region's hinterland parks. Many visitors stay in private accommodation outside the park and in the adjacent towns of Orbost, Marlo and Bemm River.

Market research indicates that holiday visitors to the park are mainly from regional Victoria (47%) and Melbourne (42%) (Yann, Campbell, Hoare & Wheeler 1998). Interstate (9%) and international visitors (2%) make up the balance, though regional surveys suggest that visitation by these segments may in fact be higher (Market Solutions Australia 1996).

Visitation to the park is expected to increase steadily as it is within comfortable day-tripping distance from growth areas on the Gippsland Lakes and it is expected that the East Gippsland region will receive slightly increased numbers of Melburnians and interstate and international visitors in future years.

The pattern of visitation within the park will also change. Recent access improvements to Pearl Point Road have been accompanied by increasing visitation, and the consequences of visitor pressure on the generally unhardened sites in this area are clearly evident.

The creation of the Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary off Cape Conran in 2002 is likely to attract additional visitors to the park and create a demand for new services such as dive tours.

The prospect of developing a long-distance walking trail within the region is under consideration. Likely effects on park visitation and potential impacts on the park's values are unclear until feasibility and route details of the walk are known. Regardless of this project,



bushwalking activity along the entire Wilderness Coast is expected to increase.

## 2.5 LCC recommendations and legislation

### Legislation

Cape Conran Coastal Park is reserved and managed under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.). The Act requires the Secretary to DSE to preserve and protect the natural condition of the park, and its natural and cultural features, and subject to this to provide for the use of the park by the public for enjoyment, recreation and education. Appropriate research activities are also provided for under the Act.

The objects and provisions of the National Parks Act set the framework for management of Cape Conran Coastal Park (appendix 1). Specific legislation, and LCC recommendations accepted by the State Government, also govern particular aspects of management of the park, as described below and in subsequent sections of the plan.

The *Parks Victoria Act 1998* (Vic.) enables management services for Cape Conran Coastal Park to be provided on behalf of the Secretary by Parks Victoria. The National Parks (Park) Regulations 2003 apply to the park. The Marine Regulations 1999 apply to waters within the park.

The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth) applies to the management of the park.

An application by the Gunai and Kurnai peoples for a Native Title determination covering large areas of Crown land and waters in East Gippsland, including the park and adjoining waters, was registered with the National Native Title Tribunal Federal Court in 1998. An application lodged by the Bidwell people in 2002 covering far East Gippsland has been discontinued.

The provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) apply to the whole of the park with respect to actions that have, will have, or are likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance, in particular threatened flora and fauna and migratory birds listed under that Act.

The provisions of the *Heritage Rivers Act 1993* (Vic.) apply to the lower reaches of the Bemm River and Sydenham Inlet.

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* (Vic.) applies to any Crown land within 200 metres of the high water mark of the coastal waters of Victoria, including parts of the planning area. The Coastal Management Act provides for a coordinated approach to the planning, management and use of coastal Crown land in Victoria.

The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) protects all indigenous flora and fauna within the park.

Aboriginal places and objects (whether registered or not) are protected under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth) and *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* (Vic.).

### LCC recommendations

The former Land Conservation Council (LCC) made specific recommendations relating to the management and uses of the area now comprising the park (LCC 1986). The recommendations included the investigation of a coastal link road, the accommodation of recreational activities traditionally associated with the area, and improvement to the boat ramp facilities at Cape Conran.

In approving the LCC recommendations in 1987, the State Government decided that no road linking Cape Conran and Bemm River along or near the coast within the park be permitted because of conflicts with high environmental values and unsuitable topography. A subsequent multi-agency investigation determined that an all-weather tourist link road along the northern boundary of the park would not be viable (NRE 1996).

The LCC in its Rivers and Streams Special Investigation (LCC 1991) recognised the importance of the lower reaches of Bemm River, including the Sydenham Inlet, for conserving the diverse range of native fish present, and also geomorphic features of statewide significance. The LCC recommended that these values be protected as part of the heritage river corridor for the Bemm River.

## 2.6 Policies and guidelines

The park is managed in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational policies and as appropriate, consistent with other relevant policies and guidelines, including the following:

- Cape Conran Coastal Park: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management (Schell & Long 2000b)
- Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heaths in Far East Gippsland (Avis 1993)
- Gippsland Fire Protection Plan (NRE 1999)
- Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land (CNR 1995a)
- Draft Heritage Rivers and Natural Catchment Management Plans. Volume 4 – East Gippsland (NRE 1997a)
- Parks Victoria's Guidelines for Working with Aboriginal Communities and Protection of Cultural Sites (Parks Victoria 2002)

- Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland – Coastal Action Plan (GCB 2002a)
- Gippsland Boating Coastal Action Plan (GCB 2002b).

The Cape Conran Coastal Park is managed within a broader context of a number of other plans and strategies, including:

- East Gippsland Planning Scheme (East Gippsland Shire Council 1999)
- Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCC 2002)
- Cape Conran Project: Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Program (CFL 1986)
- Nature Based Tourism: Directions and Opportunities 2000–2003 (Tourism Victoria 2000)
- Far East Gippsland Ecotourism Strategy (NRE & Parks Victoria 1997).

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## 3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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### 3.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Cape Conran Coastal Park finds a park with distinctive natural beauty, offering a wide diversity of enriching recreation opportunities in a range of unspoiled and relaxing coastal settings.

The park, with the adjoining Croajingolong National Park, is renowned as the Wilderness Coast, protecting an extensive area of some of the nation's finest coastal environments as part of a world class reserve system.

Thriving, colourful heathland communities maintained by careful application of prescribed fire characterise much of the coastal landscape. Threatened fauna are well protected through successful predator control programs and careful management of their habitat. Highly regarded research and monitoring programs continue to inform adaptive management of park ecosystems.

The park is a key drawcard for holiday-makers who come to stay in the park or in neighbouring townships and in so doing contribute to the regional economy. The park is also popular as a coastal playground for local people who visit to surf, fish, swim and relax.

The scenic beauty and idyllic beaches of Cape Conran attract moderately high levels of visitation. The campsites and cabins at Banksia Bluff are well presented and continue to provide a special experience in an area that retains its bushland character. Well-designed facilities and infrastructure are in harmony with and protect the area's special features. The West Cape boat ramp functions well, providing ocean access for offshore anglers and visitors to Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary.

Camping locations in the east of the park cater for those seeking a more remote beach setting. A network of short walking tracks and a range of longer walks provide great opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the park.

A first class interpretation and education program acquaints school groups and other visitors with the fascinating flora, fauna and geology of the park, and there are abundant opportunities for wildlife viewing. The

heritage river qualities of the lower Bemm system are highly valued by the public.

There is strong community awareness, respect and appreciation of the park's values. A variety of communities and groups, including the Friends, descendants of the original custodians, schools and others with particular interests in the park, volunteer support and work with the staff to conserve and facilitate the park and facilitate its use and enjoyment.

### 3.2 Zoning

A management zoning scheme has been developed to:

- provide a geographic framework in which to manage the park
- indicate which management directions have priority in different parts of the park
- indicate the types and levels of use appropriate throughout the park
- assist in minimising existing and potential conflicts between uses and activities, or between these and the protection of park values
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.

Four management zones apply to the park: Conservation, Conservation and Recreation, Recreation Development, and Education. In addition, seven overlays, including five Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and two Land Use Designations (LUDs), are used to identify requirements additional to those of the underlying primary management zones.

Table 1 specifies management zones and overlay characteristics, and figures 2 and 2a show their location. Table 2 summarises the activities that are permitted within these zones and overlays.

### 3.3 Management directions

Major management directions for the park are outlined as follows:

### **Conservation**

- Special protection will be accorded to Dock Inlet and its catchment to protect its delicate environs and unique values.
- Prescribed burning programs will be continued to protect people, natural and cultural values, property and park assets, with due regard to all park values and in accordance with the Gippsland Fire Protection Plan.
- Park fauna will be protected through the implementation of well-researched programs to reduce specific threatening processes.
- Habitats of threatened species, including the Little Tern, Hooded Plover, Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Ground Parrot, will be maintained.
- Burning operations will be implemented, on the basis of sound research findings, to maintain the structure and diversity of heathland communities, and as necessary to protect significant cultural places.
- Measures to control the spread of Phytophthora through the park will be introduced and guided by research findings.
- Strategic control programs will ensure that pest plants and animals continue to have minimal impact on park values.
- Indigenous cultural places and objects will be protected from interference or damage.
- Scenic landscape and historic places and relics will be conserved by protecting them from damaging or inappropriate activities.
- Further surveys of, and research into, the Indigenous cultural heritage of the park, and the historic heritage, will be encouraged and supported.
- The Traditional Owners' cultural lore and their interests, rights and aspirations for the area will be reflected in all planning and management of the park, in accordance with relevant legislation and policies.
- Indigenous cultural lore relating to Country will be respected, promoted and interpreted in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners.
- The impact of any works and infrastructure on the park's natural and cultural values will be minimised by careful planning, design, siting and construction.
- Park boundary anomalies will be identified, and incursions by private land use resolved.

### **The park visit**

- The park, with Croajingolong National Park, will be promoted for the wealth of visitor experiences they offer as part of Gippsland's Wilderness Coast.
- The semi-remote character and high conservation values of the park will be retained and protected, while opportunities for visitors to access, experience and appreciate the park's special qualities will be enhanced.
- The amenity of the West Cape and Salmon Rocks facilities will be improved, in recognition of the area's emergence as one of the region's most popular surfing, swimming and boating destinations.
- Day visitor facilities at Point Ricardo, Yeerung Beach and Pearl Point will be upgraded to protect the environment and cater better for current levels of use.
- Provision will continue to be made for traditional family camping in a bushland setting at Banksia Bluff.
- The provision of enhanced services for camping at Banksia Bluff, such as standing tent camps, some hard-stand sites, and improved water reticulation, will be considered to cater for a broader visitor base.
- Bush camping in the eastern end of the park will continue to be permitted, with some rationalisation and basic service improvement of campsites along the Pearl Point Road.
- Cabin and lodge accommodation at Cape Conran will be operated at high standards.
- Upgrading the quality of the Cape Conran bore water supply will be investigated.

**TABLE 1 MANAGEMENT ZONES AND OVERLAYS**

	<b>AREA/LOCATION</b>	<b>VALUES</b>	<b>GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIM</b>
<b>Zone</b>			
Conservation	4550 ha, 39% of park. Generally Dock Inlet catchment.	Broad areas containing sensitive natural environments or ecosystems.	Protect sensitive natural environments and provide for minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities, subject to ensuring minimal interference to natural processes.
Conservation and Recreation	6080 ha, 52% of park. The majority of the park.	Broad natural areas which can sustain significant levels of recreation.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small-scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.
Recreation Development	95 ha, <1% of park. Accommodation area and key visitor nodes at Cape Conran.	High use areas with significant visitor facilities in a natural setting.	Provide primarily for high visitor use with a concentration of recreation, interpretation and park management facilities.
Education	975 ha, 8% of park. Heathland and woodland north-west of Banksia Bluff Camping Area.	A readily accessible area suited to environmental education.	Provide primarily for environmental education for schools in a less sensitive area close to camping and accommodation facilities.
<b>Overlay</b>			
Point Ricardo Parallel Dunes – Special Protection Area	Dune system between Point Ricardo and Conran Creek.	Geomorphology of a series of regular, parallel dunes.	Maintain or enhance the area's essentially natural condition and take special care with certain activities such as construction of fire control lines that may destabilise dune systems.
Dock Inlet – Special Protection Area	Dock Inlet and environs within 100 metres of shoreline.	Geomorphology of freshwater lagoon, creek channels and dune systems.	Protect the inlet's natural attributes, including water quality, by precluding inappropriate access and activities and promoting awareness of its special values.
Bemm River Silt Jetty – Special Protection Area	Lower western silt jetty of the Bemm River between private property, the lake and the river.	Geomorphology of the active river delta, where the river enters Sydenham Inlet.	Allow natural fluvial processes to continue, restore a more natural vegetative cover, and preclude activities that may accelerate erosion.
Sydenham Inlet Entrance – Special Protection Area	Ocean entrance area of Sydenham Inlet below the channel.	Little Tern breeding grounds on sandbars and low dunes around river mouth.	Provide conditions conducive to the establishment of Little Tern breeding colonies, and protect colonies from disturbance by humans, dogs and introduced predators.
Glossy Black-Cockatoo Habitat – Special Protection Area	Casuarina stands south of Old Coast Road in the headwaters of Dock Creek catchment.	Suitable habitat for the threatened Glossy Black-Cockatoo.	Maintain optimal conditions for the survival of Glossy Black-Cockatoo by protecting preferred habitats, particularly through careful management of fire.
Land use designation – Bemm Heritage River	1300 ha, 11% of park. Lower reaches of the Bemm River, Sydenham Inlet and their immediate hinterland.	Geomorphological features of State significance, native fish diversity and recreational fishing.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small-scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.

Table 1 (cont'd)

	AREA/LOCATION	VALUES	GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIM
Land use designation— Duck Hunting	950 ha, 8% of park. Sydenham Inlet lake and its immediate shoreline within park (excludes Croajingolong NP shore).	Traditional duck hunting area.	Provide opportunities for duck hunting within the park while minimising impacts on park values.

Note: Management Zones and Special Protection Areas are shown on figure 2. Land Use Designation overlays are shown on figure 2a.

- Information and interpretation about the park's natural and cultural values will be improved to enhance visitor enjoyment.
  - Greater use of the park by schools for scientific study will be encouraged by designating an Education Zone, including the area recommended by the LCC (1986) and additional areas close to accommodation areas at Cape Conran.
  - Opportunities for environmental education will be enhanced through linkages and partnership projects with the proposed adjoining Rural Learning Centre.
  - Options for the provision of short walks linking the park with adjoining townships of Marlo and Bemm River will be investigated.
  - Subject to engineering investigations and ecological and cultural risk assessments, an additional jetty will be constructed at the West Cape boat ramp to improve boating safety.
  - Options to reduce landscape and landform impacts associated with the power line between Cape Conran and Bemm River will be explored.
  - Licensed tour operators will be encouraged to offer an expanded range of minimal-impact recreation activities that are consistent with the aims for the park.
- Community awareness and involvement**
- Visitors, local communities, Indigenous communities, and the broader community will be encouraged to become more aware of the park and appreciative of its values and management.
  - Local communities and visitors will be encouraged to develop a sense of custodianship for the park, and become involved in its management.
  - Existing relationships between communities or groups and the park will be further developed and maintained to facilitate and encourage their participation in the park's management.
  - Strong consultative relationships will be developed with local communities.
  - Strong co-operative relationships will be developed and maintained with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community to facilitate the appropriate reflection of their cultural lore, and interests and rights and aspirations for the area, in the planning and management of the park.
  - The Friends and volunteers will be supported to help protect and conserve the park.
  - Community groups with particular interests in the park will be encouraged to assist in implementing the management plan.
  - Parks Victoria will collaborate with other agencies to achieve common goals.

**TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

ACTIVITY	MANAGEMENT ZONES				OVERLAYS		
	1	2	3	4	SPA	LUD <sup>1</sup>	LUD <sup>2</sup>
	39% of park	52% of park	<1% of park	8% of park	6% of park	11% of park	8% of park
Bicycle riding	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
Camping – Banksia Bluff (range of facilities, including standing tent camps)	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Camping – boat-based, fully self-contained (no facilities)	N	Yes	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N
Camping – dispersed (no facilities)	Yes	Yes	N	N	Y	Y	N
Camping – land-based, designated sites (limited facilities)	Y	Y	N	N	N/A	N/A	N/A
Canoeing and kayaking	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Dogs	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Duck hunting	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Fishing	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Horse riding	N	Yes	Yes	N	N	N	N
Intertidal collecting*	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Jet skiing	N	N	N	N/A	N	N	N
Motor boating (including launching)	N	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Picnicking	Y	Y	Y	Yes	Y	Y	Y
Recreational four wheel driving	N	Y	Y	Yes	Y	N/A	N/A
Roofed accommodation	N	N	Y	N	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sailboards surfboards and surf skis	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Sailing	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Swimming	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Water-skiing	N	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Walking	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Orienteering and rogaining	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

**Key**

## Zones:

Zone 1	Conservation Zone
Zone 2	Conservation and Recreation Zone
Zone 3	Recreation Development Zone
Zone 4	Education Zone

## Overlays:

Overlay SPA	—Special Protection Area
Overlay LUD <sup>1</sup>	—Land Use Designation—Heritage River
Overlay LUD <sup>2</sup>	—Land Use Designation—Duck Hunting

Yes	Permitted—subject to overlay prescriptions, and conditions prescribed by regulation or statutory permit, or elsewhere in the plan.
Y	Permitted— subject to conditions prescribed, by regulation or statutory permit, or elsewhere in the plan.
N	Not appropriate.
N/A	Not applicable.

\* Consistent with Fisheries Regulations.

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## 4 STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

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### 4.1 Geological and landform features

The coastal environs of the park are typified by dunes, lagoons and swamps, with some sections of rocky shorelines at Cape Conran and Pearl Point. Inland, the park forms part of the extensive coastal plain which extends from Lake Tyers to Tamboon Inlet. The Yeerung River has formed a minor gorge where the sandy surface deposits have been eroded to expose underlying Palaeozoic rocks.

The bedrock of the park comprises Ordovician siltstones and sandstones, which are exposed at Cape Conran and Pearl Point. These rocks contain fossils and also show quartz vein intrusions, probably from the later Devonian period when the granite outliers of Cape Conran and Yeerung River were formed.

Easily erodible Tertiary deposits occur inland and are overlain by Quaternary sands in the form of barrier sand dunes. More recent Quaternary river and swamp deposits occur at or near Sydenham Inlet.

Geomorphological (landform) features within the park are dominated by coastal processes. Sea level changes, longshore drift and onshore winds have shaped the landforms into a series of parallel barrier dunes, separated by swampy depressions. Lagoons, namely Dock and Sydenham Inlets, have also formed together with deltas on Dock Creek and Bemm River, which flow into the inlets.

In accordance with Indigenous tradition, the landforms of the planning area are significant, and some features bear important relationships with cultural lore.

