
MOUNT SAMARIA STATE PARK

MANAGEMENT PLAN

**This 1996 plan was evaluated in 2009 and will
continue to be implemented for a further five years**

National Parks Service

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENT**

VICTORIA

JUNE 1996

This Management Plan for Mount Samaria National Park is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management of the Park until the Plan is reviewed. A Draft Management Plan was published in February 1996. A total of 12 submissions were received. Copies of this Plan can be purchased from:

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FOREWORD

Mount Samaria State Park has a remote and peaceful atmosphere and yet is easily accessible. It is ideal for bushwalking, camping, picnicking and sightseeing. Facilities are low-key, in keeping with the atmosphere of the Park.

The Park contains diverse vegetation, significant flora and a diverse range of fauna habitats. Visitors will discover many interesting features including panoramic views, waterfalls, colourful wildflower displays and historic sawmill sites.

This Approved Plan establishes the long-term management framework to protect the important conservation and recreation values of the Park while ensuring that it plays an important role in nature-based tourism in North East Victoria.

As a result of the Plan's implementation, I am confident that the Park's diverse environments, spectacular scenery and semi-remote character will be protected while visitors' enjoyment is enhanced.

I look forward to the community's support for the management of this important State Park, a significant part of Victoria's parks system.

Hon Marie Tehan MP
MINISTER FOR CONSERVATION
and LAND MANAGEMENT

APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Approved Management Plan, prepared as required under Section 17 of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.), provides the basis and direction for future management of Mount

Samaria State Park. It was finalised following consideration of the eleven submissions received on the Draft Plan.

Mark Stone
Director, National Parks Service

Chris McRae
Interim Regional Manager, North East

SUMMARY

Mount Samaria State Park (7600 ha) is a forested plateau, noted for its conservation values and impressive scenery. Situated between Benalla and Mansfield in north-east Victoria, it complements other Parks and conservation reserves in this area. Its high scenic values make it attractive for activities including picnicking, camping, bushwalking and nature study in a semi-remote setting.

Mount Samaria State Park will be managed for conservation and recreation consistent with its State Park status. The Park's distinctive character and natural setting, coupled with sensitive management of facilities, will result in high quality experiences for visitors.

The main management directions for the Park are summarised as follows.

- Natural and cultural values will be protected.
- A pest plant and animal control strategy will be prepared which identifies key sites, target species and control methods.
- Facilities which encourage appropriate recreational activities in keeping with the Park's semi-remote and undeveloped atmosphere will be maintained and enhanced.
- Increased visitor use of the Park will be encouraged through appropriate promotion of the Park.
- The local community will be encouraged to be actively involved in the management of the Park.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and planning area

Mount Samaria State Park is situated in north-eastern Victoria, approximately 200 km north-east of Melbourne. It lies half-way between Mansfield and Benalla between the Strathbogie Ranges and the Toombullups (figure 1).

The management plan covers the Mount Samaria State Park (7 600 ha) which includes the Blue Range Reference Area (400 ha).

1.2 Regional context

Mount Samaria State Park is bordered by cleared farmland to the north, west and south, and State forest and pine plantations to the east. There are significant blocks of public land such as the Strathbogie Ranges, the Blue Range and the Tolmie Highlands nearby.

There is a variety of contrasting recreation opportunities near Mount Samaria. The Alpine National Park (Wabonga Plateau) lies 30 km to the east. Other attractions include Lake Eildon, Eildon State Park, Fraser National Park, Lake Nillahcootie and Toombullup Historic Area.

1.3 Significance of the Park

Mount Samaria State Park makes a valuable contribution to Victoria's parks system, which aims to protect viable, representative samples of the State's natural environments on public land. Parks also provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values, and may make important contributions to tourism.

The Park is assigned to the IUCN Category II (National Parks) of the United Nations' List of National Parks and Protected Areas. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and appropriate recreation.

The Park is listed on the Register of the National Estate in recognition of its importance as part of our heritage.

Significant features of the Park include:

Natural values

- Rock outcrops of geological significance, and several waterfalls.
- A diverse range of vegetation communities supporting 320 recorded native species, five of which are threatened.
- An area of Mountain Swamp Gum alliance, containing several significant plant species.
- Many plant species which are near the limit of their distribution.
- A diverse range of faunal habitats, supporting some species which are threatened.

Cultural values

- The remains of timber seasoning kilns and haulage tramways of historical significance.

Tourism and recreation values

- A variety of attractions and recreational opportunities in a semi-remote setting, particularly for walking, camping, touring and nature study.
- Relatively good 2WD vehicle access.
- A variety of walks to sites of natural and historical significance including waterfalls, an old tramline and extensive panoramic views from several vantage points.

1.4 Creation of the Park

Mount Samaria State Park was included on Schedule Three of the National Parks Act as a result of the *National Parks (Amendment) Act 1978* (Vic.) and proclaimed on 26 April 1979. It was transferred to the new Schedule Two B (State Parks) in 1989. The Park was created following Government decisions on recommendations from Land Conservation Council (LCC) studies in the North-eastern Study Area (LCC 1974).

1.5 Legislation, LCC recommendations and guidelines

Mount Samaria State Park is reserved and managed under the provisions of the National Parks Act. The Act requires the Director to preserve and protect the natural environment of the Park, and its natural and other features, and to provide for the use of the Park by the public for enjoyment, recreation and education, and for research.

The Land Conservation Council recommendations for the Park (LCC 1974; LCC 1986) include providing for recreational and educational experiences related to enjoying and understanding the natural environment. A specific recommendation in relation to the Park was to provide for apiculture on its western boundary.

The Blue Range Reference Area has been proclaimed under the *Reference Areas Act 1978* (Vic.) and is managed in accordance with Ministerial directives, the relevant NRE guideline and a specific management plan (NPS 1977). Within this area, which forms a reference for comparative study, natural processes will be allowed to continue undisturbed.

The Park is managed in accordance with NRE guidelines for the management of parks (NPS 1995), LCC recommendations, and other NRE plans and guidelines, including:

- Benalla Regional Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1995a);
- Goulburn-Broken Regional Landcare Plan (Landcare 1993).

1.6 Park management aims

Sections 4 and 17 of the National Parks Act are the main basis for management of the Park. The following management aims are derived from those sections and as such govern all aspects of park management.

Resource conservation

- Preserve and protect the natural environment.
- Allow natural environmental processes to continue with the minimum of disturbance, and maintain biodiversity.
- Conserve features of archaeological, historical and cultural significance.

Park protection

- Protect water catchments and streams.
- Protect human life, the park and adjacent lands from injury by fire.
- Eradicate or otherwise control introduced plants, animals and diseases.

The Park visit

- Provide opportunities for appropriate recreation and tourism.
- Promote and encourage appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the Park's natural and cultural values and its recreational opportunities.
- Encourage appropriate park use and behaviour, and foster a conservation ethic in visitors.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of visitors.

Other

- Provide for and encourage scientific research, surveys and monitoring that will contribute to a better understanding and management of the Park.
- Co-operate with local, State and interstate government authorities, the community and other interested organisations to assist in the management of the Park.

2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Mount Samaria State Park finds a Park valued for its semi-remote atmosphere and interesting features, and offering a variety of appropriate recreational opportunities. The most popular activities are walking, camping, picnicking and nature study. The Park is being managed for conservation and recreation consistent with its State Park and IUCN status and with an increasing understanding of its diverse natural environments.

A high quality visitor experience is encouraged through high standard interpretation of the Park's values. Visitor facilities are sensitively managed and are in keeping with the Park's isolated and semi-remote atmosphere. In conjunction with other parks and reserves, the Park is being increasingly valued as an important part of the nature-based tourism opportunities in the area. Careful and sensitive management by NRE, assisted by Friends and other volunteer groups, ensures that the Park's values are being maintained for future generations.

2.2 Management directions

Major management directions for the Park are outlined below.

Resource conservation

- Significant species and communities will be monitored, and threats to these species and communities identified and managed.
- Visitor impact on significant and sensitive natural features such as the significant plant communities, and cultural features such as the sawmill relics, will be minimised.

Park protection

- Fuel reduction burning will be managed in accordance with the Benalla Regional Fire Protection Plan and the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land.

- A pest plant and animal control strategy which identifies key sites, target species and methods of control will be prepared.
- Degraded sites will be rehabilitated.
- Vehicle access will be seasonally restricted where required to protect vehicle tracks and to minimise erosion.

The Park visit

- The experience of relative remoteness will be retained.
- Existing picnic and camping facilities will be upgraded.
- Visitor enjoyment of the Park will be enhanced by improving interpretation of the Park's natural and cultural features.
- Surveys will be conducted to better determine visitor needs and expectations.

2.3 Zoning

A Park management zoning scheme has been developed to:

- provide a geographic framework in which to manage the Park;
- indicate which management directions have priority in different parts of the Park;
- indicate the types and levels of use appropriate throughout the Park;
- assist in minimising existing and potential conflicts between uses and activities, or between those and the protection of Park values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.

Two principal management zones and one overlay designation applies to the Park. Table 1 specifies the management zone and overlay characteristics and figure 1 shows the location of those areas.

TABLE 1 PARK MANAGEMENT ZONES AND OVERLAY

	MANAGEMENT ZONES		OVERLAY
	REFERENCE AREA	CONSERVATION/RECREATION	SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA
AREA/LOCATION	400 ha; 5% of Park. Comprises Blue Range Reference Area.	7200 ha; 95% of Park. All of the Park except the Reference Area.	Mountain Swamp Gum alliance, mossland and herbfield areas, and Wild Dog Creek Falls.
VALUES	Relatively undisturbed land types and associated vegetation.	Important natural values and scope for appropriate recreational opportunities.	Discrete significant areas requiring special attention.
GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIMS	Protect viable samples of one or more land types that are relatively undisturbed for comparative study with similar land types elsewhere, by keeping all human interference to the essential minimum and ensuring as far as practicable that the only long-term change results from natural processes.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small-scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.	Protect specific natural or cultural values in specific areas and sites where a special management focus is required.

3 RESOURCE CONSERVATION

3.1 Geological and landform features

The Park's geology is complex and diverse, resulting from geological activity during the Cambrian, Devonian and Quaternary periods. The Park contains a variety of landforms and soils but is dominated by a steep-sided undulating plateau. The plateau is formed on Devonian granodiorite but there is a variety of other igneous and sedimentary rocks throughout the Park. Much of the Park contains friable brown gradational soils, and red duplex soils, yellowish duplex soils and friable red gradational soils also occur.

Features of particular interest include:

- Cambrian greenstone rock outcrops which are among the oldest rocks in the State;
- Wild Dog Creek Falls.

Aims

- Minimise the impacts of visitors and management on significant geological features, including waterfalls and rock outcrops.
- Prevent and control soil erosion caused by visitors and management activities.

Management strategies

- *Monitor the impact of visitors on geological features and develop management guidelines as required.*
- *Prevent erosion of vehicular and walking tracks during wet weather by closing roads and tracks on a seasonal basis as required (section 5.2.1).*
- *Ensure adequate drainage of all tracks to reduce the potential for erosion.*

3.2 Vegetation

A major feature of the Park is its diversity of vegetation types, including Narrow-leaf Peppermint and Blue Gum forests (which occur over most of the plateau), drier low open-

forests with a grassy understorey, closed heath and mossland-herbfield. The understorey species give excellent springtime wildflower displays.

Three hundred and twenty native species have been recorded within the Park (Beaglehole 1988), five of which are listed as threatened (appendix 1). A number of species found in the Park are near the limit of their distribution (appendix 1).

Several features of botanical interest recorded by Smith (1979) include:

- Mountain Swamp Gum swampy heaths, which occur on poorly drained areas and contain several significant plant species;
- mossland-herbfield communities, which are sensitive to disturbance;
- several significant species in the vicinity of the waterfalls;
- several significant species which occur on the lower slopes of the northern spurs.

Much of the forest is relatively young as a result of timber harvesting carried out from the 1920s until 1969. The presence of mature and over-mature stands of Narrow-leaf Peppermint and Blue Gum forest is a significant feature of the Park.

Aims

- Protect native plant communities in their natural condition, and maintain biodiversity.
- Enhance the long-term survival prospects of threatened or significant plant species or communities.
- Revegetate degraded areas.

Management strategies

- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act listed species according to approved action statements.*
- *Encourage surveys and research on significant flora and vegetation communities in the Park to improve*

knowledge of their management requirements.

- *Ensure significant species and vegetation communities are adequately protected from management activities, including fire protection works.*
- *Monitor the impacts of visitor use on the Mountain Swamp Gum alliance near the Camphora campsite. Provide visitors with information concerning the protection of this alliance.*
- *Ensure that drainage patterns which may influence the Mountain Swamp Gum alliance within the Mountain Swamp Gum Special Protection Area are not modified by road works or other management activities.*
- *Monitor the impacts of visitor use on vegetation at Wild Dog Creek Falls and take appropriate management action as necessary.*
- *Increase knowledge of fire regimes required for the conservation of vegetation communities in the Park. Use ecological burning in accordance with fire management policies and guidelines where necessary to ensure the conservation of plant communities.*

3.3 Fauna

The Park contains a high diversity of fauna habitats. Information about fauna in the Park is not comprehensive but previous surveys have identified 18 species of indigenous mammals (including 7 bats), 92 birds, 14 reptiles and 6 amphibians. Mammals recorded include the Sugar Glider, Bobuck and Greater Glider. The value of the Park for hollow-dependent species is likely to increase as the forests age.

Significant species recorded in the Park include the Spot-tailed Quoll, classified as vulnerable in Victoria. The Peregrine Falcon has also been recorded. Although no longer considered threatened within Victoria, this species has been reduced in much of its former world-wide

range. The presence of a nesting pair in the Park is significant.

Prescribed burning could affect Spot-tailed Quolls by destroying hollow logs on the ground, in which they live. The species may also be affected by baiting programs for pest animals.

Aims

- Protect native animal communities, and maintain genetic diversity.
- Enhance the long-term survival prospects of threatened or significant fauna.

Management strategies

- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act listed species according to approved action statements, in particular the Spot-tailed Quoll and Peregrine Falcon.*
- *Increase knowledge of the Park's fauna and its management requirements, concentrating on locating threatened species and developing management actions for their protection.*
- *Develop a monitoring program which focuses on significant species and their habitats. Encourage university or community groups to participate.*
- *Minimise visitor impacts on sensitive faunal habitats through the restriction of visitor access if required.*
- *Do not establish walking tracks or visitor facilities near known Peregrine Falcon breeding sites.*

3.4 Landscape

The Park's distinctive landscape, in particular the steep escarpments, waterfalls and valleys of Mount Samaria and the Blue Range, contrasts dramatically with the surrounding rolling hills. These features are highly visible and consequently minimisation of undesirable visual effects from uses such as road construction is required.

Lookouts (e.g. Mount Samaria, Rocky Point, Nillahcootie and Back Creek Falls lookouts)

give outstanding views of features such as Lake Nillahcootie to the west and Mount Buller to the south-east.

Aim

- Conserve the landscape values of the Park, especially the areas of greatest scenic quality and viewer interest.

Management strategies

- *Site and design all facilities taking into account the need to protect the landscape qualities of the Park.*
- *Minimise the visual impacts of maintenance and fire protection activities.*
- *Monitor and assess activities or developments proposed on adjoining freehold land and seek to ensure that the landscape qualities of the Park are not compromised.*

3.5 Cultural heritage

Aboriginal heritage

There are no known Aboriginal sites in the Park; however, the area is thought to have been inhabited by Aborigines. There are two significant sites nearby: Lima South Burial Cave and the Garden Range rock art sites.

Studies of archaeological sites in Victoria suggest that upland areas such as Mount Samaria were less intensively occupied than the riverine plains. Surface artefact scatters may be located on spurs, ridge lines or river terraces. Rock outcrops within the Park may contain rock shelters supporting evidence of human activity including floor deposits, art or human remains.

The Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated is the relevant authority for cultural heritage in Mount Samaria under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth).

European heritage

Grazing began in the Park in the 1840s on the 'Samaria Run', which was a major local grazing enterprise covering much of the Park.

Large-scale timber cutting began on the plateau surrounding Mount Samaria in the 1920s. The ruins of the sawmill operated by Spring Creek Saw Mills and Timber Seasoning Company Limited are a graphic display of former sawmilling activities in the Park. A timber tramway, with many of its wooden rails still in place, and a winch site at the top of the eastern escarpment, are also significant historic features. Several old photographs of the company's operations contribute to the interpretation value of this site. Although most timber mills closed by the 1930s, sporadic timber harvesting continued in the Park until 1969.

Poorly documented local stories suggest that the area may have been used by bushrangers, including the Kelly Gang and Harry Power.

Aims

- Protect archaeological sites and sites of historic significance.
- Provide safe public access to, and interpret, selected historic features.

Management strategies

- *In consultation with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, investigate and document Aboriginal history and protect identified sites as appropriate.*
- *Record and catalogue the location of relics and significant historic sites as identified. Identify any threatening processes and take appropriate action, in consultation with Historic Places Section, to ensure appropriate conservation.*
- *Take action to ensure that historical sawmilling artefacts are not removed from the Park.*

4 PARK PROTECTION

4.1 Fire management

The National Parks Act requires the Director of National Parks to ensure that appropriate and sufficient measures are taken to protect parks from injury by fire.

