



Annual Reserve Report

Gordonvale WHA Reserve 2015-16



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Introduction

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) protects important natural areas as permanent reserves and aims to demonstrate excellence in reserve management for biodiversity conservation. To achieve this aim, the TLC has adopted an adaptive management framework – the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. The framework comprises 5 key steps – planning, implementing, monitoring, reporting, review/adaptation and communication.

Gordonvale was acquired by the TLC in 2013 and protects 80 hectares of wet eucalypt forest, moorland on the site of Ernie Bond’s historic homestead in the Vale of Rasselas in southwest Tasmania’s world heritage area WHA. The Reserve is surrounded by and included within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The management of the Reserve is guided by the Gordonvale WHA Reserve Management Plan. The plan is implemented by TLC staff through an Annual Work Plan and Monitoring Plan. Details of ecological monitoring methods can be found in TLC’s Ecological Monitoring Procedures Manual.

This report describes progress made towards delivery of the management plan in 2015-16, and is divided into three sections:

1. Reserve Scorecard – a table summarising the results of management effectiveness and ecological monitoring to date;
2. Management Effectiveness Summary – providing details of the implementation of key management strategies and making recommendations for plan improvement;
3. Ecological Monitoring Summary – providing details of the status of conservation targets and trends of key ecological indicators

The recommendations made in this report are used to adapt and improve management of the Reserve, update the management plan, and revise work and monitoring plans for the coming year. Key findings of this report are communicated to TLC Board, supporters and other stakeholders.

Gordonvale WHA Reserve Scorecard

Monitoring			
Target	Indicator	Status 2015/16	Trend
Native ecosystems	Floristic diversity Structural complexity Canopy recruitment Vertebrate fauna diversity	Unknown	Baseline data collection is scheduled for 2016-17
Community connection to landscape	# volunteer days on the Reserve	0	Flat
	# visitors to the Reserve	Unknown	
Cultural heritage	Not yet identified		
Wilderness value	Not yet identified		
Management Effectiveness			
Strategy	Indicator	Status	Trend
Community engagement	# events at the Reserve	0	Flat
	# of volunteer activities at the Reserve	0	Flat
	# of research and education projects	0	Flat
Fire management	# of unauthorised fires at the Reserve	0	Flat
Weed and disease management	Weed control (m2)	0	Flat
	Disease status	Unknown	Unknown
Cultural heritage preservation	Not yet identified		

Cover image: Gordonvale landscape. Photo: Grant Dixon.

Monitoring Summary

Native ecosystems		Status: Very Good	
Goal: Maintain the condition of native ecosystems		Outcome: On Track	
<p>Target Description: Tall, wet eucalypt forest occupies a fire-protected, south-facing slope and the riparian zone along a small creek that crosses the property. Open woodland dominated by Smithton peppermint occupies much of the property and is in excellent condition, with high species richness, no weeds and complex vegetation structure. Buttongrass moorlands with emergent shrubs are widespread on Gordonvale and form part of a vast extensive moorland system in very wet situations with poor drainage on nutrient poor rock types such as quartzite.</p>		 <p>Tall eucalypt forest. Photo: Matt Taylor.</p>	
Ecological indicator	Current status	Trend	
Floristic diversity	Data collection scheduled for 2016	Unknown	
Structural complexity			
Canopy recruitment			
Vertebrate fauna diversity			
<p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A preliminary assessment has shown that native vegetation at Gordonvale is in excellent condition and has remained largely unmodified since European settlement. 			
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install TLC's long-term ecological monitoring program 			

