

Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park

Management Statement

2026



Queensland
Government

This management statement has not been co-designed with First Nations partners. This document has been prepared by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to provide management guidance and adaptive management until such a time as the department can engage with First Nations partners in the co-design of a management instrument.

Management statements are prepared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. These documents may also include management direction for other State tenure for which QPWS has management responsibility.

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1. Introduction

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), within the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), applies a contemporary management process that is based on international best practice and targets management towards the most important features of each park: their 'key values'.

The Values-Based Management Framework (VBMF) is an adaptive management cycle that incorporates planning, prioritising, doing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting into all areas of our business. This enables the agency to be more flexible and proactive and to improve management effectiveness over time. A glossary of VBMF terms and concepts used within this document is provided at the end of this document (Section 5 – Glossary).

As a land manager, QPWS has a custodial obligation to ensure our estate is managed to provide appropriate and safe access, protect life and property, be a good neighbour and work cooperatively with partners across the landscape. The agency does this as part of setting the 'levels of service' for each park. Levels of service is a management standard that considers an area's values, threatening processes, custodial obligations, risks and overall management complexity.

This management statement has been prepared by QPWS to provide management guidance and adaptive management until such a time as the department can engage with First Nations partners in co-design of a management instrument.

2. Park overview

The following figure and table (Figure 1, Table 1) provide an overview of information related to the parks included in this management statement, including their locality, legislative framework and applicable plans/agreements.

