

for the new millennium review

Renew the vision!

To mark the 30th Anniversary of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allan MP, has commissioned a major review to renew the vision for natural and cultural heritage conservation and the role of the NPWS.

The objective of the Visions Review is:

"to prepare a comprehensive report to the Minister for the Environment which recommends actions necessary to further enhance the performance of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in protected area management, nature conservation and cultural heritage conservation."

The Steering Committee: stakeholders guiding the review

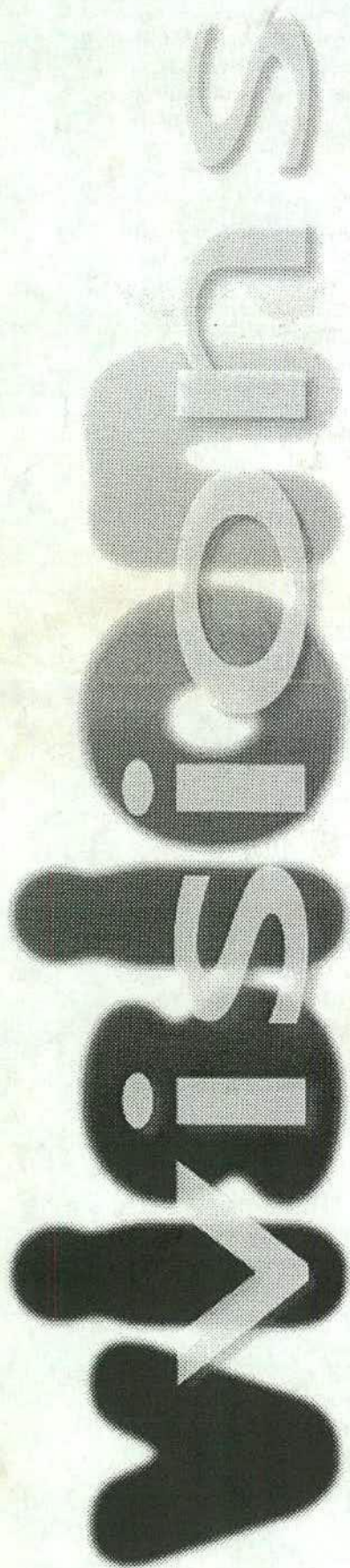
An independent Steering Committee, comprising representatives from diverse backgrounds, has been appointed by the Minister to undertake this Visions for the New Millennium Review. The acting Director General, Brian Gilligan, has joined the Steering Committee as its Chair. The 18 members of the Steering Committee are keen to see broad based participation in the review process at a number of levels.

Visions Process Taking Shape

The Steering Committee has identified 12 key issues to be considered in the review process, which attempt to cover the breadth of conservation and management responsibilities of the NPWS. These are grouped into three broad themes: *managing our natural diversity*, *managing our cultural heritage*, and *use and enjoyment of protected areas*. Issues papers prepared on each of these 12 key issues provide a basis for regional and symposium workshop discussions.

Invitation lists have been developed inviting interested groups and individuals to participate in the review process at regional, state, national and international levels through regional workshops and the symposium. The Steering Committee is committed to ensuring representation by a wide range of groups and individuals from environment, industry, recreation, local government, state government and Aboriginal interests.

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Regional Workshops on the way

In June, a series of workshops with invited key representatives at the regional level will take place in 8 regional centres across the state: Grafton (north coast - 1 June), Armidale (northern tablelands - 2 June), Dubbo (central west - 3 June), Broken Hill (far west - 4 June), Wagga Wagga (south west - 5 June), Nowra (south coast - 9 June), Cooma (far south - 10 June), Sydney (city - 11 June) and Parramatta (central Sydney - 12 June).

The workshops are designed as an opportunity for regional participation in the Review process by a wide range of stakeholders, an important lead up to the Symposium in July. Workshops for NPWS staff will be held in conjunction with stakeholder workshops in most regional centres. The regional workshops will focus on the key objectives of the Visions Review: the role of the NPWS in conservation around the themes of conserving our natural diversity, conserving our cultural heritage, and use and enjoyment of protected areas. All workshops will follow a consistent format to ensure that all participant ideas can be drawn into the review process.

The outcomes of each workshop will be compiled into a report and provided to each participant. This report will provide a key resource document for Symposium participants, and for the Visions Review Steering Committee in preparing its report to the Minister for the Environment on the Review.

Symposium Arrangements Firming Up

Following the hypothetical on Thursday evening, the Symposium will be officially opened on Friday morning 17 July 1998 by the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Bob Carr MP, followed by an address from the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allan, MP. This day will feature informative and challenging presentations on a range of social, political, indigenous, and global conservation topics by international and national figures, including Mr Harold Eidsvik, world renowned expert in park management, nature conservation and World Heritage management (keynote speaker), Professor Adrian Phillips - Chair of the World Conservation Union's World Commission on Protected Areas, and Dr Reed Noss - Co-Executive Director of the Conservation Biology Institute. This day will be topped off with a memorable conference dinner in The Rocks, Sydney.

The focus of Saturday will be concurrent workshops exploring 12 key strategic issues around three broad themes of the review: conservation of natural diversity, conservation of cultural heritage (Aboriginal and non-indigenous) and use and enjoyment. Each Symposium

participant will have the opportunity to explore 3 key issues during the workshop sessions. An insightful presentation will be given by Mr Rob Amberger, Superintendent of the Grand Canyon National Park focusing on 30 years experience in the US Parks Service and management of ten national parks across the United States.

