

Appendix D

Lake Curalo Estuary Processes Study & Management Plan

Visual Amenity Study

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Foreword

In mid 1999 Bega Valley Shire Council appointed a team of consultants to undertake the Lake Curalo Estuary Processes Study and Management Plan. This visual amenity study of Lake Curalo and its environs is a component of that plan.

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Lake Curalo Estuary Processes Study and Management Plan

Visual Amenity Study

1. Location

Lake Curalo is located within the town of Eden on the far South Coast of NSW. It has a water surface area of approximately 0.9 km² and an average depth of 2 metres. Its intermittent opening is located at the northern end of Aslings Beach. The setting of the Lake includes a high proportion of urban land and many houses, streets and parks have views to the Lake.

Figure 1 Location Map (Source: UBD NSW Directory 9th Ed.)

2. Methodology

Visual amenity or scenic quality of a landscape is widely recognised as a concept that must be taken into consideration in preparing environmental studies and management plans. Despite many methodologies for assessing visual amenity / quality having been developed over the last 30 years or so there is still no acceptable quantitative method that can objectively measure the scenic quality of landscapes. Thus, visual assessments are essentially subjective because perceptions of what constitutes high visual quality in a landscape varies amongst individuals and cultural groups. Therefore the methodology employed for this study is subjective.

The term ‘visual amenity’ is a description of the landscape character and the influence that character has on the overall scenic values of the study area. The visual catchment is the area visible from the Lake and its foreshores. In the case of Lake Curalo, this is a large area taking in much of the town of Eden and surrounding hills and headlands.

2.1 Visual Assessment Principles

A major objective is to identify the visual elements of the study area that are crucial to the scenic quality of the Lake and its landscape setting. Such elements, if altered inappropriately, have the potential to diminish the visual quality of Lake Curalo and its environs.

In preparing this visual amenity study, the following tasks were undertaken:

- The landform and land cover of the setting was examined
- Landscape types within the visual catchment of Lake Curalo were identified
- The various viewer positions were examined and the proportions of viewers were estimated
- The key characteristics and visual amenity of each landscape type was described and broadly categorised as either high, medium or low

2.2 Landform and land cover

The landforms surrounding Lake Curalo have varying visual prominence and character. For example, the forested hills and headlands that form the northern and western backdrop to the Lake are considered to be of high visual amenity. The low lying areas on the southern and western sides of the Lake generally have restricted views of the Lake and have generally been extensively modified by development and are considered to have lower visual amenity.

Land cover refers to vegetation type and landuse. The structure of different vegetation communities produce different visual effects on the landscape. In visual terms, land cover that comprises mainly native forest or natural foreshore vegetation is considered to be of higher visual quality than areas where the land cover has been altered by human activities. Rural vegetation patterns associated with grazing contrast with the forested slopes of the remnant natural areas. Urban areas integrate better with the

natural landscape when there are trees present to visually soften the built forms. Vegetation can also influence views from areas. For example in flatter areas trees and shrubs can easily screen low scale development.

Man-modified landscapes form much of the visual setting of Lake Curalo. A variety of urban land uses surround the Lake ranging from light industrial/commercial areas, residential areas, caravan parks, high school, and sportsfields. The Lake is visible from the many elevated positions within the town of Eden. The fact that many houses and public streets in Eden have views north over Lake Curalo means that the northern foreshore and slopes are particularly visually sensitive.

2.3 Viewer Locations

Various locations across the study area were considered as potential viewer locations. These included the areas around the foreshores that were publicly accessible, residential areas of Eden that overlook the Lake and the rural residential lands on the northern side. The probable number of observers were estimated as high, medium or low. Viewing duration was categorised as permanent (views of the Lake 24 hours a day) or transient (views are infrequent or for short time periods). Viewing positions that are permanent and have a high number of observers include the residential areas of Eden that overlook the Lake.

3 Visual Amenity

A set of three landscape units were generated by combining land cover and landform. The following describes the criteria for ranking of the landscape units and describes their visual amenity.

HIGH Visual Amenity

This category encompasses the landscape units that are considered essential to the visual and environmental quality of the study area. Landscape units that fall in this category are areas with distinct natural landform and land cover that would be visually sensitive to any changes. In some cases these areas include landscapes that have been man-modified yet retain their visual quality through the retention of a high proportion of native vegetation. For example, the slopes and ridges to the north of the Lake have been partially cleared for rural / rural residential landuse but still retain large stands of remnant forest (see photo 2).

