

12. Conservation And Recreation

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Parks and Forest Reserves

The study area contains a number of National and State Parks, along with various other parks and reserves, each with unique features catering for a variety of recreational activities. The most popular parks that lie either fully or partly within the study area are Fraser National Park, Kinglake National Park, Cathedral Range State Park and Eildon State Park. These four parks occur in the south-east amongst larger tracts of mountainous state forest with their popularity due, in part, to their close proximity to Melbourne.

A list of the larger blocks of reserved public land and principal land used is given in table 12.1.

Table 12.1 A listing of the major public land areas that occur in the survey area

Classification	Approx. area	Principal land use
National Parks		
Fraser	38 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Kinglake (approx. 40%)	43 km ²	Conservation and recreation
State Parks		
Eildon	245 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Lake Mountain	25 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Cathedral Range	34 km ²	Conservation and recreation
State Forests		
Tallarook	49 km ²	Hardwood production
Mount Disappointment	232 km ²	Hardwood production
Murrindindi	437 km ²	Hardwood production and Unspecified use areas
Toolangi		
Black Range		
Marysville	267 km ²	Hardwood production
Rubicon	225 km ²	Hardwood production
Strathbogie Ranges	48 km ²	Hardwood production
Regional Parks		
Wandong	7 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Yea River	3 km ²	Conservation and recreation
State Reserves (Scenic)		
Murrindindi	8 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Steavensons Falls	2 km ²	Conservation and recreation
The Paps	2 km ²	Conservation and recreation
Commonwealth land		
Puckapunyal (approx. 20%)	46 km ²	Defence
Others		
Existing and proposed Softwood plantations	90 km ²	Softwood production
Various small forest areas	60 km ²	Various
Flora and Fauna reserves	19 km ²	Flora and fauna conservation
Educational areas	4 km ²	Education
Snobs Creek Reserve	2.5 km ²	Fish hatchery

In the north and west of the study area there are fewer large blocks of public land to attract the tourist, and so recreational pressure is concentrated on stream and river frontages. As a result of the limited public land and forest resources the towns in the area have tended towards industrial and commercial development rather than recreational pursuits.

By contrast the area around Marysville, for instance, is today promoted as 'Melbourne's Mountain Playground'. Development of tourist facilities and services in towns adjacent to large areas of forested public land has occurred in response to increased tourist numbers.

