

Recreation Management Plan

Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams

April 2014

It's your water! Have your say...



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Overview

Healthy communities. Prosperous region. This is Seqwater's vision and is intrinsic to our operations. Seqwater is responsible for ensuring a safe, secure and reliable water supply for almost three million people across South East Queensland. We are unique in South East Queensland in that our catchments are more open from both a recreational and broader land use perspective. In developing the recreation management plans for our water storages we need to consider, foremost, that this water is the source for all our drinking water.

Seqwater recognises the importance of recreation to the community and encourages the responsible enjoyment of our natural areas. In June 2013, Seqwater began the most extensive review of recreational activities and facilities at South East Queensland dams and catchments ever undertaken.

Our Objective: Manage access to recreation opportunities while protecting natural resources and water quality.

The challenge that faces Seqwater is how to manage our core role of providing drinking water to a growing population, while satisfying growing community demands and expectations for access to lakes and catchment lands. Achieving our objective requires a risk based approach to the management of recreation, and the cooperation and support from the community.

Our promise to the community at the outset of the Recreation Review was to listen and learn about the recreational opportunities in and around the lakes, and within our constraints, deliver a management plan based on this feedback.

The response by the community and stakeholders to the Review has been outstanding. Special thanks are extended to the many people who provided input and participated in the surveys and workshops that helped us shape the new plans.



The Value of Our Natural Areas

Seqwater currently provide more than 50 per cent of the region's green space (excluding areas of conservation), with our recreation assets attracting around two million visitors each year.

Natural Value

Seqwater owns or manages approximately 60,000 hectares of land across South East Queensland. These assets not only supply water to a growing region, but also encompass some of the most scenic and picturesque sites in the region.

The natural areas around our lakes are home to an abundance of native wildlife, including providing important habitat for koalas that are listed as a vulnerable species.

Cultural Value

Seqwater catchments encompass landscapes and places of great importance to Aboriginal communities in South East Queensland. Seqwater is committed to managing those places sensitively and in partnership with those communities.

Social Value

Seqwater sites provide a range of social benefits, including recreation, tourism, education and social interaction between groups, families and others. They also support community wellbeing and provide opportunities for improving general health through outdoor recreation.

Economic Value

Seqwater sites are being increasingly recognised for their potential to encourage economic activity in regional areas. Expenditure by people visiting Seqwater lakes encourages local economic activity and generates local employment.

Seqwater commissioned external advice on the *Economic Value of Recreation Undertaken on Seqwater's Land*. A travel cost study supported by an independent survey of dam visitors was undertaken in June 2013 to understand the value visitors place on recreation. In summary the study found:

- Queensland households place a significant value on visits to Seqwater lakes. On average, an adult visitor to a Seqwater lake values the experience at around \$60 per trip. This translates to a total intrinsic value of recreation of over **\$150 million per annum**.
- A high proportion of people stop at regional towns on the way to and from Seqwater sites providing significant benefits to local businesses.
- Almost 80% of respondents said they visited as part of a group
- 40% of respondents who visited Seqwater sites are in the 55+ age bracket
- The top 3 main reasons for visiting an Seqwater site were

- Relaxing with families and friends
- Enjoying the natural environment
- Picnicking

Both the feedback from the community, and the results of the independent review, has highlighted that visiting our lakes and recreation areas is a highly valued experience. The majority of people that come want to enjoy the environment and natural areas. This aligns well with our objective regarding recreation management – *To manage access to recreation opportunities while protecting natural resources and water quality.*

Recreation also provides an opportunity to educate people regarding the importance of maintaining healthy catchments to protect our source water.

Scope

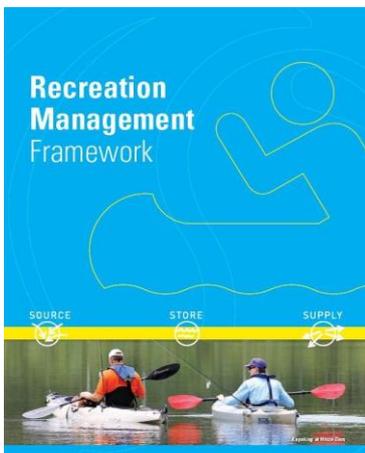
This recreation management plan encompasses all land based and water based recreation undertaken on Seqwater owned or controlled sites at Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams, unless specifically addressed through legislation or other access arrangements including permits, licences or leases.

Poona Dam is considered to be an operational area of the Image Flat water treatment plant and as such has been excluded from the recreation review process.

