

Great Otway Parks Conservation Action Plan

Overview

Achieving our vision to:

Increase the resilience of natural assets in the Great Otway Parks Landscape and maintain ecosystem services in the face of climate change and other stressors.

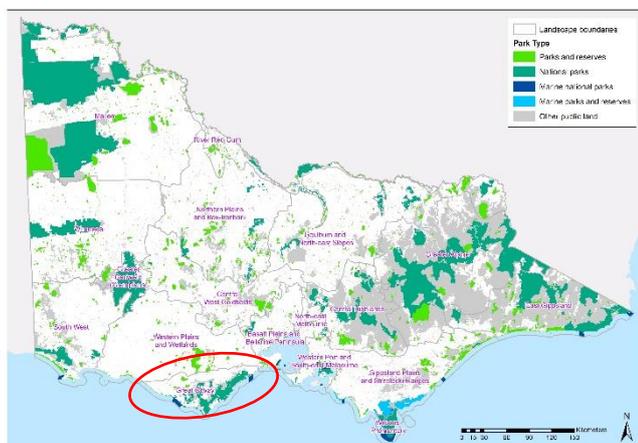
The Great Otway Parks Landscape is a region of great biodiversity and cultural heritage. It encompasses old-growth forests, cool temperate rainforests and wet forest, biodiverse heathlands, a large expanse of essentially unmodified coastline, and important marine ecosystems.

Parks and reserves include:

- Great Otway National Park
- Port Campbell National Park
- Twelve Apostles Marine National Park
- Point Addis Marine National Park
- Cooriemungle Creek Flora Reserve
- Aire River Wildlife Reserve
- Bay of Islands Coastal Park, and
- 38 other reserves managed by Parks Victoria

The landscape is significant to several Traditional Owner groups who are traditionally and culturally associated with various areas. The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation have legislated authority for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The Great Otway Parks Landscape



Conservation Assets

Six terrestrial and four marine ecosystems have been identified as conservation assets in the Great Otway Parks Landscape. Within each of these, a range of nested assets have also been identified, including threatened species and important ecological assemblages.

Condition

The plan identifies a range of key ecological attributes (components that are believed to best reflect the health of the asset). The plan describes their current condition (very good, good, fair, poor) and the trend (improving, stable, declining), and establishes a target for future condition of each key ecological attribute. These measures allow the condition of each asset to be assessed:

- **Subtidal Reef** is mostly in very good condition
- **Heathland, Dry Forest and Woodland, Wet Forest and Rainforest, Riparian and Freshwater Wetland, Estuarine and Saline Wetlands, Intertidal Reef, Water Column (pelagic) and Soft Sediments** are mostly in good condition
- **Coastal (including islands)** are in fair condition

Threats

Seven priority threats to the conservation assets in the Park Landscape are identified:

- Inappropriate fire regimes
- Weed invasion
- Pathogens and diseases
- Terrestrial predation by foxes and cats
- Grazing and browsing pressure
- Invasive or overabundant marine species
- Habitat degradation from visitor impacts and resource collection

The Conservation Action Plan identifies strategies that target our conservation efforts to achieve the best outcomes for ecosystems and species with the available resources.

Conservation strategies

The following strategies will be implemented to tackle the threats. They have been selected for their likely impact, feasibility and cost-effectiveness in achieving the desired conservation outcomes.

- **Manage fire for ecological health** — Work in partnership with fire management agencies to maintain and improve fire regimes that diversify vegetation age-class mosaics and protect fire-sensitive values.
- **Manage weeds and pathogens using a biosecurity approach** — Reduce the spread, establishment and impact of weeds and diseases, focusing on species that have, or are likely to have, significant impacts on the health of conservation assets and ecological processes.
- **Ongoing control introduced predators to support resilient native fauna populations** — Implement targeted control of Red Foxes and Feral Cats at priority locations to support the persistence, movement and increase of native fauna vulnerable to predation.
- **Manage herbivores for healthy habitats** — Implement effective and integrated control of key herbivores to improve the regeneration and structural diversity of conservation assets across the Great Otway Parks Landscape.
- **Manage over-browsing by Koalas** — Collaborate with other land managers to proactively manage Koalas to maintain healthy Manna Gum communities.
- **Manage marine pests for healthy marine protected areas** — Reduce the likelihood of populations of marine pests establishing in the Parks Landscape and ensure that the eradication of populations of new pests is rapid and targeted.
- **Reduce the impacts of recreation, illegal activities and natural resource extraction on natural values** — Encourage the public to enjoy nature-based activities while ensuring the impacts on priority marine and terrestrial areas and species are minimised.
- **Reintroduce locally threatened species** — Reintroduce, where feasible, locally threatened species, and locally extinct species to restore ecological processes, including soil disturbance (digging, burrowing), seed and spore dispersal, and predation by native animals.
- **Collaboration and engagement to build support for environmental management** — Collaborate and engage to build support for environmental management. Strengthen collaboration and partnerships to maintain long-term engagement and guide adaptive environmental programs.

Global Practice

Conservation Action Planning is an internationally recognised process developed by The Nature Conservancy, and used by many conservation managers around Australia. Adaptive management is a critical component of the model. The Plan provides directions for environmental conservation management for the next 15 years. After 5 years, the plan will be reviewed, and progress will be evaluated against outcomes identified for conservation.

Performance measurement

For each strategy, component actions and monitoring indicators have been developed. These will be used to track the achievement of threat mitigation objectives and conservation outcomes defined for each of the assets.

Implementing the plan

The Conservation Action Plan will be implemented by the Western Victoria regional team in partnership with Traditional Owners, and with detailed planning and design often assisted by other agencies, restoration partners, researchers, Friends groups, special interest groups, and volunteers.

10 Step Process:
Parks Victoria uses a ten-step process for conservation action planning: the Plan covers the first seven steps in the process



For more information

Copies of the plan may be downloaded from the Parks Victoria website (www.parks.vic.gov.au)