

Field Inspection Report

MOOLOOLAH LOGGING AREA (LA)

Beerwah State Forest

23 August 2012



Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

August 2012

Introduction

The subject parcel, Mooloolah Logging Area (MLA) was identified and inspected as a potential site for a multi purpose facility for driver training and other motorsport uses.

The site inspection of state owned land, which is part of Beerwah State Forest (State Forest 561) and described as Lot 561 on FTY1655 (Figure 1), was carried out on 23 August 2012.

MLA is managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service within the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (DNPRSR) under the provisions of the *Forestry Act 1959* as DNPRSR is responsible for the custodial management of State Forests. The Forest Products unit within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has responsibility for the management of native forest log timber production and associated harvesting on available State Forest areas which includes MLA.

The remainder of Beerwah State Forest to the south of the MLA (approximately 4500 hectares) is made up of slash pine plantation under licence to Hancock Queensland Plantations Pty Limited.

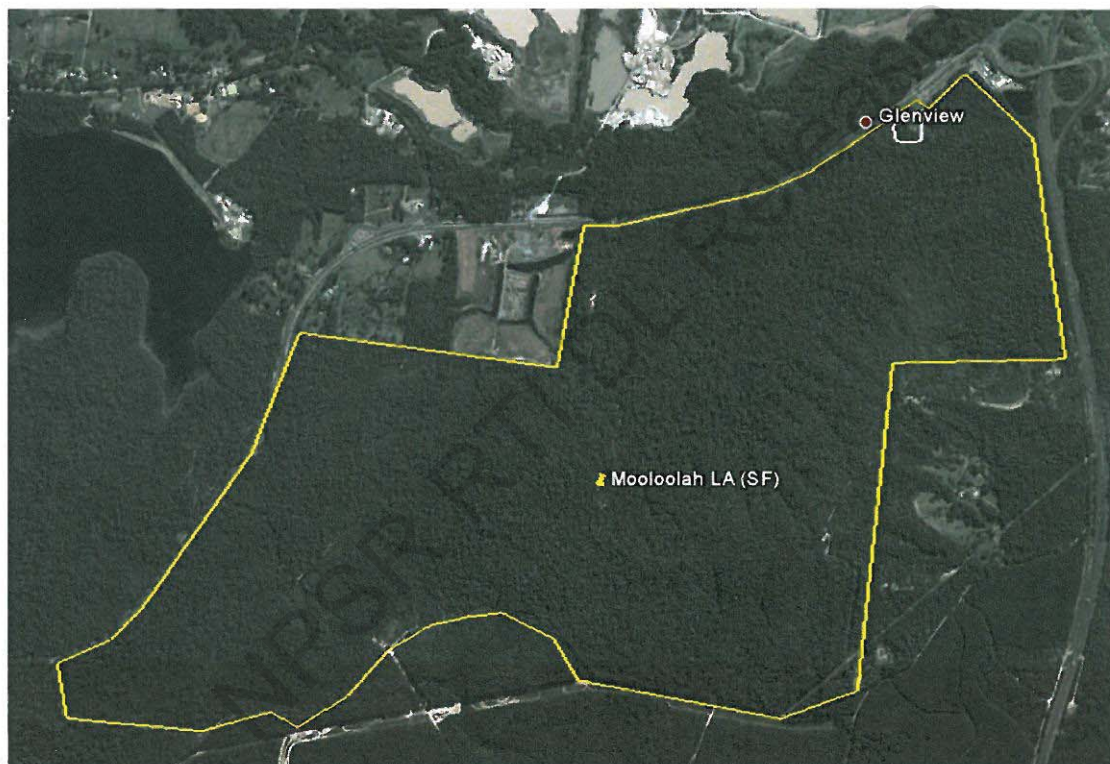


Figure 1: Mooloolah Logging Area

Property Information:

Locality:	Glenview, Parish of Bribie
Area:	534 hectares
Council:	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
State Electorate:	Caloundra
Tenure:	State Forest
Owner:	Queensland Government
Primary Zoning:	Rural (Draft Sunshine Coast Regional Council Planning Scheme, 2012)

Location and Access

Location:

MLA is located in the northern end of the Beerwah State Forest. It is four kilometres east of the town of Landsborough and eight kilometres west of Caloundra. The Steve Irwin Way runs along the northern boundary and the Bruce Highway runs along part of the eastern boundary (Figure 2).