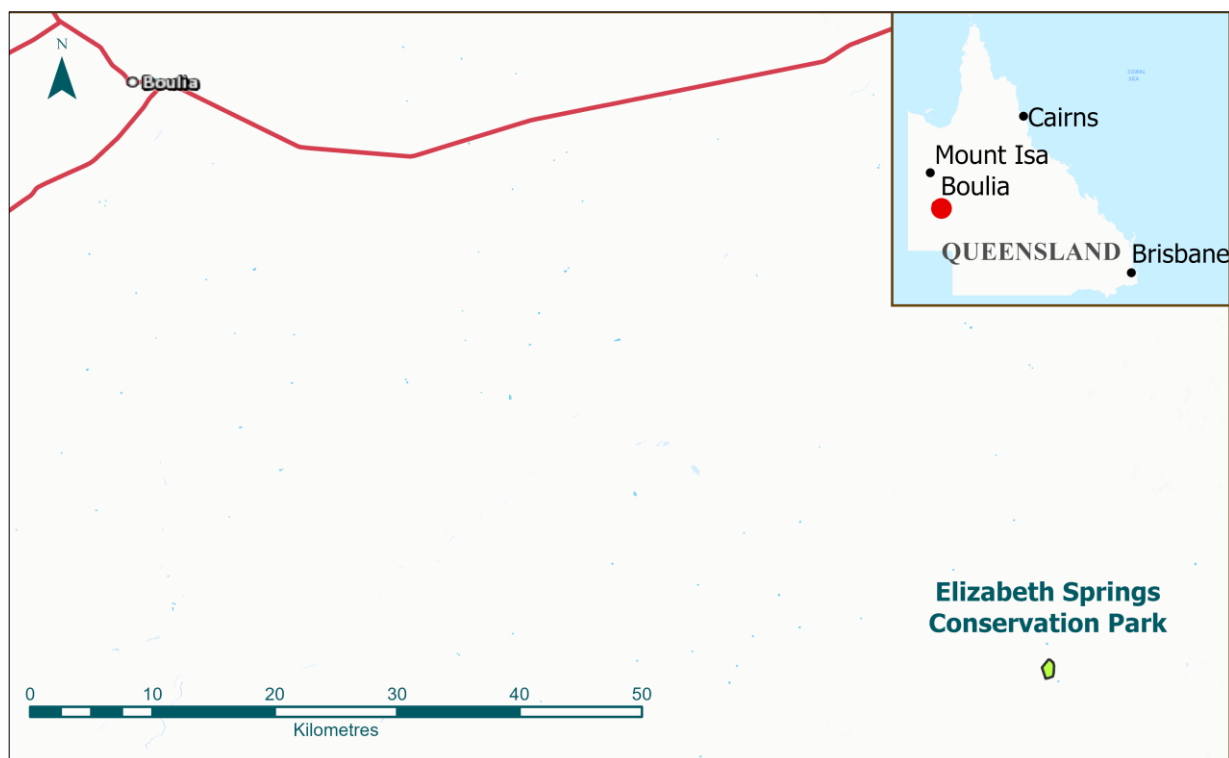


Figure 1. Locality of Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park

Table 1. Overview of Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park

Park size	Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park	101.2 ha
Bioregion	Mitchell Grass Downs	
QPWS region	Central Queensland	
Local government area	Diamantina Shire Council	
State electorate	Gregory	
Relevant legislation	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>	

3. Key values

All parks, forests and reserves contain a range of natural, cultural, social and economic values that contribute to the state's comprehensive and representative protected area and forest estate. The VBMF provides a framework for identifying and protecting the most important of these—referred to as *key values*—which in turn guides the allocation of management resources.

The location of each key value is shown in Figure 2. An assessment of each key value—including its current and desired condition, trend, and the confidence level of the assessment—is presented in the following tables and can be interpreted using Table 2. The assessment also outlines the main threats to each key value and provides broad strategic management direction to address these threats and achieve desired outcomes over time.

Table 2. Description of condition and trend icons used in the key values assessment

Condition of key value	Good  The value is in good condition and is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current measures are maintained	Good with some concern  The value is likely to be maintained over the long term with minor additional conservation measures to address existing concerns	Significant concern  The value is threatened by a number of current or potential threats. Significant additional conservation measures are required to preserve the value over the medium to long term	Critical  The value is severely threatened. Urgent additional large-scale conservation measures are required or the value may be lost
Trend of key value condition	Improving 	Stable 	Deteriorating 	No consistent trend 
Assessment confidence	Inferred 	Limited 	Adequate 	

