

Great Sandy Conservation Park

Management Plan 2006

Extended May 2026

Prepared by: **Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.**

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The Great Sandy Conservation Park Management Plan 2000 has been extended in 2026, in line with the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (s120G). Minor amendments have been made. There has been no change to the statement's original management intent and direction.

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1. Management direction and purposes

1.1 Management directions

Great Sandy Conservation Park covers a number of islands and headlands in the Great Sandy Strait, which lies between K'gari (Fraser Island) and the mainland from Hervey Bay. The park covers an area of approximately 658 hectares (Figure 1)

Great Sandy Conservation Park will be managed to conserve coastal lowland and island plant communities in their natural condition, with particular emphasis on preserving and interpreting the natural environment of the park. Management of the park will complement management of the adjacent Great Sandy National Park and waters of the Great Sandy Strait.

1.2 Purposes

The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:

- management is in accordance with strategies outlined in the Great Sandy Region Management Plan;
- management of the park is in conjunction with management of adjacent marine habitats in the Great Sandy Strait, including the dugong population, fish habitat and the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar area;
- sensitive habitats, threatened species and cultural sites are identified and monitored and their requirements are reflected in management programs;
- problem weeds are actively managed and their spread is significantly reduced;
- introduced animals and adjacent land use have minimal impact on the natural values of the park; and
- neighbours, local government, Aboriginal people with traditional links to the area and other interested parties are made aware of park management issues and are provided with opportunities to be involved in park management.

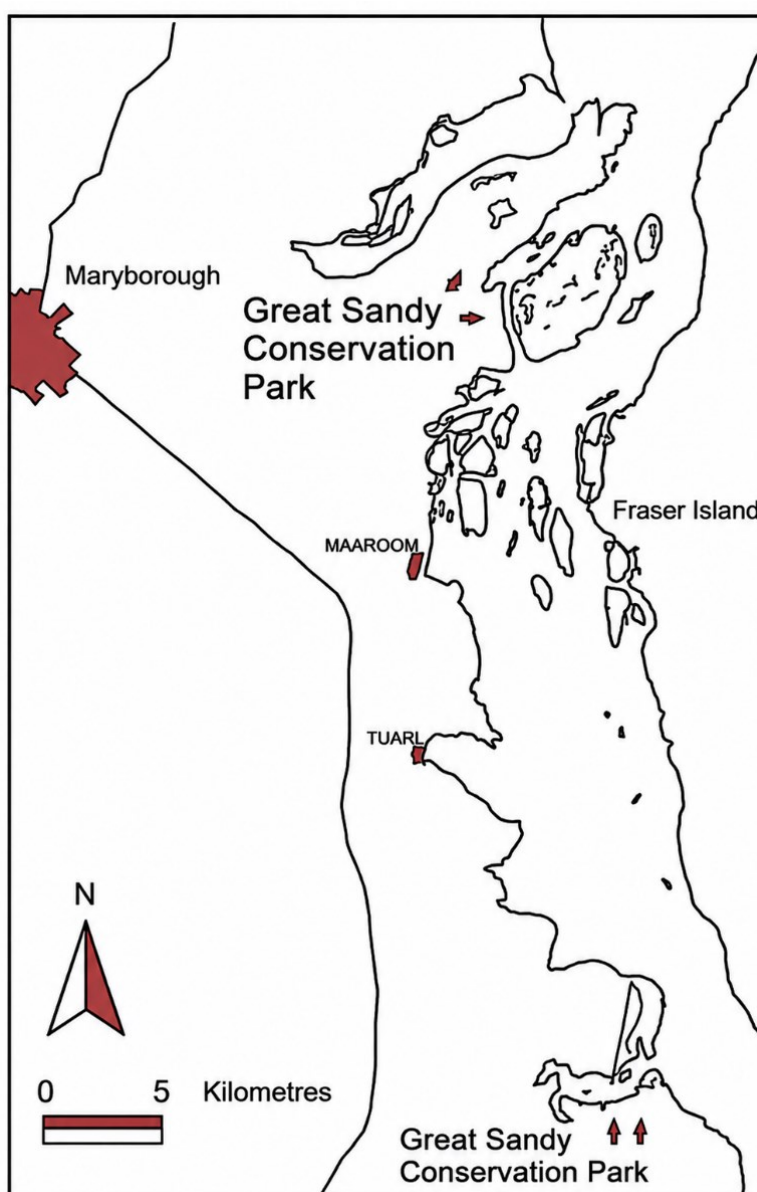
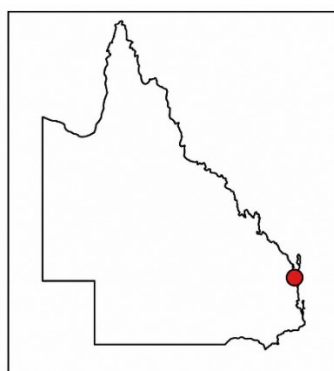