Cultural heritage		Status: Very Good	
Goal Cultural heritage is documented and preserved		Outcome: On Track	
Description Gordonvale was the outpost home of the legendary pioneer Ernie Bond - a true pioneer in the wilderness. 'Gordonvale' is registered on the Tasmanian Historic Archaeological Sites Catalogue (THASC 8112-009) with a heritage listing on the dwellings, garden, and camping area, pits and farm implements.			
Relicts of Ernie Bond's iconic homestead. Photo: Grant Dixon.			
Indicator	Current status	Trend	
Cultural heritage condition	Unknown		
Historical information	Unknown		
Key findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remains of Ernie Bond's homestead are slowly being reclaimed by the forest. • TLC held discussions with the Mountain Hut Preservation Society on the potential of protecting or reinstating some dwellings from Ernie Bond's homestead. 			
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and map features of historic significance • Gather an archive of historical records related to the Reserve • Continue discussions with Mountain Hut Preservation Society on potential of protecting or reinstating Ernie Bond's dwelling 			

Wilderness values		Status: Good	
Goal: The wilderness character of the region is maintained.		Outcome: On Track	
Description: The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is surrounded by the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, is within the TWWHA and is designated as having WHA status: its world heritage context and its wilderness values are therefore significant.		 <p>Expansive valley on the walk into Gordonvale. Photo: Grant Dixon</p>	
Indicator	Current status	Trend	
Not yet defined			
Key findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The wilderness character of the area is of outstanding universal value as recognised by the Reserve's listing in the recent WHA extensions. 			
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that detract from the wilderness character of the Reserve and surrounding landscape should not be permitted. 			

Community connection with the landscape	Status: Very Good	
Goals The community has opportunities to connect with the landscape through education, recreation, research and volunteering	Outcome: On Track	
Description The remoteness and isolation of this region has long attracted recreational users who over generations have fostered a sense of community and attachment. Members of the bushwalking community hold valuable knowledge about the cultural and conservation values of the Gordonvale WHA Reserve and may be able help the TLC with management. Providing opportunities for interested parties to remain engaged or to contribute will help protect the reserve and well as the wider WHA landscape.	 <p>Bushwalkers en route to Lake Rhona. Photo: Grant Dixon.</p>	
Community indicator	Current status	Trend
# volunteer days on the Reserve	0	Flat
# visitors to the Reserve	Unknown	
Key findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC hosted several staff and supporter trips at the time of the Reserve’s acquisition in 2013. Due to the remoteness of this reserve there have been no TLC supported trips since. Numerous people walk through Gordonvale en route to Lake Rhona. Most walkers are likely to record their walk in a PWS log book at the track head and the number of people walking through Gordonvale could be estimated using this log book. 		
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to encourage community connections to the reserve by providing research, education, recreation or volunteering opportunities Consider removing this from individual reserve management plans and reporting all relevant TLC activities across Tasmania in a separate report. This approach will be easier to report, more reflective of changes over time, and is a goal of TLC’s Strategic Plan. 		

Management Effectiveness Summary

Fire management		
Key objective(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No unauthorised fires occur on the reserve (ongoing). 		Status 2015-16 On-track
Strategy description TLC recognises the threat posed by unplanned fires to human life and the environment but acknowledges the difficulty of responding to fire in this remote location. The TLC will implement the restrictions of a 'fuel stove only' policy. The TLC will work with Parks and Wildlife Service and the Tasmania Fire Service in the event of a bushfire in this area and keep up to date with any changes to fire policy, any fire restrictions or management burns being undertaken in the wider region.		Gordonvale is remote and inaccessible for firefighting. Photo: Matt Newton. 
Indicator	Current status	Trend
No. of unauthorised fires at the Reserve	0 fires	Flat
Progress in 2015-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have been unconfirmed reports of bushwalkers lighting campfires at Gordonvale. A fire risk assessment was completed for all TLC reserves, Gordonvale is a low risk. A fire management policy for all TLC Reserves is being implemented. A fuel stove only policy is also being implemented, in keeping with the surrounding World Heritage Area. 		
Key recommendations for future management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement a fuel stove only policy for the Reserve. 		

