Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board Annual Report

2014-15



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Annual Report of the Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board 2014-15

September 2015

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Presented to Parliament by Hon Ian Hunter MLC, Minister for Sustainability Environment and Conservation, pursuant to section 43L of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972

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Government of South Australia

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30 September 2015

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Hon Ian Hunter MLC Minister for Sustainability Environment and Conservation Parliament House North Terrace ADELAIDE SA 5000 South Australian Arid Lands Region

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Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of section 43L of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and the *Public Sector Act 2009*, I have pleasure in presenting the annual report of the Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board for the year ended 30 June 2015.

For further information on this matter please contact Ms Denise McCourt, Executive Officer Co-management, on telephone (08) 86485 348 or via email, denise.mccourt@sa.gov.au.

John Schutz Chairperson Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board

A working partnership

First proclaimed in 1945, the Flinders Ranges National Park forms part of the traditional country of the Adnyamathanha people, rich with cultural significance and evidence of their past occupation.

Adnyamathanha and the State Government share a vision for the Flinders Ranges National Park (FRNP). The Co-management model provides the framework for the Adnyamathanha people and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) to share responsibility for the Park. In 2011, the FRNP Co-management Board was established following Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) and the Minister for Sustainability Environment and Conservation entering into a formal Co-management Agreement over the Park.

The FRNP Co-management Board (the Board) has a challenging agenda - managing the cultural landscape, still known and understood by its Aboriginal traditional owners, in a way that also protects and conserves the Park's outstanding natural and cultural features. The Board seeks to:

Conserve its natural and cultural heritage, using both **traditional** and **scientific** knowledge to **better manage** the land

Respect the rights, interests and needs of the traditional owners and **create** social development and economic opportunities for Adnyamathanha families and communities

Provide **great experiences** for visitors and position Flinders Ranges as an iconic, internationally recognised tourism destination.'

This report shows how the Board answered that challenge in 2014-15.

This is the fourth Annual Report of the Board and covers the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. It is prepared to fulfil requirements of section 43L of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, Regulation 16 of the National Parks and Wildlife (Flinders Ranges National Park) Regulations 2011 (the Regulations) and the Public Sector Act 2009.

Strategic priorities and achievements for 2014-15

The Co-management framework meets a number of the State's Strategic Plan Targets, including:

Aboriginal wellbeing – Target 6

- Reconciliation, Cultural and Traditional Lands
 - Number of National Park Co-management Agreements (indicator 19)
 - Native title claims resolved (indicator 21)
- Governance and Leadership
 - Number of Aboriginal people on government boards and committees (indicator 17)

Aboriginal lands native title - Target 44

• Resolve 80% of native title claims by 2020.

Management Plan - Flinders Ranges National Park

The Co-management Agreement provides for the existing management plan (1983 and amended in 1989) to be reviewed and a new draft plan to be prepared in partnership with the Board.

The Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan is the over-arching strategic document for the National Park that will guide future management activities. It sets a vision for the Park and has a strong Adnyamathanha influence in managing cultural and natural heritage values in the Park.

The Board had a key role in developing the Management Plan for the Park and engaging with key partners, including the broader Adnyamathanha community. The draft plan is based on three themes; advancing Adnyamathanha spiritual, cultural and economic relationships with Country; healing the Flinders Ranges National Park and sharing the spirit of the Flinders Ranges.

The draft Plan was released for public consultation in April 2015. Feedback will be used to develop a final park management plan which will be submitted to the Board for approval.

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation will then consider adoption in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. Once adopted the park management plan will guide the long term protection of the Flinders Ranges National Park.

The new Management Plan for the Park will allow for a Traditional Use Zone that will ensure Adnyamathanha people can hunt and gather safely in a protected area, where the general public will not be permitted.

The Board has identified the Second Plain Area, located off the Wilkawillina Road as the most suitable location (Pantapinna Plains area).

The Board are now developing an Operational Policy to ensure safe use of the site, and ATLA will be engaged accordingly.

In addition to the responsibilities for the Park the Board will have an advisory role to the Minister with respect to Bimbowrie, Yalpara, Ediacara and Black Rock Conservation Parks. The Board has reviewed the draft Ediacara and Bimbowrie Plans and subsequently recommended adoptions of these Plans to the Minister.