Management Approach

Seqwater's Recreation Management Framework recognises recreation in natural areas as a legitimate use, however not all activities can be provided at every site, nor is it desirable to do so. The purpose of the Recreation Management Framework is to inform policy and guide decision making regarding recreational use of Seqwater sites.

The Recreation Management Framework has seven key principles:



- Minimise risks to water quality
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Diversity in the range of recreation activities, locations and settings
- Ensure all use is consistent with Seqwater's land management practices
- Facilitate sustainable recreation
- Engage with external regulating agencies
- Meet financial management outcomes

A key management principle in the Framework is *Diversity*. This principle recognises the importance of ensuring that there is a range of recreational experiences catered for so that recreation spaces meet the needs of the wider community. The fact that Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams are closely located to one another provides an ideal opportunity to embrace and enhance the diversity of recreational settings and experiences in the region thereby maximizing the benefits to both the users and the local community.

Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams are located in a region that already has a variety of recreational opportunities provided by the local Council and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Demand for greater access must be weighed against the primary role of these assets. Water from each of these lakes is used for drinking supply.

There is no recreational access to Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams for members of the public in boats or paddlecraft.

The Seqwater land around Cooloolabin Dam and Wappa Dam adjoins the Mapleton National Park and Mapleton Conservation Park respectively. There are linkages of trails across Seqwater land, National Park and roads in the area.

Recognising the range of other agencies, community groups and individuals who have an interest in the management and use of Cooloolabin and Wappa Dams, Seqwater will continue to work collaboratively with these groups to achieve sustainable recreational use and deliver on the changes to access and facilities highlighted through the consultation process for the Recreation Review.

Seqwater will continue to consult with the community and relevant stakeholders to address significant emerging issues for recreation and any new management arrangements.

Funding

Seqwater's primary focus is to *"deliver safe, secure, resilient and reliable water supplies at least cost to its customers"*. While we recognise that recreation is an important element of the services we provide to the community, the provision of extensive recreation facilities and services is not something we are explicitly funded for. Seqwater's *Statement of Obligations* requires us, amongst other things, to *"review opportunities for recreation including strategies to recover costs from users and/or beneficiaries where appropriate"*. This will be an ongoing consideration in regard to the management and delivery of recreational facilities.

Funding for Recreation Review Outcomes

The timing of the implementation of the changes highlighted in the recreation review will largely be dependent on when funding can be secured. Seqwater is currently working in partnership with other agencies, including Queensland Department of National Parks, Sport, Recreation, and Racing and Sunshine Coast Council, to secure funding and develop an implementation plan for the delivery of the recreation review outcomes.

The implementation plan as well as regular updates on the progress of these initiatives will be forwarded to everyone who registered interest for these lakes online, key stakeholders, as well as updates on our website.

Commercial Undertakings

Seqwater recognises that the use of its sites for commercial undertakings contributes to the economic activity in regional areas.

While our primary objective in the management of recreation is to manage access to recreation opportunities for the **public**, we recognise that commercial operators can play a role in

supporting visitor needs and increasing the public's enjoyment and appreciation of our natural areas.

Seqwater has developed a *Commercial Activities Policy* which outlines the process and requirements for any commercial use of sites. Where sites are used either temporarily or more permanently for commercial purposes, a commercial fee will be applied.

Further information can be found on the Seqwater website at www.seqwater.com.au

Recreation Management

Conditions of Access and Use

The *Seqwater Rules* outline the conditions of access and use by all visitors to Seqwater sites. These are referenced on the on-site signage. A full copy of the rules can be found on the website www.seqwater.com.au.

The primary purpose of the *Seqwater Rules* is to ensure the safety of visitors and to protect the environment and infrastructure provided so that the areas are safe for all to enjoy. All visitors are asked to comply with these rules.

Public Notices

Seqwater endeavours to ensure that visitors are well informed about any issues at sites that may impact the visitor's experience. A number of methods are used to keep everyone informed including:

- Seqwater Website
- Facebook
- Direct stakeholder email notifications
- On-site signage

Seqwater recommends that all visitors check the Seqwater website or facebook page before visiting any sites.

Enforcement

Seqwater actively enforces the use and activities on its sites. Enforcement activities are primarily aimed at visitor education and voluntary compliance to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all users.

Seqwater also partners with key enforcement agencies such as Queensland Police and coordinates the management and enforcement activities across all sites.

Feedback through the Recreation Review has highlighted how important appropriate enforcement is to visitors. As a result Seqwater will be reviewing its resourcing, its enforcement

powers and the partnering opportunities that may exist to improve enforcement across all of its sites.

