

11. Visitor use - effects and management

Links to Section 1

This resource sheet can be used for park specific application of activities in Section 1 of this Parks Victoria education resource kit, in particular:

Parks and SOSE

9. Management issues in national parks.

12. Visitor impacts and management strategies.

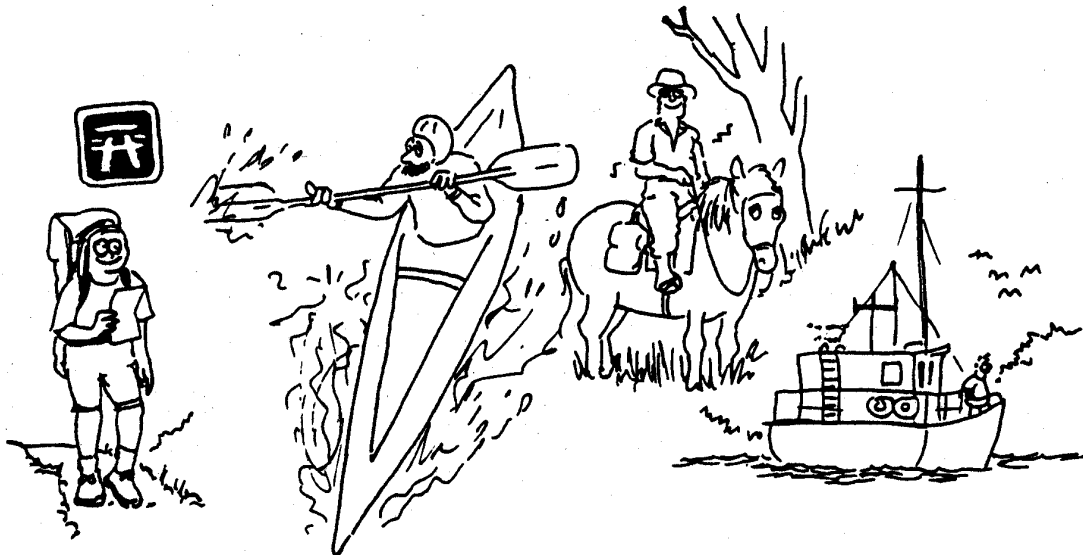
14. Planning a new national park.

With the ever increasing numbers of visitors to the Grampians, Parks Victoria has to find ways of overcoming the inevitable problems caused by tourism. Many of these problems can be reduced by individual effort on the part of all visitors. People are encouraged not to damage, litter or vandalise any feature in the park. They should help protect the native flora and fauna by not picking plants or disturbing wildlife and by staying on tracks.

The park's management zoning scheme (see next page) helps indicate the types of activities and levels of use appropriate in different parts of the park.

- The Recreation Development Area is the zone in which tourist a development such as the National Park Centre is located.
- The Conservation and Recreation Zone caters for sustainable recreational opportunities in areas considered less sensitive.
- The Conservation Zone has only minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities.
- The Reference Zone has no tourist facilities and human activity is kept to an absolute minimum.

In addition to zoning the park to limit recreational uses to appropriate areas, various management strategies have been instigated to limit the impact of visitors on the park.



1. Grampians National Park Management Zones

Zones					
	Reference Area	Conservation	Conservation & Recreation	Recreation Development	Education
Area/ location	1 465 ha, 1% of park. The Sisters, Moora Valley and Grasstree Creek Reference Areas	65 500 ha, 39% of park.	99 546 ha, 59% of park.	< 10 ha, <1% of park.	679 ha, <1% of park. Potter Creek, Wannon Divide and Halls Gap (proposed) Education Areas.
Values	Relatively undisturbed representative land types and associated vegetation.	Broad areas with sensitive natural environments.	Important natural values and scope for recreational opportunities.	Grampians National Park Centre.	Area for education purposes.
General management aims	Protect viable samples of one of more land types that are relatively undisturbed for comparative study with similar land types elsewhere, by keeping all human interference to the minimum essential and ensuring as far as practical that the only long-term changes result from natural processes.	Protect sensitive natural environments and provide for minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities, subject to ensuring minimal interference with natural processes.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.	Develop as a tourist destination incorporating the Grampians NP Visitor Centre and the Brambuk Indigenous Cultural Centre.	Provide primarily for environmental education in a relatively undisturbed setting.
Access	For approved scientific research.	Limited vehicular access	2WD and 4WD public access generally available	2WD.	2WD.

