

Nature Conservation (Review of Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010) Public Consultation Notice 2023

Notifiable instrument NI2023-138

made under the

Nature Conservation Act 2014, s 189 (Reserve management plan—review), s 179 (Draft reserve management plan – public consultation)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Nature Conservation (Review of Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010) Public Consultation Notice 2023*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Reserve management plan review

The custodian has reviewed the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management Plan 2010. The *Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management Plan 2010* (the review) is set out at schedule 1 of this instrument.

4 Details of public consultation

- (1) I invite written submissions from anyone about the review. Submissions may be sent to:

Director, Parks Planning and Policy
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Email: ParksPlanning@act.gov.au

- (2) Submissions may be given on the review during the period starting on the notification day of this instrument and ending at close of business, 12 May 2023.

(3) The Namadgi National Park Plan of Management Plan 2010 and the review can be viewed:

- online at <http://www.environment.act.gov.au> and
- on the YourSay website at <http://www.yoursay.act.gov.au>.

Stephen Alegria
Executive Branch Manager, Parks and Conservation Service
Custodian

2 March 2023



ACT
Government



Review of the Namadgi National Park Management Plan 2010

Accessibility

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues as accessible as possible.

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, such as large print, please phone

Access Canberra on 13 22 81 or email the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate at EPSDDComms@act.gov.au

If English is not your first language and you require a translating and interpreting service, please phone 13 14 50.

If you are deaf, or have a speech or hearing impairment, and need the teletypewriter service, please phone 13 36 77 and ask for Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

For speak and listen users, please phone 1300 555 727 and ask for Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

For more information on these services visit <http://www.relayservice.com.au>

Traditional Custodian Acknowledgment

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as Canberra's first inhabitants and Traditional Custodians. We recognise the special relationship and connection that Ngunnawal people have with this Country. Prior to the dislocation of Ngunnawal people from their land, they were a thriving people whose life and culture was connected unequivocally to this land in a way that only they understand and know, and is core to their physical and spiritual being. The disconnection of the Ngunnawal people from Culture and Country has had longlasting, profound and ongoing health and wellbeing effects on their life, cultural practices, families and continuation of their law/lore. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate acknowledges the historic dispossession of the Ngunnawal people of Canberra and surrounding regions. We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people have played in caring for Country as for time immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters.

Ngunnawal Language Acknowledgement

Yuma

Dhawura nguna ngurumbangu gunangu Ngunnawal. Nginggada dindi dhawura Ngunnawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin. Mura bidji mulanggaridjindjula. Naraganawaliyiri yarabindjula.

This country is Ngunnawal (ancestral/spiritual) homeland. We all always respect elders, male and female, as well as Ngunnawal country itself. They always keep the pathways of their ancestors alive. They walk together as one.

All images are by Mark Jekabsons unless otherwise acknowledged

Front cover image: Legoland

Image this page: Mt Gudgenby (Brian Hawkins)

Back cover image: Cotter River

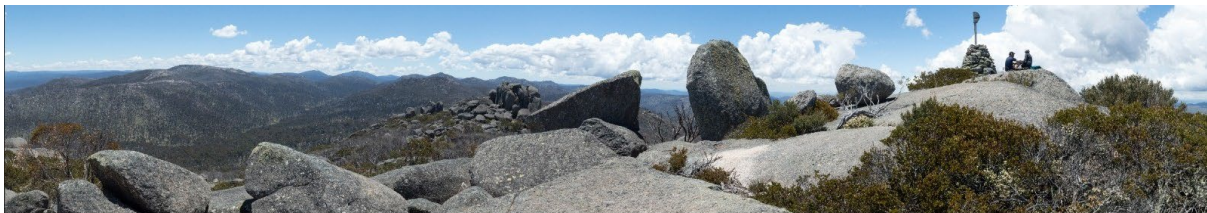


Table of Contents

1 The Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010.....	4
1.1 Management objectives	5
1.2 Purpose of this review	6
1.3 Changes in the legislative and policy environment since 2010	8
2 High-level assessment of the 2010 Management Plan.....	9
2.1 Adequacy as a planning framework.....	9
2.2 Strengths and limitations.....	10
3 Park Zoning.....	11
4 Review against Objectives.....	13
4.1 Water	13
4.2 Landscape and biodiversity protection.....	16
4.3 Protecting and managing cultural heritage	20
4.4 Fire management.....	22
4.5 Recreation and visitor use	24
4.6 Communication, information, interpretation, education & research	26
4.7 Neighbours, community groups and volunteers	27
4.8 A protected and managed resource	29
5 Conclusion	31
References.....	32
Appendix.....	34



Rowleys Flat

1 The Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010

The current Namadgi National Park (NP) Plan of Management came into effect on 27 October 2010, replacing the first management plan released in 1986. The 2010 plan was prepared to meet the requirements of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* that management plans be prepared for Public Land under the ACT Territory Plan. The plan is available for download online:

<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2010-192/default.asp>

Namadgi NP comprises two categories of Public Land with the following management objectives:

Wilderness Area

- *Conserve the natural environment in a manner ensuring that disturbance to that environment is minimal.*
- *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

- *Conserve the natural environment.*
- *Provide for public use of the area for recreation, education and research.*

1.1 Management objectives

Each chapter of the 2010 plan describes the values of Namadgi NP and the primary management objectives. These objectives, and the associated policies, actions and priorities, guide management of the park by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS).

The following primary management objectives are outlined in the 2010 plan and remain highly relevant to the future management of Namadgi NP.

Water

- 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.

Landscape and biodiversity protection

- 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.

Protecting and managing cultural heritage

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

Fire management

- 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 and fuel loads.

Recreation and visitor use

- Namadgi National Park 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.

Communication, information, interpretation, education & research

- 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 NP provide knowledge and understanding that underpin park management.

Neighbours, community groups and volunteers

- 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.

A protected and managed resource

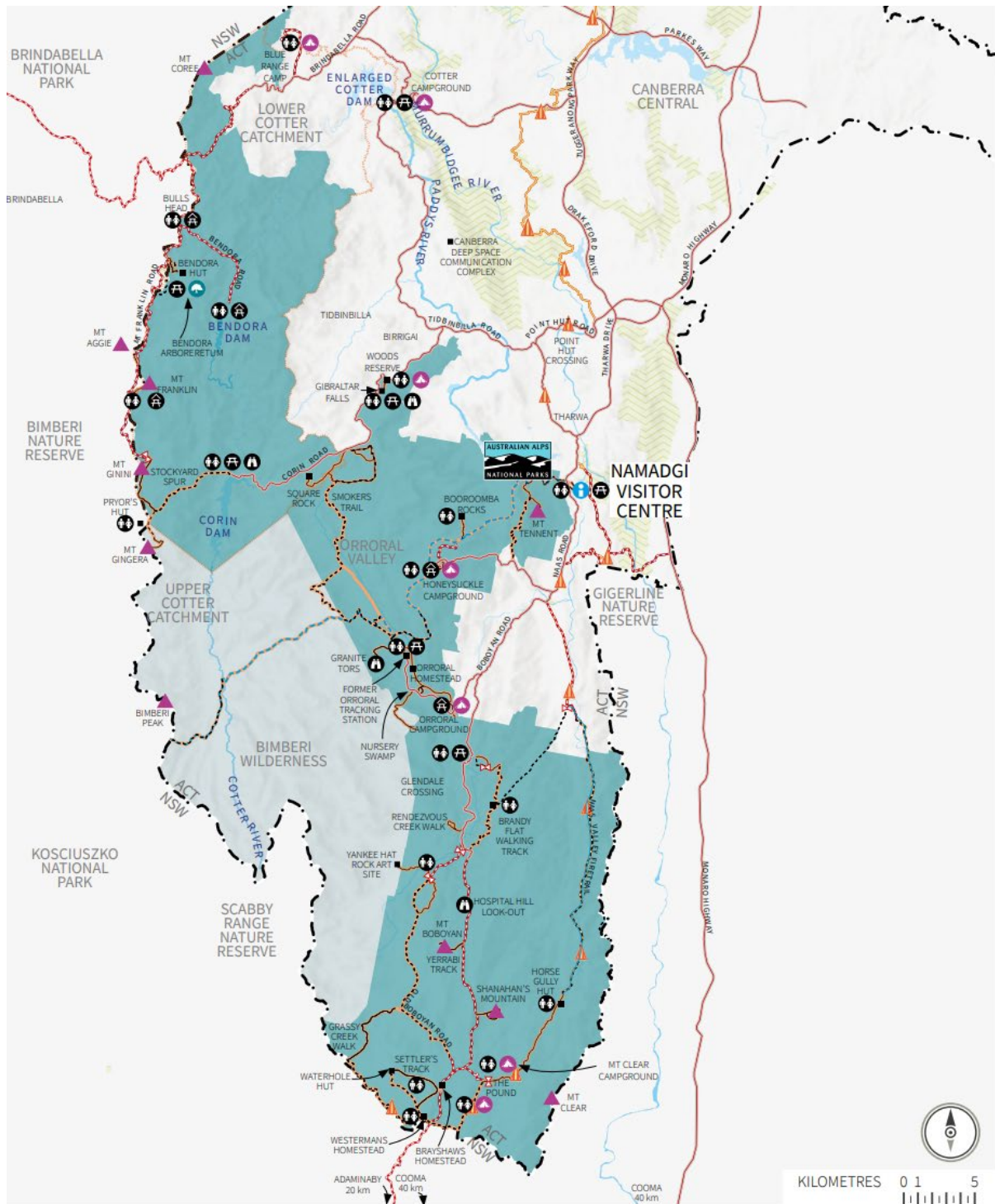
- Systems for operational management are developed to best practice standards to provide efficient, effective and informed management.