Fire Management Plan - Flinders Ranges National Park

The development of a Fire Management Plan for the Northern Flinders Ranges, incorporating Flinders Ranges National Park, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges NP and Ediacara Conservation Park was initiated in 2011.

This draft Plan will examine fire risk and address fire management issues at a landscape scale and is being developed in accordance with DEWNR's policies and procedures for fire management planning. The DEWNR Planning Team is working closely with the Board to ensure the draft Plan has a strong Aboriginal cultural focus.

The Board, as the management authority for Flinders Ranges National Park will be a signatory for both the release of the draft Plan for public comment and the subsequent adoption of the final Plan.

Interpretation Plan - Providing richer visitor experiences

The Board are progressing the next version of the Flinders Ranges National Park Interpretation Plan to ensure a strong Adnyamathanha influence. The Interpretation Plan provides a framework for improving interpretation and cultural information about the Park. Interpretation is designed to enrich visitor experiences, connect the audience to big-picture concepts and make emotional and intellectual connections to the park. There are a wealth of stories to tell in FRNP – stories about people and places, flora and fauna.

Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection. Freeman Tilden

The Board recognise and support ongoing opportunities for sustainable tourism and recreational activities including a number of international, national and local events which attract thousands of visitors to the region and contribute to regional tourism.

Governance

The Premier announced in July 2014 the review and reform of all boards and committees within South Australia.

The reform was aimed at strengthening and broadening the way in which government engages with the community and makes decisions.

The Co-management framework for South Australia has been recognised internationally as a model which supports effective collaboration with Aboriginal people in the management of their traditional lands.

The Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board was retained. The full report is publically available on the "Your SAY" website.

Native species protected and habitat improved through pest management

The Board gave approval for continuation of conservation and a pest management program conducted through Bounceback on FRNP.

Good seasonal conditions were experienced across the northern Flinders over the past 12 months. These conditions have resulted in widespread recovery of plants and animals across the region and noticeably so on Flinders Ranges National Park where management of grazing pressure and fox baiting programs have been ongoing.

A wide range of species including many with National and State conservation significance benefited from ongoing management of feral goats and foxes. These include the:

- Elegant Wattle
- Slender Bell-fruit
- Eremophila species
- Palatable bluebush and saltbush species
- Short-tailed Grasswren
- Carpet Python
- Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby

There is also anecdotal evidence that populations of regionally rare animals such as Echidna and Sand Goanna are increasing, as a result of long term fox control. Echidna are frequently sighted on the remote cameras being used to monitor predator and herbivore levels in the Park.

Goat control activities reduced grazing pressure to promote vegetation recovery and improve habitat for Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies. Long-lived perennial species such as Bullock Bush are now regenerating in response to the reduction in grazing by feral goats that are at their lowest levels since control programs commenced in the early 1990's.

Reintroduction of the Idnya and Virlda to the Flinders Ranges, South Australia



The Bounceback Program has also been keen to test whether pest control has been effective in restoring land and vegetation condition to the point where the Park can once again sustain medium sized predators like Idnya and herbivores such as Virlda, that once inhabited the region.

The Idnya (western quoll) is a totem animal of the Adnyamathanha people. The story of the goanna and the native cat tells how the quoll became spotted. The two animals elope and come from the eastern side of Lake Frome, near the border of New South Wales. They travel up into the Gammon Ranges but the elders catch up with them and the native cat is speared all over, causing her to become spotted.

(Reference Dorothy Tunbridge Flinders Ranges Mammals)

Last seen in the Flinders Ranges during the 1880's, the Idnya is a small Australian native carnivorous marsupial which once thrived across 80 per cent of the Australian continent.

In a partnership arrangement with the Foundation for the Australia's Most Endangered species (FAME), 41 Idnya were released in2014, followed by another 37 in May 2015. The released animals mostly came from Western Australia, provided through the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Following both releases there have been very encouraging signs, with good evidence of females breeding and recruitment of young. At this stage, we are mainly aiming to learn about their shelter requirements, breeding habits, food preference and interaction with predators. An understanding of long term success will only come after the region has been through serious drought.