Several geomorphological features within the park were assessed to be of State significance (McCrae-Williams et al. 1981). These include the active and previous river deltas at Sydenham Inlet, which are being degraded by erosion associated with illegal grazing within the park (section 8.2); extensive wetlands and tidal channels; Dock Inlet; and the rocky shoreline at Cape Conran, which displays the granitic–sedimentary contact zone. However, the data custodians for the geological significance process, the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), while

acknowledging the study as being the most comprehensive survey for its study area, claim that the site significance assessment was undertaken without a comprehensive statewide listing of sites as a reference point for replication and representation of each feature (Susan White pers. comm.).

The coastal dune system is generally stable although there are some dune blowouts east of Pearl Point. Parallel dune ridges at Point Ricardo are of interest as the best developed features of this type east of Lakes Entrance.

Because of the potential for inappropriate management, fire suppression activities and visitor pressure to compromise significant geomorphological features within the park, Special Protection Areas have been designated for the Bemm River silt jetty, Dock Inlet and the Point Ricardo dunes.

#### Aims

- Provide for the protection of geological and geomorphological features of scientific or landscape interest, or cultural significance.
- Minimise disturbances to geomorphological processes or features.
- Provide for study, education and appreciation of geological and landform features and coastal geomorphological processes.

#### Management strategies

- *Encourage sound significance assessment of features of scientific or landscape interest and protect features as appropriate.*
- *Identify, respect and protect landform features of special cultural importance to the Traditional Owners in planning and implementing management activities (section 5.1, 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *Provide interpretive materials relating to the geological and landform features in the park, and foster public appreciation and protection of these features (section 6.1).*
- *Monitor and manage significant sites, including Special Protection Areas, to*



*minimise visitor and management impacts (table 1).*

- *Prevent grazing within the Bemm River silt jetty SPA to minimise further erosion and rehabilitate the area with indigenous plant species (section 7.2).*
- *Restrict machinery and vehicle access to the SPA protecting the parallel dune system near Point Ricardo.*

## 4.2 Rivers and catchments

The majority of the park falls within the Yeerung River and Dock Inlet catchments, which also include State forest south of the Princes Highway. Dock Inlet is significant as a virtually pristine catchment terminating in a freshwater coastal lagoon. Maintenance of high water quality is important to sensitive aquatic vegetation fringing the inlet. The faunal assemblages associated with the rivers and catchments of the park have significant conservation values, particularly because of the absence of introduced species in these waters.

The park contains the coastal segment of two larger catchments: the Bemm and Little River catchments, which terminate in Sydenham Inlet. Bemm River catchment (939 km<sup>2</sup>) extends as far north as the Errinundra Plateau. Little River drains a significant portion of the coastal hinterland south-west of Cann River. In recognition of its outstanding natural, cultural, scenic and recreational attributes, the Bemm is designated a Heritage River under the Heritage Rivers Act. Sydenham Inlet is included within this classification (figure 2a).

Land use within its catchments has increased sedimentation within Sydenham Inlet (I D & A 1994). Sydenham Inlet is intermittently closed to the sea when the river mouth is blocked by a sand bar. Artificial opening of the entrance is necessary on some occasions to lower persistent high water levels and reduce flooding on public assets, park access roads and freehold land around the Inlet (section 7.2).

The Draft Heritage River Management Plan (NRE 1997a) lists assessment of impacts of this activity on erosion, sediment movement and geomorphological values as a key management direction for the Bemm River. The plan also recommends that the natural

cycle of opening and closing of the river mouth be allowed to continue as far as possible while protecting private property. It also notes that the rapid drop in water level associated with artificial opening can cause bank collapse and redistribution of silt which requires study.

Parks Victoria implements the protocols for opening the entrance, under certain provisions of the Coastal Management Act, Heritage Rivers Act and Native Title Act.

The salinity of the inlet varies considerably with the state of the entrance and flood events. The long-term ecological impacts of artificially opening the entrance at the pre-determined level are not known (section 7.2).

### Aims

- Protect and maintain the integrity of streams and catchments within the park.
- Minimise the impact of management and visitor activities on rivers and catchments in the park.

### Management strategies

- *Support monitoring of the quality and condition of rivers and streams within the park.*
- *Manage the Bemm Heritage River corridor within the park in accordance with the Heritage River Management Plan.*
- *Preserve the pristine nature of Dock Inlet by encouraging visitors to adopt minimum impact behaviour and ensuring management activities are carried out with extreme sensitivity (table 1).*
- *Liaise with relevant State and Local Government agencies about any inappropriate catchment activities outside the park to reduce downstream impacts.*
- *Ensure appropriate erosion mitigation measures are included in all park works.*
- *Encourage research to assess the impacts on park values of artificially opening the mouth of the Bemm River.*

## 4.3 Vegetation

The park contains 11 ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) with 23 associated sub-communities (most of which are related to the Banksia Woodland and Wet or Sand Heathland

EVCs). Their distribution is typically associated with particular landforms. They include forest communities associated with lowland foothills to the north of the park or along watercourses, heathland and Banksia woodland communities interspersed on the flat coastal plain, coastal communities occurring in the south of the park, swamp communities adjoining watercourses, coastal lagoon wetland communities occurring near freshwater swamps inland from the coastal dunes, and seagrass meadows cover much of the bed of Sydenham Inlet.

The heathlands within the park are part of an extensive series of heathland communities, including those in Croajingolong National Park, which are significant for their species richness and undisturbed condition. Diversity in some East Gippsland coastal heathlands has been described as comparable with South African heaths, regarded as the richest vegetation communities on the planet outside lowland tropical rainforest.

The park's vegetation has been well studied in a series of projects during the last 20 years and extensive data sets are available. In particular, a report on the flora and fauna of the Yeerung Forest Block (CNR 1992) contains valuable information on the park's flora and fauna, threatening processes and management recommendations.

Little is commonly known about the Indigenous cultural lore relating to the flora of the park. The Traditional Owners recognise vegetation as an intrinsic element of *Country* and their cultural lore includes sophisticated knowledge of its values and uses. This heritage has considerable potential to interest visitors, and to enrich park management.

The park area was subject to cattle grazing prior to reservation, although the full extent of grazing and the broadscale effects are unknown. The recent fire history (section 4.6) appears to play a significant role in determining current vegetation structure.

Wildfire, fuel reduction and ecological burning all have an influence on vegetation communities. Appropriate fire regimes for an array of vegetation and fauna management objectives are a crucial part of conservation management in the park. If some heathlands remain unburnt for a long time they can be

invaded and dominated by Coastal Tea-tree, with a potential loss in biodiversity. On the other hand, major wildfire is also a potentially threatening process to the park's vegetation. Ecological fire management, research and planning continue to be directed towards ensuring that a diverse range of heathland age classes are represented. This is important for maintaining suitable habitat for significant fauna species such as the Ground Parrot.

The Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heaths in Far East Gippsland (Avis 1993), and the Guidelines for Ecological Burning in Lowland Forest and Heathland: Yeerung Case Study (McCarthy 2000), currently guide vegetation management in the park (section 4.6).

The park contains 49 threatened plant species (appendix 2), including the Bonnet Orchid and Leafless Tongue-orchid which are endangered in Victoria.

The seagrass beds within Sydenham Inlet sustain a diverse range of native fish, and are critical to the maintenance of regional fish populations. The decline of seagrass beds elsewhere due to factors including sedimentation and boating activity indicates the importance of monitoring the Sydenham Inlet seagrass as a basis for long-term protection of these values.

Seagrass in Sydenham Inlet has been mapped, providing baseline information for measuring changes to this important aquatic vegetation type.

#### **Aims**

- Conserve native plant communities and maintain genetic diversity.
- Enhance the long-term survival of threatened and significant plant species and communities.
- Provide for scientific investigation relating to conservation of flora and biodiversity.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Continue to implement the Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heaths in Far East Gippsland with the aim of moving towards establishing and maintaining a balanced range of heathland age classes.*

- *Incorporate relevant findings of the Yeerung Case Study (McCarthy 2000) and the fire management recommendations (CNR 1992) in planning future ecological and fuel reduction burns.*
- *Monitor and review the implementation of the Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heaths in Far East Gippsland in relation to the needs of flora, fauna and fire protection requirements (section 4.6).*
- *Encourage survey, research and monitoring of threatened flora and vegetation communities in the park to improve knowledge of their management requirements.*
- *Ensure that the significance of vegetation and flora to the Traditional Owners is respected in all management and visitor activities. Reflect Indigenous knowledge of vegetation in management practices as appropriate (section 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Encourage the implementation of a monitoring program for the Sydenham Inlet seagrass beds.*
- *Investigate the scope for inclusion of park survey and monitoring needs into the Research Partners Program.*
- *Ensure that park burning plans are based on establishing regimes that maintain the vigour and diversity of the park's biota.*
- *Manage species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (appendix 2) according to approved Action Statements.*
- *Incorporate research findings in managing threatened species and vegetation within the park.*
- *Research the dynamics of encroachment into coastal heaths by Coastal Tea-tree within the park and implement strategies to restore a balance of structure and diversity as required.*
- *Ensure all records of significant flora species in the park are incorporated into the Environmental Information System.*

#### 4.4 Fauna

The rich botanical assemblages of the park provide habitats for a corresponding diverse range of animals. An abundance of fauna

viewing opportunities provides an added dimension to visitors' experience of the park.

Forty-one mammal species have been recorded in the park, including seven threatened species. Populations of the endangered Smoky Mouse and vulnerable Eastern Bent-wing Bat are examples of these. Whales and dolphins occur in the coastal waters adjoining the park. Whale strandings are not common but have occurred in the park.

Sambar and Hog deer are infrequently observed within the park. These introduced species are protected wildlife under the provisions of the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic.), but their presence is incompatible with management principles given that they are non-indigenous species. The National Parks Act prohibits hunting in the park aside from duck hunting on Sydenham Inlet. While deer numbers are considered to be low, the species could affect vegetation values in the long-term if allowed to multiply.

A total of 170 species of birds, including 33 threatened species, have been recorded within the park (appendix 3). Fourteen species of migratory birds, recorded in the park, are listed under international migratory bird agreements.

Important avifauna include the endangered Ground Parrot and the threatened Turquoise Parrot, which occur in heathland communities. The White-bellied Sea-Eagle frequents the coast and estuaries while the Powerful, Sooty and Masked Owls are inland forest species. Glossy Black-Cockatoos feed in she-oak habitat within a relatively small area of forest at the north of the park, declared a Special Protection Area (figure 2).

Hooded Plovers and Little Terns nest on the ocean beaches and are susceptible to disturbance by visitors and dogs, especially at estuary mouths. The entrance to Sydenham Inlet is a Special Protection Area for this reason (figure 2).

There are important populations of reptiles and amphibians within the park. Six species are threatened in Victoria, including a number of frogs, skinks and the large Tree Goanna (appendix 3).

The reefs and rock pools of Cape Conran and Pearl Point support a rich assemblage of intertidal and subtidal organisms. The lower

reaches of the Bemm River and Sydenham Inlet also support a diverse range of native fish species (section 4.3) as well as the introduced Brown Trout.

The relationship between fauna and their preferred habitats within the park is reasonably well established as a result of a series of systematic surveys in the Yeerung Forest Block (CNR 1992).

The requirements of a number of threatened species, including Smoky Mouse, Long-nosed Potoroo, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Ground Parrot and Regent Honeyeater, for heathland or post-fire habitats for survival highlights the importance of applying this understanding to fire management within the park.

The Forest Management Plan for East Gippsland (CNR 1995b) designates most of the State forest area which adjoins the park as Special Protection Zone which is managed primarily for conservation. Timber harvesting is excluded and the State forest reserve network links the park with the Cabbage Tree Creek Flora Reserve. Special faunal attributes of the adjoining Special Protection Zone include Masked Owl, Sooty Owl and Powerful Owl habitats.

The plentiful endemic fauna of the park would have provided a rich food source for former Indigenous inhabitants. Little is commonly known about the Indigenous cultural lore relating to the fauna of the park. In Indigenous tradition, fauna is an intrinsic element of *Country*. Indigenous cultural lore includes sophisticated knowledge of its values and uses. This heritage is greatly valued by the Traditional Owners in particular, and has considerable potential to interest visitors and enrich park management.

#### Aims

- Protect indigenous fauna.
- Maintain genetic diversity of fauna communities.
- Enhance the long-term survival prospects of threatened or significant faunal species and populations.

#### Management strategies

- *Continue to implement the Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heathlands*

*in Far East Gippsland (sections 4.3 and 4.6).*

- *Implement the recommendations of Ecological Survey Report No. 43 (CNR 1992) as they apply to the park area.*
- *Manage species listed in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (appendix 3) according to approved Action Statements.*
- *Encourage the identification of, and research into, endemic fauna of significance to Traditional Owners.*
- *Ensure that the significance of fauna to the Traditional Owners is respected in all management and visitor activities. Reflect Indigenous knowledge of fauna in management practices, as appropriate (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Encourage continuing survey and monitoring of threatened fauna to improve knowledge of their habitat and management requirements.*
- *Liaise with DSE to ensure park management strategies for significant fauna species integrate with statewide and regional programs.*
- *Monitor the impact of Sambar and Hog Deer in the park. Implement appropriate control strategies where detrimental impacts have been identified.*
- *Manage the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Habitat Special Protection Area (figure 2) to provide optimum conditions for this threatened species (section 4.6).*
- *Manage visitors to minimise impacts of domestic dogs on nesting shorebirds; in particular, exclude dogs from the Little Tern Special Protection Area and the Conservation Zone (section 6.10).*
- *Ensure all records of significant fauna species in the park are incorporated into the Environmental Information System.*

#### 4.5 Landscape

Sweeping coastal vistas framed by banksia trees are distinctive landscapes within the park. The rocky headland protrusions of Cape Conran, Point Ricardo and Pearl Point break the continuity of a long expanse of dune-backed coastline. Broad heathland vistas

interspersed with woodland or low forest typify many of the park's key access routes, including Cape Conran Road, Yeerung Road and Pearl Point Road. Sydenham Inlet, Yeerung River and Dock Inlet provide estuarine settings behind the coastal dune systems.

Elevated sites above the Cape, the Yeerung River area, at Pearl Point and near Point Ricardo offer excellent panoramic views of the coastline. At the latter location, the addition of an elevated lookout platform would enhance visitor enjoyment of the surrounding heathlands and seascape. Occasionally, passing whales can be seen from these high points. The majority of the park is relatively flat but views are often pleasantly expansive along sweeping beaches, or across flowering heaths and tranquil estuary waters. In some popular areas it is desirable that views be maintained through occasional pruning or thinning of vegetation.

The landscape is an important element of the natural environment. For Indigenous people, it is an important element of *Country*, and is intrinsically related to the cultural lore of the Traditional Owners (sections 5.1 and 6.1).

The areas adjacent to high-use recreation sites and along park access roads and walking tracks require particular attention to ensure that the natural landscape is not impaired by carparks, structures and obtrusive signage. Coastal Tea-tree encroachment into heathlands has in some areas obscured vistas and views of the coastline, particularly along the Cape Conran Road. Management activities such as prescribed burning and road maintenance can diminish or enhance landscape values, depending on the sensitivity with which they are carried out.

The roofed accommodation and management buildings at Cape Conran have been carefully designed to harmonise with their banksia woodland setting. Any future plantings or works around these buildings should also complement the setting.

The power line, which supplies electricity to Bemm River, runs through the park on an east–west alignment. The section of power line between Cape Conran and Bemm River and the associated linear access track and maintenance clearing is a major visual

intrusion into the natural and semi-remote values of this part of the park (section 7.1). Other visual intrusions into the park's landscape include the marl pit off the Cape Conran–Cabbage Tree Road (section 4.8).

### Aims

- Protect the natural landscape, particularly places of special significance to the Traditional Owners, interest to visitors, or high scenic quality.
- Minimise visual impacts on the landscape and remove or ameliorate undesirable visual intrusions.

### Management strategies

- *Minimise the visual impact of all park management activities and ensure any future developments are sensitively integrated with their natural settings.*
- *Protect landscape values in the park in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational guidelines.*
- *Liaise with DSE and planning authorities to minimise the visual impact on areas in view of visitors to the park (chapter 7 and section 8.3).*
- *Consider the utility of fire in managing landscapes as well as ecological values when planning prescribed burning programs along the coast.*
- *Monitor and provide input to management activities by external agencies that could affect landscape values (section 8.3).*
- *Maintain seascape views from East Cape day visitor areas and where necessary from park lookouts by judicious pruning of vegetation.*
- *Enhance viewing opportunities for park visitors at Point Ricardo by providing a viewing platform.*
- *Minimise the impact of signs, visitor facilities and other park development on the natural and cultural landscape of the planning area.*

## 4.6 Fire management

Most of the park has been burnt by wildfire on at least one occasion during the period of recording of major wildfires since 1938. The major wildfires of 1968 and 1981 burnt large areas in the east and west of the park respectively. Most of the heathlands east of Pearl Point were burnt by wildfire in 1973, and again by a combination of wildfire and ecoburn in 2004. A large ecoburn was conducted in the heathlands north of Cape Conran in 2003. A 600 ha wildfire occurred within the Dock Inlet catchment in February 2005. There have been numerous recorded smaller wildfires within the park, most of them ignited by lightning strikes.

Parks Victoria and DSE are responsible for undertaking sufficient fire prevention and suppression works in the park under the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic.) and preventing injury by fire to the park under the National Parks Act. The Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land (CNR 1995a) provides the basis for fire management in the strategic sense and sets performance indicators for a number of fire-related actions. Fire is an important factor and a powerful management tool in maintaining the vigour and diversity of the park's biota (sections 4.3 and 4.4).

Current fire protection is in accordance with the Gippsland Fire Protection Plan (NRE 1999). This plan includes fire protection objectives and the strategies necessary to achieve these objectives. The Fire Pre-suppression Strategy for the area, including the park, is shown in figure 4.

The Strategy divides the park area into five fuel management zones.

**Zone 1 - Asset protection**—covers the Cape Conran cabins, camping area and day visitor facilities. The prime objective in this zone is to provide the highest level of strategic protection to human life, property and public assets. Fuel management is intensive and likely burn frequency is between three and six years.

**Zone 2 – Strategic fuel reduced corridor**—covers a portion of park west of Bemm River township. The prime objective is to provide a substantial barrier to the spread of wildfire to assist in making fire suppression safer and more effective. This corridor assists in the fire

protection of the Bemm River township. Likely burn frequency is between five and eight years.

