

**ITEM NO: 6****SUBJECT: MEGALONG RESERVE DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT –  
ADOPTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC EXHIBITION****FILE NO: F03185**

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**Recommendations:**

1. *That the Council adopts the Draft Plan of Management for Megalong Reserve for the purpose of public exhibition in accordance with the provisions of the NSW Crown Lands Act 1989.*
  2. *That the exhibition of the draft Plan be widely advertised and promoted and be for a period of not less than six (6) weeks.*
  3. *That a report come back to the Council following the public exhibition.*
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**Report by Group Manager, Community & Corporate:****Report summary**

The purpose of the report is to introduce the draft Plan of Management (PoM) for Megalong Reserve and request that the Council endorse this document for public exhibition.

This report summarises the following:

- Issues that have contributed to the need for the PoM;
- Issues that were raised by the community during the stakeholder consultation;
- How the issues have been addressed through the draft PoM; and
- The resource implications as a result of adopting this draft PoM.

The draft PoM is enclosed separately for the information of the Councillors.

**Background**

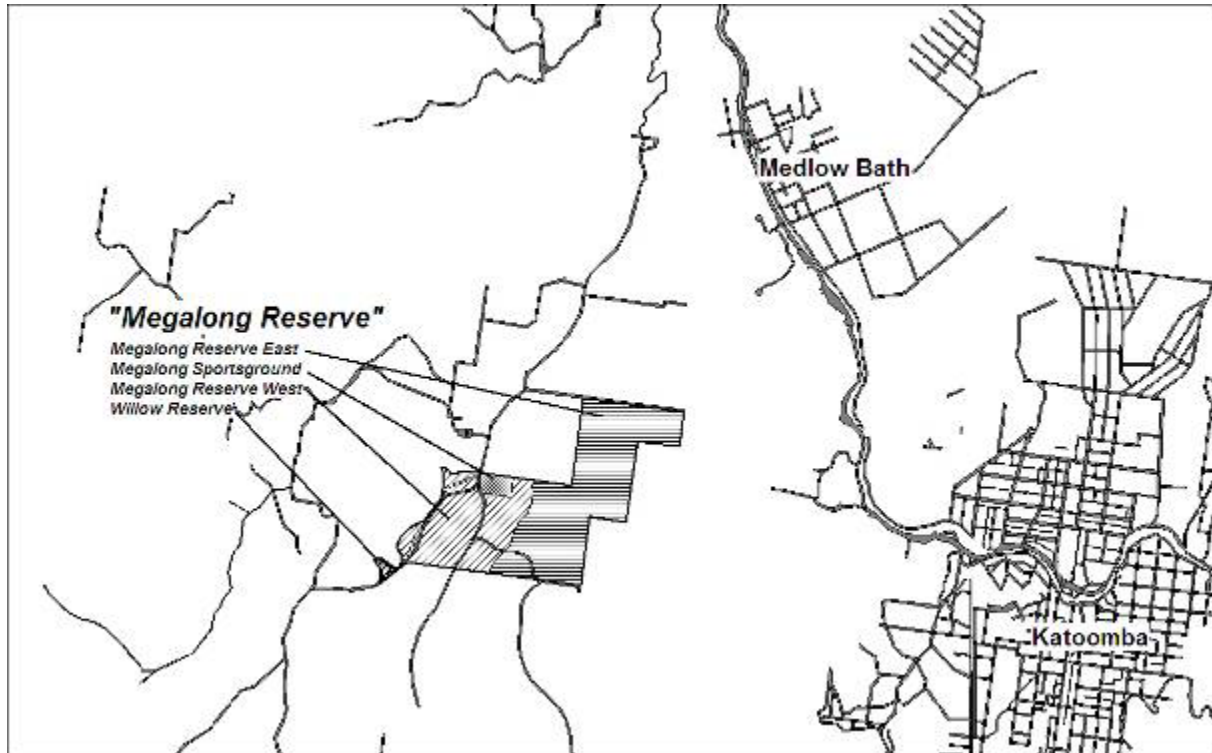
Megalong Reserve is located in Megalong Valley six kilometers west of Katoomba. It is highly valued for its contribution to the social amenity and recreational opportunities in the Megalong Valley and through its contribution to protecting the irreplaceable natural values of the City.

The draft PoM for Megalong Reserve covers four parcels of crown reserve with a combined extent of 208 hectares. The four reserves covered by the draft PoM are Megalong Sportsground, Willow Reserve, and Megalong Reserve, which consists of two reserves east and west of Backs Creek. It is noted that in writing this draft PoM, all four reserves are collectively referred to as 'Megalong Reserve'.

Currently, management of Megalong Sportsground, Willow and Megalong Reserve (Back Creek West) is the responsibility of the Council. Megalong Reserve (Back Creek East) is managed by the NSW Department of Lands.

The Megalong Reserve PoM does not cover any community land managed by the Council for which the NSW *Local Government Act 1989* provisions apply. The PoM has instead been prepared in accordance with the NSW *Crown Lands Act 1989* as the reserve is comprised entirely of crown lands.