The Virlda (common brushtail possum) had disappeared from the SA arid lands including the Flinders Ranges by the 1950s, mainly as a result of habitat degradation. In mid 2015, again in partnership with FAME, 79 Virlda were released into the Park, sourced from the Australian Wildlife Conservancy reserve, Yookamurra Sanctuary, in the Riverland. It is early days, but there has been only one recorded mortality to date, with most animals having stayed within a few kilometres of their release sites and occupying good daytime shelters in river red gum trees and fallen hollow logs, with a few also using native pines.

Big picture' results through partnerships

The Park is part of a broader natural and cultural landscape. The Board supported:

• ongoing feral animal and pest plant control through the regional *Bounceback* program.

Bounceback is a major conservation initiative which aims to protect and restore the semi-arid environments of the Flinders, Gawler and Olary Ranges of South Australia.

Sacred Canyon

Sacred Canyon is a significant Aboriginal engraving and cultural site, located on the Mannawarra pastoral lease, a large pastoral property to the south and east of Flinders Ranges National Park.

The Board has been discussing its concerns regarding ongoing damage and graffiti at this significant site. Through discussions with the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA), the parties have both agreed that immediate action is required to restrict access to the site, while longer term management arrangements can be negotiated with key stakeholders.

Park Management

The Board delegated some routine and day-to-day responsibilities for park management to DEWNR staff to manage in accordance with government policy and procedures. This will ensure the effective and timely management of the Flinders Ranges National Park and will allow the Board to focus on park management at a more strategic level.

Employment

It is a requirement in the Co-management Agreement that preference be given to Adnyamathanha people to work on the park. This has occurred recently with a short term maintenance contract, and further opportunities will be investigated.

Protection of Aboriginal culture is a high priority of the Board. All base grade positions across FRNP will include a statement in the job description that ensures Adnyamathanha people are the only applicant that will be considered.

Improved research management

The Board has delegated its authority for approving research to the Scientific Permits Officer of DEWNR. The Board will review reports on research projects annually and ensure measures to safeguard cultural sites from research-related disturbance.

Working with neighbours and the Adnyamathanha Community

The Board is committed to working with neighbouring landholders to achieve shared management objectives. Board meetings are generally open to the public and community members are encouraged to attend and participate in Board activities.

Managing the Park for success

Co-management of the Park is a partnership where the Adnyamathanha people work together with the DEWNR to share decision-making and responsibility for the management of the Park.

Promoting Co-management

State-wide Co-management Workshop

The inaugural workshop was held in November 2014 to bring together Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees across the State to share co-management experiences. There are now 12 co-management agreements, covering two-thirds of the protected area systems in South Australia.

The Workshop identified a number of key issues, challenges and opportunities that will be progressed by both DEWNR and the traditional owners.

The Board continues to maintain an active role in promoting the park and co-management. Adnyamathanha Board members also provide regular presentations and updates at Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) and South Australian Native Title Services (SANTS) Congress meetings.

Membership

Under Regulation 5 of the National Parks and Wildlife (Flinders Ranges National Park) Regulations 2011, the Board consists of eight members appointed by the Minster, of whom:

- (a) four must be Adnyamathanha people appointed on the nomination of ATLA; and
- (b) three must be officers of the Department, of whom -
 - (i) one must be the either the Director or the person for the time being holding the office of Regional Manager (however described) for the region in which the Park is located (or the person for the time being performing the functions of that office); and
- (c) one must be a person nominated by the Minister.
- (d) At least one member of the Board must be a woman and one a man.
- (e) The Minister may appoint a person to be a deputy member and that person may act as a member of the Board, in the absence of the member.

The full membership of the Co-management Board is as at 30 June 2015 was as follows.

<u>Chairperson</u>	
Mr John Schutz	(5)(b): officer of the Department (Group Executive Director, Partnerships and Stewardship, DEWNR)
Deputy Chairperson	
Haydyn Bromley	(5)(a): nominated by ATLA
<u>Members</u>	
Ms Glenise Coulthard	(5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Ms Kaelene McMillan	(5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Mr Stefan Wilton	(5)(a): nominated by ATLA
Mr Stuart Paul	(5)(b): officer of the Department (Regional Manager South Australian Arid Lands Region, DEWNR)
Ms Anne Sellar	(5)(b): officer of the Department (Director Volunteers and Visitors Services, DEWNR)
Ms Lisien Loan	(5)(c): nominated by the Minister (Manager Legislation and Policy, DEWNR)
Deputy Members	
Mr Brenton Grear	(Executive Director Strategy and Advice, DEWNR) Deputy to Mr Schutz
Ms Angelina Stuart	Deputy to Ms Coulthard
Ms Cheryl Waye	Deputy to Ms McMillan
Mr Greg Jackson	Deputy to Mr Bromley
Mr Terry Coulthard	Deputy to Mr Wilton