**Zone 3 – Broad area fuel reduced mosaic**—covers an area just east of Yeerung River and a narrow strip north of Cape Conran Road. This zone focuses on providing a mosaic of fire frequencies consistent with the requirements of vegetation communities and the needs of fire protection.

**Zone 4 –Flora and fauna management**—covers the majority of the park area, including extensive heathlands for which detailed burning prescriptions have been developed. The focus is upon vegetation management, although asset protection benefits are also likely. The burn frequency is guided by the Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heathlands in Far East Gippsland (Avis 1993).

**Zone 5 - Exclusion of prescribed burning**—provides for the exclusion of prescribed burning, at least for the period of the Gippsland Fire Protection Plan. If vegetation in these areas were burnt there would probably be economic, ecological or cultural loss.

The specific fire ecology requirements for a range of habitats within the park are described with management recommendations in Ecological Survey Report No. 43 (CNR 1992).

Care with fire management needs to be exercised within Special Protection Areas to ensure that the vital attributes of those areas are not damaged. The specific guidelines and restrictions that apply for the Point Ricardo parallel dunes and Dock Inlet Special Protection Areas are shown in table 1.

Near-coastal heathlands south of the Cape Conran Road and in the Pearl Point area are presently included in the burning exclusion zone. However, these communities require periodic fire to maintain their structure and habitat values. Subject to values and risk assessments, they are probably better included in Zone 4.

She-oak habitat within the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Special Protection Area is reasonably fire sensitive. Options to maintain long-term habitat values through strategic burning patterns in this area need to be further considered.

The Cape Conran cabins complex is surrounded by a fuel modified zone and is serviced by a pressurised fire hydrant system. A network of mown fire breaks and beach access tracks is maintained to help protect the many campers and day visitors that congregate at Cape Conran in summer. Protocols are in place to protect visitors and assets in the event of wildfire incidents at this location.

### Aims

- Protect life and property and park values from injury by fire.
- Minimise the adverse effects of fires and fire suppression methods.
- Maintain fire regimes appropriate to the conservation of native flora and fauna.

### Management strategies

- *Undertake prescribed burning in accordance with the Gippsland Fire Protection Plan, the Cape Conran Campground Protection Plan, the fire management recommendations within Ecological Survey Report No. 43 and heathland burning regimes as specified in the Fire Management Plan for Coastal Heaths in Far East Gippsland.*
- *Ensure that ecological burning and burning for fire protection reflect appropriate fire regimes and meet ecological objectives.*
- *Ensure that the next review of the Gippsland Fire Protection Plan adequately considers ecological burning requirements of near-coastal vegetation communities including heathlands, and fire protection requirements of cultural places, and that fuel management zones are amended accordingly.*
- *Integrate fuel reduction and ecological burn planning to confer strategic protection of significant heathlands, reducing the risk of loss of age class and structural diversity through wildfire.*
- *Publicise and enforce regulations relating to the use of fire in the park.*
- *Maintain the existing network of roads and tracks (table 3) and water points.*
- *Give preference to suppression methods which cause least disturbance to park vegetation and scenic values, such as:*
  - *use of hand tools rather than machinery*
  - *avoiding use of chemical or phosphate retardants on heathlands*
  - *use of existing roads and tracks as control lines*
  - *allowing wildfires to burn out to existing control lines where possible.*
- *Ensure prescriptions and pre-planning for prescribed burning operations take due account of landscape values adjoining high use areas of the park.*
- *Ensure that all of the park's natural and cultural values, including Indigenous cultural heritage, are taken into account in the planning and implementation of fire protection and management operations.*
- *Encourage research into the Traditional Owners' cultural lore relating to fire. Reflect Indigenous knowledge of fire in management practices, as appropriate (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Rehabilitate fire control lines and other disturbances resulting from suppression activities in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land.*
- *Apply restrictions and guidelines to fire suppression and any burning operations in Special Protection Areas in accordance with their management aims (table 1).*
- *Establish an appropriate fire regime and pre-suppression strategy for maintenance of she-oak habitat in the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Special Protection Area.*
- *Continue liaison with neighbouring communities of Bemm River and Marlo Plains on fire protection issues.*
- *Record heathland burns on the Environmental Information System (EIS) to assist future monitoring and research.*

#### 4.7 Pest plants and animals, and diseases

Nine introduced mammals and five introduced birds have been recorded within the Yeerung Forest Block study area (CNR 1992) which includes the park. Introduced predators (fox, cat and dog) are present in low to moderate numbers and pose the greatest threat to fauna. Significant species such as the Little Tern and Hooded Plover which nest on exposed beaches are at particular risk. Project Deliverance, a fox control program aimed at monitoring prey species responses to reduced predator abundances, ran from 1997 through to 2003. Areas sampled within in the park showed substantial reductions in predators and increases in prey abundances. Since April 2004, the park has been included within the broadscale 'Southern Ark' fox control program which covers one million hectares of public land in East Gippsland.

There is evidence of Feral Pig activity in the eastern end of the park which requires monitoring.

Introduced fish species in the park include Brown Trout in the Bemm River.

The incidence of environmental weeds within the park is mostly limited to near settlements and development nodes such as Bemm River and Cape Conran, and along roadsides. Highly invasive species such as Mirror Bush, Boneseed and Dolichos Pea are present in some littoral areas of the park. Areas which have been heavily infested with Dolichos Pea at Cape Conran are now denuded following treatment and may require special measures to restore native vegetation. The park has some small, isolated infestations of Blackberry and Bindweed. Sea Spurge is an increasing problem on foredunes.

Marram Grass has invaded parts of the park, and was planted in the past to stabilise mobile dunes near Point Ricardo. Kikuyu is prolific at the picnic areas at East Cape and Salmon Rocks, where it is regularly mown to form an effective groundcover and presents few control problems.

Phytophthora (Cinnamon Fungus) is prevalent in the coastal areas of Gippsland and was recorded near the park in 1973. This pathogen can greatly reduce the vigour of some plant communities and cause the death of

susceptible species, some of which occur in the park. This fungus spreads naturally by movement of water and soil. Spread of the disease can be accelerated by drainage works, transportation of infected soil and gravel by vehicles and road machinery, or even by bushwalkers and animals.

While there is no visible dieback from this fungus within the park, the distribution of the pathogen is not known. Until an understanding of the pattern of infestation is developed, a precautionary approach needs to be taken to minimise the risk of introduction or spread of the fungus.

##### Aims

- Eradicate or control pest plants and animals using methods which minimise disturbance to natural systems and effects on park values.
- Restore native vegetation to areas where weeds have been removed.
- Minimise the spread of any Phytophthora in the park.

##### Management strategies

- *Prepare and implement strategic pest plant and animal control programs for the park, giving priority to:*
  - *controlling of highly invasive species and pathogens*
  - *continuing the current Dolichos Pea control program at East Cape, including rehabilitation of treated sites with indigenous plant species*
  - *continuing to control predators in the vicinity of known Little Tern and Hooded Plover nesting sites.*
- *Use control methods that minimise disturbance to natural systems and effects on park values. Take special care to avoid soil disturbance and use of chemicals that could affect archaeological relics.*
- *Ensure all significant pest plant and animal control activities in the park are incorporated into the Environmental Information System.*
- *Apply findings of Project Deliverance to the implementation of Southern Ark to maintain low populations of foxes in the*



*park while continuing to monitor prey responses.*

- *Monitor the presence and impacts of pigs and deer in the park and implement control measures as appropriate.*
- *Encourage research to determine the presence, or not, of *Phytophthora* within the park and build an understanding of the pathogen's distribution.*
- *Establish and implement appropriate quarantine and hygiene procedures for *Phytophthora* with particular emphasis on vehicle, soil and gravel movements associated with fire management, track construction and road maintenance operations.*
- *Continue to inform park visitors and adjacent landholders about relevant pest plant and animal control programs (sections 6.1 and 7.2).*
- *Monitor the spread of Sea Spurge within the park and apply control measures if and where they are likely to be effective.*

#### **4.8 Soil conservation**

Most of the soils within the park are essentially sandy or peaty and easily eroded. Isolated soil degradation has occurred in some high-use recreation areas and along some roads and tracks. The peaty sections of the Powerline Track, the East Yeerung Track and the adjoining Old Coast Road (table 3) become very boggy and are especially susceptible to vehicular damage in wet conditions. Current seasonal closures and planned road drainage improvements aim to minimise such impacts (section 6.2).

Soil conservation measures are an essential component of road, track and easement management in protecting the pristine conditions within the Dock Inlet catchment.

Areas within the Banksia Bluff camp are excessively compacted, resulting in poor moisture penetration, loss of ground cover and potential adverse affects on tree health.

The park's flat terrain and good vegetative cover minimises potential water erosion in most areas. Flood flows in the various streams within the park create a degree of natural erosion, particularly within the highly dynamic

lower reaches of the Yeerung and Bemm Rivers.

Wind-induced sand movement and dune blowouts occur along the coast. People walking across sand dunes can initiate or accelerate dune erosion. Popula beach access points within the park are generally well sited and protected from soil movement by stepped or stabilised track surfaces. The exposure of Aboriginal artefacts can require careful soil management and visitor traffic management measures to ensure their preservation.

Gravel from the marl pit near the Cabbage Tree–Conran Road has been used for local road maintenance. Removal of gravel from the park is not permitted, but minor future extractions from the pit to service in-park requirements are anticipated. Most of this extensive pit is in need of rehabilitation.

The old Cape Conran rubbish pit on the Cabbage Tree–Conran Road is no longer in use but is in need of further rehabilitation.

#### **Aim**

- Prevent and control soil degradation caused by visitor or management activities and restore disturbed sites, avoiding damage to natural and cultural values.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Manage public access across dunes to the beach to prevent degradation of the sand dunes.*
- *Plan and implement all soil and site rehabilitation in consultation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community, and ensure protection of cultural heritage values. Take special care with restoration works in dunes (sections 5.1 and 6.1).*
- *Include soil conservation requirements in the approval of any maintenance works on roads, tracks and the power line corridor.*
- *Include appropriate soil conservation requirements in approvals for the use of machinery in the Dock Inlet catchment.*
- *Minimise unnatural soil erosion within Special Protection Areas designated for protection of landform features in accordance with table 1 and section 4.1.*

- *Prepare operational guidelines for the future use of the marl pit and rehabilitation of the unused sections.*
- *Close off and rehabilitate the old Cape Conran rubbish tip site.*
- *Use indigenous species of local provenance in all rehabilitation works.*

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## 5 STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

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### 5.1 Indigenous cultural heritage

Cape Conran Coastal Park has a history of Aboriginal occupation dating back at least 6000 years. Research into Indigenous tradition indicates that the Gunai and Kurnai peoples, and the Bidwell people, were original custodians of areas now part of the park, and that other Indigenous people, including the Monaro Ngarigo, also had an association with this coastal region.

A number of significant features in the park carry Indigenous names, including Yeerung and Bemm Rivers, Gunai Beach and Py-Yoot and Binn camp grounds.

A substantial portion of the Indigenous cultural heritage of the region is contained in, or associated with, the park. Extensive sites containing Aboriginal middens and other artefacts at Cape Conran, and elsewhere along the park coast, provide physical evidence of Indigenous peoples' long association with, and widespread use of, shellfish in the area.

A survey of archaeological sites in the park has been completed (Schell & Long 2000a) and recommendations made for management of these sites (Schell & Long 2000b). Much knowledge has been lost since the arrival of Europeans but there may be much that can be uncovered from oral histories from descendants of the original custodians or original documentation.

There are cultural sites in the park that are at risk from natural or non-natural threats, which include:

- shoreline erosion, visitor activities and pressure, and some management activities
- lack of knowledge and recognition
- lack of respect, pillaging of artefacts and vandalism
- park facilities that were inappropriately located in the past.

All Aboriginal places and objects are protected under the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. Under the

Commonwealth Act, Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Incorporated (MAC) is scheduled as the local Aboriginal community for the western areas of the park. It has certain responsibilities relating to the identification, care and management of Aboriginal places, and its consent is required for any interference or disturbance to any Aboriginal place or Aboriginal object in these areas. Currently the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs exercises the responsibilities, usually the prerogative of a scheduled local Aboriginal community, in relation to the areas of the park east of Pearl Point Road. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) also has certain statutory responsibilities under the legislation.

Issues relating to native title are dealt with in accordance with the Native Title Act. Three separate applications for Native Title determinations covering the park have been made. The Gunai and Kurnai application was lodged with the Native Title Tribunal on 4 April 1997 and registered on 1 April 1999. A Bidwell Clan application lodged with the Tribunal on 13 August 2002 has been discontinued. A Kurnai application lodged with the Tribunal on 29 April 2005 was not registered at the time of publication.

Parks Victoria respects Indigenous peoples' cultural lore, and interests and rights in, and aspirations for *Country*, and thus welcomes opportunities to work with the relevant Indigenous communities in managing the park (section 8.2). The importance of a sound understanding of archaeological values for managing works programs, and thus of continuing liaison with relevant Indigenous communities and AAV, is well understood.

A works crew from the locally based MAC constructed the East Cape boardwalk jointly with Parks Victoria in the late 1990s. The boardwalk is well used by park visitors and features the interpretation of Indigenous values and use of the Cape Conran area (section 6.1).

#### Aims

- Protect Indigenous cultural heritage from interference or damaging activities.
- Nurture Indigenous cultural lore relating to the park.

## Management strategies

- *Protect and care for all Indigenous cultural places and objects, in partnership with the Traditional Owners, co-operation with the scheduled Aboriginal community and liaison with AAV (sections 8.2 and 8.3). Take account of scientific recommendations for the management of archaeological sites (Schell & Long 2000b), and work in accordance with:*
  - *relevant legislation including the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act*
  - *Parks Victoria's Guidelines for Working with Indigenous Communities and Protection of Cultural Sites.*
- *Assess annual park programs to minimise the potential for impact from park management activities on Indigenous cultural heritage, in consultation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community (section 8.2).*
- *Respect Indigenous culture. Work in collaboration with the Traditional Owners, and in accordance with legislation and policies, to reflect the Traditional Owners' cultural lore and interests, rights and aspirations in the area, in all planning and management for the park (sections 4.1–4.8, 6.1, 6.7, 6.8, 6.10, 7.1 and 8.2).*
- *Maintain confidentiality in respect of Indigenous cultural lore, places, objects and aspirations, in accordance with tradition and the wishes of the Traditional Owners (section 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Encourage the identification, recording, and monitoring of Indigenous places and objects, and cultural lore relating to the park, in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and scheduled Aboriginal community, and liaison with AAV (section 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *Conduct risk assessments of Indigenous cultural places, objects and cultural lore in liaison with AAV. Use the information to protect, promote and interpret Indigenous cultural heritage in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*

- *Ensure all management actions are in accordance with the Native Title Act.*

## 5.2 Historic cultural heritage

The first Europeans to travel this coast were the survivors of the wreck of the Sydney Cove in Bass Strait in 1797, on their long walk to Sydney. They were soon followed by the explorers Bass and Flinders, who reputedly had a friendly meeting with natives on the Ninety Mile Beach in 1801 (LCC 1985). Cape Conran was named after Captain Lewis Conran, supposedly a member of George Smyth's coastal survey team during 1849–52 (Green 1984).

The first European settlers (McLeods) arrived in Orbost from the Monaro area in 1842. The 'Lake Bemm' run east of Cape Conran was taken up by the pastoralist Andrew Ewing from 1848 onwards. Thomas Stirling took up the Corringale run (extending from Lake Tyers to Bemm River) in 1857 (LCC 1985). His brother James Stirling occupied land at Marlo in 1873, and extended his run to Cape Conran (Green 1984). Early cattlemen were known to 'fire the scrub' for the promotion of green growth for their cattle. This practice would have no doubt occurred within the park area up until the 1939 bushfires, after which the State Government deemed the practice illegal. Parts of the park were subject to grazing licences up until the late 1970s. There are remnants of stock yards and a hut from grazing occupation on the northern boundary of the park.

In the mid 1890s Frank Conlon and his family selected several hundred acres of land in the vicinity of the aerodrome reserve near Point Ricardo where, for eight years, the Conlon home became known for the hospitality extended to those travelling along the Old Coast Road to Cann River (Green 1984). The Marlo Plains were not opened for wider selection until 1948.

Transport by sea was important during the early settlement years, and boats traded out of the Snowy River from the 1870s. Offshore, Beware Reef claimed a number of shipwrecks. Others were wrecked on the coastline of the park itself, including the *Neptune* which was wrecked on Pearl Point in 1889. Sailors Grave was so-named because of the unknown sailors who were buried there, possibly associated with an ill-fated salvage attempt on the SS

*Ridge Park* which was shipwrecked on Beware Reef in 1881 (Ross Anderson pers. comm.). A well documented account (Pepper 1980) of a humorous incident involving two Indigenous stockmen who came across a piano washed up on the beach near Conran, supposedly wreckage from the *Ridge Park*, has entered local folklore.

Survivors from a ship wrecked near Marlo in the 1880s, including the wealthy James brothers, are thought to have established a settlement on the west branch of the Yeerung River. The settlement apparently included a school and a mine but, after only a few years, the settlers moved on to the lower Bemm River area (O'Bryan n.d.). The Township of Bemm River was gazetted in 1925.

Recreational use of the park dates from the early 1890s when Cape Conran was favoured as a summer camping spot by Orbost residents and district farmers. Families would travel by buggies and wagons along the sand road from Marlo, or the 'all weather' road from Cabbage Tree, to swim, fish and relax at the Cape.

The Conran 'settlement', comprising a dozen holiday houses and a hall, was built mainly between 1945 and 1950 on an area of land at East Cape granted under permissive occupancy (Green 1984). Mainly used for family holidays, the settlement had a small number of permanent residents and was at times used as a base by commercial fishermen. Electricity was connected to the settlement in 1969. Sealing of the Cape Conran Road around this time brought a huge seasonal influx of campers and caravans in the decade that followed, creating crowded conditions. All of the associated buildings were removed when the permissive occupancies were terminated and the area was redeveloped for day visitor use in the mid 1980s. Aside from photographs, the well-grassed open spaces and graded beach access ways of the East Cape picnic areas are the only physical evidence of the former settlement. Many people have fond memories of their times at 'Conran' when the 'houses' were there and have strong connections with the area as a result.

