

Submission on the Recreational Use of Reservoirs, Orange City.

The Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this report. CWEC is a regional environment group, acting as an umbrella group to several environment groups in the Central West of NSW from districts such as Orange, Dubbo, Mudgee, Bathurst and Lithgow.

Gosling Creek

Gosling Creek is an area into which OCC has poured considerable resources and some of the surrounding areas contain grassy woodland in quite good condition, with a patchy, but quite fairly good native grassland understorey. Although the waterbirds are probably not quite as interesting as those on Spring Creek (although it should be stated that fewer surveys have been conducted), the regenerated and planted woodland provides good habitat for terrestrial birds, including Super Parrot, *Polytelis swainsonii* listed as 'vulnerable' under both state⁴ and commonwealth legislation.⁵

The area is quite spacious and some parts could be suited to camping. Normally, CWEC would have no real issue with the development of camping facilities in this area, providing the facilities are well-regulated so as to avoid environmental degradation of the vegetation in the precinct and avoid the high conservation biodiversity areas discussed above. A small campsite based on the northern side near the existing facilities would be acceptable. This comment, however, is based on the assumption that any campsite would be small, in well-defined areas and that the development of new infrastructure was also at a modest scale. The report, however, provides no information on the size of the proposed facilities, apart from a rough budget, so, on that basis, we would have to object to this proposal at this stage. The money could be put to better use controlling the woody weeds that are invading the woodland areas.

Spring Creek

An increase in boating activity, even non-powered, should not be permitted. Your planning documents makes almost no mention of 'the environment' in its considerations, but this reservoir is an important refuge area for water birds (see Table 1). Several threatened species, including one at commonwealth level, are known to use the area, including waterfowl Freckled Duck *Stictonetta naevosa* and Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis* (with evidence of the latter breeding), as well as terrestrial species such as Flame Robin. Species protected under international treaties are also present.

Table 1 *Number of species and those of conservation concern recorded 1994–present*

| Species category | Number |
|---|--------|
| Total species | 124 |
| Native species | 119 |
| Introduced species | 5 |
| Wetland species | 51 |
| Species under JAMBA ¹ | 2 |
| Species under CAMBA ² | 4 |
| Species under ROKAMBA ³ | 2 |
| Species ‘vulnerable’ NSW ⁴ | 6 |
| Species ‘vulnerable’ Australia ⁵ | 1 |

Legend for Table 1

¹ JAMBA Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Japan for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Danger of Extinction and their Environment (1974)

² CAMBA Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the People's Republic of China for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environment (1986)

³ ROKAMBA Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea on the Protection of Migratory Birds (2006)

⁴ Species listed as ‘vulnerable’ under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* NSW 2016.

⁵ Species listed federally as ‘vulnerable’ under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999

The author is currently analysing the data for this site from many sources and will have a more detailed report on the abundance of each species at a later date.

More boating activity would be mean more disturbance and this could be critical, particular during periods of drought further inland.

Many of the important bird species are to be found at the northern end where the water is very shallow. The density of birds in this lagoon area is much higher than in the open water, and birds such as rails and native hens have been recorded here. These type of birds are of particular interest to bird-watchers as they are highly cryptic and uncommon. But any kind of increased access to the reservoir would have to be at this end and would therefore cause the most disturbance to these species.

I (with others from groups such as the Orange Field Naturalist and Conservation Society- OFNCS) have surveyed the area on a three-monthly basis since 2008 and, apart from the Kinross school rowers and support boat, a few fishermen, and the very occasional non-motorised boat, probably originating from the houses along the shore, the only other people that I have seen using the area are other bird-watchers. In a two-hour survey period, we have recorded up to 55 species, making it a highly attractive area for bird tourism. Why not consider a bird platform and a brochure with the birds species to be seen? It is a good area to see birds of prey as well as waterbirds.

But there is no evidence of demand for more water-based or camping activities. It is in severe need of weed control (mainly willows and St John's Wort and would benefit from replacement of these willows with native tree and shrub species).

CWEC concurs with the plan not to permit camping at the site. This would add to the disturbance and degradation of the area. There are really no suitable sites in any case.

Our recommendation would be to permit fishermen (on foot), but to not increase any other type of recreational activity in this area.

Suma Park

CWEC concurs with the conclusions of the report that no increase in recreational activity on this dam should be permitted at least until further surveys are done as little is known about the environment of the area due to difficulty of access.

Conclusion

CWEC would like to suggest that OCC takes account of the environmental assets provided by these reservoirs prior to any move to develop them further, and to keep in close touch with the stakeholder groups such as ourselves, as well as ECCO and OFNCS, in which reside a lot of local knowledge about the flora and fauna of these areas.

It is not clear to us why this report only considers these three reservoirs. The most suitable area for an increase in the intensity of recreation would be Lake Canobolas. There is less natural bushland to spoil than Gosling Creek; the amenities are already in place, so would cost less; supervision of visitors would be easier if confined to one area; there is less likelihood of water contamination for Orange; and it has more attractive and suitable areas for camping etc.

CWEC would like to thank Orange City Council for this opportunity to comment on this report.

Cilla Kinross

President

Central West Environment Council

15th October 2018.