Extensive areas of pine plantation lie to the south. There are some common boundaries with rural residential private holdings in the north, east and south west. Some of these properties to the south west and east retain reasonable amounts of remnant vegetation but to the north is almost entirely cleared.



Figure 2: Road access to MLA

Access:

Sealed road access to the property is available via the Bruce Highway and Steve Irwin Way. Service roads throughout the property are unsealed.





Some internal service roads have been badly impacted by erosion induced by regular unauthorised vehicular traffic often at inappropriate times particularly when the roads are wet.



Property description

Description:

The MLA is located in the northern end of the Beerwah State Forest on the Steve Irwin Way. The total area of the MLA is approximately 800 hectares. The smaller northern section of 134 hectares is bounded by Ewen Maddock dam to its north and the Steve Irwin Way to the south. The remainder, the area described within this report, lies south of the Steve Irwin Way.

The topography of the MLA (Figure 3) consists of relatively flat land to the north, rising to a high point of 130m above sea level in the south-east portion adjacent to the private freehold land.



Figure 3: Topography of MLA

The high point is the location of a telecommunications tower for which Crown Castle Pty Ltd currently hold an occupation permit. This site is principally operated by Telstra.



Some steep gullies are present.



Vegetation cover and fauna:

A wide variety of vegetation communities are present ranging from grassy open forest on the ridgeline to tall eucalypt forest with vine and palm forest understorey, very tall open forest with shrubby understorey on lower slopes and undulating flats and melaleuca swamp and heathland in the lowest lying areas. The area contains eleven regional ecosystems, two of which are listed as “endangered” and four are “of concern”.

A total of 11 mammals, 56 bird, 6 reptile and 13 amphibian species have been recorded in the MLA. Only one introduced fauna species was recorded, the cane toad (*Rhinella marina*) which was present in large numbers.

Further information regarding the flora and fauna of MLA is detailed in:

- Appendix A: *Conservation Significance of Mooloolah Logging Area* (DERM, 2012)
- Appendix B: *Beerwah State Forest, MLA Fauna Survey 25-28 October 2010* (QPWS, 2011).

Potential environmental impacts

Regional ecosystems present

There are eleven Regional ecosystems in Mooloolah LA. Two have a Biodiversity Status of *Endangered (E)* and four are *Of Concern*. (Refer Appendix A)

