



## Interim Wonga Beach Foreshore Management Plan

October 2020

## **Background**

Wonga Beach is a beachside suburb located approximately 17kms north of the town of Mossman. In the 2016 census Wonga Beach had a population of 975 people. Following the relocation of the old Rocky Point State School to the new Wonga Beach State School in 1999, the area has become popular with families.

A number of residents at Wonga Beach have long been using various modes of transport to access the beach, for both recreational and commercial purposes. Wonga Beach is in close proximity to the Daintree River and Bells Reef just offshore. This makes it a popular area for recreational fishing, and as vehicles such as quad bikes have become more popular and there has been an increase to the pre-owned market of low cost ATV's, Council has recognised that the use of such vehicles has become a popular recreational past time.

The use of vehicles on Wonga Beach, has become more popular in the last few years. Local Laws Officers, together with Open Spaces and Civil Works, have attempted to manage this issue across the Shire by way of enforcement actions and infrastructure, with mixed results depending on the location. Wonga Beach is approx. 10.5kms long, with the area from the Wonga Community Park in the South to the end of the main residential area to the North being approx. 3.5kms. This is a large stretch of coastline for Council officers to patrol and regulate.

Recreational quad bike use has historically not been approved. However, a number of Wonga Beach residents have been using quad bikes on the beach for many years and consider the activity to be a part of their way of life and what makes the area special. Following a community meeting at Wonga Beach State School in late 2015, Council received several enquiries from residents wanting to obtain a permit. In 2016, Council staff met onsite with a Senior Environmental Officer from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, with the feedback being that he did not foresee any major environmental issues with quad bikes using the hard sand to traverse Wonga Beach. Recent discussion with the Marine Park Authority also implied that this was a matter for Council to manage. The draft Vehicles on Beaches policy was sent to the Department of Environment and Science on two separate occasions requesting feedback or objection, without response. In 2018, Council conducted community consultation, aimed at Wonga Beach residents, of which the final report has been provided to Councillors. A decision was made to put this issue on hold until the new local laws could be adopted, which has now occurred.

As the population of Wonga Beach has steadily grown, Council has also seen an increase in the illegal clearing of foreshore vegetation, camping on the beach and other activities that have an impact on the amenity and environment.

## **Purpose of the plan**

The purpose of the Management Plan for Wonga beach is to develop clear management actions that are to be led by Council and inform future decisions regarding the protection and management of foreshore.

These plans provide Council and the community with clear, workable processes and actions for ongoing use, maintenance, improvement and regulation of the Wonga Beach Foreshore.

The plans consider community needs and expectations whilst also providing for a sustainable, usable and enjoyable foreshore environment.

The foreshore area is public land for the benefit of the community as a whole, and as such, actions have been determined with that intention in mind. No person has any greater right to use this land, or have a say in its management, than any other person.





## **WONGA BEACH**

### **Landscape**

To the south of the Daintree River mouth, a broad sandy embayment extends along the coastline for approximately 10.5km. The sandy embayment is a beach ridge system, formed in front of the low-lying coastal area of the Daintree River floodplain and associated mangroves, wetlands and Melaleuca forest.

The most southern 3.5km of the sandy embayment has residential development and a Council controlled caravan park. A private caravan park is located 700 metres north of the settled coastal extent with a rural subdivision located in this area approximately 800 metres west of the foreshore Reserve

### **Communities**

Wonga Beach is one of the region's main settlements, with over 500 dwellings and a number of tourist facilities. The closest road running parallel to the beach is the Old Wonga Esplanade. The densely vegetated area in between includes a caravan/camping ground.

Wonga Beach can be divided into Old and New Wonga (southern part) with the two separated by a large formerly developed (hotel and commercial) parcel of land. The site is currently vacant. There is no road between the two settlement areas, except via the Mossman - Daintree Road to the West. A bicycle/pedestrian path links the two settlements.

A well vegetated dune system currently provides some protection from coastal hazards to the residential zones.

### **Key environmental values include:**

Coastal landforms – including sandy embayment's, estuary, dune systems and near shore reefs.

Vegetation communities and ecosystems – including the rainforest, mangroves and native dune vegetation

Significant and endangered species – including both land and marine environments (e.g. turtles, birds and fish).



