

Namadgi



Summary of the Namadgi National Park

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT 2010

Namadgi's values

Namadgi National Park is the largest conservation reserve in the ACT covering approximately 46% (106 095 ha) of the Territory. The park includes the rugged mountain ranges and broad grassy valleys in the western and southern parts of the ACT.

Namadgi protects the Cotter River Catchment, Canberra's main supply of water and is important for conserving biodiversity. The park's snow gum woodlands, subalpine fens and bogs, grasslands and montane forest communities provide habitat for a diverse range of species.

Namadgi has a rich heritage of human history with evidence of Aboriginal use of the land and remnants of early European pastoral activity.

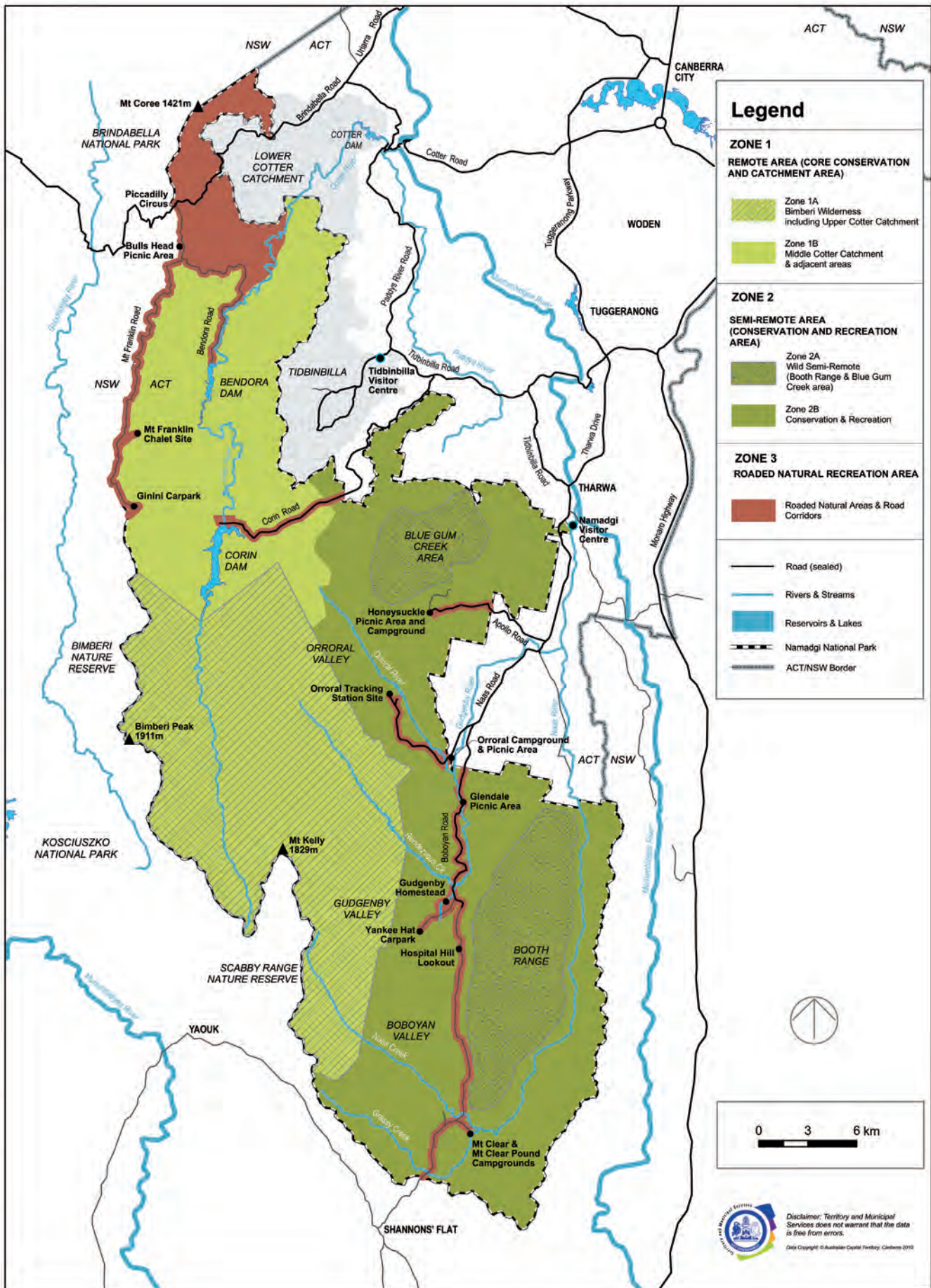
The park is popular for low key recreation including bushwalking, camping, cycling, rock climbing and abseiling. In addition, the Bimberi Wilderness provides a place of solitude for inspiration and wellbeing.

Namadgi is one of eleven national parks and reserves in the Australian Alps that are collectively known as the Australian Alps national parks. These parks are managed cooperatively to provide protection for much of the alpine, subalpine and montane environments of mainland Australia.

This summary of the *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010* provides a brief overview. For more comprehensive information please refer to the full plan of management.



Namadgi National Park Management Zones



Why have a plan of management for Namadgi?

The *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010* is a legal document which identifies the values of the park and how they can be protected. The plan provides guidance to the ACT Government's park management agency and indicates to the ACT community and park visitors the primary objectives in managing the park. A review of the plan is required every ten years.

ACT Legislative and Planning Framework

Namadgi National Park is defined as Public Land under the *Territory Plan* (the key statutory planning document in the ACT) and the *Planning and Development Act 2007* requires that each area of reserved Public Land has a plan of management. The Act identifies the primary management objectives for Namadgi as:

Wilderness area

1. To conserve the natural environment in a manner ensuring that disturbance to that environment is minimal.
2. To provide for the use of the area (other than by vehicles or other mechanised equipment) for recreation by limited numbers of people, so as to ensure that opportunities for solitude are provided.

National park

1. To conserve the natural environment.
2. To provide for public use of the area for recreation, education and research.

What is in the plan?

The plan identifies objectives for management of the park's values and includes background information that has been considered in developing policies and actions.

Park values are addressed under:

- Water
- Natural Heritage
- Cultural Heritage
- Fire
- Recreation
- Learning
- Community
- A protected and managed resource.



Park zones

Management zones have been developed for Namadgi based on natural and cultural heritage values. These are shown on the map on page 2. Key issues considered in developing the zones include:

- the need to protect Canberra's urban water supply
- protection of biodiversity, ecological processes, cultural heritage and scenic landscapes
- protection of areas that are highly ecologically significant where threatened species, ecological communities and geological features occur that are sensitive to disturbance
- protection of Namadgi's 'wilderness' and 'remote areas' values
- the ACT legislative and planning framework.

The zones provide a gradation from remote areas (wilderness and water catchment) which has the most restrictive access policies, to areas accessible by vehicle with more 'developed' recreational opportunities. Management policies for each zone are outlined in Table 1. Recreation policies for each zone are outlined in Table 2.



Table 1. Management policies

See map for management zones on page 2.

	Zone 1 Remote Area Core Conservation and Catchment Area		Zone 2 Semi-Remote Area Conservation and Recreation Area		Zone 3 Roaded Natural Recreation Area
	Zone 1A Bimberi Wilderness including Upper Cotter Catchment	Zone 1B Middle Cotter Catchment and Adjacent Areas	Zone 2A Wild Semi-Remote Booth Range and Blue Gum Creek Area	Zone 2B Conservation and Recreation	Zone 3 Roaded Natural Areas and Road Corridors
Access	Access on foot. Motorised or mechanised access strictly controlled and only for management purposes.	Vehicle access to track heads around periphery of zone. No motorised access except for management purposes. Tour cycling can occur on formed roads and fire trails north of Mt Ginini car park.	Vehicle access to track heads around periphery of zone. Motorised access limited to management vehicles.	Vehicle access to track heads around periphery of zone. Motorised access for management purposes; special circumstances and licensed operators. Tour cycling on formed roads. Horse riding on designated formed roads.	Access via 2WD roads to periphery of other zones. All roads in Zone 3 are public roads.
Management vehicle trails	No new management trails. Management trails may be redesigned and constructed to improved standards.	No new management trails unless there is a demonstrated need for fire or catchment protection purposes. Management trails may be redesigned and constructed to improved standards.	No new management trails unless there is a demonstrated need for fire protection purposes. Management trails may be redesigned and constructed to improved standards.	No new management trails unless there is a demonstrated need for fire protection purposes. Management trails may be redesigned and constructed to improved standards.	No new management trails unless there is a demonstrated need for fire protection purposes. Management trails may be redesigned and constructed to improved standards.
Facilities	Public facilities rarely found and only for natural and cultural heritage protection.	Public facilities rarely found and only for natural and cultural heritage protection.	Public facilities rarely found and only for natural and cultural heritage protection.	Low-key facilities consistent with existing network of historic huts, toilets and interpretive trails. Dispersed camping. On-site interpretation. Toilets to be provided in high-use areas.	Low-key facilities at picnic areas. Campgrounds with limited facilities and opportunities for remote style bush camping. Toilets to be provided in high-use areas.
Aboriginal cultural camps	Subject to negotiation and protocols.	Subject to negotiation and protocols.	Permitted subject to protocols.	Permitted subject to protocols.	Permitted subject to protocols.
Disabled access and facilities	N/A	All new facilities to provide for disabled access as far as practicable.	N/A	All new facilities to provide for disabled access as far as practicable.	All new facilities to provide for disabled access as far as practicable.
Social interaction	Extremely low level of interaction with other users. Predominant perception of isolation and remoteness from urban centres. Restriction on group size and overall numbers at any one time.	Low level of interaction with other users.	Generally a low level of interaction with other users.	Low to medium level of interaction. Medium opportunity to escape the urban environment, enjoy solitude or participate in group events.	Relatively frequent interaction with other visitors. Perception of travelling a road through a remote area.
Walking tracks	No new overnight walking tracks. Existing routes may be redefined for better environmental outcomes.	No overnight walking tracks. Has potential for new walking tracks for day walks.	No new walking tracks.	Potential for new walking tracks, particularly to link to existing walking tracks to create circular routes.	Potential for new walking tracks particularly short circular routes suitable for all abilities.
Campground	No designated campgrounds. Dispersed camping only.	No designated campgrounds or dispersed camping.	No designated campgrounds. Dispersed camping only.	Designated bush camps on overnight walking tracks permitted. Dispersed camping permitted.	Camping in designated campgrounds only.

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Walking tracks	No new overnight walking tracks. Existing routes may be redefined for better environmental outcomes.	No overnight walking tracks. Has potential for new walking tracks for day walks.	No new walking tracks.	Potential for new walking tracks, particularly to link to existing walking tracks to create circular routes.	Potential for new walking tracks particularly short circular routes suitable for all abilities.
Campground	No designated campgrounds. Dispersed camping only.	No designated campgrounds or dispersed camping.	No designated campgrounds. Dispersed camping only.	Designated bush camps on overnight walking tracks permitted. Dispersed camping permitted provided environmental and cultural heritage impacts remain low.	Camping in designated campgrounds only.
Management structures	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Permitted as required for research and monitoring and protection of natural and cultural heritage assets.	Permitted as required for research and monitoring and protection of natural and cultural heritage assets.
Utility structures	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Only if demonstrated as essential to meeting management objectives.	Utility structures to be kept to a minimum.	Utility structures to be kept to a minimum.
Built accommodation	No overnight accommodation. Cotter Hut strictly for management purposes.	No overnight accommodation.	No overnight accommodation.	No overnight accommodation. Staff residences permitted.	Overnight accommodation at Gudgenby Homestead Precinct. Staff residences permitted.
Management intervention	As required for natural and cultural heritage protection, and water resource management.	As required for natural and cultural heritage protection, and water resource management.	As required for natural and cultural heritage protection.	Moderate level for natural and cultural heritage protection.	High level for environment protection purposes.
Signs	Strictly for management and environmental protection purposes.	Strictly for management and environmental protection purposes.	Yes, particularly in high use areas and for walking tracks.	Yes, particularly in high use areas and for walking tracks.	Yes. Moderate level of directional and interpretive signage.
Interpretation	No permanent free-standing interpretation structures.	Low level of interpretation.	Moderate level of interpretation.	Moderate level of interpretation.	Moderate to high level of interpretation.
Memorial plaques	Only in accordance with the ACT Government Memorials Policy.	Only in accordance with the ACT Government Memorials Policy.	Only in accordance with the ACT Government Memorials Policy.	Only in accordance with the ACT Government Memorials Policy.	Only in accordance with the ACT Government Memorials Policy. This zone is the most appropriate for any approved memorials, and/or the Visitor Information Centre.