Recreation Infrastructure

Visitors expect a range of settings, experiences and facilities reflecting wide-ranging outdoor interests and cultural diversity.

Any new facilities and amenities should be in harmony with existing settings and should not impact water quality or the environmental values of the area. They need to respect the cultural values, be functional and address visitor needs. Where practical Seqwater will utilise recyclable and/or renewable materials and adhere to energy and water efficiency guidelines.

Seqwater will endeavour to provide adequate, well maintained recreational infrastructure within its budgetary constraints.

Education

There are a variety of opportunities to encourage the uptake of best practices by recreational users and for them to be active stewards for Seqwater lakes and catchments. Seqwater will make available and promote ways for the community and recreational users to contribute to the ongoing protection of our natural areas and drinking water catchments, and thereby ensure sustainable recreation.

All efforts will be made to ensure that visitors are better informed of the opportunities at each Seqwater recreation site, and that the information provided enhances visitor experiences, understanding and appreciation.

Safety

Seqwater's dams and lakes are part of natural systems and have naturally occurring characteristics that visitors need to be mindful of when recreating. These characteristics change regularly and include changing bacteria levels and hazards above and below water. This is a very normal and an expected occurrence in any natural system. Visitors are encouraged to comply with all on site signage, check the website for updates/changes to conditions, and take care when recreating.

Summary of Feedback and Outcomes

Consultation Feedback

The following provides a summary of all the issues raised throughout the consultation process identifying the common themes across all the data collected throughout the consultation period.

Cooloolabin Dam

Key findings:

- There is a demand for a swimming area.
- There is support for picnic facilities to be upgraded.
- Introducing non-motorised watercraft to the lake is highly supported.
- Respondents expressed disinterest regarding fishing.
- There is satisfaction with the trails however feedback has indicated signage and maintenance could be improved.
- There is support to change the opening hours to reflect seasonal daylight hours.
- Marginal majority support for allowing dogs on leash.
- Site access needs to be controlled.
- Respondents divided on the issue of camping at the dam.

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
Swimming	Majority in support for the establishment of a swimming area. Those against consider the lake not suitable or safe.	Swimming will not be permitted due to concerns relating to water quality.
Picnicking	Strong support for upgrade of the picnic area.	Upgrade works to be scheduled when funding available.
Playgrounds	Limited demand for facilities.	Upgrade works to be scheduled when funding available.
Camping	Less than 40% support the introduction of a camping area.	Nil required
Motorised Watercraft		The option of motorised watercraft on Cooloolabin Dam was not open for consideration. Motorised watercraft will not be permitted on Cooloolabin Dam.
Non-motorised Watercraft	Strong support for allowing non-motorised watercraft on the dam. Some commentary around the disruption to wildlife habitats should non-motorised boats be permitted.	Access for non-motorised craft will not be permitted due to concerns relating to water quality and the potential spread of Cabomba weed.

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
Fishing	<p>Respondents were divided over allowing fishing.</p> <p>Some commentary around ensuring the fishing is sustainable.</p> <p>Those against allowing fishing noted the affects on the wildlife and the environment.</p>	<p>Cooloolabin Dam is not currently stocked with fish.</p> <p>Seqwater would support an application from a fish stocking group.</p> <p>Shoreline fishing continues to be permitted in accordance with relevant fishing regulations.</p>
Trails	<p>There is satisfaction with existing trails.</p> <p>Feedback also included the possibility of new trails, including a full loop trail around the lake.</p>	<p>Seqwater will continue to work in conjunction with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to improve the entire trail network.</p> <p>A full loop trail cannot be provided as Seqwater does not own all the land around the lake.</p>
Dogs	<p>Feedback divided.</p> <p>Significant commentary around the need for dogs to be on leash and for owners to clean up after their dogs.</p> <p>Strong commentary regarding the negative effects on flora and fauna.</p>	<p>The areas around Cooloolabin Dam are home to an abundance of native wildlife. This area provides an important wildlife corridor to the Mapleton National Park and Mapleton Conservation Park. It is imperative Seqwater takes measures to protect these animals and their habitat. Domestic pets and other animals cannot be brought into recreation areas or catchment areas at Cooloolabin Dam.</p>
Site Access	<p>68% would like to see access improved.</p> <p>Commentary centred on restricting after hours access and improving directional signage at the site</p>	<p>Site access to be limited to standard operating hours by the installation of a lockable gate at the entrance to the recreation area.</p> <p>Additional signage to be installed.</p>
Opening Hours	<p>Majority in support for a change in the opening hours to match seasonal influences.</p>	<p>Decisions on opening hours will be made after the completion of the recreation review in October 2014.</p>
Environment	<p>Agreement that areas of environmental significance exist.</p> <p>Some commentary around the wildlife habitats in the area, particularly birdlife.</p>	<p>Seqwater is committed to protecting environmentally sensitive areas, including the management of animal and plant pests.</p>
Other	<p>Details of illegal activity happening onsite including fires, vandalism, graffiti and littering.</p>	<p>Seqwater will continue to monitor the site and liaise with the Queensland Police Service.</p>

