

Incorporating Ramsar principles and wetland tools into park management planning

A large proportion of the area associated with internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands occurs on areas of land or water that are also part of Queensland's national parks. In Queensland there is a requirement to develop management plans that identify a park's key natural and cultural values as well as propose strategies for day-to-day and long-term management to protect those values. This project aims to incorporate ecological character description information, Ramsar management principles, and available wetland tools into individual park management plans for protected areas that contain Ramsar or other wetlands.

Background

Queensland has 5 wetlands recognised by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (commonly known as the Ramsar Convention). These sites are Moreton Bay, Bowling Green Bay, Currawinya Lakes, Shoalwater Bay and Corio Bay, and the Great Sandy Strait. Draft ecological character descriptions (ECDs) have been developed for all Ramsar sites in Queensland. The ECDs describe baseline information about the wetland's environmental features and services.

These Ramsar sites overlap to greater and lesser extents with areas that are also part of Queensland's Protected Area Estate (which includes national parks, conservation parks, resources reserves and marine parks). The information in ECDs can be used to develop park management plans for protected areas that contain Ramsar wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention aims to halt, and where possible, reverse the worldwide loss of wetlands, and conserve those that remain through wise use and management.

To further assist wetland management and the development of protected area management plans, this project will also determine the needs and available resources and promote the tools required for park planners to enhance wetland management on the protected area estate.

Management plans for protected areas in Queensland are developed in accordance with the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*, *Marine Parks Act 2004*, and the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*.



Aerial view of saline Lake Wyara, part of the Currawinya Lakes Ramsar site in south-west Queensland.

Methods

Determining needs and promoting wetland tools for park planning

A significant component of this project will involve determining and disseminating information that will assist park planners in developing management plans. Initially this will involve communicating with park planners to:

- determine the type of wetland information needed, and promote available wetland information and tools that will be most beneficial for park management
- develop a process for including wetland specific information and actions into park management plans
- determine the most effective way of delivering this information (for example training or fact sheets).





Pumicestone Passage near Bribie Island—part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site in South East Queensland.

Incorporating Ramsar management principles into park management plans

This project will also:

- identify the protected areas associated with Ramsar sites
- incorporate Ramsar management principles and elements of the Ramsar ECDs into the existing management plan framework for parks that overlap Ramsar sites.

Products and tools

A range of products and tools will be developed as part of this project including:

- a survey to investigate the requirements of park planners in relation to wetland information and management, and developing management plans
- fact sheets and guidelines to assist wetland management of protected areas
- training tools and opportunities for park planners in relation to wetland information currently available through the Queensland Wetlands Program (such as *WetlandInfo*, *WetlandMaps*)
- management plans that incorporate Ramsar management principles and elements of the ECDs for parks associated with Ramsar wetlands.

Boundary modifications

The project will also:

- investigate opportunities, determine procedures and commence the process of making adjustments to the Ramsar site boundaries as suggested in the ECDs
- suggest a procedure for making adjustments to the Ramsar site boundaries.

The Queensland Wetlands Program supports projects and activities that result in long-term benefits to the sustainable management, wise use and protection of wetlands in Queensland. The tools developed by the Program help wetlands land holders, managers and decision makers in government and industry. The Program is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland governments.

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