Water

Primary management objective

The ecological and hydrological condition of water catchments is maintained and, where desirable and feasible, improved, to ensure a continuing high quality and cost-effective water supply for the ACT.

Protecting water quality in the Cotter Catchment is a high priority in managing Namadgi National Park. Water from the upper Cotter Catchment (wilderness) and the middle Cotter Catchment (rugged mountainous country with limited access) generally requires minimal treatment before being supplied as drinking water to Canberra.

Recreational use of water supply catchments and reservoirs is often restricted in Australia. Access roads, tracks and visitors increase the risk of reduced water quality. For this reason the upper and middle Cotter Catchment is closed to public vehicle access. Camping is prohibited in the middle and lower Cotter Catchment and there is a limit on the number of overnight camping permits in the upper Cotter Catchment.

A protected catchment can still be affected by natural events. Heavy rain following the 2003 bushfire resulted in large quantities of sediment and ash washing into Bendora Dam, severely reducing water quality.

The fire also caused serious damage to the *Sphagnum* bogs in the headwaters of tributary streams. These bogs are important natural regulators as they store and release water. A long term program to assist in their recovery is underway.

Climate Change

The implications of climate change for water supply are uncertain. Current predictions suggest that the climate will become warmer and drier with possibly more frequent extreme events. Bushfires may be more frequent and wetlands may contract. The results of these changes may include a reduced catchment yield and declining water quality.

Other rivers

In addition to protecting the Cotter Catchment, Namadgi also protects the upper catchments of the Paddys, Gudgenby and Naas rivers.

Some of the water policies and actions included in the plan:

- Protect water quality in all streams by minimising the impact of erosion caused by management infrastructure and use (such as fire trails, road works and creek crossings). This means applying a high standard of soil erosion control measures and keeping any new works to an absolute minimum.
- The impact of feral animals, such as pigs, horses, deer and rabbits, on water quality will be minimised by conducting effective management programs.
- Evaluate closing and rehabilitating vehicle trails that are not necessary for management purposes or recreational access, and are likely sources of sedimentation in water supply catchments (e.g. the network of vehicle trails in the northern part of the park near Mt Coree).
- Monitoring and reporting programs related to catchment condition and water resource management will be established to inform future management decisions.
- Work on a regional level and with other Australian Alps management agencies to gather and analyse information on catchment management, particularly with regard to measuring impacts of climate change on water resources.
- Work across departments within Government to establish cooperative and knowledge sharing arrangements to achieve catchment management outcomes.

Natural heritage

Primary management objectives

- The biodiversity and geodiversity of Namadgi National Park is conserved.
- Ecosystems are managed so that they can continue to function and evolve naturally and the integrity of landscapes and scenery is protected.

Landscapes

The Brindabella Range forms the western boundary of Namadgi National Park with elevations varying from 1400 metres in the north to over 1800 metres in the south. The range is covered in snow for periods of time during winter and receives rainfall above 1200 millimetres per annum.

The park includes perennial rivers in deep valleys, dry rainshadow areas and grassy valley bottoms subject to cold air drainage. Peaty bogs and granite tors are a feature and many areas have only a thin soil cover.

Native vegetation

More than 700 plant species have been recorded in the park, almost two-thirds of the ACT total.

At lower elevations (900–1300 metres) there are tussock grasslands, bogs, woodlands and forests. Examples of these types of vegetation can be seen in the southern part of the park in the Naas and Gudgenby valleys. At middle elevations (1100–1600 metres) mountain forests dominate. These forests contain stands of the tall, majestic Alpine Ash, Brown Barrel and Mountain Gum. On drier sites are the aromatic Broad-leaved and Narrow-leaved Peppermints. Above 1600 metres alpine and subalpine vegetation is found including tussock grassland, herffield, Snow Gum woodland and bogs.

Three vegetation communities in Namadgi have been identified as requiring special protection and management. These are:

- *Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT*
- Montane and Subalpine Bog (forming a significant component of the Commonwealth listed *Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens*)
- Black Cypress Pine Tableland Open Forest.

A 'watching brief' is proposed for the Red Stringybark – Scribbly Gum Tableland Forest.

Several rare and unusual species occur in Namadgi, but only two plant species are formally recognised as threatened: *Gentiana baeuerlenii* (a sub-alpine

herb) and *Corunastylis ectopa* (Brindabella Midge Orchid). Both are declared threatened under ACT and Commonwealth legislation.

The Ginini Flats Wetlands is included on the *List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar) in recognition of its significant ecological characteristics and is the only Ramsar Wetland in the ACT.

The effects of climate change on vegetation are likely to be most evident in the higher altitude areas where conditions are already marginal for some ecological communities, for example, Montane and Subalpine Bog.

Native animals

To date, 222 species of vertebrate animals have been recorded in Namadgi. Many of these are nocturnal, secretive or difficult to locate and are not seen in commonly visited areas, for example, possums, gliders, bats, dingoes/wild dogs, frogs, fish and native crustaceans. Other animals, such as eastern grey kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, echidnas and some species of skinks and snakes, are often seen.

There are 170 bird species recorded from the park. The Brindabella Range is important habitat for a number of altitudinal migrants which are species that breed in the mountains during summer and descend to lower elevations in winter. These include the yellow-faced honeyeater, white-naped honeyeater, satin flycatcher, cicadabird, yellow-tailed black cockatoo, gang-gang cockatoo and Australian king-parrot.

At least 41 reptile species have been recorded in Namadgi, including 7 species of snake, 33 species of lizard and one species of tortoise.