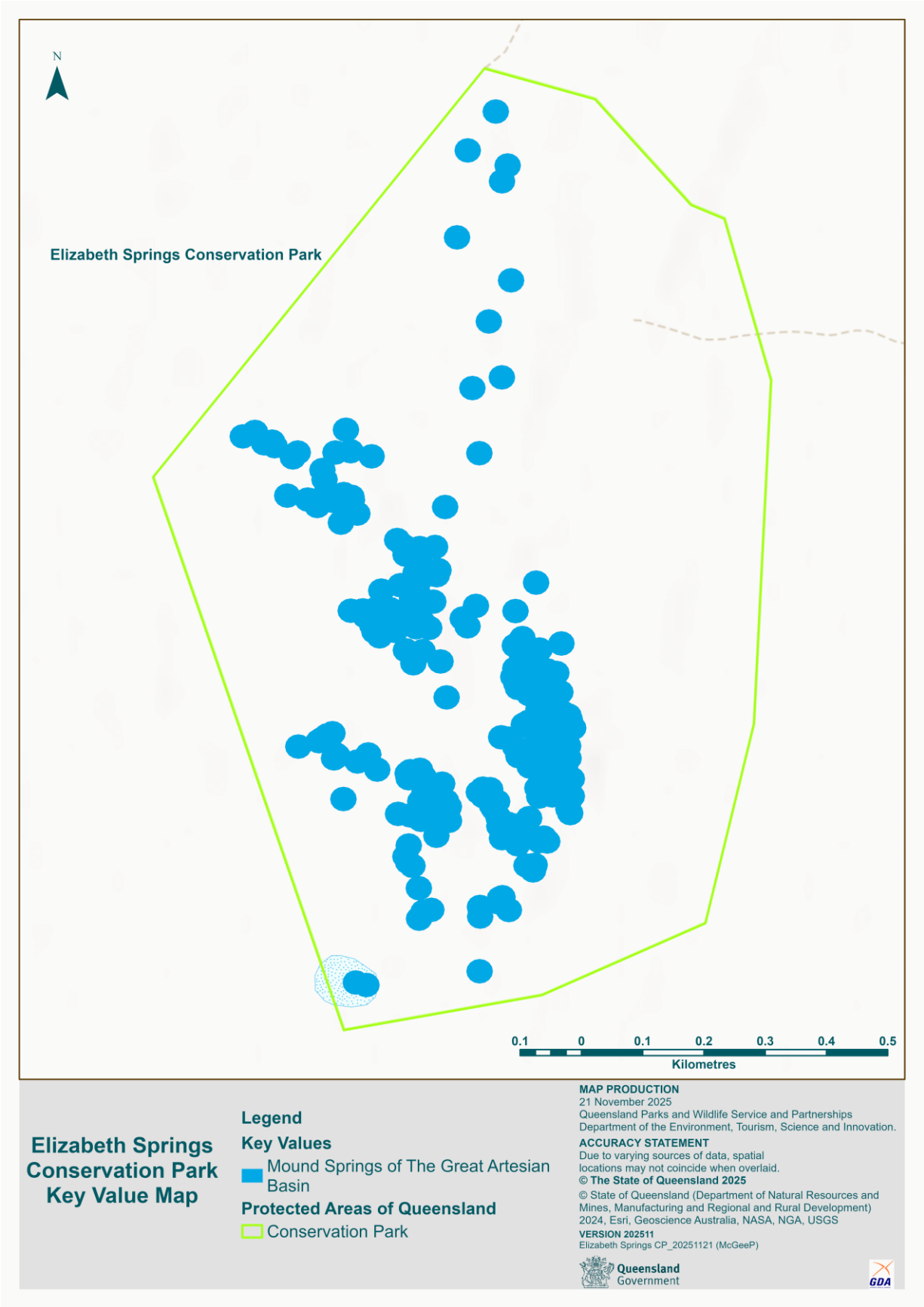


Figure 2. Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park key values

3.1 Mound springs of the Great Artesian Basin

Key value category	Key value description	Current condition	Assessment confidence	Current trend	Assessment confidence	Desired condition (short term)	Desired condition (long term)
Ecosystems and biodiversity	Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park is listed on the National Heritage Places for its extraordinary natural and evolutionary qualities (Department of Environment and Energy 2009). The extent of artesian springs in the Great Artesian Basin is geographically rare. The park preserves relatively intact springs in an isolated location. The park is also listed under the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a category III (Natural Monument or Feature Park). An IUCN category III protected area is usually a relatively small protected area that protects a specific natural or cultural monument (landform, sea mount, springs or geological feature) (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2018). The mound spring regional ecosystem (4.3.22) is classed as endangered under the Vegetation Management Regulation 2000. Elizabeth Springs is the only known location and type locality for two species, a Hydrobiid snail <i>Jardinella isolata</i> and the Elizabeth Springs goby <i>Chlamydogobius micropterus</i>. The salt pipewort <i>Eriocaulon carsonii subsp. carsonii</i> also occurs on the park. It is a perennial aquatic herb known only to occur in Artesian Basin springs and is nationally endangered.						
Desired outcome The condition of the mound springs will be managed at 'good with some concern' through the management of introduced animals, fish and weeds.							

Threats to key value

Threat process	Threat category	Description	Threat level	Threat rating
Introduced animals	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	Cattle and pigs can occur across all the springs.	Primary	Medium
Introduced weeds	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	Common rush <i>Phragmites australis</i> and sedges <i>Fimbristylis spp.</i> occur within these wetlands. These native species can become dominant and can outcompete other native species. Parkinsonia occurs in the creek line on the park. Parkinsonia, if left unmanaged, can form dense ecosystem changing thickets.	Secondary	Low
Introduced animals	Invasive and other problematic species, genes and diseases	Mosquito fish <i>Gambusia holbrooki</i> occur in bore drains in the catchment and can spread into the park by floodwater in creeks. A bore in a neighbouring property has an infestation of mosquito fish. If mosquito fish become established in the spring wetlands they would represent a serious threat to the endemic Elizabeth Springs goby, <i>C. micropterus</i> .	Other	Low
Hydrological modification	Natural system modifications	Artesian water level drop as a result of uncapped bores may alter the number and extent of spring sites.	Other	High