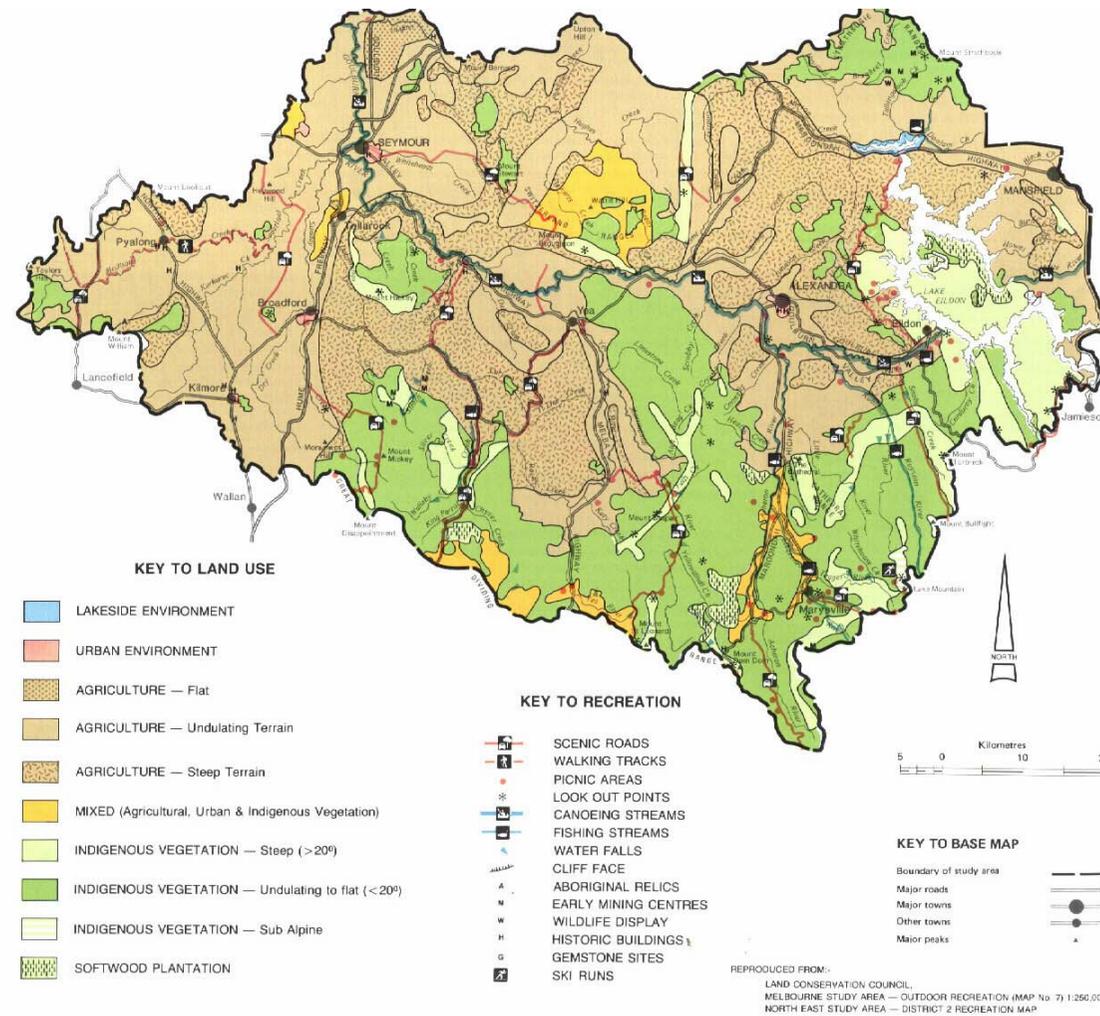


Figure 12.1 A map depicting the principle recreation and conservation areas within the study region cross-referenced to other associated land use.

Enterprising individuals taking advantage of the influx of visitors have established recreational attractions on private land, such as the many wineries, museums, craft shops and trout farms.

Events and facilities such as the Victorian Wine Show held in Seymour, the Mangalore Air Show, the A-1 Historic Gold Mine Settlement and the Snobs Creek Freshwater Fisheries Research Station and Hatchery are popular tourist attractions.

However, the attraction to the area for the majority of visitors is the diverse and scenically attractive landscape found within the parks and other reserves. (Plate 12.1, 12.2, Figure 12.1).



Plate 12.1 Forests of the study area contain numerous attractions, many of which are now found within parks and reserves.

Fraser National Park and Eildon State Park both abut the shores of Lake Eildon, and consequently offer both land-based and water-based recreation, including water skiing and fishing.

The Lake Mountain Alpine Reserve is extremely popular during the winter months for cross-country skiing as well as for scenic and botanic value.

The Steavensons Falls Scenic Reserve is an intensively used day visitor area, its key feature being the waterfalls which are floodlit at night.

The forested areas surrounding Marysville are popular for sightseeing and bushwalking and a network of walking tracks are maintained to encourage use of this area.

The majority of the public land is in catchments supplying water for industrial, domestic and irrigation use.



Plate 12.2 A view of the Goulburn River immediately below the Lake Eildon Reservoir. The river is a recreation resource that is extensively used for canoeing and fishing.

The environs of the Taggerty and Acheron Rivers and Keppel Falls are becoming increasingly popular with visitors and contain good examples of Myrtle Beech forest.

Lake Eildon and the Goulburn River are popular destinations for water-based recreational activities such as fishing, skiing and boating.

The black range State Forest, extending in a north-south direction from Alexandra to Narbethong is popular for car-rallying and horse-riding.