Joiners Channel and the associated concrete lobster storage pit (coff) on the West Cape are relics of early fishing activity at Conran. Ned Joiner and his sons reportedly used explosives to blast rocks from the channel to provide

access for small boats. The Joiner family lived in a house above the site and were involved in the construction of the coff in 1946.

The storm refuge hut on 'the channel' at Sydenham Inlet is of local significance. Located on the seaward side of the lake, this structure has traditionally provided shelter to anglers when strong winds and rough water have prevented a safe return to the Bemm River township. Volunteers from the Bemm River community have recently refurbished the hut.

### Aims

- Protect and conserve historic cultural places.
- Provide opportunities for people to learn about and understand the historic and cultural values of the park.

### Management strategies

- *Document an environmental history of the park, which focuses on historic and cultural sites and values suitable for recording in Parks Victoria's Asset Management System.*
- *Encourage research, documentation and acknowledgement of the history of the Conran holiday settlement and associated activities.*
- *Assess the significance of historic and cultural sites according to the principles of the Burra Charter (ICOMOS 1999).*
- *Protect, preserve, interpret and manage features and sites of cultural and historic significance according to the principles of the Burra Charter (ICOMOS 1999), Parks Victoria operational policies and the provisions of the Heritage Act 1995 (Vic.).*
- *Within the framework provided by Parks Victoria's Heritage Strategy, prepare a heritage action plan to guide management of significant historic places.*
- *Where appropriate, provide interpretive materials to improve visitor appreciation of cultural and historic sites of significance (section 6.1).*

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## 6 STRATEGIES FOR VISITORS

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### 6.1 Visitor information, interpretation and education

The provision of information, interpretive services and environmental education can help orientate visitors, enhance their visit and foster an understanding and appreciation of the park's features, values and risks. It can also encourage appropriate visitor use, reduce potential management problems and contribute to a broader understanding of natural environments and management objectives.

Cape Conran Coastal Park has a wide range of natural and cultural values of great interest to the public. In particular opportunities exist to develop interpretive themes related to the park's marine interface, heathland communities, wetland communities, abundant fauna, geological processes and Indigenous cultural heritage. A range of material based on such themes would enhance visitor satisfaction and also the education value of the park.

Park Notes and accommodation information are distributed from park offices and accredited information centres. On-site information is currently provided at Cape Conran and Point Ricardo. Basic visitor orientation and site-specific information is required at other sites, including Sydenham Inlet, Pearl Point and Yeerung Beach. There is a lack of suitable park orientation information in the 'gateway' townships of Marlo and Bemm River and in the town of Orbost. Specific public information about the status of the Bemm Heritage River is also needed. Co-operation with the East Gippsland Shire, visitor information centres, and regional and local tourism associations regarding the provision of information about visitor opportunities and tours available in the park is important.

Aspects of Indigenous culture are depicted in interpretive signage along the East Cape boardwalk and also at the Salmon Rocks lookout platform. These sites are part of Batuluk Cultural Trail which traverses the Gippsland region. Moogji Aboriginal Council has played a leading role in the development of cultural signage at Cape Conran.

The Activity Centre near the Conran office provides interpretation activities and displays, which interpret various aspects of the park's natural and cultural history, as well as shelter. In past years a range of education and interpretation programs have been run from the Centre, usually during the summer holiday period. The nearby lodge is often used as a classroom when education groups are in residence.

The proposed Education Zone (section 3.2) will extend the value of these facilities and provide a focus area for school education programs. The zone will allow authorised low-level disturbance activities associated with field work, monitoring, and experiments to be carried out, which might not otherwise be permitted in the park. In creating this zone, the Education Area proposed by the LCC (1986) has been expanded to the south and west to provide better access, particularly from the camping and accommodation facilities at Cape Conran.

Access to the new Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary is gained via Cape Conran. There will be a need to provide information and education services within the park to assist with management of this adjacent reserve.

The park is a major tourist destination in the area. Improved promotion and upgrading of the park in conjunction with other local attractions could increase and sustain visitation and help support the tourism industry in East Gippsland.

#### Aims

- Encourage visitors to discover, enjoy and appreciate the park's natural and cultural values.
- Orientate visitors in relation to park features.
- Inform visitors of appropriate behaviour during their park visit.
- Improve visitor satisfaction and promote sustainable visitor use of the park.
- Provide a range of high-quality interpretation and education opportunities

to promote understanding and appreciation of the park's values.

- Promote Indigenous heritage values and reconciliation through a range of tourism, interpretive, information and education mediums.

### Management strategies

- *Develop and implement a strategic park information, interpretation and education plan, in partnership with relevant groups which considers the following key themes and messages:*
  - *distinctive park fauna*
  - *heathland ecology*
  - *marine life / marine conservation*
  - *wetlands and waterbirds*
  - *geological and landform features*
  - *Indigenous culture*
  - *maritime and settlement history*
  - *fire safety*
  - *keeping dogs under control*
  - *minimal impact fishing*
  - *coastal walks.*
- *Provide adequate visitor orientation, interpretation, information and safety messages at key visitor sites including Pearl Point, Yeerung Beach and Salmon Rocks.*
- *Seek the inclusion of park orientation displays within tourist information facilities in the gateway townships of Marlo and Bemm River and in Orbost.*
- *Continue to distribute Park Notes, including fire safety information, from park offices and accredited information centres.*
- *Include opportunities for learning, understanding, and appreciating Indigenous cultural lore in information, interpretation and education programs, in consultation and with the approval of the Traditional Owners (section 5.1). Themes could include:*
  - *perspectives, stories and spiritual significance of landscape, landforms, flora and fauna*
  - *customs relating to people, resource use and management practices.*
- *Explore the opportunity for interpretive signage that integrates both pre and post-settlement stories (sections 5.1 and 5.2.).*
- *Use, provide, promote or identify Indigenous cultural heritage, including intellectual property, only in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria's operational policies (section 5.1).*
- *Continue to involve and provide opportunities for the Indigenous people to participate in the interpretation of the Indigenous cultural heritage of the park in consultation and with the agreement of the Traditional Owners.*
- *Provide interpretation to improve poor understanding among visitors of park values such as middens, and management programs relating to pest plants and animals, fire, and flora and fauna.*
- *Provide information and interpretation on Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary at Cape Conran.*
- *Encourage all visitors to adopt minimal impact techniques and to adhere to codes of conduct appropriate to their activity.*
- *Encourage students to take part in data collection and observation.*
- *Ensure that the Traditional Owners are consulted and involved in the planning and conduct of relevant formal events in the park.*
- *Regularly evaluate information and interpretive programs related to the park.*
- *Liaise with State, regional and local tourism authorities to ensure the park is appropriately promoted in regional visitor information centres and in tourist guides.*
- *Ensure that regional tourism information and Park Notes indicate the heritage river status of the Bemm River.*

## 6.2 Vehicular access

Vehicle access is more developed at either end of the park. The level of access grades to a relatively low level in the semi-remote central core of the park. Parts of the park's minor track network need upgrading to improve management access and enhance recreation opportunities.

The vast majority of visitors travel to the park by private vehicle and gain access via one of three high-standard sealed roads maintained by either VicRoads or the East Gippsland Shire. The park may also be reached via a network of minor forest roads (figure 2).

The Cape Conran Road provides the main access to the western end of the park from Marlo. This highly scenic road parallels the coastline through the park for 18 km before terminating at Cape Conran. The recently sealed Cabbage Tree–Conran Road provides direct access from the Princes Highway. These two roads link to provide a scenic alternative coastal drive to the Princes Highway for travellers in transit. A number of secondary park roads of appropriate standard provide access to key destinations, including Point Ricardo, West Cape, Banksia Bluff and Yeerung Beach. Improved bus parking facilities are needed at East Cape.

Access to the eastern end of the park is generally via the Bemm River township, which is accessed from the Princes Highway by the Sydenham Inlet Road. From here the park can be accessed directly via the Inlet by boat, via the Pearl Point Road, or via a network of minor tracks west of the town, which also make for pleasant walking.

The Pearl Point Road provides access to a series of beaches before terminating at Pearl Point. This road has been progressively upgraded over recent years and while it is subject to inundation when lake levels are high, it is now virtually all-weather two-wheel-drive standard. A short section at Pearl Point is yet to be gravelled.

The Old Coast Road, which abuts much of the northern boundary of the park between the Cabbage Tree–Conran Road and the Sydenham Inlet Road, is managed by DSE. A number of four-wheel-drive tracks within the park are open to the public. These tracks are

generally unformed and receive little maintenance. The Heckarwe and Swampy Ridges Tracks lie to the west of Bemm River and are used mainly for fire protection and other management purposes. The East Yeerung Track runs from the Powerline Track to the Old Coast Road and provides seasonal two-wheel drive access to the Yeerung River Gorge. All of these tracks pass through swampy terrain and are subject to seasonal closure. Unformed low-lying peaty sections of these tracks will not support vehicles except in dry conditions, which do not necessarily coincide with the warmer months. Such sections require upgrading to provide more reliable seasonal access and to prevent degradation of park values.

The standard of the East Yeerung Track in particular is inconsistent with its current level of use. This track links via the western part of the Old Coast Road with State forest tracks to the north to provide forest four-wheel-driving opportunities close to Cape Conran. Low-lying sections of the Old Coast Road have been progressively upgraded. Options to create a scenic forest drive utilising this road need to be investigated with DSE.

The Powerline Track is an unformed track, which follows the power line from the Yeerung River to Pearl Point. It is closed to the public between the East Yeerung Track and Pearl Point and is used only for power line maintenance and management purposes. The track and power line are a major visual intrusion on the landscape of the park. If future removal of the power line is feasible (section 7.1) it would be desirable to convert this track to a walking track providing access to Dock Inlet. Bushwalking and cycling access is discussed in sections 6.8 and 6.12.

### Aims

- Provide an appropriate level of vehicle access to visitor nodes for bush and scenic driving and for park management purposes.
- Minimise the impact of road and track management and vehicle use on the park's natural and cultural values.



**TABLE 3 MANAGEMENT OF ROADS AND VEHICULAR TRACKS**

ROAD / TRACK	CURRENT CLASSES	PLANNED CLASSES	FUTURE MANAGEMENT/COMMENT
<b>COASTAL PARK</b>			
East Cape Road	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
Banksia Bluff Road	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
Cabins access road	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
Yeerung River Road	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
Pearl Point Road	5/B/C/D/O	5/B/C/O	Upgrade unsurfaced section to 5C.
Swampy Ridges Track	5/E/SC	5/E/SC	–
Heckarwe Trail	5/E/SC	5/E/SC	Repair swampy sections.
Fletch's Stretch	5/E/SC	5/E/SC	–
East Yeerung Track	5/E/SC	5/C/SC	Upgrade to 5C to Yeerung Gorge, or to Old Coast Rd subject to future scenic forest drive.
Powerline Track–open section	4/D/E/O	4/C/O	Upgrade to 4C to provide Yeerung Gorge access.
Powerline Track–MVO section	4/E/MVO	4/E/MVO	Subject to future relocation of power line, convert to walking track.
Point Ricardo	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
West Cape Road	4/A/O	4/A/O	–
Salmon Rocks Road	5/B/O	5/B/O	–
<b>NOT PART OF PARK</b>			
Cape Conran Road	4/A/O	–	Managed by VicRoads.
Sydenham Inlet Road	4/A/O	–	Managed by VicRoads.
Marlo Aerodrome Road	4/B/O	–	Managed by Shire of East Gippsland.
Cabbage Tree–Conran Road	4/A/O	–	Managed by Shire of East Gippsland.
Old Coast Road	4/D/E/SC	–	DSE management (refer section 6.2).
Proposed Rural Learning Centre access road	undeveloped	–	To be managed by Shire of East Gippsland or Department of Education & Training.

**Key** (Parks Victoria Roads Classification)

## Function:

- 4 Class 4 roads provide for park access, and additional functions such as commercial uses, through access to other location (outside the park), or access to private property or utilities.
- 5 Class 5 roads exclusively provide access for visitors into parks for recreational activities, or exclusive use for park management.

## Development:

- A Primary Road—all weather, two lane, mainly sealed road.
- B Secondary Road—all weather, two laned, formed and gravelled, or single lane sealed with gravel shoulders.
- C Minor Road—Single lane unsealed, formed road usually lightly gravelled.
- D Access Track—Single lane, dry weather, formed (from natural materials).
- E Rough Track—Single laned, unformed, earth track at or near the natural surface.

## Status:

- O Open to public use (including motor vehicles).
- SC Open to public use, except when seasonally closed.
- MVO Management vehicles only.

## Management strategies

- *Manage park access roads and tracks in accordance with table 3. Ensure maintenance works do not damage natural and cultural values by, where necessary, carrying out full environmental and cultural risk assessments in co-operation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Designate a bus parking area in the vicinity of the East Cape day visitor area.*
- *Complete the final stages of gravel surfacing of the Pearl Point Road.*
- *Subject to future relocation of the power line, convert the management vehicles only (MVO) track between East Yeerung Track and Pearl Point to a walking track (section 6.8).*
- *Upgrade the East Yeerung Track as far as Yeerung Gorge to dry weather two-wheel-drive standard.*
- *Upgrade sections of the Heckarwe Track and Swampy Ridges Track to provide more reliable seasonal access.*
- *Investigate with DSE, the use of East Yeerung Track and the Old Coast Road as part of a scenic forest drive.*

### 6.3 Day visits

Day visitors represent the majority of visitors to the park. Reasonably good facilities are provided for this group at Cape Conran, the park's most popular destination. Typical activities include sightseeing, fishing, boating, picnicking and beach activities. A moderate level of access for the disabled is provided. Other popular sites within the western part of the park, such as Point Ricardo and Yeerung Beach, lack appropriate visitor facilities. Similarly, facilities provided in the east of the park in the Bemm River–Pearl Point area are very basic and not adequate for increasing levels of use.

Cape Conran is attractive to day visitors because on most days it offers beach locations sheltered from wind and sea conditions on either the east or west side of the Cape. Campers and day visitors are well separated,

eliminating recreational use conflicts between these visitor groups.

A large day-use area is designated at East Cape, the park's most visited location. It has a sealed access road and several grassed picnic areas with seating, a small shelter, gas barbecues, toilets, and disabled facilities. The water supply is highly mineralised. Views from the upper picnic areas need to be maintained by judicious pruning of encroaching vegetation. Pedestrian access would be enhanced by reinstating a small footbridge across the gully between the picnic areas. Random access to the surf beach has the potential to cause erosion and vegetation loss. An additional shelter, drinking water, changing facilities and designated bus parking are needed. Otherwise visitors are well catered for. Sailors Grave provides the only easy beach access for frail and disabled visitors.

The Salmon Rocks area is used by surfers and for fishing, beach walking, swimming and picnicking. This location is extremely popular in the warmer months as it is the only accessible surf beach in East Gippsland which provides shelter from afternoon sea breezes and strong easterly winds. Basic services are provided but are inadequate for increasing levels of use. The current layout of the carparks and facilities is problematic at peak periods. Redevelopment of this area under a master plan to improve the amenity and function of visitor services is required. The strong rip which often runs beside the rocks presents a hazard to unwary swimmers.

Other day visitor areas on the West Cape at Joiners Channel and around the boat ramp are popular with families. Diving, snorkelling, fishing and picnicking are typical activities, while children enjoy playing in the rockpools. Joiner's Channel is a highly valued dive site, offering easy 'walk-in' scuba access to a diverse array of underwater environments without the hazards of boating traffic. The raw beauty of the adjoining small shelly beach and rock formations provides inspiration to many. Visitor services on the West Cape are basic and in need of some refurbishment.

Point Ricardo provides easy beach access and is a popular fishing location. Recent improvements to the carpark have been undertaken by the Friends of Cape Conran Coastal Park. An elevated heathy knoll behind

the carpark offers panoramic ocean views and whale watching opportunities (section 4.5). Access to this lookout needs to be rationalised as the current vehicle track is unconsolidated and subject to erosion.

Yeerung Beach is attractive to day visitors because of its scenic beauty, safe swimming in the warm waters of the estuary, and excellent surf fishing. Carparking at this beach has recently been expanded. A toilet and visitor orientation facilities are needed to cater for growing visitation levels and to protect the environment. Protection of nesting Hooded Plovers near the estuary mouth is an issue requiring management of visitor behaviour (section 4.4) and dogs (section 6.10).

Canoeing is also popular on the tranquil Yeerung River. Basic visitor facilities are provided at the canoe launching site and at the Yeerung Bridge. Further upstream the Yeerung Gorge can be reached by vehicle or by walking from the bridge.

Numerous access points along the park's coastline between Bemm River and Pearl Point are well used by local day visitors, people staying in the township and campers. Surf fishing, sightseeing and beach picnicking are the main activities undertaken. Visitor facilities are minimal and there are conflicts between user groups, especially at Pearl Point and Py-yoot Bay because of the constricted configuration of the carparks.

The lack of toilet facilities along the park's coastline between Bemm River and Pearl Point, and at Yeerung Beach, raises both hygiene and environmental issues.

The entrance to Sydenham Inlet is a popular destination for boat-based day visits but is also a breeding area for Little Terns (section 4.4). Management of visitor behaviour during the breeding season is required to protect tern colonies.

The location of existing and proposed facilities for visitors are summarised in figure 3 and table 4.

#### Aims

- Provide day visitor facilities that enhance visitors' enjoyment of the park and are consistent with protecting park values.

- Protect areas critical to wildlife from disturbance by day visitors.
- Address hygiene and environmental issues associated with a lack of appropriate facilities at key day-visitor destinations.