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Mr Ken Anderson	(Operations Manager South Australian Arid Lands Region, DEWNR) Deputy to Mr Paul						
Mr Barry Hayden	(Team Deputy t	Leader o Ms Sellar.	Protected	Area	Management,	DEWNR)	
Ms Lucy Dodd	(Manager, Public Lands & Community Engagement, South Australian Arid Lands Region, DEWNR) Deputy to Ms Loan						

The appointments are for a four-year period from 7 November 2011 to 6 November 2015.

Meetings

The Board held four meetings.

- 4 August 2014; Wilpena, Flinders Ranges National Park
- 27 October 2014; Wilpena, Flinders Ranges National Park
- 30 March 2015; Wilpena, Flinders Ranges National Park
- 19 June 2015; Oraparinna, Flinders Ranges National Park

Attendance at Meetings

Member	4 August 2014	27 October 2014	30 March 2015	19 June 2015
Mr John Schutz	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ms Glenise Coulthard	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ms Kaelene McMillan	Y	Y	Ν	Y
Mr Haydyn Bromley	Y	N*	Y	Y
Mr Stefan Wilton	Y	N*	Y	Y
Mr Stuart Paul	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ms Anne Sellar	Y	Y	Y	N*
Ms Lisien Loan	Y	Y	Y	Y

* Deputy Member attended for Member

The Co-management Board

The functions and powers of the Board are set out in Regulation 10 of the National Parks and Wildlife (Flinders Ranges National Park) Regulations 2011 as follows:

- (1) The functions of the Board are
 - a) to carry out the functions assigned to the Board by or under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972; and
 - b) to carry out the functions assigned to by the Board by the co-management agreement; and
 - c) to carry out other functions assigned to the Board by the Minister.
- (2) The Board has the power to do anything necessary, expedient or incidental to the performance of its functions.
- (3) Without limiting the generality of subsection (2), the Board may enter into any form of contract, agreement or arrangement.
- (4) The Board must perform its functions, or exercise a power, in a manner that is consistent with the co-management agreement.

Regulation 12 (1) of the Regulations states that six members (of whom at least three must be Adnyamathanha people and at least three must be members appointed under regulation 5(1)(b) or (c)) constitute a quorum of the Board. This requirement was met at each Board meeting.

Regulations

The following information addresses annual reporting requirements established under Regulation 16 of the National Parks and Wildlife (Flinders Ranges National Park) Regulations 2011.

(a) Information relating to traditional hunting activities in the park carried out in accordance with section 68D of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972.

The Board are currently progressing the management plan for the Park, which will incorporate hunting activities.

(b) Information relating to the effect of traditional hunting activities in the park carried out in accordance with section 68D of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 on native plants and protected animals, or the eggs of protected animals (and in particular those species that are scheduled as rare, endangered or vulnerable under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972).

The Board are currently progressing the management plan for the Park, which will incorporate hunting activities.

(c) Information relating to the operations and work programs undertaken by or on behalf of the Board.

The Board continued to implement its work program based on the obligations under the Co-management Agreement, Indigenous Land Use Agreement, National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, National Parks and Wildlife (FRNP) Regulations 2011 and the Public Sector Act 2009. The work program will in future addresses the strategic priorities that have been identified by the Board.

DEWNR officers report on operational and management activities undertaken in the Park to the Board at each meeting. The report addresses visitor management, biodiversity programs, cultural management matters, asset maintenance, projects, planning, training and development, work health and safety, and funding applications.

(d) Information relating to park infrastructure.

Park infrastructure is managed through DEWNR's asset management program to ensure appropriate maintenance of infrastructure/assets on reserves. The Board is provided with an overview at each meeting as part of the DEWNR management report.

(e) Any other information required by the Minister.

No additional information was required by the Minister during this reporting period.

Reconciliation Statement

The Board would like to acknowledge that the land on which it meets is the traditional lands for the Adnyamathanha people.