Figure 1 Great Sandy Conservation Park location

2. Basis for management

Great Sandy Conservation Park is gazetted under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as a conservation park and will be managed in accordance with s21 of the Act which sets out the following principles for management:

- (1) A conservation park is to be managed to—
 - (a) conserve and present the area's cultural and natural resources and their values; and
 - (b) provide for the permanent conservation of the area's natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and
 - (c) provide opportunities for educational and recreational activities in a way consistent with the area's natural and cultural resources and values; and
 - (d) ensure that any commercial use of the area's natural resources, including fishing and grazing, is ecologically sustainable.

The requirements of other legislation administered by the Service and other State and Commonwealth agencies will be met where necessary.

2.1 Bioregional context

The park lies within the local authority areas of the Maryborough City Council and Tiaro Shire Council. The park covers sections of South Head, Turkey Island, Walsh Island, Ching Island and the eastern section Cowra Point (Kauri Creek section). The park is located in the Great Sandy and Burnett-Curtis Coastal Lowlands provinces of the South East Queensland biogeographic region.

Great Sandy Conservation Park is an amalgamation of the old Turkey Island Environmental Park (69.6ha gazetted in 1986), South Head Environmental Park (166.3ha gazetted in 1988) and Kauri Creek (Cowra Point) Environmental Park (219ha gazetted in 1989). These environmental parks were amalgamated to form Great Sandy Conservation Park in 1994 according to the recommendations of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan. Further acquisitions of Walsh Island, Ching Island and additional sections of Turkey Island in 1995 have increased the park's size to its current extent.

The marine areas adjacent to the park are covered by the Susan River, Maaroom and Kauri Creek Fish Habitat Reserves and the Hervey Bay-Great Sandy Strait Dugong Protection Area.

The park falls within the Great Sandy Region which includes K'gari (Fraser Island), the Cooloola sandmass, Noosa Northshore and the waters of Hervey Bay and the Great Sandy Strait. The Great Sandy Region covers an area of about 840 000ha and has been subject to extensive planning as a result of the Commission of Inquiry into the Conservation, Management and Use of Fraser Island and the Great Sandy Region appointed in 1990. The inquiry resulted in the production of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan in 1994.

Surrounding land use includes:

- forestry pine plantations on the adjacent mainland;
- residential development of the townships of River Heads, Maaroom, Boonooroo, Tuan, Poona and Tinnanbar;
- Great Sandy and Poona National Parks;
- the Wide Bay Military Reserve.

There is a proposal for a resort on Bandicoot Island which is adjacent to the South Head section of the Park.

3. Values of Great Sandy Conservation Park

Geology and landform

The Great Sandy Strait would have been a coastal plain in the last glacial period, but was flooded by the post-glacial rise in sea level. Apart from narrow channels the strait is shallow with an average depth of less than 5m and extensive intertidal deposits. Tidal currents keep the channels flushed and prevent the strait from silting up.

Mary River sediments form part of the shallow delta in the Great Sandy Strait, with coarse gravelly sands grading to fine sands as distance increases from the river mouth. Modern marine sediments overlie those from the Pleistocene unconsolidated substrates. These sediments form tidal delta banks in and adjacent to Great Sandy Strait. Active sedimentation is taking place with material derived from both fluvial and offshore shelf sources.

Great Sandy Strait is one of the few passage landscapes in Australia. Passage landscapes occur where offshore islands are sufficiently close to the mainland to block the outflow of a substantial river system. This forms a double-ended estuary characterised by shifting patterns, mangroves, sand banks and mud islands.

