



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Action Plan

Alpine she-oak skink (*Cyclodomorphus praealtus*)

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of s.78C of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019 (Reg.) in relation to an Asset of Intergenerational Significance (AIS) as declared under s.153G of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Site details

AIS site	AIS-E0-019, AIS-E0-021, AIS-E0-075, AIS-E0-144, AIS-E0-160, AIS-E0-162, AIS-E0-163, AIS-E0-165, AIS-E0-166
Site location	An area of 11816 hectares in Kosciuszko National Park
NPWS contact	Team Leader - Conservation, Southern Ranges Branch

Environmental values

This table sets out the environmental values for which the land was listed as an AIS (Reg. 78C(3)(a)).

Identified value(s)	Value description
Important habitat for alpine she-oak skink	The endangered alpine she-oak skink is a slender medium-sized lizard reaching a maximum length of around 350 millimetres. The species has specific habitat requirements, preferring tree-less or very lightly treed areas that contain tussock grasses, low heath or a combination of both. Within this habitat the species shelters beneath litter, rocks, logs and other ground debris, and has been observed basking on grass tussocks.

Key risks to environmental values

This table sets out the key risks to the environmental values of the land (Reg. 78C(3)(b)).

Key risk(s)	Description
Inappropriate fire regimes	<p>Inappropriate fire frequency and intensity that alters vegetation composition and structure may lead to a reduction in suitable habitat and affect the persistence of alpine she-oak skink at the sites.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution and lack of knowledge of the species at the sites.</p>
Feral predators	<p>Predation of alpine she-oak skink by foxes and feral cats.</p>
Weeds	<p>Habitat degradation and competition through invasion, establishment, intensification and/or spread of weeds (e.g., orange hawkweed and exotic perennial grasses) to the extent that the area of suitable habitat is reduced.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution of the species at the sites.</p>
Feral herbivores	<p>Damage and degradation of alpine she-oak skink habitat by introduced herbivores, including deer, horses and rabbits, through grazing, trampling, digging and ground disturbance.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution of the species at the sites.</p>
Feral pigs	<p>Direct predation and degradation of alpine she-oak skink habitat by feral pigs through browsing, trampling, wallowing and rooting may lead to a decline of alpine she-oak skink at the sites.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution of the species at the sites.</p>
Pathogens, diseases and microorganisms	<p>Occurrence of <i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i> infection in alpine she-oak skink habitat that changes the structure, composition and condition of vegetation communities may affect the persistence of the species at the sites.</p> <p>Infection by <i>Nannizziop barbatae</i> reptilian skin fungi, leading to the mortality of individuals.</p>
Anthropogenic climate change	<p>Changes to weather patterns and climatic conditions as a result of anthropogenic climate change that increases frequency and severity of drought conditions, alters habitat structure, composition and resource availability may exceed the adaptive capacity and reduce survivorship of alpine she-oak skink at the sites.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution of the species at the sites.</p>
Disturbance	<p>Authorised infrastructure maintenance activities (e.g., construction and maintenance of roads, trails, buildings and ski runs) and visitor use that leads to degradation and/or fragments of habitat, and damage to individuals may lead to a population decline at the sites.</p> <p>This risk is exacerbated by the restricted and fragmented distribution of the species at the sites.</p>

Conservation activities

This table sets out the conservation activities required to:

1. Control, abate or mitigate the key risks and
2. maintain, restore and remediate the environmental values of the land (Reg. 78C(3)(c)).

Key risk(s)	Impacted site(s)	Conservation activities
Inappropriate fire regimes	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance on the appropriate fire management for the habitat of the alpine she-oak skink within 12 months of the adoption of this plan and update as required. This guidance must provide for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintenance of an appropriate fire regime by developing and implementing a site-specific burn plan for the declared areas. - implementation of any required fire protection and response measures in the declared areas. - integration of site-specific requirements into NPWS and NSW Government bushfire planning, risk management and operational response arrangements. • Implement fire management consistent with the guidance.
Feral predators	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent practicable, reduce the density of foxes to a level that is not having an ecologically significant impact on alpine she-oak skink and maintain the density at or below that level by baiting, trapping and shooting. • To the extent practicable, reduce the density of cats to a level that is not having an ecologically significant impact on alpine she-oak skink and maintain the density at or below that level by undertaking periodic feral cat control (shooting, trapping or other approved methods).
Weeds	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove weed species to the extent required to ensure weeds do not have a negative impact on alpine she-oak skink, by targeted application of physical, biological, and chemical weed control.
Feral herbivores	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent practicable, reduce deer and rabbit densities to levels that are not having an ecologically significant impact on the alpine she-oak skink, and maintain densities at or below those levels, by trapping and shooting and other approved integrated control measures. • To the extent practicable, reduce the density of feral horses to a level that is not having an ecologically significant impact on the alpine she-oak skink, by trapping, mustering and removal, and ground shooting in accordance with a wild horse plan of management approved by the Secretary.
Feral pigs	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent practicable, reduce density of feral pigs to a level that is not having an ecologically significant impact on the alpine she-oak skink, and maintain the density at or below that level, by trapping, baiting and shooting.

Key risk(s)	Impacted site(s)	Conservation activities
Pathogens, diseases and microorganisms	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement hygiene protocols as outlined in the DPE Hygiene Guidelines (as published in April 2020) or as varied by any written advice from the Secretary for the purposes of this declared area.
Anthropogenic climate change	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a decline in species trajectory is attributed to impacts of anthropogenic climate change, investigate options for ex-situ management of population.
Disturbance	All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake periodic reviews to identify whether infrastructure maintenance and construction works are having an adverse impact on alpine she-oak skink. If adverse impacts are observed implement actions to mitigate the impacts. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - upgrade/realignment of trails to avoid known plants/habitat - installation of signage or more discrete marking systems to delineate exclusion areas to prevent slashing or herbicide use near sites. - installation of barriers or other suitable protective structures around individuals to minimise impacts from construction and maintenance works If required, develop and implement guidance for staff, utility managers, council and contractors about appropriate maintenance and construction practices that minimise impacts to alpine she-oak skink population and habitat.

Other land management activities

Within the declared land there are existing assets and infrastructure of NPWS and other external service providers, including public utilities.

Maintenance operations (including inspection, emergency works and routine and standard maintenance) that are exempt development in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, and which are performed on and around existing assets and infrastructure, are authorised under this conservation action plan (CAP) provided such operations are undertaken in a manner that aims to minimise the risk to the declared environmental values of the land and with any other required consents or approvals.

All maintenance operations on the declared land are to be undertaken in accordance with this CAP.

Measuring and reporting

This table sets out the requirements for measuring and reporting on health and condition (Reg. 78C(3)(d)).

Attribute	Metric	Method
Health and condition of the alpine she-oak skink population	Population estimate	Implement annual monitoring to generate an estimate of the number of individuals in the population.
	Area of occupancy	Implement an assessment every 2 years to calculate the area of occupancy and/or determine distribution of alpine she-oak skink at the sites.

A report on the health and condition of the value for which this AIS was declared will be prepared and published on the Department of Planning and Environment website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au. The report will summarise the baseline and current health and condition of the values of the declared land and its overall trajectory.

Evaluation of conservation action plans

This CAP will be amended or replaced as new information becomes available that helps improve our management of the identified assets (Reg. 78H).

The Secretary must appoint a scientist, or a panel of scientists, to conduct a review, as soon as possible after the period of five years from the first approval of a CAP, to examine whether CAPs have been effectively implemented (Reg. 78J(1)).

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Approved by	Atticus Fleming, Acting Coordinator General, Environment and Heritage Group
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