1.2 Purpose of this review

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, the custodian of a reserve must review a reserve management plan every 10 years and at any other time at the Minister's request. The Minister for Planning and Land Management extended the time for completing a review of the current Namadgi NP plan to 31 December 2022.

This review reports on the implementation of the 2010 plan and will assist in the preparation of a new plan for Namadgi NP. It assesses the adequacy of the 2010 plan as a planning framework for management of the park and identifies its key strengths and weaknesses (Section 2). Management activities undertaken to achieve the objectives of the 2010 plan are outlined (Section 4) and new and emerging issues for future consideration have been identified (Sections 3 and 4).

This review was undertaken by the Parks Planning and Policy Section, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) on behalf of the custodian, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), and in consultation with ACT PCS and other EPSDD staff. Public consultation on this review will help identify issues that are important to the community for consideration in a new plan. Following public consultation on this review, work will commence to develop a new plan for Namadgi NP. The draft plan will also be released for public consultation.



LEGEND

NAMADGI NATIONAL PARK	BICENTENNIAL NATIONAL TRAIL	VISITOR CENTRE
BIMBERI WILDERNESS - PERMIT CAMPING ONLY	AUSTRALIAN ALPS WALKING TRACK	CAMPGROUND (FEES APPLY)
COTTER CATCHMENT - NO CAMPING	WALKING TRACK	PICNIC AREA
SEALED ROAD	LOCKED GATE	TOILETS
UNSEALED ROAD		LOOKOUT

Map 1: Namadgi National Park

1.3 Changes in the legislative and policy environment since 2010

The following key legislation, policy, and program documents relevant to management of Namadgi NP have been introduced or updated since the release of the 2010 plan.

Biodiversity and water

- *Water Resources Act 2007* (updated 2021)
- *Nature Conservation Act 2014*
- Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-2023
- ACT Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy and Action Plans 2018
- ACT Climate Strategy 2019-2025 and revised Strategy
- ACT Native Woodland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans 2019
- Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy 2005 and revised Strategy 2017
- ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-2023
- ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the Balance
- ACT (Surface Water) Water Resource Plan 2020
- Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Plan for Upland Grassland 2019
- EPSDD Science Plan 2020-2025

Pest species control

- ACT Weeds Strategy 2009-2019 and Annual Invasive Weeds Operations Plans (iWOP)
- ACT Biosecurity Strategy 2016-2026
- ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy 2012-2022
- Best Practice Management Guide for Rabbits in the ACT 2015
- Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan 2020
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan 2017

Fire and emergency management

- ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan Version 4 (2019-2024)
- Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations 2019
- Draft Regional Fire Management Plan 2019-2028 and Bushfire Operations Plans
- Emergency Plan 2014
- ACT Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan 2020

Since 2010, several action plans for threatened species and ecological communities have been updated, and Conservation Advice for the newly listed Endangered High-Country Bogs and Associated Fens was finalised.



Orroral Boulder

2 High-level assessment of the 2010 Management Plan

The current plan has been effective in guiding the management of the park since 2010. Its effectiveness as a decision-making framework, and the key strengths and limitations of its content, are outlined below.

2.1 Adequacy as a planning framework

The 'Adequacy of Primary Planning Document', developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), provides a tool to assess the adequacy of planning documents to guide management of protected areas (Hockings et al. 2008). A brief assessment of the current Namadgi NP Plan against the IUCN criteria is outlined in Table 1 and further details are provided in the Appendix.

Consideration of this assessment will help to ensure the content and management objectives of a new plan for Namadgi NP are fit for purpose and adhere to current best practice.



Pryors Hut

Table 1. Assessment of the current Namadgi NP Plan against IUCN criteria for protected area planning documents

DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK	
Does the plan establish a clear understanding of the desired outcomes of management in clear terms rather than just specifying actions to be taken?	Very Good
Does the plan express the desired future for the reserve in a way that can assist management of new issues and opportunities that arise during the life of the plan?	Very Good
Does the plan provide for a process of monitoring, review and adjustment during the life of the plan?	Fair
PLANNING CONTEXT	
Does the plan provide an adequate and appropriate policy environment for management of the reserve?	Very Good
Is the plan integrated/linked to other significant national/regional/ sectoral plans that influence management of the reserve?	Very Good
PLAN CONTENT	
Is the plan based on an adequate and relevant information base?	Good
Have the values for the reserve been identified in the plan and linked to the management objectives and desired outcomes?	Very Good
Does the plan address the primary issues facing management of the reserve within the context of the desired future of the reserve?	Very Good
Are the objectives and actions specified in the plan represented as adequate and appropriate responses to the issues?	Good
Were local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve involved in developing the management plan and setting direction for management?	Fair
Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve?	Fair
Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of other stakeholders involved in the reserve?	Very Good
Does the plan provide adequate direction on management actions that should be undertaken in the reserve?	Good
Does the plan identify the priorities amongst strategies and actions in a way that facilitates work programming and allocation of resources?	Good

2.2 Strengths and limitations

The following key elements are included in the current Namadgi NP plan and are critical in guiding effective management.

- Management objectives, policies and actions for protecting the park's values.
- Clearly articulated desired outcomes of management and a future vision.
- A detailed outline of the planning and management context, including international, national and regional agreements, and relevant strategies and policies.
- Extensive information on the values and potential threats to these values.
- Consideration of the interests of a range of stakeholders.
- Park management zones, which identify high value areas and the types of activities permitted.
- A table of management actions and priorities.

The current Namadgi NP plan provides only limited information on the following issues. More

detailed consideration of these issues will be required in the new plan.

- Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage and contemporary connections to Country.
- How Aboriginal people will engage in the management of Namadgi NP.
- Observable impacts and potential future risks from climate change, and priority mitigation measures.
- Spatial information on park values.
- IUCN categorisation (introduced under the Nature Conservation Act).
- Implementation of the management plan according to adaptive management principles.