Figure 12. Locality map – Wonga Beach.<sup>18</sup>



## **Precincts**

For the purposes of this plan, Wonga Beach has been divided into 4 precincts:-

1. New Wonga
2. Old Wonga
3. Giblin Street north to Pinnacle Village
4. Pinnacle Village to Daintree River





## **Management Strategies**

Management strategies are grouped in themes, these being:

1. Ensuring planning and local laws controls are in place. This will include the insertion of new conditions to the local laws prescribed activity schedule 26 – Bringing or driving motor vehicles onto local government controlled areas.
2. Issuing an Information Notice for prescribed activity approvals to ensure reasonable conditions are applied until such time as the conditions can be reflected in the local law.
3. Facilitate the creation of a community group to highlight and solve issues associated with the use.
4. Actively monitoring and enforcing planning and local laws controls. This may include the use of surveillance cameras in strategically placed locations.
5. Installing new signage to reflect permitted uses.
6. Protecting coastal biodiversity and ensuring healthy coastal ecosystems
7. Providing safe designated community access to foreshore areas
8. Restricting access using physical barriers
9. Education
10. Conduct maintenance in and around the foreshore area.

Updates to this plan shall be undertaken annually.



## Community Survey Feedback – Recreational ATV Use

In 2018, Council conducted community consultation with Wonga Beach residents to determine support for the use of quad bikes on the beach.

On the basis of the submissions received, looking at the individuals represented, 69% supported the use of quad bikes on the beach for recreational purposes, 28% were against it and 3% were neutral.

Of those respondents that objected, the four most common reasons identified were:

1. ATV's will have a detrimental impact on the natural environment, including degradation of sand dunes, sea grasses and interference with native and migrating birds;
2. Policing a permit system will be difficult (if not impossible) and expensive, opening the door for unauthorized vehicles on the beach;
3. Ratepayers could be liable for damage or injuries occurring from vehicles;
4. ATV's are noisy and intrusive and will affect the quiet enjoyment of the beach by residents and visitors.

The management plan is intended to address these issues.



## Animal Management

The area from Giblin Street north to Vixies Road is a dog off leash area. All other areas of Wonga Beach are required to have dogs kept in an appropriate enclosure and on a leash when in a public place.

No animals are prohibited in the Wonga Beach foreshore area, including horses.



## **Precinct Management**





## Pinnacle Village to Daintree River

This is a dog on-leash area

### Actions

- No access points via Council controlled land
- Quad-bike use is allowed with a permit. Quad-bike use is strictly prohibited on or near the riparian zones, vegetated areas and dune areas.
- Quad bike use is permitted only on hard packed sand within the tidal zone.
- Audit to identify any existing access points



## North of Giblin Street to Pinnacle Village

This is a dog off-leash area. In this precinct, the responsible person for a dog must ensure that:-

- Dogs are under effective control at all times (voice command);
- Dog faeces is immediately cleaned up and disposed of properly.

## Actions

- No access points via Council controlled land excepting access for guests of Pinnacle Village caravan Park.
- 4WD access only for guests of Pinnacle Village for launching and retrieving a boat.
- Quad-bike use is strictly prohibited on or near the riparian zones, vegetated and dune areas.
- Quad bike use is permitted only on hard packed sand within the tidal zone.
- Audit undertaken to determine any existing access points to the beach.
- Audit undertaken during nesting season for any turtle nests