Map 1 below illustrates the boundary of the draft PoM and the different reserves.



*Map 1: Various reserves covered by Megalong Reserve DPoM..*

### **Research and consultation**

In developing the draft PoM, the Council carried out extensive research and consultation including:

- Reviewing background files / studies;
- Consultation with internal staff members;
- Undertaking an internal environment and cultural heritage assessment of the site, which included a detailed botanical assessment, inspection for cultural heritage objects, and intensive assessment of trail status. A review of fauna values and water quality based on Council and Streamwatch datasets was also conducted;
- Consultation with the Department of Lands; and
- Consultation was held directly with the following user groups and stakeholders:
  - Blue Mountains Pony Club;
  - Megalong Valley Landowners Association; and
  - A commercial nature based recreation operator using Megalong Reserve.

The main issues raised during consultation are detailed below:

<b>RESIDENTIAL / RURAL AMENITY</b>		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Megalong Reserve, in particular the Sportsground and Community Hall, are a pivotal social amenity for Megalong Residents and horse riders in the Blue Mountains, and the reserve maintains a unique rural character.	Maintenance levels may not be sustaining the current amenity levels provided at the Sportsground.  Future development and/or introduction of additional uses may impact on the fabric and character of the site.	Continue and improve maintenance levels in the Reserve.  Investigate the potential for the Reserve to support additional uses.  Ensure additional uses or future development is consistent with maintaining the character of the reserve.

<b>CULTURAL</b>		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Responses</b>
The Reserve maintains both European and Indigenous cultural heritage values, including aboriginal objects and features of past European land uses.	A comprehensive cultural heritage assessment of the Reserve has not been undertaken.  Little knowledge on the needs and future conservation practices to protect and conserve values.  New development may compromise heritage values.	Undertake a more detailed cultural heritage assessment of the site when funding permits, or there is a more pending need.  Review current management practices against known cultural values.  Require a detailed cultural assessment for any new development that may impact on cultural values.

<b>BUSHLAND</b>		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Diverse vegetation including 119 species & 4 vegetation communities, potential for 178 fauna species to utilise the reserve.	Protection of biodiversity.  Reducing vegetation disturbance.	Ensure management actions support conservation of biodiversity.  Rationalise track network to improve condition of vegetation communities.
	Bushfire management.	Ensure bushfire management supports biodiversity conservation whilst contributing to strategic bushfire management in the City.

<b>SPORTING &amp; RECREATION</b>		
<b>Values</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Provides the only recreational facilities for organised sport in the Megalong Valley.	Maintenance levels may not be sustaining current amenity.	Continue and improve maintenance levels in the Reserve.
Represents one of only two gymkhana facilities in the City.  Provides a venue to natural area trail riding on horseback.	Continued use of the site for gymkhana.  Maintenance of trails.	Provide ongoing support from Council for the site to be utilise for gymkhana.  Ensure regular inspection and maintenance of trails for safety, maintenance of amenity and protection of the environment.
The site could be developed to support additional recreation uses ie mountain biking.	Potential for conflicts between users ie horse riders & bike riders using same tracks.	Undertake a detailed investigation of issues prior to allowing any additional recreational uses.  If necessary, install signage depicting shared 'ride, walk & bike' tracks.

### **Management Direction and Action Plan**

There are a total of 52 actions within the Draft PoM across 10 broad management areas, which are listed below:

- Tenure and Management Strategy
- Facilities at Megalong Sportsground
- Cultural Heritage
- Natural Heritage
- Water Quality
- Invasive Weeds
- Nature Studies
- Horse Riding, Cycling, Bushwalking and Trail Management
- Bush Fire Management
- Licensing and Bookings

It is important to note that a PoM is not a commitment to all of the activities, works and actions allowed for in the finally adopted PoM. Rather it is an effective management tool to list necessary actions and identify their priority. The implementation of actions identified in this plan would be subject to normal decision making processes by the Council such as Capital Works Programs and priorities elsewhere within the broader environmental and recreation works program. It is also important to note that the Council's Long Term Financial Strategy identifies significant citywide challenges in providing new assets, maintaining assets and renewing them at the end of their effective life. Consideration of the Council's financial position may influence the implementation of actions at Megalong Reserve, including those identified in the final approved PoM for Megalong Reserve.

The total estimated costs of all works allowed for within the PoM are :

- Projects the Council would fund are estimated to be: \$22,000-32,000;
- There are five (5) actions that require no resourcing from Council;
- There are forty three (43) projects that need to be included in existing staff resources; and
- There two (2) projects that require further investigation prior to determining the most appropriate action and associated costs.

Note: Many of the above actions may attract grants which would assist in funding projects.