Four species of native fish are found in Namadgi's streams. Trout cod, Macquarie perch and two-spined blackfish are presently restricted to the Cotter Catchment and listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*. Mountain galaxias are widely distributed throughout the park.

Weeds and pest animals

A number of introduced plants and animals form part of most natural environments. Some weed species in Namadgi date back 150 years to when the grassy valleys and foothills were used for grazing, others are more recent invasions.

Weed control in Namadgi is undertaken as part of a coordinated ACT-wide program which is guided by the principles outlined in the *ACT Weed Strategy 2009-2019*. Pest animal management programs are developed in accordance with policies and objectives set out in the *ACT Vertebrate Pest*

Management Strategy 2002 and also address actions identified in threatened species Action Plans.

Pest animal control programs in the park primarily focus on vertebrate pests including: feral pigs, foxes, rabbits, horses and cats. Feral deer are an emerging problem.

Dingoes/wild dogs

Dingoes are dogs which have been in Australia for at least 4000 years, and are native animals under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*.

These animals perform the role of a top predator and appear to limit the increase of pest populations after control programs. There is also evidence that they limit eastern grey kangaroo numbers.

Dingoes/wild dogs can impact on sheep graziers whose properties adjoin the park and the animals must be controlled within a defined area of Namadgi bordering sheep grazing areas.

Wilderness

The wilderness concept is based around naturalness, spaciousness, minimal contact with other people, and remoteness from settlement and access.

The Bimberi Wilderness in Namadgi has these characteristics and also protects the upper Cotter Catchment. No mechanised access (e.g. vehicles, bicycles) is permitted in the wilderness zone other than for management purposes. Bushwalking and pack-camping are allowed on a permit system with restrictions on numbers.

Ecological restoration

Rehabilitation of natural ecosystems may involve regeneration, restoration or reinstatement. The disruption of ecological systems in Namadgi is most prevalent in the lower elevation valleys that were cleared for farming in the 1800s. By re-establishing vegetation and controlling introduced species, ecological restoration of valley floors could assist in providing more habitat for arboreal mammals (e.g. greater glider and common ringtail) and their native predators (e.g. powerful owl and spotted-tailed quoll).

Threatened Species

The following animals recorded from Namadgi are listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980*:

- northern corroboree frog *Pseudophryne pengilleyi*
- two-spined blackfish *Gadopsis bispinosus*
- trout cod *Maccullochella macquariensis*
- Macquarie perch *Macquaria australasica*
- Murray River crayfish *Euastacus armatus*
- hooded robin *Melanodryas cucullata*
- brown tree creeper *Climacteris picumnus*
- varied sitella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*
- little eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*
- white-winged triller *Lalage sueurii*
- smoky mouse *Pseudomys fumeus*
- spotted-tailed quoll *Dasyurus maculates*
- brush-tailed rock-wallaby *Petrogale penicillata*



Some of the natural heritage policies and actions included in the plan:

- Long-term monitoring of the post-fire recovery of ecological communities will be undertaken to provide data to inform fire management strategies. This will be focused on communities where long-term data are most required e.g. forest communities and *Sphagnum* bogs.
- Management programs will be designed that:
 - improve understanding of the biology and ecology of animals species as a basis for managing habitat
 - minimise or eliminate threats to native fauna
 - provide the highest priority to conservation of species that are most vulnerable to change (including climate change), such as specialist and threatened species and those of regional significance.
- Using the best available knowledge, fire management strategies will be adopted that recognise and take account of animal ecology.
- The weed control strategy presently in place for Namadgi will continue to be developed, reviewed and implemented. Specific attention will be given to high priority weed species (e.g. ACT Declared Pest Plants, Weeds of National Significance) weed infested areas that provide a source for spread to other areas, and invasion routes such as roads, tracks and fire trails.
- Hygiene measures aimed at minimising the introduction and spread of weed species (and pathogens) by park staff and contractors will be applied that include:
 - machinery will be washed
 - work from the least infested areas to the most infested
 - minimise soil disturbance
 - control feral animals such as horses, goats and pigs that spread seed and disturb soil
 - avoid the introduction of material such soil, fill and gravel that is likely to be infested with seeds of weed species
 - require horse riders to carry clean horse feed, and to feed horses with clean feed two days before coming to the park
 - educate park users about potential spread of weeds from fruit cores and on items such as socks, boots, gaiters, bicycles and camping equipment.
- Pest management programs will be implemented to reduce impacts on native plants and animals, and on production values on adjoining lands where relevant (e.g. sheep on adjoining rural land attacked by dingo/wild dogs).
- High priority will be given to the maintenance of the wilderness qualities of the park and protection of the Bimberi Wilderness Area.
- Subject to feasibility and an assessment of cost-effectiveness, design and implement scientifically based ecological restoration programs and activities. Focus on those valleys where there is a greater likelihood of success, and complementary objectives can be achieved, such as extension of important habitat types and reduction in eastern grey kangaroo numbers.

Cultural heritage

Primary management objective

Cultural heritage within Namadgi is identified, conserved, and where appropriate, interpreted and promoted to retain and foster community associations and an appreciation of the past.

Aboriginal people

Evidence of Aboriginal life in the area now managed as Namadgi National Park can be found in a continuing oral tradition, the findings of archaeological surveys and the observations of the region's first European settlers. Knowledge of Aboriginal use of Namadgi is limited by the fragmentation of oral tradition and kinship groups that followed European settlement of the region, and also by the limited systematic archaeological survey and anthropological research that has been undertaken.

Three Aboriginal language groups have been recorded for the area that is now Namadgi: Ngunnawal, Ngarigo and Walgalu. There is no clear delineation of the boundaries between these groups. The prevailing contemporary view is that most of Namadgi was part of Ngunnawal country and that other groups also had cultural connections to the mountain region.

From archaeological research there is evidence of extended occupation in the Cotter, Orroral, Gudgenby and Naas river valleys at elevations around 1000 metres, as well as some higher elevation valleys. Ceremonial stone arrangements can be found on some Namadgi peaks and three of the most significant rock art sites in the Australian Alps are found in the park.

