

Making assessments count

Protected area management effectiveness

Improving quality

Tony Varcoe (Parks Victoria)

and

Andrew Growcock (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services)

Build in quality assurance to each step



Risks

- Available knowledge not captured/shared
- Data not adequately interpreted or translated into knowledge
- Assessment questions subject to interpretation/subjectivity
- Variability among assessors / inconsistent answers
- ‘Park manager experience’ / staff bias
 - reliability/ accuracy
 - responses based on maximising funding?
- Staff culture (doing rather than evaluating)
- Disconnection with day to day business practices

Mitigating risks

1. Survey design

- Be clear on why you are collecting the information: operational vs strategic
- Frame questions clearly
- Recognise the value and limitations of quantitative and qualitative assessments
- Clear, plain English, accessible guidelines and standards
- Have clear business rules and logics

General data		Reserve classification		IUCN category
Gazetted area (ha)	Area including ungazetted land (ha)	Declared wilderness (ha)	Accession area (ha)	
Primary HPWS Branch	Primary HPWS Region	Primary HPWS Area		
Other HPWS Branch(es)	Other HPWS Region(s)	Other HPWS Area(s)		
Local Government Area (LGA)				
Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)				
Catchment & Management Area (CMA)				
Regional Forest Agreement (RFA)				

Chapter 2 – Using the SoP Information System

Accessing SoP Information System

Access to the SoP Information System is via Citrix:

1. In Infloweb, open on the **Applications** tab and select the **Citrix Metaframe** icon (you can also link to Citrix from the [SoP Infloweb](#) page)
2. Click **OK** and login as usual using your Parks Victoria username and password



Mitigating risks

2. Data management systems

- Ensure stable, reliable information systems for data entry and extraction
- Understand user needs for accessing data
- User friendly platforms/software
- Automated summary results on most common questions plus flexibility to create user queries

The screenshot displays a web-based survey management system for Parks Victoria. The header includes the Parks Victoria logo and the slogan 'Healthy Parks Healthy People'. The main content area is titled 'Survey Details - Wilsons Promontory National Park' and shows the following information:

- Park ID:** 3308
- RIC area(s):** Wilsons Promontory
- District(s):** South Gippsland
- Region(s):** Eastern Victoria
- Date of assessment:** 1/10/2013
- Principal Assessor:** Brett Mitchell
- Assessor:** Dan Rogers, Emily Green
- Assisting Assessor:** (with an 'Add Assisting Assessor' button)

Below this information are tabs for 'Part A: Park Attributes', 'Part B: Park Context', 'Part C: Management Effectiveness', and 'Authorisation'. A 'Help' section is visible with options to 'Collapse All Panels' and 'Expand All Panels'. A specific assessment question is shown: 'C1 Weeds - Weeds are not a threat to park values AND there is no weed management program (justify/comment in assessment table)'. The question asks for a general assessment of weed extent over 2010-2013 and the current weed impact. Radio button options are provided for each question.

At the bottom left of the interface, the user's details are shown: 'User: tvarcoe' and 'Role: Administrator'. Navigation buttons for 'REPORTS', 'ASSIGN ASSESSORS', and 'ADMINISTRATION' are also present.

Mitigating risks

3. Survey process

- Provide pre-assessment training and help desk
- Get inputs from users and managers
- Ensure you can consistently capture/ reflect different types of evidence
- Identify a single manager responsible for completing the evaluation: ‘regional survey coordinators’ or ‘principal assessors’
- Empower those accountable: ensure senior manager sign-off. Also supports moderation if required



Mitigating risks

4. Data auditing

- Develop clear business rules and logics (yes, this again!)
- Identify areas and issues where inconsistency likely to be greatest
- Identify areas of greatest risk if incorrect data compiled
- Plan time to review data and steps to ‘flag’ incorrect data. Have a start and end time
- Follow up with managers in person or via phone
 - Explore not just issue of concern, but the context around it



Mitigating risks

5. Keep it relevant

- Ongoing interaction is required to review results, discuss context and develop actions. This will improve quality
- Consider your audiences needs from evaluation
 - Strategic planning
 - Operations planning
 - Plans of management
 - KPI indicators for the organisation



Improving data quality

Develop evaluation culture

Connect monitoring to MEE evaluation



Ensure qualitative data is content rich

Justification / comment

Many areas of natural values improved in condition as they continue to recover from major landscape scale fire events in the last decade and long term cattle grazing in alpine areas. Habitat condition has improved through management intervention (large scale weed programs, e.g willows, peatland weed programs and predator control, e.g LFP.), however to some extent this has been offset by the negative impacts of horses, deer, and the spread of other weed species. There is a lack of detailed knowledge of all natural values; there has