Setting the Scene

There have been significant changes in the responsibilities of the NPWS over the last decade, and in the environment in which the NPWS operates. The models of nature conservation and cultural heritage management have shifted. Significant Government policy reforms are under way and community expectations of the NPWS performance are higher than ever. It is an appropriate time to take stock and determine what changes are necessary to deal with an often uncertain, and challenging, future.

The current conservation responsibilities of the NPWS arise from the *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974* (as amended), together with the *Wilderness Act 1987*, and the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. They can be summarised in the following objectives:

- to investigate and acquire land for inclusion in a system of parks and reserves to conserve a complete range of the natural environments of the state;
- to provide for regional open space and recreational opportunities through establishing and managing regional parks and state recreation areas;
- to work through the Marine Parks Authority, to establish and manage a comprehensive system of marine parks;
- to protect and manage Aboriginal sites, objects and places of special significance to Aboriginal people throughout the state;
- to manage historic places within the NPWS' park and reserve system and to acquire historic places of significance for management as historic sites;
- to manage the NPWS' parks and reserves for the enjoyment of present generations and to conserve them for future generations;
- to ensure the conservation of protected native animals and plants throughout the state and to prevent the extinction and promote the recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities;
- to identify, protect and manage wilderness throughout the state;
- to conserve outstanding natural features including karst areas; and

- to promote community awareness, understand and appreciation of nature and of our cultural heritage.

The following briefs provide useful background reading for the Regional Workshops. A full set of Visions Review Issues Papers and Trends Paper can be accessed from the Visions Internet site at www.npws.nsw.gov.au/news/visions/index.html from mid June 1998.

Looking Ahead: Trends Paper

This snapshot provides an overview of major trends and emerging issues which may prove to have significant consequences for economic, political and social life in Australia. These issues have not been analysed in relation to the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, but offer some future perspectives.

Social Trends and Issues

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Science and Technology, the global population is estimated to be increasing by approximately 1.6% per year from 5.9 billion people in 1997 to 10 billion people by 2030. The Australian population is projected to grow from 18.1 million in 1995 to between 22.5 and 23.5 million in 2021, and between 24.9 and 28.3 million in 2050, depending on a range of assumptions including fertility and overseas migration. The projections show that regardless of which combination of assumptions is chosen, the aging of Australia's population will continue. This has implications for a range of issues including health, housing, transport, consumer demand, savings and financial services.

Although NSW comprises only 10.4% of the total area of Australia, it comprises 33.9% of Australian residents. Most of the state's population is clustered around three major coastal centres of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Sydney's population growth is mainly due to overseas migration, but growth in other regions of the state is generally caused by drift from Sydney from Sydney to coastal retreats, or from rural areas to more populated coastal cities or towns where work opportunities are greater.

Possible lifestyle issues for the next few years include "anchoring" (spiritual issues), "mancipation" (emancipation of men), and "wilderling" (wilderness experiences). Automation, globalisation, replacement of labour by capital, aging population, growth of the service sector and shifting places for low

labour costs has influenced the nature of employment and employment patterns. Growth in insecure employment, non-permanent full time employment, decline of corporate loyalty and single career paths, need for retraining and reskilling during a career, long term unemployment, and access to information and education.

Economics and Business

One of the most significant trends driving change in developed and developing economies is the internationalisation of capital and markets through the development of a global economy of trade in products and services. There are two key dimensions to this: the development of an international financial sector, and the development of transnational corporate power beyond the control of individual nation states.

Consideration need to be given to issues such as:

- declining diversity and independence of political and cultural expression as a result of incorporating urban sectors of lesser developed countries into global markets
- standardisation and simplification of issues and messages with the rise of infotainment, and the concentration of ownership of information and communication media
- transnationals may bring economic benefits from capital investment and employment creation, but profits may be transferred offshore and not reinvested locally, leading to less local investment and regional growth.

Environmental Trends and Issues

The impacts of economic systems based on the continuing consumption of material goods and services is increasingly recognised by even mainstream politicians in developed nations as unsustainable. It has been suggested that one of the greatest threats to sustainable economic development is the volume and volatility of financial markets. Other environmental issues of concern include the impact of rapid population growth in lesser developed countries on natural environments and resource depletion; the continuing declines in quality and availability of natural resources such as clean air and water; impact of urban growth and development on society and health; and risk on dependence on monocultural systems for major world food supplies and the risk of naturally occurring disasters such as fire, flood, and drought, and human induced disasters such as mad cow disease and chicken flu.

Political Trends and Issues

Along with increasing internationalisation, there appears to be a trend towards increasing regionalisation. In environmental planning, both state and federal governments appear to be divesting planning to lower levels. The increasing demand for local involvement in decision-making processes reflects this trend. There is a reincarnation of the ideology of market capitalism, where the role of government is to facilitate the efficient operation of market forces via micro-economic reform, and to provide some level of basic welfare service in cases of market failure. Approaches taken in reforms of public sector agencies have included corporatisation and privatisation of the public service, commercialisation of research and services, increasing service focus, more commercial approach to project management and service provision, and contracting out of services.

Insight: Issues Papers

The following summary overviews provide a snapshot of each issues paper.

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Protected Area Categories

For more than a century, national parks and

other protected areas have been the cornerstone of attempts to protect outstanding natural landscapes and wildlife and to facilitate public access to and enjoyment of those areas. More recently, protected areas have increasingly been cast in the role of conserving biological diversity, especially through maintaining habitat and ecological processes. There has always been competition between natural resource industries and the creation of protected areas. This will almost certainly grow as the protected areas system expands, and resource exploration techniques improve and as non-renewable resources decline.