#### Management strategies

- *Provide facilities for visitors in accordance with table 4. Ensure maintenance works do not damage natural and cultural values by, where necessary, carrying out full environmental and cultural risk assessments in co-operation with the Traditional Owners, and the scheduled Aboriginal community (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Construct a lookout platform off the road to Point Ricardo. Rationalise vehicle access and provide surfaced carparking.*
- *Avoid damage to natural and cultural values while providing visitor services and facilities by careful planning and implementation of works (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Develop and implement a master plan for the upgrading of the day-use facilities at Salmon Rocks and West Cape.*
- *At East Cape, maintain vistas from the upper picnic areas (section 4.5), manage random beach access to minimise impacts and reinstate a footbridge linking the picnic areas.*
- *Construct a roofed picnic shelter at East Cape and incorporate a rainwater tank to provide drinking water.*
- *Provide a simple changing shelter at East Cape Beach.*
- *Complete the upgrade of the Yeerung Beach carpark and provide toilet and information facilities.*
- *Designate Py-yoot Bay as a day-use only area, surface the carpark, and investigate the feasibility of providing disabled access to the beach.*
- *Identify and provide additional disabled access at appropriate points in the park.*
- *Provide a gravelled carpark, toilet and information facilities at Pearl Point.*

**TABLE 4 MANAGEMENT OF VISITOR SITE RECREATION FACILITIES**

SITE	LEVEL OF SERVICE	TOILETS	PICNIC TABLES	ELECTRIC/GAS BBQs	FIRE PLACES	WATER SUPPLY	PARK INFO.	LOOKOUT	CAMPING	BOAT RAMP/JETTY
Point Ricardo	B	N	N	N	N	N	E	P	N	N
Salmon Rocks	M	E	E	P	N	P	P	E	N	N
West Cape	M	E	E	N	N	E	E	N	N	E/P
Sailors Grave	M	E	E	E	N	E	E	N	N	N
East Cape	M	E	E	E	N	E	P	N	N	N
Banksia Bluff campground	M	E	E	P	E	E	E	N	E	N
Cape Conran cabins	H	E	N	E	E	E	E	N	N	N
Activity Centre	M	E	E	N	N	E	E	N	N	N
Yeerung Beach	M	P	E	N	N	P	P	E	N	N
Yeerung boat launching point	B	N	E	N	N	N	N	N	N	E
Yeerung Bridge	B	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Yeerung Gorge	B	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dock Inlet	B	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pearl Point	B	P	P	N	P	N	P	E	P	N
Ocean Beach	B	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Binn/Gunnai Beach	B	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	E	N
Py-yoot Bay	B	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Note: All coastal sites listed above are linked to beach by walking track. These tracks are not shown in table 5.

#### Key

Level of Service:

H = high B = basic M = mid

Facilities:

E = existing N = none P = provide

- *Manage visitor use of Special Protection Areas according to table 1.*
- *Provide a warning sign at Salmon Rocks regarding possible rip conditions off the beach.*

## 6.4 Camping

Camping is a popular activity in the park. The park provides visitors with the opportunity to camp in unspoilt natural coastal settings.

There are two levels of camping occurring in the park. A substantial camping area has been developed at Banksia Bluff, Cape Conran and there are a number of informal camping areas

off the Pearl Point Road and near the entrance to Sydenham Inlet.

Banksia Bluff camping area consists of 135 sites in a bushland setting with fireplaces, bush showers, septic toilets and a wet weather shelter. It is immediately adjacent to a good surf beach and within a short distance of nature trails, day-use areas and the boat launching ramp. The camping area is very popular in peak holiday periods and the opportunity to encounter wildlife is a notable feature. The campground and adjacent roofed accommodation are operated by contracted managers (section 7.1).

Retention of the relaxed bushland character of Banksia Bluff is important to regular visitors,

many of whom are families who return annually. Additional shelters, improved shower facilities and water reticulation, and a modest number of temporary hard-stand tent camps and sites are desirable minor improvements. Many campers currently venture out of the park for hot showers. A 'coin-in-the-slot' hot shower could be considered as an additional service to be provided. These changes would enhance camper's enjoyment of the park throughout the year and improve utility for school groups. Further analysis of options for siting hard-stand camps is required. Any other developments within the campground precinct should be subject to further public consultation. An intensive vegetation management program is required at Banksia Bluff to remove old and dangerous trees, manage other tree risks, and replant for shade and shelter. Collection of firewood by campers on a large scale can destroy habitat and adversely affect flora and fauna. The current policy of encouraging campers to either purchase wood for campfires or collect it from outside the park should continue.

Informal bush camping currently occurs at Pearl Point, Py-yoot Bay, Gunnai Beach, Binn Beach and at isolated sites along the channel leading to the entrance to Sydenham Inlet. Popular with fishing groups, camper usage of these sites is relatively low with a distinct seasonal peak, with the exception of Pearl Point, which is used more regularly. No facilities are provided and services are limited to Ranger patrols and the provision of a rubbish trailer, which is voluntarily maintained by the Bemm River community. There is evidence of incremental damage to vegetation and access/use conflicts at some sites. At Pearl Point, areas used by campers have been enlarged noticeably in recent times. Human waste hygiene issues are also evident. There are also conflicts of use at Pearl Point and Py-yoot Bay between day visitors and campers. The escalation of these problems is clearly linked to increased visitation associated with road access improvements. The Pearl Point area has significant Indigenous cultural values, which need to be carefully managed to prevent further damage by visitors.

Better definition and management of all of the Pearl Point Road campsites is required. The creation of a small number of new campsites

(4–6) at Pearl Point is desirable to allow the existing cleared area to be rationalised for day visitor use and parking. To protect the natural character and Indigenous cultural values of these areas, it will be essential to retain the vegetation canopy, and to protect midden sites by further cultural survey work in collaboration with and the agreement of the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community. Basic facilities, including toilets, should be provided at Pearl Point to prevent further degradation. Camping should be excluded from Py-yoot Bay to allow sufficient space for day visitor parking (section 6.3).

While visitation levels to the Binn and Gunnai camping areas does not warrant any significant development of facilities, measures to prevent the unplanned expansion of campsites into adjoining bushland are required. The feasibility of providing portable toilet facilities in peak periods and collecting camping fees to offset servicing costs could be considered.

The campsites near the entrance to Sydenham Inlet, including 'Reg's Rest' and 'The Blowhole', require careful monitoring for environmental impact and conflicts of access and/or use.

### **Aims**

- Provide opportunities to meet current market needs for a range of camping experiences while minimising impacts on park values.
- Maintain the bush setting camping experience of the Banksia Bluff campground.

### **Management strategies**

- *Retain the bushland character of the Banksia Bluff campground.*
- *Construct additional wet weather shelters, improved shower facilities and water reticulation, and provide for temporary hard-stand tent camps and sites at Banksia Bluff. Subject any other development proposals at Banksia Bluff to a proper public consultation process.*
- *Prepare a vegetation management strategy for Banksia Bluff to address tree senescence, risk, site compaction and revegetation issues.*

- *Continue to encourage Banksia Bluff campers to reduce campfire impacts by not collecting firewood within the park.*
- *Carry out full environmental and cultural risk assessments in co-operation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community as necessary to ensure proposed works to provide or maintain camping services and facilities do not have an impact on park values (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Designate the current parking area at Pearl Point as day-use only. Subject to an analysis of potential archaeological site impacts, create four to six small campsites nearby.*
- *Provide a toilet to cater for campers and day visitors at Pearl Point.*
- *Prepare a master plan to guide visitor facility upgrades in the Pearl Point area.*
- *Continue to provide for Binn and Gunnai camping areas but prevent any expansion beyond the current areas through boundary definition.*
- *Do not permit camping at Py-yoot Bay.*
- *Investigate peak season fee collection and servicing options for the Pearl Point Road camping areas.*
- *Objectively monitor the environmental and park use impacts of campsites along the Sydenham Inlet channel and regulate use where necessary.*

## 6.5 Roofed accommodation

The park offers visitors the option to stay overnight in unique architect-designed accommodation facilities at Cape Conran. Cabin and lodge accommodation is provided in a stand of banksia woodland to the east of the camping area. Developed with the aid of a Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Grant in 1988, the buildings are designed to maximise visitor interaction with the natural setting.

The complex consists of eight timber cabins accommodating a total of 62 people, and a 17 bed lodge. The cabins have proved to be very popular. The average annual occupancy rate is around 65%. Aside from regular patronage from short stay holiday-makers, the cabins and

lodge are popular with education and training groups. A basic level of disabled access is provided to one of the cabins and the lodge. The facilities are currently operated by contracted managers who provide 24-hour on-site presence (section 7.1).

Accommodation buildings are generally in good condition, but require a lot of maintenance because of their timber construction and the coastal environment. The primary water supply at Cape Conran is from a bore, which produces highly mineralised water. Rainwater tanks provide an alternative source of water at each cabin. As at Banksia Bluff camp, a strategic approach to tree risk and revegetation is required. The amenity of the area would benefit from some additional attention to landscape detail, including pathways, park furniture and planting zones. The cabins' environs need regular ground fuel modification and management of volatile vegetation for fire protection.

The original Bicentennial development proposal envisaged that the number of cabins might be increased in the future. Additional sites have been identified within the existing development envelope that could cater for up to 40 additional bed spaces, although water and sewerage services would need to be upgraded. Recently two cabins were built on the nearest freehold land to Cape Conran and more are proposed. Expansion of roofed accommodation facilities in the park is not favoured at present.

### Aims

- Maintain the integrity of the natural setting of the site.
- Continue to provide roofed accommodation to cater for a broad range of user groups.

### Management strategies

- *Continue to maintain and operate the accommodation buildings to a high standard.*
- *Maintain the current level of roofed accommodation at Cape Conran. If there is a significant change in circumstances, review the requirements for expansion of roofed accommodation capacity in light of visitor demand, the response of the private*

*sector in supplying suitable accommodation close to the park and organisational priorities. Subject any proposals for further development of roofed accommodation to a proper public consultation process.*

- *Ensure that any works to maintain or provide any additional roofed accommodation in the park are carried out only after full environmental and cultural risk assessments, in co-operation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Improve disabled access to existing accommodation facilities.*
- *Investigate the feasibility of treating the Cape Conran bore water supply to improve water quality by reducing the mineral content.*
- *Adopt best environmental standards for water supply, waste disposal, energy use and building design and siting when upgrading infrastructure.*
- *Prepare and implement a landscape management plan for the cabin environs which addresses amenity, tree risk, fire protection and visitor access.*

## 6.6 Boating

Boating is a popular activity within and from the park. The major associated activities are fishing, diving, sightseeing, picnicking and camping. Sydenham Inlet is the main waterway destination within the park, while the West Cape boat ramp at Cape Conran is the most used ocean access point between Lakes Entrance and Mallacoota. This boat ramp provides access for professional crayfish and abalone fishermen and also key access to Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary. The Yeerung River estuary is suitable only for small boats and canoes.

At West Cape there is a concrete boat ramp which has been constructed in a natural sand-bottomed channel between the rocks. There is a boarding jetty and a concrete apron for manoeuvring on to the ramp. Use of the ramp is limited to boats up to about six metres in length because of the narrow width of the channel and the shallow ramp gradient. The

ramp is at times subject to an accumulation of sand and kelp which usually clears naturally, but has in the past occasionally been cleared mechanically when conditions and demand for use warrant such measures.

An associated sealed carpark overflows on a few peak days each year when boat trailers are parked beside the road above the carpark. For the remainder of the year capacity is adequate.

Access to Bass Strait in Far East Gippsland is limited by the exposed nature of the coast and the lack of natural sheltered harbours. The existing facility at West Cape, being relatively sheltered from easterly swell and winds, provides reasonable access for experienced boat operators in certain conditions. The ramp becomes unusable in south-westerly weather conditions.

A potentially dangerous situation can arise if a number of boats are caught out in a south-westerly change. Sea conditions can become hazardous for small craft very quickly and the configuration of the ramp, access road and carpark make fast retrieval of boats difficult. At Sailors Grave in the lee of East Cape an emergency retrieval channel has been constructed. Onshore leading marks identify the channel, and a gate from the day-use carpark controls four-wheel-drive access to the beach. The gravel access ramp onto the beach is subject to spring tides and storm damage and periodically needs to be reformed to be useable. This location is an emergency retrieval point only; launching of boats is not permitted.

Construction of an additional jetty on the south-east side of the existing ramp at West Cape would allow two boats to be retrieved at the same time. This would improve speed of retrieval and hence safety, and also facilitate easier boat launching. Works would be subject to detailed investigation of any impacts on natural and cultural values and should be designed so as not to constrict the width of the existing channel. The Gippsland Boating Coastal Action Plan (CAP) (GCB 2002b) deems these works to be a high regional priority. Associated investigations could also consider the feasibility and impacts of removing shallow rocks in the ramp channel which impede access.

The Yeerung River estuary is a confined waterway popular with canoeists, swimmers and walkers. A small unsealed boat ramp is provided on the west shore. High speed boating has the potential to conflict with other visitors' enjoyment of the estuary's tranquil nature and wildlife. Limiting water access to non-motorised or electrically powered vessels would allow passive recreation on the estuary to continue without disturbance from noise and boat wakes.

Sydenham Inlet is a very popular location for boating. The inlet is relatively shallow, particularly when the entrance is open, making much of the lake inaccessible to larger vessels. Water levels within the estuary fluctuate substantially depending on tides, river flows and the state of the entrance. After the entrance periodically closes water levels rise until such time as the entrance re-opens either naturally or by management intervention. There are two boat ramps at Bemm River which are located in an area excluded from the park. The remainder of the Inlet is within the park with the township boundary generally being at high water mark whilst the eastern shore (Croajingolong) boundary is the low water mark.

Conditions on Sydenham Inlet are changeable due to weather and entrance condition. Navigation of the lake presents difficulties to motor boats at low water levels. There are safety concerns for visitors to the entrance area who may be in danger if they attempt to return to Bemm River during rough lake conditions. The historic Refuge Hut near the channel below the lake provides a safe location until lake conditions moderate. After opening of Sydenham Inlet, strong outflow currents can present a serious hazard to unwary boaters.

Responsible authorities listed under the *Marine Act 1988* (Vic.) are DSE for Sydenham Inlet and East Gippsland Shire for the Bemm River. The waters of the Yeerung River are not scheduled under this Act. Marine safety responsibilities for waters within the park are in need of review.

#### Aims

- Provide opportunities for boating whilst minimising associated impacts on park values and conflict with other visitors.

- Continue to provide access for ocean boat launching at West Cape.
- Encourage safe boating within and from the park.

#### Management strategies

- *Maintain the West Cape boat ramp carpark at the existing capacity of the sealed area and protect the intrinsic values of the Cape by not expanding the developed footprint.*
- *Construct an additional jetty on the south east side of the existing ramp at West Cape, subject to an engineering feasibility assessment, to enable faster boat retrieval in bad weather conditions. Consider incorporating disabled access to the additional jetty. Liaise with DSE towards removing shallow impeding rocks in the ramp channel as part of this project.*
- *Ensure any works to construct or maintain boating facilities are carried out only after full environmental and cultural risk assessments, and satisfaction of legislative and policy requirements relating to Indigenous values and rights, in collaboration with the Traditional Owners, and the scheduled Aboriginal community (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Encourage safe and responsible use of the West Cape boat ramp and promote awareness of the inherent dangers of the area.*
- *Promote boat operator awareness of the emergency boat retrieval channel at Sailors Grave and maintain the associated leading marks.*
- *Maintain and if possible stabilise the gravel beach access ramp at Sailors Grave to provide reliable four-wheel-drive access for emergency situations.*
- *Seek co-operative arrangements with user groups for clearing the West Cape boat ramp of sand and kelp.*
- *Prohibit the use of non-electric engines on vessels on the Yeerung River.*
- *Maintain the Sydenham Refuge Hut with due regard to its historical values. Discourage non-emergency use.*



- *Review with DSE the Marine Act scheduling of responsible authorities for State waters within the park.*
- *Ensure facilities are in place to adequately convey boating safety messages at Sydenham Inlet.*

## 6.7 Fishing

Recreational fishing is a popular and important activity within the park and from the park. Sydenham Inlet is renowned for the quality of its estuary fishing whilst Point Ricardo, Yeerung Beach, Pearl Point and beaches to the east are the key surf fishing locations. The rocky shoreline of Cape Conran is popular with recreational divers collecting abalone and also provides some rock fishing. Yeerung River offers sheltered estuary fishing.

The main estuarine species targeted by anglers are Black Bream, Estuary Perch and Luderick. Australian Salmon is the most common species caught from the park's beaches. Prawns can be netted in Sydenham Inlet when they are running. The recreational values of fishing and also the conservation values of native fish species in this area have been recognised in the Draft Heritage Rivers and Natural Catchments Management Plan (NRE 1997a). The Victorian Inland Fisheries Strategy (NRE 1997b) specifies that the Bemm River and its tributaries be managed as native fish waters.

Two commercial fishers are currently licensed to collect bait in Sydenham Inlet. Sandworms and prawns are the key organisms collected. The total bait collected by commercial and recreational fishers is unknown.

Since July 1999 a Recreational Fishing Licence has been required for all forms of recreational fishing in all Victorian marine, estuarine and fresh waters. There are no specific 'Mollusc No Take Zones' within the park. Highly accessible rocky intertidal areas within the park could be subject to a gradual loss of diversity through the indiscriminate collection of molluscs and other organisms. While no specific information on this is available, gradual decline has been the trend in other well visited areas. Parts of the park and marine waters offshore are subject to abalone poaching activities.

### Aim

- Provide opportunities for recreational fishing and bait collection in accordance with aims for the park.

### Management strategies

- *Manage fishing in accordance with the Fisheries Act 1995 (Vic.) and regulations.*
- *Raise public awareness of provisions regarding collection of bait, bag limits, seasons and licence requirements (section 6.1).*
- *Encourage responsible fishing and sustainable use of the park's coastline by promoting fishing practices that are safe and environmentally friendly.*
- *Maintain fishing opportunities but monitor populations of estuarine fish in Sydenham Inlet and take management action to maintain fish diversity if necessary.*
- *Assess the impacts of fishing and bait collection in the Bemm estuary and take appropriate action to ensure long-term viability of targeted populations.*
- *Monitor the condition of susceptible rocky intertidal habitats within the park and take management actions as necessary to maintain species diversity.*

## 6.8 Bushwalking

The park provides a diverse range of walking opportunities, from short nature trails to extended walks along remote sections of coastline. Previous surveys have highlighted walking as a preferred activity for visitors to East Gippsland (NRE & Parks Victoria 1997) and this is consistent with observations made in the park. The distance and grade of existing walking tracks is given in table 5.

A number of short walks are available in the Cape Conran area, many of them along specifically constructed tracks which meander through heathlands and coastal woodlands, providing excellent scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities. The Cape Conran Nature Trail is an interpreted walk which traverses the Cape, accessing Sunset Peak and Cowrie Bay. The East Cape boardwalk provides spectacular alternative access to Cowrie Bay and has a series of signs interpreting Indigenous culture.