Strategic management directions

Strategic management direction	Priority*
Reduce impacts of parkinsonia and noogoora burr on the spring wetlands.	3
Reduce the impacts of cattle and pigs on the spring wetlands.	3
Prevent the establishment of mosquito fish in the spring wetlands.	2
Reduce the impacts of common rush and sedges on the spring wetlands.	4

*Key value priority: 1 – Critical, 2 – Very high, 3 – High, 4 – Moderate, 5 – Desirable (see Appendix 1)

4. Management direction

QPWS manages protected areas and forests to protect their values and deliver our custodial obligations as a land manager. A levels of service (LoS) assessment allows QPWS to consider the management of each park in a state-wide context and determine desired levels of management effort for each park in a consistent and equitable way. An LoS assessment lets QPWS staff and the public know what level of management activity to expect on each park, forest or reserve. There are six LoS ratings ranging from 'below acceptable' to 'exceptional', and an 'acceptable' rating is the minimum standard required to deliver good management and meet our legislative and custodial obligations.

This section provides a strategic management direction for each management theme, identifying its current LoS and desired LoS which can be interpreted using Figure 3.

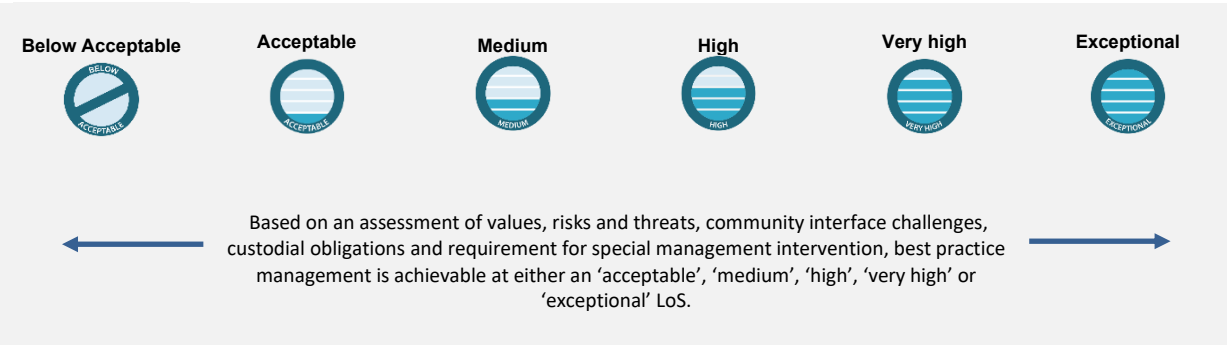


Figure 3. Description of LoS icons

4.1 Management directions

Management theme	Current	Desired	Strategic management direction	Priority (1–5) *
Fire management			Maintain current approach to fire management based on broad regional ecosystem mapping, guided by the planned burn guidelines.	3
Pest management			Improve current approach to pest management by ensuring key values are protected from threatening pest processes as a priority.	3
Natural values management			Improve natural resource management by incorporating research into adaptive management of the springs.	3
Historic cultural heritage management			Maintain current approach to historic cultural heritage management.	3
Visitor management			Improve current approach to visitor management by enhancing visitor interpretation.	4
Community, partnerships and other interests			Strengthen connection to Country by partnering with, and facilitating access for, First Nations groups.	2
			Maintain communication with Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy regarding aquifer draw-down impacts to Elizabeth Springs.	3
Field management capability			Maintain current field management practices.	3
Operational planning and management support			Maintain current operational planning and management support.	3

*Level of Service priority: 1 – extremely urgent and extremely necessary, 2 – very necessary and very urgent, 3 – moderately necessary and moderately urgent, 4 – somewhat necessary and somewhat urgent, 5 – optional and not urgent (see Appendix 1)

5. Glossary

The following glossary contains VBMF terms and concepts used within this document.

