

MANTON DAM RECREATION AREA

MANAGEMENT PLAN

August 2002



DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE,
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT



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PREFACE

There are few places like Manton Dam Recreation Area in the Northern Territory.

Originally constructed during WWII as the water supply for Darwin, the Dam has historically played an important role in the development of the region.

Whilst its role has changed over the years since it was built it is no less important. As a back-up water supply for Darwin, and as one of the best water bodies for water sports in the Territory, it remains an important place valued by the community.

This Management Plan is a commitment towards protecting the natural values of the area whilst allowing for the continued use and enjoyment of the area for water sports and other recreational activities.



The Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA
Minister for Parks and Wildlife



FOREWORD

The aim of this Management Plan for Manton Dam Recreation Area is to ensure the protection of the Area's natural and cultural values whilst providing opportunity for people to use and enjoy the Area. The Plan states the intent of the Parks and Wildlife Commission with respect to management of the Area, it sets management objectives and proposes appropriate actions to guide management and development. The Plan was developed using an outcome-based approach and utilises performance measures to assist in measuring the effectiveness of management actions. The Plan will remain in force until revoked by a new Management Plan.

The draft Plan has been prepared in consultation with the Power and Water Authority, Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Department of Transport and Works (Marine Branch). Additionally, discussions were held with representatives of the Darwin Ski Club and other stakeholders as part of a community consultation process.

The key elements of the Plan are as follows:

- Ensuring that water quality within the dam and catchment is maintained at a high standard.
- Containing the spread of weeds and feral animals within the Area.
- Facilitating the appropriate use, appreciation and enjoyment of the Area by the public.
- Protecting areas and items of cultural and/or historical significance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Manton River was named after James Thomas Manton, a surveyor who in 1864 recommended the Port Darwin site for settlement. In 1942 the Manton River was impounded, creating Manton Dam, Darwin's first water supply reservoir. Prior to WWII many Darwin residents drew water from wells which relied on seepage and were seasonally unreliable.

In 1951 the catchment surrounding Manton Dam was declared 'Woolnough Water Catchment Area and Fauna and Flora Area'. It supplied water to Darwin until the completion of the Darwin River Dam to the west in 1972, which then became the water supply for an expanded Darwin population. Since then, Manton Dam has functioned in a supplementary capacity, a role, which will discontinue with construction of Western Manton Dam, leaving Manton Dam purely for recreational use and as an emergency water supply for Darwin.

In response to the expressed need for water based recreation venues in the Darwin Region, it was decided in 1988 to make Manton Dam available for recreation. Basic facilities were constructed and the Area was opened to the public for recreational use in June 1989. Water skiing, sailing and picnicking soon became popular pursuits.

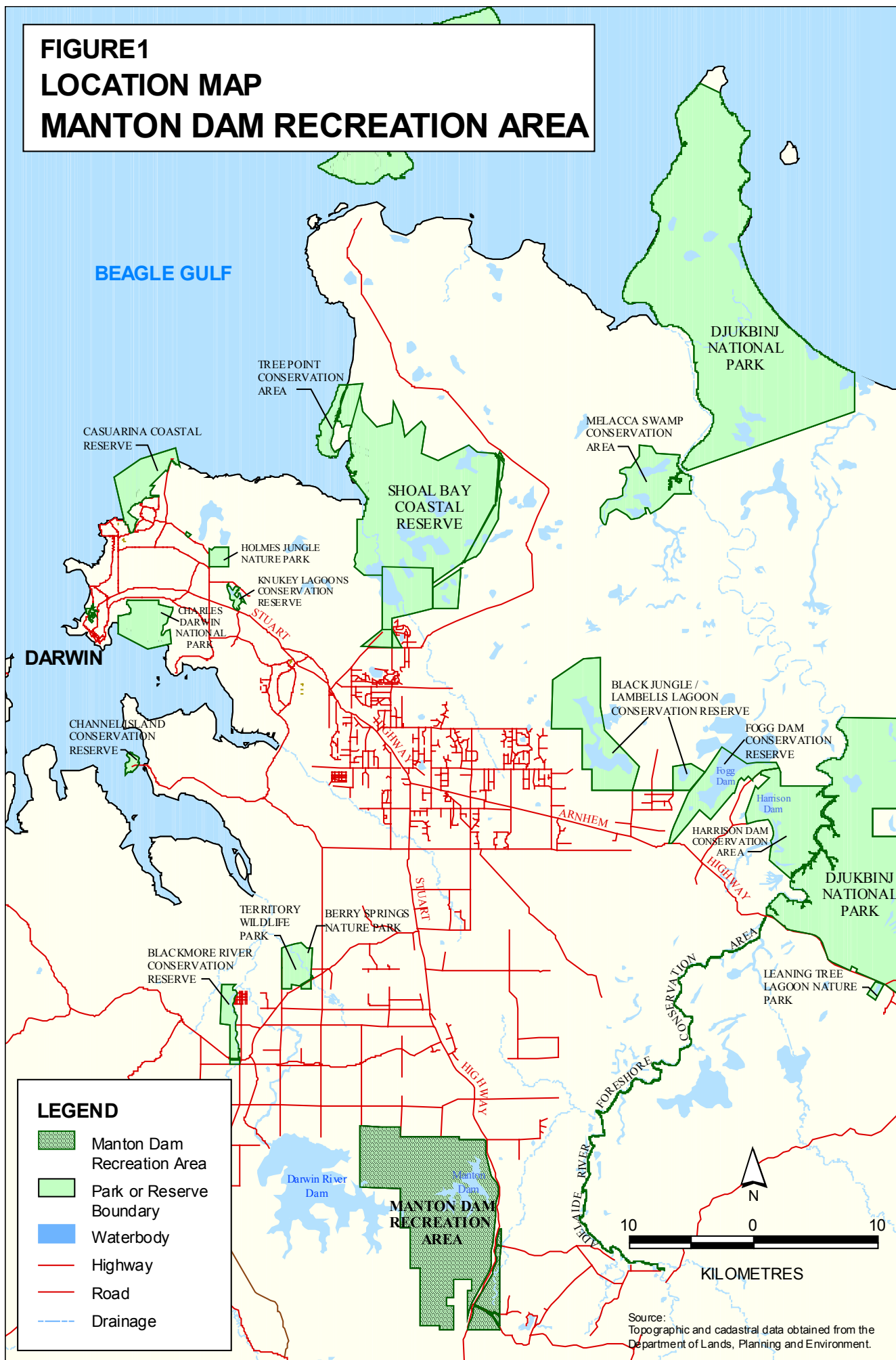
By agreement between the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory (CCNT) and the Power and Water Authority (PAWA), the Manton Dam catchment was leased by PAWA to the Conservation Land Corporation for a term of 99 years, beginning 1 June 1989. The care, control and management of the catchment, by virtue of the lease agreement, was vested in the CCNT. In 1992 the Area was subdivided and subsequently a new lease was initiated over NT Portion 3837 between PAWA and the Conservation Land Corporation commencing on 3 June 1993 for a term of 95 years.

2. LOCATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Manton Dam Recreation Area is located approximately 65 km south of Darwin, adjacent to the Stuart Highway (Figure 1) and covers an area of some 11,657 ha. The dam has a water surface area of 330 ha. This is a relatively large body of water (within one hour's drive of Darwin) helps meet the need for areas where people can enjoy water based recreational activities in a relatively safe environment.

Given the Top End's climate and the hazards of swimming in many areas (box jelly fish and saltwater crocodiles), there is a strong demand for areas where aquatic activities such as power boating, water skiing and swimming can be undertaken in relative safety. The Darwin region has a general scarcity of such places. For many years Lake Bennett was a popular water ski lake, however, in 1987 it was changed to a lake for non-powered boats only. Girraween Lagoon and The Lakes Resort are two other areas that are used for water skiing however, both of are relatively small water bodies and at times can become overcrowded.

**FIGURE 1
LOCATION MAP
MANTON DAM RECREATION AREA**



3. ZONING SCHEME

The Zoning Scheme provides a basis for the regulation of activities and developments within defined areas. It aims at providing a range of quality recreation experiences by minimising conflict between competing uses while at the same time protecting the areas natural resources and water quality. Activities and access to any zone may be restricted or regulated if they have deleterious impacts on the values of the Recreation Area or to ensure public safety.

The Zoning Scheme for the recreation Area is shown in Figure 2. Activities permitted within each Zone are outlined in Table 1. There are seven zones identified for Manton Dam Recreation Area.

- Recreation and Facilities Zone
- Natural Zone
- Power Boat Zone
- Jet Ski Zone
- Low Speed Boating Zone
- Swimming Zone
- Prohibited Access Zone

The **Recreation and Facilities Zone** provides visitors with appropriate facilities and infrastructure to enjoy the Recreation Area in a convenient, safe and social way. Facilities within this Zone include the following;

- a sealed access road,
- sealed car and trailer parking areas with capacity for 40 vehicles,
- unsealed trailer parking area,
- picnic tables and BBQ facilities,
- toilets (of a composting type to prevent effluent polluting the dam) with access for disabled persons,
- a footbridge crossing a seasonally inundated depression,
- a swimming beach constructed of imported sand and a boat-launching ramp.

In the future, it may also include commercial accommodation facilities (eg cabins and a campground), a kiosk or other facilities designed to enhance the recreational experience.

The **Natural Zone** aims at protecting the vegetation, wildlife habitat and catchment values throughout the remainder of the Area. Facilities in this zone will be limited to walking tracks leading to sites of interest and vantage points.

The **Water Skiing and Power Boat Zone** provides opportunities for high speed boating including water skiing or riding inflatable devices behind power boats or jet skis, however, for safety reasons the use of jet skis which are not towing skiers or inflatable devices is not permitted in this Zone.

The **Jet Ski Zone** caters for jet skiers and for safety reasons most other activities including Jet Skiing whilst towing a skier or inflatable device are *not* permitted in this Zone.

The **Low Speed Boating Zone** is an area set aside for quite pleasure boating. This includes sailing, canoeing and fishing. Powerboats are permitted in this Zone but have a speed restriction of 5 knots; non-powered craft have no speed restrictions.

The **Swimming Zone** includes an area set aside for safe swimming, all watercraft are prohibited in this Zone. An artificial beach provides easy access to the water.

The **Prohibited Access Zone** is an area established to prohibit visitor access in the interest of visitor safety and the protection of wildlife (primarily waterbirds). This zone includes three areas;

- near the dam wall,
- the western section of the dam, and
- at the northern section of the Area abutting the shooting range.

Table 1: Summary of zones and activities permitted in each zone.

Activity	Recreation/ Facilities Zone	Natural Zone	Water Skiing and Power Boat Zone	Jet Skiing Zone	Low Speed Boating Zone	Swimming Zone	Prohibited Access Zone
Motor boating	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	(Yes)*	No	No
Water skiing	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No	No	No
Jet skiing	N/A	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No
Jet skiing towing a skier	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No	No	No
Scuba diving	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Para- sailing	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Sailing	N/A	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No
Wind surfing	N/A	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No
Canoeing	N/A	N/A	No	No	Yes	No	No
Fishing	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Swimming	N/A	N/A	No	No	No	Yes	No
Bird watching	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bush- walking	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
Picnicking	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
Camping	No	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
Research	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**

* Restricted to 5 knots

** Under permit only

