

BIOSECURITY ACT 2015

Discussion Paper: Recreation in natural areas



November 2016

Comments on this paper close on 14 December 2016

Option	Details
Email your comments to:	submissions.biosecuritylegislation@dpi.nsw.gov.au
Post your comments to:	Biosecurity Act 2015 NSW Department of Primary Industries Locked Bag 21 Orange NSW 2800

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See: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact

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Summary

Recreation in natural and semi-natural areas includes a range of leisure, outdoor recreation and tourism activities like bushwalking, trail bike riding, orienteering and dog walking. These activities provide opportunities to enjoy natural areas and learn about the environment and the biosecurity threats that may affect it.

Recreational activities can sometimes increase the biosecurity risks to natural areas. The Biosecurity Act 2015 introduces the concept of shared responsibility under a general biosecurity duty. The aim is to reduce the impact of invasive species on the State's natural areas using a combination of prevention, eradication or minimisation through containment and protection. The general biosecurity duty requires any person who knows, or ought to know, of the biosecurity risks associated with an activity to take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

This new approach allows recreational users of natural areas to fulfil their general biosecurity duty including the use of guidelines, codes of practice and of practical measures to reduce the risks from pests, weeds and diseases.

Your comments are sought on how to ensure that we all play our part in biosecurity, so the values of natural areas will be looked after well on both public and private lands and waters.

Background Information

What is recreation in natural areas?

Recreation in natural and semi-natural areas includes a wide range of leisure, outdoor education and tourism activities. These activities may be undertaken because of an appreciation of the natural environment, or may just happen to take place in natural or semi-natural areas.

Each year there are over 39 million visits to NSW National Parks; each Australian makes around four domestic trips involving nature activities and 3.9 million visitors stay overnight in non-commercial camping and caravanning areas so awareness and management of the risks to biosecurity are important.

The types of recreation referred to in this discussion paper are extremely broad and involve domestic and international tourists. They include bushwalking; camping; horse riding; photography; mountain biking; orienteering; rogaining; picnicking; rock climbing; car camping; four wheel driving, trail bike and quad bike riding; running; skiing; sight-seeing; bird watching; boating; hunting; dog walking; canoeing; outdoor education; school camps; canyoning, and caving.

How does recreation in natural areas relate to biosecurity?

Responsible recreation in natural areas provides opportunities for people to experience nature and value the environment. The use and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural areas can also generate awareness of the things that sometimes threaten those areas. Recreational visitors to natural areas can help alert land managers to pest animals or weeds, and can help create a culture of shared responsibility for protecting natural areas from biosecurity risks like plant and wildlife diseases, feral animals and weeds.

Recreational activities can sometimes increase the biosecurity risks to natural areas and to other nearby areas like farmlands for example by:

- Bringing weed seeds, insect pests, or aquatic pests like waterweeds into new areas on their shoes, gear, boats or vehicles;
- Damaging vegetation and soil, exposing new ground where weeds can establish;

- Damaging native wildlife habitat and creating conditions that encourage non-native (feral) species;
- Transporting fungus spores, plant diseases or wildlife diseases into previously unaffected natural areas or adjacent farmlands.

Invasive pests, weeds and diseases harm the State's wildlife, native plants and ecosystems such as cinnamon fungus spread in mud on people's boots or vehicles can kill or damage many native plants. Myrtle rust is a foreign disease that can be accidentally spread by people, affecting native species like gum trees, paperbarks and tea trees. The seeds of many foreign grass species found in gardens and on farms can rapidly grow to swamp native grasses and wildflowers if carried by accident into natural areas.

So recreational users in natural areas have an extremely important role identifying, minimising and helping to manage biosecurity risks to the State's natural environment.

What are the outcomes we are seeking?

We want to reduce the impact of invasive species on the State's natural areas to a minimum. We'll do this using a combination of prevention, eradication, containment and protection along these lines:

1. **Prevention** aims at stopping invasive species from entering new areas. This is the most cost-effective approach to biosecurity.
2. **Elimination** aims to detect and completely remove an invasive species from the State or part of it before it can establish a self-sustaining population. This is also very cost-effective, and is best done as a rapid response in the early stages of an invasive species incursion.
3. **Minimisation strategies including containment** aim to limit the spread of an invasive species that is not considered eradicable.
4. **Protection** aims to limit the impacts of invasive species on particular sites, native species or environmental values.