With only 5.7% of the State in protected areas (against a National Forest Policy recommendation of 15%) and most of the gaps in representation occurring where there is little public land, the costs of establishing a truly comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas could easily run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

There has been increasing recreational use made of national parks but the Service has assumed responsibility for state recreation areas and, more recently, regional parks. These new reserve categories broaden the Service's role, potentially moving the Service away solely from a conservation and heritage role, which it has seen as its core business.

To help give some structure to the types of protected areas, and to allow for comparisons between jurisdictions, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature developed seven categories:

Category Ia: STRICT NATURE RESERVE: protected area managed mainly for science with outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physical features and/or species.

Category Ib: WILDERNESS AREA: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection. Large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition.

Category II: NATIONAL PARK: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation. Natural area of land and/or sea, designated to protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, exclude exploitation or occupation which conflict with the purposes of designation of the area; and provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

Category III: NATURAL MONUMENT: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features. Area containing one, or more, specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

Category IV: HABITAT/SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the requirements of specific species.

Category V: PROTECTED LANDSCAPE/ SEASCAPE: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

Category VI: MANAGED RESOURCE PROTECTED AREA: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

The growth of a conservation ethic within communities has resulted in a higher awareness of the environment, seen in the growth of community-based groups such as catchment management committees and conservation groups. There are both opportunities and expectations of community involvement in issues related to protected areas.

Many individuals are prepared to make a personal commitment to conserving protected areas. Some volunteer for work through NPWS volunteer programs, friends groups or through local government. Others are prepared to commit some or all of their land to conservation through *Conservation Agreements* or other covenants. A number of landholders voluntarily support *Wildlife Refuge* schemes on their properties.

There has been a growing scientific and community awareness of the significance of marine ecosystems and concern about their use and conservation. The formation of the Marine Parks Authority has seen the forging of the NPWS and NSW Fisheries in a new era of marine conservation and sustainable resource management.

Consideration should be given to the role of reserves and other protected areas in conserving our natural diversity, as opposed to non-reservation strategies and the degree of emphasis which should be placed on nature conservation management, as opposed to other uses.

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Managing for Conservation

To many within the broader community, the management of protected areas under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (the Act), remains the primary role of the NPWS. The image of the knowledgeable and caring "ranger", who can identify the park's plants and animals and spends the day battling weeds and litter bugs remains strong, despite the vast changes that have occurred in both the agency and the field of conservation more generally in the past twenty years. While the NPWS has increasingly and necessarily focused its efforts on conservation outside the park and reserve system, the management of protected areas remains fundamental to its role and functions.

The Draft NSW Biodiversity Strategy identifies the need to "effectively manage protected areas". Actions include to continue to develop and regularly review management plans for all protected areas aimed at

maintaining and enhancing biodiversity values and rehabilitating degraded areas. The development and review process will continue to involve extensive public consultation.

As managers of greater than 5% of the land area of NSW, the NPWS has a significant role to play in land management generally, over and above specific responsibilities to manage for natural diversity on those lands. The rapid and continued growth in reserved lands means the NPWS must actively manage change and respond to new and increasing land management responsibilities. This continued growth has been at the expense of the management quality of those lands, with most new areas subject to a long history of prior disturbance and modification, and coming complete with a large contingent of existing users with often strong opposing views on the management of those lands by the NPWS.

The Act requires the preparation of Plans of Management (PoM) for most classes of reserves, "as soon as practicable". Plans are legally binding documents and outline how a reserve will be managed in the future. It is arguable that no work should occur within a reserve unless it is either identified or clearly compatible with a PoM. Of the 358 reserves gazetted under the Act (as at November 1997), 75 (20%) have adopted PoMs; 27 (7.5%) have draft PoMs that are in final stages of adoption; and 20 (5.6%) have draft PoMs that are or have been on public exhibition. This means 122 (33.1%) protected areas have either a draft or adopted PoM as required by legislation.

Conflict around PoM development seems in most cases to be increasing, primarily due to a lack of a common view on the role and function of protected areas. This conflict is most often focused on differences over appropriate recreational activities and the need to restrict or modify historical use patterns. This is not surprising considering the vagueness of the legislation in this regard, most parks where the result of community advocacy driven by aesthetic and recreational values rather than any scientific criteria; and that increasingly, reserves are being declared over lands with a long history of incompatible existing use. This problem is compounded by the fact that, in many cases, the NPWS is the only agency with a legislative requirement to provide appropriate recreational opportunities on public land. Accordingly, all potential users of such a resource focus on ensuring their particular activity is allowed for within a reserve PoM.

The principles of protected area management are as much an art as science. While professional management practice has been the backbone of NPWS reserve planning, it can be hard to sell these maxims to users threatened by a conservation management approach. This has increased the need of the agency to better research and document management actions in transparent processes, often facilitated through the development of partnerships with universities and other institutions with expertise in land management. It also requires the better development of NPWS policies and guidelines reflecting standards of best practice.

Reservation as a "protected area" does not in itself guarantee the conservation of natural diversity within that area. "Managing" protected areas towards such an outcome is a core responsibility of the NPWS, and in reviewing this activity it is important to consider whether there is agreement on the preferred management outcome, the way in which the NPWS is working towards that outcome, and whether that outcome is, or ever can be, realised.