Weed and disease management		
Key objective(s)		Status 2015-16 Minor issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing weeds are eradicated by 2017 and any new outbreaks are addressed in a timely manner. 		
Strategy description		
<p>The aim of this strategy is to eradicate existing infestations of Californian thistle on the reserve by 2017 and recommend biosecurity procedures to prevent or minimise the infestation of any new pest, weed or diseases in the future. Annual monitoring as part of the annual reserve assessment will ensure that any follow-up control can be undertaken.</p> <p>The exotic plant species associated with Ernie Bond's settlement (e.g. spring bulbs and Rhododendron etc.) will be conserved for heritage purposes but their current distribution will be mapped and monitored to ensure they do not spread beyond this precinct.</p>		<p>Daffodil bulbs emerging near Ernie Bond's house site. Photo: Matt Taylor</p> 
Indicator	Current status	Trend
Weed control (m2)	0	Flat
Disease status	Unknown	Unknown
Progress in 2015-16		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No works were undertaken at the Reserve in 2015-16 due to accessibility issues when weeds are emergent. PWS continue to provide a boot-wash down station and soil hygiene information at the bushwalker access point. 		
Key recommendations for future management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map all weeds and heritage plants. Treat infestations of California thistle. Maintain sign at access point. Monitor heritage plants to ensure they don't spread, especially the rhododendron. 		

Community engagement and neighbour relations

Key objective(s)

- TLC provides opportunities for the community to experience or benefit from the Reserve

Status 2015-16
On-track

Strategy description

The TLC encourages visitation at its reserves but recognises the remoteness of Gordonvale, its wilderness setting and the designated ‘self-reliant recreation’ zoning in the TWWHA Management Plan (Parks and Wildlife Service 1999). The TLC recognises that foot access to Gordonvale involves crossing the Franklin – Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and that many visitors may be on-route to Lake Rhona with Gordonvale as a temporary stopover site.

TLC sign installed at track head in 2015. Photo: Tim Devereux.



Indicator

Current status

Trend

events at the Reserve

0

Flat

of volunteer activities at the Reserve

0

Flat

of research and education projects

0

Flat

Progress in 2015-16

- Access to the Reserve was maintained.
- Visitor numbers can be estimated from PWS bushwalker log books at the start of the walking track, but this information was not collected in 2015-16.
- A sign was installed at the track head acknowledging the supporters that assisted in TLC’s purchase of Gordonvale.
- Visitors continue to access the Reserve on route to Lake Rhona.
- TLC provided input into the revised TWWHA Management Plan identifying the need to protect the wilderness of Gordonvale as a key priority.

Key recommendations for future management

- Maintain access to the Reserve
- Continue to provide opportunities for people to connect with the Reserve.
- Continue to maintain relationships with neighbours.
- Consider dividing this strategy into “community engagement” and “visitor management”, with the community engagement section to be reported across all of TLCs activities across Tasmania in a separate report. This approach will be easier to report, more reflective of changes over time, and is a goal of TLC’s Strategic Plan.

Cultural heritage preservation		
Key objective(s)		Status 2015-16 Minor issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernie Bond's legacy is preserved. 		
Strategy description		Post and rail fence at Gordonvale. Photo: Grant Dixon.
<p>The legacy of Ernie Bond and his settlement at Gordonvale has been documented in various sources but the settlement physically has deteriorated to scattered remnants of huts, tracks, fences and farming implements which will continue to disappear over time. Community knowledge and a willingness to be involved with oral or physical preservation are essential if we are to retain any of these last fragments. A preservation strategy is needed on how best to proceed with undertaking this, however, in the immediate term the existing remnants of Ernie Bonds settlement will not be disturbed and the current distribution of the spring bulbs and Rhododendron will be mapped to ensure they do not spread beyond their former precinct.</p>		
Indicator	Current status	Trend
Not yet identified	Unknown	Unknown, likely deteriorating
Progress in 2015-16		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC held discussions with the Mountain Hut Preservation Society on the potential of protecting or reinstating some dwellings from Ernie Bond's homestead. 		
Key recommendations for future management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a skilled volunteer to map and document the cultural heritage features. Continue discussions with Mountain Hut Preservation Society on potential of protecting or reinstating Ernie Bond's dwelling 		