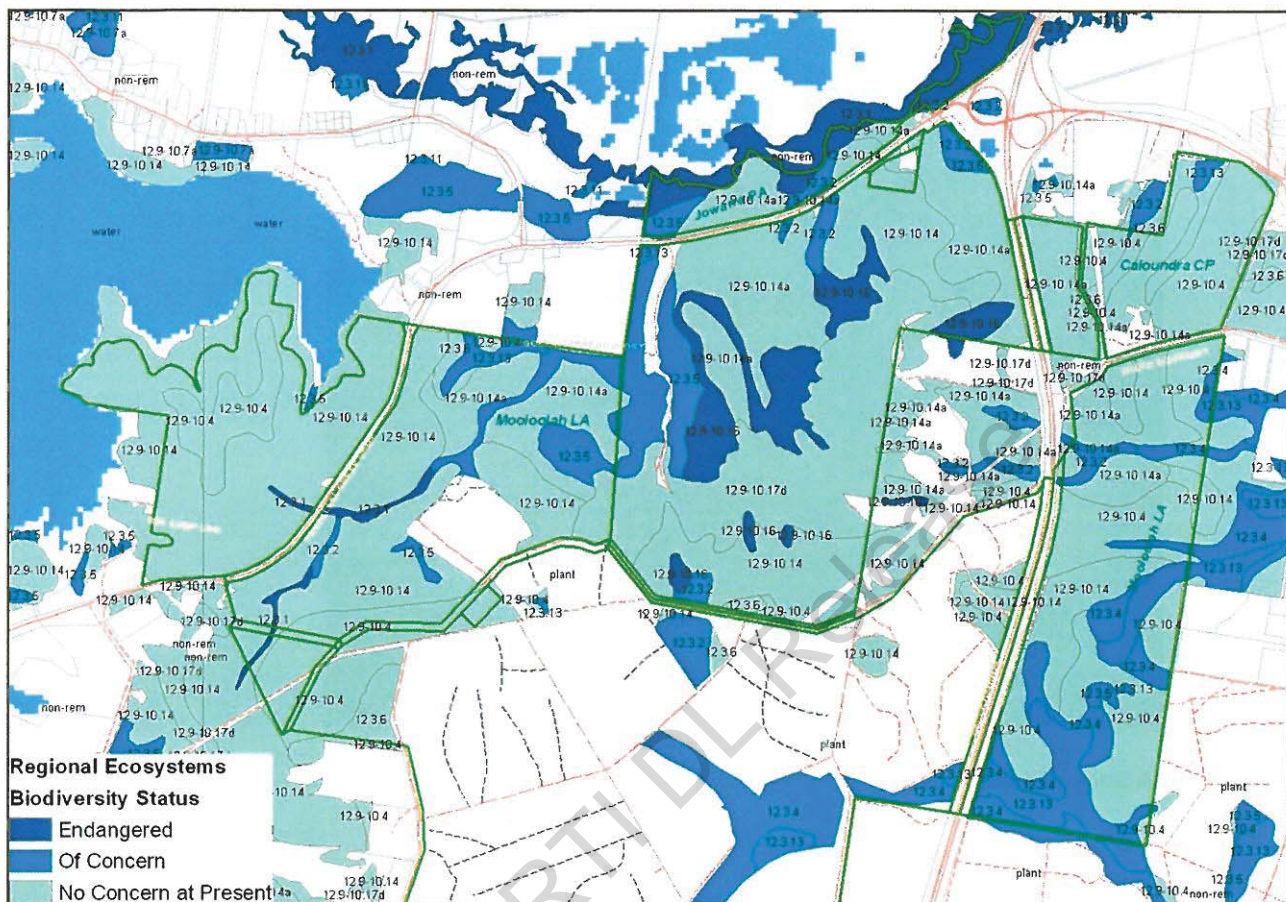


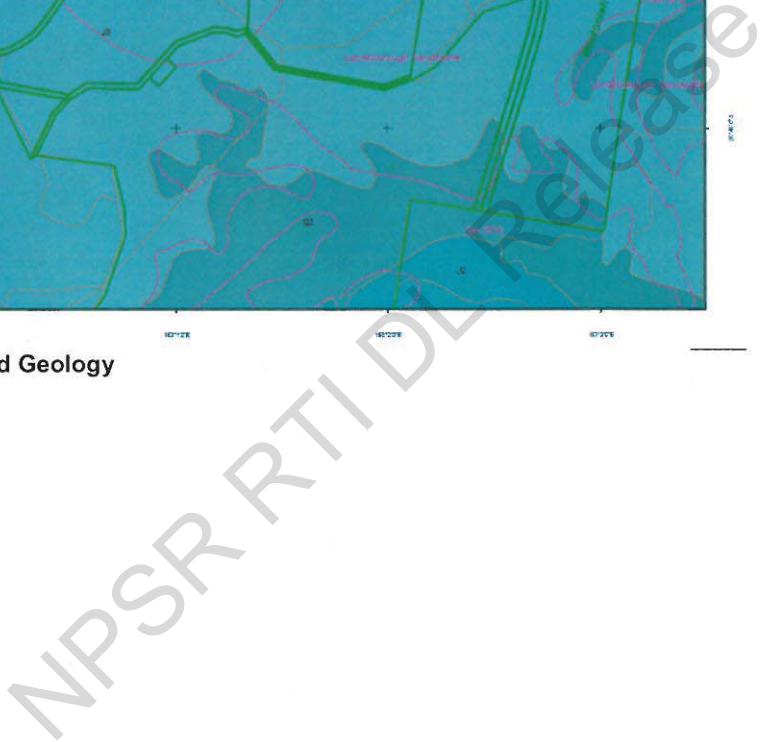
Figure 4: Mooloolah LA Regional Ecosystems Biodiversity Status ¹

Noise Sensitive receptors

There are some common boundaries with private holdings in the north, east and south west. These properties include private residences, a golf course, paddocks for horse agistment and a service station. The Mooloolah Cemetery also adjoins the MLA.

