

Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Study

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Stage 1

Background Report – Draft 30 Aug 05

Recreation & Open Space

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conceptz

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. Objectives	
2.1 Project Objectives	1
2.2 Stage 1 of the Project	1
3. Scope of Work	
3.1 Extent and Purpose of Stage 1 Assessment	1
3.2 Description of Study Area	1
3.3 Limitations of Assessment	2
4. Approach	2
5. Policies and Strategies	
5.1 State Government & Agencies	
5.1.1 Department of Victorian Communities	4
5.1.2 Parks Victoria	6
5.2 Local Government	
5.2.1 Benalla Rural City	9
5.2.2 Wangaratta Rural City	11
6. Existing Conditions	
6.1 Lake Mokoan	
6.1.1 Description	15
6.1.2 Recreation and Leisure Activities	15
6.2 Lake Mokoan Surrounds	
6.2.1 Description	18
6.2.2 Recreation and Leisure Activities	19
7. Conclusions	
7.1 Key Issues	21
7.2 Recreation and Open Space Objectives	24
7.3 Other Recreation and Open Space Opportunities	25
Bibliography	26

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1. Introduction

The Lake Mokoan Land Use Study has been commissioned following the Victorian Government decision to decommission Lake Mokoan.

The Lake Mokoan Land Use Study is being jointly managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA). The Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Steering Committee (LMFLUSC) has been established and is assisting the DSE and GBCMA with development of the future land use plan.

Beca PL, and its consultant team, has been appointed to assist the DSE, GBCMA and the FMFLUSC with the development of the future land use plan. Conceptz is a member of the Beca consultant team.

2. Objectives

2.1 Project Objectives

The study brief identifies that the land use strategy will need to:

- balance the diverse range of community aspirations for the site
- be ecologically sustainable
- be technically feasible
- be cost-effective to establish and maintain over the long-term
- provide / establish clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the management of the site.

2.2 Stage 1 of the Project

The objective of this report is to provide background information relating to recreation and open space for the Lake Mokoan Land Use Study.

3. Scope of Work

3.1 Extent and Purpose of Stage 1 Assessment

The study program is being undertaken in three stages. This report forms part of Stage 1 that is considering values and aspirations. Stage 2 will consider the development and assessment of land use options, and Stage 3 is the preparation of final report. The project is due for completion in late April 2006.

3.2 Description of Study Area

The Lake Mokoan primary study area is in the upper reaches of the Murray Valley, between the Broken River (at Benalla) and the Ovens River (at Wangaratta). It lies within the undulating uplands between the Benalla Plain to the west and the Warby Range to the east.

The primary study area encompasses the lake and all of the land currently on, and / or managed by Goulburn Murray Water (GMW), which extends up to and in some cases beyond full supply level. It also includes the inlet and outlet channels and their associated buffer strips owned by GMW. The primary study area falls wholly within the Rural City of Benalla.

A secondary study area can be defined as the land that surrounds Lake Mokoan and is within its viewshed. This encompasses land up to the ridge line of the Warby Ranges and the Chesney Vale Hills (to the north and west respectively), the Hume Freeway to the east and just beyond the existing dam wall to the south.

3.3 Limitations of Assessment

This report is based on information gathered through the approach identified in Section 4. Further background information relevant to recreation and open space issues is expected to emerge as the project develops.

4. Approach

This draft report is based on:

- review of legislation and policies relevant to recreation and open space;
- review of the previous Lake Mokoan Study research;
- review of previous recreation and open space studies;
- identification of recreation and open space linkages and connections;
- inspection of the area; and
- initial consultation with the Government stakeholders and the community

5. Policies and Strategies

Policies and strategies relating to recreation and open space are both spatial (relating to areas of land) or and functional (relating to goals and objectives). The spatial policies may be directly relevant to future land use options. Functional policies may be relevant in providing an (aspirational) framework for future land use options.

5.1 State Government Policies

5.1.1 Department of Victorian Communities

(1) Active for Life Physical Activity Framework

The framework describes the Victorian Government's commitment to a healthier, more active community. It aims to provide a context within which inclusive facilities and services can be maximised. Emphasis is placed on developing collaborative initiatives whenever possible.

The benefits of promoting and supporting active lifestyles are grouped into four broad categories, being health, economic, social and environmental.

Four objectives are identified:

- Building partnerships
- Educating and engaging the public and professionals
- Improving physical activity services and removing barriers to participation
- Improving places in which physical activity occurs

Government commitments in relation to these objectives include a diverse range of community building, organizational capacity and funding initiatives designed to achieve the goal of greater participation in recreation activities.

(2) Sport and Recreation Victoria

Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) is part of the DVC. SRV maximises the economic and social benefits provided to all Victorians by the sport and recreation sectors through:

- ensuring greater access and opportunities for sport and recreation participation by all Victorians;
- maintaining Victoria's reputation as Australia's leading sporting and major events state;
- improving the quality of community sport and recreation facilities;
- strengthening the capacity of sport and recreation organisations; and
- reinforcing the enriching role that sport and recreation plays in people's lives.

(a) *Minister's Statement, "A Focus on Community Sport and Recreation"* April 2004

The statement included the following comments on policy directions:

"Local level sport and recreation ... provide considerable community benefits. These include:

- contributing to the creation of stronger, healthier communities. It does this by providing settings for people to socialise and share common interests;
- making a significant contribution to individual self-development and achievement across all ages; and
- being a major driver of community interaction and pride.

SRV's research focus will place more emphasis on community sport and recreation participation. This valuable research helps us better understand how the initiatives introduced by our Government have resulted in stronger communities and improved well-being.

The Government has set four goals for sport and recreation in Victoria to the end of this decade. These goals are:

- a culture of inclusiveness and participation in Victoria;
- access to sustainable activities and facilities in all communities;
- a co-operative approach to improve service delivery across the sector; and
- a leading sport and recreation sector providing opportunities for all Victorians to achieve their goals.

These goals were set out in *Sport and Recreation 2005 – 2010: A Discussion Paper* and feedback from the community indicates they have broad sector support."