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Filling the Gaps in Protected Areas

Australia exhibits many distinctive and unique features to be incorporated in a network of protected areas. The continent's unique landforms and biota result from a number of historical and geographical factors stemming from Australia's origin as part of the supercontinent Gondwana and the long-term isolation of the continental landmass following the breakup of Gondwana. The origins of Australia's unique flora and fauna result from this continental isolation, the co-evolution of landscapes and biota, and their interaction with human societies under high levels of environmental stress associated with increasing climatic variability, low nutrient soils, high fire frequency and the interaction of surface and ground water in a predominantly flat landscape.

Since the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment in 1992, a series of environmental agreements have been entered into by the States with the Federal Government which seek to apply scientifically based principles for the conservation of biodiversity on a national level. A common feature of the agreements is a focus on conserving biodiversity through completing networks of protected areas, supported by other conservation and ecologically

sustainable development measures throughout the rest of the landscape.

Achieving the goal of a completed comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) network of protected areas will require an expansion of the existing system to include all ecosystems, and the varied life forms within them, in viable protected areas that can be adequately managed and sustained into the future.

The refinement of procedures for setting protected area targets is likely to continue, as is the trend to increase the targets for ecosystems or other options for biodiversity. It is anticipated that the land area required to meet protected area targets will increase as more components of biodiversity are taken into account in conservation planning. Knowledge will also increase concerning basic requirements for species and community viability, particularly as far as the impacts of threatening processes, including climate change, are concerned. The capacity to include more detail in interactive conservation planning processes will continue to increase. The trend to rely increasingly on scientific criteria for protected area planning should become further aligned with the use of expert panels to identify conservation planning principles and setting targets. In a number of areas this process has reduced conflict in the target setting process.

The recent emphasis on determining goals and criteria to enhance the conservation of biodiversity in protected area networks has tended to mean less focused attention on cultural heritage values in protected areas. The move towards Aboriginal reconciliation should provide a new focus for examining the role of protected area networks in protecting sites of significance to the Aboriginal community.

There is a commitment to the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) network of terrestrial and marine protected areas by 2010 contained in the New South Wales Draft Biodiversity Strategy as a priority action. The NPWS is the lead agency for the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and also has responsibility for the identification and protection of other natural and cultural features through the reserve system. Achieving the target of a completed CAR network of protected areas by 2010 will require a major expansion of the existing system to include all ecosystems, and the varied life forms within them. Issues to be considered in this process are:

- **setting targets** for the protected area network;
- determining what additional **data and analysis** is required to plan the remainder of the network and assembling that data;
- identifying **priority conservation areas** in the landscape and looking at options;
- determining the most effective **form of protection** for individual components of the network;
- **establishment** of protected areas;
- undertaking regular **reviews** of the effectiveness of the network as it is being developed.
- increased development research approaches to test and develop principles at both the specific and broad scales (e.g. species, small spatial scales and landscapes);
- more collaborative research with universities and other agencies such as CSIRO (e.g. engaging students and other researchers to focus on specific NPWS problems) and more partnership projects with major community groups (e.g. Greening Australia);
- more powerful and sophisticated computer hardware (enabling development of answers to problems and ideas that were unsolvable 10 years ago);
- an enhanced role for research as one component of a multi-functional approach to tackling conservation problems (i.e. research, policy, planning, assessment and management).

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Understanding Nature

Over the last thirty or so years, 'the environment' has emerged alongside the traditional fields of engineering, town planning and economics as a legitimate factor in decision making. Conservation efforts are concerned with both identification and management of areas of conservation significance (both inside and outside a formal reserve system) and with reducing the impact of human activities on the environment. Fulfilling these objectives requires the application of a vast amount of scientific and technical information relating to the state of, and trends within, the natural environment.

Research contributes to decision making by:

- identifying the target of conservation work. For example, the listing process under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* is done by an independent scientific body and is made on the process of scientific criteria alone;
- setting standards for environmental assessment and management;
- generating approaches to deal with conservation problems. Examples include survey techniques for threatened species, modeling programs, techniques to quantify and assess environmental impact, and management strategies;
- describing the environment and the interactions/processes within environments.

There have been marked changes over the last twenty years in the way research is delivered in the public sector in general and the NPWS in particular. These trends will continue in the future and include:

- more active extension of research results to managers and the public through a range of media;

Consideration should be given to the relationship between scientists and decision-makers operating at strategic, policy, regulatory and operational levels and dealing with a diverse range of issues. An effective working relationship between the producers and consumers of scientific and technical information requires an understanding of, and sensitivity to, both the application and limitations of science and technical data and the nature and broader social and economic context of decision making.

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Community Partnerships

The natural diversity of NSW exists over the full range of landscapes and land tenures. Whilst NSW is working towards the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas, to sustain natural diversity it is essential that the roughly 95% of NSW which is outside the system is managed as part of the natural landscape. There are a variety of opportunities for working with the community and private landholders in a range of ways to successfully build conservation partnerships.

There is a view that private and leasehold land is for the exclusive use of the land manager and that any benefits to natural diversity are incidental to the economic and personal benefits gained from land use. The alternative and increasingly common view is that all landholders have a level of responsibility for nature conservation on their property, and that this does not automatically have to conflict with the productive use of the

land. Successful conservation must flow from a basic commitment by land managers to include nature conservation in their management goals.

