

**K. I. T.**

**“KEEPING IN TOUCH”**

## **Desert Park management plans**

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) have commenced the development of management plans for the Witjira and Simpson Desert Parks. The aim is to have a draft plan ready by the end of 2016. The draft will then enter a 3-month period of public consultation, followed by the preparation and release of the final plan in the later half of 2017.

The National Resources Advisory unit of 4WDSA have been invited to participate in the process. Members have had a constructive meeting with the relevant planning officer, Theresa Andrew. A summary of the topics discussed can be found of the next page.

There is now an opportunity for interested members of the SA 4WD community to have their own say. Please see the fact sheet from DEWNR (last 2 pages of this KIT) for how to participate.

**A summary of the topics discussed at the 4WDSA/DEWNR meeting, these topics may or may not feature in the final management plan.**

- Ensuring all travellers select the appropriate tyre pressure, and utilise safety flags  
[possibility of inserting a pop out box in the management plan to this effect]
- Suitable signage is installed to instruct travellers on how to cross the desert safely and with minimum impact to the environment and cultural sites
- The use of generators – it would be good to allow the use of generators and we could restrict the hours of use and location in which they can be operated
- Trailers – there are pros and cons for allowing trailers (allows more people to travel the area, safer as not loading up the 4WD but without the correct tyre pressure, trailers can easily degrade tracks). Management options include restricting trailers to certain tracks (eg Rig Road), and providing education on tyre pressure
- Camp fires – would be good to continue allowing camp fires in the Simpson – possibility of mandating fire pots only, and BYO fire wood. Acceptance of the no camp fire rule in Witjira.
- Extend camping areas – instead of only allowing 50m either side of tracks, allow camping in breakout areas and/or allow camping up to 500m either side of the track in certain areas.
- Set and promote specific radio stations for each track/area
- Don't close off any existing tracks
- Consider allowing access to the no public access track that continues from the Erabena Track south to the Kallakoopah Creek. This could be done by allowing restricted access (possibly administered by 4WD SA and allowing a max number of vehicles per year and a request for travellers to note environmental conditions).

**Thanks to Theresa for recording the discussion above. The fact sheet produced by DEWNR follows.**

## **New management plans for Witjira National Park and the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve**

Around 270 million years ago, the Simpson Desert was covered by glaciers. Today, it is a hot and dry landscape that boasts the world's largest sand dune desert, with the world's longest parallel dunes.

With a rich cultural heritage, dunes up to 200 km in length, mound springs that bubble million-year-old water, a rare marsupial mole and purple love-grass, this is a special place.



There are over 1,100 dunes in the Simpson Desert

The Simpson Desert covers more than 17 million hectares and spills into South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. In South Australia, the desert lies within Witjira National Park (768,853 Ha), Simpson Desert Conservation Park (688,142 Ha) and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (2,919,123 Ha). This is the Country of the Wangkangurru Yarluynandi and Lower Southern Arrernte people who have retained a connection to the land for more than 15,000 years.

Cameleers crisscrossed the desert from the mid-1800s and from the 1860s, pastoralists took up land on the desert's fringe. From the 1960s, mining companies searched for oil and gas and developed tracks including French Line, Rig Road and the QAA Line.

More recently, the desert has been a destination for adventurers and their 4WDs. Travelers take on the challenge of traversing dune after dune and enjoy the novelty of swimming in Great Artesian Basin water at Dalhousie Springs.



The cultural, ecological and geological significance of the area was recognised with the proclamation of Simpson Desert Conservation Park in 1967 and Witjira National Park in 1985. The Simpson Desert Regional Reserve created in 1988 to link Witjira with the Conservation Park.

Today, it's all about getting a balance between land use and conservation so that the natural and cultural features of this special area can be protected, enhanced and enjoyed into the future.

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources is working with the Witjira National Park Co-management Board, the Irrwanyere Aboriginal Corporation and the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Aboriginal Corporation to develop park management plans for the Witjira and Simpson Desert Parks, in accordance with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The new plans will reflect developments and changes within the parks, together with the aspirations of the Wangkangurru Yarluyandi and Lower Southern Arrente Traditional Owners.

A discussion paper will be released in early 2016, and provide the opportunity for public comment. A draft management plan will then be prepared and released for public consultation over a three month period. Comments received will be considered in the development of the plan.

**Questions to consider now:**

- What makes these parks special?
- What are the main threats to these parks?
- What would be on your wish list for the future management of the parks?



The water at Dalhousie Springs is warm at around 40 degrees Celsius.

**Have your say**

You are invited to register your interest in having a say about the management of these parks

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More information about park planning can be found at:  
<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parkmanagement>