Source: *Grampians National Park Draft Management Plan 2002.*

2 Camping

Many of the 13 designated campgrounds in the park are at old timber mill sites. Designated camp sites are provided so that people do not continually open up new areas in the park for camping. Barriers are used to confine cars to parking areas and prevent camping in other areas. Sometimes areas are fenced off for regeneration. Campfires must be in the fireplaces provided. Bush camping (i.e. away from designated camp grounds) is permitted in some areas of the park but not in the Wonderland Range or in the watershed of Lake Wartook or other protected areas.

A camping fee was introduced in 1991 for use of the designated camp grounds. No fees apply for bush camping. This could lead to increased pressure on bush camping sites and is being carefully monitored.

To protect the park, the following bush camping restrictions exist:

- The bush camp must be established in an existing clearing.
- All rubbish must be removed and not buried.
- No standing trees are to be removed.
- No washing is to be done in streams and reservoirs.
- All human excreta and sullage must be buried more than 100 metres from any stream or reservoir. Bush camps must **NOT** be within 50 metres of a sealed road, within 20 metres of streams or high water level of a reservoir, or within 1 kilometre of designated camp and picnic grounds.
- Vehicles must stay on existing tracks.
- Regulations about campfires vary in different parts of the Park. Please check with the park office before lighting a campfire.

Wood collection for camp fires can be a source of harm to the natural environment. The collection of firewood is limited to fallen timber but some people strip the bark off standing eucalypts for kindling. The removal of dead timber can reduce the habitat available for small animals and

invertebrates. Since the establishment of Grampians National Park, an effort has been made to increase the amount of fallen timber and debris left on the ground, thus helping to retain the growth and decay cycle which provides new soil for vegetation. The total number of fireplaces available has been greatly reduced, the size of fires limited and at Zumstein the introduction of electric barbecues has generally improved the situation.

The destruction of live timber is a concern particularly in areas where there is a shortage of fallen timber. This is the case on the Major Mitchell Plateau at the bush camping site where fallen timber is scarce. People are encouraged to use fuel stoves.

3 Picnicking

Dispersed picnicking is permitted in most areas of Grampians National Park.

Picnickers and campers are responsible for taking their rubbish home. The main litter problems are associated with drink containers, tissues and lolly wrappers. Around campgrounds, foil, bread ties and ring tops cause problems because they do not decompose.

The education focus is on visitor responsibility: 'leave no trace of your visit.'

4 Bush walking

The impact of walking on the environment varies according to the level of use and type of soil, vegetation and topography. Cutting corners on trails causes erosion. Off-track walking can quickly destroy fragile plant communities.

Careful planning caters for a range of walking options that will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural features and systems of the park. Minimum impact bush walking is emphasised at all times. Bush walking is not permitted in the two Reference Areas in the park.

Walking tracks and camp grounds are continually being upgraded. Boardwalks are used in marshy areas and fragile habitats to minimise the impact of walkers.

Track standards reflect the management objectives of each Zone of the park. Four grades of walking tracks are provided. In the Wonderland Range and other high usage areas, tracks are constructed to be well defined and well drained with a good surface. In the near primitive and more rugged Victoria Range, tracks are less defined.

5. Four-wheel driving and trail bikes

Four-wheel drive vehicles and trail bikes have increased visitor pressure on minor roads within the park. Four-wheel driving and trail bike riding is only permitted on roads and vehicle tracks that are open to the public. No public vehicles are permitted off roads, on closed roads, or anywhere in Reference Areas and all vehicles must be registered and drivers/riders must be licensed. Trail bike riding is discouraged in intensive use areas such as the Wonderland Range. Many 4-wheel drive tracks are closed during winter to reduce erosion problems.

6. Pleasure driving

The extensive network of roads in the Grampians grew out of servicing the timber industry during the time the Grampians was managed by the Forests Commission of Victoria. Many roads which were duplications were closed when the area became a national park.

Roads and parking areas can be very busy during peak holiday times.

7. Cycling

Bicycle riding is not permitted on closed roads or on any walking tracks. This is for safety reasons as the rough terrain or poor condition of closed roads make cyclists more vulnerable to accidents.

9. Rock climbing and abseiling

Rock climbing and abseiling is permitted throughout the park except in the Reference Areas or over walking tracks. Climbers need to be aware of the potential dangers of dislodging rocks above walking tracks. Climbing restrictions may need to be introduced if the activities cause track erosion or threaten the natural or cultural environment, e.g. the breeding sites of the rare Peregrine Falcon or other significant flora and fauna, Indigenous art sites or special geological features. Climbers are encouraged to contact the Park Office for the latest policies, as new ways of protecting the park from this visitor impact are continually being researched.