There are three basic approaches to conserving nature on private land which are currently used to varying degrees in this state:

- **Involuntary measures** provide a clear understanding of what land managers can or cannot do on a specific parcel of land and generally require some form of permission from a government agency to undertake an activity. It imposes new restrictions on uses previously not restricted, for example land clearing.
- **Voluntary binding measures** are basic partnerships between landholders/managers and government. They are generally based on some form of management agreement that is entered into voluntarily by landowners and the government but binds the parties to a range of agreed outcomes. The NPWS have primarily been involved in voluntary binding measures through its Voluntary Conservation Agreement (VCA) program and Wildlife Refuge program. A VCA is an agreement between the Minister for the Environment and a landholder which binds the landholder to certain actions according to a plan of management included with the agreement. The agreement is registered on the title and is binding on subsequent owners. Under the agreement, landowners may be entitled to assistance - e.g. fencing, weed control, survey work etc. A Wildlife Refuge is also an Agreement between the Minister for the Environment and a landholder, which is binding in a limited way as the landholder can request that the Wildlife Refuge status be revoked. There are between 500-1000 Wildlife Refuges in NSW.
- **Voluntary non-binding measures** are less formalised versions of voluntary binding measures, the main difference being that the measures are not binding on the landowner. The NPWS has recently signed an intergovernment protocol that will allow the adoption of the Victorian Land for Wildlife scheme in NSW. Other NPWS programs aim to foster stewardship of natural diversity. The NPWS also acknowledges the importance of involving all land managers, including Aboriginal people, through incorporation of traditional and contemporary land management practices. NPWS also participates in the development of best management practices for conservation management and

participates in awards programs such as IBIS, Keep Australia Beautiful and the Landcare awards to help recognise achievement in land stewardship.

A strong focus on community partnerships should lead to more effective conservation and lead to improved relationships with the community. This requires structural and financial support both within government agencies and in the community. The NPWS can be easily overloaded in supporting collaborative relationships for conservation rather than actively undertaking its own conservation programs which in the end does not fulfil the expectations of the community. The way government agencies such as NPWS relate to the community is changing rapidly. Consideration needs to be given to whether NPWS should work in natural heritage conservation as an integral part of the community or alongside but separate from the community.

Conserving our Natural Diversity:

Bioregional Planning

There have been significant conservation gains in terms of the protected area system in NSW. However, these efforts have suffered from the lack of an over-riding strategic plan. With notable exceptions, conservation successes have occurred where they pose least threat to competing economic land uses. The bias in the distribution of lands managed for conservation to steep and/or infertile country has arisen for a number of reasons:

Most of the "easy" conservation targets have probably been reserved or protected through other means. Land is an increasingly scarce resource, with a rising monetary value despite degradation. Securing land for conservation will be increasingly expensive.

It is now well recognised that formal reserves will not in themselves achieve national objectives for the conservation of biodiversity and that there is a need to protect biodiversity across all landscapes. It is also well recognised that most landscapes in Australia are variably disturbed and degraded and that conservation of biodiversity is not just about conserving pristine areas. It must also preserve the conservation values of more disturbed and or degraded environments as these remain important for the conservation of many species. Fragmented and degraded ecosystems can be reconstructed.

In attempting to address these complex issues, there is an increasing body of opinion arguing that individual conservation initiatives and

conservation actions which deal with subsets of biodiversity and/or small land areas need to be integrated better into a larger planning framework. This needs to be based, not only at the species and genetic level, but on a regional scale to address wider landscape and ecological processes.

Bioregional planning is regional planning within an ecological framework. Whilst administration may still occur within local government boundaries, planning needs to be based on 'bioregions' which represent distinctive ecosystems and, very often, distinctive patterns of regional land and natural resource use. Bioregions therefore provide a useful framework for integrating conservation planning and social and economic planning and for involving the whole community.

Currently, the Service's focus is on regional conservation planning, representing one component of bioregional planning. Regional conservation planning, at its simplest, involves assessment of conservation values and levels of threatening processes and the establishment of regional conservation priorities in space and time; identification of conservation mechanisms which are needed and/or available in the region; and development of procedures and protocols for the application of appropriate conservation mechanisms to various parts of the landscape.

A bioregional approach to the conservation of biodiversity can provide for the determination of conservation values and planning and implementation of a broad mix of conservation initiatives across the land/seascape in a strategic, structured and integrated manner. Consideration needs to be given to how best this might be done and how a greater NPWS and "whole-of-government" commitment to bioregional planning might be secured.

Conserving our Cultural Heritage

Commemorating our History

NPWS is the only agency in NSW which manages extensive lands across the State for the statutory purpose of conservation of natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage. It is also responsible for the provision of educational and recreational opportunities so that the public may understand, use and enjoy the heritage values of protected areas.

Following the model of the US National Parks Service, when the NPWS was established, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* provided for the acquisition and management of historic places

of national significance as historic sites. These were the cultural equivalent of national parks. Six historic sites were established in 1967, five for historic (non-indigenous) heritage places and one for an Aboriginal heritage place. In 1998, there are six historic sites protecting historic (non-indigenous) heritage, though they have changed. Three of the original sites have been absorbed into a national park and one transferred to the Historic Houses Trust. Other highly significant historic places (for example, the Quarantine Station, Goat Island and Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour National Park) have, during this period, been incorporated into national parks rather than being dedicated as Historic Sites.

National parks are viewed by government and the public as appropriate areas to conserve significant cultural values, and are not just for nature conservation. Sydney Harbour National Park contains several significant historic places which could just as easily be historic sites as inclusions in a national park. Their inclusion in a national park may also be indicative of some differences of opinion about what a national park is meant to be.

In the past, exclusive uses of historic structures, which would prevent public access for a period of years, have been contemplated as a means of securing investment that would conserve and adapt the structures for subsequent public uses. Such uses offer a means to fund maintenance, upgrading of facilities and, subsequently, a standard of public access and enjoyment that the Service could not otherwise afford. However, the Courts have determined that such uses are not permissible under the Act. The option of amending the Act to allow exclusive use for a limited period in return for significant investments in the conservation of significant historic fabric and interpretive programs could be problematic as many groups may resist any commercial development within parks and reserves and any diminution of the public interest.

