



# Four Wheel Drive Queensland

'The Queensland Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs'

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## GLASSHOUSE MOUNTAINS/BEERBURRUM STATE FOREST RESERVE ACCESS

### 1. Introduction

The Glasshouse Mountains (GHM) access issue is regularly raised by 4WD clubs. The issue faced within this region is not unique and the rules and responsibilities apply to all regions where there is a combination of state forest and privately managed reserves. It is under the assumption to the general public that all of the GHM region is open access. **This is not the case as stated below.**

Four Wheel Drive Queensland and its associated clubs are bound by their code of ethics to educate their members with methods of responsible four-wheel driving. This code of ethics includes conservation, legal access, education/training and safety.

The GHM region is used by many groups that do not have a code of ethics and have no sense of responsibility. It is in the best interest of 4WD Queensland clubs to abide by their code as this is reflective on all clubs connected to the association.

GHM users include 4WDers & trail bike riders, as well as cyclists, walkers and horse riders and all need to coexist in the responsible use of the area. There are dedicated regions for particular uses to minimize the impact on each other. Therefore, users need to abide by these guidelines to prevent possible accidents and incidents.

GHM region has multiple land managers

- HQ Plantations
- QPWS (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service)
- Powerlink
- Fullerton Farms
- Private properties.

This document will explain what rules apply to what areas within the Glasshouse Mountains and Beerburum State Forest.

We need to start by defining what areas are managed by who, as each land manager has different guidelines on how to gain access to their particular area.

Acknowledged or written permission from the respective land managers is needed to access the GHM and Beerburum State Forest areas.

Recently there has been events held by private organisations, and publicly advertised (on Facebook), which certainly adds to the confusion of what is legal access and what is not. These events have been held in areas managed by HQ Plantations, QPWS & Powerlink and they cross over different access legalities. **Consultation with the these organizations has not happened**, which should be the first thing to do when arranging an event, then implementing effective Risk Management and Environmental strategies.

\*See maps of the GHM area attached to this document.

### 2. HQ Plantations (previously known as Forestry Plantations Qld) managed areas:

Most of the GHM region is under management by HQ Plantations. This private company's source of income is from the growing & harvesting of plantation trees. Approximately 15% of the region is privately owned by HQ Plantations. Access to this privately owned areas is strictly prohibited. Another 62% is under HQ Plantations 99 year management lease from the Queensland Government. (2010 sale for \$603m). Specific conditions are attached to these leased areas.

HQ Plantation's allow access to formed roads within its managed area. People may argue that in previous years they were able to openly access the region without fear of trespass, but this is not the case. The previous managers, Forestry Plantations (Qld Govt owned) policy was the similar to the current HQ Plantations policy.

### **HQ Plantations advisory notes extract**

- You are required to obtain a permit if you are involved in a commercial activity, an organised group activity, or a competitive event. Conditions of entry for these activities and events will be specified on your permit
- If you are not part of a commercial activity, an organised group activity, or a competitive event you may traverse a State Plantation Forest without obtaining a permit. This access is however conditional upon compliance with any access restrictions and/or signage and conditions as outlined below
- Motor vehicle operators must hold a valid driver's licence and the motor vehicle must be registered. Vehicle access, including trail bike access, is restricted to formed roads, access is not permitted to fire lines and tracks. State Plantation Forest roads are subject to the same road rules and regulations as public roads and are often patrolled by police. If you drive or ride a motor vehicle on these roads in an illegal manner, fines and other penalties will apply.

In previous years, monitoring and control of use of the area was lax. BUT since the handover to HQ Plantations, the main issue has become productivity with an importance on preserving the environment, hence limiting access to its plantation area.

Several meetings and field trips with HQ Plantations management have shown the destruction of tracks that are needed for management access, fire breaks, harvesting, flood management, environmental control and public use. **Maintenance of these tracks runs into the millions**, and whilst some of the damage comes from bad weather events, much of it is preventable. Wet weather has brought many 4WD's to the area, leading to massive destruction to tracks and trees, causing huge erosion and runoff issues. This soiled water then enters into the Pumicestone Passage, having a significant effect on the water quality there.



Figure 1 Severe erosion and runoff



Figure 2 Severe erosion and runoff on fire trail

Plantation trees have been significantly damaged due to new tracks beeing created by 4WD's and over use of fire/management tracks. Driving on or near the roots of trees heavily compacts the ground, restricting the growth of the plant. Hence the reason why HQ Plantations requires vehicles to only drive on existing formed tracks.

**In a nutshell, if you are surrounded by or are near Pine plantations and not on a formed road (raised crown & table drains) then you shouldn't be there.**

On their private land, HQ Plantations has tried to physically restrict access. This involved barricades and signage. Most signs usually are removed quickly and illegally, and barricades become destroyed.



Figure 3 Barricades to private property destroyed



Figure 4 Illegal track through forestry

The next step was to approach legitimate associations that use the area and advise them of their duty of responsibility and rights. This is the issue we are facing now. Some groups feel that they are immune to these regulations, hence some people are still using the area (illegally) and others are doing the right thing, by obtaining access permission. As part of this program HQ Plantations have tried implementing compliance with officers from HQ Plantations, QPWS and Qld Police. Due to much illegal dumping, some areas have had CCTV installed, some obvious, some covert. These cameras are used also to identify damage and trespassers to the area.

As noted before, access to the area is still available to those wanting to visit the area. Just stick to the guidelines. HQ Plantations have released a detailed map that can be used by users of the area. (See Figure 8). This map is available upon request to your 4WD club CARE rep and is also available on the 4WD Qld Egnyte server. This map shows what areas are managed by HQ Plantations, and therefore what requires a permit if clubs wish to visit. This map shows that significant areas, particularly shown in green and dark pink are limited to formed roads only. The other areas indicated in yellow and light pink are State forest/Nat Park and are limited to QPWS conditions, see below.

**On a positive note:** Recent discussions with HQ Plantations indicate that they want to work with 4WD clubs in developing areas for the exclusive use for 4wd clubs. This will depend on many factors including:-

- If 4WD members want to contribute to the management of this area,
- Ways to regulate the damage and maintenance.
- By concentrating the use into a particular area then maybe it will alleviate damage to the remainder of plantations.

This relationship is built on trust and acknowledgment, wishing to coexist and move forward together. With associated clubs ignoring this, and freely accessing restricted areas, it would severely damage the trust we have and inhibit moving forward.

## **2. QPWS (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service) managed areas.**

Areas in GHM under control of QPWS come under a few different classifications. Around 14% of the area is covered by National Park and State Forest. Generally, access to State Forests are open to all users, BUT depending on numbers a Group Activity Permit (GAP) may be required. For more information on Group Activity Permits see the QPWS website.

QPWS may close sections of their areas due to conservation, science research, maintenance or restricted use. But the general rule is that if it you are on State land, if it is not signed or gated off, then free access is allowed. There are some conditions though, mostly relating to wet weather:

### ***QPWS advisory notes extract***

- *Be aware of wet weather—please obey advisory notices regarding wet weather conditions. Access is not permitted in wet weather or when road is soft and muddy.*
- *Four-wheel-drive vehicles and trail bikes may be driven on roads in Beerburrum and Beerwah State Forests.*
- *"All planned trips to Beerburrum East State Forest, Beerburrum West State Forest, and Beerwah State Forest that require access to 4WD tracks is not permitted during extended wet weather periods (over 25mm rain overnight , or over 100mm per week): and any road closures must be obeyed. To obtain rainfall figures for this area, contact QPWS and also check the Bureau of Meteorology website."*
- *Be aware of wet weather—please obey advisory notices regarding wet weather conditions. Access is not permitted in wetweather or where vehicle tracks sink into the road more than two centimeters.*

Under our current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with QPWS, 4WD clubs are allowed to gain additional access to managed (gated/signed) areas, under the discretion of the Ranger in Charge. Details of this can be found by consulting your CARE representative or 4WD QLD.

Since 4WD QLD is working with separate organizations that manage similar, if not the same areas in GHM and Beerburrum State Forest , then this can lead to confusion to whose area is who. A map released by QPWS (See figure 7) shows that this conflicts with the one released by HQ Plantations, hence one of the reasons why the area is believed to be freely available to the public. Err on the side of caution here and read onto the areas that are controlled by that specific land manager.

## **3. Powerlink managed areas.**

Powerlink (formerly known as Qld Electricity Transmission Corp) controls the use and maintenance of the 3 major power-lines that run through the GHM area. There are several tracks that run under these lines and it is up to Powerlink to maintain and permit access to the use of them. These areas are the most popular driving destinations for 4WD'ers. BUT Powerlink does state that the areas under its control are restricted to management and authorised use only.

These tracks are used by both HQ Plantations & QPWS for access to their own managed areas and are vital in the formation of firebreaks, stopping large uncontrolled burns of the state forest. When these access tracks deteriorated beyond safe transit then it becomes a workplace safety issue and become potentially dangerous areas.



Figure 5 Formed road destroyed, now unusable by emergency vehicles

#### 4. Private Property.

The region is surrounded by private farms and residences, with much of it blending into forestry. Many of these properties use the tracks within GHM to gain access to their land. There have been several complaints over this access being destroyed and inaccessible with conventional vehicles. Not everyone wishes to drive with 4" lifts and 35's, just to get out of the gate. HQ Plantations, QPWS & Council would have an obligation to uphold the condition of these roads, so unnecessary maintenance is very costly and time consuming.

#### 5. Where 4WD Qld fits into this?

Whilst we would love to be able to gain free access to everywhere, it is not the case within GHM and Beerburum Stare Forest. 4WD QLD is a peak body in the industry and we need to demonstrate responsible 4wding with legal access. We are achieving this with our MoU with QPWS, trying to gain exclusive access to areas within HQ Plantations areas.

With the help of communication and education we hope to decrease to damage done in these areas by the public entering illegally. GHM not being the only area targeted as there are many areas within our state that suffer from abuse, both private & public.

It is 4WD Qld's duty to give as much information possible to its members, so as they can be in confidence that what they are doing is legal, and not detrimental to others. As a start, helping clean up the area & helping with maintenance or control of the area, clubs can get direct connection with the managers, be a positive force and show to the public that we can all coexist instead of a us and them approach.



Figure 6 Fire Trail destroyed, used during wet weather

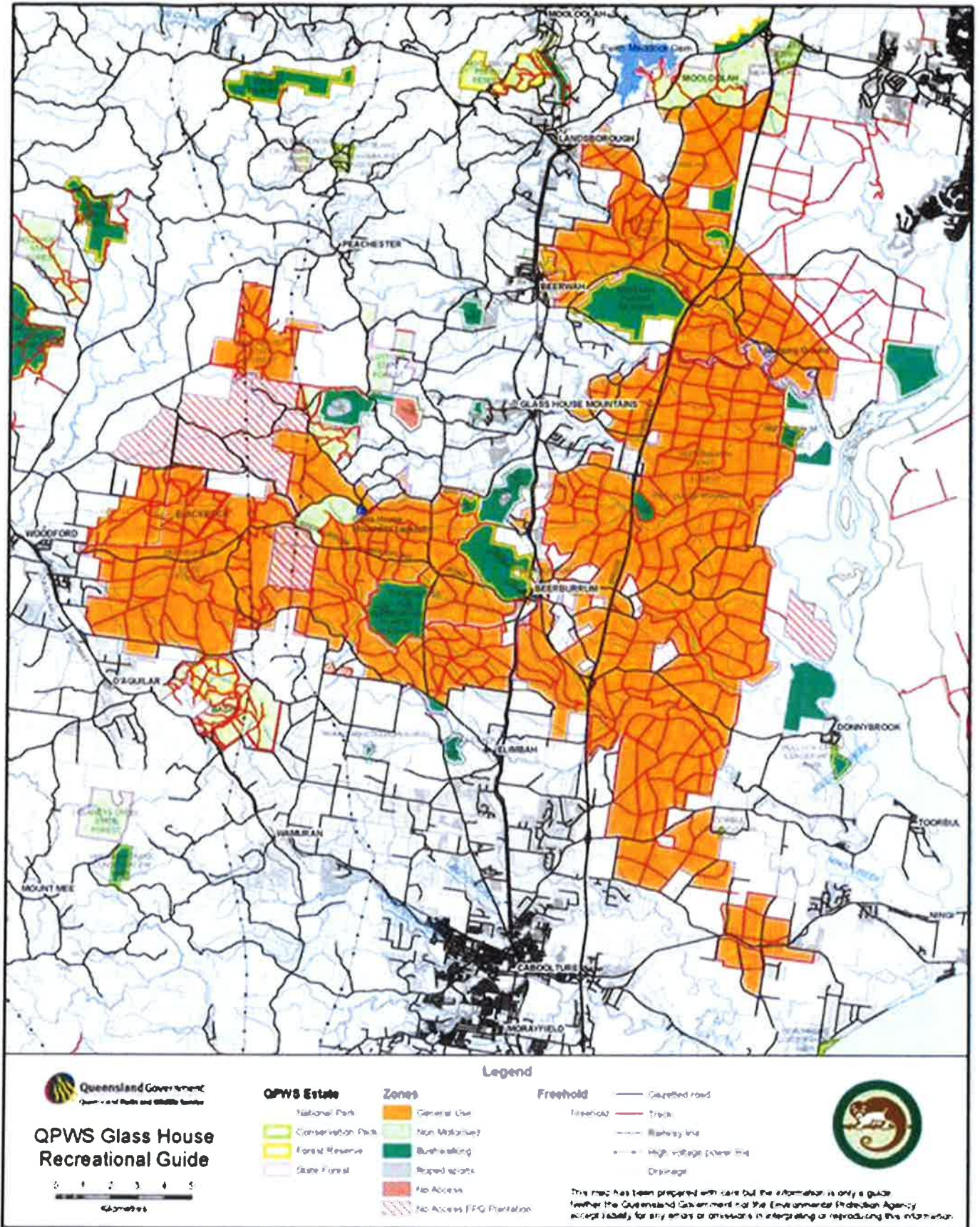


Figure 7

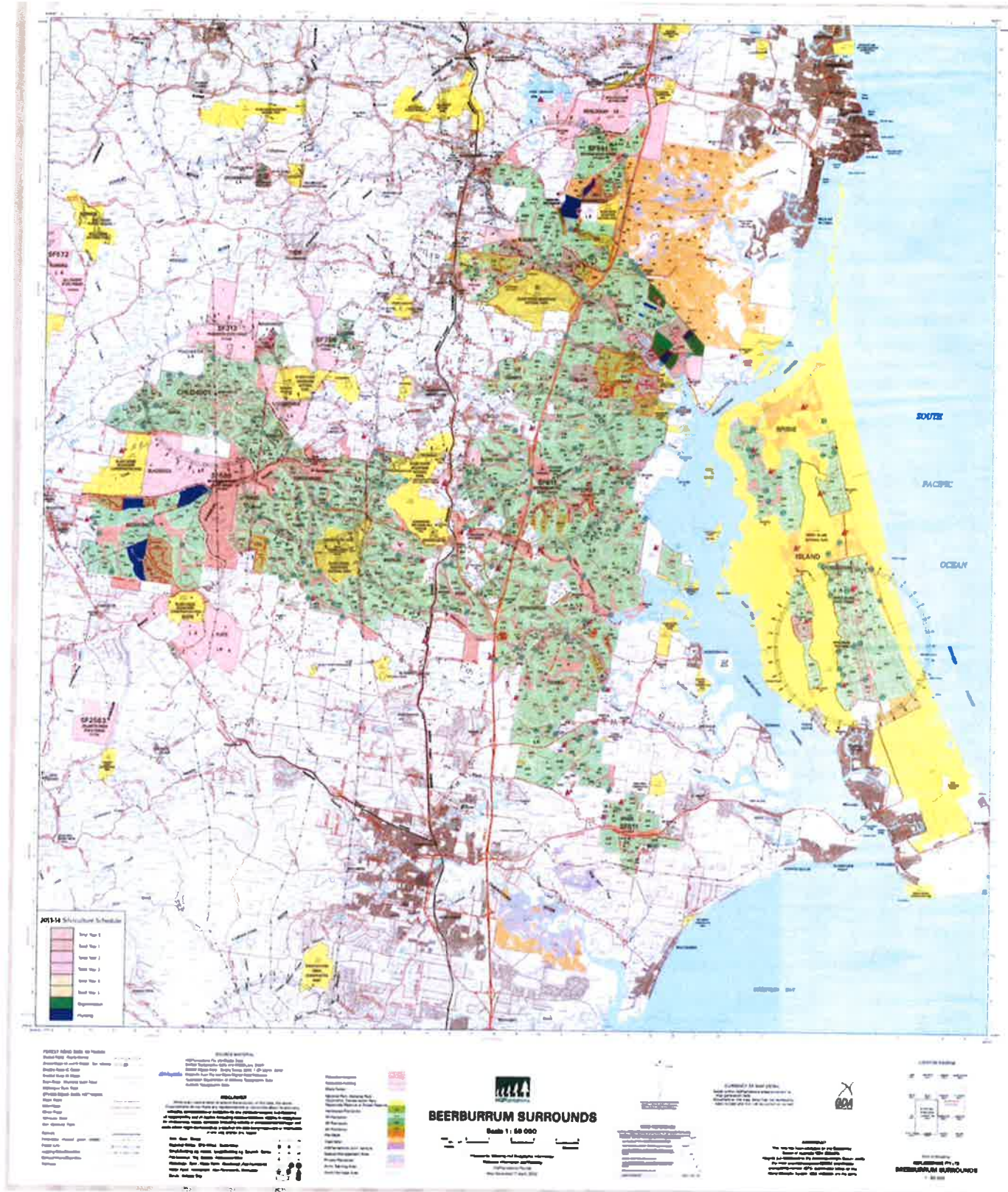


Figure 8