Other popular short walks around Cape Conran include the Heathland Walk, Swampy Creek Walk, and the Estuary View Trail on the Yeerung River. All of these tracks are in good condition but require regular slashing of trackside vegetation. The coastal walking track which links the Salmon Rocks carpark with the boat launching ramp may need further stabilisation works. There are Aboriginal middens close to the track and minor erosion has been caused by walkers diverting from the track.

There are informal walking opportunities around Bemm River on minor forest tracks and along the beach. There is a lack of park information on these walks. The Yeerung Gorge is a popular day walk destination in the central area of the Park.

Long-distance beach walks can be undertaken along the entire length of the park's coastline, and link to the Croajingolong Coastal Walk to the east. Dispersed camping associated with overnight walking is having little apparent impact, but beach walkers have the potential to disturb nesting shorebirds.

Dock Inlet is a popular loop walk destination as it is accessible by beach from either Yeerung River or Pearl Point, returning via the Powerline Track. The easement and power poles have a major visual impact on this otherwise scenic expanse of coastal heathland. If future relocation or undergrounding of the power line become feasible options (section 8.1), the track should be reduced in width and re-aligned where necessary to make it more suitable for walkers and cyclists. Minimal-impact bushwalking in the vicinity of Dock Inlet is particularly relevant to protecting its pristine values.

There is a long-standing proposal to develop an iconic coastal walk in East Gippsland (Parks Victoria et al. 1997; Victorian Trails Co-ordinating Committee 2004). By definition this walk should provide an outstanding coastal walking experience. Still in the conceptual stages, the project will be subject to detailed planning and if feasible may include all or part of the park's coastline. Any new infrastructure required by the walk should not be detrimental to park values.

A separate proposal involves the construction of a foreshore walking track linking Marlo

township with the western end of the park via French's Narrows. This access would increase visitor use and appreciation of this part of the park and create much-needed walking opportunities at Marlo.

#### **Aims**

- Provide a variety of high-quality walking opportunities within the park, while minimising impacts on park values.
- Facilitate improved walking access to the park from neighbouring townships.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Maintain existing walking track network to current standards and undertake works in accordance with table 5, minimising damage to natural and cultural values (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1 and 5.2).*
- *Monitor walker impact on Indigenous middens and, in co-operation with the relevant Indigenous communities, implement site protection measures where necessary.*
- *Continue to monitor site impacts of camping associated with overnight walks and instigate protection measures as appropriate.*
- *Promote minimal-impact bushwalking, in particular protecting water quality and avoiding disturbance of seabirds and waders.*
- *If the Cape Conran-Bemm River power line is relocated, reduce the width of the Powerline Track and realign, where necessary, to improve visitors experience.*
- *Work with the Bemm River community to investigate and produce visitor information on short walks around Bemm River.*
- *Ensure any future long-distance coastal walk developments do not have a negative impact on park values and complement existing visitor services.*
- *Support the creation of a walking track to link Marlo township and the park in a manner that avoids damage to natural and cultural values.*

**TABLE 5 MANAGEMENT OF WALKING TRACKS**

NAME	DISTANCE (ONE WAY)	PLANNED GRADE	MANAGEMENT ACTION
Cape Conran Nature Trail	2.5	2	Enhance loop walk opportunities by improving link tracks and signs.
East Cape Boardwalk	0.4	2	Plant screening vegetation to minimise visual impact.
Heathland Walk	2	3	Consider linkages with education area activities.
Swampy Creek Walk	1.5	2	–
Estuary View Trail	1.5	2	–
Yeerung Gorge Track	0.6	4	–
Powerline Track	12	4	Subject to power line decisions, realign and reduce width.
Dock Inlet Walking Track	0.8	4	Improve directional signage, protect SPA values.
Salmon Rocks–West Cape Track	0.2	3	Stabilise sandy sections, protect cultural sites
Heckarwe Trail / Adjoining four-wheel-drive tracks	various	4	Provide signs and information on walking opportunities from Bemm River.

Note: The table does not include the walking-access tracks linking visitor sites to beach.

**Key** Australian Standards classification for walking tracks (AS 2156.1—2001)

Grade 2 For a large number of visitors to walk easily in a natural environment with frequent encounters and a moderate to high level of interpretation and facilities.

Grade 3 For visitors to walk in slightly disturbed natural environments, requiring moderate levels of fitness with occasional encounters and perhaps signage - interpretation and facilities are not common.

Grade 4 For visitors to explore and discover relatively undisturbed natural environments along distinct tracks with few encounters and no interpretive signage.

## 6.9 Hunting

Duck hunting has long been an established activity on Sydenham Inlet and has little impact on other park visitors. In accordance with government-accepted LCC recommendations and park regulations, the hunting of ducks in season will be permitted in this part of the park (figure 2a). Hunting will not be permitted in the remainder of the park for the safety of visitors and protection of park values.

### Aim

- Provide opportunities for duck hunting on the lake at Sydenham Inlet while minimising its impact on park values.

### Management strategies

- *Provide for and manage duck hunting within the Land Use Designation–Duck Hunting (figure 2a) in accordance with park regulations and statewide controls relating to duck hunting.*
- *Continue to monitor the impact of duck hunting on park values at Sydenham Inlet.*

## 6.10 Dogs

Dogs are currently permitted in most parts of the park provided they are on a leash and under control. Many visitors enjoy the opportunity to bring their dog to the beach, and the park is one of the few areas on the coast where this is possible. Dogs are not permitted in the cabins precinct or in a designated section of the Banksia Bluff campground.

Dogs can be a source of annoyance to some park visitors, particularly when unrestrained. There have been a few reported dog attacks within the park, and dog faeces can be a problem at high-use sites. Escalation of these issues could necessitate more stringent restrictions in the future.

Dogs can also disturb or harm native wildlife if not kept under control and they pose a particular risk to threatened beach breeding birds such as Little Terns and Hooded Plovers. The presence of dogs in the Conservation Zone is incompatible with the objectives of that zone. Dogs can also disturb and exacerbate erosion problems on sensitive cultural heritage sites, particularly middens.

#### Aim

- Permit dogs in specified areas of the park, while protecting park values and the experience of visitors.

#### Management strategies

- *Continue to permit dogs under immediate control (on a leash) at all times in the park, except in:*
  - *the Conservation Zone (figure 2)*
  - *the Sydenham Inlet Entrance Special Protection Area from 1 November to 31 March*
  - *the area surrounding sites 1–55 of the Banksia Bluff campground*
  - *the Cape Conran cabins precinct.*
- *Encourage visitors with dogs to take responsibility for the appropriate disposal of their dog's faeces from beaches, tracks and other visitor sites.*
- *Monitor the impact of dogs in the park on wildlife, middens and visitors. Implement further controls to prevent impacts as necessary (sections 4.1–4.5, 5.1, 5.2 and 6.1).*

### 6.11 Horse riding

A little horse riding currently occurs in the western section of the park. This activity has the potential to conflict with other users, spread weeds, and cause damage to sensitive coastal environments. Large groups of horses can be particularly intimidating to other park

users. The riding of horses on foredunes has the potential to disturb nesting shorebirds.

Because of potential environmental and visitor impacts, horse riding should be confined to certain beaches and vehicle tracks. Point Ricardo and the eastern end of Py-yoot Bay provide the best beach access points to areas suitable for horse riding in the west and the east of the park respectively. Horse riding is not appropriate in the high visitation areas around Cape Conran and should also be excluded from the Dock Inlet catchment.

The Horse Riding Code (CNR 1994) gives guidelines for safety and minimum impact.

#### Aim

- Provide opportunities for horse riding while minimising impacts on park values and protecting the experience and safety of other visitors.

#### Management strategies

- *Permit horse riding on vehicular tracks open to public use as shown in table 3 (not the MVO section of Powerline Track).*
- *Permit horse riding on the ocean beach between Point Ricardo access road and the western boundary of the park, and between Py-yoot Bay (eastern end) and Ocean Beach via designated beach access points.*
- *Promote responsible horse riding in the park through promotion of the Horse Riding Code.*
- *Monitor use of the park by horse riding groups and introduce group size limits via a permit system if required.*

### 6.12 Cycling

Cycling is becoming an increasingly popular activity in the park. Aside from public roads, certain management vehicle tracks and walking tracks are also navigable by mountain bike. The inappropriate use of bicycles on walking tracks has the potential to endanger other users. Bicycles are occasionally ridden on East Cape Beach at low tide. The Mountain Biking Code (CNR 1993) sets out guidelines for safe cycling and methods to minimise the impacts of cycling on park values.

**Aim**

- Provide a range of cycling opportunities within the park while minimising impacts on park values and protecting the experience and safety of other park visitors.

**Management strategies**

- *Permit the use of bicycles only on roads and tracks open to public vehicles (table 3) and the following routes:*
  - *the MVO section of the Powerline Track (figure 3)*
  - *Dock Inlet Walking Track (north of the inlet (table 5, figure 3)*
  - *Cape Conran Nature Trail*
  - *the Heathland Walk*
  - *East Cape Beach.*
- *Monitor the impacts of cycling in these areas and restrict use as necessary.*
- *Encourage cyclists to adopt the Mountain Biking Code.*

**6.13 Tourism services**

The development of licensed tour operations in Far East Gippsland has been hampered by distance from major cities, seasonality of visitation and lack of critical mass of tourism product. The majority of local operators rely on other sources of income to supplement their earnings.

The park makes some contribution to licensed tour opportunities within the region. It offers good prospects for growth in nature-based and cultural tourism.

Activities recently offered by licensed operators include coastal walking, camping, surfing lessons, dive tours, four-wheel drive tours and horse riding tours. There is potential for additional services such as specialist guided tours, interpretation and education by private operators, and canoe and bicycle tour or hire services.

Well-organised tour groups can help interpret park values and minimise impacts. A co-ordinated effort between tour operators and park management towards the provision of high-quality services and the protection of park values is desirable.

The development of an iconic East Gippsland coastal walk through the park (section 6.8) may stimulate an increase in licensed tour activity and create a demand for additional services.

**Aims**

- Encourage the provision of appropriate licensed services to improve the quality and range of recreational experiences available in the park.
- Minimise impacts of licensed operations on park values and the experiences of other visitors.

**Management strategies**

- *Liaise with licensed tour operators to provide information and advice on appropriate activities and on the park's values to ensure they provide high quality services.*
- *Encourage the appropriate extension of the range of guided activities available to visitors (e.g. boat tours and guided walks).*
- *Ensure that all tourism operators are licensed in accordance with the National Parks Act and that licences stipulate that Indigenous content may be used only with the approval of the Traditional Owners.*
- *Encourage licensed tour operators to recognise and respect Indigenous cultural heritage, and enhance the visitor experience, by working to deliver their services with the Traditional Owners.*
- *Encourage local Indigenous enterprises to provide licensed tour operations and park activities, in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners.*
- *Monitor the activities of tour operators to ensure that they do not impact adversely on the park's values.*
- *Ensure that any future licensed services associated with walking track developments are compatible with the protection of park values.*

## 6.14 Public safety

Park visitors are exposed to a number of natural hazards, mostly in coastal areas and not peculiar to the park. Some risks do relate specifically to the park and its infrastructure. Public information and education programs are one of the most effective ways to promote safety.

The most serious hazard during the Fire Danger Period on a broad scale is wildfire (section 4.6). Fire risk around high-use areas and assets is reduced by scheduled fuel reduction burns (figure 4) and a system of firebreaks. The Banksia Bluff camp has the highest concentration of people in the park in mid-summer. Public safety procedures are in place for the Cape Conran accommodation areas. It is vital that visitors, staff and public authorities understand these. Visitors should be discouraged from using remote parts of the park away from the coast on days of extreme fire danger.

Falling trees and tree limbs represent a potential public risk, particularly in the park's camping and picnic areas. Ongoing management of this issue is necessary.

Vehicle accidents on park roads are not uncommon. Excessive speed on narrow gravel surfaced roads is the usual cause. In some cases further advisory signage or speed restrictions may be appropriate.

There are inherent dangers associated with some activities such as off-track walking, water activities and rock fishing. There have been numerous incidents involving delayed, sick or injured walkers over the years, some invoking search and rescue responses. At times strong rips present risks to swimmers. No surf lifesaving patrols are provided in the park. Strong outflow currents associated with recently opened or flooded river-mouths present a serious hazard to the unwary.

Boating hazards have been discussed elsewhere in this plan (section 6.6). A marine radio listening watch is provided from the Cape Conran office when it is open and supplements services provided by Marlo Ocean Rescue.

Paralysis Ticks are common in the park. Tick bites can have serious effects on people and dogs.

The contracted managers at Cape Conran are required to have an emergency plan. Park managers are not the lead response agency for most emergency situations, but are often first on the scene. Local response arrangements need to form part of an Emergency Management Plan for the park, which in turn must integrate with the Municipal Emergency Response plan for effective co-ordination of responses to the range of likely incidents in the park.

### Aims

- Promote safe visitor use of the park.
- Ensure that park management has adequate capacity to respond to emergency situations.

### Management strategies

- *Provide public information and safety warnings on bushfire risks and other specific hazards within the park.*
- *Continue to manage fire risk in accordance with the approved Fire Protection Plan.*
- *Maintain fire protection systems at the Banksia Bluff campground and Cape Conran cabins and ensure that park staff and fire crews are adequately trained in their use.*
- *Maintain a tree hazard management program for the Cape Conran campground, cabins and day-use areas.*
- *Investigate options to improve the safety of key gravelled Class B roads within the park.*
- *Consider provision of information on beach safety at major swimming beaches.*
- *Undertake periodic risk management audits and manage identified hazards, particularly at key visitor sites.*
- *Ensure park management staff are adequately trained to assist in emergency situations.*
- *Ensure Indigenous cultural heritage values and the relevant Indigenous community and agency contacts are adequately considered and included in the*

*development of Emergency Management Plans for the park.*

- *Maintain currency of Cape Conran Emergency Plan which guides on-site staff in first response procedures.*
- *Maintain a current Emergency Management Plan for the park that makes adequate provision for the range of possible incidents, draws on new*

*knowledge as it becomes available and puts in place strategies to minimise dangers to park visitors.*

- *Ensure that Municipal Emergency Response Plans make adequate provision for the range of likely incidents within the park.*

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## 7 STRATEGIES FOR AUTHORISED USES AND BOUNDARY ISSUES

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### 7.1 Authorised uses

Commercial services provided at Cape Conran include operation of the campground and roofed accommodation and the sale of essential camping supplies (e.g. gas, wood, bottled water and ice) from the Conran office. These services are currently authorised under a three-year management permit. The permit allows for the provision of other goods and services subject to Parks Victoria's approval. A recent review of the permit has confirmed that the visitor experience could be enhanced and asset management improved under a lease arrangement.

Apiculture is permitted within the park. Three bee sites off the Pearl Point Road have been used, traditionally, under six-month permits. Colonies of feral European Honey Bees can and have caused nuisance to park visitors.

Two bait access licences issued under the Fisheries Act are current for the waters of Sydenham Inlet (section 6.7).

A section of TRU power line runs east-west through much of the park between Marlo and Bemm River. A 'Management Vehicles Only' power line track runs beneath this line to allow maintenance (section 6.2). The power line easement is sometimes slashed to reduce the risk of wildfire damaging the power line. The easement and power poles have a major impact on the park landscape and can ignite wildfires. The power line is particularly intrusive in the highly scenic and semi-remote settings between Cape Conran and Bemm River.

Telstra also has utilities passing through the park at various locations. Public telephones are also provided at the Conran office.

A coastal navigation beacon on Cape Conran is maintained for local shipping purposes by Gippsland Ports. There are a number of unobtrusive geodetic survey markers in the park.

### Aim

- Minimise the impacts of authorised occupations and activities on the park, visitors and other users.

### Management strategies

- *Seek to ensure all public authority functioning and private land uses in the park are addressed and authorised in accordance with:*
  - *relevant legislation*
  - *Parks Victoria's operational policies*
  - *Parks Victoria's Guidelines for Working with Aboriginal communities and Protection of Cultural Sites.*
- *Continue to refine the Cape Conran business management arrangements in the best interests of the visitors and park assets and values.*
- *Ensure that Traditional Owners are consulted, and their views taken into account, in considering the issue of any authorisation.*
- *Ensure uses have minimal impact on park values by including effective conditions in authorisations and liaising with authorised users to ensure that conditions are met.*
- *Continue to make available the three traditional bee sites off Pearl Point Road.*
- *Prepare a Section 27 consent under the National Parks Act for the sections of TRU power line within the park, including the following conditions:*
  - *vegetation removal along the power line easement will be the minimum necessary to reasonably protect the asset*
  - *options to eliminate or minimise landscape impacts of the Cape Conran to Bemm River power line will be investigated.*



## 7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

The majority of the park abuts other public land and waters (figure 2):

- Bass Strait forms the seaward boundary of the park at the low water mark.
- Croajingolong National Park adjoins the park at the low water mark along the east shore of Sydenham Inlet.
- A narrow strip of foreshore reserve separates the park from the Bemm River township.
- State forest abuts the northern boundary. The adjoining areas are zoned for Special Protection which confers very high levels of protection of natural values.
- Marlo Aerodrome Reserve abuts the northern boundary and is managed by the East Gippsland Shire.

The south-eastern portion of the Aerodrome Reserve is leased to the Department of Education and Training as a site for the development of a Rural Learning Centre. The Department is about to commence the detailed design phase of this \$2.8 million project. Road access to the site may be constructed on a road reserve which runs north from the Cape Conran Road near Point Ricardo. Opportunities to create linkages between the Centre and the park and establish partnership projects of mutual benefit will be explored.

A section of the Aerodrome Reserve is grazed by the neighbouring landholder. The boundary of the area, shared with the park, is poorly defined on the ground. A part of the adjoining park is occupied by some paddocks that were fenced prior to its establishment. The National Parks Act does not provide for grazing as a permitted park use.

Freehold land adjoins part of the park near Bemm River township and on the northern boundary, west of the Cabbage Tree–Cape Conran Road. The residents of Bemm River and Marlo are also close neighbours.