(b) *Access for All Abilities*

Through SRV, the Government also provides funding to a network of community based organizations that assist local sport and recreation organizations to develop environments in their community that include, and are accessible to, people with disabilities.

(3) Community Building

Community building is another important Victorian Government priority (relevant to recreation and leisure planning) that seeks to develop cohesive and sustainable communities. It involves whole of Government strategies to improve the ability of communities to manage their own affairs, build on their strengths and engage in partnerships with Government and other sectors that result in shared social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits.

5.1.2 Parks Victoria

Open Space

Parks Victoria manages the national, wilderness, State and regional parks, Melbourne's metropolitan parks and open space network. Parks and Reserves cover more than 3.75 million hectares, or approximately 16% of the State. The policies and strategies of Parks Victoria are relevant to future land use in the Lake Mokoan area.

(1) Environment Conservation Council 2001 Box Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation

The ECC Investigation Report provides a comprehensive inventory of the nature and condition of the north east Victorian Box Ironbark forests, and a set of recommendations for the protection of remnant areas, and improvement in the condition, use and management of the forests. The findings of the report are extensive, while the adoption of the major recommendations by the State Government has resulted in an increase in the area of land in National and State Parks from approximately 9% to 23% of public land.

The ECC Investigation Report identifies a framework for future use of Box Ironbark public land. The framework covers nature conservation, aboriginal interests, non-indigenous cultural heritage, mining, wood products, apiculture, recreation, tourism, eucalyptus oil production, and other uses including grazing.

No Box Ironbark public land was identified in the primary study area, however important areas were identified in the secondary study area and nearby, these being the Warby Range State Park, Reef Hills State Park and Chesney Vale Hills. The potential for linkage to these areas is a recreational issue.

The following area recommendations / commentary are relevant to the Lake Mokoan Land Use Study:

Recommendation B3 - p139 The Warby Range State Park ...

- will cover 11,084 ha, incorporating the Killawarra State Forest and Boweya Flora Reserve
- will protect the impressive landscape, biodiversity, recreation and aboriginal cultural values of the granite hills immediately north of Glenrowan
- is dominated by a prominent range of high scenic quality, providing spectacular views of the surrounding and distant countryside
- would provide protected habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, including many threatened species ... (and) ensure the long term maintenance of a substantial habitat corridor of high quality vegetation from the Great Dividing Range to the Murray River
- contains important aboriginal sites of high cultural and spiritual significance
- is relatively well known receiving 29,100 visitors per year
- will provide increased scope many recreation and tourism activities already occurring in the park including bushwalking, picnicking, sightseeing, cycling, camping, orienteering and nature study.

Recommendation B4 - p143 The Reef Hills State Park ...

- will cover 2,013 ha, straddling the Hume Freeway 5 km south of Benalla
- incorporates low hills of sedimentary rock
- will improve protection of flora and fauna of national significance, with its large number of threatened species and significant vegetation communities
- includes a 30 ha large old tree site dominated by red box trees
- contains several Aboriginal cultural sites which need to be properly surveyed
- is the only large area of public land close to Benalla, providing local residents with recreation opportunities in a readily accessible local setting
- change of status is likely to result in increased visitors

Recommendation H8 - p187 Mount Meg ...

- consists of eight existing bushland reserves comprising 440 ha.
- has nine threatened species recorded in these blocks
- ... although the public land blocks are scattered, there is much native vegetation on freehold land linking them
- is in district, known as the Chesney Vale Hills, that may well be suited as a location for a Conservation Management Network

**(2) Parks Victoria 2003
Recreation Framework for Box Ironbark Public Land**

The report was prepared to “provide direction and certainty for both recreational users and public land managers” as to where and how popular recreation activities can be pursued in Box Ironbark forests.

Policy statements guide the management of social, economic and ecological resources. They cover recreation and tourism, biodiversity, cultural heritage and aboriginal community involvement.

Recreation and tourism on public land is appropriate if it:

- accords with legislative objectives, management plans and policies for the land
- is consistent with national Ecologically Sustainable Development objectives and principles
- meets a demonstrated need and is dependent on the natural environment or cultural values of the area used and community appreciation of those values
- involves levels of risk consistent with the skills and experience of the likely users and does not require impractical levels of risk mitigation
- does not unreasonable restrict other community users
- creates a net public benefit and enhances individual and community well-being and welfare in the short and long term

To ensure protection of areas for recreation and tourism while enabling appropriate use and benefits, the principles are:

- provide equitable access for a diverse range of appropriate activities
- plan, manage and monitor recreation and tourism use to minimize impacts
- provide and maintain appropriate services and facilities to foster visitor enjoyment, education and ensure visitor safety
- encourage facilitate and promote recreation and tourism opportunities through research, communication and consultations

For each major forest use, the report provides a set of management guidelines which define the areas where various activities may be pursued.

**(3) Parks Victoria
Community Access Strategy**

The objective of the Parks Victoria Community Access Strategy is to ensure that ‘all Victorian’s have equity of access and opportunity in using Victoria’s Parks thus contributing to the health and wellbeing of the whole community.’

The Community Access Strategy has defined 7 initiatives which are to be taken across all aspects of Parks Victoria's activities so as to enhance access:

- taking cultural and linguistic diversity into account at each level of the planning process
- consulting culturally and linguistically diverse park users and potential park users
- working in partnerships with organisations that reflect the ethnic diversity of the community
- providing appropriate information to park users and potential users
- developing staff confidence and competence to work in multi-cultural settings
- using data about the diversity of park visitors and the community to design and deliver appropriate services
- promoting ideas and experiences of working successfully with a diverse community.

For each initiative, the Strategy has defined a purpose, rationale, internal and external reporting links (how action on the initiative is monitored and reported), a set of performance indicators, a set of recommended actions and a case study.

(4) **Parks Victoria Levels of Service Strategy**

The Levels of Service Strategy has been developed by Parks Victoria over a number of years as an operational tool to assist the organisation in implementing and managing open space development decisions.

