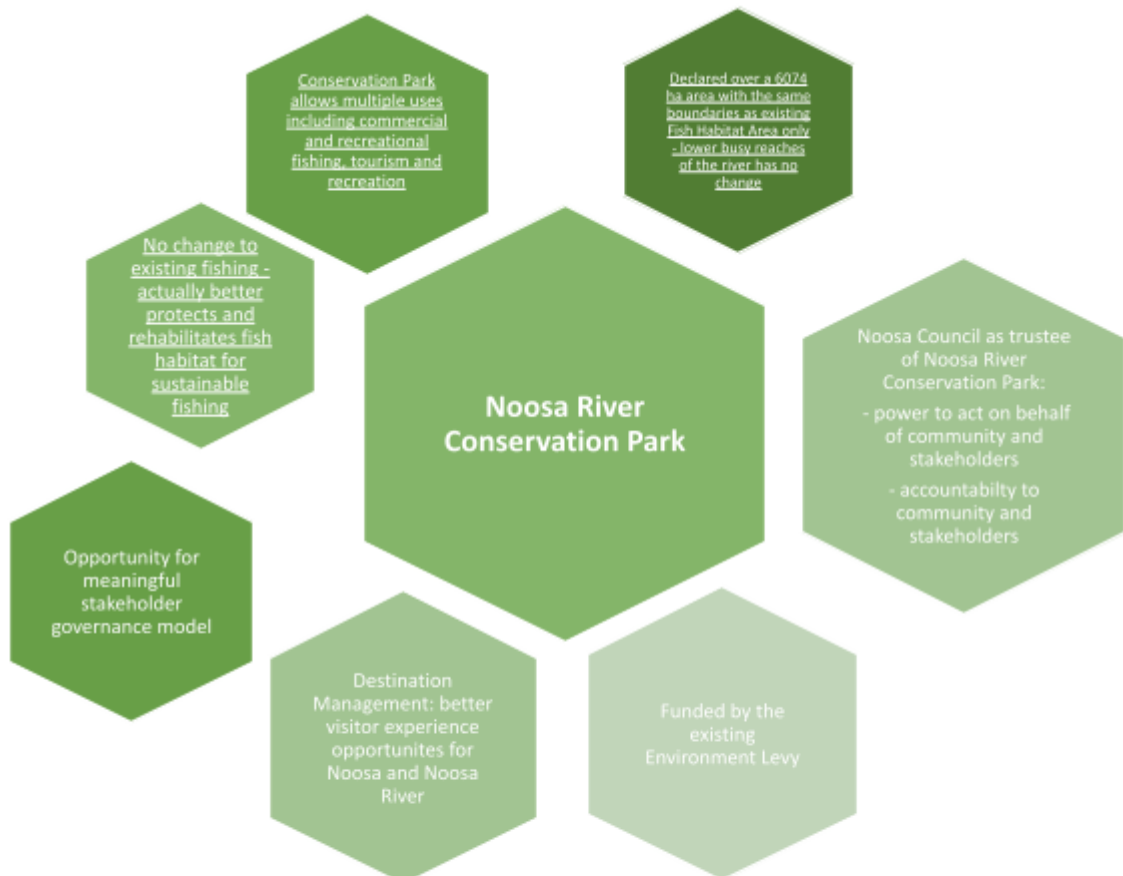


Discussion Paper

Noosa River and Lakes Conservation Park

Contents:

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1.0 What is a Conservation Park?:

The Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992* allows the establishment of Conservation Parks that have multiple uses including recreation and fishing. A Conservation Park is different to a National Park. For example, a Conservation Park can allow commercial activities including fishing whereas this can rarely occur in a National Park. The Act states as follows:

21 Management principles of conservation parks

(1) A conservation park is to be managed to—

- (a) conserve and present the areas cultural and natural resources and their values; and*
- (b) provide for the permanent conservation of the areas natural condition to the greatest possible extent; and*
- (c) provide opportunities for educational and recreational activities in a way consistent with the areas natural and cultural resources and values; and*
- (d) ensure that any commercial use of the areas natural resources, including fishing and grazing, is ecologically sustainable.*

2.0 Examples of multi-use Conservation Parks in Queensland

The **Daisy Hill Conservation Park** is in the southern suburbs of Brisbane, this park protects significant habitat for koalas and other wildlife, while providing visitors with a variety of recreational activities to enjoy. With an extensive network of shared trails, visitors can spin the wheels of their mountain bike, ride on horseback or stretch their legs with a bushwalk, have a barbecue or picnic in the day-use area or trail hub and see live koalas up close with a free visit to the Daisy Hill Koala Centre. Creation of the park was Queensland's first coordinated conservation area—the Koala Bushland Coordinated Conservation Area (KBCCA). Born from a common concern to protect the areas natural values, the Queensland Government, Logan City Council and Redland City Council forged a long-term conservation agreement in 1996, creating the KBCCA. The conservation area links Daisy Hill Conservation Park, Venman Bushland National Park and local council areas (Neville Lawrie Reserve, Don and Christine Burnett Conservation Area and Ford Road Conservation Area) to provide a combined area of over 1500ha of natural bushland. This area protects one of the most intact natural koala habitats between Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

The **Lark Quarry Conservation Park** is 110km south-west of Winton and contains ancient mesas, gullies and broken escarpments to the world's only known dinosaur stampede site. The park is jointly managed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Winton Shire Council with the Queensland Museum providing scientific advice on ways to protect the trackways. Lark Quarry is a significant visitor destination for the region.

The **Lake Broadwater Conservation Park** is 30km south-west of Dalby. Lake Broadwater is the only large, naturally occurring freshwater lake on the Darling Downs and is an important refuge for waterbirds and other wildlife. The lake is popular for picnicking, walking and birdwatching at any time of year; as well as power-boating, skiing, canoeing and swimming.