Most adjoining landholders are involved in cattle grazing, although there are also other agricultural enterprises. Generally boundaries are well fenced. Part of the western silt jetty of the Bemm River within the park is subject to unauthorised grazing.

Some freehold land managers manage land for nature conservation, and some are involved in tourism. On some private allotments in the vicinity of the Burbang Caravan Park close to Cape Conran, native vegetation cover has been substantially retained and in some cases protected by covenant. Two cabins were recently built as the first stage of an accommodation development on farmland in this area. Similar future tourism developments need to be well planned and managed, to minimise potential impact on park values.

The Cape Conran Road and the Cabbage Tree–Conran Road, which are used by many tourists, pass through, but do not form part of the park. The roads are managed by VicRoads and the East Gippsland Shire respectively. The section of Sydenham Inlet Road adjoining the park is also managed by VicRoads. Good roadside management is important to maintaining a range of park values, particularly landscape quality.

Tourism is the main industry of Bemm River and Marlo townships and the tourism attracted by the park is of critical importance to their economies.

Periodically the entrance to Sydenham Inlet closes, the water level in the estuary rises considerably, and adjacent areas of farmland, township and key access roads become flooded. Pearl Point Road also becomes inundated, cutting access between Bemm River and the local beaches. Parks Victoria, in consultation with the local community, has developed protocols for opening the entrance when the water reaches a specified level to prevent long-term flooding. Parks Victoria implements the protocols, consistent with the Coastal Management Act, Heritage River Act (section 4.2) and Native Title Act.

The entrance opening protocols for Sydenham Inlet may need to be refined if the Gippsland Coastal Board, in accordance with its intention, prepares a Gippsland Estuaries Coastal Action Plan, including principles for entrance openings across the region, or if it becomes evident that the implementation of the current protocols is having undesirable impacts on park values.

### **Aims**

- Minimise the adverse impacts on the park of activities occurring outside the park boundaries.
- Minimise conflicts between park management activities and adjoining land use.

### **Management strategies**

- *Ensure park boundaries are clearly defined.*
- *In co-operation with DSE and the East Gippsland Shire Council, resolve the boundary and encroachment issues between the park and the Marlo Aerodrome Reserve to prevent unauthorised grazing.*
- *Explore options to create linkages between the proposed Rural Learning Centre and the park, and establish partnership projects of mutual benefit with the Department of Education and Training.*
- *Ensure that park values are respected in the design and construction of the access road to the proposed Rural Learning Centre.*
- *Seek to ensure that the management of through roads, particularly maintenance of roadside vegetation, is sympathetic to park values through a liaison with VicRoads and the East Gippsland Shire Council.*
- *Maintain liaison with local community groups and adjacent land owners, and where appropriate involve them in relevant aspects of planning and managing the park.*
- *Prevent illegal grazing within the park on the western silt jetty of the Bemm River through liaison with adjoining landholders.*
- *Work with park neighbours to develop a co-operative approach to fire management and fenceline clearing in accordance with Parks Victoria's policy and operating guidelines.*
- *Continue the arrangement whereby DSE, as a referral authority, in consultation with Parks Victoria assesses planning permit applications for adjoining land that have the potential to have an impact on the park. Consult with, and represent the views of, the Traditional Owners on planning issues affecting the park to DSE, as appropriate.*
- *Open the entrance to Sydenham Inlet to relieve flooding in accordance with agreed protocols (sections 4.2 and 5.1). Periodically review the protocols for openings in consultation with the local community, Traditional Owners, the scheduled Aboriginal community, and relevant agencies. Ensure that the protocols address:*
  - *environmental and cultural values of the park and heritage river in accordance with relevant legislation, policy, guidelines and plans (sections 2.5 and 2.6)*
  - *the safety of people*
  - *the feasibility of a successful opening*
  - *economic and social impacts of flooding on freehold land and marine activities*
  - *potential damage to public and private assets.*

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## 8 COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

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### 8.1 Community awareness

Community support for, and involvement in, the park depends upon a high level of community awareness of the park's values and a consequential shared sense of custodianship for the park. These are more likely to develop if Parks Victoria demonstrates its respect for community views and engages in ongoing consultation and information sharing.

Overall, neighbours and local communities are reasonably aware of the values and sensitivities of the park, but are less familiar with values and sensitivities of Bemm Heritage River.

Co-operation with adjoining landholders is essential on matters such as control of domestic animals, weeds and pest animals. In a fire-prone environment, co-operation on matters of strategic fire protection, including maintenance of fire access and fence-line clearing, is of mutual importance (section 7.2).

Strong park-related social networks among park visitors, the local community and park staff create a platform from which to raise awareness and reach others in the community.

Parks Victoria is aware there have been conflicts over use of the land in the past, and recognises that reconciliation among the concerned parties, including Parks Victoria, is important to all concerned and to the park's future.

#### Aims

- Build a sense of custodianship for the park among community groups and individuals.
- Increase public awareness of the park's values, regulations and management activities.

#### Management strategies

- *Raise community awareness of park and heritage river values, and Parks Victoria's commitment to seek reconciliation with those concerned with past and present uses of the land included in the park, through targeted information and education programs.*

- *Work with the Traditional Owners, the scheduled Aboriginal community, and with neighbours, AAV and DSE, to raise community awareness of Indigenous cultural heritage values of the park and adjoining land, and to support the achievement of common goals for these values.*

### 8.2 Community participation

Parks Victoria recognises the great potential of community heritage, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for the enrichment and strengthening of the park's management. In particular, Parks Victoria respects and values the cultural lore, interests and aspirations of Indigenous and local people.

A range of community groups have an active or potential interest in the plan's implementation. The interests of such groups often overlap and may or may not be complementary. Where such groups work together and with Parks Victoria to achieve common goals, there can be considerable benefits to all parties in the avoidance of duplication of effort and in improved outcomes.

Parks Victoria seeks to establish and maintain relationships and working arrangements with any group willing to take an active and constructive interest in particular aspects of the park's management. Suitable areas for group participation include research, survey and monitoring, conservation and protection activities, and maintenance and improvement of visitor access and facilities.

Friends of Cape Conran Coastal Park, Bemm River Progress Association, Moogji Aboriginal Council, Orbost Secondary College and Conservation Volunteers Australia have all undertaken valuable projects in the park that otherwise might not have progressed.

There are substantial opportunities for Indigenous peoples, statewide volunteer programs, Landcare groups, angling groups and campers to participate in park projects. There are also opportunities for tertiary students to engage in research activities that provide valuable assistance to the park's management and at the same time gain

important on-site work experience in natural resources management.

Interest groups' voluntary participation in the plan's implementation fosters a greater community awareness of park values.

#### **Aim**

- Inform, enrich and strengthen park management with the community's heritage, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Promote opportunities for community groups to assist Parks Victoria in the park's management.*
- *Promote the activities of the Friends of Cape Conran Coastal Park and support them in assisting with the park's management.*
- *Strengthen relationships with community groups that use or have a particular interest in the park, and encourage and support them to work together and with Parks Victoria to achieve shared goals for the park.*
- *Liaise with local tourism organisations (e.g. Orbost Chamber of Commerce) on matters of mutual interest and for effective promotion of the park.*
- *Continue to further build, strengthen, and maintain relationships with Indigenous communities with an interest in the park. In particular, seek to further develop a close inclusive working partnership with the Traditional Owners and co-operation with the scheduled Aboriginal community.*
- *Encourage the establishment of an Indigenous reference group to work with Parks Victoria, in accordance with legislation and operational policies, to reflect the Traditional Owners' cultural lore, and interests, rights and aspirations for the area, in the planning and management of the park and other protected areas in East Gippsland.*
- *Seek to establish a Memorandum of Understanding and working protocols with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled*

*Aboriginal community regarding the assessment of annual works programs.*

- *Promote opportunities among interested community groups and Parks Victoria's staff for sharing knowledge and increasing understanding and appreciation of each other's aspirations and goals for the park.*
- *Encourage and assist friends, other interest groups and volunteers, to develop an understanding and appreciation of the park's values, and the Traditional Owners' cultural lore, and interests and rights and aspirations for the park area.*
- *Encourage and support groups that use or have an interest in the park to work together to pursue sources of funding, including Parks Victoria grants, for projects in the park. Encourage joint grants with other groups as appropriate.*
- *Provide opportunities for, and encourage and support tertiary students to undertake, volunteer work experience and research activities that assist park management and are consistent with the plan.*
- *Develop a long-term volunteer strategy which incorporates the skills and interests of volunteer groups in appropriate park management activities.*

### **8.3 Agency partnerships**

A range of government agencies have policy and management responsibilities that relate to the park as indicated elsewhere in the plan.

#### **Aim**

- Collaborate with other agencies on matters of mutual interest towards obtaining the best possible outcomes for the park and its values.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Adopt a collaborative approach to issues that relate to the park's management and are of mutual interest to Parks Victoria and the local municipality or State or Commonwealth Government agencies.*
- *Seek to resolve issues in accordance with the plan and relevant policies and legislation.*

- *Collaborate with DSE on a range of matters including nature-based tourism development, community partnerships, resource protection and natural values management programs.*
- *Collaborate with the Department of Education and Training to develop complementary linkages and programs between the new Rural Learning Centre and the park (section 7.2).*
- *Collaborate with the East Gippsland Shire on strategic tourism matters and any municipal planning scheme amendments or adjoining development proposals likely to impact on the park.*

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#### **Personnal communications**

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Susan White, Geological Society Australia.

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## GLOSSARY

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**Biodiversity** – the natural diversity of all life: the sum of all our native species of flora and fauna, the genetic variation within them, their habitats and the ecosystems of which they are an integral part.

**Bioregion** – an area with unique underlying environmental and ecological features.

**Catchment** – the area of land that drains to a watercourse or estuary.

**Country** – all of nature, culture and spirituality relating to an area.

**Crown land** – land belonging to the State.

**Culture** – a material, social, aesthetic or spiritual development or refinement produced by the human mind.

**Cultural lore** – tradition about songs, rituals, ceremonies, dances, art, customs, and spiritual beliefs.

**Cultural object** – an object that is of particular significance to people in accordance with tradition.

**Cultural place** – a place that is of particular significance to people in accordance with tradition.

**Customs** – observances and practices of people (includes land management and resource use) in accordance with their tradition.

**Ecologically sustainable development (ESD)** – development that improves the total quality of life both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

**Ecosystem** – a dynamic complex of interacting organisms and their associated non-living environment.

**Freehold land** – land held under freehold tenure (commonly private land).

**Geomorphology** – the scientific study of landforms and geological formations and the processes that shape them.

**Heritage** – a place, activity, way of life or structure that has aesthetic, historical, scientific, social or other value for the past, present or future generations.

**Indigenous cultural heritage** – the cultural lore, places and objects of significance to people in accordance with tradition.

**Indigenous people** – people who are descendants of Aboriginal Australians.

**Infrastructure** – physical structures that facilitate the human use of an area (e.g. roads, paths, toilet blocks).

**Levels of Service Framework** – a strategic framework for visitor and asset management that is used to support resource allocation decision-making to best provide appropriate recreational infrastructure in a consistent manner.

**Nature-based tourism** – tourism that provides a range of experiences associated with the natural environment, generally related to outdoor activity.

**Pests** – exotic organisms (plants, animals or pathogens) that when introduced outside their natural or previous distribution, cause significant changes to habitats, food chains, ecosystems or human health by feeding on or competing with native species. Can refer to either terrestrial or marine species.

**Relevant Indigenous communities** – includes the Traditional Owners, and the scheduled Aboriginal community for an area included in the park.

**Scheduled Aboriginal community** – the local Aboriginal community scheduled under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth) relating to an area of the park.

**Sediment** – insoluble material that settles to the bottom of a water body, consisting mainly of particles derived from rock, soil and organic material.

**Stakeholders** – those people and organisations who may affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by, a decision or activity.

**Threatening processes** – a source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause loss.

**Tradition** – the body of knowledge, belief and customs that is passed from generation to generation.

**Traditional Owners** – communities of people that reasonably assert an association with the park area that is based on direct descent from the original Indigenous custodians and is in accordance with Indigenous tradition.

**Values** – natural and cultural assets (e.g. historical artefacts, features, landscapes, flora and fauna species, flora communities) that have been given worth or are considered to be desirable.

### Abbreviations

**AAV** – Aboriginal Affairs Victoria

**CFL** – (former) Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands



**CNR** – (former) Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

**DSE** – Department of Sustainability and Environment

**GCB** – Gippsland Coastal Board

**LCC** – (former) Land Conservation Council

**MAC** – Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Incorporated

**NRE** – (former) Department of Natural Resources and Environment

**VCC** – Victorian Coastal Council

## APPENDIX 1 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR THE PARK

Management objectives for parks included in Schedule Three ('Other Parks') of the National Parks Act, which include Cape Conran Coastal Park, are in Sections 4 as listed below.

### 4. *Objects of Act*

The objects of the Act are—

- (b) in respect of parks described in Schedule Three—
  - (i) to make provision, in so far as is appropriate to each such park, for the protection and preservation of indigenous flora and fauna and of features of scenic or archaeological, ecological, historic or other scientific interest; and
  - (ii) subject to such provision as is made under sub-paragraph (i), to make provision for the public to observe, experience or otherwise become acquainted in those parks with the countryside and rural skills activities and pursuits and for carrying on, in those parks and for those purposes, agricultural, horticultural, or other agrarian projects and botanical, biological, ecological, geological, zoological, or other scientific studies or projects; and
- (c) to make provision in accordance with the foregoing for the use of parks by the public for the purposes of enjoyment, recreation or education and for the encouragement and control of that use.

Requirements of the Secretary for parks included in Schedule Three of the National Parks Act are in Section 18 as listed below.

### 18. *Other Parks*

(2) The Secretary shall, subject to this Act —

- (a) ensure that each park referred to in Schedule Three is controlled and managed in accordance with the objects of the Act in a manner that will, insofar as is appropriate to the park –
  - (i) preserve, protect and re-establish indigenous flora and fauna in the park;
  - (ii) preserve and protect features in the park of scenic, archaeological, ecological, ecological, historic or other scientific interest;
  - (iii) enable the park to be used by the public for the enjoyment, observation and study of the countryside and its pursuits, its flora and fauna, its ecology and geology and other features; and
  - (iv) control exotic flora and fauna in the park;
- (b) ensure that proper and sufficient measures are taken to protect each park referred to in Schedule Three from injury by fire;
  - (i) promote and encourage the use and enjoyment of parks referred to in Schedule 3 by the public; and
  - (ii) prepare a plan of management in respect of each park referred to in Schedule 3.

For an up-to-date copy of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.), refer to Victorian Acts on the Victorian Parliament website '[www.parliament.vic.gov.au/legislation&bills](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/legislation&bills)'.

## APPENDIX 2 THREATENED FLORA

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS		FFG ACT
		AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	STATUS
<i>Acronychia oblongifolia</i> <sup>1</sup>	Yellow-wood	-	r	-
<i>Almaleea paludosa</i> <sup>1</sup>	Marsh Bush-pea	-	r	-
<i>Baeckea linifolia</i> <sup>1</sup>	Swamp Baeckea	-	r	-
<i>Baeckea ramosissima</i> subsp. <i>prostrata</i> <sup>*</sup>	Rosy Baeckea	-	r	-
<i>Bossiaea ensata</i> <sup>1</sup>	Sword Bossiaea	-	r	-
<i>Bossiaea heterophylla</i> <sup>1</sup>	Variable Bossiaea	-	r	-
<i>Burnettia cuneata</i> <sup>1</sup>	Lizard Orchid	-	r	-
<i>Calendenia aurantiaca</i> <sup>3</sup>	Orange-tip Finger-orchid	-	r	-
<i>Calorophus elongatus</i> <sup>1</sup>	Long Rope-rush	-	v	-
<i>Commersonia</i> sp. aff. <i>fraser</i> <sup>1</sup>	Blackfellow's Hemp	-	v	-
<i>Corunastylis pumila</i> <sup>1</sup>	Green Midge-orchid	-	r	-
<i>Corybas fimbriata</i> <sup>1</sup>	Fringed Helmet-orchid	-	r	-
<i>Cryptostylis erecta</i> <sup>3</sup>	Bonnet Orchid	VU	e	-
<i>Cryptostylis hunteriana</i> <sup>1</sup>	Leafless Tongue-orchid	VU	e	L
<i>Diuris punctata</i> var. <i>punctata</i> <sup>3</sup>	Purple Diuris	-	v	L / D
<i>Elymus multiflorus</i> <sup>1</sup>	Short-awned Wheat-grass	-	k	-
<i>Entolasia stricta</i> <sup>1</sup>	Upright Panic	-	k	-
<i>Grevillea neurophylla</i> <sup>1</sup>	Granite Grevillea	-	r	-
<i>Hibbertia dentata</i> <sup>1</sup>	Trailing Guinea-flower	-	r	-
<i>Hibbertia rufa</i> <sup>1</sup>	Brown Guinea-flower	-	r	-
<i>Hibbertia torulosa</i> <sup>1</sup>	Knobby Guinea-flower	-	k	-
<i>Hybanthus vernonii</i> subsp. <i>vernonii</i> <sup>1</sup>	Erect Violet	-	r	-
<i>Hydrorchis orbicularis</i> <sup>1</sup>	Swamp Onion-orchid	-	v	-
<i>Laxmannia gracilis</i> <sup>3</sup>	Slender Wire-lily	-	r	-
<i>Lepidosperma limicola</i> <sup>1</sup>	Razor Sword-sedge	-	r	-
<i>Leptospermum glabrescens</i> s.s. <sup>2</sup>	Smooth Tea-tree	-	k	-
<i>Leptospermum trinervium</i> <sup>1</sup>	Paperbark Tea-tree	-	r	-
<i>Leucopogon esquamatus</i> <sup>1</sup>	Swamp Beard-heath	-	r	-
<i>Leucopogon microphyllus</i> var. <i>pilibundus</i> <sup>3</sup>	Hairy Beard-heath	-	r	-
<i>Lindsaea microphylla</i> <sup>1</sup>	Lacy Wedge-fern	-	r	-
<i>Melaleuca armillaris</i> ssp. <i>armillaris</i> <sup>3</sup>	Giant Honey-myrtle	-	r	-
<i>Ozothamnus argophyllus</i> <sup>1</sup>	Spicy Everlasting	-	r	-
<i>Persoonia</i> × <i>lucida</i> <sup>1</sup>	Shining Geebung	-	r	-
<i>Podolobium ilicifolium</i> <sup>1</sup>	Prickly Podolobium	-	r	-
<i>Pomaderris discolour</i> <sup>3</sup>	Eastern Pomaderris	-	r	-
<i>Pomaderris pilifera</i> <sup>1</sup>	Striped Pomaderris	-	r	-

