

# ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 21

Spring 2009 North Botany Bay Environment News

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## MALABAR HEADLAND

IS THE NSW NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE CAPABLE OF MANAGING IT?



Promises have been made to incorporate Malabar Headland into the NSW National Parks (NPWS) estate but is the NPWS the best agency to protect the Headland's values? According to the 2007/08 Annual Report of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) the NPWS now manages 8.34% of NSW. To find out how it might manage Malabar Headland it is instructive to take a look at its performance in Botany Bay National Park, La Perouse.

NPWS are part of the DECCW along with the former EPA, Botanic Gardens, and parts of the former Department of Land & Water Conservation. In the NPWS structure NSW is divided into Directorates with Sydney being part of the Central Directorate. Directorates are broken into Regions then Areas. Botany Bay National Park at La Perouse is part of the Harbour South Area and wider Sydney Region which extends past Rouse Hill. Major decisions are taken at the Regional Level. Botany Bay NP at Kurnell is neither part of the same area nor the same region. It belongs to Sydney South Region which includes Royal National Park and the Illawarra. There are 4 field officers working at La Perouse with the managers for the area based at Nielsen Park, Vaucluse. Harbour South Area comprises 7ha at Wollie Creek, 40ha on Sydney Harbour and 132 ha at La Perouse. A full-time Ranger used to be based at La Perouse, but no longer. A Senior Field Officer was located at Bare Island, but no longer. There used to be more tours and longer opening hours for the Museum and Bare Island. Even though visitors to the La Perouse

Headland have been steadily increasing each year since the opening of the M5 East (and the operation of the Plan of Management) the NPWS has been winding back its services. (Photo below: Congwong Bay crowded in Summer)



**The Park needs more Field Officer capacity to meet accountabilities under the Plan of Management. But not only is NPWS management not responding to the current and future needs of the area but they are effectively cutting current capacity by 25%.**

The latest news is that a Field Officer's position will be left vacant and the current occupant will have to leave La Perouse at the end of the month. NPWS Management will be cutting staff at the beginning of the high tourist season, when other parks around Sydney

are engaging in hazard reduction and stepping up their weed control programs and when the neighbouring NSW Golf Club is to host, for the first time, the prestigious Australian Open in December.

If there are plans to incorporate Malabar into the Parks Estate before the next Federal election in 2010/State Election in March 2011, then local expertise is required. It is not sustainable to be relying on staff travelling from Vaucluse! Below Image of Harbour South Headquarters – **A VERY DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOOD**



And what of the Plan of Management commitment: *The NPWS will maintain its current operational capacity to respond to incidents in and around Botany Bay National Park.*

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 requires that a plan of management be prepared for each national park. This is a legal document that outlines how the area will be managed in the years ahead.

**The Plan of Management for Botany Bay NP** includes accountabilities under Action Plans. Following are some of the actions required to be undertaken between **2002-2004** with comments on performance in CAPS. Note that the comment 'No Evidence' refers to lack of physical evidence and communication by signs/website/notices in media/briefings and notices to local community.

- Prepare GIS coverage of habitat types, including known locations of threatened species and endangered ecological communities – NO EVIDENCE
- Prepare and implement weed control plans – NO EVIDENCE – WEEDS HAVE GOT WORSE DURING LIFE OF PLAN
- Review management implications of relevant threatened species recovery plans NO EVIDENCE – ECOLOGICAL BURNS FOR EASTERN SUBURBS BANKSIA SCRUB NOT UNDERTAKEN

**Threatened Fauna Species in La Perouse Precinct listed in the 2004 Fire Management Plan:**

*Chelonia mydas* Green Turtle Vulnerable Little Congwong Beach  
*Crinia tinnula* Wallum Froglet Vulnerable Henry Hill & adjacent wetland  
*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher Vulnerable Henry Head  
*Litoria aurea* Green and Golden Bell Frog

Endangered

*Miniopterus shreibersii* Common Bent Wing Bat  
 Vulnerable Henry Head

*Neochmia ruficauda* Star Finch Endangered  
 Henry Head – MONITORING OF BATS BUT NO EVIDENCE FOR EXAMPLE OF ATTEMPTS TO RECOVER GREEN AND GOLDEN BELL FROG, PROTECT GREEN TURTLE, MONITOR SOOTY OYSTERCATCHERS

- Arrange removal of weeds from Crown Land near Happy Valley NO EVIDENCE

(Below photograph of the Entry to Park with native vegetation being choked by an assortment of weeds)