¹ Department of Environment and Resource Management. (2012) Conservation Significance of Mooloolah Logging Area. P.7 Site Assessment Report Mooloolah Logging Area
23 August 2012

The soils in the area are sandy, erodible and poorly drained. Damage and erosion in MLA as a result of unauthorised motorbike and other vehicular use has been recorded as a result of the highly erodible sandy soils



d Geology

Current land use

- Native Forest Log Timber Production and Harvesting
The DAFF has recently completed the current cycle of harvesting in western (completed in 2004) and in the eastern (completed in 2001) sections of the MLA, while the central section is scheduled for harvesting within the next few years (refer Figure 6). These areas of MLA within Beerwah State Forest continue to be managed by DAFF for ongoing commercial timber production to help supply the dependent regional hardwood sawmills with their future requirements for native forest sawlogs.

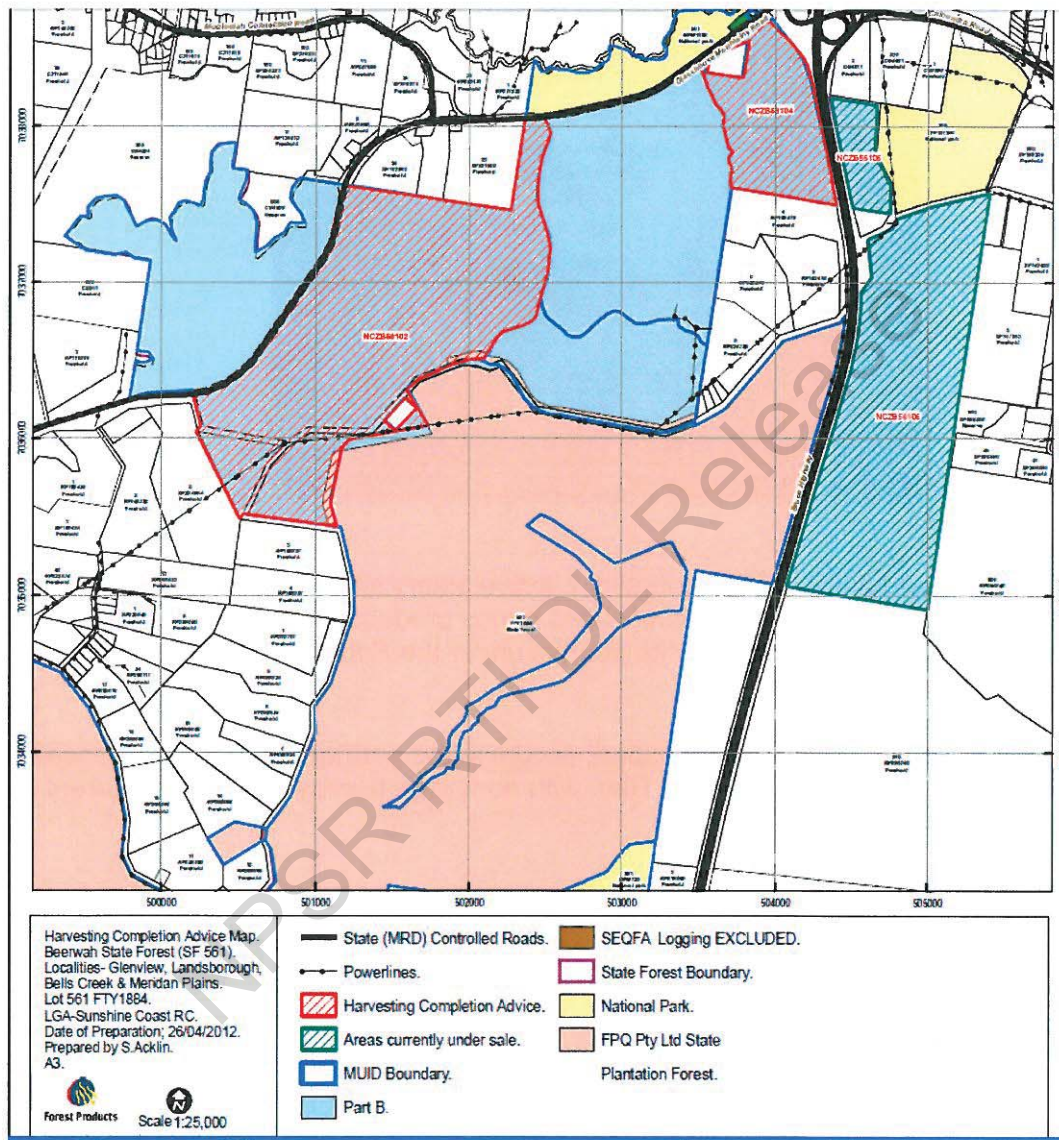


Figure 6: MLA timber harvesting status

- Telecommunications
Crown Castle Pty Ltd currently hold an occupation permit for a communication tower within the MLA and several communications companies (Telstra, Vodafone and Optus) have licenses to broadcast from the site and require access for maintenance purposes
- Utilities
There is a powerline corridor in the area which is not (currently) formally authorised.



- **Apiary Sites**
The area of interest within MLA contains 2 active apiary sites used by beekeepers for the placement of their beehives and associated honey production. Use of these sites is authorised by the issue of apiary site permits under the *Forestry Act 1959*.
- **Foliage Harvesting**
Foliage harvesting, principally for export, occurs in the northern end of the Beerwah State Forest bounded by Ewen Maddock Dam with no foliage harvesting permits current with the area of interest in MLA.
- **Motorised recreation**
The MLA is accessible via locked gates. Any motorised recreation by motorcycles or four-wheel drive vehicles is currently illegal.
- **Non motorised recreation**
A variety of recreational/tourism activities are already permitted in the general area including: horse trail riding, mountain bike tours; as well as group activity permits for the Department of Defence and the Australian Native Plants Society, and commercial activity permits for television shows and tour groups;