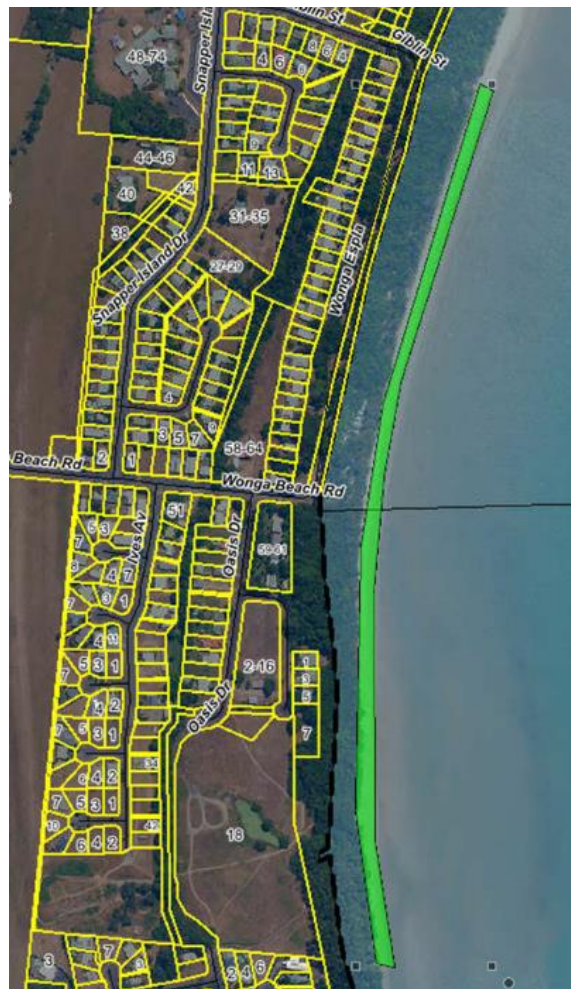


## Old Wonga (Giblin Street south to northern end Marlin Drive)

This is a dog on-leash area

### Actions

- Audit all existing access points to foreshore
- Formalise all vehicle/pedestrian and quad bike access points and sign post entrance conditions for quad bike use.
- Close and revegetate all illegal/not formalised access points
- 4WD and quad-bike use. 4WD and quad-bike use is strictly prohibited on or near the riparian zones, vegetated and dune areas.
- Quad bike use is permitted only on hard packed sand within the tidal zone.
- Actively monitor and enforce no creation of new access points to foreshore.
- Audit undertaken during nesting season for any turtle nests
- Giblin Street access closed to 4WDs. Quad bike access via Giblin Street access permitted. This is to minimise the impact on the frontal dune and disturbance to residents.
- Install a key controlled barrier at the southern end of the Council Caravan Park (Wonga Beach Road) to allow vehicle access for boat launching

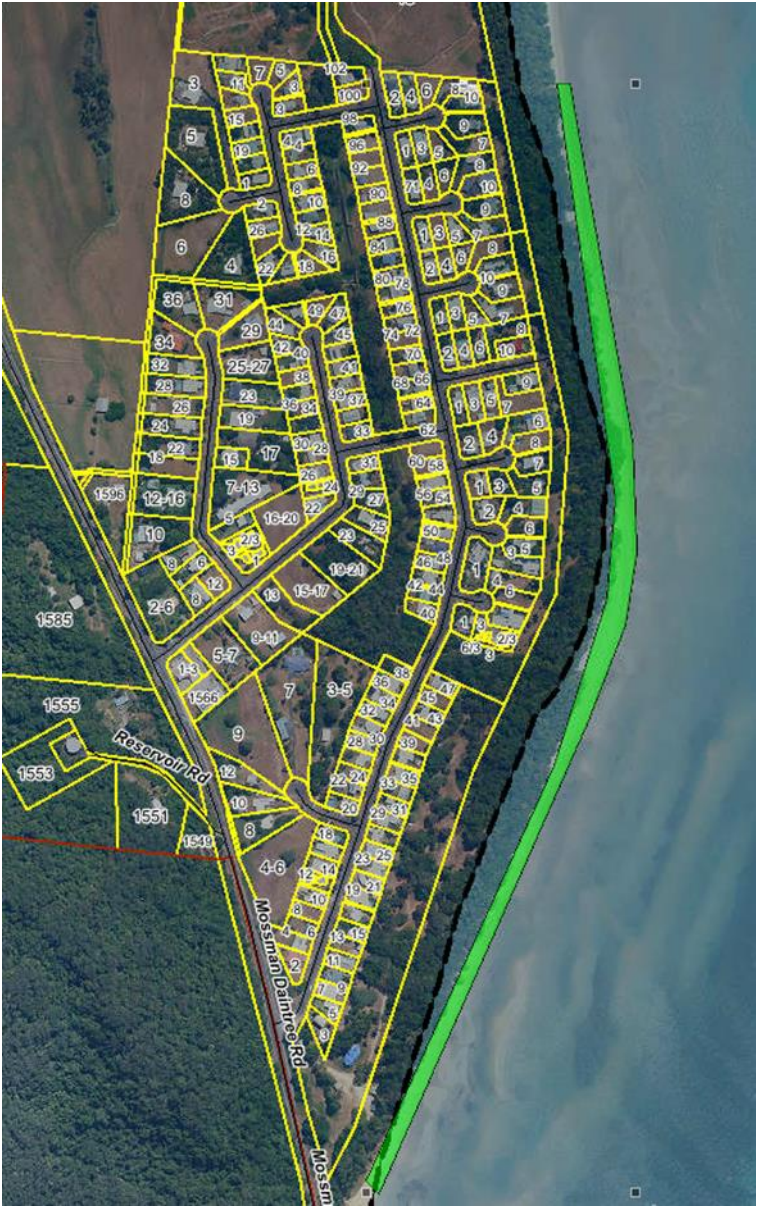


**New Wonga (northern End of Marlin Drive south to Wonga Community Park - Includes Lot 65 CP903509)**

This is a dog on-leash area

**Actions**

- Audit all existing access points to foreshore
- Formalise all vehicle/pedestrian and quad bike access points and sign post entrance conditions for quad bike use.
- Close and revegetate all illegal/not formalised access points
- No 4WD use permitted. Quad-bike use is strictly prohibited on or near the riparian zones, vegetated and dune areas.
- Quad bike use is permitted only on hard packed sand within the tidal zone.
- Actively monitor and enforce no creation of new access points to foreshore.
- Audit undertaken during nesting season to identify the number and location of turtle nests
- Quad bike access via one (1) designated access in Wonga Beach Community Park (Lot 65 CP903509).
- Install a key controlled barrier to restrict access to the remainder of Lot 65. This includes access to the rear of properties on Marlin Drive. This is to minimise the impact on the frontal dune, vegetation and disturbance to residents.
- Close and revegetate all illegal/not formalised access points
- Council to allow quad bike access to the beach at strategically spaced, defined access points, appropriately signed. This is to minimise the impact on the frontal dune and disturbance to residents.