The Levels of Service Strategy was developed for the purposes of:

- assisting local park, district and regional staff to determine the appropriate level and type of visitor infrastructure and services to be delivered at a specific site or group of sites
- assist in the allocation of scarce resources by applying the site importance rating as a means of prioritizing service allocations
- better meeting visitor expectations and needs
- assist in identifying potential sites to increase or reduce services.

It should be noted that the Levels of Service Strategy is seen as one of Parks Victoria's management tools and that it is to be applied in conjunction with for example, asset management systems, risk profiling, environmental management and user satisfaction surveys.

The Strategy essentially works by comparing a score of (1) the *existing* level of service at a site with (2) the score for what *should* be provided -- with the exception of sites which have identifiable safety issues or detrimental impacts on natural and/or cultural values which justify their closure. Where score (2) is substantially higher than (1), this is interpreted as an indication that site upgrading is required whereas the reverse indicates the potential for service reduction. The magnitude of the positive differences between (1) and (2) is then used as a basis for determining the magnitude of change to be considered, although these determinations are weighted by a 'site importance rating' and a 'recreation setting score'. The outcome of this is then used to establish a 'management direction scatter graph' and to proceed to determining the most appropriate course of management action to be taken at individual sites.

The process of developing and testing the Levels of Service Strategy has been detailed and comprehensive. The process may be relevant as a management tool by agencies responsible for natural, rural and semi-developed open space resources.

5.2 Local Government

5.2.1 Benalla Rural City

(1) Benalla Planning Scheme

State Planning Policy Framework

The SPPF sets out the State Planning Policies that apply to all land in Victoria. These policies must be taken into account when preparing amendments to or making decisions under the Benalla Planning Scheme. The State policies that are relevant to recreation and open space are:

Clause	Policy	Comment
13	Principles of Land Use and Development Planning	<p>Principles relating to settlement, environment, management of resources, infrastructure, economic well-being, social needs and regional co-operation are identified.</p> <p>Key themes include the importance of land use and transport integration, economic viability, health and safety, urban design and amenity, resource efficiency, ecologically sustainable development and adaptation in relation to changing technology.</p> <p>Planning is to recognise social needs by providing land for a range of accessible community resources, such as affordable housing, places of employment, open space, and education, cultural, health and community support (mental, aged, disabled, youth and family services) facilities. Land use and development planning must support the development and maintenance of communities with adequate and safe physical and social environments for their residents, through the appropriate location of uses and developments and quality of urban design.</p>
15	Environment	
15.01	<i>Protection of Catchments, Waterways and Groundwater</i>	The objective is the protection and, where possible, restoration of catchments, waterways and water bodies. Planning Authorities must have regard to Regional Catchment Strategies, land care plans, management plans for roadsides, soil, salinity, water quality and nutrients, floodplains ... and waterways.
15.02	<i>Floodplain Management</i>	The objective is the protection of life, property and community infrastructure, and the natural flood carrying capacity ... and storage function of ... waterways.
15.07	<i>Protection from Wildfire</i>	The objective is the minimization of risk to life, property, natural environment and community infrastructure from wildfire. Proposed development must address issues related to fire management and risk in the design and operation of the site.
15.09	<i>Conservation of Native Flora and Fauna</i>	The objective is the protection and conservation of biodiversity, including native vegetation retention ... implementation statements relate to protection and conservation of habitat, wetlands, preventing the spread of plant and animal pests, removal of native vegetation and appropriate siting of buildings and works.
15.10	<i>Open Space</i>	The objective is to assist in the creation of a diverse and integrated network of public open space commensurate with the needs of urban communities and rural areas ... implementation statements relate to planning for regional open space networks to be used for conservation of natural and cultural environments. Planning Authorities should ensure that open space networks ... are linked through the provision of walking and cycling tracks ... and links between major parks and activity areas.

Local Planning Policy Framework

"21.04 Vision For The Future

The vision for the Municipality is:

"Benalla will be recognised as a leader in balanced economic, social and environmental planning in a way that recognises the diverse needs and values of its community"

This vision from the corporate plan is an important expression of the direction that the municipality wishes to take and underpins the strategic direction to be taken by the municipality in the future.

Eight goals are identified in the corporate plan. Four of these goals are of particular relevance to the planning scheme:

- Provide an integrated approach to land use planning that will ensure clear and relevant policies and procedures are developed to guide the future growth of the municipality.
- Work in partnership with its communities to strengthen community networks and to improve the quality of living in municipality.
- Develop and implement plans that ensure the municipality has well maintained and developed infrastructure capable of meeting current and future needs.
- To improve the quality of the municipality's environment and to establish the region as an environmental model.

Benalla Council will proactively work with the organisations responsible to ensure a quality, balanced and sustainable approach is pursued on environmental issues."

(2) **Your Town Your Future Strategy 2001**

The purpose of the strategy was to develop a strategic planning framework that integrated key economic, social and environmental issues in (former) Delatite Shire. The strategy was developed through an extensive research and community consultation process. Nine sectors were addressed, being economic development, tourism, agribusiness and rural land, environment, infrastructure settlement, community development, recreation and leisure, and arts, culture and heritage.

In terms of recreation and leisure:

- The strategic aim was to improve community awareness of opportunities, and promote participation, to contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of the community.
- The policy objectives focused on planning to avoid duplication, maximizing use and investment in existing facilities, communication aimed at increasing awareness and participation, planning for access for all abilities, and improving the quality, management and usage of facilities.
- The identified priority actions supported the objectives, focusing on developing programs, marketing and communication initiatives; and
- It was noted that the spread of population over a wide geographical area, and funding constraints, makes effective service provision a challenging task.

Community development, together with arts, culture and heritage, initiatives were viewed as being closely related to recreation and leisure, focusing on improving the health and well-being of the community. Key actions identified included the need for planning, education, improving access, management and building partnerships.

(3) Benalla Major Recreation Reserves Planning Study 2002

The purpose of the study (for Delatite Shire) was to develop masterplans for the four major reserves in Benalla.