As the second most popular rock climbing destination in Victoria, the Grampians has been under increasing pressure in recent times. The impact chiefly relates to walking tracks to and near popular sites such as Mount Wudjubguyan (Hollow Mountain), Mount Stapylton and Summerday Valley. Climbers have developed a myriad of additional tracks at these sites. The base of many cliffs, particularly beginner instruction faces, are heavily impacted and subject to channel erosion. The network of tracks has recently been accurately mapped and will provide the basis for a rationalisation and formalisation of tracks to take account of user movement patterns. High impact areas at the base of popular climbs are being terraced or hardened.

Many Indigenous art sites occur in areas frequented by rock climbers, including Brim Springs and Mount Stapylton. Because weathering has faded the artwork some sites are extremely difficult to see and can easily be overlooked. The establishment of new climbs presents a constant danger to these sites. Liaison is being established between the Parks Victoria and rock climbers to address this problem.

10. Angling

Angling is permitted throughout the park and in Wimmera Mallee Water (*previously Rural Water Corporation*) reservoirs but it is a minor activity among park visitors. A licence is required by anyone over 18 years of age. Pensioners do not require a licence. A Closed Season applies to some water courses and lakes.

11. Swimming

All the water storage areas in Grampians National Park are controlled by water authorities. Swimming is not permitted in Urban Water Supply Catchments nor in MacKenzie Creek, the Horsham Supply Channel or Lake Wartook. Swimming is permitted in Moora Moora Reservoir and in Lake Bellfield away from the wall and outlet area. School and other groups often opt to use the swimming pool in Halls Gap township.

12. Boating

Boating is controlled by the water authorities. Non-power boating (canoeing, rowing, sailing, etc.) is permitted on all their reservoirs. Boats with internal combustion engines are prohibited in Lake Bellfield because of the danger of fuel spills and the problems of noise and fumes in an enclosed valley. Electric engines are allowed. Lake Wartook permits power boats with a limit of 8 kw - a speed limit of 8 km/h applies in order to reduce wave erosion.



13. Vandalism

Occasional graffiti problems occur within Grampians National Park and in the past Indigenous rock art shelters were a major target. Vandalism to trees around camping grounds also occurs. Road closures can lead to a significant problem if barriers are destroyed to gain access.

14. Visitor information

Visitor education is crucial. Whenever possible, visitor understanding of the national park is being promoted. People are encouraged to come to the National Park Centre to see the audio-visual, view the displays or seek information about specific sites and usage.

An Education Officer is based at the National Park Centre to work with school groups, dealing directly with thousands of students each year. Community programs aimed at increasing visitors' understanding and appreciation of the park and the role they play in protecting it are offered by ranger staff during holiday periods such as Easter and Christmas. A number of information boards exist throughout the park to increase visitor understanding.

Rangers generally patrol the park during weekends and busy times, with education being their primary focus. If necessary, Rangers have the power to issue on-the-spot fines for offences against various acts and regulations. More serious offenders may be summonsed to appear in court.

15. Monitoring

In order to properly manage and plan for recreation and conservation in the park it is essential to know the type, pattern and level of visitor use, and to monitor the impact of recreational activities. Monitoring is therefore an important part of park management. Recreational impact is constantly being monitored either by observation or formal data collection. Counters on roads and walking tracks collect statistics on visitor numbers. Periodically, special monitoring programs are needed to assess the impact of specific activities in the park, e.g. a monitoring program was conducted for Summerday Valley, a high use area for rock climbing and abseiling.

The Resource Evaluation and Monitoring System (REAMS) has been used in Grampians National Park. This was designed to address the need to monitor the condition of natural and cultural assets. The System collects data which traces change over time. It includes information on flora, fauna, significant

communities, recreational, historical and archaeological sites. The great value of REAMS is its ability to predict change, detect change or to react to change at the earliest possible opportunity.

Recreation will continue to be a major use of Grampians National Park. Management procedures such as those outlined above will help ensure that the increasing number of visitors do not destroy or damage the very attractions they come to visit.

16. Voluntary assistance

The Friends of Grampians National Park actively assists with Park management tasks, for example, monitoring and weeding. The Australian Conservation Volunteers and Green Corps have placed work crews in the park to undertake tree planting, track construction or upgrading and survey work.

Many student volunteers and work experience students also assist the park in a number of tasks. Those interested should contact the Park Office well in advance as there is a limit to the number of placements available.