Current fire protection measures are in accordance with the Benalla Regional Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1995a). This plan combines fire prevention and suppression in order to protect life, property and assets. Most of the Park is designated a Priority 4 burning zone, with Priority 2 burning zones located along the north-western, northern and north-eastern boundaries as part of a strategic burning corridor. Areas containing recreational facilities and the Blue Range Reference Area will not be subject to fuel reduction burning.

Research is required into the fire ecology of the Park's flora and fauna, especially threatened species and significant plant communities. Ecological and other controlled burning strategies should be developed in accordance with fire management policies and guidelines where necessary to ensure the conservation of plant communities.

Aims

- Protect human life, property and Park values from injury by fire.
- Maintain the natural influence of fires on ecological processes within the Park.
- Minimise the adverse effects of fires and fire suppression methods.

Management strategies

- *Undertake prescribed burning in accordance with the Benalla Regional Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1995a) and the Code of Practice for Fire Management (CNR 1995b).*
- *Review the Park's fire protection strategy in association with reviews of the Fire Protection Plan, or as new information becomes available, ensuring that park*

values are considered in the preparation of fire pre-suppression strategies.

- *Publicise and enforce fire regulations and restrictions on the use and role of fire within the Park.*
- *Ensure that grassed picnic areas are slashed regularly to help protect visitors to the Park, and that fire dams are adequately maintained.*
- *Give preference to using the following suppression methods as far as practicable in the Blue Range Reference Area:*
 - *use of hand tools and aerial suppression;*
 - *use of existing roads and tracks and natural features as control lines;*
 - *backburning;*
 - *allowing wildfires to burn out to appropriate control lines, outside the main fire danger periods and where conditions allow.*
- *Rehabilitate any areas of the Park which may be disturbed by control lines and other suppression activities as soon as practicable following fire suppression operations in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fire Management (CNR 1995b).*
- *Protect the old timber tramline from prescribed burning and wildfire if possible.*
- *Ensure the results of relevant research are included in any ecological fire management strategy, and in the review of the Fire Protection Plan.*

4.2 Pest plants and animals, and diseases

Sixty-seven introduced plant species (including seven noxious weeds) have been recorded in the Park (Smith 1979), many of them confined to the Park boundaries, possibly invading from surrounding farmland.

The major problem species are Blackberry, St Johns Wort, Skeleton Weed and Spear Thistle. Wildlings from pine plantations adjacent to the Park have some potential to cause problems.

Several pest animal species occur in the Park including wild dogs, foxes, rabbits, deer, goats, cats and pigs. Pigs, which dig up large areas in search of native tubers, are the major concern.

Adjacent land holders have complained of wild dogs and feral pigs entering their properties from the Park, killing stock and disturbing pasture. Pig populations are known to be significant in adjacent pine plantations. A management plan for the control of pigs in the Park was developed in 1991.

There are several small areas of dead trees in the Park, particularly between the Mount Samaria summit and Wild Dog Creek Falls. The cause of the dieback is not known, but drought stress is suspected.

Aims

- Control, and where possible eradicate, non-indigenous plants and animals, and diseases.
- Minimise the impact of control programs on native flora and fauna.
- Establish, and where possible control, the cause of dieback in the affected area.

Management strategies

- *Prepare and implement a pest plants and animals control strategy for the Park which:*
 - *identifies key target species and locations;*
 - *identifies particular conservation areas where special efforts may be required to control pest plants and animals (e.g. locations of threatened species);*
 - *specifies appropriate control methods which ensure maximum protection of non-target species, in particular the Spot-tailed Quoll, and which have minimal impact on the natural environment.*
- *Continue to implement the existing management plan for the control of pigs.*
- *Reduce the risk of new infestations by checking sites of potential weed sources (e.g. cleared areas or recent roadworks) and implementing an appropriate control strategy.*
- *Monitor and identify the cause of the tree dieback and undertake appropriate action.*
- *Maintain the electric fencing program with adjacent properties to reduce the number of wild dogs entering private land from the Park (section 6.2 and 7.2).*
- *Encourage adjacent landholders, particularly pine plantation managers, to control pig populations on their properties (sections 6.2 and 7.2).*

5 THE PARK VISIT

5.1 The Park visitor

Mount Samaria State Park offers the visitor opportunities to enjoy activities including picnicking, camping and nature study in a semi-remote setting. The Park will continue to offer these opportunities without a significant expansion of existing facilities.

In 1994-95, the Park recorded an estimated 3300 visits, of which 25 per cent were overnight. However, use of the Park is expected to increase gradually as the tourism potential of the area is realised.

The majority of visitors travel from other parts of Victoria. Interstate and overseas visitors occasionally go to the Park.

Local use of the Park is fairly limited. Nevertheless, the Park is well situated to cater for particular recreational demands of Benalla and Mansfield residents. The development of five school camps nearby is likely to increase demand within the Park for recreation and environmental education programs.

Visitors to the district can experience the Park's features in conjunction with a variety of nearby attractions. The Park has attractive bushland scenery, complementing water based recreation on Lake Nillahcootie and Lake Eildon.

Providing for the visitor

Mount Samaria State Park offers opportunities to three distinct visitor types. The key opportunities are:

- for those in two-wheel-drive vehicles to enjoy accessible picnic areas, campsites, short walks and lookouts;
- for self-reliant visitors to camp overnight and enjoy a variety of features, especially the longer walks, and for other self-reliant visitors to undertake activities such as rock climbing or horse riding;
- for groups involved in organised educational or recreational activities.

Future management will continue to focus on existing visitor types and activities and will maintain the semi-remote and essentially undeveloped setting. Facilities for picnicking and camping will continue to be concentrated at existing sites.

