

Recreation Management Plan

Lake Baroon and Ewen Maddock Dam

December 2013

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 their catchments. 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 contributes significantly to 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.

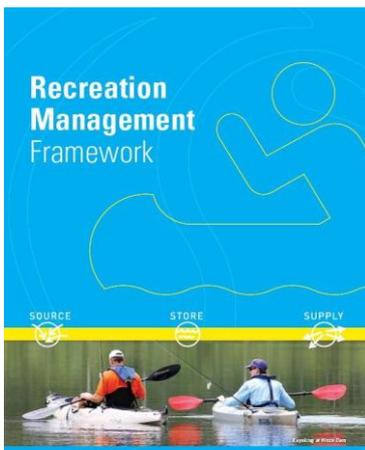
Scope

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

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. Lake Baroon and Ewen Maddock Dam are located in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. A large range of recreational experiences are available in the region, encompassing beaches, National Parks, rivers, creeks, council parks and facilities, along with these lakes.

Lake Baroon and Ewen Maddock Dam both cater for passive recreation activities such as fishing, paddling and trail based activities.

Feedback has clearly shown that overall, the community is happy with the current level of recreation activities provided, and does not want changes to permitted activities at these lakes. There were suggestions regarding improvements that could be made around access to the lakes, but major changes to these lakes were not supported.

Recognising the range of other agencies, community groups and individuals who have an interest in the management and use of Lake Baroon and Ewen Maddock Dam, 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 identified in the recreation review will largely be dependent on when funding can be secured. Some outcomes may be achieved with minimal expenditure, however it will be necessary for Seqwater to secure funding and develop an implementation plan for delivery of other recreation review outcomes. Seqwater will seek to work with Sunshine Coast Council in delivering some of the outcomes.

Updates on the progress of these initiatives will be available to stakeholders via 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 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 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.

Visitors should also remember that the lakes and catchments are operational assets and their use for recreational purposes cannot impact their primary purpose. The operational requirements of Seqwater's business **will always** override any recreational use.

Public Notices

Seqwater endeavours to ensure that visitors are well informed about any issues at sites that may impact the visitors' experiences. 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 Maritime Safety Queensland 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 wide 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 safe and 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.

Lake Baroon

Key findings:

- The existing picnic facilities and playgrounds are of a good standard and require little change.
- The community does not support the introduction of motorised watercraft.
- Feedback was divided on the possible introduction of a boating permit scheme for non-motorised watercraft.
- There is support to change the opening hours to reflect seasonal daylight hours.

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
Swimming	Almost half of respondents are satisfied with the current swimming area (49%).	Nil required
Picnicking	Majority satisfied with current facilities (83%).	Nil required
Playgrounds	Limited demand for additional facilities.	Nil required
Motorised Watercraft	Majority strongly disagree with opening Lake Baroon to motorised watercraft (77%). Commentary focused on concerns regarding the destruction of the amenity in the area.	Nil required
Non-Motorised Watercraft	Split response for the introduction of a boating permit scheme (45% disagreed, 35% agreed). Open the upper reaches and arms of Lake Baroon to paddlecraft.	Decisions on boating permit scheme will be made at the completion of the recreation review in 2014. Upper reaches and arms of Lake Baroon to be opened up to paddlecraft.
Fishing	Majority satisfied with current fishing access.	Nil required.
Trails	Majority satisfied with current	Seqwater to investigate the possibility of

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
	<p>trails.</p> <p>Some commentary around the need for new trails, particularly a loop trail around the lake.</p>	<p>extending the Martin Williams Walk by including sections of existing fire trail.</p> <p>Seqwater does not own suitable land for a loop trail around the lake. Land owned is predominately dense bushland with steep inclines.</p>
Dogs	<p>Opinions were divided. 46% believe dogs on leashes should be permitted, while 40% disagree.</p>	<p>The impact to the wildlife and the potential conflicts with other park users remains a concern for Seqwater, particularly given the visitation in peak periods. Given feedback is quite divided, no changes will be made.</p>
Site Access	<p>Whilst majority believed access to be sufficient, there is a small number who believe it could be improved.</p> <p>There was discussion amongst the group about a scenic lookout, however feedback was provided that the money could be better spent elsewhere.</p>	<p>Seqwater identified possible locations for a scenic lookout, however the costs involved with establishing the lookouts would be considerable.</p>
Opening Hours	<p>Strong support for a change in the opening hours to match seasonal influences (78%).</p>	<p>Decisions on opening hours will be made at the completion of the recreation review in 2014.</p>
Environment	<p>Majority believe there are areas of environment significance with comments including Mary River Cod habitat, cultural heritage at Obi Obi Creek and Maleny State Forest, home to koalas and wallabies, and natural areas with an abundance of flora and fauna.</p>	<p>Seqwater is committed to protecting environmentally sensitive areas.</p>

Ewen Maddock Dam

Key findings:

- The existing picnic facilities and playgrounds are of a good standard and require little change.
- There is support for wash down facilities to be installed at Maddock Park for paddlecraft and swimmers.
- Demand exists for camping in the area.
- Introducing a boating permit scheme for non-motorised watercraft is not supported.
- There is demand for improvement of signage on trails and for additional mountain bike trails.
- There is demand for improving and/or providing additional paddlecraft access points.