Adaptive management and the Conservation Effectiveness Management Program

Through the Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program (CEMP), the EPSDD aims to synthesise available knowledge and complete condition assessments for a range of ecosystems located within the ACT. In Namadgi NP, these include bogs and fens, upland grasslands, subalpine woodlands, aquatic and riparian communities, and forests. The purpose of these ecosystem condition assessments are to (1) understand the interactions among ecological values and ecosystem stressors, (2) summarise the research, monitoring, and management activities that occur, and (3) quantify the status of condition indicators and identify relevant trends. This information is intended to inform the planning phase of adaptive management programs for ecosystems within the ACT.

Through the CEMP, priority management evaluations (such as monitoring the vegetation outcomes of bog restoration actions) are undertaken and opportunities to improve adaptive management of conservation projects (such as developing digital data collection apps) are identified. By providing evidence to support decision making, and the tools to review management effectiveness, the CEMP also contributes to the doing and reviewing elements of adaptive management.



Moonlight Hollow Road

3 Park Zoning

The 2010 Namadgi NP plan introduced management zones based on natural and cultural heritage values and outlined policies for appropriate recreational activities within each zone:

- Zone 1 Remote Area (Core Conservation and Catchment Area): highly restricted access
- Zone 2 Semi-Remote Area (Conservation and Recreation Area): limited access and low-key recreation permitted
- Zone 3 Roaded Natural Recreation Area: accessible by vehicle with established recreational opportunities

The plan also provides direction on the type of group events and number of participants permitted in each zone.

Key issues considered in developing the zones included:

- 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 and with values that are sensitive to disturbance
- protection of wilderness and remote area values
- the ACT legislative and planning framework.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Review of management zones with consideration given to key issues outlined above and any modification or disturbance to areas since 2010.
- Assigning IUCN categories to areas within Namadgi NP (e.g., Category II [National Park], Category Ib [Wilderness Area], and Category IV [Habitat/Species Management Area]). As required under the Nature Conservation Act, areas will be managed according to the broad objectives of these categories and those outlined in a new plan for Namadgi NP.



A snowy Mt Franklin Road

4 Review against Objectives

4.1 Water

2010 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

Key achievements since 2010

Post 2020 fire

Heavy rainfalls following the 2020 Orroral Valley bushfire caused significant erosion across Namadgi NP. The following restoration work has been undertaken in collaboration with Icon Water and other key partners:

- control of hillslope erosion adjacent to high priority streams
- stabilisation works where required
- restoration of alpine sphagnum bogs and riparian habitat.

Work to rationalise, realign and/or repair roads and tracks is also underway (see 4.8).

Icon Water has undertaken a [catchment erosion risk model](#), including a post 2020 fire update, and is sponsoring a research project investigating the potential impact of changes in forest age and structure on the hydrology of the catchment.

Environmental flows

Water diversions at Corin and Bendora dams are operated by Icon Water. Under the associated licences to take water, there are requirements to protect environmental flows and undertake environmental monitoring. Icon Water monitors ecological health downstream of the dams, including macro invertebrates, fish and algae.

Protection of water quality

Within Corin and Bendora reservoirs, Icon Water monitors water for contaminants, including baseline physiochemical water quality parameters. If pollutants are detected, Icon Water and the ACT PCS work to identify and eliminate the source/s of pollution. These may include erosion, or leaks/spills of sewage, fuel, or pesticides.

The following actions have been undertaken to reduce the risk of water pollution in Namadgi NP:

- regular cleaning and pumping of toilet facilities
- pump-out toilets installed at Frank and Jacks Hut and Settlers Track trail head and new pump-out toilets at Corin Dam
- Orroral Valley campground toilet (septic system) closed and plans to build a new toilet block when the Orroral Valley Road is reopened
- regular ranger patrols and liaison with Icon Water to monitor and enforce the prohibition of watercraft on Corin and Bendora dams
- establishment of diesel fuel and unleaded petrol tanks at the Namadgi Visitor Information Centre (VIC) with appropriate storage and spill containment systems
- establishment of a new chemical shed at the VIC (commenced) to reduce chemical storage requirements at Glendale Depot
- completion of a purpose-built herbicide storage with appropriate spill containment systems at Glendale, the VIC and Corin depots

Recreational activities that cause erosion in Namadgi NP are regulated by the Nature Conservation Act and are managed by the ACT PCS through, for example:

- limited access, which is monitored and enforced with signage, locked gates, and a permit system for additional access
- regular ranger patrols
- education through meetings and printed information.

All major development projects (e.g., the Mt Franklin Road/Cotter Road Fire Trails Upgrade Project) require an Environmental Impact Statement and all Regional Works Plans, unless granted a justified exemption, address erosion and sedimentation control, and buffer the riparian zone.

Effective partnerships between the community and government

The ACT PCS works with and supports Icon Water, Australian Alps working groups, CSIRO and other research institutions, the Conservation Research (CR) Branch, Frog Watch and Waterwatch to undertake catchment monitoring programs. Waterwatch volunteers monitor water quality parameters, water bugs and riparian condition within Namadgi NP and publish an [annual Catchment Health Indicator Program Report](#).

The ACT Water Strategy 2014–44: Striking the Balance, guides strategic management of the ACT's water resources and is intended to guide water management activities undertaken by the ACT Government, Icon Water, Commonwealth and state agencies, and other stakeholders. In 2015, the ACT Region Catchment Management Coordination Group was established to strengthen governance of catchment management in the region.



ACT Government employee undertaking post-fire water monitoring

Research and monitoring

An aquatic and riparian CEMP (in preparation) will include an ecosystem condition assessment and an evaluation of priority management activities.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in relevant updated strategies and plans.
- On-going protection and management of the Cotter catchment as a high priority.
- Updated information and continued research on the impacts of climate change on ACT's water supply, bogs and fens, and aquatic biodiversity.
- Updated information on the impacts of recreational use on water quality.
- The future development of a climate mitigation and adaptation decision tool (as outlined in the ACT Bushfire Recovery Plan).
- The need for continued restoration work following the 2020 bushfire.
- The Aquatic and Riparian Ecosystems CEMP.



Bendora Dam

4.2 Landscape and biodiversity protection

Objectives: 1. *The biodiversity and geodiversity of Namadgi National Park is conserved.*
2. *Ecosystems are managed so that they can continue to function and evolve naturally and the integrity of landscapes and scenery is protected.*

Key achievements since 2010

Native Vegetation

In 2018, native and derived vegetation in the ACT was classified into 64 plant communities and mapped (available on [ACTMapi](#)). Vegetation structural attributes, including canopy cover and height, have been added using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data (updated in 2020). This mapping informs habitat modelling, fire management planning and the identification of sensitive vegetation communities and species for protection within Namadgi NP.

In 2019, High Country Bogs and Associated Fens were listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the Nature Conservation Act and a Conservation Advice was developed. A new Ginini Flats Wetlands Complex Ramsar Site Management Plan was released in 2017. With the assistance of community volunteers, significant rehabilitation work is continuing on sphagnum bogs and fens that were burnt in 2020. The CR Branch continues ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of on-ground recovery actions.

An Upland Native Grasslands CEMP completed in 2019 including conceptual models for determining the approach to condition assessment and the identification of primary drivers, conservation values and ecological stressors within the ecosystem (Brawata et al., 2019). The document includes a condition assessment of the ecosystem and key management recommendations.

Research and monitoring

Terrestrial fauna

Several recent and current research projects aim to fill critical knowledge gaps about terrestrial fauna within Namadgi NP:

- Pre and post-fire abundance of Greater Gliders (*Petauroides volans*) and threatened Yellow-bellied Gliders (*Petaurus australis*). In collaboration with the Australian National University (ANU), this project will also investigate the impact of fire on food resources for gliders.
- Relationship between mammals and fire history in Black Sallee woodlands and wet-tussock grasslands) — an honours project through the University of Canberra.
- Genetic diversity, and the impacts of bushfire on the threatened Broad-toothed Rat— a collaborative project with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the University of Canberra.
- Occupancy of Gang-gang Cockatoos within the park.
- Relationship between fauna in subalpine woodlands and the history of bushfires and planned burning.