The Murrindindi Scenic Reserve and the Murrindindi valley are steep to mountainous with vegetation types ranging from drier, open forests to tall, closed moist forests. The areas include waterfalls and rock outcrops, and are particularly popular with bush campers.

The Mount Disappointment and Tallarook State Forests are two larger blocks of forest that occur in the water half of the study area. Their proximity to Melbourne make them popular areas for pleasure driving, picnicking, sightseeing, walking and orienteering.

Conservation on Public Land

Intensive or uncontrolled recreational use of land can lead to soil erosion, vegetation destruction, water pollution and fauna disturbance. Off-road recreation vehicles such as trail bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles can cause significant problems, particularly in fragile alpine environments where the major thrust of recreational vehicle control programs is aimed.

Recreational use often conflicts with conservation objectives, and a number of reserves within the study area are suffering from over use. In recent times there has been a large increase in the number of people using parks and forest areas for recreation.

Departmental patrols, both in National and State Park areas and State Forest areas, have increased in response to the rising recreational demands. Table 12.2 illustrates the increase in day visitors and camper nights at Fraser National Park from 1962/63 to 1984/85.

Table 12.2 Fraser National Park visitor statistics 1962/63 to 1984/85.

Year	Day visitors	Camper nights
1984/85	39,250	58,509
1983/84	39,006	43,446
1982/83	45,872	38,887
1981/82	58,087	69,797
1980/81	40,513	61,394
1979/80	46,289	63,644
1978/79	49,400	59,500
1977/78	41,500	50,300
1976/77	42,772	40,216
1975/76	58,356	43,281
1974/75	48,364	40,959
1973/74	43,301	38,441
1972/73	18,998	25,599
1971/72	30,710	29,217
1970/71	34,944	29,601
1969/70	25,742	20,130
1968/69	17,528	14,694
1967/68	11,637	9,300
1966/67	11,140	22,854
1965/66	10,088	13,344
1964/65	7,095	10,084
1963/64	6,632	7,485
1962/63	4,923	5,472

Sources – Annual reports, National Parks Service, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

The Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has a firm policy of public education when attempting to address the numerous problems and conflicts that exist between recreationists and the environment. Considerable effort and expenditure is directed towards public education through departmental patrols, ranger presence in the field, brochure and information sheet publication and media advertising, to name a few. (Figure 12.2).

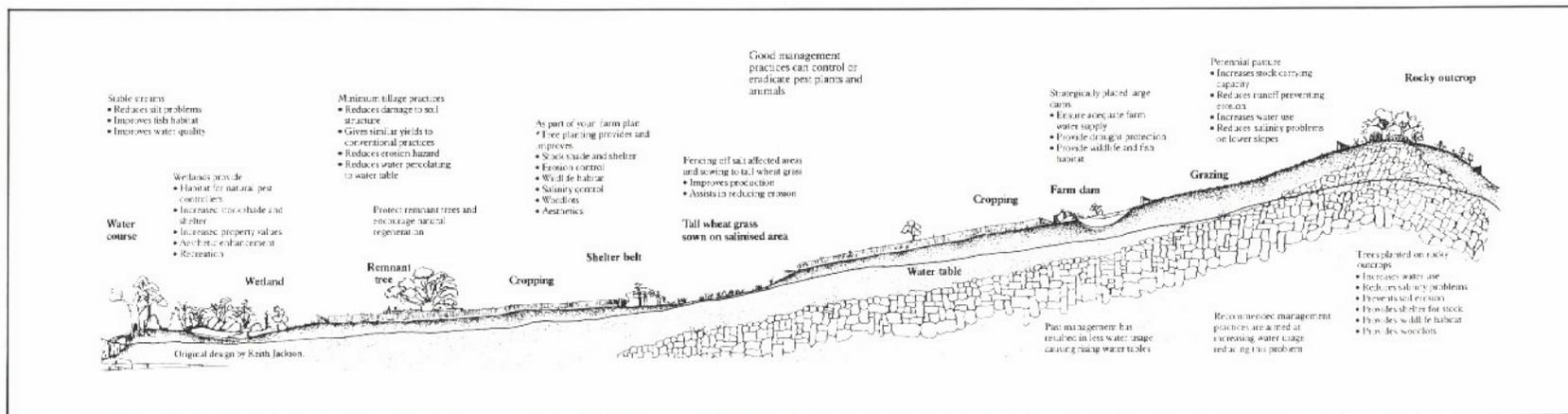


Figure 12.2 Good management integrates all aspects of land protection.