Aims

- Develop an understanding of visitor profiles and attitudes.
- Provide for visitors in accordance with the above overview of future management for visitors

Management strategies

- *Provide facilities and services which highlight, but are in keeping with, the area's distinctive character (sections 3.4, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, and tables 2, 4 and 5).*
- *Permit recreational activities in accordance with table 3.*
- *Encourage all visitors to adopt minimal impact techniques and to adhere to codes of conduct appropriate to their activity.*
- *Conduct visitor surveys to assess visitor numbers, profiles, pattern of behaviour, expectations and preferences.*
- *Monitor visitor use to ensure adequate provision of facilities consistent with appropriate types and levels of use.*

5.2 Visitor recreational activities and facilities

5.2.1 Vehicle access

Mount Samaria Road, which traverses the Park from north to south, is the only major public access route for 2WD vehicles. Butchers Track is available for 4WD access on a seasonal basis. These routes are also used by trail bikes.

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	MANAGEMENT ZONES		OVERLAY
	REFERENCE AREA	CONSERVATION & RECREATION	SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA
Picnicking	No	Yes	No
Camping - designated sites (with facilities)	N/A	Yes	N/A
Camping - dispersed (no facilities)	No	Yes	No
Camping - horse based	No	No	No
Walking	No	Yes	Yes
Bicycle riding	No	YC (5.2.1)	No
Horse riding	No	YC (5.2.4)	No
Orienteering / Rogaining	No	Yes	No
Rock climbing / Abseiling	No	Yes	No
Firewood removal	No	No	No
Hunting	No	No	No
Trail bike riding	No	YC (5.2.1)	No
Dogs	No	No	No
Yes	Appropriate	YC	Conditional; refer to relevant section for details
No	Not appropriate	N/A	Not applicable

TABLE 4 MANAGEMENT OF ROADS AND TRACKS

ROAD OR TRACK	CLASS	COMMENTS/USES	STATUS	FUTURE MANAGEMENT
Mount Samaria Road	1	Major access track	O	Unchanged
Williams Road	2	Access to private property	O	Unchanged
Browns Road/Track	2/3	Access to private property	O	Unchanged
Wileman Track	3	Used by walkers as access to falls	MVO	Unchanged
West Track	3	Fire access perimeter track	MVO	Unchanged
Butchers Track	3	Minor access track from the north-east (seasonal closure)	O	Unchanged
Wild Dog Creek Falls Track	2	Used by walkers as access to falls	MVO	Unchanged
Back Creek Falls Track	2	Used by walkers as access to falls	MVO	Unchanged
Spring Creek Track	3	Minor access track from eastern boundary	MVO	Unchanged
<u>Class</u>		<u>Status</u>		
1	All vehicle - all weather	MVO	Management vehicles only	
2	All vehicle - dry weather only	O	Open to public vehicles	
3	4WD - dry weather only			

- *Maintain Mount Samaria Road for all weather two-wheel-drive access, but not for caravans.*
- *Permit trail bike riding on roads and vehicle tracks in accordance with table 4, but not on MVO tracks.*
- *Permit cycling on all roads and vehicle tracks including MVO tracks in accordance with table 4, but not on the walking tracks listed in table 5.*

5.2.2 Day visits and camping

The Park's major visitor attractions include excellent viewing points with sweeping panoramas of the Victorian Alps, the Murray Basin Plains and Lake Nillahcootie, scenic waterfalls, the summit of Mount Samaria and attractive and uncrowded natural areas for walking and camping.

There are currently four designated camping sites within the Park: two car-based sites and two walk-in sites. All four sites have fireplaces and toilets. The two walk-in areas situated at Camphora and near Wild Dog Creek Falls can cater for up to five groups (20 people) and are used mostly in the summer months. From these two sites, there is easy access to walking tracks and the waterfalls.

The car-based campsites are situated to the east of Samaria Well and at the Spring Creek sawmill site. Samaria Well is in the northern dry forests. It has some scenic value and looks out over adjacent farmland but is away from the main areas of attraction in the Park. The Spring Creek site is adjacent to the sawmill ruins and is an ideal location to link with many walking tracks.

Three car-based picnic areas are designated in the Park: Samaria Well, the Spring Creek sawmill site and Rocky Point Lookout. Samaria Well is the largest of the picnic facilities, catering for about fifteen people at any one time. The sawmill ruins are a major focus of the Park. The picnic site at the sawmill ruins can cater for no more than three small groups. Rocky Point Lookout caters for about six people.

Other areas suitable for picnics are Camphora and Wild Dog Creek Falls campsites. Day visitors can use the facilities in unoccupied campsites as required.

Pleasure driving is a popular activity in which visitors can easily view the changing forest types as they move from one end of the Park to the other. Mount Samaria Road is maintained at a standard suitable for all weather access by public 2WD vehicles.

Table 2 and figure 1 show the location and types of facilities available in the Park.

Facilities will continue to be concentrated at existing sites.

Aim

- Establish and maintain day visitor and camping facilities which enhance visitor enjoyment of the Park and are consistent with protecting Park values.

Management strategies

- *Provide low-key picnic and camping facilities for use by visitors in accordance with figure 1 and table 2.*
- *Monitor visitor use at all campsites and day use areas. Provide additional facilities at existing sites as appropriate.*
- *Encourage dispersed camping within the Park by bushwalkers only, with guidance from NRE staff.*
- *Develop a 2WD nature drive interpreting the features along Mount Samaria Road.*
- *Monitor the impact of camping at the Camphora campsite in order to ensure the protection of the Mountain Swamp Gum alliance (section 3.2).*

5.2.3 Bushwalking

Short family walks and longer day walks enable visitors to enjoy the Park's interesting features and remote atmosphere. A summary of existing walking tracks within the Park is shown in table 5 and figure 1. Several tracks shown in table 4 are also popular with walkers.

TABLE 5 WALKING TRACKS

NAME	LENGTH (ONE WAY)	CURRENT STANDARD	ADDITIONAL WORK REQUIREMENTS	PROPOSED STANDARD
Mount Samaria Walking Track	4 km	D	Upgrade track and develop car park on Mount Samaria Road.	C
Kiln Nature Walk	250 m	D	Prepare nature walk notes.	B/C
Tramline Track	4 km	D	Extend to Spring Creek Track.	C
Wild Dog Creek Falls Walking Track	1 km	D	Upgrade.	B
Lightning Track	3 km	D		D
Summit Link Track	2 km	D		D
Rocky Point Track	200 m	D		D

Standard

Grade B	Track well defined and drained and surfaced where necessary
Grade C	Track well defined, benched and drained where necessary.
Grade D	Track defined through use, usually drained and cleared.