As part of a broader project to investigate habitat supplementation for the Gang-gang Cockatoo, nesting tubes are being trialled in Namadgi NP. A collaborative project also aims to provide nest boxes for less common and rare birds and microbats in different vegetation types in both high and low-fire severity areas within Namadgi NP. Supplemented habitat will be monitored over time and will inform future interventions.

The ACT Government continues to collaborate with the ANU to conserve the critically endangered Northern Corroboree Frog and establish wild populations within Namadgi NP. Over the past two years, frogs from the captive breeding program at Tidbinbilla have been released at a new site and subsequent surveys indicate they are persisting and breeding.

Aquatic fauna

Fragmentation of waterways has been identified as a major threat to freshwater fish. Following research to identify barriers to fish passage across the ACT conservation estate, a report *Why can't fish cross the road? Barriers to fish passage in the national park and reserves of the ACT* was released (Lucas et al., 2019). The study documents and assesses human-made stream barriers and identifies priorities for modification to improve fish passage.

Threatened aquatic fauna such as the Macquarie Perch (*Macquarie australasica*), are monitored by the CR Branch. Recent research undertaken on the Alpine Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus reiki*) and Reik's Crayfish (*Euastacus crassus*) indicate major reductions in populations and range restrictions following the 2020 bushfire (ACT Government, unpublished). Both Macquarie Perch and Alpine Spiny Crayfish are now protected from take under the *Fisheries Act 2000* and are expected to be listed as threatened in the future.

Monitoring data indicate a large reduction in adult Two-spined Blackfish (*Gadopsis bispinosus*) and limited breeding success following the 2020 fire. Supplementary fish habitats will be placed in fire-affected rivers to improve habitat, and a future analysis of the species' genetic condition will determine if additional intervention is required.

In collaboration with volunteers, surveys of Mountain Galaxias (*Galaxias olidus*) are being undertaken to understand how populations are impacted by, and recover from, high-intensity fire and associated environmental changes. This long-term monitoring program will inform fire management and restoration interventions in Namadgi NP.

Several citizen science monitoring programs support the conservation of aquatic fauna within Namadgi NP, including programs to:

- monitor platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) in the Gudgenby River, Bogong Creek, Rendezvous Creek, Dry Creek and Orroral River (Waterwatch)
- improve our understanding of how Mountain Galaxias respond to prescribed fire.



Snowy Flats Sphagnum Bog

Invasive species

Flora

An Invasive Weeds Operations Plan (IWOP) is developed and implemented annually, and photo-point monitoring and Collector App mapping assist in prioritising management actions. Many weed control activities are coordinated with neighbours and through the Australian Alps Liaison Committee. Community groups, including the Gudgenby Bush Regenerators, National Parks Association, and Canberra Bushwalking Club, have undertaken weed control activities within Namadgi NP. Current priority species for control include Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*), African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*), Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*) and Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*).

Vehicle wash down facilities are provided at the VIC and reduce the spread of invasive species. Procedures are in place for regular wash downs of ACT PCS vehicles, particularly for those used in management activities that have the potential to spread weeds (e.g., slashing). Sites where management activities, such as trail maintenance, have been undertaken are monitored for weed infestations.

Updated public information on invasive plants is available on the EPSDD website, at the VIC, at the start of trails, and through ranger guided activities.

Fauna

The 2012–2020 ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy is implemented annually and guides the ongoing control and monitoring of rabbits, wild dogs, feral pigs, and feral horses. Since the release of the 2010 Namadgi NP plan, a Sambar Deer monitoring and control program has commenced in the Upper Cotter.

The Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan, which maintains zero tolerance for feral horses within Namadgi NP, was released in 2020.

The ACT PCS is signatory to three cooperative wild dog plans and has established cooperative arrangements for invasive fauna research and/or management with neighbouring landholders, the Alps Liaison Committee, community groups, CSIRO, and other research institutions. To protect stock on neighbouring rural lands, wild dogs are controlled in targeted areas of Namadgi National Park and the Bimberi Wilderness Area in accordance with these plans.



Eastern Pygmy Possum (*Cercartetus nanus*) and Alpine Daisy (*Leucochrysum* sp.)

Soil and landscapes

To avoid visual impacts on the landscape, several facilities within Namadgi NP have been redesigned or relocated. This includes the Square Rock car park, Rendezvous Creek car park and the Corin visitor hub.

In 2016, a Soil Landscapes dataset was completed, which identifies 55 soil landscape map units across the ACT, including Namadgi NP. This digital product provides information to assist in identifying major soil and landscape qualities and constraints to land use (Cook et al., 2016).

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- Updated information and continued research on the impacts of climate change on natural systems, biodiversity and human wellbeing.
- Management actions that consider climate change impacts, including activities to promote ecosystem and biodiversity resilience and adaptation.
- Research on species recovery following the 2020 fire and how this will inform future management.
- The importance of connectivity for wildlife movement, including outside park boundaries.
- The availability of fine-scale vegetation information.
- Ongoing need for research to fill critical knowledge gaps and inform future management.
- Ongoing need for post-fire vegetation restoration activities.



Scarlet Greenhood (*Diplodinium coccinum*) and Reiks Crayfish (*Euastacus reiki*)

4.3 Protecting and managing cultural heritage

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.*

Key achievements since 2010

Identification and protection of Aboriginal heritage sites

The connections of Aboriginal people to Country spans tens of thousands of years and many cultural values are embedded in places and objects throughout Namadgi NP. These include ceremonial sites, rock art sites, cultural trees, grinding grooves and artefact scatters. The following activities have been undertaken to manage and protect these sites:

- As part of a long-term fire recovery response, the ACT PCS is working with heritage experts, archaeologists and the local Aboriginal community to conduct assessments of known heritage sites to decide how sites are restored and managed into the future.
- In 2019, the ACT NRM unit engaged archaeologists to undertake surveys within Namadgi NP to improve knowledge of Aboriginal sites, with a particular focus on remote area survey for rock art sites.
- In 2013, a Namadgi National Park Rock Art Sites Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was prepared, which describes the seven rock art sites within Namadgi NP and strategies for their ongoing protection (NRAWG & Stepwise, 2013). While this document expired in 2019, sites continue to be managed through a collaborative partnership with the local Aboriginal community, including ACT Representative Aboriginal Organisations.
- Where there is no threat, Aboriginal artefacts are left in situ. However, an at-risk scar tree was removed from the Outward-Bound property in Tharwa and relocated to the VIC, and during the 2020 Orroral Valley fire, at the request of the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee, Representative Aboriginal Organisations, and ACT heritage, a wooden object was removed from the park for its protection.

Facilitating contemporary Aboriginal connections to Country

Several groups and initiatives support Aboriginal people to access and manage their Country within the ACT, including Namadgi NP.

- The Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee engages with the EPSDD to support cultural understanding within the Directorate. Importantly, the Committee provides guidance on environmental and land management matters to support collaborative management of Country.
- The Murumbung Yurung Murra Network is a collective of Aboriginal staff working in various roles in the ACT PCS to provide peer support, mentoring and advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the EPSDD. Members of the network also deliver educational activities to staff and the broader community, to enhance their understanding of Aboriginal culture within the ACT.
- The Murumbung Ranger group delivers an innovative program of ranger guided activities, events and on-ground cultural heritage and environmental projects in partnership with, or with endorsement from, local Traditional Custodians.