All efforts are directed towards the ultimate aim of reducing conflict between recreational activities and the conservation of natural resources on public land.

Conservation on private land

The conservation of natural resources on private freehold land is important. The major threats which exist are:

- (i) soil erosion
- (ii) dryland salinity
- (iii) pest plants and animals
- (iv) wildfire

Approximately 48% of the study area is affected by varying degrees of sheet and gully erosion, with control measures including using deep-rooted perennial grasses, treeplanting and earthworks. Currently, more emphasis is placed on preventative measures by providing advice for improved farm management. Control of erosion on agricultural and non-agricultural private land (as well as public land) is a priority aim of resource conservation.

The removal of the deep-rooted perennial vegetation by clearing has reduced evapotranspiration and allowed for ore rainwater to infiltrate the groundwaters. As a result groundwater tables since settlement have risen. The groundwaters are frequently saline, and where the groundwaters approach the surface, saline seeps occur, and land productivity drops. This process, known as salinisation has affected at least 400 hectares in the west of the study area, and is recognised as a potentially significant problem throughout the western portion of the Alexandra Region. Major efforts in other areas of Victoria to eliminate the threat of salinity has resulted in some success, but the problem still looms as a major environmental threat to soil and water resources.

Exotic plants and animals are common throughout the study area, directly influencing the ecology of natural systems and often competing with agricultural pursuits.

Many pests have the potential to successfully out-compete the native species with the possible outcome of reducing native species numbers. They therefore pose a significant threat to the conservation of desirable species and some, for example rabbits, significantly modify their environments, resulting in accelerated land degradation.

Rabbit numbers fluctuate depending on environmental conditions, the area around Seymour for instance has consistently been identified as one of the major infestations in Victoria.

Feral pigs appear to be an increasing problem throughout the forested areas in the south, and have the potential to spread exotic diseases such as foot and mouth disease.

Other faunal pests include foxes, cats, dogs, goats, wombats and various native and introduced bird species. These species generally do not create serious problems and any outbreak is localised.

Approximately 50 species of proclaimed noxious weeds have been recorded throughout the study area. The main pest plants are Blackberry, St. Johns Wort and Patersons Curse. All have the ability to successfully out-compete native vegetation, and on agricultural land have the potential to significantly reduce productivity.

Other important weeds include Artichoke Thistle, Cape Broom, Chinese Scrub, Furze, Stinkwort, Tutsan, Dodder, Perennial Ragweed and Boneseed.

In the past 30 years, there has been sporadic outbreaks of wood-boring and leaf-cutting insect populations throughout forests in the study area. Plagues of defoliating Phasmatids infested large areas of ash-type forests in the Marysville and Broadford area throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

Sirex Wood Wasp caused extensive damage to *Pinus radiata* plantations in the Lake Eildon district between 1972 and 1979. Generally, insect populations rarely escalate to levels where they are a threat to the conservation of resources, since a balance is usually attained before serious damage results.

Other insects that occasionally attain pest proportions in the study area are Lerps, Gum-leaf skeletonisers, bark beetles, locusts and European wasps. Only under certain environmental conditions do these insects attain plague proportions.

The responsibility for the conservation of the majority of natural resources rests with the Department of Conservation, Forest and Lands. Thus, Government policy and Departmental management must ensure that resource use is sustainable and that ecological processes and genetic diversity essential for the maintenance of resources are monitored and protected. Management must also strive to achieve a balance between people's demands on the land and resource conservation, for without this balance and its associated control measures, the resources of the study area are open to abuse.