

Operational policy

Infrastructure and development

Management of artificial waters

Operational policies provide a framework for consistent application and interpretation of legislation and for the management of non-legislative matters by the Environmental Protection Agency, (incorporating the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service). Operational policies are not intended to be applied inflexibly in all circumstances. Individual circumstances may require a modified application of policy.

Policy subject

Managing artificial waters on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) managed areas.

Purpose

To ensure that appropriate management arrangements are applied to artificial waters on QPWS managed areas.

Background

QPWS is one of the largest landholders in Queensland. There are many artificial waters on its estate including surface water storages (such as dams and “turkey nests”) and bores. These artificial waters are owned and maintained by QPWS and/or permit, lease or other authority holders for activities such as grazing and mining.

Artificial waters are not part of the natural environment and can have significant impacts on biodiversity and the ecological processes that occur on QPWS managed areas. For example, artificial waters in the semi-arid rangelands of Australia are known to foster significantly boosted macropod populations.

Artificial waters can also benefit rare and threatened species and, in certain locations, can compensate for loss of naturally available water through the impacts of post-European human settlement.

Definitions

Piped and capped bores: ground water bores with infrastructure that eliminates uncontrolled surface water flow under its own pressure.

Artificial waters: includes dams, in-stream impoundments and bores constructed by earthworks or other methods, or by drilling, but does not include tanks or containers of water.

Decommission: return the site to its former state. This can be achieved by ceasing maintenance and allowing natural processes to rehabilitate the site, or physically breaching and removing a dam, or plugging a bore and restoring the site. The method used will depend upon factors such as the assessed impact on biodiversity, and site and climatic conditions.

Policy statement

National park (scientific)

Artificial waters may be constructed, managed and maintained on a national park (scientific) solely to achieve the purpose for which the area was declared, such as maintaining a species of plant or animal classified as

endangered or vulnerable. The extent of such artificial waters will be kept to an absolute minimum, and to the extent possible, complementary infrastructure should be built to exclude access to the water by non-target species.

QPWS will decommission all other existing artificial waters on national park (scientific) by December 2010.

Any works on artificial waters that have been identified as having significant cultural heritage value will be carried out in a manner consistent with protecting that value.

National park

No new construction (including earthworks), that will create artificial surface waters will be allowed on a national park, except for small, shallow, in-stream impoundments required to harvest water into a reticulated system for visitor drinking water, staff domestic purposes or to fight fires, and there is no practical alternative to provide such water. The extent of such artificial waters will be kept to an absolute minimum.

No new bore drilling works will be allowed on a national park, except for the purpose of harvesting groundwater into a reticulated system for visitor drinking water, staff domestic purposes or to fight fires, and there is no practical alternative to provide such water. The extent of such artificial waters will be kept to an absolute minimum and such water should not be allowed to pond as surface water. **Note:** In exceptional circumstances, where there is a demonstrated public interest, there is no reasonably practical alternative and the facility is assessed as ecologically sustainable, a regulation may be made and a Section 35 approval may be granted to allow a bore to be established in a national park as a service facility to supply town water.

QPWS will decommission all existing artificial waters on national parks, except for those directly required for visitor drinking water, staff domestic purposes or fire fighting and there is no reasonably practical alternative to provide such water. The extent of such retained artificial waters will be kept to an absolute minimum, and to the extent possible, complementary infrastructure should be built to exclude access to the water by native and non-native animals.

Except in situations indicated above, no maintenance works will be carried out on artificial waters in national parks.

Any works on artificial waters that have been identified as having significant cultural heritage value will be carried out in a manner consistent with protecting that value.

Other tenures

Artificial waters on all other land tenures managed by QPWS will be kept to an absolute minimum and the requirement to retain them will be periodically reviewed by local managers as part of routine operational planning.

Any works on artificial waters that have been identified as having significant cultural heritage value will be carried out in a manner consistent with protecting that value.

All bores on QPWS managed lands must be permanently piped and capped. Existing bores that do not meet this requirement must do so by December 2010 (see *Other Matters To Consider* below).