- An ACT Aboriginal Fire Management Framework now forms part of annual ACT Bushfire Operational Plans. The framework establishes a set of guidelines and principles to rejuvenate cultural burning practices in the ACT.
- Applications from Ngunnawal families to access areas of Namadgi NP for cultural purposes are considered on a case-by-case basis. Traditional Custodians were supported recently to visit Bogong Moth sites within Namadgi NP and to view the impacts of the 2020 fire.
- Traditional Custodians have been engaged to identify their priorities and objectives in relation to water as part of the development of the ACT Water Resource Plan (a commitment under the Murray Darling Basin Plan).
- Representative Aboriginal Organisations work with Namadgi staff and Traditional Custodians on all Aboriginal heritage works and conservation proposals in the park.
- The EPSDD Reconciliation Action Plan July 2019–June 2021 has clear objectives to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes.
- Traditional Custodians have expressed an interest in the culturally appropriate use of natural resources found within the ACT, including Namadgi NP. Together with Traditional Custodians, a cultural resource management plan is being developed to guide these activities across the ACT.

Protection of historic (non-Aboriginal) heritage values

The ACT PCS works closely with the Kosciuszko Huts Association to manage the 16 historic huts, homesteads and woolsheds within Namadgi NP; the following work has been undertaken recently:

- repairs to the Orroral Woolshed and Max and Berts Hut
- lead paint removal and re-painting of Frank and Jacks Hut
- conservation of the internal wall coverings at Orroral Homestead
- updates to the Orroral Woolshed CMP (pending Heritage Council approval).

Containment lines, slashing and backburning were implemented to protect priority heritage sites during the 2020 Orroral Valley fire. Unfortunately, the Demanding and Max and Berts huts were destroyed.

Celebrating historic (non-Aboriginal) connections with Namadgi NP

ACT PCS staff have engaged with community members who have historic connections with Namadgi NP, through, for example:

- facilitating a visit to the Gudgenby Cottage by the Bootes sisters
- the 'Gudgenby in a Box' opening ceremony
- facilitating a site visit by the builder of the Cotter Hut
- celebrating the anniversary of the Apollo Space Mission at Honeysuckle Creek and the 30th anniversary of gazettal of the park
- facilitating site visits of the Shannons Flat families who previously owned land in the park
- recording and sharing oral histories (a Kosciuszko Huts Association project).

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- Greater opportunities for Traditional Custodians to inform management of the park.
- Objectives to support Traditional Custodians to maintain their connections to Country, including to manage Country and access resources.

- Updating the Namadgi Rock Art CMP and attaining the required approval for the Orroral Woolshed CMP.
- The development of an overarching Cultural Heritage Management System that outlines how the PCS will manage Aboriginal places and objects within ACT's reserves and parks.
- The use of historic (non-Aboriginal) assets by visitors to the park.

4.4 Fire management

Objectives: 1. Strategies integrate fire protection, water supply and conservation objectives and, to provide guidance for management, are supported by an effective research and monitoring program. 2. Fire management strategies create a mosaic of areas across the park with differing fire histories and a consequent diversity of vegetation age-classes and fuel loads.

Key achievements since 2010

Bushfire and flood Recovery Plan

The natural, cultural and recreational values of Namadgi NP have been severely impacted by bushfires. Approximately 92% of the park burned in 2003 and almost 80% burned in 2020. The severe storms and flooding that followed both fire events caused further damage to infrastructure, severe erosion in some areas, and extensive sediment deposition in many rivers and streams.

The ACT Government worked with the community to develop and implement an ACT Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan (released in September 2020) to assist the natural recovery of impacted areas. This followed recommendations from an ACT-led Rapid Risk Assessment Team that undertook an immediate assessment of the burned area and produced a report outlining the key risks arising from the bushfire, and recommendations to mitigate them. Immediate actions are now complete and long-term recovery actions are ongoing.

Future management and restoration efforts in Namadgi NP will be informed by the outcomes of current recovery actions and research on the impacts of fire on biodiversity and ecosystems. A story-map update on these projects is available at: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/nature-conservation/science-platform/science-and-research-news/bushfire-recovery-programs>.

Ongoing fire management activities

The primary legislation for bushfire management in the ACT is the *Emergencies Act 2004*. Fire management in Namadgi NP is undertaken in accordance with the five-year [ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan \(SBMP\)](#), [ten-year Regional Fire Management Plans](#) (RFMPs), and annual [Bushfire Operational Plans](#) (BOPs). Ecological thresholds (Tolerable Fire Intervals), growth stage diversity and climate refugia for ACT vegetation communities have been identified and are considered in the preparation of RFMPs and BOPs (available in the [Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations 2019](#)).

The CR branch provides ecological advice at all stages of fire planning required under the *Emergencies Act 2004*, and provides information to inform prescribed burn work plans, burn implementation and post-burn monitoring. A new Environmental and Cultural Values Officer position has been established in the EPSDD to provide ecological and environmental advice in the planning and implementation of prescribed burns and during fire management activities.

Research, monitoring and mapping

The ACT PCS and CR branch undertake research, in collaboration with external partners such as the ANU, University of Melbourne, University of Canberra, and University of Wollongong, to inform ongoing fire management activities and to better understand the response of biodiversity to fire. The ACT PCS is also a member of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, which supports research to improve disaster resilience and reduce the various impacts from bushfires and other natural hazards.

Fire management in Namadgi NP is also informed by:

- ACT vegetation mapping (see 4.2) and spatial records of protected/fire sensitive species and communities
- fire history and severity mapping
- erosion hazard assessment and mapping
- updated fire management zones (a collaborative project between the ACT Government, ACT Rural Fire Service and ACT Emergency Services Agency)

The CR branch monitors prescribed burning activities and reports on the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of burning. These reports provide key information and recommendations that aim to support continued improvement in planning and implementing prescribed burns.

Community engagement and collaborative management

The ACT PCS engages regularly with the ACT Rural Fire Service (RFS) and NSW RFS to plan and coordinate strategies and fire management activities. The PCS Fire Management Unit continues to work closely with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to determine fire risk and coordinate fire operations across the ACT region and beyond.

An ACT Farm Fire Wise Program has been developed by the ACT RFS to support and assist the rural community in fire prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions and capabilities.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- Protection of long unburnt areas, and sensitive ecological communities and species.
- Ongoing need for post-fire restoration activities and research to inform fire management.
- Ongoing review of pre-suppression and suppression technologies and practices to improve environmental outcomes.
- Enhancing opportunities for cultural burning activities by Traditional Custodians.



Black Sally Flat after the 2020 bushfire

4.5 Recreation and visitor use

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.

Key achievements since 2010

Visitor Experience Strategy

The ACT PCS is currently developing a Visitor Experience Strategy that will lay the foundations to better understand, plan for and manage visitation across the ACT conservation estate. The strategy will support the spatial planning and monitoring of visitor experiences, and the prioritisation of new infrastructure, and will reduce the impact of visitors on sensitive ecosystems.

The Strategy will outline the way the ACT PCS will work to improve and diversify available experiences across parks, reserves and plantations, while conserving cultural and natural heritage. The Strategy will be closely connected with the Nature Based Commercial Tourism Framework (NBCTF) currently under development.

Nature based tourism in the ACT

The ACT PCS is currently establishing a NBCTF to provide a planned and sustainable way to enhance, promote and enable a better understanding of Canberra's natural landscapes and wildlife. The framework will guide tourism activities in parks and reserves, including Namadgi NP, and will offer better support to commercial operators.

The NBCTF will be supported by a permit/licence system and a targeted compliance program. The framework will enable development of new experiences to establish a sense of belonging and inclusion for the community. It will support multiculturalism, connect people with nature, arts, culture, and heritage, and enhance the community's understanding of conservation values and threats.