Appendices

Appendix 2 (cont'd)

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS		FFG ACT
		AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	STATUS
<i>Pterostylis grandiflora</i> <sup>3</sup>	Cobra Greenhood	-	r	-
<i>Pterostylis pedoglossa</i> <sup>3</sup>	Prawn Greenhood	-	v	-
<i>Ripogonum album</i> <sup>1</sup>	White Supplejack	-	r	-
<i>Sambucus australasica</i> <sup>3</sup>	Yellow Elderberry	-	v	L
<i>Senecio spathulatus</i> s.s. <sup>1</sup>	Coast Groundsel	-	r	-
<i>Sowerbaea juncea</i> <sup>1</sup>	Rush Lily	-	r	-
<i>Stackhousia nuda</i> <sup>3</sup>	Wiry Stackhousia	-	r	-
<i>Thelymitra malvina</i> <sup>1</sup>	Mauve-tuft Sun-orchid	-	v	-
<i>Viola caleyana</i> <sup>3</sup>	Swamp Violet	-	r	-
<i>Xanthosia tasmanica</i> <sup>1</sup>	Southern Xanthosia	-	r	-

Source:

<sup>1</sup> DSE (2005a)

<sup>2</sup> State of the Parks Report, Parks Victoria

<sup>3</sup> other

\* presence in park requires verification

Australian status:

VU vulnerable

Victorian status:

e endangered

v vulnerable

r rare

k species poorly known

Status under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.):

L listed

D draft Action Statement prepared

## APPENDIX 3 THREATENED FAUNA

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS		FFG ACT	
		AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	FFG STATUS	ACTION STATEMENT
<b>Mammals</b>					
<i>Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis</i>	Common Bent-wing Bat (eastern sub-species)	-	Vul	L	
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Flying-fox	VU	Vul	L	
<i>Potorous tridactylus tridactylus</i>	Long-nosed Potoroo	VU	End	L	
<i>Arctocephalus forsteri</i>	New Zealand Fur Seal		NT	-	
<i>Pseudomys fumeus</i>	Smoky Mouse	EN	End	L	
<i>Isoodon obesulus obesulus</i>	Southern Brown Bandicoot	EN	NT	-	
<i>Dasyurus maculatus maculatus</i>	Spot-tailed Tiger Quoll	VU	End	L	No. 15
<b>Birds</b>					
<i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i>	Australasian Bittern	-	End	L	
<i>Porzana pusilla palustris</i>	Baillon's Crake	-	Vul	L	
<i>Phalacrocorax fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Cormorant	-	NT	-	
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	-	NT	L	
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern	-	NT	L	
<i>Dasyornis brachypterus brachypterus</i>	Eastern Bristlebird	EN	End	L	No. 89
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Eastern Curlew	-	NT		
<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>	Fairy Prion	V	LR		
<i>Sterna nereis nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	-	End	L	
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami</i>	Glossy Black-Cockatoo	-	Vul	L	
<i>Ardea alba</i>	Great Egret		Vul	L	No. 120
<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae novaehollandiae</i>	Grey Goshawk	-	Vul	N	
<i>Pezoporus wallicus wallicus</i>	Ground Parrot	-	End	L	
<i>Sterna nilotica macrotarsa</i>	Gull-billed Tern	-	End	L	
<i>Aythya australis</i>	Hardhead	-	Vul	-	
<i>Charadrius rubricollis rubricollis</i>	Hooded Plover	-	Vul	L	No. 9
<i>Rallus pectoralis pectoralis</i>	Lewin's Rail	-	Vul	L	
<i>Sterna albifrons sinensis</i>	Little Tern	-	Vul	L	No. 51
<i>Tyto novaehollandiae novaehollandiae</i>	Masked Owl	-	End	L	No. 124
<i>Biziura lobata</i>	Musk Duck	-	Vul	-	
<i>Nycticorax caledonicus hillis</i>	Nankeen Night Heron	-	NT	-	
<i>Larus pacificus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull	-	NT	-	
<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>	Pied Cormorant	-	NT	-	
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl	-	End	L	No. 92

Appendices

Appendix 3 (cont'd)

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CONSERVATION STATUS		FFG ACT	
		AUSTRALIA	VICTORIA	FFG STATUS	ACTION STATEMENT
<i>Xanthomyza phrygia</i>	Regent Honeyeater	EN	CEn	L	No. 41
<i>Platalea regia</i>	Royal Spoonbill	-	Vul	-	
<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	Shy Albatross	VU	Vul	L	
<i>Tyto tenebricosa tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl	-	Vul	L	No. 117
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Southern Giant-Petrel	EN	Vul	L	
<i>Chthonicola sagittata</i>	Speckled Warbler	-	Vul	L	
<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	Square-tailed Kite	-	Vul	L	
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot	EN	End	L	
<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	Turquoise Parrot	-	NT	L	
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	-	Vul	L	No. 60
<b>Fish</b>					
<i>Prototroctes maraera</i>	Australian Grayling	VU	Vul	L	
<b>Reptiles and amphibians</b>					
<i>Pseudemoia rawlinsoni</i>	Glossy Grass Skink	-	NT	-	
<i>Litoria aurea</i>	Green and Golden Bell Frog	VU	NT		
<i>Uperoleia martini</i>	Martin's Toadlet	-	DD	-	
<i>Egernia coventryi</i>	Swamp Skink	-	Vul	L	
<i>Varanus varius</i>	Lace Monitor	-	Vu	-	
<i>Uperoleia tyleri</i>	Tyler's Toadlet	-	DD	-	

Source: DSE (2005b)

Australian status:

EN endangered in Australia

VU vulnerable in Australia

Victorian status:

CEn critically endangered

End endangered

Vul vulnerable

NT near threatened

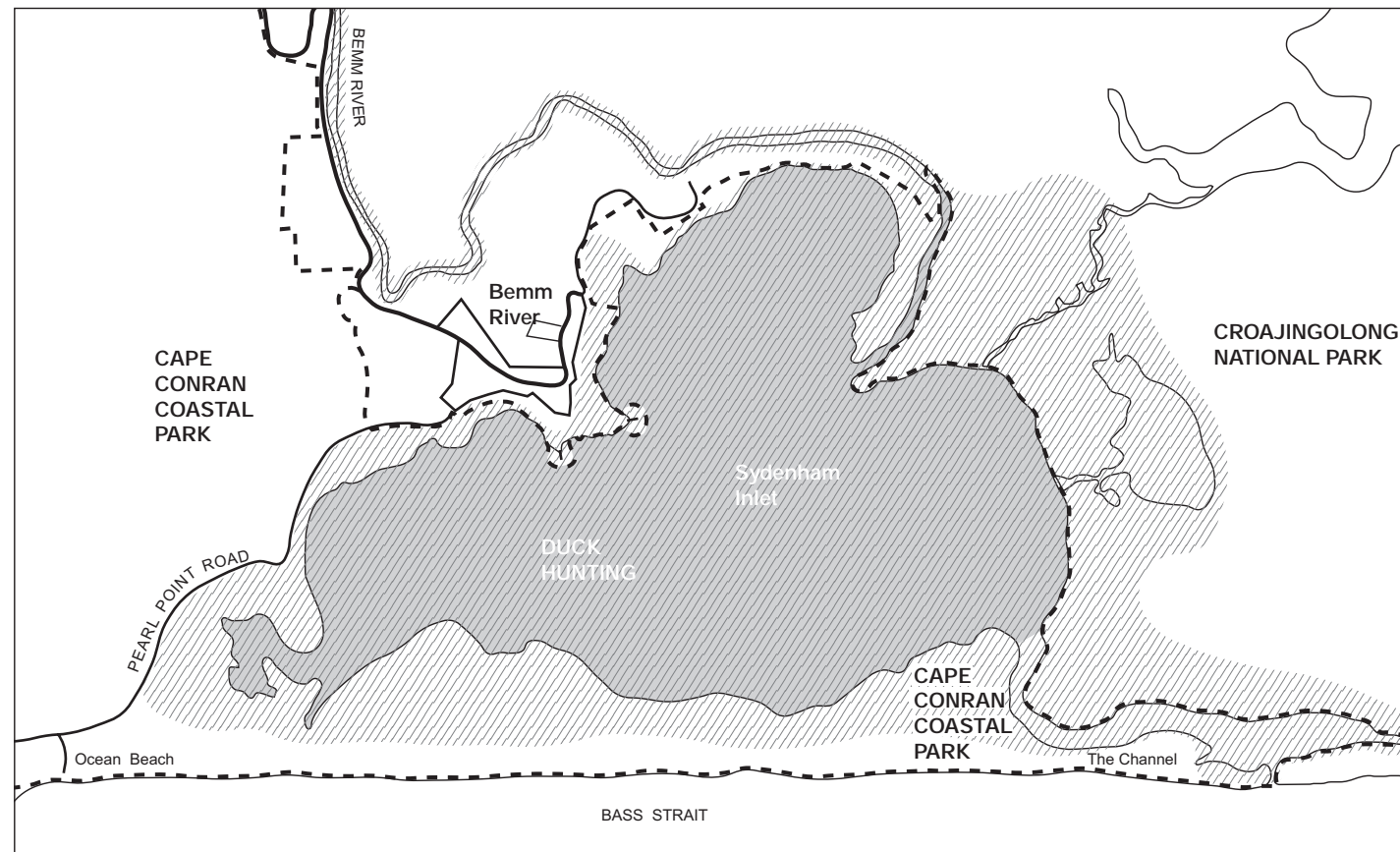
DD data deficient

Status under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) (FFG Act):

L Listed

N Nominated

FIGURE 2a  
**CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK**  
 LAND TENURE AND OVERLAYS – SYDENHAM INLET



**Cape Conran Coastal Park**

- Major road
- Minor/unsealed road
- - - Boundary of Cape Conran Coastal Park

**Overlays\***

- Land use designation: Bemm Heritage River
- Land use designation: Duck Hunting

\* This map should be read in conjunction with Figure 2.

N

0      0.5      1.0  
 KILOMETRES

Cartography by Charles Walsh  
 Nature Tourism Services 03/06

Please note that this map is indicative only. For detailed boundary information please refer to marked up topographic maps on display at the Parks Victoria Orbost office during the plan of management exhibition period.

FIGURE 1  
**CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK**  
 REGIONAL LOCALITY PLAN

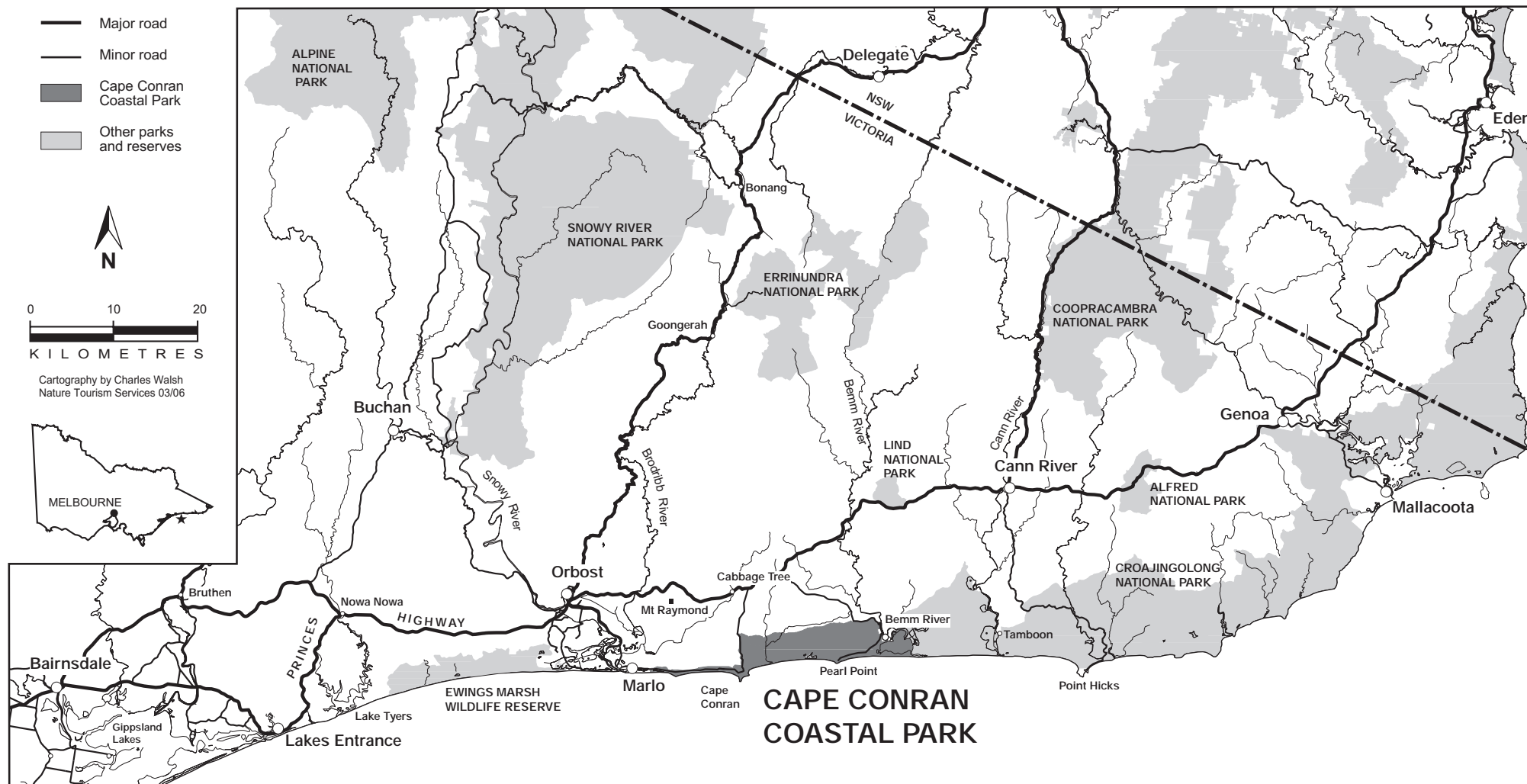






FIGURE 3

# CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK ACCESS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

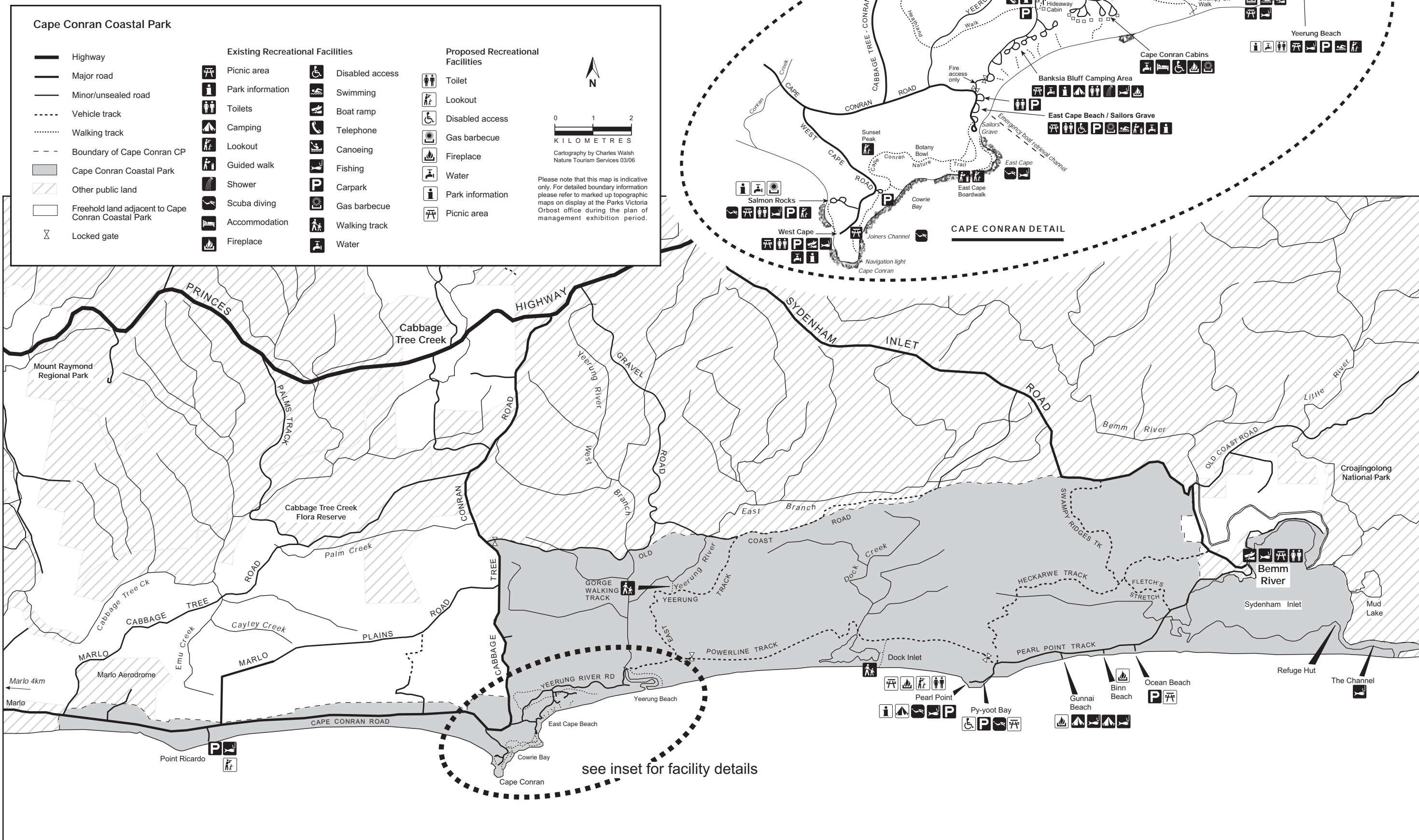


FIGURE 4  
**CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK**  
**FIRE PRE-SUPPRESSION STRATEGY PLAN**