The main components of the Action Plan for Megalong Reserve PoM:

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>TENURE AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY</b>		
Reassess the status of one parcel currently gazetted as Crown Land Reserved from Sale to Recreation Reserve and form a single trust over all four reserves.	Staff Time	BMCC
Council and Department of Lands should consider formalising a single Council managed reserve trust to oversee all three parcels of land.	Staff Time	BMCC
<b>FACILITIES AT MEGALONG SPORTSGROUND</b>		
Develop joint management and maintenance with stakeholders	Staff Time	BMCC
Continue required maintenance levels to achieve safe and functioning facilities.	\$5,000 (existing)	BMCC
The upgrade of any facilities will adhere to Council’s Access & Equity Policy, and any statutory obligation under the NSW EPA Act 1979, NSW <i>Crown Lands Act</i> 1989, and LEP 1991.	N/A	-
<b>CULTURAL HERITAGE</b>		
Review current usage or management actions to ensure they do not impact upon cultural values.	Staff Time	BMCC
Before any new development occurs within the Reserve a systematic archaeological assessment of the Reserve should be undertaken.	\$1,000- \$10,000	BMCC Grants
<b>NATURAL HERITAGE</b>		
Establish a fauna and flora monitoring program that includes the establishment of permanent photo points.	Staff Time	BMCC
Signage should identify that fauna and flora are protected and that firewood is not to be collected within the reserve.	\$5,000	BMCC Grants
Make the vertebrate fauna and flora lists associated with this PoM available to the public via Council’s web site and develop other support material.	Staff Time	BMCC
<b>HORSERIDING, CYCLING, BUSHWALKING</b>		
The areas available for private and commercial horse riding and mountain biking should be restricted to improve management and protection of the environment.	Staff Time	BMCC
Restrict commercial horse riding to primary trails for a defined period in response to fire and rain.	Staff Time	BMCC
Rationalise the trail network, which will include closure of tracks that are degraded, unnecessary or duplicate.	\$7,000	BMCC
Decommissioned and degraded trails should be remediated. Costs will be dependant upon the outcome of the trail rationalisation.	tbd	BMCC User
Signage should be erected identifying to users the areas available for their activity.	\$2,500	BMCC Grants

<b>BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT</b>		
A Bushfire Asset Protection Zone should be established and maintained around buildings and assets of significant value in the Reserve.	Staff Time	BMCC
Hazard Reduction burning should achieve a mosaic of different age classes and comply to minimum and maximum fire intervals and other biodiversity protection principles.	Staff Time	Not required
Emergency management at the reserve should be improved including trail improvement, development of bushfire refuge and contractor protocols.	\$1,500	Not required
Within a area burnt, intensive activities such as commercial horse riding should be restricted for a defined period.	Staff Time	Not required
<b>LICENSING AND BOOKINGS</b>		
Council should require the licensing and/or bookings for all specialised or commercial activities that will use the Reserve & licenses should be for a defined area/time.	Staff Time	BMCC
Licenses should only be granted where they are consistent with the purpose of the Reserve and where they can achieve compliance with the objectives and management actions of this PoM.	Staff Time	BMCC

Once the PoM is adopted grants, capital works bids and other resource allocation will be investigated further.

**Sustainability Assessment**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Social</b>	Supports sustainable reserve and recreational infrastructure management providing ongoing provision of a range of services that contribute to the social well-being of resident’s and visitors.	A significant negative social effect is not expected to arise from implementation of the PoM. Some recreational & commercial horse riding on trails, which provides a social amenity, may be restricted in time if the PoM is not approved and implemented.
<b>Economic</b>	Supports existing nature based recreation businesses, and provides a sustainable strategy for their continued operation at Megalong Reserve. The PoM also identifies the potential for new business opportunities to be available at the Reserve.	A significant negative economic effect is not expected to arise from implementation of the PoM. However, if the PoM is not implemented existing and potential businesses may be negatively effected as trails deteriorate and require closure due to only limited management occurring.
<b>Environmental</b>	The PoM contributes to the protection of the significant natural heritage values of the reserve. The management framework and actions contained in the Plan will minimise impacts associated with existing and potential degrading processes.	Some existing activities will continue to result in minor impacts, however, with continue management intervention these impacts can be reduced to a level that is considered sustainable and will not adversely affect the values of the reserve.

**Financial implications**

The Megalong PoM is estimated to cost the Council \$22,000-\$32,000 to implement and these costs are currently budgeted for in existing work programs. Three unfunded actions that require further investigation prior to costing or are only required if new developments were proposed and can be externally fund. Consequently, the implementation of the Megalong PoM will not result in an additional cost to the Council.

**Legal and risk management issues**

Actions contained in the Megalong PoM will contribute to improve the legal and risk management position of the Council. The PoM has identified several minor risk management and enforcement issues associated with the reserve and has proposed actions to achieve improvement.

**Conclusion**

The development of the Megalong Reserve draft PoM involved comprehensive research, field investigation and public consultation. The plan has sought to improve management of the reserve and resolve any competing demands. This draft PoM satisfactorily resolves the issues raised and it is expected that the few concerns will be raised throughout the public exhibition phase.

It is recommended that Council endorse the Megalong Reserve Draft Plan of Management for public exhibition.

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