Visitor Services Survey

The results of a 2021 visitor services survey of conservation areas in the ACT illustrate that 70% of respondents have visited Namadgi NP. Most respondents visit the park to spend time in nature (54.3%) and undertake physical exercise (40.4%). The most popular activities (in order of popularity) are walking, nature appreciation, hiking, relaxing, picnic/BBQ, photography, mountain biking, and camping/staying in accommodation. Ninety-two percent of respondents were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their overall experience.

The types of activities visitors want to see in the future are:

- Improvement of what's already there (facilities/walks/ bikes trails/signage)
- Guided tours/walks
- More Indigenous information given to the public
- More conservation management (weeds/litter).

Visitor Assist Volunteers in the Visitor Centre

The Visitor Assist program, where volunteers assist visitors to the VIC with information and interpretation about Namadgi NP, has been transitioned from Conservation Volunteers Australia to PCS ParkCare. The program has also been expanded to offer NaturePlay activities for children in school holidays.

Upgraded interpretation and use of Visitor Centre Facilities

Visitor experience at the VIC has been upgraded to include the 'Gudgenby in a Box' and scar tree interpretation installations.

The Theatre at the Namadgi VIC has been made available for public bookings and has been used for a range of meetings and events with community and environmental organisations. The Gallery space also continues to attract exhibitions of local artists and photographers. The park also hosts Craft ACT's Artist in Residence program every year, resulting in park-inspired art and greater connection of the arts and culture community with Namadgi.

NatureStays and Campgrounds

An online campground booking system has been introduced to enable visitors to see facilities at campsites and book and pay online. Ready Cut Cottage is now available for visitor accommodation and is a popular choice for those wanting to stay overnight in the park.

Recovery from 2020 fire

The 2020 Orroral Valley bushfire and ensuing heavy rainfalls impacted built infrastructure in Namadgi NP. Work on the restoration of damaged assets is currently underway.

- Walking tracks, including signs and interpretation, were badly damaged. Work is being undertaken to develop a Walking Track Strategy for ACT parks and reserves, including Namadgi NP. A recent workshop aimed to gather community priorities regarding development, maintenance, upgrades and network planning for the future.
- Management Tracks. The PCS is currently undertaking a Strategic Trail Review to assess the condition and utility of PSC-managed tracks. This will inform immediate and ongoing actions (see 4.8).
- The Australian Alps Walking Track (managed according to Australian Alps policies) was closed for some months following the 2020 bushfire and has been realigned in some areas.

Monitoring and managing visitors

Many group events are held in Namadgi NP each year, including orienteering and mountain biking events. The indicative guide to events (Schedule 3 in the 2010 Namadgi NP plan) outlines the type of events that are permitted in each recreation zone (Section 3).

Vehicle and foot-traffic counters are located at key access points to monitor visitation numbers.

The Recreation Users Stakeholder Group meets regularly to discuss recreational issues and opportunities. Parks staff also meet with the ACT Equestrian, Canberra Climbers and the Canberra Anglers Associations to discuss issues relevant to specific user groups.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- Review of management zones.
- Continued need for replacement and upgrades to infrastructure that support recreation.
- An approach to regulating the assessment of event applications.
- Improved compliance by recreational users with specific access restrictions.
- Review the need for campfires.
- Improved monitoring and analysis of visitor numbers and impacts.

4.6 Communication, information, interpretation, education & research

Primary Management Objectives: 1. 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. 2. Survey, monitoring and research programs in Namadgi provide knowledge and understanding that underpin park management.

Key achievements since 2010

Research planning

The Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program (BRAMP) supports the role of the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna and sets out a program of biodiversity research and monitoring activities. The BRAMP contributes to ensuring policy, program and resource allocation decisions are evidence-based, and relevant reporting is consistent.

The EPSDD Science Plan 2020–2025 now fulfils the requirements of the BRAMP. The Science Plan covers a five-year period, and an annual implementation plan is prepared each year. [The 20202021 Report on the EPSDD Science Plan Implementation Plan](#) outlines progress towards fulfilling five Action Areas, including priority research projects within Namadgi NP.

ACT PCS staff continue to liaise with EPSDD staff and external agencies (e.g., CSIRO and other research institutions, Water Watch, Frog Watch, Alps working groups, and Icon Water) to plan and implement surveys within Namadgi NP. Information and progress on all environmental research projects, including collaborative projects led by external agencies, must be recorded in EPSDD's centralised Research Directory.

Monitoring

As outlined in 2.2 above, the CEMP aims to inform key elements of adaptive management of ecosystems across the ACT reserve system. Application of the CEMP for managing ecosystems within Namadgi will provide evidence to support land management decisions and is an integral part of improving management effectiveness within the park.

A program of research, monitoring and management actions was also implemented as part of the response to the 2020 fire and flood (see 4.4).

Communication

The ACT PCS regularly promotes messages to the community through the EPSDD website and social media platforms. The CR branch also shares environmental research findings with various stakeholder groups during its annual EcoFocus seminar.

Information about the park is available at the VIC, in brochures and guides, and on signage throughout the park. The significance of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage places is reflected on interpretation signs (e.g., at 'Gudgenby in a Box', Lone Pine and Orroral Homestead). Ranger guided activities within Namadgi NP provide an opportunity to disseminate information about the values of and threats to the area.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Objectives and information in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- New opportunities for interpretation and education.
- The development of a communication plan and interpretation strategy.

- Programs that enhance community understanding and joint protection of the values of Namadgi NP.
- Ensuring new knowledge informs an adaptive management framework.

4.7 Neighbours, community groups and volunteers

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.

Key achievements since 2010

Volunteers and community groups

The ACT PCS Volunteer and Visitor Programs supports volunteer activity through the ParkCare Volunteering Program, which consists of ParkCare Patch, RangerAssist, VisitorAssist, and WildlifeAssist programs. ParkCare VisitorAssist Volunteers help visitors engage with and understand Namadgi NP and its surrounds by providing information, including interpretation of the local landscape, at the VIC.

The Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group and Kosciuszko Huts Association, connected through ParkCare Patch, also undertake conservation work in the park, including:

- maintenance of historic huts within Namadgi NP
- Landcare regeneration works
- mapping invasive species, including rabbit warrens in the Gudgenby Valley, to support control programs.

The National Parks Association (NPA) and Canberra Bushwalking Club continue to undertake volunteer activities in Namadgi NP. For example, Canberra Bushwalking Club has been involved in monitoring sites with invasive broom for over 20 years and the NPA mapped fence lines around the Gudgenby Homestead prior to their removal.

The following groups are supporting regeneration of the landscape following the 2020 bushfire and floods: Parkcare, ACT National Parks Association, Gudgenby Bush Regeneration Group, Friends of Tidbinbilla, Kosciuszko Huts Association, Landcare, Canberra Orchid Society, Greening Australia, Friends of Grassland, Water Watch, Frog Watch, Kosciuszko2Coast, Conservation Council, Canberra Ornithologists Group and ACT Wildlife.



Cotter Hut

Neighbours

The ACT PCS participates in planning and resource sharing for fire planning and operational programs. Rural Services staff work with ACT land holders on issues such as containing livestock, fencing, roadside mowing and weed control, fulfilling requirements of Land Management Agreements, Eastern Grey Kangaroo culling and hazard reduction burning. A rural grants program is available to lessees to assist with projects, and EPSDD staff offer free natural resource management advice to lessees. ACT NRM is undertaking a restoration project in the Naas Valley region, which focuses on riparian zones of the Naas River.

ACT PCS staff have good working relationships with Outward Bound regarding the organisation's use of the park and continue to liaise with neighbours as required. Many cross-border cooperative management programs are coordinated through the Australian Alps Liaison Committee Cooperative Management Agreement.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- New opportunities for collaboration, particularly with Traditional Custodians.
- Development of protocols for park access, OH&S and other relevant issues with partner organisations.