European settlement

By 1839, approximately 27% of the land that is now Namadgi had been claimed by squatters. Homesteads were built, as well as simple huts for absentee pastoralists and stockmen working in the outlying areas of larger runs. A number of stock routes are likely to have developed along traditional Aboriginal routes, linking the area to surrounding valleys and high plains.

In the early 20th Century, permanently occupied homesteads with substantial ornamental and orchard plantings were located across the southern and central Namadgi area including Tennent, Cotter, Orroral, Gudgenby, Boboyan, Crawfords, Lonesome Pine, Westermans, Brayshaws, Mt Clear and Booths. Later in the century, improvements in roads and motor vehicles resulted in fewer people living on these properties. Pastoralism came to an end in the

1970s–1980s with the declaration of the Gudgenby Nature Reserve and subsequently Namadgi National Park. Some homesteads, ruins, and huts remain, and there are traces of yards, sheep dips and fence lines. They are maintained with the support of groups such as the National Parks Association of the ACT and the Kosciuszko Huts Association.

20th Century

Throughout the 20th Century a number of activities occurred in the area that is now Namadgi. These include:

- *Water supply* – the dams and reservoirs of the Cotter Catchment.
- *Federation* – the markers from the border survey of 1910–1915 (many destroyed in the 2003 bushfire but subsequently resurveyed and marked).
- *Forestry* – timber cutting and planting of arboreta to trial the growth of softwood species (most of the arboreta were destroyed in the 2003 bushfire).
- *Recreation* – including skiing on the Brindabella Range.
- *Scientific research* – including fire ecology and studies of flora and fauna.
- *Space communication* – the Orroral and Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Stations were part of the US space program from the 1960s.



Some of the cultural heritage policies and actions included in the plan:

- Review and update as necessary existing Conservation Management Plans for cultural heritage sites and places of significance.
- Report Aboriginal heritage places in accordance with the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2004*.
- Assess and, where appropriate, nominate significant European heritage places, landscapes or thematic groupings for inclusion on the ACT Heritage Register under the *Heritage Act 2004*.
- Recognise the regional significance of Namadgi's cultural heritage places and work with land managers in Kosciuszko National Park and Brindabella National Park on strategies for regional interpretation.
- Manage heritage places in a way that acknowledges and respects all histories and does not conserve or interpret one history to the exclusion of another.
- Public access to culturally significant buildings or groups of buildings within Namadgi will be provided except where:
 - the buildings are required for management purposes
 - there is an unacceptable risk to public safety
 - there is a high risk of vandalism
 - there is a high risk of adverse impact on the fabric of the place.
- Discourage the use of Namadgi's huts for overnight accommodation, other than in emergencies. This will be achieved through education and creating awareness of their values.
- Ensure that border markers and survey control marks in Namadgi are protected from inadvertent damage in park management activities, especially road and fire trail maintenance and upgrading.
- Interpret and commemorate community connections to land use or recreational activities that have been a significant part of the history of the park.
- Recognition of Aboriginal connection to land and an appreciation of Aboriginal culture will be promoted within the community through the interpretation of Aboriginal occupation of Namadgi.
- Establish and support heritage management partnerships and/or formal agreements with individuals, families and communities having traditional links to Namadgi and with community groups having an interest in cultural heritage management.

Fire

Primary management objectives

- Fire management strategies integrate fire protection, water supply and conservation objectives and, to provide guidance for management, are supported by an effective research and monitoring program.
- Fire management strategies create a mosaic of areas across the park with differing fire histories and a consequent diversity of vegetation age-classes.

Fire is part of the Namadgi environment. Large fires occurred in the area in 1920, 1926, 1939, 1983 and 2003. The combination of flammable vegetation, dry summers with hot dry north-westerly winds, periodic droughts and lightning strikes results in 'blow up' days and regular fires. The 2003 fire was by far the largest and had the greatest impact on Namadgi and Canberra—91% of the park was burnt. For the life of the management plan, fire management in the park will be undertaken in the context of the recovery of the park from the effects of the 2003 fire.

Fire frequency

The fire history of the Brindabella Ranges has been studied in detail. This has shown that the frequency of fires increased dramatically from the 1850s providing an increase in early regrowth vegetation (especially dense shrubs and young trees) which produced large fuel loads for later fires.

Though the frequency of fire declined in the 20th century, by the time Namadgi was declared in 1984, much of the vegetation was still in the regrowth phase from intense 19th century burning and the large fires of 1939 and 1983. The 2003 fire has again returned much of the vegetation of the park to an early post-fire recovery phase.

Current predictions suggest that bushfires may be more frequent under a changing climate.

Fire ecology

Ecologically, it is the *fire regime* (frequency, intensity and the seasons in which the fire occurs) that is important rather than the impact of one fire. More than 40 years of scientific research and observation has significantly advanced the understanding of fire and the Australian environment, including in higher altitude areas. However, there is still much to learn about the response of species and ecological communities to particular fire events and changed fire regimes. The interaction between fire and fauna is remarkably complex and poorly understood, for example, no studies have yet reliably shown how many vertebrate animals die during a fire.

The Namadgi plan recognises that there is much uncertainty about fire management, including the need to be able to adapt to improved ecological knowledge and changing circumstances.

The results of monitoring and research in fire ecology will be applied to fire management programs.

Fire management is complex

Fire management involves clearly defining the purposes of intervention, and requires knowledge of the fire ecology, vegetation, terrain and the previous fire history.

Fire management in the park aims to integrate fire protection, water supply and conservation objectives and to create a mosaic of areas across the park with differing fire histories, vegetation ages and fuel loads. Details are set out in Regional Fire Management Plans within the framework of the *Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT*. A Bushfire Operational Plan is prepared annually for fire management within Namadgi.

Prescribed burning

Prescribed burning is one of the main intervention techniques, which has the aim of reducing combustible material (fuel) available for later wildfires. Experience across the Australian Alps has shown that this can be effective, except in extreme conditions.