On leisure trends and their implications, the study identified:

- The ageing of the population
- Changing family structures
- Provision of greater diversity of opportunities
- Overall increases in national affluence
- Higher education levels
- Higher community expectations regarding provision quality
- Litigation and legal liability issues
- Greater ability to access other locations and opportunities

Information of possible relevance to this study was:

- Two of these reserves, the Showgrounds Reserve and the United Friendlies Society Reserve, are located adjacent to the Broken River (or Lake Benalla).
- The study included an assessment of *Sporting and Open Space Provision in Rural Towns* in the Shire. The study said of the recreation facilities in Thoona (closest town to the northern foreshore of Lake Mokoan) ... “four tennis courts, kitchen, toilets, bbq facilities, unused oval and club facilities” ... concluding that “possible wider uses may include camping and a cycling stopping point.”

(4) Benalla Bicycle Strategy 1999

The objective of the study was to develop a strategy that would provide facilities for cyclists within the Shire. This included recreational users, commuters, touring cyclists and mountain bikers.

Inter-township routes were identified (refer to Appendices – Figure 23). The Lake Mokoan Loop was one of these routes. A number of other (connected) routes are identified on the plan, including Benalla – Glenrowan (Hume Highway and Kilfeera Road) and the Lurg Loop (via Winton).

Recommendations in relation to inter-township routes included the need for cyclist warning signs and edge lines where road shoulder sealing was unlikely.

(5) Lake Benalla Riverine Trail and Waterway Management Plan 2001

The project was a joint initiative of the GBCMA and (former) Delatite Shire. The study area was the course of the Broken River from the Hume Highway south of Benalla to Faithfull Street to the north of the town. The purpose of the study was to prepare design and management guidelines for a riverine trail through Benalla for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, waterway stability including foreshores, water quality improvement and weed management.

5.2.2 Wangaratta Rural City

Recreation and open space issues transcend municipal boundaries. The boundary between Benalla and Wangaratta Rural City is near to the northern end of Lake Mokoan. Policies and strategies in the adjoining municipality that may be relevant are identified.

(1) Wangaratta Planning Scheme

The Wangaratta Planning Scheme does not apply to the Lake Mokoan area, however some of the stated strategic objectives relating to economic development, tourism, the environment and rural land are identified here to provide an understanding of directions and priorities in the adjoining municipality.

Local Planning Policy Framework

21.03 Vision

Council recognises that the immense range of opportunities for economic growth within the Rural City of Wangaratta, needs to be balanced with the challenges of environmental enhancement and sustainable development. Council's 20 year planning vision for the future of the municipality as developed through the *2020 Community Plan* includes (*relevant statements selected*):

- Ensure a fair and orderly balance between competing land uses;
- New agricultural opportunities established with an emphasis on intensive agriculture and tourism related development;
- The establishment of the Rural City as the primary centre for the timber processing, textiles and viticulture in North East Victoria;
- Growth in investment and expansion of the existing agricultural, industrial, commercial and retail sectors through a balance of new and existing opportunities;
- Vibrant rural communities and towns with access to new services and infrastructure;
- Improved and sustainable water quality and supply by use of catchment management strategies;
- Ensure that development does not detrimentally impact on salinity, erosion and degradation of the natural environment;
- Promotion of the Rural City as a major tourist destination;
- Significantly enhanced public open space systems along river and creek valleys;
- Protected areas of environmental significance;
- Urban and rural development which meets community expectations.

(2) Wangaratta Recreation Strategy 2005

The strategy was adopted by Council in August 2005. Key elements of the strategy are:

1. Vision

Council will support participation in recreation for people of all ages and abilities who live and work throughout the Rural City of Wangaratta. By doing so, Council plays an active role in facilitating a range of personal, community, economic and environmental benefits for individuals and communities that are derived from participation. Underpinning Council's support of recreation participation is that it is considered and applied in a manner that makes best use of resources, creates sustainable opportunities, builds partnerships and considers whole of community approaches to increasing participation for all.

2. Planning Principles

A focus on the Benefits of Participation

Council's motivation in recreation is not about development of facilities and services, but rather Council's interest is centred upon the recognition that participation brings about a range of positive personal, social, economic benefits for individuals and communities.

Access for All

There are some sectors of our community who, because of their age, ability, ethnicity, geographic location and economic status, have greater difficulty in accessing recreation opportunities. The benefits derived from participation are therefore harder to reach for such communities. On this basis,

Council has a role to provide additional assistance to these communities in order to support participation in recreation for all people within the Rural City.

Flexible and Multipurpose Settings

The cornerstone of a successful recreation facility and open space is its ability to evolve and move with the changing needs of the community. Council will therefore support projects that have a capacity to provide for a range of needs. Underpinning the strength of multi-purpose facilities is their capacity to maximise opportunities to achieve economies of scale through the shared use of resources.

Supporting Diverse Opportunities

Social trends such as the spread and nature of working hours, an ageing demography and a rise in consumer orientation have markedly impacted recreation participation patterns. Similarly, there have been significant changes in participation trends such as the decline of weekend sporting activities and a marked rise in the diversity of recreation opportunities. Our community is not homogenous, its needs for recreation opportunities are diverse and evolving, so too therefore should the range of recreation opportunities.

Working with Others

Council is not the sole contributor of recreation opportunities. There are a range of other levels of government, the private sector, non government organisations and community organisations who collectively contribute to the range, quality and distribution of recreation opportunities. On this basis, Council is focused upon positioning its efforts so as to complement as opposed to duplicate this context. Similarly, this principle is also focused upon fostering partnerships with others in order to work towards shared outcomes.

Risk Management

This principle recognises the requirement to assess risk and liability in all future recreation developments, initiatives and management processes.

Relationship with the Natural Environment

Implicit to the quality and context of many recreation activities is the health and quality of the environment. This principle responds to the requirement to ensure that recreation developments protect the qualities of the natural environment to which many recreation experiences depend.

Financial Sustainability

Future investment in recreation development is required to be financially sustainable as an integral part of the Council's Strategic Financial planning processes.