Interpretation sign on Yerrabi Track

4.8 A protected and managed resource

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

Key achievements since 2010

Water and energy use

Water extraction within Namadgi NP is subject to relevant licences, and a range of monitoring and management activities are ongoing to maintain water quality standards within the park (see 4.1).

Waste management and chemical use

The collection and appropriate disposal of sewage within the park is managed by sullage contractors. Pump-out toilets have been constructed where recreational use is high (see 4.1) and organisers of large events are required to provide portable toilets for participants. Visitors continue to be encouraged to take their rubbish home.

The application of chemicals in the park complies with Australian standards and, as outlined in 4.1, considers potential impacts on the park's water resources.

Monitoring and evaluation

Data collected during pest animal surveys, such as quarterly rabbit transect counts and annual pig monitoring, directly inform relevant control programs. Data from research regarding ecosystem and/or biodiversity conservation—led by the ACT Government or in collaboration with research institutions—inform ongoing planning for management actions.

The expansion of CEMP (see 2.2) to include additional ecosystems will improve the approach to monitoring ecosystem health and providing evidence to support land management decisions within Namadgi NP.

The ACT PCS and the broader EPSDD have several partnerships to collect and share data and information, including through:

- the NPA (rabbit warren mapping)
- Canberra Nature Map
- ACT Wildlife Atlas
- Canberra Ornithologists Group
- ACTmapi biodiversity layer.

Environmental impact assessment

Under the *Planning and Development Act 2007* Environmental Impact Assessments are required for any developments that trigger impact track assessment (see:

https://www.planning.act.gov.au/development-applications-assessments/assessment-of-development/da-assessment-tracks/impact_track for further information).

Procedures are in place to ensure environmental impacts are considered in the development of Park Operations Plans. This includes:

- ensuring all works planning includes consideration of possible environmental impacts
- the use of GIS for spatial analysis of possible impacts
- completing project briefs, risk assessments and site inductions for contractors
- considering environmental impacts when assessing event applications.

Potential environmental impacts on Namadgi NP are also considered as part of the assessment of Nature Conservation Act licence applications.

Administration - Fees and charges and access management

All fees and charges for the park are reviewed annually. General information regarding access to the park is provided at track heads and additional information for large group events is provided as required. Remote areas of Namadgi NP are used for training by various emergency services including police, ambulance and fire. Licence holders are required to seek approval before entering wilderness areas, and PCS staff and researchers are required to inform VIC staff before commencing work in these areas.

Vehicular access is monitored, and a new lock system has been installed to prevent access to areas closed to visitors. All personnel going beyond locked gates must advise the VIC of their intention and must adhere to several access conditions. Access is not approved on days of Total Fire Ban, after heavy rain or during hazard reduction burns.

Fire trails are routinely maintained to standards outlined in the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and Regional Fire Plans. The PCS is currently developing a Strategic Asset Plan for PCS-managed roads and trails. As part of this, a Strategic Trail Review, which will assess the condition, structural integrity and alignment of all roads and trails managed by PCS, is underway. Where appropriate, this will inform recommendations regarding the need for immediate and/or ongoing actions, including major upgrades, re-alignments, maintenance schedules and decommissioning of ineffective trails.

In planning future works, consideration will be given to maintaining access to parks while enhancing the design and construction of roads and trails to ensure better resilience to extreme weather events associated with climate change.

Infrastructure

As required, the ACT PCS liaises with authorities including the ACT Property Group, ACT Roads, ACTEW, Icon Water and Telstra regarding the safety and maintenance of infrastructure. The ACT PCS monitors compliance with leases, licences (including Nature Conservation Act licences) and agreements, events approvals and the Outward Bound Memorandum Of Understanding.

External agencies are required to produce a communication plan for works that may affect park visitors and must provide details on the mechanisms for informing the public.

Implementation of the Plan

The ACT PCS is currently refining a Spatialised Operations Planning System that facilitates consistent operational planning, activity implementation and reporting across PCS-managed reserves within the ACT. The new system allows PCS staff to record and prioritise operational activities, while providing clear links to strategic priorities, such as the objectives, policies and actions outlined in reserve management plans.

Issues to be considered in preparing a new plan

- Management agreements with public utility agencies.
- Approval processes and operational procedures for access to Namadgi NP.
- Further development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation that is embedded in an adaptive management approach for the park.
- The development and outcomes of the Strategic Trail Review and associated Strategic Management Plan for PCS Roads and Trails

5 Conclusion

The 2010 plan provides a useful decision-making framework that clearly identifies Namadgi's key values, and objectives, policies and actions for their protection. Much of the information in the 2010 plan, and many of the identified management objectives, remain relevant to future management of the park. However, there have been significant updates to legislation and policy since 2010 and new knowledge is available to inform future management. A new plan is required to ensure priority actions are well-informed and aligned with broader objectives for the protection of the ACT's natural and cultural heritage.

The EPSDD has worked with the community to develop and implement immediate and long-term actions to assist the recovery of Namadgi following extensive impacts from fire and floods. There is an ongoing need for post-fire restoration activities and research to shape future priorities for management of the park. Importantly, this includes protecting long unburnt areas and sensitive ecological communities and species.

Since 2010, there have been considerable achievements in meeting the objectives of the 2010 plan. Effective partnerships, on-ground management, and regulatory and research activities support the maintenance of water quality and guide biodiversity conservation activities. There is, however, a need to further explore the implications of climate change and identify appropriate activities to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience to predicted impacts.

The EPSDD acknowledges the connection Ngunnawal people maintain with their Country and, since 2010, has implemented several initiatives to better support these connections. Nevertheless, a greater focus on collaborating with Aboriginal people to manage Country within Namadgi NP is a priority. Ongoing relevant policy development is also required, including the completion of CMPs to guide the management and protection of significant heritage places. Continuing to maintain and improve Namadgi's natural, cultural, and recreational values will require ongoing collaboration with other agencies, including land managers and research institutions, and the broader community.

The ACT PCS has worked hard to maintain and restore built assets that facilitate community access to Namadgi for recreation. The need to replace and upgrade facilities is ongoing and will be informed by improved monitoring and analysis of visitor use and impacts on the park. Ensuring visitors comply with restrictions to access, and identifying additional opportunities for community education, are critical components of maintaining sustainable recreation within the park. This will be further supported by the development of the ACT PCS Visitor Experience Strategy and Nature Based Commercial Tourism Framework.

One of the challenges in reviewing the achievements of the Namadgi plan is the current absence of a systematic, integrated approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of management effectiveness for ACT reserves. The EPSDD is currently in the process of reviewing its land management planning system to establish a more systematic approach to management planning, monitoring and outcome-based evaluation of management effectiveness. This will assist the land custodian to implement enhanced adaptive management to conserve the natural and cultural values of Namadgi into the future and meet reporting obligations under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.

5 Recommendations

Given the breadth of new information available to inform ongoing management of Namadgi, and the policy and legislative changes that have occurred since 2010, it is recommended that a new plan for Namadgi National Park be developed as soon as practicable. A new plan should:

- be informed by up-to-date information
- be integrated with and informed by new and updated strategies and frameworks that influence management of the park
- require an implementation plan to be developed and outline how an adaptive management framework will be employed
- clearly articulate priority management objectives that take into consideration the impacts of the 2020 bushfires
- provide opportunities for Traditional Custodians to participate in setting directions for the park
- identify and explore sustainable ways to support the priorities of Traditional Custodians and users of the park
- expand on information regarding Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage within the park
- prioritise the update and completion of CMPs for heritage places within the park
- identify a consolidated but comprehensive number of priority (short, medium and long term) actions
- consider the ongoing relevance of the primary management objectives identified in the 2010 plan
- outline how visitor numbers and impacts will be better assessed and how visitor access restrictions will be enforced
- consider the need for a communication and interpretation strategy for the park
- highlight the ongoing need for research to inform park management, especially regarding actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change
- include enhanced spatial information of values and threats within the park.