In Namadgi, the main purpose of fuel reduction is to lessen the risk to surrounding rural assets and the city of Canberra. Prescribed burning can also be used for biodiversity purposes by providing conditions suitable for the regeneration of particular species and creating desirable habitat conditions.

Fire access

A network of strategically located fire trails and helipads is a key requirement for fire management.

Fire trails are the primary access for rapid fire suppression and they provide fuel breaks for prescribed burning and indirect attack (back burns). However, fire trails can have an impact on park values and their construction, maintenance and use are important park management considerations.

Some of the fire management policies and actions included in the plan:

- In accordance with the *Emergencies Act 2004* and the *Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT*, prepare Bushfire Operational Plans for the park that are consistent with the Australian Alps Fire Management Principles and the objectives of the *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management* to address:
 - a program of fuel reduction to provide for the protection of identified built and natural assets, to reduce the spread and intensity of fire and assist in suppression operations
 - the provision of access trails and helipads for fire suppression and fuel management activities
 - the development of strategies for the early detection and rapid suppression and the management of unplanned fire in the park
 - the provision of a network of water access points
 - the provision of adequate resources including infrastructure, equipment and personnel for suppression operations and the undertaking of fuel management activities
 - training and skills development for staff involved in any aspect of fire management.
- As far as practicable exclude prescribed fire from hydrologically and ecologically significant or sensitive areas including:
 - erosion-prone zones
 - wet heaths, subalpine bogs and significant wetland
 - dry rocky heath communities (threatened species habitat)
 - areas occupied by obligate seeding species ('seeders') until they have reached sufficient maturity to regenerate after a fire
 - riparian areas.
- The results of research into fire ecology and monitoring of ecological responses to fire will be applied to fire management strategies to assist with determining fire regimes that support the creation of:
 - a diversity of vegetation composition and structure
 - suitable habitat for naturally occurring species and communities.
- Conduct prescribed burning in accordance with requirements of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*.
- Plan and implement public education programs about fire restrictions relating to park use, campfires, bushfire causes and personal behaviour to minimise bushfire danger.
- Work with neighbours of the park in NSW through established forums and NSW agencies such as the Rural Fire Service in relation to fire management including:
 - co-operative fire fighting arrangements
 - construction, use and maintenance of fire trails and fire breaks
 - prescribed burning for asset protection
 - provision of, and access to watering points
 - fire emergency procedures
 - communication about effective bushfire protection.

Recreation

Primary management objective

Namadgi provides a variety of sustainable recreation opportunities that are consistent with the protection of the park's natural and cultural heritage values and water supply catchments.

Visitors come to Namadgi for its wild, rugged and expansive landscapes as well as a rich cultural heritage. Day and over-night bushwalking, mountain bike riding, climbing and abseiling, cross-country skiing and car camping are popular. The park is also used for activities such as orienteering, rogaining and mountain running. Entry into the park is free.

Two long distance recreational routes in the park are the Australian Alps Walking Track from Namadgi Visitor Centre to Walhalla in Victoria (615 km) and the Bicentennial National Trail from Cooktown in Queensland to Healesville in Victoria (5330 km).

The park includes a number of short walking trails and public roads for vehicle access. There are also closed (locked gate) management roads or trails which are generally available for non-motorised access.

The focus of recreational planning for Namadgi is primarily towards low-key recreational activities that do not require extensive infrastructure.

General recreation zoning policies

Management of recreational use is a key part of the plan. The central element is to provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the protection of the natural environment, cultural heritage and water supply catchments and that do not conflict with one another.

Table 2 outlines the recreational policies in each of the park management zones.



Table 2. Recreation policies for management zones

See map for management zones on page 2.

	Zone 1 Remote Area Core Conservation and Catchment Area		Zone 2 Semi-Remote Area Conservation and Recreation Area		Zone 3 Roaded Natural Recreation Area
	Zone 1A Bimberi Wilderness including Upper Cotter Catchment	Zone 1B Middle Cotter Catchment and Adjacent Areas	Zone 2A Wild Semi-Remote Booth Range and Blue Gum Creek Area	Zone 2B Conservation and Recreation	Zone 3 Roaded Natural Areas and Road Corridors
Car Camping	No	No	No	No	Yes, in designated campgrounds.
Pack Camping	Dispersed camping by permit only (maximum of 24 persons at any one time).	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, in designated campgrounds.
Picnicking and sightseeing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4W Driving (on track only)	* Conditional	* Conditional	N/A	* Conditional	Yes, on public roads only.
Walking	Yes, day and overnight.	Yes, day only.	Yes, day and overnight.	Yes, day and overnight.	Yes, day and overnight.
Cycling and other non-powered wheeled transport (on track only)	* Conditional	Yes, on formed roads. Not permitted south beyond Ginini car park.	N/A	Yes, on formed roads.	Yes, on formed roads.
Trail bikes and other powered wheeled transport	No	No	No	No	Yes, only on public roads and must be registered.
Horse riding	No	No	No	Yes, in designated areas.	Yes
Rock climbing & abseiling	Yes	Yes, day use only.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snow play	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ski touring	Yes	Yes, day use only.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mechanically assisted skiing	No	No	No	No	No
Fishing	No	No	Yes, subject to regulation and policy.	Yes, subject to regulation and policy.	Yes, subject to regulation and policy.
Boating, canoeing, kayaking, rafting	No, except for management purposes.	No, except for management purposes.	N/A	Yes	Yes
Non powered and powered flight (hang gliding, hot air ballooning, paragliding)	No	No	Non-powered – with permission. Powered – not allowed.	Non-powered – with permission. Powered – not allowed.	Non-powered – with permission. Powered – not allowed.
Powered flight (low altitude)	No, except for emergency or management purposes.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit. No landings except for emergency or management.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit. No landings except for emergency or management.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit. No landings except for emergency or management.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit. No landings except for emergency or management.
Special events	No	Yes, limited to formed trails.	Yes, according to policy.	Yes, according to policy.	Yes, according to policy.
Guided commercial activities	No. Day use may be permitted subject to licensing arrangements.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit and day use only.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit.	Yes, subject to licence and/or permit.
Non commercial groups	Yes, subject to permit and group size.	Yes, day use only.	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Permitted with written consent from the Conservator and for management purposes only.