- There is support for continuation of allowing dogs on leash.
- There is support to change the opening hours to reflect seasonal daylight hours.

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
Swimming	<p>Majority were either satisfied (48%) or indifferent (40%) with regards to current facilities.</p> <p>Some commentary around allowing longer distance swimming for events such as triathlons.</p>	<p>Nil required</p> <p>Presence of the weed Cabomba limits the ability to provide a larger swimming area.</p>
Picnicking	<p>Majority satisfied with current facilities.</p>	<p>Nil required</p>
Playgrounds	<p>Majority satisfied or had no opinion on current facilities.</p>	<p>Nil required</p>
Camping	<p>Majority believe a camping area would be of benefit (57%), while 22% disagree.</p> <p>Those supporting it believe it would a great place for families whilst others believe it would work for hikers and riders. Those against were concerned about the lack of space and the possibility of people abusing it.</p>	<p>Options for a suitable site for such a facility are very limited. Further investigation is required by Seqwater. Any camping area would need to be run by a third party operator.</p>
Non-Motorised Watercraft	<p>Majority disagree with the introduction of a boating permit scheme.</p> <p>Comments included the use of others who should pay and the little need for infrastructure by users of paddlecraft.</p> <p>Commentary around the need to provide a wash down facility.</p>	<p>Decisions on boating permit scheme will be made at the completion of the recreation review in 2014.</p> <p>Seqwater to install a wash down facility for paddlecraft at Maddock Park.</p>
Fishing	<p>Majority were indifferent (50%) while 33% believe access for fishing is sufficient.</p>	<p>Nil required</p>
Trails	<p>Over half of participants found the trails to be sufficient.</p> <p>Request for trail signage to be improved.</p> <p>Request for more mountain bike</p>	<p>Additional directional signage has been installed. Further improvements to signage and trail maps will be implemented.</p> <p>Current trail network is extensive. Loop trail</p>

Activity	Issue Summary	Seqwater Response
	<p>trails, and a full loop trail around the lake.</p> <p>Requests for dam wall to be re-opened to walkers.</p> <p>Improve Gympie Street North entry point to the Ewen Maddock trail network.</p>	<p>is not feasible due to swampy terrain, which would make new trails cost prohibitive.</p> <p>Due to operational requirements, the dam wall will not be re-opened. Monitoring apparatus installed during the dam wall upgrade precludes public access.</p> <p>Seqwater will work with Sunshine Coast Council to improve this access point.</p>
Dogs	<p>Majority are satisfied with keeping the current arrangements of allowing dogs on leash.</p>	<p>Nil required.</p>
Site Access	<p>Opinion was evenly split in relation to sufficient access.</p> <p>Commentary around improving the paddlecraft access point at Maddock Park.</p> <p>Commentary about re-opening the boat ramp near the water treatment plant.</p> <p>Comments around opening a new access point to the lake for paddlecraft around the Landsborough or southern ends of the lake.</p>	<p>Seqwater to investigate improvements to the paddlecraft access point at Maddock Park.</p> <p>Due to operational requirements and safety risks, this boat ramp cannot be re-opened for public access.</p> <p>No suitable sites could be identified. Improved paddle access point at Maddock Park may address this issue.</p>
Opening Hours	<p>Strong support for a change in the opening hours to match seasonal influences (62%).</p>	<p>Decisions on opening hours will be made at the completion of the complete recreation review in 2014.</p>
Environment	<p>Majority did not have an opinion, but around one third noted some areas of significance.</p> <p>Discussion around the education and awareness of aquatic weeds including Cabomba.</p>	<p>Seqwater is committed to protecting environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p>Seqwater will implement a public awareness campaign in relation to aquatic weeds.</p>

Recreation Review Outcomes

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

Lake Baroon

Outcome	Action
Open upper reaches (arms) of lake to paddlecraft. <i>It is anticipated that this will be implemented by February 2014.</i>	Remove signage currently closing the upper reaches of the lake. Update orientation signage and website information.

Outcome	Action
Investigate the possibility of extending the Martin Williams Walk. <i>Planning and scoping of any required works will be progressed after completion of trail assessment.</i>	Determine whether surrounding fire trails can be incorporated to extend the trail.

Ewen Maddock Dam

Outcome	Action
Establish wash down facilities for paddlecraft and for swimmers. <i>It is anticipated that this will be implemented by March 2014.</i>	Establish a paddlecraft wash down facility (including tap for swimmers) at Maddock Park.

Outcome	Action
Improve trail signage and mapping. <i>Review of trail signage to be completed by June 2014.</i>	Review and improve current signage and mapping.

Outcome	Action
<p>Upgrade Gympie Street North entry point to Ewen Maddock Dam trail network.</p> <p><i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority. The timing of works and the funding required will need to be discussed with Sunshine Coast Council.</i></p>	<p>Upgrade Gympie Street North entry point by installing car park facilities.</p>

Outcome	Action
<p>Improve paddlecraft access</p> <p><i>Planning and scoping of works will be progressed as a priority.</i></p>	<p>Investigate improvements to the paddlecraft access point at Maddock Park to make it easier to access the lake.</p> <p>Improve the car park facilities at Maddock Park to better accommodate vehicles towing paddlecraft.</p>

In addition to website notices, we 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.