

Comments on the Penrith Lakes Parkland Draft Vision Plan

Use of this response form is optional.

Submissions on the draft Plan are **due by 5pm Thursday 30 April 2015**, and can be made via:

- Email to the Office of Penrith Lakes: opl@sport.nsw.gov.au
- Post to the Office of Penrith Lakes, c/o: Locked Bag 1422, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

Name of submitter:
Hawkesbury Environment Network (HEN)
Is this a confidential submission?
No
1. What would you like to see developed at Penrith Lakes?
Comments: HEN's vision for Penrith Lakes is the post-quarrying development of a world-class environmental, educational, recreational and historical resource for all the residents of Sydney and particularly Western Sydney.
2. What do you think of the proposed precincts?

Comments:

Wildlife Lake: It is encouraging to see habitat islands in the lake and new tree plantings around Wildlife Lake. Protecting the growth of this new vegetation to maturity will be vital to attracting birds, small mammals, reptiles and aquatic life to this precinct. Residential/commercial development should not be permitted anywhere around the Wildlife Lake.

It is HEN's understanding that Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre (PLEEC) have a preference for permanent relocation to the Wildlife Lake in the existing 1800's Landers Inn heritage buildings or an innovative, purpose-built facility. This presents the best opportunity for a centre of excellence for environmental education catering for schools, colleges and university instruction, fieldwork and research for students from Greater Western Sydney and beyond. The centre could be the flagship for the understanding and practice of sustainable development in the Penrith and Blue Mountains areas and complement the unique natural wonders of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Riverbank Precinct: HEN supports the Riverbank Precinct as a high conservation zone for native vegetation and archaeological artefacts, and requests that all current vegetation be preserved and maintained with no further clearing in this precinct, with new native plantings where necessary for restoration. HEN supports the Great River Walk.

Main Lakes and Chain of Ponds Precincts: HEN supports the use of these large bodies of water for passive recreational activities such as swimming, sailing, kayaking, non-motorised boating and community parklands. Sensitive native local-provenance vegetation plantings will be essential along the shores of these lakes.

Southern Leisure Precinct: HEN believes that there should be no housing development along the south-west or western sides of Penrith Lakes in order to preserve the high conservation and heritage values of the area. HEN supports diverse habitat and recreational opportunities such as walking, cycling and camping. In consultation with Muru Mittigar people, the aboriginal cultural centre should be maintained.

Sports and Events Precinct: All aboriginal heritage should be protected. It is critical to maintain the the history of this, one of the oldest areas of European settlement in Australia. This includes preservation of the 1828 school and the 1847 Castlereagh Uniting Church and associated "Academy". To maintain the rural character of the area around these historic buildings, there should be no housing here. This precinct is already a world class water sports site and expansion of this facility will need improved access roads. HEN believes that any housing and tourist accommodation development here should be low-impact, low-rise building to maintain a village character. Apart from small retail and sporting outlets, HEN opposes large-scale commercial development.

Urban Precinct: The construction of all residential and (minimal) commercial development should be planned and implemented to the highest standards of environmental responsibility. Planning approvals for the Urban Precinct should include standards that exceed the requirements and mandatory targets of the BASIX State Environmental Planning Policy to ensure that all building construction incorporates high levels of water, energy and material conservation. Water Sensitive Urban Design should be the basis for all landscaping and related infrastructure.

3. What uses or activities would you like to see at the site?

Comments:

See comments on individual precincts

4. What ideas do you have about the future uses of the site?

Comments:

The water leaving the bio-remedial treatment ponds should be further treated to deliver tertiary-treated standard water. This will not only enable this water to be recycled for irrigation and other residential purposes but also prevent polluted water entering the river system during flood events.

All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that during times of flood the water entering the Nepean River does not get polluted from the recreational, residential or commercial precincts of the entire Parklands site. As the draft plan appears to channel all flood water from the Lakes across the weir from the Main Lake and into the river, necessary engineering is required between the residential areas and the Main Lake as well as at the weir to guarantee trapping of all forms of gross, fine and chemical pollution.

Public transport services should be readily accessible for both visitors and residents from all parts of the Parklands site.

5. What would you see as the priority precincts for delivery to the public?

Comments:

The Wildlife Lake should be developed as a first priority because it takes time for natural systems to reach equilibrium and develop sufficient resilience by the introduced/attracted fauna and flora to accommodate the inevitable pressures of increasing visitation by visitors and impacts of potential nearby residential developments.

Do you have any other comments on the Draft Vision Plan?

Comments:

Water from the Nepean River should never be used to fill the Parklands Lakes; this is the strongest issue.

Increased water extraction for agricultural irrigation and residential use has already contributed to reduced environmental flows and fewer flooding incidents in the last 20 years; this has in turn contributed to regular choking of the Hawkesbury River downstream with salvinia and alligator weed. Pollution in the lakes caused by stormwater runoff, combined with drought conditions will invariably lead to high algal and aquatic weed growth; as this rots, the odour will be huge, and all events affected. There would be pressure to empty the lakes to the river, or extract more water from the river, or even to spray the weed. All would have bad effects.

If the Nepean River is tapped to maintain the Lakes, their demand for supplementary water would be highest at times of drought, which is when the river needs the water most to maintain a healthy condition. If the Lakes are kept perpetually filled with river water, when there is high rainfall there will be overflow back into the river, carrying residential stormwater pollutants and weeds from gardens. Therefore the entire Lakes system water levels should only be filled from their rainwater catchment and the levels allowed to rise and fall accordingly.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean is one of eastern Australia's major river systems and the iconic natural feature of regions both upstream and downstream of this development. The Hawkesbury Environment Network, the Hawkesbury Council, the Hawkesbury River County Council and other agencies are working in many ways to improve the health of the river and the deliberate tapping of the river system to supplement this new development will undermine their efforts.

HEN has grave concerns regarding flooding, evacuation and impacts on neighbouring areas. A flood evacuation plan is usually undertaken for urban and industrial sites where communication is difficult. What happens if large numbers are out camping or trail-riding and out of contact in the case of a maximum flood/storm surge? Considering the massive destruction that recently happened north of Sydney on Maitland and Hunter area floodplains, the costs of damage to roads and houses and other infrastructure in this area should cause serious doubts about safety, evacuation and replacement costs.

Floodplain ecosystems: The site already has a great chance to retain elements of floodplain ecosystems to retain and allow slow release of floodwaters via wetlands; including sites for migratory birds, grass-feeders, and the native aquatic species.

The beauty of the site is in the (curtilage) link and views across from the main road on the east, across a floodplain, towards an unimpeded view of the escarpment...that's an almost unique feature of this place.

Connecting the planning events:

PLDC commissioned a regional Environmental Study in 1984 to identify technical and environmental issues that needed to be resolved before the Lakes scheme could be carried out successfully. These issues should be resolved.

Ownership and commercialisation:

HEN understands that governments need partnerships to develop large-scale facilities/events and therefore want to see strong controls on the scale and design of such commercial arrangements to reflect the best possible long-lasting high quality international standards. The governance structure (page 29 Part 3) is one that should be developed and finalised before any cost-benefit aspects of urbanisation.