Some of the recreation policies and actions included in the plan:

- Visitor facilities will be provided in the park that support permitted recreational activities, enhance visitor experiences, and minimise impacts on the natural and cultural values of the park.
- Monitoring programs will be developed to assess visitor impacts and inform recreation management in the park.
- Where there is an unacceptable level of recreational impact on particular areas, sensitive ecosystems or cultural heritage sites, a range of techniques will be employed to manage that impact including the option for managers to temporarily or permanently close these areas to visitors.
- No new overnight accommodation will be built inside the park during the life of the plan.
- Opportunities will be explored for adaptive reuse of the Gudgenby Homestead and precinct for overnight accommodation. The value of current community activities will be taken into account.
- In consultation with user groups, the Mt Clear Pound Campground will be upgraded.
- Large groups (more than 10 individuals) will be encouraged to camp in designated campgrounds.
- A walking track strategy will be developed.
- Evaluate the establishment of a small walk-in bush camping area in the vicinity of, but away from, the Booroomba Rocks carpark.
- A policy document will be developed to guide the assessment of applications for events of different types and sizes within the park, including for large events (within 12 months).
- All organised events require a permit. Permission for events will depend on the nature of the activity and likely impacts on environmental, cultural and social values.
- Special events are not permitted in the upper Cotter Catchment.
- A bond may be charged to organisers of medium and large events.
- Design and implement a legislated licensing/permit and accreditation system with associated fees for ACT tour operators in collaboration with tourism industry groups.



Learning

Primary management objectives

- Opportunities are provided for the community to acquire knowledge of, and to understand and enjoy Namadgi's natural and cultural heritage, and to actively participate in protecting the values of the park.
- survey, monitoring and research programs in Namadgi provide knowledge and understanding that underpin park management.

Namadgi is close to Canberra and has tremendous potential for education, interpretation and research programs. Visitors can experience a diversity of landscapes, ecological communities and Aboriginal and historical heritage.

The combined *Namadgi Map and Guide* provides detailed information about the park and recreation opportunities, and is the most important publication for visitors.

A range of other information material has also been developed including displays at the Namadgi Visitor Centre, interpretation signs provided at visitor 'nodes' throughout the park, walking track brochures, information for cyclists, the Alps codes for specific recreation activities, and information

for campers. ACT Government websites are also important for information about the park.

Education programs for schools have primarily been delivered on a demand basis rather than by a formalised program to attract specific school groups.

Interest in cultural tourism activities has grown markedly over the past five years and Aboriginal staff have been able to assist with meeting some of this demand.

There is an extensive history of research activity in Namadgi. Early studies were linked to the development of the ACT and the water requirements for the city of Canberra. Since the establishment of Namadgi as a national park, scientific research has often progressed through partnerships with other Australian Alps national parks agencies and tertiary institutions.

Survey, monitoring and research programs are planned to provide information on the functions of natural systems, the condition of species and ecological communities and on the human history of the area. This information helps inform management on how to proceed in dealing with issues such as fire, recreational use and control of introduced species by providing a basis for adaptive management.

Some of the policies and actions included in the plan:

- Tour operators will be assisted with information about accreditation programs, natural and cultural heritage values of the park and codes of practice for recreational activities.
- Information materials will be accessible to visitors at the visitor centre, and at key locations throughout and outside the park, particularly through ACT Government websites.
- A communication plan will be developed.
- Work with educational institutions to enable them to provide high quality educational services in relation to the park and its values.
- As far as practicable, Aboriginal people will have carriage of Aboriginal cultural interpretation and education activities.
- Establish a research committee or working group to:
 - prepare an inventory (including a bibliography) of past and current surveys, monitoring and research in Namadgi;
 - analyse survey, monitoring and research
 - prepare a summary report.
- Develop a systematic, visitor research program that addresses:
 - visitor statistics
 - visitor satisfaction and attitudes
 - the types of activities that visitors are undertaking
 - impacts of visitor use.

Community

Primary management objective

Partnerships and collaborative programs are fostered to effectively involve park neighbours and the community in a range of park management activities and cross-border issues.

Community participation is an integral component of protected area management. Some ACT community groups have a long association with the area that is now Namadgi National Park as do individuals and families. Since Namadgi's inception, many other groups and individuals have been involved in its management and have formed a strong attachment to the park. These organisations and individuals seek meaningful and ongoing involvement in the conservation of the area and associated management activities.