Links with Tourism & Cultural Strengths

Much of the unique character of the Rural City of Wangaratta is associated with its natural landscape, tourism and rich heritage. Significant landscapes, mountain ranges and river corridors provide essential recreation experiences which are inherent to community life in the municipality and important attractions to visitors to the municipality.

Supporting Community Initiative

Local communities make vital contributions to resourcing and operating sport and recreation facilities. This principle is focused upon supporting and sustaining community endeavours which in turn, contribute to the growth and development of recreation opportunities in the Rural City. The context of this principle is twofold – Firstly, it considers the ongoing financial and voluntary efforts made by community organisations, such as sporting club, to provide local, quality sporting opportunities for residents. Secondly, it includes the recognition and support of organisations that provide a unique opportunity or demonstrate best practice.

3. Strategy and Actions

A comprehensive framework of strategies and actions were prepared in response to the key issues that emerged throughout the course of the project, being:

- Council's Role in Resourcing and Supporting Sport and Recreation
- Building Participation
- The Management of Recreation Reserves
- Decision Making Framework for Facility Developments, and
- Master Planning for Council Reserves

No recreation initiatives were identified for Glenrowan, the nearest township to the Lake Mokoan area.

Two broad strategies were identified that may have possible relevance:

1. Play a lead role in planning and development of recreation opportunities

In partnership with neighbouring local governments and other stakeholders, assess the feasibility of a Regional Sports Academy for the North East Region in terms of:

- its impact to participation at all levels of participation
- the capacity to host major sporting events, and the resultant flow on economic benefits for the region
- the capacity for the region to cater (in terms of facilities) for elite level sports participation

2. Through a community development approach, support and strengthen local participation opportunities

Work closely with community committees to establish and support local area responses to local area issues. Implicit to this action is that different communities of interest will have different resourcing and participation patterns, and for this reason will require different responses. Opportunities should target:

- family participation opportunities
- rural communities, reflecting the comparatively limited opportunities for recreation participation
- strengthening linkages with schools in terms of their facilities and familiar settings for families
- adding value to existing recreation opportunities, as opposed to develop new opportunities
- opportunities that involve 'hard to reach' population groups such as older adults, young people and people with a disability.

(3) Wangaratta Rural Bicycle Path Strategy 1999

"Cycling to the Future" was undertaken with the aspiration to transform Wangaratta into the preferred cycling destination in Victoria / Australia. The Murray to the Mountains rail trail route was the platform. The Rural Bicycle Route Strategy aimed to complement the rail trail network by identifying linkages to Wangaratta, other townships and tourist attractions.

In a survey, rural routes that were identified as having strong favour included Warby Range Road and the Wangaratta Main Road to Glenrowan. The rural bicycle route network was identified (refer to Appendices – Figure 6.1). The network included linkages to the northern edge of Lake Mokoan.

(4) Glenrowan Masterplan 2003

The most significant tourism development for the region is the Kelly Touring Route (to be launched late 2005) and the revitalisation of Glenrowan township to include an interpretative centre for the Kelly story and re-development of the 'siege' site. The proposed master plan for Glenrowan will further enhance the unique heritage of the town.

6. Existing Conditions

6.1 Lake Mokoan

6.1.1 Description

The scale of Lake Mokoan is quite impressive:

- Lake Mokoan has a capacity of 365,000 ML, a surface area of about 7,880ha and a maximum depth of 7.3m. It has a relatively small local catchment area that provides an average annual inflow of 25,000 ML.
- The lake perimeter is approximately 50km in length;
- The storage embankment is approximately 7.5km long, 10.8m high at its highest section and averages 6m in height over its length.
- The unlined earthen inlet and outlet channels are 21km and 8km long respectively. Major structures along the channels comprise bridges for road and internal farm access, subways and siphons to maintain local cross-drainage and drop structures to maintain the design bed longitudinal slope and prevent bed erosion.

6.1.2 Recreation and Leisure Activities

Stage 1 of this study (background papers) is concerned with identifying existing uses, issues and constraints that inform future opportunities for use of the area (for recreation and leisure) when the lake is decommissioned. The following existing use information is based on desktop research, particularly a review of the previous Lake Mokoan Study that considered existing use in greater detail, Government websites and advice obtained through community consultation.

There are many recreation and leisure activities associated with Lake Mokoan, surrounding open space and nearby recreation facilities in the townships and rural areas.

The existing use of Lake Mokoan for recreation and leisure activities has been described in the *Lake Mokoan Study 2003*. The quantum of these activities appears to have changed little since that study was undertaken.

The Table below identifies the estimated quantum and value, and also appears in the Essential Economics Background Paper:

Summary of Recreational Person Days and Expenditure

Activity	Estimated number of person days	Estimated % of person days	Estimated annual expenditure in region
Fishing	5,000	46%	\$200,000
Duck-hunting	2,600	24%	\$186,000
Yachting	1,150	11%	\$45,000
Water Skiing	400	4%	\$20,000
Day picnics	1,500	15%	\$68,000
Totals (rounded)	10,650	100%	\$519,000

Source: Lake Mokoan Study – Final Report Volume 1 p5-20
 Table 5.9 Expenditure and Economic Value of Recreation at Lake Mokoan
 Expenditure shown is mid-point estimate, percentage is calculated

Other relevant information is included below from:

- "Lake Mokoan Study , Volume 1", USC Consultants - LMS report
- "Lake Mokoan – it's contribution to Delatite Shire's Economy", Linqage International - LI Report
- Department of Primary Industries Web-site

(1) Fishing

DPI web site:

"Lake Mokoan is a large shallow storage surrounded by farmland and scattered forest. It was created by the enlargement of Winton Swamp in 1971 and receives water from the Broken River, which is released when needed to satisfy downstream irrigation and domestic needs.

When the level is low and conditions are hot, the lake is prone to blooms of toxic blue-green algae, which not only cause fish kills, but can also affect stock and people who drink or come into contact with the water. Under these circumstances, the lake is closed to the public.