Good walking opportunities are provided from Mount Samaria Road to Mount Samaria. This track continues to Butchers Track, with links to Wild Dog Creek campsite and the Spring Creek sawmill site. An excellent walk has also been developed along the old timber tramway to the old winching station.

The walk to the summit of Mount Samaria is popular for its spectacular views over the plains to the north and to the ranges in the east and west. Currently the entrance to the track lacks an adequate car park (section 5.2.1).

Aim

- Provide a range of walking opportunities, from short walks to overnight walks, while minimising impacts on Park values.

Management strategies

- *Maintain and enhance a range of walking opportunities in accordance with table 5.*

- *Investigate walking track opportunities in the northern section of the Park.*
- *Encourage visitors to use fuel stoves for cooking and heating.*
- *In response to visitor surveys, review the requirement for any further walking tracks over the next few years.*

5.2.4 Horse riding

Horse riding is currently permitted on Mount Samaria Road, Butchers Track and Williams Road. Riding is not a popular use of the Park and occurs more in adjacent State forest. Nevertheless, precautions must be taken to minimise soil erosion and the introduction of weeds.

Aim

- Provide opportunities for both commercial and recreational horse riders while minimising the impact of horse riding on Park values and other users.

Management strategies

- *Permit horse riding on formed public vehicle tracks but not on MVO or walking tracks (table 4).*
- *Do not permit horse camping in the Park. Encourage campers to use appropriate sites in adjacent State forest.*
- *Monitor the impacts of horse riding activities in the Park to establish carrying capacities for each track and modify usage accordingly.*
- *Monitor the impact of horses on the spread of pest plants.*

5.2.5 Rock climbing

Some areas within Mount Samaria State Park have been used for rock climbing and abseiling. Usage has been infrequent.

Aim

- Allow rock climbing and abseiling in appropriate areas, consistent with the protection of conservation values.

Management strategies

- *Promote a minimal impact approach to climbing and abseiling.*
- *Monitor the impacts of rock climbing and abseiling on the natural values of the Park and develop strategies to protect these values as required.*

5.3 Visitor information, interpretation and education

The provision of information, interpretive services and environmental education will help orientate visitors, foster an understanding and appreciation of the Park's features and values, influence visitor use, reduce management problems and contribute to a broader understanding of natural environments and management objectives.

The Park offers opportunities to develop themes related to the Park's diverse environments,

spectacular views and history. The saw mill ruins and adjacent timber tramway have excellent potential for interpretation.

Information and interpretation should build on these themes as well as emphasising the need for minimal impact practices for visitors to the Park.

An information board at Spring Creek sawmill is currently the main source of information for visitors.

The presence of up to five school camps nearby will increase demands for camping, recreation and environmental education programs within the Park, and for Departmental staff to assist with those programs.

Aims

- Provide visitors with interpretive information about the values of the Park.
- Provide educational opportunities for schools, tertiary institutions and community groups.

Management strategies

- *Develop a Park Interpretation Plan to guide Park managers and staff in developing, maintaining and evaluating interpretive and education services in the Park.*
- *Provide adequate visitor orientation information and safety messages at key visitor nodes.*
- *Establish and implement monitoring and maintenance schedules for all interpretive facilities.*
- *Undertake regular evaluation of information and interpretation programs related to the Park.*
- *Develop opportunities for recreation and education associated with the major historic themes and features of the Park, particularly timber harvesting.*
- *Improve the Spring Creek sawmill site for public interpretation. Develop a site plan*

and specific conservation requirements for the area.

- *Erect visitor information boards at both ends of the Park (Samaria Well and Rocky Point Lookout) to complement published information.*
- *Improve signage within the Park, especially that associated with walking tracks.*
- *Establish and implement monitoring and maintenance schedules for all interpretive facilities.*

5.4 Commercial tourism operations

The main tourism strength of the Park is its role as one of a number of medium profile attractions in the Benalla-Mansfield area. The key task is to increase awareness of the Park and link it to other features. The Park has further potential for nature based tourism in a semi-remote setting. Horse riding commercial tour operators are currently using the Park.

Aims

- Provide tourism opportunities consistent with the Park's management objectives.
- Support and complement broader tourism opportunities and activity in the region.

Management strategies

- *Assess the Park's values and features to identify potential itineraries, events, themes and experiences for tourism and make local tourism bodies aware of these.*
- *Monitor tourist use of the Park to ensure impacts are not detrimental to the Park's natural and cultural values.*

- *Encourage applications from commercial tour operators to provide a range of tours and services compatible with Park values.*
- *Assess the potential for touring links between the Park and other tourism features in the area (driving routes, bike trails, walking tracks, etc.) and liaise with local tourism bodies regarding their implementation.*

5.5 Public safety

The climate and topography of the Park present inherent dangers and risks to visitors. These risks are increased by the Park's relative remoteness and lack of access in some parts.

Aim

- Promote and encourage safe practices among staff and visitors to the Park.

Management strategies

- *Ensure Park staff are sufficiently trained to assist in emergency situations.*
- *Encourage visitors to seek information on any activities they intend to undertake and the risks associated with them in the Park by reading available information or contacting the Benalla NRE office.*
- *Undertake regular inspection of facilities to ensure they are maintained in a safe condition.*

6 COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Friends and volunteers

Currently there is no Friends of the Mount Samaria State Park group. However, several groups have undertaken volunteer work in the Park. Interested volunteer groups can make valuable contributions to several Park management projects and their assistance will be encouraged.

Aim

- Encourage volunteer involvement in managing the Park.

