

MINISTERIAL BRIEFING

RECEIVED

05 NOV 2009

MINISTER HAMPTONS OFFICE

FILE NO: D2008/1550

TO: MINISTER FOR PARKS AND WILDLIFE

DATE: 4/11/09

FROM: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DEPT REF: D090136PW

MINS REF: 2009/1243-12M

RE: WRITTEN QUESTION 28 - TREE POINT CONSERVATION RESERVE - GUNN POINT PENINSULA

BACKGROUND

The management of Tree Point Conservation Reserve was raised as an issue in the Legislative Assembly by the Member for Nelson, Mr Gerry Wood, as Written Question 28 in November 2008 (Attachment A).

A response to Mr Wood's Written Question was signed by your predecessor on 25 November 2008, however it appears the response was not forwarded through the appropriate channels (Attachment B). The Department has therefore reviewed the responses that were provided in November 2008, and has updated them accordingly.

CURRENT SITUATION

The attached Legislative Assembly Written question form has been completed.

In response to this issues raised in the Legislative Assembly by Mr Wood in November 2008, the Parks and Wildlife Service has increased the number of patrols to the area from two times a week to at least three patrols per week, including daily patrols on the weekends, has improved signage and replaced and repaired fencing to protect dunes and has been more active in educating beach users both through media print and by engaging those beach users encountered on the regular patrols.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended you sign Part C of the attached Written Question form.

A/Director, Northern Region:
Executive Director, Parks:

Barry Scott
Graham Phelps

8999 4518
8999 4560

JIM GRANT

SIGNED / NOT SIGNED

KARL HAMPTON

18 NOV 2009

Legislative Assembly Written Question Number


MIN REF: D090136PW

DIRECTED TO : Minister for Parks and Wildlife
ASKED BY : Member for Nelson, Mr Gerry Wood
SUBJECT : Tree Point Conservation Reserve – Gunn Point Peninsula
**DATE REFERRED TO
MINISTER'S OFFICE** : 7/11/08
REFERRED TO : Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and
Sport

Please note that, once approved, answers to Written Questions are provided in electronic form to the Legislative Assembly and are published in Hansard. Hansard is published in a black & white Word format. Answers are to be provided in this format please. If it is considered a more complex format is necessary to answer the Question, please discuss this with Cabinet Office prior to finalising the answer.

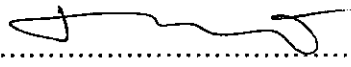
PART A: Action Officer and Division Head to complete

It is recommended that the attached answer be provided.

Name: Barry Scott Title: A/Director Northern Region Parks
Signature:  Date: 30/10/09.....
Endorsed by Branch/Division Head: Date: 30/10/09.....

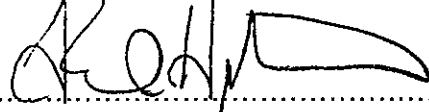
PART B: Chief Executive to complete

I support the above recommendation.

Signature:  Date: 4/11/09.....
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART C: Minister's Approval

I approve the submission of the attached answer in my name.

Signature:  Date: 18/11/09.....

PART D: Concluding Steps

1. Minister's office to return original documents to agency.
2. Agency to scan and email signed cover sheet and answer along with Word copy of answer to Cabinet Office (please use 'DCM Cabinet Office' group email address). Cabinet Office is responsible for recording the response and onforwarding the answer to the Legislative Assembly.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Wood to Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage

As the Tree Point Conservation Reserve on the Gunn Point Peninsula is part of NT parks:

1. **Does the Department intend to repair or rebuild the fence which protects the sand dunes at Tree Point from vehicle traffic?**

ANSWER

The fence to protect the beach dune has been maintained and repaired over the past 10 years by Parks and Wildlife and these fences underwent major maintenance in May 2009.

2. **How many people have been prosecuted for driving along the foreshore within the boundary of the Reserve?**

ANSWER

There have been no prosecutions for driving along the beach from the boundary to the barrier opposite the private properties. The barrier consists of poles set into boulders. It is not possible to drive a vehicle past this barrier. Motorcycles may be able to fit through the poles and quad bikers may be able to get around the barrier at low tide. On the weekend, patrolling rangers speak to the people in the area, including people camping on the land along the beach towards Gunn Point. The activities of users are monitored in this way.