- Prepare and implement feral animal control plans RABBIT BAITS
- Exhibit, finalise and implement fire management plans PLAN DONE BUT IMPLEMENTATION ANOTHER MATTER
- Develop cooperative fire strategies with brigades/neighbours NOT WITH COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURS
- Issue annual licences & negotiate reduced size of Sydney Pistol Club range. Determine future of pistol club - ELSEWHERE IN PLAN STATES THAT CLUB WILL BE GONE BY 2007. IRONIC THAT THE CLUB IS CONSIDERED 'INAPPROPRIATE' BUT NPWS FACILITATED THE EXCISION OF 1.3HA OF CAPE BANKS (the former DISTRICT SCOUT GROUND) IN 2004 FOR A HELICOPTER BASE (WHERE THERE WAS NO CONTRACT) IN THE REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS(REF) NPWS STAFF GAVE THE 'ALL CLEAR' ON PRIOR USE BY STATING THAT SCOUTS HADN'T USED THE SCOUT GROUND FOR YEARS – THIS WAS NOT TRUE.

**FOR ACTION IN THE FIRST 5 YEARS OF THE PLAN 2002-2007**

- Develop revegetation program for degraded and devegetated areas NO EVIDENCE
- Close informal tracks above Congwong Bay HAVE DONE THIS AND MADE ACCESS TO BROWN'S ROCK VERY DIFFICULT AS WELL AS RESTRICTING PASSIVE SURVEILLANCE TO DETER ILLEGAL ACTIVITY AT LITTLE CONGWONG

- Seek cooperation of neighbours in weed programs, including education/information program – **DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEVELOP VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS – STATE THE FOLLOWING:** *Existing volunteer weed control and revegetation programs will continue to be supported and the NPWS will facilitate the development of additional programs where the community expresses an interest in active participation - HAVE NOT FACILITATED*

**WEEDS – THE SECOND BIGGEST THREAT TO AUSTRALIA'S BIODIVERSITY.  
BITOU – THE BIGGEST THREAT TO BIODIVERSITY ON THE NSW COAST**

- Undertake conservation works (guns, carriages) on Bare Island 4.2.2 – **WORK HAS BEEN DONE BUT ISLAND IS ONLY OPEN FOR 3X45 MINUTE TOURS PER WEEK, AND THEN SOMETIMES CANCELLED AT SHORT NOTICE. LOCALS PREVIOUSLY COULD ACCESS THE AREA FREE OF CHARGE**
- Rehabilitate degraded and unnecessary access tracks - **TRACKS CLOSED BUT AREAS NOT UPGRADED**
- Liaise with Randwick Council regarding management of nude bathing at Little Congwong Beach – **THIS ACCOUNTABILITY WAS PUT INTO THE PLAN OF MANAGEMENT AFTER IT CAME OFF PUBLIC EXHIBITION. NUDE BATHING IS NOT LEGAL SO WHY SEEK TO 'MANAGE' RATHER THAN ELIMINATE. THEY DON'T SEEK TO MANAGE HANG-GLIDING AND HORSERIDING THESE ACTIVITIES WERE CLOSED DOWN.**

**FOR ACTION OVER THE LIFE OF THIS PLAN**

- Stabilise and re-route track behind Congwong Bay - **NO CHANGES OTHER THAN TRACKS CLOSED WITH INCONVENIENCE TO WALKERS.**
- Undertake rehabilitation work on the Congwong Bay mined area – **NO EVIDENCE, SOME WORK DONE BEFORE PLAN IN OPERATION.**
- Conduct research and surveys on the biodiversity of the park – **NO EVIDENCE**
- Prepare and implement fire education program **NO EVIDENCE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM**
- Develop interpretive walk at Cape Banks – **NOTHING AT CAPE BANKS**



(Photo Operations at Cape Banks WW2 – Cape Banks/Henry Head were just as significant a site in Sydney's wartime defences as North Head. The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Trust manage North Head – it is worth a look to see the comparison.)

- Upgrade walking track to Henry Head – **NO EVIDENCE OF UPGRADE**
- Identify and progressively remove all pollutant sources to park – **NO EVIDENCE**

**Statements in the Plan of Management (with comment in CAPS)**

- Cape Banks is an important site for examining the geological history of the Sydney Basin and has been listed by the Australian Heritage Commission and Geological Society of Australia as an important area for geological research and education. **IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT AS A WHALEWATCHING SITE AND MILITARY SITE BUT THERE IS NO INTERPRETATION.**



(Above: Image of Cape Banks and Cruwee Bay (Pussycat named because of the shape)

- The park is adjacent to areas dedicated as marine conservation areas and is therefore managed for conservation purposes across the intertidal zone. **THERE IS NO INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION.**
- The park protects a number of rare or threatened plant species and vegetation communities of high scientific value including the largest remnant of the eastern suburbs Banksia scrub, possibly the most diminished plant community type in the Sydney basin.