References

Brawata, R., Stevenson, B., and Seddon, J. 2017. Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program: an overview. Technical Report. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government, Canberra.

Brawata, R., Larson, E., Stevenson, B. and Seddon, J. 2019. Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program: ACT Upland Native Grasslands Ecosystem Condition Monitoring Plan. Technical Report. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government, Canberra.

Cook, W., Jenkins, B., Young, M., Murphy, C., Milford H.B. and Muller, R. 2016. Soil Landscapes of the Australian Capital Territory, Office of Environment and Heritage, Queanbeyan, NSW.

Hockings, M., James, R., Stolton, S., Dudley, N., Mathur, V., Makomba, J., Courrau, J. and Parrish, J. 2008. Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit. Assessing management effectiveness of natural World Heritage sites: *Tool 5, Assessment of Management Planning, Worksheet 5b*. UNESCO/IUCN World Heritage Papers 23. UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Lucas, Z., Evans, L., Beitzel, M. and Jekabsons, M. 2019. Why can't fish cross the road? Barriers to fish passage in national park and reserves of the ACT. Unpublished report, Research Report Series. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. ACT Government, Canberra.

Namadgi Rock Art Working Group (NRAWG) & Stepwise. 2013. Namadgi National Park Rock Art Sites Conservation Management Plan. Namadgi Rock Art Working Group, commissioned by the ACT Government, Canberra.



ACT Government staff surveying crayfish

Appendix

Evaluation against the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Assessment Tool

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released an assessment tool (Worksheet 5b: Adequacy of Primary Planning Document¹) in 2008 to help assess the adequacy of planning used to guide management of World Heritage sites. This tool provides a useful assessment of protected area management plans.

The following is an assessment of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010 against the IUCN Worksheet 5b:

Question	Response	Comments/ Explanation	Opportunities, recommendations and follow-up actions
1. Does the plan establish a clear understanding of the desired outcomes of management in clear terms rather than just specifying actions to be taken?	Very Good: Desired outcomes are explicitly articulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan's vision statement and primary objectives indicate the desired outcome of management at a high level and the secondary objectives provide further detail. The statement of significance identifies the natural and cultural values which give Namadgi NP special significance, and individual chapters provide additional detail of these values. Objectives include those prescribed in the <i>Planning and Development Act</i>. 	A new management plan will include, where possible, ecosystem condition monitoring currently being established under CEMP. This will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of management activities and provide evidence to support management decisions.
2. Does the plan express the desired future for the reserve in a way that can assist management of new issues and opportunities that arise during the life of the plan?	Very Good: The desired future for the park is expressed in a way that provides clear guidance for addressing new issues and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The desired future of Namadgi NP, and the approach to attain it, are outlined in the plan's vision statement, primary and secondary objectives, and management considerations Defined zones provide guidance about what is appropriate in each area. 	
3. Does the plan provide for a process of monitoring, review and adjustment during the life of the plan?	Fair: The need for monitoring, review and adjustment is recognised but not dealt with in sufficient detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptive/experimental management is included in Key Principles of Management. Action 193 states 'regularly assess progress with the actions'. The <i>Nature Conservation Act 2014</i> requires 5- and 10-year reporting on action implementation. This requirement was legislated after the 2010 plan was finalised. 	<p>EPSDD is developing a system to record implementation of actions to support 5 yearly reporting.</p> <p>Development of CEMP will assist in biodiversity monitoring, evaluation, and support of management actions.</p>
4. Does the plan provide an adequate and appropriate policy environment for management of the reserve?	Very Good: The policy context for the park is identified and adequate and appropriate policies are established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan highlights the ACT's comprehensive planning and legislative framework. This framework guides the identification of values and management priorities. The plan includes 269 policies specifically directed at protecting key values. 	A new management plan will include legislative and policy developments since 2010.
5. Is the plan integrated/linked to other significant national/regional/sectoral plans that influence management of the reserve?	Very Good: Plans relevant to Namadgi NP are identified and specific mechanisms are included to ensure ongoing integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan outlines relevant international, national and regional plans/agreements. Chapter 2 outlines the relevant international and national legislation and agreements. The key role of the Australian Alps National Parks Agreement is outlined 	A new management plan will include updated references to strategies that influence management of the reserve

Question	Response	Comments/ Explanation	Opportunities, recommendations and follow-up actions
6. Is the plan based on an adequate and relevant information base?	Good: The information base is adequate in scope and depth but is now outdated and/or contains irrelevant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan includes information from ecological and water research conducted prior to publication. Recreational use data is gathered and assessed on an ad hoc basis. 	A new management plan will reflect current and future research priorities and will provide updates to available information, including additional information on climate change and adaptation approaches.
7. Have the values for the reserve been identified in the plan and linked to the management objectives and desired outcomes?	Very Good: The site values have been clearly identified and linked to well-defined management objectives and desired outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapters 4-6 and 8-10 outline the values of the park and primary and secondary objectives for each. 	A new management plan will reflect updated information on values.
8. Does the plan address the primary issues facing management of the reserve within the context of the desired future of the reserve?	Very Good: The plan identifies primary issues for Namadgi NP, and management of the park is outcome, rather than issue driven.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan identifies key issues that threaten the values of the park. Many management objectives and actions aim to mitigate these impacts. 	A new management plan will reflect updated issues and opportunities relevant to the management of the park (e.g., participation of Traditional Custodians and threats from climate change and wildfire).
9. Are the objectives and actions specified in the plan represented as adequate and appropriate responses to the issues	Good: Objectives and actions are adequate and appropriate for most issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan includes 10 primary objectives, 49 secondary objectives and 193 actions. 	<p>Staff advise that too many actions were included in the plan, and the scale of some was too low for this document.</p> <p>A new plan would aim to include fewer objectives and actions.</p>
10. Were local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve involved in developing the management plan and setting direction for management?	Fair: Local and indigenous communities living in or around Namadgi NP were engaged during the development of the plan but did not play a key role in setting its direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Interim Namadgi Advisory Board, established under a 2001 Agreement between the ACT Government and ACT Native Title Claimants, provided input during the development of the plan. This Board ceased meeting before the Namadgi NP plan was finalised in 2010. 	With the support of the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee and other relevant groups, Traditional Custodians will be provided an opportunity to participate in the development of a new plan.
11. Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve?	Fair: The plan notes the importance of local and indigenous communities, but the focus is on cultural sites, rather than ongoing engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan states that Aboriginal engagement in Namadgi NP will be in accordance with local, regional, and international policies, agreements and other guidelines. Aboriginal rangers and the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee have had input into the management of Namadgi NP. 	Traditional Custodians will be provided greater opportunities to plan for and implement management actions within Namadgi NP.
12. Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of other stakeholders involved in the reserve?	Very Good: The plan considers the needs and interests of various stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan identifies many groups who have an interest in Namadgi NP, and opportunities were provided for them to provide input during development of the plan An indicative guide to events is included in the plan. EPSDD supports a Recreational Users Group to provide input on key issues in all ACT reserves. EPSDD includes a Rural Landholders Unit to engage with rural neighbours in the ACT. 	The new plan will include information on the development of the Visitor Experience Strategy and Nature Based Commercial Tourism Framework.

Question	Response	Comments/ Explanation	Opportunities, recommendations and follow-up actions
13. Does the plan provide adequate direction on management actions that should be undertaken in the reserve?	Good: Management actions specified in the plan provide an adequate basis for developing operational plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the 193 management actions identified in the plan are long term and ongoing. Few are short-term or once-off actions. 	A new plan would aim to include fewer actions.
14. Does the plan identify the priorities amongst strategies and actions in a way that facilitates work programming and allocation of resources?	Good: Actions are able to adequately inform work programming and resource allocation most of the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan ranks the implementation of actions as either high, medium or low. 	