Although evidence of breaches sometimes exists in the form of tyre tracks on the beach, rangers very rarely observe vehicles on the Tree Point beach. When a breach is observed, rangers use discretion and take appropriate action, guided by the following:

- If a vehicle stops and the driver or rider is contrite; issue a verbal warning.
- If a vehicle stops and the driver or rider is aggressive; issue an infringement.
- If a vehicle stops and the driver or rider is a repeat offender; issue an infringement notice.
- If a vehicle does not stop and the vehicle registration cannot be identified; take no action.
- If a vehicle does not stop and the vehicle registration can be identified; issue an infringement notice.

Rangers take the approach of not being heavy-handed to remorseful users and deal with the matter through verbal warnings. This method is commonly applied in similar situations across the Northern Territory's parks and is used as a means of educating the public and maintaining good public relations.

To date, most offenders have been responsive to instructions from rangers and have only been given verbal warnings. There are, however, a small number of people who refuse

to stop when approached by staff and these are almost invariably in unidentifiable, unregistered vehicles.

While there have been no prosecutions to date for driving on Tree Point beach. A media advertisement was placed in the NT News on Thursday 29 October 2009 and Saturday 31 October 2009, to alert the public about the access restrictions within Tree Point Conservation Area.

3. What is the maximum fine for driving on the foreshore?

ANSWER

The fine for off-road driving is \$200.00.

4. The Department removed Poinciana trees from within the Reserve over 12 months ago, the trees are starting to grow again; what
a. Is the department doing to stop the regrowth this year?

ANSWER

Re-growth of Poinciana will be treated with the herbicide "Glyphosate" this financial year as has been done for the past three years. It is important to treat re-growth at the appropriate growth time to gain maximum effect. The new growth that comes with the Wet season needs to be sprayed to obtain maximum benefit.

b. Are the plans for future destruction of any regrowth in following years?

ANSWER

The treatment of the Poinciana re-growth will continue until the amount of re-treatment is reduced and then another section of the large Poinciana trees can be cut down and removed and the re-growth treatment program for the new section continued.

5. Are there any plans to station a Parks and Wildlife Ranger temporarily on weekends, or permanently at Tree Point or nearby to this area?

ANSWER

There are currently no plans to station a ranger at Tree Point Conservation Area neither over weekends nor permanently in the area. Rangers based at Howard Springs Nature Park manage Tree Point Conservation Area, including a number of other areas in the Darwin Parks District. Rangers from Howard Springs have increased their visits to Tree Point Conservation Area from twice a week to at least three times a week during the Dry season, which includes daily visits on weekends, where surveillance of the beach is up to an hour each time. The number of visits during the Wet season is dependent on road access along the unsealed Gunn Point Road. Rangers are also trying to educate beach users during their patrols, and fences and barriers have been improved to prevent damage to dunes.

6. **Could you give a breakdown of capital and maintenance expenditure projects carried out on the Tree Point Reserve over the last 5 years?**

ANSWER

There has been no capital development at Tree Point Conservation Area in the past five years, however, works have been carried out using operational funds and Repairs and Maintenance funding.

The fence protecting the small dune along the access road has been maintained regularly over the years. Fencing materials costing \$6000 were used in May 2009 to replace and repair the fence by ranger staff.

A long term program of removing Poinciana was started as this invasive tree was taking over the coastal vine thicket that is present on the beach front dune. Large trees in a section were cut down and used to barricade the beach dune preventing vehicles accessing the beach over the dune. Re-growth has been treated on a twice a year basis.

A large amount of operational funding from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport was spent on building a sea wall at the front a property to prevent erosion and sea access to the property. The work involved using tipper trucks and front-end loaders and using qualified staff from the Department. The property owner supervised the work as it was located mostly on his property.

The metal sign on the beach explaining beach regulations has been repaired after being vandalised, and a second identical sign has been made at a cost of \$900 so that it can be slotted in as soon as is necessary in the future.

Legislative Assembly Written Question Number

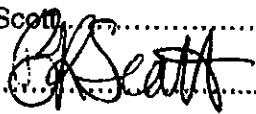
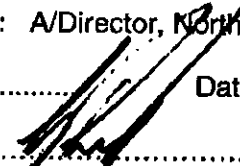
MIN REF: M080108PW
AGENCY REF:

DIRECTED TO : Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage
ASKED BY : Member for Nelson, Mr Gerry Wood
SUBJECT : Tree Point Conservation Reserve – Gunn Point Peninsula
**DATE REFERRED TO
MINISTER'S OFFICE** : 7/11/08
REFERRED TO : Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport

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PART A: Action Officer and Division Head to complete

It is recommended that the attached answer be provided.