In recent years there has been a substantial rise in use of the reserve by mountain bikes. This is considered a more sustainable activity for roads through the reserve, given the geology, and recognises an in-situ growth area in demand. Anecdotally, as mountain bike use has risen, trail bike use has diminished, suggesting the two activities are not compatible at this location.

When combining the impacts of current and past use, emerging usage patterns, and the range of opportunities in the area at large, non-motorised was deemed the most appropriate and sustainable for MLA reserve. (Appendix C: Excerpt from Recreation Strategy).

Other proposed future land use

- The Department of Transport and Main Roads propose a new northbound entry ramp from the Sunshine Motorway to the Bruce Highway in the form of a 'fly-over' approximately 20m above ground level which will impact approximately 100 hectares in the north eastern part of MLA. (Appendix D)



Surrounding land use

The land in the immediate vicinity of the MLA is currently used for a variety of purposes including:

- Mooloolah Cemetery
- Horse agistment
- Par 3 Golf course
- Service Station
- Rural residential.

The land to the south of MLA is slash pine plantation under licence to Hancock Queensland Plantations Pty Limited. Unauthorised vehicular access through this area, apart from causing erosion and track damage, has resulted in other environmental damage.





Suitability for Motorsports Park

A significant consideration is whether the proposal, and the type of activities catered for, is consistent with the cardinal principle to be observed in the management of State Forests i.e. the permanent reservation of such areas for the purpose of producing timber and associated products in perpetuity and of protecting a watershed therein. To date, occupation permits under s35 of the *Forestry Act 1959* have been granted for uses inconsistent with the management principles if a proposal has benefits for the department, the State or the broader community **and** there is no suitable alternative land available for the purpose.

Under s32 of the *Forestry Act 1959* the MLA could be revoked by regulation, in whole or in part, if the Minister is satisfied, having regard to the purposes of the Act and the public interest, that it is desirable to make land in the State Forest available for "providing accommodation or recreational facilities for encouraging or promoting the tourist industry".