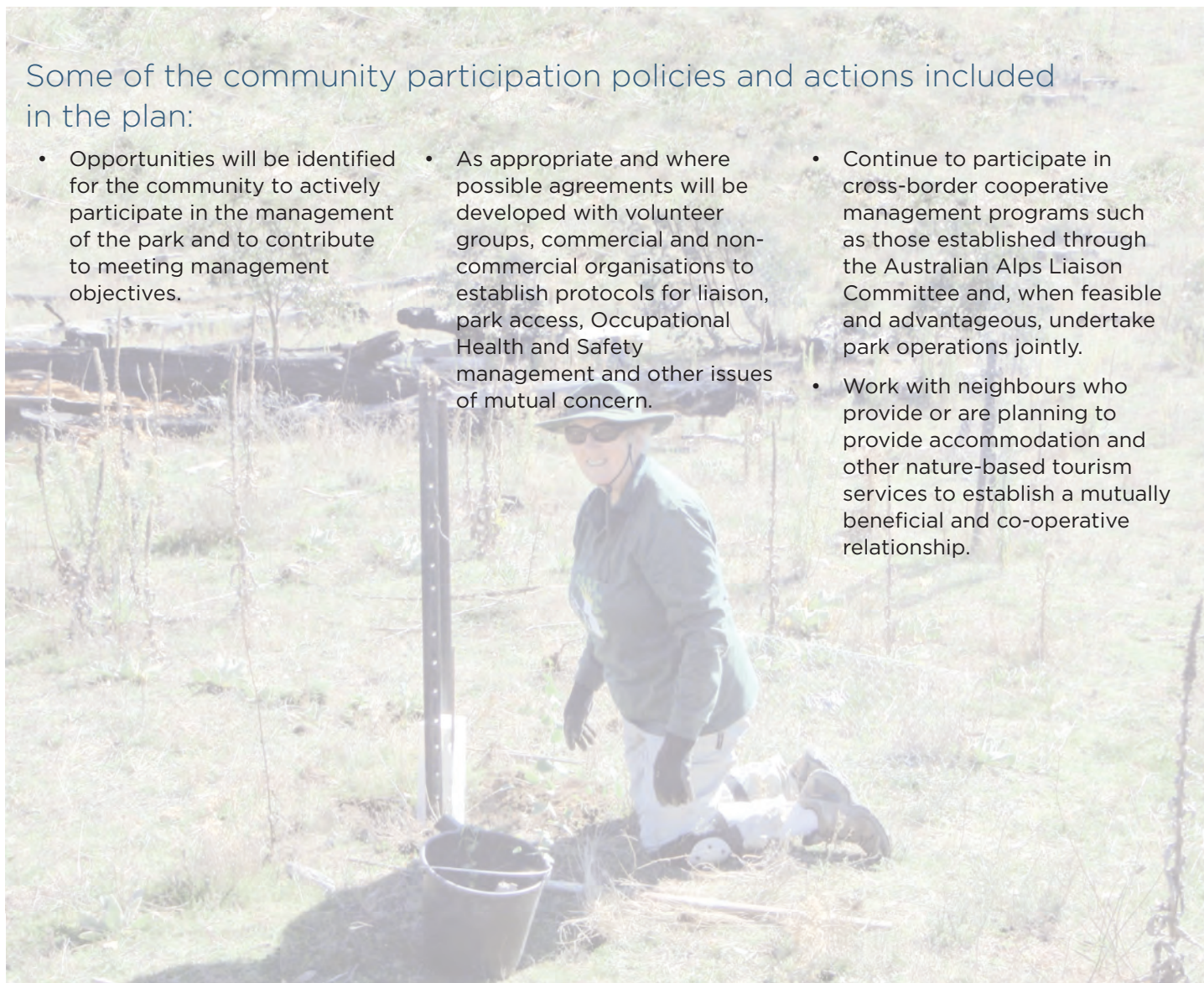
Namadgi's rural neighbours are mainly concerned with the interface between the park and their land. The focus is on issues that apply across land tenures and that arise through shared boundaries.

Communication between neighbouring ACT rural landholders and park rangers occurs frequently but on an ad hoc basis. The ACT Rural Forum, which is open to all ACT rural lessees, meets three or four times a year to provide the opportunity for Government agencies and rural lessees to exchange information and views.

Namadgi also borders the Kosciuszko and Brindabella National Parks and the Scabby Range Nature Reserve. These areas are part of the Australian Alps national parks and NSW and ACT park managers (together with their Victorian alpine counterparts) meet regularly through the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program.

Some of the community participation policies and actions included in the plan:

- Opportunities will be identified for the community to actively participate in the management of the park and to contribute to meeting management objectives.
- As appropriate and where possible agreements will be developed with volunteer groups, commercial and non-commercial organisations to establish protocols for liaison, park access, Occupational Health and Safety management and other issues of mutual concern.
- Continue to participate in cross-border cooperative management programs such as those established through the Australian Alps Liaison Committee and, when feasible and advantageous, undertake park operations jointly.
- Work with neighbours who provide or are planning to provide accommodation and other nature-based tourism services to establish a mutually beneficial and co-operative relationship.



A protected and managed resource

Primary management objective

Systems for operational management are developed to best practice standards to provide efficient, effective and informed management.

Maintenance of environmental quality is an important consideration in managing Namadgi National Park.

Water quality

Clean water is essential both for health of aquatic ecosystems and to provide safe drinking water for people. The *Environment Protection Regulations 2005* set out water quality standards for the protection of water used for domestic supply, aquatic habitats and recreational use.

Water and energy use

Park operations will be aligned with the objectives and principles of the ACT water resources strategy *Think water, act water*, the *ACT Greenhouse Strategy* and the ACT Government Energy Management Program.

Air quality

Air quality in the park is generally of a very high standard. Smoke from prescribed burning and bushfires is likely to occur seasonally. The Environment Protection Authority authorise park managers to undertake prescribed burning under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*.

Noise

Due to the absence of development in the park, noise pollution is generally not an issue. However, aircraft noise, particularly helicopters, may affect visitors in the remote areas of the park where people expect a quiet and natural atmosphere.

Waste management

Park managers have run a successful program for some years encouraging visitors to take all their garbage with them for disposal elsewhere. Overnight bushwalkers and groups using remote areas are encouraged to bury faecal waste or to carry it out for appropriate disposal.

Use of chemicals

Chemicals are commonly used in the park for pest plant and animal control, fire suppression and in the course of everyday management activities that require the use of machinery. It is the responsibility of the relevant agency manager and contractor to ensure that the conditions of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* and any subsequent Environmental Authorisations are met.

Environmental impact assessment

Developments within the park may require an environmental impact assessment as outlined in the *Planning and Development Act 2007*. It is preferable that environmental considerations be part of the early stages of any proposed development.

Some of the environmental protection policies and actions included in the plan:

- Water quality monitoring will be planned and implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders (e.g. ACTEW; Waterwatch facilitators).
- Ensure that water extraction is subject to licensing as required under the *Water Resources Act 2007*.
- Liaise with scenic flight operators and other air services to ensure that light aircraft and helicopters are aware of their obligations in relation to flying over the wilderness area.
- Educate park visitors about appropriate methods of human waste disposal.
- All chemicals must be applied in accordance with the label or have an approved off-label permit from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
- Works planned for the park will be subject to impact assessment as required by legislation. Where ever possible, proposed works and developments will be assessed collectively.



DESIGN: BIG ISLAND GRAPHICS

Further Information

For more information on the *Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010*, including to determine the activities allowed in the park, please refer to the full plan of management.

Copies of plan and other information on the park are available from the Department of Territory and Municipal Services.

Enquiries: Canberra Connect on 13 2281

Website: www.tams.act.gov.au.

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