The **Parklands Conservation Park** is 4km north of Nambour and consists of open eucalypt forest, rainforest gullies and gorges providing valuable wildlife habitat. Walkers, runners, horse riders and

mountain-bike riders can explore the park on 15km of shared trails. Another 13 trails are provided specifically for mountain-bike riders.

3.0 Why Noosa River?

Noosa River and its lakes and creeks are a magnificent water way system with remarkable biodiversity values that also underpin the Noosa economy and lifestyle including tourism, commercial and recreational fishing as well as a wide variety of water-based recreational activities.

In the Noosa River and its lakes and creeks, 6,074 ha is already declared Fish Habitat Area (see **Figure A**). The same boundaries that define the Fish Habitat Area would form appropriate boundaries for a Conservation Park managed for multiple purposes including conservation, commercial and recreational fishing, and recreation generally.

Areas of the Noosa River not covered by the Fish Habitat Area, including the busy lower reaches, Noosaville Foreshore, Canal Estates and private Noosa North Shore waterfrontages, would not be in the Conservation Park.

It could be combined with existing Conservation Parks established on the banks of the river such as Noosa Conservation Park, Weyba Creek Conservation Park, Keyser Island Conservation Park, Sheep Island Conservation Park, and Goat Island Conservation Park.

4.0 Would a Conservation Park impact commercial and recreational fishing?

The Conservation Park would allow commercial and recreational fishing to continue, sustainably managed under the *Fisheries Act 1994* by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, as per current practice.

The declaration of the Conservation Park as outlined above would enable better protection and restoration of fish habitat such as sea grass beds, providing better opportunities for fish breeding.

5.0 Why Noosa Council as Trustee?

The *Nature Conservation Act* provides for other entities, such as a local government, to be trustees of Conservation Parks. The examples provided above at **Daisy Hill Conservation Park** and **Lark Quarry Conservation Park** are managed jointly with the local councils.

Currently the Noosa River is managed under a plethora of state legislation and controls resulting in management outcomes that fall well below Noosa community expectations. Noosa Council currently has very little formal authority to manage or co-manage issues of concern to the Noosa community on the Noosa River and is facing increasing criticism that it is not doing enough to manage the Noosa River.

With state agencies based in other locations such as Brisbane their presence on the river to implement controls can also be ineffective.

Appointment of Noosa Council as trustee of a **Conservation Park** with a boundary the same as the Noosa River Fish Habitat Areas would provide the community and stakeholders with better clarity on who is responsible for managing issues within the Conservation Park.

As outlined above, commercial and recreational fishing management in the Fish Habitat Area would still continue to be managed by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries under the *Fisheries Act 1994*, as they are the appropriate authority.

The declaration would also provide Council with a delegated capability from Queensland Department of Environment and Science to manage the Noosa River and Lakes Conservation Park as its trustee, giving Noosa Council a meaningful delegated capability at a state legislation level. This would provide greater equity in relationships with other state agencies and leverage greater co-operation for day-to-day management.

6.0 How could Noosa Council manage the Conservation Park?

Having gained a delegated capability giving it equal status as the other agencies with authority over aspects of the Noosa River, Council could also prepare a Management Plan for the Conservation Park, in consultation with government, industry and community stakeholders that clarifies outcomes, uses and relationships.

The Noosa River Conservation Park Management Plan could include provisions addressing:

- Better education and interpretation for all river users
- Improved management of riverbanks particularly from erosion and unlawful activities
- Improved protection of restoration areas such as seagrass beds
- In partnership with Maritime Safety Queensland, improved management of vessels including anchoring mooring and abandoned vessels.

Noosa Council could use funding through the established Environment Levy to manage the Conservation Park. This management approach is already used for conservation land acquired by Council and funded by the Environment Levy.

7.0 Other benefits

Other benefits include:

- Opportunity to consider a stakeholder and government agency river governance model, that critically and meaningfully informs Noosa Council in its management of the Conservation Park.
- Opportunity to market the Noosa River as an integrated destination consistent with the broader natural Noosa experience, and co-ordinate Noosa River experiences for residents and visitors. It would reinforce Noosa's brand and reputation as a world class natural destination.
- Opportunity to strengthen Noosa Council's ability to win a greater share of Commonwealth Government grants available for marine research-based restoration.

- Opportunity to move closer to realising the Noosa Council Environment Strategy target of 50% of the shire in secure conservation tenure. The recent declaration of the West Cooroy National Park saw the area increase of 1150Ha from 35534Ha to 36684Ha and increase the percentage of land in secure conservation status from 40.8% to 42.2%. The additional 6074 Ha would increase the percentage to 49.1%. This benchmarks against the balance of Queensland, where only 8% of the state is in secure conservation tenure.
- Opportunity to create a continuous Noosa Shire protected area estate under the Queensland Conservation Act consisting of Noosa National Park, Tewantin National Park, the Cooloola Section of the Great Sandy National Park, and a Noosa River Conservation Park.
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8.0 Next steps

Noosa Council has invited public comment on its draft Noosa River Plan, with submissions closing at C.O.B. on 5th October 2023. After considering public submissions, Noosa Council will be voting on a final version of its Noosa River Plan on 23 October 2023.

Noosa Parks Association will be basing its submission on this discussion paper.

Noosa Parks Association is placing this discussion paper on the public record in the hope it will assist community members to make their own submissions.

NOOSA RIVER CONSERVATION PARK DISCUSSION PAPER

Noosa Parks Association 23 Sept 2023

Figure A: Areas of the Noosa River in Fish Habitat Area proposed for Noosa River Conservation Park (in yellow)

