

Western Port and South-east Melbourne Conservation Action Plan

Overview

Achieving our vision to:

Increase the resilience of natural assets in the Western Port and South-east Melbourne Parks Landscape and maintain ecosystem services in the face of climate change and other stressors.

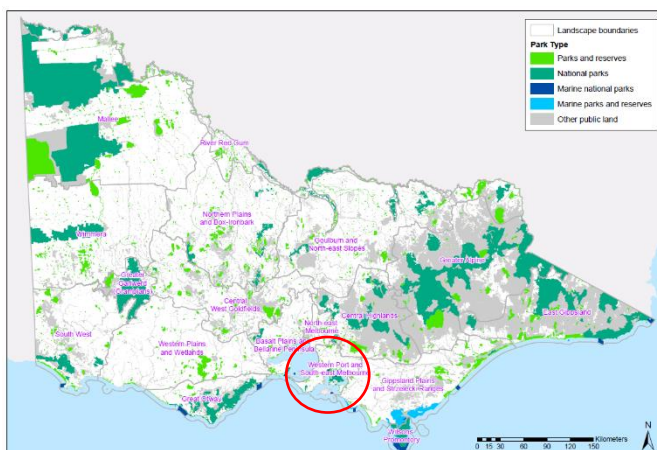
The Western Port and South-east Melbourne Parks Landscape encompasses marine and terrestrial values set within, and to the south-eastern periphery of, metropolitan Melbourne. Management of these areas balances the protection of significant conservation and biodiversity values with visitation and recreational opportunities, and community safety objectives. Although this landscape is one of the smallest, it encompasses a large number of varied ecosystems.

Parks and reserves include:

- French Island National Park
- Mornington Peninsular National Park
- Point Nepean National Park
- North Western Port Nature Conservation Reserve
- Lysterfield Park
- Arthurs Seat State Park
- Braeside Park
- French Island Marine National Park
- Yaringa Marine National Park
- Churchill Island Marine National Park

The area is significant to the Boon Wurrung, Bunurung and Wurundjeri People, who are traditionally and culturally associated with the area. The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation are recognised as the Registered Aboriginal Party for the southern section of the Parks Landscape.

The Western Port & South-east Melbourne Parks Landscape



Conservation Assets

Eleven ecosystems have been identified as conservation assets in the Western Port and South-east Melbourne Parks Landscape. Within each of these assets a range of nested assets have also been identified, including threatened species and important ecological assemblages.

Condition

The plan identifies a range of key ecological attributes (components that are believed to best reflect the health of the asset). The plan describes their current condition (very good, good, fair, poor) and the trend (improving, stable, declining), and establishes a target for future condition of each key ecological attribute. These measures allow the condition of each asset to be assessed:

- **Heathland, Saltmarsh and Mangrove, Intertidal Reef, Subtidal Reef, Soft Sediment (mudflats), and Seagrass** are in good condition.
- **Coastal, Dry Forest and Woodland, Riverine Forest and Woodland, Wetland and Waterbodies, and Water Column (pelagic)** are in fair condition.

Threats

Seven priority threats to the conservation assets in the Parks Landscape are identified:

- Inappropriate fire regimes and management
- Poor water quality inputs (freshwater and marine) and altered hydrology
- Weed invasion
- Terrestrial grazing, browsing and trampling
- Terrestrial predation
- Marine predation/competition
- Habitat degradation/loss (encroaching urbanisation and visitor impacts)

The Conservation Action Plan identifies strategies that target our conservation efforts to achieve the best outcomes for ecosystems and species with the available resources.



Allison Bolden

Wetland and Waterbodies,
Quail Island

Conservation strategies

The following conservation strategies will be undertaken to tackle these threats. They have been selected for their impact, feasibility and cost in achieving the desired conservation.

- **Fire management for ecological health** — incorporate ecological fire objectives into strategic fire plans to increase floristic diversity in key areas, particularly in the Heathland conservation asset.
- **Supporting partnerships to address threats to water-dependent assets** — communicate human impacts on water quality and hydrology to reduce pollutant input, improve flows to marine and freshwater ecosystems, and allow for landward retreat of Saltmarsh and Mangrove as sea levels rise.
- **Weed control using a biosecurity approach** — contain high risk species in high value parks, prioritising new and emergent species not yet established. Eradicate new and emerging weeds species to prevent their establishment in the landscape.
- **Terrestrial herbivore management** — implement targeted control of rabbits, goats, pigs, stock, deer and overabundant native fauna at priority sites for threatened vegetation, integrating available methods of control to achieve acceptable densities.
- **Sustained control and monitoring of introduced terrestrial predators** — implement targeted control of foxes and cats at priority and potential future sites for threatened and migratory fauna. Where feasible, undertake eradication of target species on island habitats and monitor for re-incursions.
- **Managing marine pests** — implement targeted marine pest monitoring, seek to prevent new incursions through communication and partnership, and seek to control new incursions in parks where feasible.
- **Reducing the impacts of recreation, illegal activities and resource extraction on natural values** — identify and promote visitation to areas of low conservation value, maximise PV involvement in decision making in adjacent land planning and undertake communication and compliance activities to promote sustainable resource extraction.

Global Practice

Conservation action planning is an internationally recognised process developed by The Nature Conservancy, and used by many conservation managers around Australia. Adaptive management is a critical component of the model. The Plan provides directions for environmental conservation management for the next 15 years. After 5 years, the plan will be reviewed, and progress will be evaluated against outcomes identified for conservation

Performance measurement

For each strategy, component actions and monitoring indicators have been developed. These will be used to track the achievement of threat mitigation objectives and conservation outcomes defined for each of the assets.

Implementing the plan

The Conservation Action Plan will be implemented by the Metropolitan Parks team in partnership with Traditional Owners, and with detailed planning and design often assisted by restoration partners, researchers, other agencies, Friends groups, special interest groups, and volunteers.

10 Step Process:

Parks Victoria uses a ten-step process for conservation action planning: the Plan covers the first seven steps in the process



More information

Copies of the plan may be downloaded from the Parks Victoria website (www.parks.vic.gov.au)