Term	Description
Adaptive management	The process of adjusting and improving how we manage parks, forests and reserves after assessing the outcomes of previous strategies and on-ground actions.
Condition and trend	The condition of a key value is assessed as either good, good with some concern, significant concern or critical. Trend describes what is happening to the condition: is it improving, stable, or deteriorating? A key value's current condition is determined during the planning process. A desired condition is a realistic goal for the future condition of the key value. The ongoing condition and trend of key values is assessed with regular health checks, or monitoring and scientific assessment.
Custodial obligations	The legal and policy requirements QPWS has as a land manager to ensure that parks, forests and reserves are managed properly and lawfully. This includes protecting life and property, maintaining biosecurity, building positive relationships with adjacent communities and landholders, and safeguarding the values of the land.
Desired outcome	A statement in the key value and management direction statements about moving from the current status (condition or LoS) to a desired status. The goal for management.
Health check	Basic form of monitoring that uses indicators and visual assessments to regularly evaluate the condition of key values. Regular health checks ensure QPWS can respond quickly to adverse change and redirect management priorities.
Key value	A natural, cultural, social or economic value that is most important, significant, unique or irreplaceable and helps define the essence of the area. If lost, it would diminish what makes the area distinct from others.
Level of service (LoS)	Management standards for maintaining an area based on its values, threats and the complexity of management. There are six LoS ratings ranging from 'below acceptable' to 'exceptional', noting that an 'acceptable' rating is the minimum standard required to deliver good management and meet our custodial obligations under law as a land manager. A 'current' LoS rating is the level at the time of planning, the 'desired' LoS is where we want to be.
Management direction	An assessment of the current and desired LoS for each management theme, with prioritised strategic management directions.
Management instrument	A management plan or management statement.
Management theme	Common management themes across parks, forests and reserves, including fire management; pest management; natural values management; post-contact cultural heritage management; visitor management; community, partnerships and other interests; field management capability; operational planning and management support.
Strategic management direction	A broad strategy aimed at mitigating or removing a threat to a key value and maintaining or improving the condition of a park's value; or addressing the gap between the current LoS and desired LoS for a management theme.
Threat or threatening process and threat rating	Based on IUCN's classifications, QPWS has identified threatening processes that have the potential to affect Queensland's values (e.g. natural systems modifications, invasive species). Current and potential threats to key values are identified and given a threat rating based on a combination of the extent of the impact, the severity of the impact and the urgency of action.

Appendix 1

Term	Description
Priority rating (key value SMDs)	A rating given to a strategic management direction according to the need for action to prevent further decline, stabilise current condition, or restore and enhance values, with consideration given to legislative obligations, cost, and social, economic and political factors.
	Critical (1) – Loss or very significant decline in the condition of the key value is highly likely if action is not taken OR significant improvement in the condition of the key value is highly likely if action is taken.
	Very high (2) – Significant decline in the condition of the key value is likely if action is not taken OR significant improvement in the condition of the key value is likely if action is taken.
	High (3) – Decline in the condition of the key value is likely if action is not taken OR improvement in the condition of the key value is likely if action is taken.
	Moderate (4) – Some decline in the condition of the key value is possible if action is not taken OR some improvement in the condition of the key value is possible if action is taken.
	Desirable (5) – While decline in the condition of the key value is not likely in the short term, the action, if taken, would help build long-term resilience of the key value.
Priority rating (LoS SMDs)	A rating given to an LoS or custodial obligation strategic management direction. A scale from 1 (extremely urgent) to 5 (not urgent or optional) is assigned, with consideration given to legislative obligations, cost, and social, economic and political factors.

References

Department of the Environment and Energy 2009, National Heritage Places – Elizabeth Springs, Australian Government.

UNEP-WCMC and IUCN 2018, Protected Planet: Elizabeth Springs; The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)/The Global Database on Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (GD-PAME)] [Online], [March 2018], Cambridge, UK. Available at: www.protectedplanet.net.