The Service is not the State's lead policy agency for historic heritage and it is not the only public agency with significant historic places on its estate. The Service is, however, the only agency in NSW with a mandate to acquire and manage significant historic places throughout the State. Since 1967, other legal and planning mechanisms have been established in NSW through the Heritage Act which can be used to conserve significant places on any land tenure, though not necessarily for the public.

Consideration needs to be given to historic heritage in the reserve system and its value for society now and in the future and whether it can be integrated or reconciled with nature conservation. This includes developing an agreed, consistent framework for determining which places and kinds of historical landscape evidence should be retained and preserved, which could be allowed to decay and which, if any, would be better managed by someone else. Such a framework would also identify whether it is appropriate for NPWS simply to be a responsible caretaker of historic heritage or whether it should take a more active role and promote recreational and educational activities based on historic heritage. The need for supplementary funding for historic heritage management has given rise to expectations that commercial uses of historic places may be an appropriate way to achieve conservation outcomes. However, commercial uses are not always legally or socially acceptable or financially feasible, even if they are compatible with conservation.

Conserving our Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal Communities and Heritage

The NPWS has the primary responsibility for Aboriginal cultural heritage protection and management under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). The NPW Act provides the framework for the management and definition of Aboriginal heritage sites and relics in NSW, in particular:

- emphasis is placed on the physical evidence of Aboriginal occupation, with the strongest protection afforded to "relics" where it is an offence to knowingly destroy or disturb, deface or damage a relic without first obtaining the consent of the Director-General of the NPWS;
- unoccupied Crown lands can be dedicated as Aboriginal Areas for the purpose of preserving, protecting and preventing damage to relics or Aboriginal places;
- the Minister may declare an Aboriginal place, which is, or once was, of special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture; and
- the Minister may declare any land on which a relic or Aboriginal place is situated to be a protected archaeological area.

The Act was amended by the *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Aboriginal Ownership) Act 1996*. The amendments established under the NPW Act provide a legal framework for the management of Aboriginal owned reserves. Under this legislation, reserves of cultural significance to Aboriginal people can be returned to the Local Aboriginal Land

Council which holds the title on behalf of the (traditional) Aboriginal owners, and then leased back to the Crown under the management of a Board of Management comprised of a majority of the Aboriginal owners. Under this arrangement, the Service manages the land under direction from the Board of Management in accordance with the plan of management for the park.

Although native title is not the same as the statutory rights of Aboriginal owners under the Aboriginal Ownership amendments, the legislation reflects the common law rights of native title holders legislated under the Commonwealth Native Title Act. It directs that the transfer of title to the traditional owners and subsequent leaseback to the Service of any land dedicated under the NPW Act identified for Aboriginal ownership, will be subject to any native title rights and interests existing in the land. The land transfer and any system of land management put in place following the transfer, will not cause these native title rights and interests to be extinguished or impaired.

The way in which Native Title may affect cultural heritage management in the future is unclear. Native Title is, nevertheless, a tool that can contribute to the revival and survival of traditional practices and values through the recognition of traditional custodians. Access to land for traditional purposes and the duty of care that Aboriginal people have in regard to caring for their country, is inherent to both Native Title and cultural heritage management. The NPWS, in recognising the level of commonality between cultural heritage and nature conservation, can actively advocate the process of negotiated outcomes for native title holders in regards to 'total' landscape management. Some of the ways in which negotiated outcomes may be reached that will satisfy all stakeholders, are joint management agreements and arrangements for access for traditional purposes.

In recognition that Aboriginal people were the rightful owners of their cultural heritage, the NPWS has stated its commitment to "*advocating the eventual transfer of Aboriginal heritage to an independent Aboriginal Heritage Commission*". While this may or may not happen within the near future, it is important to consider what effect an independent Aboriginal Heritage Commission may have on the Aboriginal cultural heritage management responsibilities of the Service. While Aboriginal community involvement in NPWS management is occurring at the field level, there is not a considered approach to Aboriginal community consultation and cultural heritage management at a strategic level. Consideration needs to be given to the

Major uses within the protected area system include *tourism and recreation* (walking, picnicking, cycling, motor vehicle touring, horse-riding, skiing, boating, fishing, accommodation); *commercial activities* (beekeeping, restaurants and cafes, tours, conferences, corporate events, weddings); *Aboriginal activities* (access to significant sites, cultural events, hunting and gathering); *conservation* (threatened species programs, restoration of historic heritage); *education and research* (interpretive facilities, environmental education and visitor centres, scientific research), *alien uses* (transmission lines, roads, telecommunications facilities, access to private land); *park management activities* (fire and walking trail construction and maintenance; fire hazard reduction; toilet facilities; office accommodation; workshops and depots; staff housing); *exploration and mining* (in state recreation areas). Some of these uses are an historical legacy, left-over from the period before a particular reserve was created and preserved as existing uses in the Act.

During the last 30 years, visitation to the protected area system has risen by an average of 2.25% per year. In 1994, there were approximately 22 million visits to NSW protected areas and this is expected to rise to between 27 and 32 million visitors by 2005. Between 5 and 7% are overseas visitors. In the 1996/97 financial year the NPWS received revenue from park use fees (\$6.6m), leases (5.1m), and camping fees (\$1.55m). The total revenue generated by the Service was \$26m. The Government's allocation to the Service was \$153 million, including \$41 million for capital items. Recent studies commissioned by the NPWS have demonstrated the positive economic impact of protected areas to local and regional economies. Dorriggo National Park, for example, was found to contribute almost 7% of gross regional output, 7.5% of household income and 8.4% of regional employment.