Name: Barry Scott Title: A/Director, Northern Region.....
Signature:  Date: 20/11/2008
Endorsed by Branch/Division Head:  Date: 20/11/08

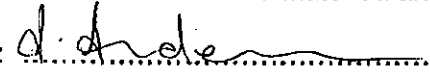
PART B: Chief Executive to complete

I support the above recommendation.

Signature:  Date: 24/11/08
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART C: Minister's Approval

I approve the submission of the attached answer in my name.

Signature:  Date: 25/11/08

PART D: Concluding Steps

1. Minister's office to send original documents to Cabinet Office, with a copy to be returned to agency.
1. Agency to email electronic copy of answer to Cabinet Office (please use 'DCM Cabinet' group email address). Cabinet Office is responsible for on forwarding the answer to the Legislative Assembly.

Cabinet Office administration only:

..... Original received from Minister's Office
..... Electronic copy received from agency and saved
..... Electronic copy provided to Legislative Assembly

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Wood to Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage

As the Tree Point Conservation Reserve on the Gunn Point Peninsula is part of NT parks:

- 1. Does the Department intend to repair or rebuild the fence which protects the sand dunes at Tree Point from vehicle traffic?**

ANSWER

The fence to protect the beach dune has been maintained and repaired over the past 10 years but has in parts now collapsed from rusting. Materials have been purchased to replace parts of the fence and repair the other sections. The task is listed on the work program for the Howard Springs rangers and will be done when staff resources allow (before the end of 2008).

- 2. How many people have been prosecuted for driving along the foreshore within the boundary of the Reserve?**

ANSWER

There have been no prosecutions for driving along the beach from the boundary to the barrier opposite the private properties. The barrier consists of poles set into boulders. It is not possible to drive a vehicle past this barrier. Motorcycles may be able to fit through the poles and quad bikers may be able to get around the barrier at low tide. On the weekend, patrolling rangers speak to the people in the area including people camping on the land along the beach towards Gunn Point. The activities of users are monitored in this way.

- 3. What is the maximum fine for driving on the foreshore?**

ANSWER

The fine for off-road driving is \$200.00.

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 - a. Is the department doing to stop the regrowth this year?**

ANSWER

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- b. Are the plans for future destruction of any regrowth in following years?**

ANSWER

The treatment of the Poinciana re-growth will continue until the amount of re-treatment is reduced and then another section of the large Poinciana trees can be cut down and removed and the re-growth treatment program for the new section continued.

- 5. Are there any plans to station a Parks and Wildlife Ranger temporarily on weekends, or permanently at Tree Point or nearby to this area?**

ANSWER

There are currently no plans to station a ranger at Tree Point Conservation Area over weekends nor permanently in the area. Rangers based at Howard Springs Nature Park manage Tree Point Conservation Area including a number of other areas in the Darwin Parks District. Rangers from Howard Springs visit Tree Point Conservation Area at least twice a week including a weekend patrol. The number of visits is dependent on road access along Gunn Point Road during the Wet season.

- 6. Could you give a breakdown of capital and maintenance expenditure projects carried out on the Tree Point Reserve over the last 5 years?**

ANSWER

There has been no capital development at Tree Point Conservation Area in the past five years, however, works have been carried out using operational funds and Repairs and Maintenance funding.

The fence protecting the small dune along the access road has been maintained regularly over the years and is now on the Howard Springs ranger work program for replacement and repair. Fencing materials costing \$6000 are on hand to do the work when circumstances permit (before the end of the year).

A long term program of removing Poinciana was started as this invasive tree was taking over the coastal vine thicket that is present on the beach front dune. Large trees in a section were cut down and used to barricade the beach dune preventing vehicles accessing the beach over the dune. Re-growth has been treated on a twice a year basis.

A large amount of operational funding from the Department (Parks and Water Resources) was spent on building a sea wall at the front of the Jans' property to prevent erosion and sea access to his property. The work involved using tipper trucks from Parks, front-end loaders and trucks from Water Resources and using qualified staff from both Divisions. David Jans supervised the work as it was located mostly on his property.

The metal sign on the beach explaining beach regulations has been repaired after being vandalised, and a second identical sign has been made at a cost of \$900 so that it can be slotted in as soon as is necessary in the future.