



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

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JERRABOMBERRA WETLANDS NATURE RESERVE

The National Parks Association of the ACT (NPA) would like to thank Environment and Recreation for the opportunity to comment on the draft management plan for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (Jerrabomberra Wetlands).

Despite being primarily an artificial creation the Jerrabomberra Wetlands have become a significant habitat for a range of native species and in particular migratory water birds. Its importance is highlighted in the recently released global review entitled “Waterbirds of the World” a key message of which was that “waterbirds are being sidelined by economic development. Too few conservation measures are currently being undertaken for globally threatened species. As a result, many wetlands of critical importance for long-distance migrants have been degraded and many populations of birds are disappearing. This is because of the loss and degradation of wetlands, as well as the impacts of pollution that can be unsustainable”.

The NPA would like to compliment Environment and Recreation for development of a new management plan as additional pressures on the Jerrabomberra Wetlands are now emerging. In particular, the residential development in the Kingston Foreshores and the proposed East Basin development have the potential to compromise the conservation values of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

The key points of the NPA’s submission on the draft management plan are:

- Strong support for the primacy of conservation over other activities in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. As a nature reserve, the primary use of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands is legislatively required to be the maintenance of its conservation values. All other uses of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands are required to not compromise this primary objective. The NPA notes that this principle is clearly identified in the wording of the draft management plan. Implementation of this principle will at times require firmness on the part of the land manager as the call for the use of the Je for other non-conservation activities mount.
- Support for the zoning concept outlined in the draft management plan and, in particular, the restriction of public access to the Wildlife Refuge Zone

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- The potential for a buffer zone to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands to be funded by the developers of projects affecting land adjoining the Jerrabomberra Wetlands to compensate for increased pressure on the Jerrabomberra Wetlands resulting from higher population density in the region.
- A call for the bicycle path to be routed outside the boundaries of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- The need to include within the management plan actions for the testing of the toxicity of soil dumps existing within the reserve from previous land use activities.

The NPA's detailed comments on the draft management plan are included as Attachment A.

Further information on any points in this submission can be obtained by contacting the NPA.

Yours truly

As Signed

Christine Goonrey
President

2 April 2007

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Attachment A

The NPA's Detailed Comments

Page 1 – The NPA strongly supports the central focus of draft management plan as being “the conservation of the wetland habitats of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands” Conservation should be the paramount objective for national parks and nature reserves in the ACT, as is described in legislation.

Page 2 - The NPA is pleased to note the emphasis placed by the draft management plan on the significance of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands as a freshwater wetland habitat. And while it does not meet the requirements for Ramsar listing this does not detract from its vital role in supporting other regional wetlands and providing a haven for wetland birds in time of drought. It is possible that under climate change the ACT region may incur greater drought conditions and this will further enhance the importance of the reliability of water at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Page 4 et al – The NPA believes the inclusion of commentary on legislation, agreements and policy enhances the usefulness of the draft management plan for readers and for the implementers of the final management plan.

Page 14 – The implications for management identified on this page all valid. In particular the risk of predation by domestic animals needs to be noted in light of East Basin developments. These should cause Environment and Recreation to argue strongly for the implementation of cat curtailment in the East Basin area.

Page 18 – The NPA believes that improved signage will be a positive development for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This should include aboriginal as well as European cultural matters.

Page 20 – Urban Infrastructure – It should also be noted within the management plan the negative visual impact of the routing of electrical infrastructure through the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and especially the open areas of the proposed wildlife refuge zone.

The NPA strongly supports the minimisation of access to infrastructure in the wildlife refuge zone during the bird-breeding season.

Page 21 – The NPA believes that any proposal for water-skiing near the Jerrabomberra Wetlands should be opposed as being potentially detrimental to the key conservation values of the area, especially in respect to disturbance to Latham's Snipe.

In addition, the siting of the new boat harbour at Kingston also has the potential for significant habitat disturbance and Environment and Recreation needs to seek to influence any decisions in respect to the boat harbour to ensure the best possible environmental outcomes.

Similarly, the East Lake development referred to on pages 20 and 21 has the potential for significant increases to urban run-off in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, which may

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have environmental impacts. Environment and Recreation will need to monitor this development and seek to influence decisions where possible to achieve best environmental outcomes.

The NPA believes that consideration needs to be given to the creation of a buffer zone for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This would be useful to offset the impacts of denser urban populations abutting the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Funding for such a buffer zone could be obtained through negotiations with developers of the East Lake area.

Page 30 – The NPA supports the use of zoning for environmental outcomes. In particular, the creation of the wildlife refuge zone is supported for its ability to reduce public access which can have a significant positive conservation outcome for wildlife.

Pages 33 et al – Chapter 4 – The NPA supports the objectives and implications identified in this chapter as these are key to achieving the primary land use objective for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

In addition the NPA would suggest:

- There is also the potential for Environment and Recreation to utilise fencing, as being proposed for Goorooyaroo to achieve environmental objectives
- That particular attention be made to the monitoring of the costs and benefits of maintaining cattle grazing in the wildlife refuge zone. These costs and benefits should take into account known impacts on riparian zones by cattle and that the results of cattle grazing at Coleman Ridge be also considered
- The ultimate goal of the weed management strategy should be the significant reduction of weeds within the Jerrabomberra Wetlands
- That plantings should be of appropriate local species

Page 48 – Management Action – the “appropriate replantings” should be of local species.

Page 50 – The NPA does not support the inclusion within the park of the installation of toilets or picnic facilities. The NPA believes that these are better placed outside the reserve and should form part of the buffer zone proposed by the NPA.

Page 51 – Recreational Activities – With the exception of cycling, the NPA concurs with the listing and location of activities identified. However, these activities must not compromise the conservation values of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

The NPA recognises the cycling communities’ desire to have a dedicated sealed bicycle path which connects the existing sealed paths to the west and north of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The existing sealed bicycle path to the Causeway could be directed south of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands to Dairy Road through the East Basin development area. This proposal would segregate pedestrians in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands from bicycles. Under the current proposal in the draft management plan the proposed separate walking and bicycle paths still cross, at least, once and require dual use of the bridge over Jerrabomberra Creek. Other bridgework on one of the smaller

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creek crossing is probably also required. With increased usage of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands resulting from the proximity of developments these features still result in potential conflicts between cyclists and other users and that it is preferable to route the bike path south of the reserve.

Page 57 – The NPA strongly supports the policy of no captive birds in the reserve and a prohibition on the feeding of birds by visitors.

Page 58 – The NPA strongly opposes the introduction of any private eco-tourism activities within the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The conducting of ranger guided walks is an acceptable tourist activity.

Page 59 – The NPA does not oppose the completion of a sealed lake circuit bicycle path but believes that it should not be routed through the Jerrabomberra Wetlands for reasons previously stated. Actions would be needed to discourage bicycle usage in the Jerrabomberra Wetlands after the re-routing of the bicycle path.

Page 61 – Extended educational usage of Kelly’s Swamp needs to be considered in light of potential disturbance issues for the bird population.

Page 74 – The NPA strongly supports the concept of the establishment of a “friends of” group for the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This could be particularly attractive to residents of the Kingston and East Basin developments.

Table 10.1 – first dot point 9.1.2 Catchment Contamination – The NPA believes this should be a High priority instead of Medium.

Both dot points under 9.4 Fire Management should be Medium instead of High.

Other Points – There are a number of soil dumps within the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, particularly in the southern part of the reserve. While these detract from the visual amenity of the reserve, they may also have the potential to contribute to toxic run-off. The NPA believes that a key action for the management of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands is an analysis of the toxicity of these sites.