What constitutes appropriate use of protected areas is a dynamic concept that gradually evolves and changes. Uses once seen as appropriate, such as recreational hunting, are no longer considered to be acceptable by the community while others, such as traditional Aboriginal uses, are being reintroduced in some areas. There are also instances where minimal use is now seen as the appropriate use, such as in wilderness areas, and conflicts between uses are a continuing management dilemma. In addition, advances in ecological science are revealing that questions of appropriate use and the impacts of use are

more complex than previously thought. Appropriate use could be defined in absolute or flexible terms. The basis for developing the definition could be argued on existing definitions of legally permissible uses in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* or a proposed amendment. It could also be argued on the basis of the Service's economic circumstances (or changes to this) and framed by environmental planning and ecologically sustainable development precepts and principles (acceptable impacts and sustainable conservation values). It could also be developed on the basis of current conservation philosophy. A mix of these approaches may be useful.

Use and Enjoyment

Presenting Nature and Heritage

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (s8) establishes a statutory responsibility for the Service to promote educational activities with regard to conservation of natural and cultural heritage. The Director-General is charged with promoting educational activities in national parks and other protected areas managed by the Service, including Aboriginal areas, historic sites and lands subject to conservation agreements, to awaken and maintain an appreciation of the value of and the need to conserve animal and plant life, including to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and their habitats. The *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the *Wilderness Act 1987* also emphasise the importance of promoting community education and stipulate the Service's responsibilities in this area.

The *Discovery Program* one of the most important community education programs undertaken by the Service. *Discovery* is a guided tour program which represents the front line delivery of the Service's legislative responsibilities for community education. *Discovery Program* services the family market and provides inexpensive environmental education experiences for visitors to protected areas. *Discovery* also operates community outreach activities about environmental education in local schools and shopping centres. NPWS has legislative responsibilities to foster appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage in not only its own work, but show leadership in the community by facilitating the implementation of those objectives in industry through working with accreditation bodies to establish competencies and demonstrating best practice. Through active involvement with the tour

historical and current roles and responsibilities of the NPWS in the management of cultural heritage; the role that Aboriginal people and communities can/should play in the management of their cultural heritage; and the relevant factors that may affect Aboriginal cultural heritage management in the near future.

Conserving our Cultural Heritage

Understanding Heritage

At the time that laws were first passed to protect cultural heritage in NSW in the 1970s very little was known about how much of that heritage existed in the Service estate or in NSW generally, or about its nature or distribution. For that reason, the Service, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, took a leading role in a research designed to identify and record heritage sites and properties.

The Service's need for research stems from the requirement that sound heritage management needs to be based on a reasonable knowledge of the nature of what is being managed (i.e. the physical nature and distribution of heritage sites and items, their susceptibility to physical deterioration, the historical information they contain, and their significance to the people of NSW). This is essential if the Service's cultural heritage management policy and practice are to have credibility.

The argument in favour of in-house research rests heavily on the proposition that unless the Service's professional staff in cultural heritage are engaged in research themselves, they will not have the necessary skills to brief consultants to carry research out on the Service's behalf. This is partly because of the fact that heritage professionals (e.g. anthropologists, archaeologists, historians) normally only stay current with developments in their fields by way of their engagement in teaching or research. But it is also, because it is only in the act of doing research that one learns what is achievable: knowing the mysteries of the Archives Office or the Mitchell Library; knowing whether methodologies which look good on paper are feasible in the field; knowing the sensitivities of local communities to being the subjects of research; having familiarity with the analysis of data; having experience in the writing up of results. The act or art of research, is like a language or discourse: if you cannot speak the language it can be difficult 'read' or interpret the results; if you cannot speak to your consultants in the language of research you risk losing their professional respect, which is a highly undesirable position for those commissioning research to be in.

In quite a real sense, the alternative to the NPWS having an in-house research capability is that the agency becomes an audience for research rather than an instigator of it. In terms of timing, it means that by the time research results filter into the 'market place' via publication they are almost no longer current (although the internet is making inroads here). Under this scenario, the agency would not, in other words, be at the cutting edge of knowledge, it would be at the tail end.

In non-indigenous heritage there is the additional consideration that, due to the small and shrinking academic base for historical archaeology in the State, very little research takes place in NSW which is not of an impact assessment or salvage nature. The Service is obliged to rely particularly heavily on its in-house research capability in this field.

Consideration needs to be given to the NPWS role in cultural heritage research (indigenous and non-indigenous), its relationship with other research institutions, and the mechanisms which the NPWS need to employ to ensure its decision-making reflects good research.

Use and Enjoyment

Providing for Appropriate Use

National parks, nature reserves and historic sites are established in recognition of different attributes (scenery or natural phenomena; areas of special scientific interest; and sites of national significance respectively). The land in the protected area system is not homogeneous. It may be more or less modified from a natural state. Its ecosystems may be more or less robust. Its flora and fauna species may be endangered or abundant. There will be evidence of prior land uses and there may be important cultural sites and places present. The local community may have particular interests because of their previous associations and uses of the land.