Proposed management under the NSW Biosecurity Act

The Biosecurity Act 2015 introduces the concept of shared responsibility under a general biosecurity duty. The general biosecurity duty requires any person dealing with biosecurity matter or a carrier of biosecurity matter (such as a boat or vehicle) and who knows, or ought to know, of the biosecurity risks associated with that activity to take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

This new approach is designed to ensure that everyone plays their fair part in biosecurity, so that the values of natural areas will be looked after well on both public and private lands and waters.

Prevention methods may include regulations to ensure proper hygiene procedures for particular activities. Prevention may also involve education, and community and business partnerships to increase surveillance and preparedness for invasive species.

Eradication and **containment** efforts may involve declaration of **Biosecurity Zones** and the issuing of **Control Orders** where biosecurity incidents are occurring (Control Orders will be most relevant to eradication work). These tools will be applied together with cooperative programs and partnerships to achieve eradication and/or containment of invasive species. Eradication and containment will be considered from local to state-wide scales, and in line with the principles of NSW Invasive Species Plan.

Protection of particular places or species from biosecurity threats will be achieved by all people fulfilling their general biosecurity duty and will use a similar range of tools to those used in containment work. Sometimes, particular invasive species may be subject to

regulations (known as **mandatory measures**) that will set down specific actions a person must take to fulfil their general biosecurity duty. This is in addition to any requirements included in a control order, biosecurity zone or other instrument made under the Biosecurity Act. In the future, the general biosecurity duty will be reflected in relevant leases, registrations, permits and public land use regulations, to ensure consistent awareness of responsibilities.

Weed and pest animal management strategies and guidelines will set out what the NSW Government expects from people in the management of widespread invasive species, and actions that people should take to discharge their general biosecurity duty.

Achieving Good Outcomes

As the general biosecurity duty is focussed on generating good outcomes and not on how people achieve those outcomes, individuals can determine their preferred option for managing biosecurity risks.



This allows people to adopt codes of practice such as the NSW Adventure Activity Standards, or for other innovative or individual approaches to discharging one's general biosecurity duty. Particular recreational groups or organisations may choose, for example, to adopt best practice guidelines for managing biosecurity risks relating to their specific types of activity.

Examples may include guidelines for ensuring that bushwalking gear is free of fungal spores and plant pathogens when entering new areas, or guidelines for the hygienic transportation of boats and fishing gear to avoid translocation of aquatic plants and pathogens.



The principles and guidelines provided by the [Bushwalkers' Code](#) of Bushwalking NSW is one example of methods that could be adopted by individuals or organisations to assist them in discharging their general biosecurity duty.

Department of Primary Industries' [Bellinger River Snapping Turtle](#) Keep a Clean Routine fact sheet is another example describing simple guidelines that can help recreational users of natural areas to fulfil their general biosecurity duty.

Outdoor activity organisations may also choose to train their staff and actively educate their members and participants in ways of avoiding biosecurity risks to natural areas and to adjoining lands like farms and residences.

Information and education material produced by the [Invasives Species Council](#) provides guidance and encouragement for people on good biosecurity practices in the bush.

Discussion

- What are the best ways to inform people engaged in recreation in natural areas of relevant biosecurity matters, risks, duties and best practices?
- How might commercial tourism operators in natural areas meet their general biosecurity duty?
- How might schools and other educational organisations best meet their general biosecurity duty relating to recreation in natural areas?
- Can you suggest some good ways of acknowledging those who meet or exceed their general biosecurity duty?
- How could we manage those who do not meet their general biosecurity duty?

What do you think?

We value your comments on how we can improve our biosecurity system and look forward to receiving your input into this important process.

Submit your feedback **by 14 December 2016** via email or post to:

Biosecurity Act 2015

NSW Department of Primary Industries

Locked Bag 21

Orange NSW 2800

Or complete this survey on Biosecurity and recreation in natural areas -

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/recreationinnaturalenvironments>

For more information about the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and regulatory framework, please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact.