

Esk National Park and Esk State Forest Management Statement 2013

Park size:	377ha
State forest size:	936ha
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	South East
Local government estate/area:	Somerset Regional
State electorate:	Esk

Legislative framework

a	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
a	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
a	<i>Forestry Act 1959</i>
a	<i>Natural Conservation Act 1992</i>
a	<i>Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990</i>

Plans and agreements

a	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
a	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

a	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
a	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

Esk National Park and Esk State Forest are valued as a natural corridor conserving and linking fractured remnant ecosystems and natural features once common in the area. The management focus is to maintain the natural features and provide low impact visitor opportunities limited to bushwalking in the national park section using the network of fire trails.

Conservation purpose

Esk National Park (377ha) was gazetted in 2006 as part of the South East Queensland Forests Agreement (SEQFA) process, in recognition of the important biodiversity and conservation values of the former Esk Forest Reserve. The State forest will be managed for harvesting pine species.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Esk National Park and Esk State Forest are located approximately 7km by sealed roads west of the township of Esk.

The predominant underlying geology is mainly sandstone providing sandstone ridges and sandy soils. The topography consists of undulating ridges forming part of the Upper Brisbane Catchment, which feeds into the Wivenhoe Dam.

The park contains significant value as a remnant tract of corridor vegetation.

The State forest is predominately a pine plantation with plots at different stages of maturity. There are corridors throughout the State forest of remnant vegetation that support native plant and animal biodiversity and mitigate erosion and silt into riparian zones.

Regional ecosystems

Esk National Park conserves three regional ecosystems classified as of no concern at present (12.3.7, 12.9–10.14 and 12.9–10.5). The main vegetation communities are eucalypt open-forest to woodland with grassy understorey and shrubby open-forest to woodland, dominated by narrow-leaved red ironbark *Eucalyptus crebra*, bailey's stringy bark *Eucalyptus baileyana*, forest red gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, blackbutt *E. pilularis*, brown bloodwood *Corymbia trachyphloia*, spotted gum *C. citriodora* and river oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana*.

The park conserves a remnant area that is considered of State biodiversity significance under the biodiversity planning assessment for the South East Queensland bioregion. The remnant contains a regional ecosystem that is one of the largest of its type in the bioregion; and the vegetation condition is natural. The park is also identified as having regional significance for its corridor values.

Native plants and animals

The plants and animals conserved in Esk National Park rely on the protected habitat that is no longer widespread in the surrounding area. Species of conservation significance listed for the park include the vulnerable glossy black-cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* and koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* (Table 1). Several bird species are also listed under international agreements (Table 2). For Esk National Park and Esk State Forest 64 and 107 species of plants and animals respectively have been listed.

Aboriginal culture

Little is known about specific Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the park and state forest.

The Jagera people have a registered native title claim over both tenures (claim no.QC03/15).

Shared-history culture

Esk National Park has a history of native timber harvesting, grazing, apiculture and recreation. The park contains cultural remnants related to the prior use of the land, including posts from a forestry camp and a loading ramp.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

The recreation uses of Esk National Park include nature appreciation, bush walking and bird watching. Because of the location and small size of the park, the management focus is to provide a natural and undeveloped setting.

The number of visitors is unknown.

Commercial activities

Pine harvesting in the state forest is the only current commercial activity.

Education and science

There are currently no known educational programs occurring at Esk National Park or Esk State Forest.

Partnerships

Cooperative partnerships with Somerset Regional Council, Rural Fire Service (RFS), Hancock Plantations Queensland (HQP), Queensland Police Service, and park neighbours are to ensure the protection of the park and its values. These partnerships are essential in regards to pest and fire management.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

A level 2 pest management strategy identifies priority pests and control measures for the national park. Targeted pest plants including lantana *Lantana camara* are spreading through the open forest communities and smothering the native understorey vegetation. Observations of the impact of prescribed burning on these pest plants should be made. Other weeds of significance include velvet tree pear *Opuntia tomentosa*, groundsel bush *Baccharis halimifolia* and annual ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*.

Pest animals include feral red deer *Cervus elaphus* and feral fallow deer *Dama dama*, wild dogs *Canis lupus familiaris*, red fox *Vulpes vulpes*, feral cats *Felis catus* and feral pigs *Sus scrofa*. Their impact on the estate is unknown.

Currently the emerging pest plant threats to the park are from the adjoining cleared plots of state forest. Early intervention and coordinated management with HQP, Somerset Regional Council and adjoining neighbours will help to stop pest plants from spreading into the park.

Fire management

The open eucalypt forest based communities of Esk National Park require periodic fire to maintain structural and species diversity, reduce weeds and to mitigate against the possibility of catastrophic wildfire. Appropriate fire management will also help protect fire sensitive vegetation communities including riparian areas and adjoining commercial plantations from wildfire.

A level 2 fire management strategy for the park and state forest is in need of review. It aims to reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire through maintaining good relationships with RFS, HQP, Somerset Regional Council and park neighbours and landowners.

A good working relationship exists between QPWS and HQP completing joint fire mitigation activities and wildfire management in the area.

Appropriate fire management can be used to help control pest plants such as lantana at the landscape level. Future fire management should aim to assess the effect of planned burning on emerging pest plants including lantana.

References

Department of Environment and Resource Management 2010, *South East Queensland Natural Resource Management Region Back on Track Actions for Biodiversity*, Department of Environment and Resource Management, Brisbane.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
Native plants and animals Biodiversity values are understood and protected.	A1. Record observations of species of conservation significance to help inform fire and pest management programs.
Tourism and visitor opportunities Visitors enjoy a low-key recreation setting and opportunities for safe and sustainable outdoor recreation.	A2. The park retains its natural state for the use of self-reliant visitors. A3. Continue to maintain the existing trail network in good condition, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · maintaining drainage on fire trails · slashing of fire trails as required.
Partnerships Good partnerships enhance park management.	A4. Facilitate cooperative relationships with the local land owners, HQP, RFS and Somerset Regional Council to address management issues.
Pest management The impact of pest plants and animals on conservation values is minimised.	A5. Continue to review and implement the level 2 pest strategy with an emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · reducing the spread of exotic grasses · coordinating pest plant and fire management.
Fire management The fire management strategy is comprehensive and updated.	A6. Review the level 2 fire management strategy.

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> status	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> status	Back on Track status
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathamii</i>	glossy black-cockatoo	Vulnerable	-	-
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	koala (South East Queensland bioregion)	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High

Table 2: Bird species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	cicadabird	-	-	ü	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	ü	ü	ü
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	ü	-

BONN – Bonn Convention

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement