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governance options



Australian Alps

Options to Improve Biodiversity Governance Arrangements

***Options for consideration at 1-2 April 2014 Scenario Planning Workshop
Bright, Victoria***

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Landscapes and Policy Hub

FOREWORD

A significant challenge for national parks is balancing biodiversity conservation and other uses. This challenge is accentuated by the impacts from climate change.

The Landscapes and Policy Hub is taking an approach to this challenge that integrates social, economic and ecological perspectives to develop tools, techniques and policy options to support regional biodiversity planning. An important element of this research is investigating plausible futures for the communities that work and rely on the iconic alpine landscapes, and the institutions that have responsibility for overseeing the governance of their natural resources.

Led by Sue Moore and Michael Lockwood and supported by researchers Michael Mitchell and Sarah Clement, this team is using a combination of conceptual modelling, scenario planning, surveys, interviews and focus groups to develop a range of governance options to assist biodiversity policy and decision-making.

The governance options for the Australian Alps in this document are presented as background to the second of two scenario planning workshops designed to test the governance options developed through this research. The material in this background document is built on the knowledge, experience and opinions of people who work in the region, have cultural connections, are responsible for some aspect of its regulation, or have interests in its future. We are particularly grateful for the generosity of all those who have participated in one-on-one interviews, workshops and focus groups and their thoughtful and candid contributions.

Ted Lefroy

Director, Landscapes and Policy Hub

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About this document...

This document provides background reading to prepare for our scenario planning workshop on 1-2 April 2014. At the workshop, we will consider two governance options aimed at improving biodiversity outcomes in the Australian Alps. These options are detailed on pages 9-14.

These governance options were initially developed by Sarah Clement as part of her PhD study, with the support of the Social and Institutional Futures Research Team. The governance options were then modified following a number of focus group discussions. The purpose of this workshop is to test the usefulness of these options for improving biodiversity outcomes in the Australian Alps using scenario narratives. The scenario narratives are detailed in a separate document, 'Australian Alps: an Overview of Plausible Scenarios in 2030'.

Put most simply, governance is about who decides, how and why. Improvements to these arrangements are needed because projections for the future of biodiversity in the area under a range of different scenarios in 2030 all suggest a decline in biodiversity values.

Governance Options

Why we generated governance options

Conserving landscapes rich in biodiversity requires long-term planning and understanding of how social and ecological systems co-evolve. How such landscapes are governed (that is, the structures and processes that determine who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable) is pivotal to the long-term conservation of this biodiversity. Being able to govern across landscapes, like the Australian Alps, where there are multiple jurisdictions and values, is a challenging task.

Governance can improve biodiversity outcomes indirectly by enabling decision-making and management actions that are more responsive to environmental and social conditions. Better biodiversity outcomes could mean improving the extent and/or condition of biodiversity values or reducing the threat to those values. For example, this might mean an increase in the extent and/or improvement in the condition of alpine and subalpine wetlands. Better outcomes could also include a decline in hawkweed or a reduction in large-scale threats like fire and feral horses.

The process used to generate the two governance options presented in this document is pictured on the following page. The research team developed two initial proposals for governance arrangements through an analysis of findings from key informant interviews, complemented by a review of the literature to identify whether best practice case studies elsewhere could offer innovative ways forward. The two proposed options were then discussed at three focus groups: with land managers from the ACT, Victoria and NSW, as well as Australian Government staff.

As a result of these focus groups, the following modifications were made to our proposed options:

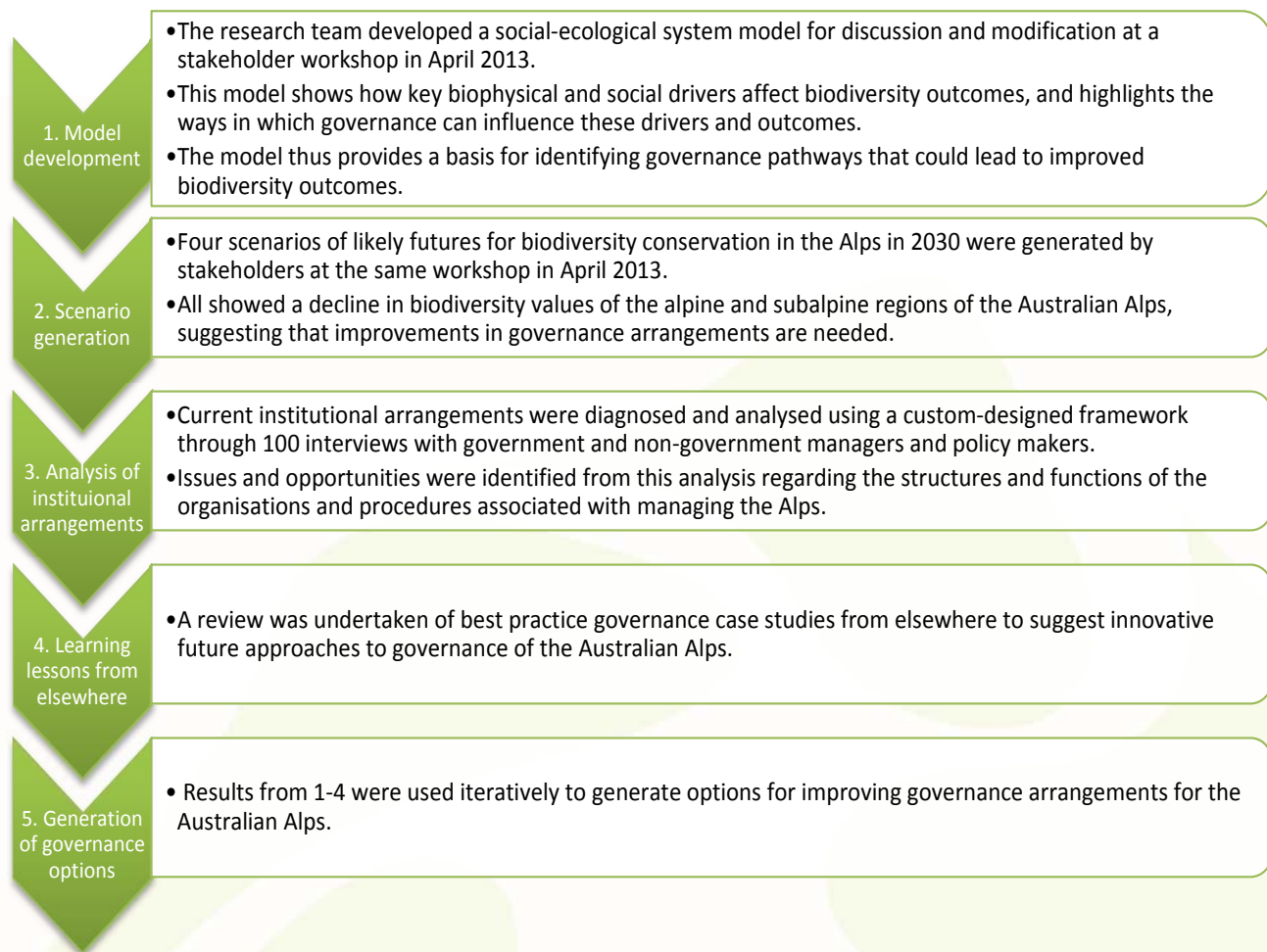
1. We have reorganised the way we have presented the governance options so that there is a greater focus on the pathway of change that leads to the establishment of the two alternative governance options by 2030. This emphasis on pathways was preferred by focus group participants. The pathway leading to both options builds on the strengths of the current Australian Alps Liaison Committee practices and structures. The pathways revolve around establishing a common plan with common goals and objectives across Australian Alps jurisdictions, using the catchphrase 'One Park One Plan'. The two options then differ in their governance arrangements for authorising and delivering on the plan. The two options are presented as a description of governance arrangements as they might appear in 2030.
2. The first option is a set of enhanced Australian Alps Liaison Committee practices and structures. The second option takes this a step further to establish a transboundary statutory authority. The public-private partnership option we originally proposed has not been pursued, given the strong reservations from most focus group participants. While there was some concern regarding a transboundary statutory authority, this option has been retained given that it was supported in one focus group, and we were also encouraged to 'push the boundaries'. We were also influenced by comments made in both focus groups concerning the likelihood that by 2030 most national parks in Victoria would have co-management arrangements in place with Indigenous Traditional Owners. Given this, it is important that workshop participants consider Indigenous co-governance arrangements for the Australian Alps, and what these might mean for biodiversity outcomes. We have therefore incorporated co-governance arrangements as part of both options.

Governance Options

Option 1: Partnerships for One Park One Plan

Option 2: Transboundary Statutory Authority

Steps to Generating Governance Options



Issues Regarding Future Governance of the Australian Alps

The following findings summarise the key issues for future governance of the Australian Alps. These findings are principally based on an analysis of input from interviews with expert informants as they diagnosed current governance arrangements. The analysis was supported by consideration of input from a 2013 scenario planning workshop and a review of relevant literature.

FINDING 1 Increases in resourcing from multiple sources, both public and private, are essential for effective landscape level biodiversity conservation.

A consistent concern in pursuing biodiversity conservation in the Australian Alps is the inadequacy of available resources for the required task. Allocation of funds also needs to be flexible enough to enable response to unexpected events or to pursue a change in direction resulting from re-evaluation of strategies. Longer-term, more secure funding is needed rather than relying heavily on applying for short-term competitive funding packages, which inevitably require considerable time and resources to prepare, and manipulation of objectives to meet funding requirements.

Building community support for biodiversity was discussed as a pivotal strategy for redressing inadequate resourcing, which could then influence the vision and political will for increased public funding. In the current political environment, this strategy seems challenging given trends towards lean government and reduced taxation together with public emphasis on ensuring governments focus on enabling economic development. Several interviewees expressed concerns regarding the rollback in resources devoted to actively educating and connecting the community to parks.

In this context, there is an inevitable pressure to identify alternative funding sources, such as philanthropic support, other forms of private investment, or charges for selected ecosystem services provided by the Australian Alps parks. Partnerships with the tourism industry are a promising base, with strong foundations already in the Australian Alps. Innovative means of developing enhanced revenue streams associated with park visitors is also part of this broader agenda. Green season tourism could provide more diverse opportunities and buffer against declining snowfall, but views on its potential and the value in pursuing it are mixed.

FINDING 2 Transcending the constraints related to short-term political cycles and multiple jurisdictions are particularly important if landscape level biodiversity conservation is to be achieved in the Australian Alps.

Effective management of biodiversity-related programs in the Australian Alps is constrained by political intervention in park management and constantly changing political dynamics. Regular changes of government mean the institutional terrain in the Australian Alps is constantly changing. Ongoing organisational restructuring and policy change can undermine performance, learning and the social cohesion that can nurture innovation. The ‘service provider’ type relationship between different government departments and agencies or sections (for example, the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries) can create complexities and tensions. On the other hand, some focus group participants perceived the short-term political cycle as an inevitable reality, as well as an opportunity to engage with the public in ways that could shift dominant discourses.

Regarding multiple jurisdictions (federal, territory, state), managers have become accustomed to working within this multi-jurisdictional system to their advantage, for example, learning from other jurisdictions to finesse their own strategies for achieving biodiversity outcomes. Although this diversity in approaches has benefits it can also undermine the pursuit of a coherent, consistent approach across jurisdictions, especially when responding to a shared problem (for example, feral horses).

The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program was noted by interviewees as a successful means for dealing with on-ground issues and providing diversity, with learning between members lauded. At the same time, the Program was noted as being ‘in a lull’ and not effectively dealing with political pressures. Interviewees expressed a desire for greater cooperation between parks agencies and other government agencies and departments, especially to allow greater flexibility to vary projects subject to narrow accountability procedures (related to Finding 4 and Finding 5). The Program will need to be more formalised if it is to attract a greater quantum of funding (Finding 1), but the appetite for such a change is mixed and will require collective discussion of costs and opportunities.

FINDING 3 Carefully considering and clarifying roles, responsibilities and skills at all levels of governance will reduce frustration, improve management and enhance the use of science in decision-making.

Authority and power are not often devolved to the level of governance at which they can be most effective. Emblematic of this were feral horse and fire management policies, where public concerns and political responses were seen by interviewees as disempowering agency staff and preventing them from adopting scientifically-informed strategies. Political and higher level government intervention can also discourage agencies from fulfilling their role as providers of ‘frank and fearless’ advice to senior political leaders. At the same time, the level of scientific expertise within parks agencies has been reduced, and there are challenges involved in successfully negotiating contracts to bring in external scientific expertise that meet both academic and park management requirements. Both trends can act as obstacles to evidence-based management. While staff with generalist expertise may be in a position to acquire a broader systems understanding, specialist skills are also needed to bolster systems understanding with the specialist knowledge required to adequately manage the unique alpine environment.

The complexity of having many layers through the vertical structure of agencies impedes flexibility. While several managers discussed the importance of linking on-ground actions to higher order objectives and assets, it is a challenge to maintain this ‘line of sight’. For many staff it remains difficult to appreciate how their day-to-day work helps achieve a bigger picture vision and strategy, or to identify opportunities to help shape that vision and strategy.

There has also been a shift in organisational culture and norms in parks agencies towards having more of a customer focus, driving expenditure toward those actions more likely to please the public. Juxtaposed with this, the strength of community concern and associated political lobbying has resulted in some frustration among parks agency staff that they are required to undertake work tasks they consider to be contrary to good science, or focusing their efforts away from the primary purpose of protected areas. Examples include bans on aerial culling to reduce feral horse numbers, dealing with wild dogs near the public-private land interface, and an emphasis on meeting area quotas for hazard reduction burning rather than other more biodiversity-related criteria.

FINDING 4 Collaboration and cooperation are an imperative for concerted, coherent actions across landscapes such as the Australian Alps.

The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program provides an obvious starting point for further collaboration focused on biodiversity conservation in the Australian Alps. This Program has enabled the pursuit of a longer-term agenda, and created spaces for inter-agency learning and building a strong network between staff in middle management positions and below focused on comparing and improving program delivery on the ground. This network has strengthened the skills and capacity of those that are best placed to connect high-level strategic objectives with action on the ground. However, lack of resources and a need for these staff to also meet their regular work responsibilities means that their involvement is often voluntary. It is these same people who may also be best placed to pursue a more adaptive approach to planning and management. However, to bring such an approach to effect requires organisational changes that shift away from a focus on command and control and enhances flexibility through effective devolution of responsibilities. This requires champions at the top of the organisation as well as commitment of time and resources to enable effective reflection and interaction.

Increasing cooperation between parks agencies and other government and non-government organisations also offers opportunities to access more diverse knowledge and sources of innovation. Catchment management agencies (CMAs) are already partners in some cross-tenure management initiatives, but there may be opportunities to expand these partnerships as well as learn from the innovative regional and landscape scale systems-based planning approaches being pursued by catchment management agencies in the Australian Alps and elsewhere. Forums have also been created to facilitate greater collaboration among Australian Alps Traditional Owners. This includes a reference group coordinated by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee to enhance collaboration among Traditional Owners across the entire Australian Alps landscape. These initiatives and others involving Aboriginal engagement have provided parks agencies and Traditional Owners with new perspectives and opportunities, including aspirations for enhanced governance responsibilities by Traditional Owners through formal and informal means.

FINDING 5 Accountability and legitimacy were identified as critical governance issues that could benefit from new approaches with enhanced prospects for adaptive planning, management and innovation.

Like many government departments, parks agencies are affected by narrow conceptions of accountability and a desire to align governments with the politics of the day. Consistent with broader trends toward ‘managerialism’ in the public sector, some of the organisational leadership are perceived as professional bureaucrats with business expertise rather than having a clear passion, commitment and understanding for protected area management. This results in risk averse behaviour, reduces organisational performance, discourages innovation and undermines collaboration. The trend toward lean governments and a desire to control financial aspects of management translates to heavy reliance on short-term, tied funding, and a decline in discretionary and recurrent funding. Current approaches to accountability encourage a focus on short-term outputs that can be easily measured (that is, ‘doing stuff’), rather than the more difficult task of achieving biodiversity outcomes over the long term. This makes continuity of programmes difficult to achieve, prevents broad reflection on organisational goals and strategies, and discourages more flexible and experimental approaches to management. Reluctance to empower managers to learn and make decisions without political intervention was also linked to this risk aversion and politicisation of the public service.

The tiered system of planning in parks provides for short, medium, and long-term strategies, but many plans of management are overly ambitious given tight resources. A lack of connection between long-term strategic and short-term business planning mean delivery on many objectives is simply not feasible, raising legitimacy concerns. On the evaluation side, ‘State of the Parks’ reporting offers a progressive step toward evaluating management effectiveness, with a focus on formative evaluation (that is, learning to improve).

Identifying and describing the governance options

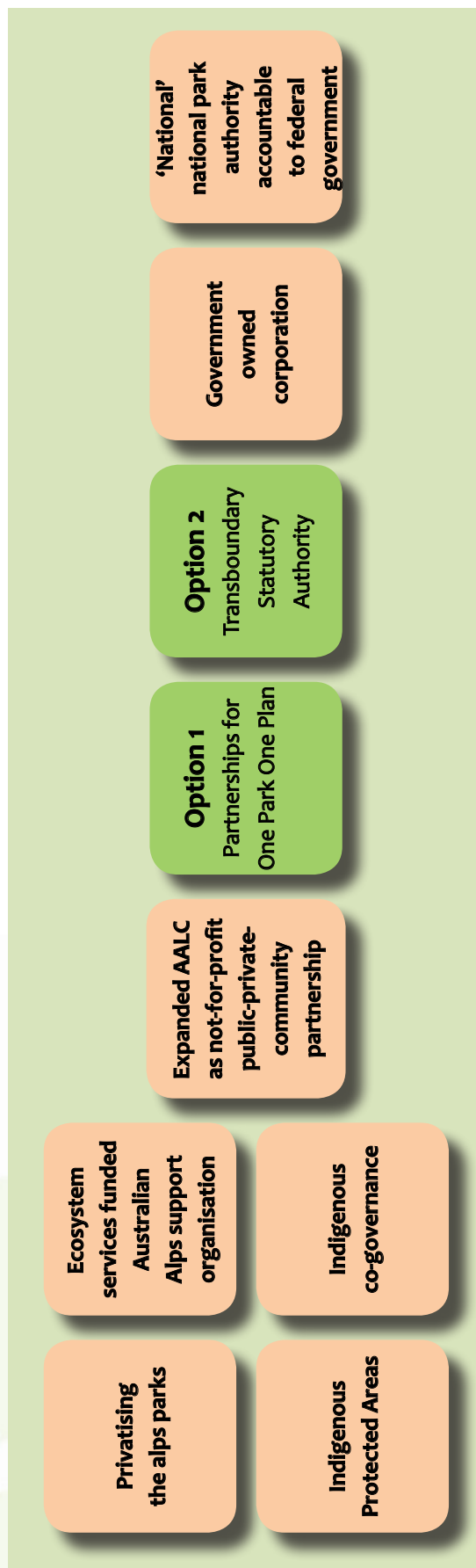
A broad range of governance options exists and a selection of these are illustrated over the page. This range of options has been constrained to those considered possible within a democratic Westminster-style system of government. The other conditions bounding the scope of options considered are detailed in the table following and relate to how land and biodiversity management responsibilities are allocated and realised in Australia. Of the range of possible future governance approaches (see figure over the page), two in particular (shaded green) were considered most useful for further consideration by workshop participants. Both options are well placed to build on the strengths of current governance arrangements while also addressing the major issues of these arrangements, as identified through interviews, analysis of best practice elsewhere and feedback from focus group participants. These two options are further detailed below.

The following two options concern governance arrangements for the 11 protected areas encompassed by the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program, plus the Victorian Alpine Resorts.

Conditions bounding the possibilities for future governance arrangements

Current Arrangements	Implications for governance options
Under the Australian Constitution, states have responsibility for land management, and history suggests constitutional change in Australia is difficult.	Limits Commonwealth involvement; truly 'national' national parks currently only exist across Commonwealth of Australia lands, so establishing a 'national' national park involving the states is likely to be politically unfeasible, even if it were deemed permissible under the Constitution.
States have their own legislation and regulation that dictates their responsibilities.	Inter-jurisdictional collaboration is limited by legislative and regulatory responsibilities and accountabilities. Statutory bodies are subject to relevant state and Commonwealth legislation.
The public good characteristics of biodiversity mean that there are a wide range of local and non-local stakeholders	Public interest and associated legislative commitments, particularly with respect to threatened species, are likely to persist.
Biodiversity management responsibilities and strategies are strongly determined by land tenure.	Assuming land tenure is unlikely to change (that is, all biodiversity values will not be privatised), the current land tenure and accompanying approaches to biodiversity management are likely to remain unchanged.
Australians have a strong cultural commitment to national parks but the associated purposes have changed over time.	Biodiversity cannot be assumed to have primacy as a park purpose indefinitely, and its valuing by society may change as social values change.

Spectrum of Governance Possibilities



The figure above shows the diverse range of alternative governance options that could be pursued for the Australian Alps. There is strong support for building on the current strengths of the existing Australian Alps Liaison Committee structure and practices, which already foster transboundary cooperation. While we have presented this as Option 1, it also contains elements of public-private-community partnerships, Indigenous co-governance, and strategies to access a diverse source of funding, including from ecosystem services. Option 2 builds on Option 1, but takes this a step further by establishing a transboundary authority through Australian and associated state and territory government legislation.



A Pathway Leading Towards Both Governance Options

Overview

The steps detailed below represent a potential pathway leading to both governance options over the period 2015 to 2030. The two options have a similar pathway given they both build on the current strengths of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC). Details differentiating these two options for 2030 follow this pathway section.

Phase 1: 2015-2020

1. Foster champions to reinvigorate the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program under the banner of 'One Park One Plan'. The Australian Alps program manager, with the advice of other Australian Alps Liaison Committee members, identifies senior and operational managers from agency partners as part of a new Australian Alps Strategic Governance Reference Group responsible for:
 - a. initiating a process for staff and other external stakeholders to identify common goals for the 'One Park One Plan' cooperative management program, and the conversion of these common goals into objectives and outcomes-oriented performance indicators;
 - b. enabling staff participation in the redesign of the program, especially champions at middle management and below to ensure the continued success of the program's operational focus; and
 - c. initiating the development of an adaptive and outcomes-oriented monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) process that is implemented as a consistent process by all Australian Alps agencies.

This new Strategic Governance Reference Group provides an opportunity for senior executive staff to reflect on strategic matters together with operational managers and champions. Management literature supports the merit of such level playing field arrangements for advancing organisational learning and change. The development of the 'One Park One Plan' program will also be informed by an understanding of the alps as a social-ecological system, with a focus on a limited number of key strategic points of intervention serving to direct key investments and management actions.

2. Establish a second new reference group (the Ecosystem Services Reference Group), their priority being progressing water supply as an ecosystem service. Partnering with the range of organisations involved in downstream water management and supply will be used to identify strategies to safeguard the quality and quantity of water emanating from the alpine environment as well as potential payment sources for the associated suite of services.
3. Use the existing Australian Alps reference groups to pursue partnerships aimed at enhancing broader stakeholder input into the 'One Park One Plan' program. Such an approach can provide opportunities for innovation that are separate from those provided through public funds. It also builds interactive governance, helping to build community support for the alps program.

4. Initiate a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Alps Heads of Agencies to progress preparation of a single management plan for the alps national parks, as the foundation to the 'One Park One Plan' program, and embed a consistent monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) process for the entire planning area.
5. Ensure foresighting as a formal part of the activities of each of the reference groups. Foresighting is a process of identifying emerging threats and potential strategies to mitigate them. This is included in the terms of reference for each group, reported on, and then formally considered in the process of developing the 'One Park One Plan' program.
6. Work with the Australian Alps Traditional Owners Reference Group to explore how Traditional Owners might like to become involved in co-governance. Ensure that discussions are held with the diversity of potential Traditional Owners given that Native Title is yet to be resolved for the Australian Alps. Early collaborative actions might include furthering Indigenous employment and tourism opportunities in the Alps.
7. Foster partnerships with adjoining landholders to secure their input into and support for the 'One Park One Plan' program, and in particular, input into landscape-scale connectivity initiatives.
8. Integrate collaborative and landscape-scale management into agency job descriptions and organisational structures, for example, by dedicating a specified number of hours to 'One Park One Plan' program activities. This not only empowers managers to devote time to these activities as a normal part of their jobs, but it is a strategy that can buffer the program from changes in the external environment.
9. Develop a program in each of the agencies and through the multi-agency reference groups to encourage and enable staff to introduce innovative and collaborative approaches to conserving biodiversity and securing resources. The program includes multiple strategies known to foster innovation:
 - a. providing a designated arena or pathway for staff to introduce ideas, even in their formative stages;
 - b. granting discretion to employees to change work practices;
 - c. providing designated time for staff to read, reflect and discuss ideas; and
 - d. incentivising innovation (for example, through staff awards that recognise excellence in innovation; and funding development and implementation of innovative ideas, including experiments and pilot studies).

The cost savings of innovation and award sponsorships offer ways to pay for such incentives. Innovations can be small or large, from improvements in park management or organisational practices to new partnerships and initiatives. Middle managers are the most common source of innovation, but entrepreneurial activity occurs at all levels. It is important that there are no sanctions for unsuccessful innovations.

10. Increase community engagement with conservation in parks through community forums and two-way communication, and in particular through strategies to increase visitation and loyalty. Loyalty from visitors and others can assist with revenue raising and enhance political support.
11. Jointly initiate a community communication and engagement campaign with partner organisations (for example, catchment management authorities, schools) focused on the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps.
12. Support the establishment of a Centre for Australian Alps Social-Ecological Research to provide science-based evidence to support management and policy initiatives as part of the 'One Park One Plan' program. This centre could be funded by the trust (see Point 13 below). This centre could complement, or include, the existing Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology.

13. Secure seed funding to establish an Australian Alps Research and Management Trust. Establish the trust as a Deductible Gift Recipient, under the control of a management board, and with articles of association defining the business of the trust as supporting the good governance and management of the Australian Alps national parks. Charge this trust with three roles. First, raise funds from philanthropic sources and private investors to support the Centre for Australian Alps Social-Ecological Research, and contribute along with government investments to the implementation of the 'One Park One Plan' program. Second, advise the agencies and the Australian Alps Liaison Committee on how to increase revenue from beneficiary and user pays systems, including mechanisms to capture more of users' willingness to pay for visitor experiences and ecosystem services. Third, fund and support research positions in the partner organisations.

Phase 2: 2020-2030

14. Redesign the memorandum of understanding for the Australian Alps to achieve, among other things:
 - a. Collective commitment by partner agencies to the goals, objectives, performance indicators and the MERI process (MERI stands for the adaptive and outcomes-oriented monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement process) established through Phase 1 above for the 'One Park One Plan' program and detailed in a shared management plan. The associated planning process, plan content and implementation, and subsequent evaluations, will be guided by the good governance principles of transparency, accountability, inclusion, fairness, continuity, connectedness and adaptability.
 - b. Collective commitment by partner agencies to outcomes-oriented accountability processes. Rather than emphasising expenditure of funds on outputs (for example, number of hectares managed for weeds), key performance indicators are developed based on biodiversity outcomes (for example, trends in condition and extent of wetlands). Accountability relationships with other government departments (that is, between the parks agencies and the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries, and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage) are recorded as part of the memorandum of understanding.
 - c. Collective commitment by partner agencies to devolve more responsibility for program implementation to regional and local level alps agency managers. These changes are clearly communicated to staff and sufficient discretionary funds are made available so that they are well-placed to take on these augmented responsibilities. This also helps build momentum for transboundary collaboration from the local levels up, as well as build community support for the parks through enhanced activity and engagement. This strategy is supported by overseas experience. In examples from South Africa, collaborative transboundary work is far more effective if it develops through active collaboration among operational staff rather than as impositions from above.
15. Develop and consolidate shared governance arrangements with Traditional Owners as Native Title issues are resolved and various stakeholders clarify their interests and the extent of their involvement and attachment to the Australian Alps as country.
16. Identify a charismatic champion who can lead a promotional campaign for the 'One Park One Plan' program, and its broader benefits for society.



Governance Option 1: **Partnerships for One Park One Plan**

Overarching governance structure

By 2030, all four parks agencies continue to exercise their jurisdictional responsibilities and are committed to the 'One Park One Plan' set of goals and objectives, as expressed and documented in a shared management plan and other policies and plans. The four agencies are committed to network governance arrangements with a strong culture of partnerships and community participation at local and regional scales.


Increased devolution of responsibilities to regional managers has contributed to the establishment of joint programs with Traditional Owners, tourism operators, local government and regional natural resource management organisations supporting the objectives of the 'One Park One Plan' program. Engagement with Traditional Owners encompasses region-specific strategic planning and co-governance arrangements, and increased opportunities for employment on country. A number of conservation organisations have also become active in partnering with parks agencies on a range of projects. Partnerships between agency and external researchers through the Centre for Australian Alps Social-Ecological Research have greatly increased the science-based support for the land management priorities of parks agencies.

Funding

The trust fund has successfully attracted significant philanthropic investments, which support the Australian Alps Liaison Committee program manager, committee members and administrative staff. This enables it to operate independently of government-sourced funding. The promotional campaign and effective community engagement programs have increased community support for actions to protect the landscape and its biodiversity features, and increased revenue for parks agencies through fees and donations paid by increased numbers of conservation-minded tourists. Arrangements are also in place for water supply organisations downstream of the alpine headwaters to contribute finances to support elements of the 'One Park One Plan' program related to research and rehabilitation projects for enhanced water management in the alpine environment.

These alternative funding sources, together with the active local and regional level collaborations, mean that the 'One Park One Plan' program has been able to support ongoing adaptive planning and management actions. The success of the trust fund, together with substantive progress on delivering outcomes, has encouraged governments to maintain the level of their financial commitments to alps governance, planning and management.

Success breeds success.



Governance Option 2: Transboundary Statutory Authority

Overarching governance structure

The pathway to enhance Australian Alps Liaison Committee practices and structures has been so successful that it has inspired strong commitment from operational and executive staff in each of the agencies, as well as from the four governments involved, to formalise the governance and management of the 'One Park One Plan' under a separate transboundary authority. A statutory authority was chosen because of its capacity to address the findings summarised on pages 4 to 6.

For this option, accountability is to a statute rather than a government minister, providing political distance and degree of autonomy to enable adaptive and innovative planning and management, with enhanced response capacity to implement, monitor and adjust interventions. The initiative is supported by the NSW, ACT, Victorian and Australian governments, which recognise the authority as a means to resolve key issues related to effective governance, planning and management across multiple jurisdictions. The goals and objectives of the 'One Park One Plan' program are used as the basis for the legislation establishing the authority.

The statute establishes the Australian Alps Management Authority, with membership determined as follows:

- representatives from Parks Victoria, Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council (Victoria), NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and ACT Division of Territory and Municipal Services;
- members with expertise in financial management, strategic planning, alpine ecology, catchment management, environmental social science and environmental economics appointed by the Federal Minister for the Environment; and
- a chair appointed by the Federal Minister for the Environment.

Legislation passed by the Commonwealth of Australia and each jurisdiction establishes the Australian Alps Management Authority. The legislation also specifies that the primary responsibility of this authority is to ensure that management of the Australian Alps is directed towards the goals specified in this legislation. These goals, derived from the 'One Park One Plan' program, are consistent with the specification and purpose of an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category II Protected Area. The partnerships associated with the reference groups established through the pathway above are retained under the new authority structure. The statute carries a commitment to supporting partnerships as providing an important network function for collaborative learning. This includes support for establishing co-governance and other collaborative arrangements with Traditional Owners, with wording for this also included in the statute.

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The adaptive process used for strategic planning, evaluation and improvement under the 'One Park One Plan' program is retained. The statute commits the Australian Alps Management Authority to ongoing engagement with key stakeholders to continually improve:

1. the set of outcome-driven key performance indicators that are consistent with the goals specified in enabling legislation;
2. the process and methods for monitoring, evaluating, reporting and improving performance; and
3. the overarching 'One Park One Plan' management plan for the Australian Alps, with its strategies for achieving goals and meeting key performance indicators.

An Australian Alps Management Authority planning team ensures that the plan is regularly updated, with input from a stakeholder advisory committee (whose members are paid sitting fees) and a science advisory committee. Business and operational plans are an integral part of the strategic planning process. To allow for wider engagement and accountability, a full review of performance against plan outcomes and key performance indicators is undertaken and publicly reported every three years. The authority's performance management system and its decisions and their rationale are transparent and made publicly available through annual reports.

Management staff remain employees of Parks Victoria, Alpine Resorts Boards (Victoria), NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service or the ACT Division of Territory and Municipal Services, but now act under direction of the authority. A substantial level of day-to-day decision-making authority is devolved to NSW, Victorian and ACT regional staff, in accordance with the 'One Park One Plan' program.

Funding

The authority employs similar funding arrangements to that proposed for Option 1, with a greater focus on pooling funds through the Australian Alps Research and Management Trust, including funds acquired through donations, user pays revenues and ecosystem service funding.

What's the difference between the options?

Current Arrangements	Option 1: Partnerships for One Park One Plan	Option 2: Transboundary Statutory Authority
Accountabilities are fractured across multiple jurisdictions, driven by regularly changing party political influences.	Accountability is through demonstrating performance against the One Park One Plan objectives.	Accountability is through statutory requirements to publically report on performance against the outcomes specified in One Park One Plan, identify ongoing challenges and issues, and develop strategies to address these.
The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Plan provides a great starting point, but more is needed to enhance consistency and collaboration across jurisdictions.	The One Park One Plan provides common goals and objectives but allows agencies in each jurisdiction to pursue achievement of those goals and objectives in their own way.	Under the legislation, each agency is accountable to the statutory authority for the delivery of strategies and actions that address the One Park One Plan goals and objectives.
The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program reference groups are the lifeblood of transboundary cooperation and shared experience, but their potential is stymied by lack of high-level support.	The Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program reference groups are revitalised as a means of building partnerships that enable increased stakeholder input into all of alps strategic planning, and are extended to include reference groups devoted to strategic planning and ecosystem services.	The roles and memberships of the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program reference groups are formalised in the legislation.
Decision-making mostly takes place at senior bureaucratic levels, and its effect on biodiversity outcomes can be adversely affected by politics, lobby groups and perceived public concerns.	Agencies respect and are committed to the ideal of increased devolution of responsibilities and program design and implementation to local and regional managers.	The authority has the power to direct agencies to devolve appropriate degrees of responsibility and autonomy to local and regional managers.
Aboriginal aspirations for co-management of their Traditional homelands are actively pursued within the constraints of current governance arrangements.	Collaboration achieved through the Australian Alps Traditional Owners Reference Group is substantially enhanced by co-governance negotiations, and aided by devolution of agency responsibilities to local and regional managers, allowing improved interactions with Traditional Owners.	The authority has a responsibility to work with Traditional Owners to investigate and pursue opportunities for establishing co-governance arrangements.

Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful for the generosity of all those who have participated in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Throughout the research, we have engaged with more than 150 people who work in the region, have cultural connections, are responsible for some aspect of its regulation, or have interests in the future of the Australian Alps. Our understanding of the current governance arrangements and development of alternatives would not have been possible without their engagement, honesty, and eagerness to share their knowledge and passion for the region.

In particular, we acknowledge and thank Gill Anderson for her guidance and advice on our engagement activities with the people of the Australian Alps. Her appreciation of the important role of the alpine managers in biodiversity governance and the connection between people and nature were invaluable to shaping the evaluation process.

We would also like to thank the many policy experts and colleagues that helped in the development and refinement of the conceptual framework that was used in this research. This framework provided the vital structure through which the important insights of stakeholders could be viewed and better understood.

Finally, we appreciate the contributions to both the consultation process and the production of the background documents by Suzie Gaynor, the hub's Communication Manager. Suzie's talent for taking our text and massaging it into readable, accessible publications, in a remarkably short timeframe, has contributed enormously to the success of our communications.

Schedule of consultation and engagement

In their research, the Social and Institutional Futures Team (Sue Moore, Michael Lockwood, Michael Mitchell and Sarah Clement) has liaised and consulted with people from the Australian Alps and the Tasmanian Midlands, and all levels of government with an interest in these areas. The key engagement activities included workshops, interviews, surveys and focus groups as follows:

Key Informant Interviews (<i>Michael Mitchell</i>)	Aug 2012
	Jul & Oct 2013
Stakeholder Interviews (<i>Sarah Clement</i>)	Feb-Apr 2013
Scenario Planning Workshops - round 1	
Tasmanian Midlands	1 Mar 2013
Australian Alps	10-11 Apr 2013
Focus Groups on Governance Options	Feb-Mar 2014
Scenario Planning Workshops - round 2	
Tasmanian Midlands	25 Mar 2014
Australian Alps	1-2 Apr 2014

About the Landscapes and Policy Hub

The Landscapes & Policy Hub is one of five research hubs funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Research Program, for four years (2011-2014) to study biodiversity conservation.

We integrate ecology and social science to provide guidance for policymakers on planning and managing biodiversity at a regional scale. We develop tools, techniques and policy options to integrate biodiversity into regional-scale planning.

The University of Tasmania hosts the hub and involves researchers from the University of Tasmania (UTAS), The Australian National University (ANU), Murdoch University, the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC), Griffith University and Charles Sturt University (CSU).



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