## **Recreational ATV Approval Process and Conditions**



## Obtaining an Approval

Application for an approval consistent with the provisions of this management plan and under *Subordinate Local Law 1, Schedule 26 – Bringing or driving motor vehicles onto local government controlled areas* must be made on the approved form, and be accompanied by payment of the required fee. Application for an approval will only be accepted in person and each applicant may only apply for a permit for himself/herself, unless they are the parent/legal guardian of a minor child.

Criteria for assessing an application, may include, but not be limited to:

- Limited recreational Quad Bike and UTV use will only be permitted at Wonga Beach.
- Access points will be at the Giblin Street and Janbal Street entrances to the beach.
- A committee of users will be formed to manage any issues with the use of vehicles on the beach, which may include membership from Douglas Shire Council, Mossman Police and any other parties deemed appropriate by the Council.
- Only residents of Wonga Beach will be eligible for an approval. Proof must be provided by producing a provisional or full driver's licence with the applicants' current residential address clearly visible.
- Only the vehicle nominated on the approval is to be driven on the beach. A full description of the vehicle, including a colour photograph, must be submitted for approval.
- Two (2) wheeled vehicles such as trail bikes and large four wheel drive passenger vehicles, will not be considered for approval.
- Where the approval is for a quad bike, applicants must have, and be able to prove, that they have undertaken some form of recognised quad bike safety training.
- Parents or legal guardians of minor children, 11 years or older, may apply for a permit on behalf of the minor child. Conditions Apply. See below.
- Conditional registration may be sought by suitable applicants from the Department of Transport and Main Roads, with the support of Douglas Shire Council and Mossman Police, to enable the vehicle to be driven on a road, to a designated access point.
- Only applicants with a current QLD drivers licence will be supported in their application for Conditional Registration.



### **Conditions Additional to Subordinate Local Law No. 1, Schedule 26**

- The vehicle is not to be driven above the high tide mark, except when travelling to and from the beach.
- Under no circumstances, including at high tide, is the vehicle to be driven on or over frontal dunes or foreshore areas not designated as access points.
- Vehicles will be restricted to travelling on the beach between the hours of 8am and 6:30pm.
- Vehicles must not be driven by persons under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs. The QLD Police Service will be notified where an authorised officer reasonably believes this is occurring.
- Vehicles are to be driven only in the area specified on the approval.
- The maximum speed limit on the beach area adjacent to Marlin Drive and the Esplanade will be 20kph. In all other areas north of the Giblin Street access point the maximum speed limit will be 40kph. Hooning, fishtailing and racing of vehicles is not permitted.
- Only the vehicle nominated on the approval is to be driven on the beach.
- Vehicles must give way at all times to pedestrians and wildlife.
- Vehicles must be kept in a good state of repair or an approval will be revoked.
- Approval holders will be issued an approval identification sticker, or similar, which must be visible on the vehicle at all times.
- Approval holders must only access the beach at the designated access points. Vehicles that cannot be registered and legally driven on a road must be pushed or transported by utility or trailer to the designated access point. Approvals will be revoked and enforcement action taken by Council officers and QLD Police, if users are found in breach of this condition.
- As per QLD State law, approval holders operating quad bikes or UTV's must wear an approved motorbike helmet and not carry a passenger unless on a seat designated for that purpose.
- As per QLD State law, passengers on a vehicle approved for passengers, must be at least 8 years of age.
- Approval holders must at all times carry their drivers licence when conducting the activity and provide to an authorised officer, on request.

### **Approval for minor children 11 years or older**

- Parents or legal guardians of minor children 11 years or older may apply for an approval on behalf of the minor child.
- Parents or legal guardians must supervise the minor child at all times when the vehicle is being used on the beach, including any movement of the vehicle between home and the beach.
- Parents or legal guardians will be responsible for the conduct and behaviour of the minor child at all times when the vehicle is being used on the beach, including any movement of the vehicle between home and the beach.
- When making application for an approval for a minor child, the parent or legal guardian will become legally liable and responsible for any enforcement action taken by Douglas Shire Council with respect to any breaches of the approval. Enforcement action may include the issue of a Penalty Infringement Notice (fine).
- Vehicles must be the appropriate size for the user and must not be a vehicle designed to be operated by an adult.
- No passengers will be permitted.