Land excluded from a State Forest under s32 is unallocated State land. The revoked land could be set aside as a reserve for community purposes and a trustee put in place to manage the land for the intended purpose. However, if the land was revoked, native title would need to be considered and the land would no longer be exempt from the requirements of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

The site itself provides a number of constraints for the proposed Sunshine Coast Motorsports Park including:

- The area contains eleven regional ecosystems, two of which are listed as "endangered" and four are "of concern". Clearing an area of conservation significance may not be favourably viewed by parts of the community;
- The geology and soil type does not lend itself to persistent motorised use and construction activities may prove difficult in low lying areas. Damage and erosion in MLA as a result of unauthorised motorbike and other vehicular use has been recorded as a result of the highly erodible sandy soils;
- Telecommunications companies have licenses to broadcast from the site and require access for maintenance purposes;
- MLA provides significant non motorised recreation values and uses (e.g. mountain biking, walking, trail running, bird watching);
- A variety of recreational/tourism activities are already permitted in the general area including: horse trail riding, mountain bike tours; as well as group activity permits for the Department of Defence and the Australian Native Plants Society, and commercial activity permits for television shows and tour groups;
- There are private residences, a cemetery, a golf course and an area offering horse agistment adjacent to the MLA which would be impacted by noise generated by motorised vehicles.
- The proposed Department of Transport and Main Roads new northbound entry ramp from the Sunshine Motorway to the Bruce Highway in the form of a 'fly-over' approximately 20m above ground level will impact approximately 100 hectares in the north eastern part of MLA.

Other considerations relevant to the proposal include:

- Unless tracks of sufficient length, variety and degree of difficulty can be provided within the facility (50km or more in length), free and illegal use will continue outside the facility.
- Financial viability of the proposal (with or without purchase of land), based on a detailed business case, needs to be demonstrated. In particular, an analysis of demand for the proposed activities, and the location of existing facilities, needs to be undertaken.
- Development approval (DA) by Sunshine Coast Regional Council would be required. DA for motorsport proposals have been difficult to obtain due to community objections.
- For accountability purposes, an Expression of Interest process should be undertaken should a State Forest area be deemed suitable for a Motorsport Park.

Conclusion/recommendation(s)

When combining the impacts of current and past use, emerging usage patterns, and the range of opportunities in the area at large, non-motorised use was deemed by QPWS to be the most appropriate and sustainable use for the MLA.

Other options for locating a Motorsports Park include:

- Identify an alternate area of State Forest that provides fewer physical, environmental and future development constraints to the type of facility proposed;
- Secure freehold land in the vicinity and construct the facility entirely on that land; or
- Secure freehold land and construct all but any long distance tracks or trails on the property and seek access to other land (freehold or otherwise) for long distance tracks and trails.

NPSR RTI DL Release

Appendices

Appendix A: *Conservation Significance of Mooloolah Logging Area* (DERM, 2012)

Appendix B: *Beerwah State Forest, MLA Fauna Survey 25-28 October 2010* (QPWS, 2011).

Appendix C: Excerpt from QPWS Recreation Strategy

Appendix D: Department of Transport and Main Roads proposal for a 'fly-over'

NPSR RTI DL Release

Recreation zoning and Mooloolah Logging Area.

Paper prepared by Claire Wright, Ranger, Recreation and Visitor Management

Recreation and Visitor Management in the Sunshine Coast and Hinterland areas have been subject to a thorough review in 2012 with the completion and delivery of a recreational zoning plan. This is a key component of the delivery of a regional recreation strategy which seeks to provide sustainable visitor opportunities across a range of recreational activities. Every location has been assessed for what it may offer visitors, with the express intention of maximising visitor opportunities whilst taking into account issues such as access, endangered flora and fauna, setting appropriateness, existing use and equity of opportunity.

Mooloolah Logging Area (MLA) contains two recreational zones – Zone 3 for active, non-motorised recreation in the western half of the reserve and Zone 2 for nature-based recreation in the eastern section. A description of the zones is provided below. With a combination of zones 2 and 3, it offers opportunities for wildflower viewing, walking, running, mountain biking, competitive events, and connectivity with the recreational opportunities offered at Ewan Maddock Dam.

