

NPWS Strategic Additions Proposal

Govetts Creek Catchment

This proposal is to give protection to lands surrounding the watercourses and swamp which flow into Govetts Creek. The Govetts Creek sub-catchment is critical for the protection of the Grose River system and Wilderness Area located within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

It will provide a continuous corridor of protected natural areas by linking the isolated section of the National Park around Cascade Dam to the main area of the existing National Park and the Minnehaha Falls Crown Reserve. These missing lands along Govetts Creek also are important for the endangered Blue Mountains Swamps they each contain.

- 1. Location:** three separate parcels included in this proposal are located between the towns of Nth Katoomba, Nth Leura and Medlow Bath. Each is located along either Govetts Creek or Katoomba Creek (which flows into Govetts Creek).
- 2. LGA:** Blue Mountains City Council
- 3. DP, Lot Numbers, Tenure and Zoning (from west to East):**
 - A: 31-35 Connell Rd, Katoomba & 81-85 Grand Canyon Rd, Medlow Bath**
All owned by Deerubbin Land Council;
DP 48738, lot 563 and 11 lots in DP 751627, lots 376. All 12 lots are E2 except small portion E3 on 1 lot (80 ha)
 - B: 11- 41 North Rd, Nth Katoomba** (access Hillview Rd): DP 963149 (2 lots) private tenure, (excludes small lot containing development), most E2 with some E3 (31 ha)
 - C: 216-242 Mt Hay Rd, Leura:** DP751646, lot 94, unreserved Crown land, most E2 with some E3 (48 ha)

LEP Zoning – almost all of each parcel is zoned E2, with small areas of E3 in each. Some lots are totally E2.
- 4. Size in hectares:** 160 ha
- 5. Public or private land:** Unreserved Crown land + private individual + Deerubbin Land Council
- 6. Adjacent existing national parks:** all parcels are surrounded on at least 3 sides with either the Blue Mountains National Park (dark green on map) or a dedicated Crown Reserve (pale green). All have at least 1 border with the Blue Mountains National Park.
- 7. Natural Values:**

Threatened Ecological Communities and Species
Each of the properties contain an area of Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone, listed as endangered under Commonwealth legislation, and listed as vulnerable under NSW legislation as Blue Mountains Swamps.
All 3 proposed additional parcels have populations of *Epacris hamiltonii* located on the property or immediately adjacent (opposite bank of creek); this species is listed as endangered under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act. The endangered Leura Skink (*Eulamprus leuraensis*) and Giant Dragonfly (*Petalura gigantea*) are also likely to be found in these swamps.

Regionally significant communities mapped under LEP 2015:

All parcels contain the following regionally significant species or communities

- Heath & Scrub (5A)
- Blue Mountains Swamp (5B)
- Blue Mountains Riparian Complex (6)

The **quality of native vegetation** on all parcels is excellent except for some clearing on 2 properties ; viz

- unsealed 4 WD access roads to power poles (B & C)
- clearing extending from development on an adjacent lot (B)

8. Local catchment values:

A watercourse flows through or borders each parcel flowing eventually into the Grose River and Grose Wilderness Area. Two of the parcels (A & B) border Katoomba Creek, which flows into Govetts Creek; the other parcel (C) has Govetts Creek flowing through it. These areas proposed are just 9 km from the iconic Blue Gum Forest. The Gross Wilderness is just 2.5km from this area.

9. Wildlife corridor:

These parcels are part of the fauna corridor which extends from the catchment area around Cascade Dam to the consolidated mass of the Blue Mountains National Park downstream.

10. Heritage and Social values:

Aboriginal Heritage:

Aboriginal People have inhabited the lands of Govett's Creek for at least 12 000 years (nearby Walls Cave). Permanent fresh water, rock overhang shelters, and an abundance of food and tool-making resources on the plateau, through the upland sedge swamps and in the valleys attracted at least seasonal settlement. There are scatters of tool-making stones in the catchment and axe grinding grooves along Katoomba Creek. The Minnehaha Falls area is a known significant site for local indigenous people.

Non-indigenous heritage and social values: These areas contain escarpment and rocky outcrops of high scenic value, and also views to escarpment areas within the existing park. The recreational value is primarily around the Bruce's Walk, the proposed additions will safeguard the access used by experienced bushwalkers to this track.

The local community has invested a significant number of volunteer hours in safeguarding these sections of creekline since 2002. Each year, 2 remote bushcare events are conducted in parts of the creek during the Great Grose Weed Walk. In addition to this, public funds have enabled the work of skilled bush regeneration contractors to supplement the volunteer efforts.

11. Current threats, including impacts on adjacent national parks:

The management of this corridor has been largely community driven, and carried out by the efforts of volunteers with the assistance of Blue Mountains City Council and NPWS. However, long term management requires responsibility to be accepted by one agency to address the following issues:

- Weeds along creekline edges and in stream - the major threat. Katoomba and Govetts Creeks are a major corridor (vector) for dispersal of weeds from the urban areas of Katoomba and Leura into the core area of the BMNP and the Wilderness Area.
- Road side edges vulnerable to weed impacts and illegal dumping of rubbish.
- Inappropriate recreational activities – there is a history of 4WD and trail bike riding, in the recent past, although not current.
- Erosion from existing tracks and trails – active management is needed along maintenance tracks to power poles, and other tracks to be closed.

To conclude: the addition of the 3 parcels in the Govetts Creek Catchment would:

- Logically re-align National Park boundaries by eliminating some virtual inholdings, improving boundaries for management of the existing national park, and consolidate the area of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
- Provide more adequate buffers to the public reserves from adjoining urban land uses, in particular for some protection against weeds.
- Allow for the better management of the Katoomba and Govetts Creek watercourses and hence the Grose River.
- Provide more protection for the threatened Blue Mountains Swamps and the endangered species living within them; viz *Eulamprus leuraensis* and *Petalura gigantean*; and for *Epacris hamiltonii*, which is restricted to small rock overhang sites above the creeklines.