Wappa Dam

Key findings:

- Respondents were divided over permitting swimming.
- There is support for the picnic area to be upgraded.
- Introducing non-motorised watercraft to the lake is supported, however there is a contingent that disagree.
- There is strong opposition to the introduction of camping in the area.
- Majority do not support the introduction of fishing.
- There is overall satisfaction with the trails.
- There is support to change the opening hours to reflect seasonal daylight hours.
- Some support for allowing dogs on leash.

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
Swimming	Respondents were divided regarding swimming.	Swimming will not be permitted due to concerns relating to water quality.
Picnicking	General support for the upgrade of the existing picnic area.	Upgrade works to be scheduled when funding available.
Playgrounds	Some support for upgrade of the playground area.	Upgrade works to be scheduled when funding available.
Camping	Strong disagreement with allowing camping in the area.	Nil required
Motorised Watercraft	Strong disagreement with allowing on water access for motorised craft.	Motorised watercraft will not be permitted on Wappa Dam.
Non-motorised Watercraft	Respondents were divided on allowing non-motorised watercraft on the lake.	Non-motorised watercraft will not be permitted on Wappa Dam.
	Disagreement with the introduction of a SEQ wide boating permit scheme.	Decision on a boating permit scheme will be made after the completion of the recreation review in October 2014.
Fishing	Respondents were divided regarding fishing. Those against allowing fishing noted the affects on the wildlife and the environment.	Nil required
Trails	The majority are satisfied with the trails. Feedback also included requests for new trails, particularly for mountain biking.	Seqwater will continue to work in conjunction with Queensland Parks and Wildlife on the entire trail network for the area. Seqwater does not own all the land around the lake.
Dogs	Respondents were divided on allowing dogs, with comments centred on the affects of the fauna	The areas around Wappa Dam are home to an abundance of native wildlife. This area provides an important wildlife corridor to the

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
	and flora.	Mapleton Conservation Park. It is imperative Seqwater takes measures to protect these animals and their habitat. Domestic pets and other animals cannot be brought into recreation areas or catchment areas at Wappa Dam.
Site Access	The majority are satisfied with site access.	Nil required.
Opening Hours	Majority in support for a change in the opening hours to match seasonal influences.	Decisions on opening hours will be made after the completion of the recreation review in October 2014.
Environment	Strong agreement that areas of environmental significance exist. Some commentary around the wildlife habitats in the area, particularly birdlife, and the need to protect and restore the pump house.	Seqwater is committed to protecting environmentally sensitive areas, including the management of animal and plant pests.
Other	Details of illegal activity happening onsite including vandalism, graffiti and littering.	Seqwater will continue to monitor the site and liaise with the Queensland Police Service.

Recreation Review Outcomes

Based on the feedback received, priorities for changes to recreational activities and access have been identified at each lake as follows:

Cooloolabin Dam

Outcome	Action
Upgrade picnic and playground facilities. <i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. Works to be scheduled when funding available.</i>	Implement cosmetic changes to picnic and playground area.

Outcome	Action
Improve onsite security. <i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. Works to be scheduled when funding available.</i>	Lockable access gate to be installed.

Outcome	Action
Improve directional signage. <i>Signage installed early April 2014.</i>	Install signage on access road.

Outcome	Action
Improve trail signage <i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. Works to be scheduled when funding available.</i>	Review current trail signage and implement improvements as required.

Wappa Dam

Outcome	Action
Upgrade picnic facilities. <i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. Works to be scheduled when funding available.</i>	Landscaping work to be undertaken to improve the amenity of the entrance to the recreation area.

Outcome	Action
Upgrade playground facilities. <i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. Works to be scheduled when funding available.</i>	Review current facilities and improve as required.

In addition to website notices, Seqwater will provide regular updates on the progress of these initiatives to key stakeholders and to people who registered interest in these lakes via the Recreation Review website.