**WE ARE YET TO SEE EVIDENCE OF EXPENDITURE OF \$100,000 GIVEN TO NPWS BY LANDCOM SPECIFICALLY FOR ENHANCING BANKSIA SCRUB IN THE PARK. LANDCOM HAS UNDERTAKEN ECOLOGICAL BURNS IN BANKSIA SCRUB UNDER ITS CONTROL.**

IN ITS FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN (2004) NPWS STATE: *Biodiversity may decline in the next 5 years in areas that have not burnt for 10 or more years....*

*The proper management of fire is essential to avoid the extinction of native plant and animal species while protecting people and their property and non-fire adapted vegetation communities.*

As stated in the Plan, *the vegetation of the La Perouse section of the park is very diverse, with over 350 species recorded. It is representative of the vegetation which was once common throughout the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney but has now largely disappeared (except for Malabar Headland).*

#### DOES THE PARK MEASURE UP AGAINST GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR NATIONAL PARKS IN NSW:

- protection and preservation of scenic and natural features – TRACKS REQUIRED BUT NOT WILLING TO WORK COOPERATIVELY ON OBTAINING GRANTS FOR SCENIC COASTAL TRACK TO COMPLETE RETURN LOOP TO HENRY HEAD
- conservation of wildlife – NO EVIDENCE IN PARK AND OFF PARK EXAMPLES LIKE THIS:

The Botany Bay Cable for Energy Australia has required dredging near Bare Island. When asked to comment on the impacts Randwick Council made a submission suggesting that the cable be re-routed to Molyneux Point to avoid Bare Island. NPWS made no comment on the sensitivity of the marine creatures around Bare Island.



In 2002/3 when Little Terns were nesting at Molyneux Point, NPWS provided advice to Sydney Ports on how to get them out. There were 400 star pickets and 4km of bunting used to discourage the Little Terns landing and nesting. This information is provided in the Service's Little Tern Recovery Plan. With some creativity applied the Little Terns could have been accommodated in a 24/7 secure area.

- preservation of historic places, landscapes, objects and relics; SEE CAPE BANKS AND HENRY HEAD; WITNESS THE LOSS OF LOCAL RELIC THE RECEVEUR TREE TRUNK RETURNED TO FRANCE WITHOUT A REPLICA TAKEN; WITNESS DECLINE OF LAPEROUSE MUSEUM



- maintenance of natural processes as far as is possible – NATURAL PROCESSES TO ENHANCE BANKSIA SCRUB NOT FACILITATED;
- preservation of Aboriginal sites and places – DECLARATION OF COAST HOSPITAL CEMETERY AS ABORIGINAL PLACE BUT LITTLE EVIDENCE OF CONSERVATION – eg. MIDDEN NOTED IN PLAN AT LITTLE CONGWONG;
- provision of appropriate recreation opportunities; (below Little Congwong OUT OF BOUNDS for most families).



NO EVIDENCE eg. ACCESS FOR DISABLED HAS NOT BEEN IMPROVED; NO TOURS PROGRAM APART FROM BARE ISLAND; FEW FACILITIES COMPARED WITH NIELSEN PARK VAUCLUSE.

- encouragement of scientific and educational research into environmental features and processes, prehistoric and historic places and landscapes and park use patterns. RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN INDEPENDENTLY NO EVIDENCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

#### FOR THE DIARY

*October 2009*

*8th-25th*

*National Water Week*

*Australian Water Association*

[http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au/](http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au)

[info@nationalwaterweek.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwaterweek.org.au)

*16th World Food Day [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

*November 2009*

*21st World Fisheries Day*

[http://www.gdrc.org/doyourbit/21\\_11-fisheries-day.html](http://www.gdrc.org/doyourbit/21_11-fisheries-day.html)

#### **NATIONAL BUY NOTHING DAY**

**28 November**

*Spend a Day without Spending*

*December 2009*

3rd-6th Australian Open, NSW Golf Club

7th - 13th Coast Care Week [www.coastcare.com.au](http://www.coastcare.com.au)

Lynda Newnam September, 2009 [www.laperouse.info](http://www.laperouse.info)  
Social Change NOT Climate Change