In fulfilling its functions, the Board is cognisant of the cultural and natural heritage of traditional owners and strives to achieve positive outcomes wherever these matters are concerned.

Human Resource Matters

Staffing

The Board has no staff of its own. Ms Denise McCourt, from DEWNR's South Australian Arid Lands Region provides executive support to the Board.

In accordance with the Co-Management Agreement, the Board is kept informed of DEWNR staff development and training. Staff working on the Park have undertaken a number of training programs including warden, fire, procurement and conflict training.

Disability Action Plans

The members of the Board are aware of and abide by their obligations under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the State Equal Opportunity Act 1984. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2013-13.

Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993

Reporting requirements against the *Whistleblowers Protection Act* 1993 require the Board to report on the number of occasions on which public interest information has been disclosed to a Responsible Officer of the agency. There were no disclosures made during the 2014-15 financial year.

Equal Opportunity Programs

The Board has no staff of its own and is serviced by staff of DEWNR. Members are aware of and abide by the equal opportunity policies and programs of DEWNR. Reporting on this matter may be viewed in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Gender Reporting

The gender balance of the Board is always taken into consideration when members are appointed. Within the reporting period there were four male and three female members.

Work Health and Safety

There were no incidents reported by the Board during the reporting period.

As a user of DEWNR facilities and equipment, the Board is aware of and abides by DEWNR's Work Health and Safety policies. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

During the reporting period DEWNR staff operating in the Park undertook First Aid, manual handling, safety awareness and 4WD vehicle training.

Public Complaints

Nil

Use of Consultants

The Board did not engage any consultants in the reporting period.

Financial Performance

DEWNR administers the budget for the Flinders Ranges National Park on behalf of the Board and provides a financial report to members at each meeting. Expenditure has been maintained with the budget allocation.

Finance

The costs associated with the administration of the Board are met from within the existing resources of DEWNR. Members are paid sitting fees in accordance with the recommendation from the Chief Executive, DPC which states;

- Chair: \$221.00 per 4 hour session
- Members: \$177.00 per 4 hour session.

Government employees are not entitled to sitting fees.

Account Payment Performance

DEWNR provides administrative resources for processing account payments for the Board. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Contractual Arrangements

The Board did not enter any contractual arrangements exceeding \$4 million in value during the reporting period.

Other Reporting Items

Energy Efficiency Action Plan Reports

The Board uses the facilities and services of the staff of DEWNR. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Overseas Travel

It is declared that no member of the Board has travelled overseas on the business of the Board during the reporting period.

Fraud

It is declared that there were no instances of fraud detected in the activities undertaken by the Board.

Financial services are provided to the Board by DEWNR. Strategies to detect instances of fraud are reported in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Regional Impact Assessment Statement

The Board undertook no Regional Impact Assessment Statements in 2014-15.

Freedom of Information

As a DEWNR administered entity, the Board participates and abides by the arrangements outlined in the DEWNR Freedom of Information regime. Reporting on this matter is available on the DEWNR internet site. Please visit <u>www.environment.sa.gov.au</u> to view the FOI Statement.

Urban Design Charter

No events occurred in 2014-15 that required the Board to consider the principles of urban design contained in the South Australian Urban Design Charter.

Greening of Government (GoGo) Framework

The Board uses the facilities and services of the staff of DEWNR. Reporting on this matter is contained in the DEWNR Annual Report 2014-15.

Acknowledgement

The Board appreciates the support and encouragement it received over the past year from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, the Hon Ian Hunter MLC.

The Board records its appreciation for the assistance provided by senior DEWNR staff, including: the Chief Executive, Ms Sandy Pitcher; Group Executive Director Partnership and Stewardship, Mr John Schutz; Regional Manager South Australian Arid Lands Region, Mr Stuart Paul; and Executive Officer, Ms Denise McCourt.

The Board acknowledges key stakeholders including the Adnyamathanha community, ATLA members, Mr Michael Anderson (Chairperson of ATLA), South Australian Arid Lands Region staff of DEWNR - particularly Senior Ranger Arthur Coulthard - and the Native Title Holders.

The Board is working collaboratively and advancing partnership arrangements between DEWNR and Adnyamathanha to achieve shared objectives for future conservation management in Flinders Ranges National Park.