When it is full and water quality is good, it is a very popular and productive fishery. It contains abundant golden perch, some Murray cod, redfin, carp, goldfish, Australian smelt, western carp, gudgeon, and mosquito fish. The lake provides some excellent fishing at times with good catches of golden perch to 1.4kg and increasing numbers of Murray cod to 7kg.

Small Murray cod are common ... the lake was surveyed by the Department in 1999, 2000 and 2001. On each occasion, mostly golden perch to 1.4kg have been caught, also some Murray cod to 7kg, carp and occasional goldfish. In 1999 a Departmental survey of anglers found most were using bait and targeting golden perch. "

LMS report (pp 5.11 – 5.14):

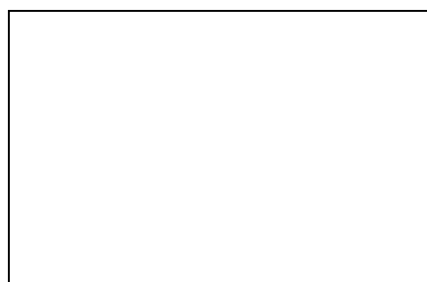
- The estimated number of fishing days was slightly less than 5,000 in 2000;
- Most anglers came from Wangaratta (16.4%), Benalla (13.2%) and Shepparton (11.5%);
- Significant numbers of anglers come from northern Melbourne;
- Many angling clubs organize weekend trips to the lake;
- A major fishing weekend is held at the lake on the last weekend of October ("Golden Classic");

LI report (pp 11-12):

- Fisheries Victoria in concert with fishing clubs has extensively stocked the lake with Murray Cod and Golden Perch since 1988. Between 1991-2001, over 180,000 golden perch fingerlings and 80,000 Murray cod fingerlings were released into the lake.
- There is general concurrence on the estimate of number of person days spent fishing annually.



Murray Cod



Golden Perch (DPI web site)

(2) Duck Hunting

LMS report (pp 5.14 – 5.15):

- Lake Mokoan is popular for hunting during the duck hunting season;
- Shooting is conducted on foot (wading) but most shooters operate from boats;
- It was estimated by Field and game Australia that about 500 people camp at the lake on the opening weekend, and are supplemented by about 500 locals; and
- It was estimated that between 3 and 25 people might shoot each day for the rest of the season.

LI report (p12):

- Supported the LMS commentary, estimating annual person days at 2,600.

During community consultation, advice was received that duck hunting has the potential to increase in status but may not be achievable depending on Government policy. Field and Game Australia have managed camping at the Lake Mokoan site since 2004. It was considered that person days involved in duck shooting at Lake Mokoan could have increased since 2003. Attention was drawn to the FGA “Wetland Environmental Task Force Public Fund” that has the capacity to fund major environmental projects subject to a guarantee that long term sustainable shooting would be allowed.

(3) Yachting

LMS report (pp 5.15 – 5.17):

- The Yacht Club is situated on the west side of the Lake near the caravan park;
- The main sailing area approximates the area of the old Winton Swamp;
- Courses are usually in the form of an equilateral triangle with sides of 2 nautical miles, Club officials claim that Lake Mokoan is superior to other lakes in the region because it has long wind runs without disturbance to wind that is created by mountains;
- The area is sufficiently large for the triangle to be orientated to suit different wind directions;
- These characteristics make the lake an inland attraction that attracts elite sailors
- The clubhouse contains storage and kitchen facilities
- The facilities are fenced – a number of yachts can therefore be stored
- The club has two rescue boats and small training yachts
- The club facilities are available for hire. Local Landcare Groups and the CFA use the meeting room;
- The club has approximately 35 members. Most live within a 15km radius of the clubhouse.
- The main racing season is from 1 September until 31 March. Two regattas (each two days) are held during the season. A winter series is conducted monthly in the remaining months.
- All vessels that are used on the lake are of the “trailer-sailer” type.

LI report (p13):

- Supported the LMS commentary

During community consultation, advice was received that the commentary in the LMS report was still accurate. The retention of an area approximating the former Winton Swamp with a minimum water depth of 2.5m is required for yachting. The Government has suggested relocation, but all other lakes are taken.

(4) Water Skiing

LMS 1 report (pp 5.17 – 5.18):

- An accurate estimate was difficult as there was no club, only recreational users; and
- Estimated use was approximately 5-8 boats every second night for 3 months with some weekend skiing during winter months.

LI report (p14):

- Identified that the lake is extensively used by water skiers during the Summer period.

(5) Day Visitors

Lake Mokoan is used by visitors and the local community for leisure activities. Some visits are likely to be in tandem with other water and land based recreation and leisure activities using the lake or around the lake edge, including the activities listed above, swimming, cycling and walking.

LMS report (pp 5.18 – 5.19):

- Estimated use by day visitors (picnicking) was between 1000-2000 person days per year.

LI report (p18):

- Estimated use by day visitors was in excess of 1000 person days per year



Lake Mokoan Outlet Channel



Lake Mokoan boat ramp

6.2 Lake Mokoan Surrounds

6.2.1 Description

The communities on the northern side of the lake (Chesney Vale and Taminick) are “physically” separated from those on the southern side of the Lake (Winton and Winton North) by the lake and Hume Corridor (in part).

The nearest settlements are Benalla, located 5km to the south west, Glenrowan 5km to the east, Thoona 10km to the north and Wangaratta 15km to the north east.

The lake is used by visitors and local communities for a wide range of recreation and leisure activities.

Nearby areas also provide for recreation and leisure pursuits. These include:

- Winton Motor Raceway
- Warby Range State Park
- Reef Hills State Park
- Glenrowan Township
- Taminick wineries
- Recreation, leisure, tourist and cultural facilities in Benalla and Wangaratta

6.2.2 Recreation and Leisure Activities

(1) Tourism

Recreation and leisure activities are closely associated with tourism. The Background Paper prepared by Essential Economics that provides an *Economic and Tourism Context* for Stage 1 of this study provides information on relevant activities in areas surrounding Lake Mokoan.