Artificial waters owned by QPWS

The extent of any artificial waters owned by QPWS will be kept to an absolute minimum, and to the extent possible, complementary infrastructure should be built to exclude access to the water by native and non-native animals.

QPWS will not construct any new surface water storages or impoundments, or install piped and capped bores unless there is an essential management requirement.

QPWS District staff will review the justification for retaining all existing artificial waters as part of routine asset management and operational planning procedures. The review outcomes and the scheduling of any decommissioning work will be incorporated into the QPWS Strategic Asset Management System (SAMS).

Any works on artificial waters that have been identified as having significant cultural heritage value will be carried out in a manner consistent with protecting that value.

For newly acquired areas, a review of the justification to retain any inherited artificial waters must be conducted within three years of acquisition.

Artificial waters owned/managed by authority holders

Proposals for new artificial waters

Holders of leases, permits or other authorities must obtain written approval from QPWS prior to building any water storage or water harvesting facility on the QPWS estate. As indicated above, approval will not be given for a location within a national park.

Any such application for approval will be assessed in relation to its demonstrated need, the environmental or cultural heritage impact it will have on the area, and the required management and maintenance regime. The extent of any such artificial waters must be kept to an absolute minimum and there must be no reasonably practical alternative to provide such water. The requirements of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the *Water Act 2000* must also be considered before approval is given.

Where approval is given, the following conditions will apply:

- no construction in water courses as defined in the *Water Act 2000*;
- no compensation will be payable for any works undertaken to construct or maintain artificial waters and/or associated reticulation infrastructure, either during or at the expiry or termination of the authority (other than where compulsory acquisition is involved);
- prior approval of the precise location and specification of the works to establish and maintain the facility must be obtained from the relevant QPWS District Manager;
- adequate design and construction standards, as specified by Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NR&M) (Farm Dam Construction Standards), must be implemented; and mandatory fencing and offset watering points must be installed; and
- arrangements for decommissioning artificial waters upon surrender or expiry of the lease, permit or other authority will be prescribed, as appropriate to the circumstances.

Existing artificial waters

Holders of leases, permits or other authorities must manage and maintain existing approved artificial waters in accordance with the conditions of their lease permit or other authority. All bores are to be permanently capped and piped as soon as practicable.

The justification and conditions of approval for existing artificial waters will be reviewed by QPWS as part of the process of renewing any lease, licence or other authority. The extent of any such artificial waters must be kept to an absolute minimum and there must be no reasonably practical alternative for the provision of such water.

If an authority is relinquished, QPWS will conduct a review of the justification to retain any inherited artificial waters. The review outcomes and the scheduling of any decommissioning work will be incorporated into the QPWS Strategic Asset Management System (SAMS). Artificial waters will only be retained where there is an essential continuing management requirement and their retention is consistent with all the above criteria.

Any works on artificial waters that have been identified as having significant cultural heritage value will be carried out in a manner consistent with protecting that value.

Other matters to consider

The existence or otherwise of native title and the potential impact on native title of any works must be considered. Notification and other relevant requirements of the *Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth)* must be adhered to prior to any works being undertaken or approved.

QPWS will ensure:

- that all bores on its lands are permanently capped and piped, and will be authorised under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* by a development permit or will comply with a self-assessed code; and
- that all bore installation or decommissioning on the estate will be undertaken by a water bore driller licensed under the *Water Act 2000*.

Within the Great Artesian Basin, the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) can assist with funding the rectification of flowing bores. GABSI provides funding for approved projects that focus on bore rehabilitation and replacing bore drains with piped reticulated systems. GABSI contributes 80 percent of the total cost of bore rehabilitation and 60 percent of the piping cost. For more information contact the local office of NR&M or check the website: www.nrm.qld.gov.au/factsheets.

Primary legislation

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Forestry Act 1959

Water Act 2000

Disclaimer

While this document has been prepared with care, it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Environmental Protection Agency should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

Approved By

Alan Feely

Signature

18/07/2005

Date

Executive Director, Parks