Zoning decision; Mooloolah Logging Area (MLA)

MLA's network of internal roads, proximity to the Bruce Highway and adjacent position between the growing population area of Caloundra South and Ewan Maddock Dam, suggests it would make an ideal location for recreation. However it contains highly erodible sandy soils and contains areas of significant ecological value and sensitivity. The management approach, through the zoning process, has been to zone the maximum proportion of the reserve possible for active recreation whilst retaining some areas as suitable for more passive activities. This is entirely in keeping with the principles of equity of opportunity and is based on the ecological information provided by a thorough vegetation and species assessments (Novello 2012, Thomas, 2010). Other consideration included the distribution of opportunities, on and off park across the Glass House and Hinterland areas.

Considerable thought was given to whether MLA should be open to motorised vehicles, such as motorbikes. The geology and soil type does not lend itself to persistent motorised use and damage and erosion in MLA as a result of motorbike use has been recorded. Interestingly in recent years there has been a substantial rise in use of the reserve by mountain bikes. This is considered a more sustainable activity for roads through the reserve, given the geology, and recognises an in-situ growth area in demand. The intention of the zoning process is to maximise visitor opportunities, so a recommendation of the zoning team was encourage and support MTB usage. Anecdotally, as mountain bike use has risen, trail bike use has diminished, suggested the two activities are not compatible at this location.

When combining the impacts of current and past use, emerging usage patterns, and the range of opportunities in the area at large, the combination of zones two and three, both non-motorised was deemed the most appropriate and sustainable for Mooloolah Logging Area reserve.

What the zones mean.

Zone 1

Definition: An area suitable for very low impact, pedestrian recreation, where the activities must be based on nature conservation, providing an experience of remoteness and self-reliance whilst at the same time protecting the park's natural and cultural resources.

Summary: The principal purpose of this zone is to provide recreation opportunities that are low-impact and compatible with areas that are typically higher in natural or conservation values. A Zone 1 is most closely related to the wilderness zone in management or conservation zoning. Recreation activities should be low-key and low-impact, typically pedestrian and facilities or infrastructure minimal or excluded altogether. This zone is generally not suitable for group or commercial activities, though consideration may be given for permits requesting bird watching or flower-viewing.

Zone 2

Definition: An area suitable for non-motorised nature-based recreation, where the activities are based primarily on nature conservation, and for which minimal facilities or infrastructure may be provided.

Summary: This zone is characterised by nature-based recreation in very natural areas, requiring only limited facilities, such as un-hardened walking tracks (AS 2156.1 Classes 4-5 depending on the LCS). Some signage and site modification may be present. A greater number of activities are permitted in a zone 2 than a zone 1 but they must be non-goal-focussed, leisurely and non-competitive to remain compatible with the characteristics of the zone.

Zone 3

Definition: An area suitable for active nature-based recreation.

Summary: This zone provides an opportunity for visitors to recreate in an environment dominated by natural elements, but modified to accommodate the visitor. Visitors can generally expect a greater range of recreation types and social interaction in a natural setting, opportunities for education and interpretation of the area's values and promotion of responsible use of the protected area. This zone can accommodate multiple uses including abseiling, rock climbing, mountain-biking, horse riding, picnicking, depending on the site (that is, clearly for rock-climbing there needs to be a cliff face and for horse-riding the tenure needs to allow it).

Motorised recreation may be placed in a zone 3 where roads and Fire Management Trails are open to public access, and where use is safe and sustainable.

Zone 4

Definition: Typically a visitor node, zone 4 defines a developed site which offers recreation opportunities for which structures and facilities are required. The designation of a zone 4 is based on physical appearance, infrastructure and facilities, rather than the range of recreation types it hosts.

Summary: Zone 4 or “developed zone” as it is often referred to, provides for relatively high levels of recreation and social interaction in a modified setting based on the physical infrastructure provided (for example, camping and picnicking). The facilities themselves will be major attractions for visitors to this zone; the needs, interests and abilities of less experienced and less active visitors are catered for. This zone caters for a large number of park visitors in a small area.

References

Novello S., *Conservation Significance of the Mooloolah Logging Area*, DERM, 2012.

Thomas R., *Beerwah State Forest Mooloolah Logging Area Fauna Survey 25-28th October*, DERM 2010