“Tourism is an important part of the study region’s economy and is seen as a growth industry for the future. Currently, tourism in the region is centred on Food and Wine Tourism, Arts and Cultural Heritage, Nature-based Tourism, Sport Related Tourism and Events Tourism.

The key tourism attractions include:

- wineries and cottage-based food industries located in Milawa, King Valley, Rutherglen and to a lesser extent locally in the Warby Ranges (Food and Wine);
- the Winton Motor Raceway which attracts between 70,000 and 100,000 visitors per year (the raceway is located approximately 1-2 km south of the Hume Highway on the south side of Lake Mokoan);
- the Victorian Gliding Centre at Benalla (sports related tourism);
- the successful Benalla Art Gallery which attracted 76,000 visitors in 2003, the recently opened Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre;
- the historic townships of Beechworth (bakery, shopping, historic buildings, Kelly history) and Rutherglen (Arts and Cultural attractions); and
- the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz, which was recently promoted as a Hallmark Event by Tourism Victoria, and other smaller events held throughout the year. In the North East Strategy Plan a strategy is to promote Wangaratta as the centre for jazz, like Tamworth is for country music (Events).

These key tourism attractions are supported by tourism infrastructure such as the Visitor Information Centres in Benalla and Wangaratta and many commercial accommodation providers.

The most exciting tourism development for the region is the *revitalisation of Glenrowan* and the associated development of an interpretative centre / museum and the Ned Kelly Touring Route which will take in a number of towns across the region, including Glenrowan, Benalla, Mansfield, Beechworth and Euroa.

Another significant development is the sealing of the Falls Creek - Omeo Road between Falls Creek and Anglers Rest, which will create a touring loop through the Alpine high country. This expected to significantly boost tourism numbers to the north-east region, particularly outside of winter months.

The two municipalities also have a range of smaller attractions including heritage houses, natural features, township events, etc which are important in generating tourism spending and employment.”

(2) Open Space

Major open space areas and assets in proximity to Lake Mokoan that provide for recreation and leisure pursuits include:

- Warby Range State Park

The State Park encompasses a steep escarpment (approximately 515m in height) extending north of the town of Glenrowan. Its attractions include the combination of excellent viewing points along the ridge, pleasant picnic places and a variety of birdlife and wildflowers. The vegetation of the Warby Range is characterised by a mosaic of open forests and woodlands. Most animals are nocturnal, and difficult to sight in daylight. Camping is available in several locations, and bushwalking on walking tracks in the range is a popular recreation pursuit.

- Reef Hills State Park

The State Park is an area of mixed eucalypt forest near Benalla. The forest is an important remnant of the original vegetation of the northern plains of Victoria and is valued by naturalists for its wide range of plant and animal life. Over 100 different species of birds, 17 native mammals and a number of reptiles have been recorded. The Grey Box and River Red Gum trees in the forest provide nectar for honey production in the area which is valued by apiarists. Scenic drives, bushwalks, horse riding, picnicking and nature study are some of the most popular activities in the park. Some roads are suitable for bicycle riding. Spring (the main wildflower season) and autumn are popular times to visit. Picnic areas are provided, but there are no facilities provided for camping.

- Broken River – Riverine Trails

The shared use trails around Lake Benalla (and the upstream islands) are an important recreation and leisure asset in Benalla. The GBCMA and Council have developed a concept for future upstream and downstream extensions of the trail network. Implementation of the concept would be subject to further community consultation on specific routes and would require detailed design.

- Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail (from Wangaratta)

The rail trail provides 94km of bitumen sealed trail that links Wangaratta to Myrtleford and Bright. Originally a railway line, the rail bed has been converted to a wide trail suitable for cycling and walking. The trail is very popular and delivering economic benefits to the region.

There are also a range of other non-urban based recreation activities in areas surrounding Lake Mokoan, including:

- Equestrian activities in various locations, including riding in the Warby Range and Chesney Hills
- “Informal” motor-cross activities in various locations (Parks Victoria is looking for a long term site for these users)
- Sport shooting (rifle range and clay target) in the Reef Hills State Park
- Cycling through out the area

7. Conclusions

7.1 Key Issues

The key issues identified for recreation and leisure planning, development and management are:

1. The Physical Outcomes of the Decommissioning Process

The form and nature of recreation and leisure pursuits in the future are directly affected by the decommissioning outcomes.

A key issue in considering the context for future recreational and leisure opportunities is what physical outcomes will be created through the decommissioning process? There will be a wetland, but will there be a water body, will it be permanent or seasonal, and if so, what attributes might they have?

Subject to decommissioning outcomes, some current water based recreation and leisure pursuits may / may not be possible. This particularly affects recreational boating and fishing pursuits. Duck hunting may still be possible. Day visitation, including sightseeing, picnics and walking, are likely to continue in some areas.

In terms of context, the Background Paper prepared by Ecology Australia that provides an *Ecological Context* for Stage 1 of this study identified that ...

“in ecological terms, the primary opportunity associated with decommissioning of Lake Mokoan is the restoration of a high-quality, diverse wetland system for conservation purposes. This brings with it numerous opportunities for involving the scientific community and local residents and may, once restoration has reached a reasonable level (and depending on the nature and use objectives of the restored wetlands), attract tourists for recreational activities such as bird watching, fishing, duck shooting, walking and sightseeing. The restoration of the wetlands and the decommissioning of the lake also create an opportunity for improved downstream water quality.”

Of course, the form and nature of the “wetland outcome” has the potential to become a recreation and tourism asset in its own right. This would be a major benefit in supporting and connecting recreation opportunities.

2. Implementation Period for the Decommissioning Process

The length of time taken for decommissioning will have a direct impact on achieving / establishing new recreational infrastructure and facilities. A potential concern is the capacity to sustain political and community commitment over the 15-20 year period that may be required to achieve the preferred future land use strategy (in particular, those components associated with wetland and ecological restoration and maintenance).

3. Funding for Future Land Use, including Recreation and Leisure

This constraint was consistently raised at the community workshops. There were concerns that there would be insufficient funds to restore the wetlands to an international standard (i.e. to do it properly) and to maintain them over the longer term.