Key characteristics of areas of HIGH visual amenity include:

- Natural and semi-natural Lake foreshore areas
- Areas with large stands of native vegetation with low scale development that is visually discreet
- Steep forested slopes and ridges
- Ocean Beach

MEDIUM Visual Amenity

The category of medium visual quality encompasses all land units where the natural landscape has been largely man modified, although in some cases landscape treatments have been implemented and/or native trees have been retained to visually soften built forms. This includes the north facing slopes of the residential areas of Eden that overlook the Lake. These areas comprise mainly detached dwellings with established gardens and trees that form a visually pleasant townscape (see photo 1).

Key Characteristics of areas of MEDIUM visual amenity include:

- Moderate slopes with views to and from the Lake
- Urban areas of detached houses with gardens and remnant native trees
- Parkland / golf course areas with stands of native vegetation

LOW Visual Amenity

Landscape units with low visual quality rating include areas where the natural land cover has been almost totally altered by human use. Landform is characteristically flat to slightly undulating and consequently visual interest is low.

Key Characteristics of areas of LOW visual amenity include:

- Mainly cleared low lying areas (eg below 10m above sea level) usually not visible from the Lake's foreshores
- Industrial precincts
- Playing fields
- Unsympathetic developments in close proximity to the Lake's foreshore

4 Visual Amenity Map

LEGEND

HIGH Visual Amenity

This category encompasses the landscape units that are considered essential to the visual and environmental quality of the study area. Landscape units that fall in this category are areas with distinct natural landform and land cover that would be visually sensitive to any changes. In some cases these areas include landscapes that have been man-modified yet retain their visual quality through the retention of a high proportion of native vegetation.

MEDIUM Visual Amenity

The category of medium visual quality encompasses all land units where the natural landscape has been largely man modified, although in some cases landscape treatments have been implemented and/or native trees have been retained to visually soften built forms. This includes the north facing slopes of the residential areas of Eden that overlook the Lake. These areas comprise mainly detached dwellings with established gardens and trees that form a visually pleasant townscape.

LOW Visual Amenity

Landscape units with low visual quality rating include areas where the natural land cover has been almost totally altered by human use. Landform is characteristically flat to slightly undulating and consequently visual interest is low.

Viewer Locations

Permanent views

Transient views

5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended as a general guide to maintaining and enhancing the visual amenity of Lake Curalo and its setting.

Landscape Issues

- Ridgeline vegetation should be protected and maintained where possible.
- Creekline and foreshore vegetation should be protected and maintained where possible.
- Existing mature trees should be retained where possible.
- The use of indigenous canopy trees to soften new and existing development should be encouraged.
- Programs to regenerate existing and preserved bushland in the vicinity of the Lake should be continued and expanded.
- A landscaped buffer area is required at the junction of developed areas and the foreshore open space in many instances to soften visual impact (eg Exposed fences at Lake Curalo Reserve, see photo 3).
- The development of a walkway around sections of the Lake's foreshore is encouraged as this will provide low impact access to an important scenic and educational resource.

Built Form

- The development approval process for properties within the visual catchment of Lake Curalo should require that new developments minimise visual impacts on the Lake and its setting.
- Muted building tones and materials with low reflectivity should be encouraged (appropriate colours include green-grey, olive greens, light brown).
- Roof lines of proposed developments should preferably match the slope of the land. Gabled and hipped roof forms are preferred to skillions.
- Height, form and bulk of buildings should be reviewed by council to ensure minimal visual impact.
- Buildings should not protrude above the existing tree line (where applicable). Two storeys is a reasonable maximum for areas in the vicinity of the Lake.
- Landscaping of new development in the vicinity of the Lake should maximise use of indigenous species.

6 Photographs

Photo 1 View south towards the town of Eden from northern foreshore of Lake Curalo

Photo 2 View west from near the Lake's entrance with distant forested hills and semi natural northern foreshore.

Photo 3 View of lake foreshore near the southern portion of Lake Curalo Reserve. Adjoining residential development and fence line have a high visual impact but could easily be softened by the planting of native trees and shrubs.

Photo 4 The wooden footbridges along Lake Curalo Reserve suggest the importance of enhancing public access to the scenic foreshore areas.

7 References

Bega Valley Shire Council
View management within public reserves (October 1998)

Bega Valley Shire Council
Eden local urban reserves plan of management (August 1996)

Bega Valley Shire Council
Eden sportsground reserves plan of management (August 1996)

Bega Valley Shire Council
Development Control Plan No 38(A4) Eden Urban Area (February 1999)

NSW Dept. of Planning
South Coast Design Guidelines (1990)