Plants and animals

The islands within the Great Sandy Strait have examples of the following representative vegetation types:

- Mangrove shrubland to low closed forest;
- *Casuarina* and/or *Melaleuca quinquenervia* open forest;
- saltpan vegetation comprising *Sporobolus virginicus* grassland and samphire herbland;
- woodland to open forest containing species such as *Corymbia tessellaris*, *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *Callitris columellaris*, *Petalostigma pubescens*, *Corymbia intermedia*, *Livistona decipiens*, *Planchonia careya*, *Leptospermum neglectum* and *Acacia julifera*; and
- *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and *Lophostemon confertus* open forest.

The Kauri Creek section has examples of the following representative vegetation types:

- *Banksia aemula* and eucalyptus shrubland and heathland;
- *Melaleuca quinquenervia* open forest;
- *Corymbia intermedia*, *Lophostemon confertus*, *E. tessellaris*, *E. tereticornis* open forest with occasional *Livistona decipiens*; and
- Rainforest patches or understorey containing kauri pine *Agathis robusta* and ferns.

The coastal wetlands of Great Sandy Strait support the most extensive areas of mangroves and saltmarshes within the south-east Queensland. A number of mangrove species found adjacent to the park are at their southern limit of distribution in the Great Sandy Strait. A significant number of plant species in the Great Sandy Region are either at their northern or southern limit of distribution.

The Great Sandy Strait is an important habitat for migratory wading birds such as the rare eastern curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, the lesser sand (Mongolian) plover *Chadarius mongolus*, the bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* and the grey-tailed tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*. Many of the islands and sections of the adjacent mainland such as Cowra Point have been recorded as roosting sites for migratory birds.

The endangered Illidge's ant-blue butterfly *Acrodipsas illidgei* has been reported in patches of mangrove at the entrance of the Mary River, however they have yet to be recorded in the sections of park in this vicinity.

The marine areas and associated tidal wetlands of the Great Sandy Strait support and harbour a diversity of marine life including populations of dolphins and turtles and the vulnerable dugong. Nests of the vulnerable false water-rat *Xeromys myoides* have been found by QPWS staff in the Kauri Creek section of the park. It is also possible that the islands are used by the false water-rat.

Eastern grey kangaroos have been recorded on the park.

Cultural heritage

Great Sandy Strait was traversed by Aboriginal people on their way between K'gari (Fraser Island) and the mainland. Great Sandy Strait also contained significant marine resources for Aboriginal people. Middens have been observed on many of the islands however further research is required to determine the significance of these sites.

Native title exists over the area that includes the park, determined on the 13 December 2019 (QCD2019/008 Butchulla People Land & Sea Claim #2)

Scenic and aesthetic

Because of its sheltered waters and scenic value, the Great Sandy Strait, which includes the Great Sandy Conservation Park, is a popular destination for recreational boating.

Scientific and educational

Natural processes are able to continue relatively undisturbed within Great Sandy Conservation Park providing opportunities for research and environmental education. Surveys of adjacent marine areas for migratory wading birds, dugongs and seagrasses have been undertaken in the past.

Recreation and tourism

The park has a small amount of recreational use. The Great Sandy Strait is a popular fishing and boating area, however access to the islands in the park is not easy and generally blocked by mangroves. A 4WD track which enters the Kauri Creek section of the park is mostly used by locals to gain access to the marine areas for fishing and crabbing. No visitor facilities exist on the park.

Economic

Protected areas can make a substantial contribution to regional development by providing natural resources that attract visitors to regional areas of Queensland. Great Sandy Conservation Park has the potential to contribute to the local economy in combination with other significant protected areas in the region. Presently no commercial tourist operators visit the park.

Summary

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Great Sandy Conservation Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in October 1999 and, in accordance with s 125 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, will be reviewed not later than 10 years after its approval. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Office in Maryborough, on (07) 4121 1800 during business hours.