The very same constraint applies not only to wetlands, but generally to sustainable recreation and leisure assets. Any outcomes need to lie within the reasonable capacity of Government, organisations and the community to foster and maintain following establishment. A report for Benalla Rural City (Garrett 2004) estimated “recreation and leisure infrastructure costs” associated with a wetland to be in excess of \$1.6m. The estimate included access roads, walking trails and boardwalks, day visitor facilities, viewing sites and hides and an interpretation centre (\$1m).

4. Available Resource Capacity

Underpinning each and every initiative is the capacity of organizations that may be responsible for implementation and management, and the community, to resource the various outcomes. Local Government has flagged the lack of resources, and indicated that volunteers are not equipped to take on any more responsibilities.

Future land ownership will also be an important issue, particularly in relation to the inlet and outlet channels.

5. Potential Linkages – Lake Mokoan Surrounds

Accessibility, proximity and visibility are locational advantages identified as strengths of the area. Lake Mokoan's location between Benalla and Wangaratta, the accessibility and visibility afforded by its location adjacent to the Hume Freeway, its proximity to major population centres (e.g. Melbourne only 2hrs away) and areas of high tourism interest (e.g. Murray River, north-east wineries, the Great Alpine Road, Glenrowan etc) create the opportunity to develop and market linkages.

Subject to decommissioning outcomes, there will be the opportunity to consider connections between various recreation, open space and tourism attractions in areas surrounding Lake Mokoan. This includes the ability for any tourism element retained in Lake Mokoan:

- to link with the Broken River trail network via the inlet and / or outlet channels;
- to leverage off proposed attractions at Glenrowan and the Ned Kelly touring route. This could be through physical links (bicycle / pedestrian trails);
- to link (similarly) to the Murray to Mountains rail trail;
- to form part of the regional touring route, "legends Wine and High Country";
- to link with open space attractions such as State Parks;
- to be marketed in association with tourism and recreational activities such as Winton Motor Raceway or local wineries / farm gate opportunities; and
- to link with arts, cultural and heritage opportunities.

The numerous recreation and leisure facilities and assets in relatively close proximity to the lake are identified in Section 6.2.2 and in the diagram on the following page.

6. Identified Needs of Local Communities

The communities around Lake Mokoan are physically separated by the lake and the Hume Corridor.

Communities of interest are based on the locality where people live, and involvement in local Landcare groups, the CFA, the Yacht Club and local schools.

The physical separation is exemplified in the CFA arrangements where the land surrounding the lake is covered by 3 groups (Wangaratta, Devenish and Benalla) and 3 brigades (Taminick, Chesney Vale and Winton). Socially it is not such a separation.

On the northern side of the lake (Chesney Vale and Taminick), the only "community facility" is the Yacht Clubrooms. The clubrooms are used for various community purposes.

On the southern side of the Lake (Winton and Winton North), the school in Winton acts as a "community facility", and higher order facilities are available in Benalla.

The needs of local communities should be addressed on the basis of the outcomes of decommissioning, particularly on the northern shore.

7.2 Recreation and Open Space Objectives

The following 10 objectives have been developed as potential guiding principles for recreation planning and achieving desirable outcomes for future land use when Lake Mokoan is decommissioned.

The objectives aim to integrate community aspirations for physical outcomes (in the form of infrastructure and assets) with economic (regional and local benefit), environmental (sustainability) and social outcomes (community well-being) inherent in recreation and leisure planning, development and management.

- **Integration**

D To promote / facilitate an integrated approach to planning, development and management of open space

- **Connection**

To identify and promote physical, organisational and community linkages in recreation and open space planning and development, including linkages to tourism, the environment, and the arts, heritage and culture.

- **Participation**

R To promote community and visitor participation in recreation and use of open space assets and facilities

- **Access and Equity**

A To identify opportunities for elderly, young and disabled persons to access and use recreation and open space facilities

- **Economic Benefit**

To identify and facilitate recreation and open space opportunities that promotes the regional and local economy, including opportunities for employment

- **Environmental Benefit**

F To identify and facilitate recreation and open space opportunities that promotes the regional and local environment

- **Management**

T To identify and assign roles and responsibilities for the ongoing management (including risk management) of recreation and open space assets and facilities

- **Financial Sustainability**

To ensure recreation and open space outcomes lie within the reasonable capacity of Government, organisations and the community to foster and maintain following establishment

- **Sense of Place**

To secure recreation and open space outcomes that creates a better sense of place, community and facilities

- **Community Support**

To secure recreation and open space outcomes that is supported by the community and encourages community building

7.3 Other Recreation and Open Space Opportunities

There are a range of other opportunities that have been identified, including:

- a golf course estate at the north-eastern end of the lake, comprising hotel accommodation and conference facilities and perhaps linking in with regional tourism activities and visitation to Winton Raceway
- an integrated sports shooting facility, possibly incorporating a target shooting range adjacent to the existing dam wall (if it is to be retained)
- development of a community hall / multi-purpose facility and playground on the northern shoreline for local community use. The existing yacht clubrooms might be considered a multi-purpose community centre option, should yachting not be possible after decommissioning of the lake
- improving road access to and within the study area and upgrading directional signage, particularly for cycling
- potential for a trail along the dam wall, accessing the spit (opportunity for bird watching)
- developing an orienteering / marathon course(s) in conjunction with the walking and cycle tracks
- a wetland ecology / education centre, providing interpretation facilities
- a (commercially run) wildlife sanctuary in association with the wetlands, including boardwalks and day visitor facilities, with good accessibility from the Hume Freeway
- a dedicated area for trail bike use and similar activities that require a non-urban environment
- equestrian trails, for example linking the Warby Range and the Chesney Hills
- community art, perhaps a public art trail
- interpretation of indigenous heritage, developed in conjunction with the aboriginal community
- involvement of youth in the development of facilities

There are both mutual benefits and inherent conflicts between many of these potential land uses, an issue that will need to be resolved in Stages 2 and 3 of this study.

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