



Rural

Fitzroy River National Park plan creating steady flow of concerns from Kimberley cattle industry

ABC Rural By [Matt Brann](#)

Updated yesterday at 13:37

First posted yesterday at 06:02



[Environmentalists hope a Fitzroy River National Park will protect the region from dam proposals at Dimond Gorge and on the Margaret River \(pictured\).](#) (Matt Brann: ABC)

There are growing concerns among the Kimberley cattle industry over a government plan to create the Fitzroy River National Park.

The park was [an election promise](#) by the Western Australian Labor Government, and has strong backing from environmentalists and some traditional owners.

But president of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association (PGA), Tony Seabrook, said some of his members were very worried about the park and what it could mean for neighbouring properties and local stations looking to diversify.

"Government needs to be able to look after the estate it currently controls in a far better fashion before they take more," Mr Seabrook said.

"This [national park] would be very detrimental for the properties which adjoin the river.

"There are certainly some sites on that river of great significance, but the park is too big, too over-reaching and probably ungovernable."



[Gogo Station is seeking approvals to grow more irrigated fodder crops for its cattle.](#) (ABC Rural: Matt Brann)

Gogo Station irrigation plans under pressure

One cattle station concerned about the impacts of the planned national park is Gogo Station, east of Fitzroy Crossing.

Owned by the Harris family since 1989, the station has been growing irrigated sorghum for its cattle using two centre pivots for several years, and is [seeking approvals to expand.](#)

Development manager Phil Hams said the station was aiming to develop up to 10,000 hectares of irrigated fodder crops using a mixture of centre pivots and flood irrigation from water harvested from Blue Bush Creek, a small tributary of the Margaret River.

"The proposed National Park has implications, and we're in discussion with a number of the government people and I think the Government realises the need to generate some economic activity in this valley to give opportunities to people, especially Aboriginal people.

"So nothing is in concrete yet and we're certainly out there, along with others, putting a view, and hopefully commonsense will prevail."

Gina Rinehart sick of water going 'to waste'

Another pastoral company keeping a close eye on the national park proposal is Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting, which owns Fossil Downs and Liveringa Station.

Mrs Rinehart has on several occasions this year alluded to the company's wish to utilise more water from the Fitzroy Valley.

"The [WA] Government only allows one water licence to access water from the Fitzroy River for Liveringa [Station] in the Kimberley, and guess how much water the Government permits to be taken? Six gegalitres," she said.

"This leaves 99.9991 per cent of the water to run out uselessly into the Indian Ocean.

"If the Government allowed us to tap into this huge wasted water source, we'd be able to increase our cattle numbers and just imagine the benefit for all of the related industries which depend on agriculture."



[WA Labor released this map prior to the March election, of its proposed Fitzroy River National Park.](#) (Supplied: WA Labor)

WA Government committed to national park and community consultation

WA's Environment Minister Stephen Dawson said the Government was committed to delivering on its promise to create the Fitzroy River National Park.

He said the park would extend from the current Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River to the north, and along the Margaret River to the east.

Mr Dawson said he expected community consultations would start early next year, and information would be provided to "key stakeholders" in the coming months.

[WA Environment Minister Stephen Dawson explains the Fitzroy River National Park plan](#) (ABC News)

He said the cattle industry had some "valid concerns", but he was committed to the creation of the national park and "ensuring the Kimberley remains a world-class tourism destination."

"What we need to do now is determine what the park will look like and that has to take place in consultation," he said.

"As the PGA has pointed out, some of its members have leases in that area and we'd need to talk to pastoral lease holders and traditional owner groups, because some of the land belongs to them.

"So we'll talk to everybody who's involved over the next few months and work out exactly what the map looks like going forward."

Asked if he supported irrigated agriculture in the Fitzroy Valley, Mr Dawson said he supported a broad range of industry in the Kimberley.

"In terms of whether the Fitzroy River needs to be dammed to deliver on some of those plans, we're very strong that the Fitzroy River should not be dammed, that was a clear commitment from us," he said.

"But certainly we're happy as a Government to work with all industries including the pastoralists, to work out how we can all co-exist and create opportunities in the Kimberley region for everybody."

He said despite [media reports](#), the Government was not aware of any private companies with "real plans" to build a dam in the Fitzroy Valley.

Topics

[Rural](#) [Beef Cattle](#) [National Parks](#) [Dams and Reservoirs](#) [Water Management](#) [Irrigation](#) [Fitzroy Crossing](#)