

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

REPORT ON HOW WE ENGAGED AND WHAT WE HEARD



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The ACT Government is developing a new plan for managing our natural resources. In developing this plan, we recognise that managing natural resources is a shared responsibility. The Canberra community's contribution is vital to ensure the plan reflects community knowledge and aspirations as well as highlighting the key role that everyone has in delivering the plan.

Natural Resource Management (NRM) is the integrated management of the natural resources that make up Australia's landscapes, such as land, water, soil, plants and animals. That is, our land, water and biodiversity and cultural assets. NRM takes account of human activities and natural processes to ensure they are balanced and carefully managed to deliver the best outcomes for today's needs and for future generations. NRM also considers the varied benefits provided to the community by the natural environment, which are becoming known as 'ecosystem services'. These services include natural pollination of crops, clean air, extreme weather mitigation and community mental and physical wellbeing. Ecosystem services are often integral to the provision of clean drinking water, the decomposition of wastes, and resilience and productivity of food production.



Figure 1 – Haig Park Markets Sunday 18 April 2021

Two separate NRM Plans have been developed for the ACT over the last 20 years. The first plan was launched in 2004 and the most recent plan, Bush Capital Legacy – Plan for Managing the Natural Resources of the ACT, was launched in 2009. These plans have provided a solid framework for NRM planning and implementation in the ACT.

It is now time to build on this work and develop a new ACT NRM Plan that reflects current community knowledge and aspirations, the latest scientific data and emerging challenges such as climate change. The new plan will look to the future and provide goals, actions and investments for the next 20 years. It will reflect the latest information, Ngunnawal values and aspirations, changing community aspirations and address existing and emerging challenges to protect our natural resources.

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THE CONVERSATION

The consultation sought feedback from the ACT community on the key areas the NRM Plan should focus on, and what the key opportunities and threats are for natural resource management over the next couple of decades.

Over the ten-week consultation period spanning 1 April 2021 to 15 June 2021, we connected with community both online and face to face. We ran an online survey that was available on the YourSay Conversations platform for the ten-week period receiving 87 responses. We hosted seven drop-in sessions connecting with over 60 people at the following locations:

- The Belconnen Arts Centre: Monday 19 April
- Downer Community Centre: Tuesday 20 April
- Forde Community Centre: Wednesday 21 April
- Tuggeranong Community Centre: Thursday 22 April
- Weston Creek Community Centre: Tuesday 27 April
- Haig Park Markets: Sunday 18 April and Sunday 2 May

We engaged directly with our stakeholders and their member groups. We established an NRM plan advisory group with representatives of the NRM and wider community including the ACT community councils, Landcare ACT, the ACT Conservation Council, the Rural Landholders Association, Landcare Volunteers and the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee.

In addition, we held face-to-face and virtual meetings with 13 internal ACT Government Departments and a further 16 Community Groups (see [Attachment 1](#)), four of which were facilitated by Landcare ACT and the ACT's catchment groups. We contacted all ACT representative Aboriginal organisations (RAOs) and invited them to comment and engage on the discussion paper and future content of the plan. To assist these conversations, a targeted Ngunnawal and Aboriginal community survey was sent out to get feedback on specific Ngunnawal NRM issues.

WHO WAS ENGAGED

The face-to-face and virtual consultation meetings were attended by 90 people including representatives of all of the catchment and conservation groups in the ACT.

Eighty seven submissions were received via the YourSay Conversations platform and 16 written submissions were received from various organisations and individuals via email. A consultation report was provided by Landcare ACT on behalf of the three catchment groups and the Rural Landholders Association.

We gathered feedback from stakeholder discussions conducted by other non-government agencies such as the ACT Conservation Council and the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group.

To maximise our engagement reach we attended multiple forums with stakeholders across our community to ensure we really captured the information we needed to develop our draft NRM Plan.

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Key insights from the community

General Comments

There was a suggestion to consider an alternative title for the plan as natural resource management was deemed not appropriate by some groups. The alternative suggestion was caring for country.

There was also a range of additional comments around cross-border consideration, acknowledging the ACT's place within the Capital Region. While the NRM Plan will focus on actions and investment within the ACT, it should, as a minimum, consider cross-border impacts and investigate mechanisms to reduce adverse environmental effects arising from outside of ACT.

The Vision

A particular focus area of the community comments was that the draft vision, put forward in the discussion paper, should be more specific on what we are intending to achieve. Other community suggestions to consider in the vision were:

- Ngunnawal cultural values and aspirations
- Incorporation of climate resilience
- The connections between people and nature.

Guiding Principles

Community comments related to the guiding principles included:

1. Generally, the guiding principles are good but could be expressed in a simpler form to improve clarity.
2. The principles should be practical and evidence-based objectives and strategies with fixed baselines and agreed conservation targets for protecting key environmental assets within the landscape. The principles should incorporate trends and impacts, including cumulative impacts.

2009 Plan

Community comments related to the 2009 Plan included:

1. A review of the previous NRM plan should be prepared to determine to what extent it has been implemented (progress towards both intermediate (2015) and long term (2030) tasks) and identify the reasons for unmet targets so that elements with shortfalls can be enhanced in the new Plan.
2. The new Plan needs to include the lessons learnt from prior NRM Plans.

Key Focus Areas

1. **Climate resilience is a primary consideration for all focus areas - biodiversity conservation, ecological function, healthy waterways, sustainable agriculture, and urban design and planning.**
2. **Strategic planning for land management and adoption of a stewardship approach. The potential for an environmental stewardship program that rewards land holders for actively setting aside and managing land for environmental purposes.**
3. **The importance of the urban forest and urban reserves as areas of connectivity and habitat for the indigenous flora and fauna.**
4. **Water security and water quality be broadened to total holistic water use in ACT and include grey water reuse etc.**
5. **The impact of bushfire hazard reduction measures on the ACT's environment and how best to manage the protection of life and property without compromising environmental values.**
6. **Carbon offsetting as an under-explored option to incentivise landholder action in the ACT with the potential to encourage large-scale restoration.**

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7. **Need to identify the operations and action plans that underpin these focus areas.**
8. **Riparian corridors being an opportunity to link remnant vegetation, provide a site for planting and increased greenery, as well as improve the condition of water both in and leaving the ACT.**
9. **Novel ecosystems i.e. alternate ways of thinking about weeds and reducing weed loads need to be considered.**
10. **Need to account for the impact of human activities such as construction.**

Ngunnawal

Community comments related to incorporating Ngunnawal values and aspirations included:

1. Desire for better collaboration between the Ngunnawal and the ACT Government and Non-Government Organisations.
2. That cultural awareness training for landholders in the ACT will be the first step towards appreciation and active involvement.
3. Ngunnawal led education programs - resources for teachers and ParkCarers to help to inform people about Ngunnawal culture.
4. Share responsibilities for Land and Water with Ngunnawal community - emphasis on co-management or partnership with traditional custodians.
5. Cultural fire management including more on-ground trials of different types of management are needed with funding directed on-ground pilots.
6. Employment opportunities - increasing opportunities for Ngunnawal people to work in the NRM space which will improve involvement and understanding from both sides.
7. The promotion of Ngunnawal language, re-naming places, animals, plants incorporating Ngunnawal language.

Measuring Performance

Community comments related to measuring performance included:

1. The need for **strong emphasis on comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and compliance regimes to check whether outcomes are being achieved and provide the mechanisms to adapt the NRM plan and management accordingly.**
2. The need for a reporting mechanism and clear accountability for the management and delivery of the plan.
3. The success of past and future plans should be evaluated and measured.

Government and Stakeholder engagement

Community comments related to stakeholder engagement included:

1. The need for appropriate measures to improve inter-relationships and communication between Government stakeholders.
2. That it is essential that representatives of the community that are concerned with and working in NRM are part of an advisory structure in the new Plan.
3. The need for improved coordination across ACT Government Directorates to facilitate integrated policy approaches, delivery and ongoing management.

Gaps for future consideration

Community comments related to areas for future consideration included:

1. The need for a contemporary agricultural policy; and agriculture as a stand alone ministerial portfolio.
2. Having recovery teams in place, ready to come in after disasters.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Submissions and survey responses were considered in the development of the draft Natural Resource Management Plan. The draft plan will be available for comment in early 2022. Following community input on the draft plan, a final draft of the plan will be submitted to the ACT Cabinet for consideration for adoption. The final ACT Natural Resource Management Plan is expected to be published in mid-2022.

You can register to receive project updates at epsddcomms@act.gov.au

To find out more about the Natural Resource Management Plan and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au or follow us on Facebook at @EnvironPlan

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Key Timings

Consultation on discussion paper - April – June 2021

Collation of feedback from the consultation on NRM Plan discussion paper – August-November 2021

Finalisation of Draft NRM plan – December 2021 - Early 2022

We are here

Release of Draft NRM plan for public comment – Early 2022

Finalise NRM Plan – June – December 2022

Publication of NRM Plan – June – December 2022

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

959

People were reached via
YourSay

87

People completed the online
Survey

7

Drop-in sessions were held
across 6 locations

24

Workshops were held with
stakeholders and community
groups

160

Emails sent to organisations
and individuals

28,915

Audience reached by social
media

16

Items of written feedback
received

Attachment 1

Meetings with community groups

And a further 11 Community Environmental Groups took up this opportunity speaking directly to us or facilitated through the Landcare ACT and Catchment Group Networks including:

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- ACT Conservation Council
 - ACT Region Catchment Coordination Group
 - Ginninderra Conservation Group
 - Greening Australia
 - Landcare ACT
 - Molonglo Conservation Group
 - Southern ACT Catchment Group
 - The Canberra Orchid Society
 - The Rural Landholders Association
 - The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists
 - Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Network.

Submissions by community

Written submissions were received from 16 organisations, 2 Individuals

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- Canberra Orchid Society
 - Conservation Council ACT Region
 - Friends of Grasslands
 - Ginninderra Catchment Group
 - Greening Australia
 - Icon Water
 - Landcare ACT
 - Molonglo Conservation Group
 - National Parks Association of the ACT Inc.
 - Private individual
 - Private individual
 - Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
 - Rural Landholders Association
 - Southern ACT Catchment Group
 - Tuggeranong Community Council
 - Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists
 - Weston Creek Community Council

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- Yass Valley Council.

ACT Government Departments

- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
 - Transport Canberra and City Services
 - Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
 - The ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna
 - Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate:
 - ACT Parks and Conservation Service
 - Bushfire and forestry
 - Biodiversity Planning and Policy
 - Biosecurity and Rural Services
 - Bushfire Recovery Team
 - Climate Change
 - Conservation Research
 - Traditional Custodian Engagement Team
 - Resilient Landscapes
 - Water Policy and Planning
 - ACT Heritage
 - ACT NRM.
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