This management plan was developed with the assistance of David Marshall, Steve Winderlich, Mark Burnham, James Haig, Locky Fullerton, Doug Crossman, Bill Fisher, Cathy Skipington and Rose Trapnell. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

Management directions

Current situation	Desired outcomes	Policies, guidelines and actions
Native plants and animals Extensive plant and animal inventory and research has been undertaken within the Great Sandy Region, however little of this work has been compiled specifically for the park. There is no plant list for the park. There is no animal list for the park. The park has been surveyed for the presence of the false water-rat <i>Xeromys myoides</i>.	The composition and extent of native vegetation types are maintained, subject to natural change. A current list of plants and animals and their conservation values is available.	Collect and compile natural resource information for the park. Develop a vegetation map for the park. Encourage research related to any rare or threatened plants and animals which may occur on the park and modify management accordingly. Identify any disturbed or degraded areas and undertake appropriate revegetation.
Introduced plants and animals Weeds on the park include groundsel, lantana and painted spurge <i>Euphorbia cyathophora</i>. Feral animals which have been recorded on the park include pigs and cane toads. Feral cats have been observed on Turkey Island.	Introduced plants are controlled and, where practical, eradicated. The impact of any introduced animals on the park is reduced.	Investigate and implement the most effective measures for the control of weeds. Declared noxious species will be eradicated if possible with emphasis placed on the eradication of groundsel from the Kauri Creek section of the park. Monitor feral animal numbers as part of general duties and through liaison with neighbours. Action will be taken if feral animal numbers are determined to be significant. Grazing of the current park area by stock will not be permitted.

Current situation	Desired outcomes	Policies, guidelines and actions
Fire management It is unlikely that the islands within the park suffer much burning due to human intervention. Any fires that occur on the islands are probably due to natural causes such as lightning strikes. Fire on the islands is unlikely to threaten human life or property on the adjacent mainland. The presence of rainforest species in the Kauri Creek section of the park suggests that this section does not regularly burn. No fire management has been conducted on the park.	Fire management is based on regionally adopted fire management practices.	Develop, maintain and implement a fire management plan composed of a fire management strategy, a fire management program and a wildfire response procedure. Develop a strategy for monitoring fire on the park as part of the fire management planning process. The Ranger-in-Charge will liaise with park neighbours and the local rural fire brigade concerning QPWS fire management practices.
Cultural heritage An informal cultural survey of the park has been undertaken and midden sites have been identified to managers of the park.	Cultural sites are formally identified and protected in accordance with the wishes of the appropriate Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people with traditional links to the area are involved in management of the park.	Survey and map any cultural sites on the park. Liaise with Aboriginal groups affiliated with the area regarding cultural site management. Aboriginal interest in the park will be identified, and those groups or individuals will be provided with the opportunity to participate in the management of the park on a long-term basis.

Current situation	Desired outcomes	Policies, guidelines and actions
Recreation and tourism There is currently no evidence that the island sections of the park are used for any recreation. The adjacent marine areas are popular for fishing and boating. A track leads to and through the Kauri Creek section of the park. The track ends at an area of saltmarsh and vehicle use of this saltmarsh may impact on the habitat and nesting area of the false water-rat. It is possible that any future additions to the park may include islands or other areas that are currently subject to recreation. There is a proposal to develop a resort on Bandicoot Island which is adjacent to the South Head section of the park.	Recreation has minimal impact on the park's natural values.	Recreational use of the park will not be encouraged. Any huts found on the park will be removed. No facilities for recreation will be developed on the park. The track that leads through the Kauri Creek section of the park will be maintained for management purposes only. If visitor use of this track increases significantly and begins to impact on the natural values of the park or the habitat and nesting area of the false water-rat, the track will be closed. A sign advising visitors not to proceed beyond the end of the track in vehicles will be erected. Assess any future additions to the park for recreational potential and provide for nature-based recreation as required. Recreation will have minimal impact on the area's natural values.
Education and interpretation There are no interpretive facilities on the park. There is no visitor information available for the park.	Appropriate use of the park is encouraged through signage.	Use signs to publicly identify sections of the park, where practical. If necessary develop strategies to alert the public to prohibited park uses.
Plan implementation and monitoring The park is managed by a QPWS management unit in Maryborough that is responsible for managing Hervey Bay Marine Park, the Woody and Little Woody Island sections of Great Sandy National Park, and coastal management issues between Burnett Head and Noosa River.	The management plan is an effective set of operational guidelines.	Ranger-in-Charge to submit a brief annual report on the success of the plan's implementation. Review the management plan within 10 years from approval according to s 125 of the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>.