Management strategies

- *Assist volunteers in forming a 'Friends' group for the Park and support such a group once established.*
- *Develop a long-term volunteer strategy for the Park that uses the skills and interests of volunteer groups in undertaking appropriate park management activities.*

6.2 Community awareness and Park neighbours

Neighbours to the Park are primarily involved in agriculture and, to a minor extent, the timber industry where the Park abuts Victorian Plantations Corporation land to the south-east. Their main interest in the Park relates to the management of fire and pest plants and animals.

Co-ordination of pest plant and animal control programs with Park neighbours is essential to the success of such programs.

Aims

- Increase public awareness of the natural values of the Park and management activities including fuel reduction burning, and pest plant and animal control.
- Encourage conservation and sound land management practices on private land adjoining the Park.

Management strategies

- *Continue to liaise with local community groups and landholders, and as appropriate involve them in relevant aspects of planning and management of the Park, particularly in relation to Park boundary issues.*
- *Apply, and encourage the application of, the Good Neighbour Policy to the management of issues on or near the boundary of the Park.*
- *Encourage a co-ordinated pest plant and animal control program with Park neighbours.*

7 OTHER ISSUES

7.1 Authorised uses

7.1.1 Apiculture

In accordance with approved LCC recommendations (LCC 1974; LCC 1986), apiculture is permitted within the Park on its western boundary. A maximum number of five sites is permitted in the Park.

Bee sites are currently located along Mount Samaria Road and are not all restricted to the western boundary as specified by LCC recommendations.

There is some concern that introduced bees, both domestic and feral, may adversely affect native flora and fauna. While studies on the effects of introduced bees are limited, a conservative approach to apiculture in the Park is warranted until longer term studies establish otherwise.

Aim

- Provide for apiculture in accordance with LCC recommendations and NRE guidelines.

Management strategies

- *Permit up to five bee sites on the western boundary in locations which will minimise impacts on the Park and visitors.*
- *In consultation with the Victorian Apiculturists Association, relocate the bee site currently in use near the centre of the Park adjacent to the Mount Samaria summit in line with LCC recommendations.*
- *License bee sites in accordance with the NRE apiculture guidelines.*

7.1.2 Other

A trigonometric station on the summit of Mount Samaria is managed by the Office of Surveyor General, NRE.

Aim

- Provide for the use of the existing trigonometric station and any appropriate future public utilities while minimising impacts on Park values.

Management strategies

- *Liaise with the Office of Surveyor-General regarding conditions to ensure minimal impact of the trigonometric station on the Park and concerning access to the summit along part of the Mount Samaria Walking Track.*
- *Consider and manage any additional use for public utilities in accordance with NPS guidelines.*

7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

The eastern boundary of the Park adjoins State Forest and, in the south, softwood plantation.

The remaining boundaries are adjacent to freehold land, most of which has been cleared for pasture. There is an increasing demand for residential blocks in these areas adjacent to the Park. There are private land inliers in the north and the west of the Park.

Aim

- Minimise conflict between Park management and surrounding land use.

Management strategies

- *Undertake annual inspections of Park boundaries to ensure that fencing, fuel reduction and control of pest plants and animals is adequate.*
- *Be involved in relevant local government authority planning matters, including land uses along Park boundaries.*
- *Consider purchase of the inlier in the northern section of the Park if the land becomes available.*

8 IMPLEMENTATION

A three-year rolling implementation program will be prepared for the Park to ensure efficient implementation of the Plan. Priorities for management are identified in table 6 as an initial step in this process.

TABLE 6 PRIORITIES FOR MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	SECTION IN PLAN
Protection	
Secure sawmilling relics to ensure that they are not removed.	3.5
Implement the Fire Protection Plan.	4.1
Prepare and implement a pest plants and animals control strategy.	4.2
Monitor and identify the cause of tree dieback and take appropriate action.	4.2
The Park visit	
Assess the opportunities for appropriate tourism within the Park.	5.2, 5.4
Manage the existing network of roads and tracks, and in particular maintain Mount Samaria Road to 2WD standard.	5.2.1
Develop and upgrade car parking at Rocky Point Lookout and at the beginning of the Mount Samaria Walking Track.	5.2.1
Develop Mount Samaria Nature Drive.	5.2.2
Upgrade and extend walking tracks in accordance with table 5.	5.2.3
Develop a site plan for the sawmill ruins.	5.3
Erect visitor display boards at the two main Park entry points.	5.3
Develop an interpretation plan for the Park.	5.3
Update existing, and produce new, publications promoting the Park and its key features.	5.3
Upgrade and improve signage within the Park.	5.3
Monitoring and research	
Encourage surveys and research on significant flora.	3.2
Encourage research on the fire ecology of vegetation communities within the Park.	3.2, 4.1
Undertake fauna surveys to identify any significant species.	3.3
Investigate and document Aboriginal history in the Park.	3.5
Monitor the impact of visitors on Park values.	5.1
Improve collection techniques for visitor use statistics.	5.1

REFERENCES

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- CNR 1995a *Benalla Regional Fire Protection Plan*, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Benalla.
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- LCC 1974 *Final Recommendations - North-Eastern Study Area District 2*, Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.
- LCC 1986 *Final Recommendations - North-Eastern Area (Benalla - Upper Murray) Review*, Land Conservation Council, Melbourne.
- NPS 1977 *Victorian Reference Area System Management Plan - Blue Range Reference Area*, National Parks Service, Melbourne (unpub.).
- NPS 1995 *National Parks and Conservation Reserves Guidelines and Procedures Manual*, National Parks Service, Melbourne.
- Smith, P.G. 1979 *Mount Samaria State Park - Report on the Vegetation*, National Parks Service, Melbourne (unpub.).

APPENDIX 1 SIGNIFICANT FLORA

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STATUS*
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	Common Spleenwort	r
<i>Brachyscome gracilis</i>	Dookie Daisy	v
<i>Caladenia</i> sp. (<i>C. patersonii</i> group)	Spider-orchid	r
<i>Euchiton umbricolus</i>	Cliff Cudweed	r
<i>Lepyrodia anarthria</i>	Scale-rush	r

* Status FIS database.

Victoria: v - vulnerable
r - rare

Smith (1979) and Beauglehole (1988) have noted a number of additional species with restricted distribution or at the limit of their distribution:

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Acacia aculeatissima</i>	Thin-leaf Wattle
<i>Acacia pravissima</i>	Ovens Wattle
<i>Aristida jerichoensis</i>	Number Nine Wire-grass
<i>Callistemon pityoides</i>	Alpine Bottlebrush
<i>Dillwynia juniperina</i>	Prickly Parrot-pea
<i>Epacris paludosa</i>	Swamp Heath
<i>Goodenia blackiana</i>	Black's Goodenia
<i>Goodia lotifolia</i>	Golden-tip
<i>Hibbertia pendunculata</i>	Stalked Guinea-flower
<i>Microsorium pustulatum</i>	Kangaroo Fern
<i>Millotia tenuifolia</i>	Soft Millotia
<i>Mirbelia oxylobioides</i>	Mountain Mirbelia
<i>Olearia glandulosa</i>	Swamp Daisy-bush
<i>Olearia myrsinoides</i>	Silk Daisy-bush
<i>Plantago gaudichaudii</i>	Narrow Plantain
<i>Pultenaea cunninghamii</i>	Grey Bush-pea
<i>Wahlenbergia</i> sp. aff. <i>gracilentia</i>	Bluebell

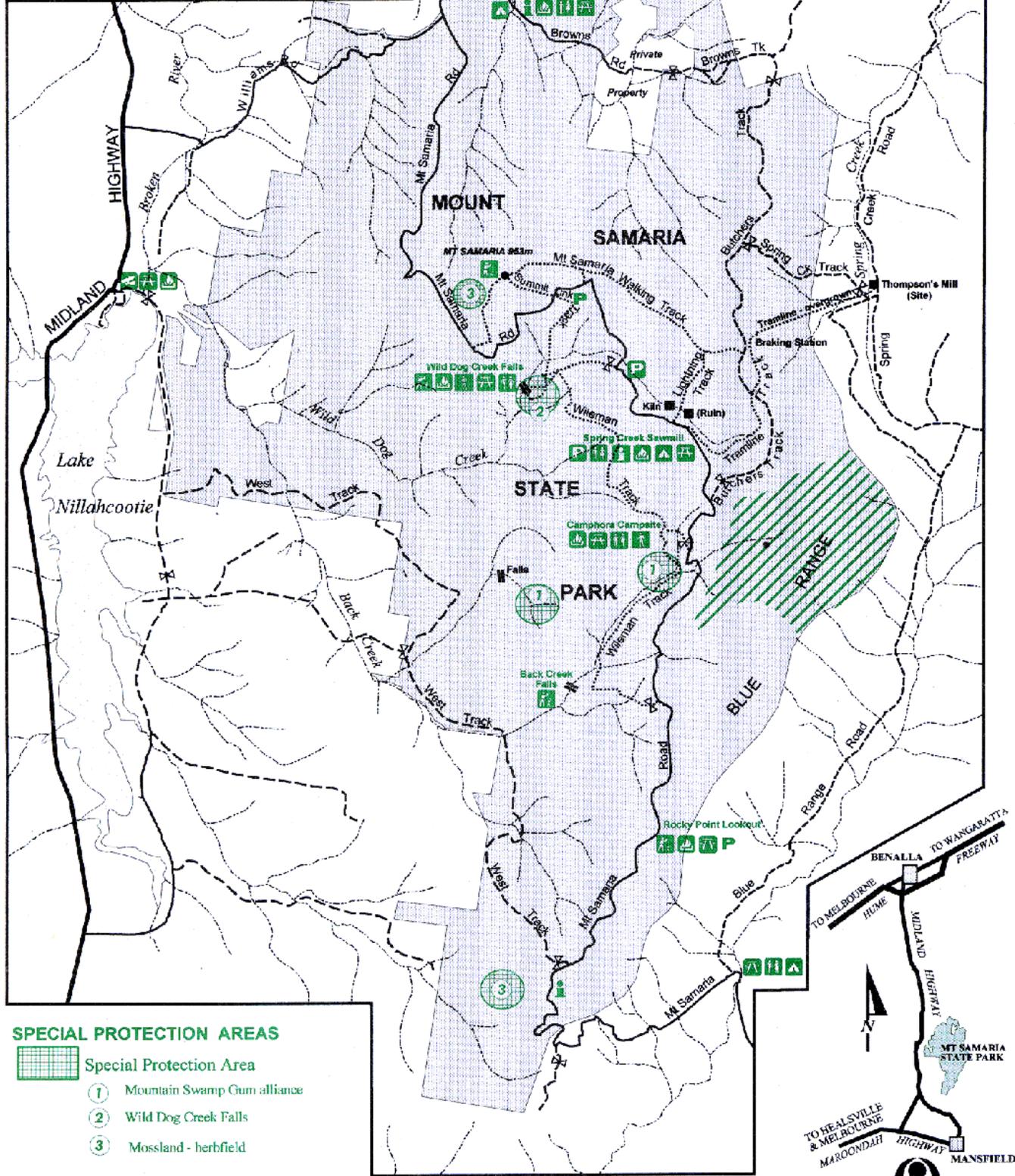
Figure 1

MOUNT SAMARIA STATE PARK

VISITOR FACILITIES AND MANAGEMENT ZONES

RECREATION SITES AND FACILITIES

- Camping
- Walk-In Campsite
- Toilets
- Car Park
- Picnic Area
- Fire Place
- Lookout
- Boat Ramp
- Proposed Car Park
- Information Board
- Proposed Information Board



SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS

- Special Protection Area
- ① Mountain Swamp Gum alliance
- ② Wild Dog Creek Falls
- ③ Mossland - herbfield

MANAGEMENT ZONES

- Conservation and Recreation Zone
- Reference Zone

- Major Road
- Gravel Road
- Track
- Foot Track
- Gate