Planning objectives include the conservation of wildlife, preservation of the park, reserve or site, and protection of special features within them, as well as the prohibition of any works adversely affecting the natural condition or special features of each park or reserve. Planning objectives also include the encouragement and regulation of the appropriate use, understanding and enjoyment of each national park and historic site and the regulation of the appropriate use of nature reserves. When the land is transferred to the reserve system, many of its previous uses cease and its purpose changes to conservation and recreation in various combinations depending on the reserve type to achieve an alignment with the purpose of reservation.

guide industry and accreditation bodies, the NPWS *Discovery* Program has provided an example of nature based tour guiding delivering on NPWS objectives.

At the corporate level, the NPWS plays a key role in influencing syllabus and curriculum development in areas relating to natural and cultural heritage and its management, and environmental education. A range of initiatives at the corporate level include partnerships between NPWS and the Environmental Education Unit of the Department of School Education, advice to the NSW Board of Studies on the review of curriculum, and development of curriculum resources with other agencies in the environmental portfolio such as the Environmental Protection Authority and the Royal Botanic Gardens. The "parks for schools" program area has been poorly resourced corporately in the form of program management and in on-ground operations in the form of suitably qualified staff. This has limited the scope for NPWS to see and take advantage of opportunities across the state in a consistent manner.

More conventional notions of education are increasingly complemented by learning experiences integral to processes which invite participation by particular groups and the broader community. These processes have the features of not being called "education" and provide an important opportunity for facilitating learning through enjoyable and active involvement in decision-making. Integrated education forms a cornerstone of the Service's commitment to community consultation and community participation programs such as volunteering and cooperative pest management.

Tourism, and tourists as 'customers' of the national parks agencies, is recognised by all Australian national parks agencies. Some agencies have responded with budget allocations to interpretation. Others have preferred to encourage private enterprise and work in a cooperative way with commercial tour operators. Efforts have been directed towards the training of tour operators as interpreters of national park values to the increasing numbers of park visitors. There are opportunities to work closer together with other departments and agencies such as Agriculture, Fisheries, catchment management committees and local government. There are many other community groups such as Landcare where closer cooperation may be possible. Volunteers who are extremely dedicated and

enthusiastic about parks is an area also where working in partnership with others can provide outcomes that the Service cannot achieve alone.

Consideration needs to be given to the options for community information and education services to be delivered through commercial operators and strategic partnerships - including the risks, and how they are minimised.

Use and Enjoyment

Using Biodiversity Wisely

Biodiversity means native flora and fauna represented at three levels; genetic diversity; species diversity; and ecosystem diversity. The use of biodiversity covers the full continuum of uses for commercial and non-commercial purposes, as well as other inadvertent impacts. **Consumptive uses** include indigenous use (e.g. cultural, ceremonial, subsistence, trade, commercial), clearing of native vegetation, grazing of native pastures, logging of native forests, fishing, aquaculture and mariculture, hunting, collecting, by-catch, bioprospecting, public display and education, scientific, and damage mitigation. **Non-consumptive (non-physical use)** include observation, tourism, photography, indigenous use (e.g. cultural, ceremonial).

Under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) the Director-General is required to prepare a Biological Diversity Strategy. The draft Strategy states that the NSW Government is committed to protecting the native biodiversity of NSW and to maintaining ecological processes and systems. The draft strategy proposes a framework for coordinating and integrating government and community efforts to ensure efficient use of resources, and is due to be adopted during 1998.

One view is that consumptive use requires biodiversity to be seen as a *renewable natural resource*. In relation to the goal of maintaining biodiversity, once flora and fauna are subject to captive-breeding/propagation *ex situ*, then the *direct* impact of such use on biodiversity conservation is negligible. Concerns associated with animal welfare (appropriate housing, humane destruction etc.) must still be addressed. The approach may also be acceptable for some species taken from the wild, depending on the abundance of the species, adequacy of baseline information and adaptive management arrangements, including monitoring, to ensure the renewal of the resource.

**Visions for the
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There is an ever present risk with consumptive use, particularly for commercial purposes (whether for live or product trade), that immediate economic rewards and the lack of alternative opportunities may outweigh considerations for a longer term sustainable income. The imperative of survival or greed have historically resulted in the demise or at least regional/local extinction of species, for example, moa in New Zealand and elephant seals on King Islands. Non-commercial consumptive use (e.g. private collection of butterflies) may also have similar outcomes depending on the scale of such activities. Whilst indirect impacts from loss and fragmentation of habitat have played a major role in the loss and decline of species and ecological communities, consumptive uses such as recreational hunting and shooting and the profits to be made from bounties on "pests" and the fur/leather trade have contributed to the decline or extinction of some species of fauna. These include the toolache and rock wallabies, crocodiles and Tasmanian tigers.

There is a viewpoint which holds that consumptive use *per se* and the resulting view of flora and fauna as *resources*, limits or ignores other values of wildlife. This

perspective is typically focused at the species level of biodiversity. The primary values of concern here are the *intrinsic or existence value* of flora and fauna, which are valuable in their own right and not because they provide any benefit for humans; and the value of *wildness* which is characterised by existence independent of human creation in contrast to domestication and ownership which confer resource use rights.

The definition of *wise* implies having both experience and knowledge, and the ability to apply them judiciously. Hence *wise* use must by definition incorporate opportunities for feedback and allow for adaptive management. There needs to be acceptance that both experience and knowledge and the character of judicious decision making will be influenced by social and cultural contexts of the times.

Consideration needs to be given to developing an agreed goal, such as the protection of the native biological diversity of NSW and the maintenance of ecological processes and systems. There needs to be a recognition that habitat loss and modification is the greatest continuing threat to biodiversity, and should be considered in any cost/benefit analysis of wise use.

