

A close-up photograph of two dark, paw-shaped impressions in light-colored sand. The prints are arranged vertically, with the upper one slightly to the right of the lower one. The sand has a fine, granular texture. In the bottom right corner, there is a small, dark, circular hole in the sand. The text 'Dog off leash trial Wanda Beach, Cronulla.' is overlaid in a blue, sans-serif font at the bottom of the image.

Dog off leash trial
Wanda Beach, Cronulla.

The Sutherland Shire

- Located at the southern coastal border of the Sydney metropolitan region
- It covers an area of 370 square kilometres
- Population 219 751
- Registered dogs 38 858
- Estimated a further 40% not registered/identified.
- 18 dogs/100 people
- 22 096 dogs located within 15km of Wanda Beach.
- Council investigates approximately 245 dog attacks in last financial year.
- A memorandum of understanding with both Sutherland and Miranda LAC's that council investigate all dog attacks.
- Environment Protection and Regulation unit currently has 17 authorised officers/inspectors.

Purpose of off leash areas.

- An off leash area is defined as an area which offers a safe, controlled environment for dogs to play, socialise, interact and exercise with other dogs and provides people an opportunity for people to interact with others having a similar interest.
- Legislated under Section 13 (6) Companion Animals Act 1998, '*there must at all times be at least one public place in the area of a local authority that is an off-leash area.*'
- Community expectations
- Reduces boredom and pent up energy for dogs.
- Contributes to health benefits for dog owners.

Considerations for a dog off leash area

- Able to withstand free running
 - Natural boundaries or require minimal fencing
 - Meets needs of dogs and owners
 - Area not associated with recreational interests
 - Area already popular
 - Several access points to area
 - Area where local residents are screened from activities
-
- Avoid the following:
 - Children's playgrounds
 - High concentration of people
 - Picnic areas
 - Sports ovals
 - Botanical Gardens or environmentally protected areas
 - Areas used by horses, bicycles or motorbikes
 - Barriers such as road crossings or railways

Current off leash areas in Sutherland Shire.

Location	Off leash times	Description
Wanda Beach Cronulla	4pm-10am daily	Beach
Silver Beach Kurnell	Unrestricted	Beach
Hordens Beach Bundeena	May-August Unrestricted Sept-April 4.30pm-8.30am Mon-Fri	Beach
Helena Street Reserve Kirrawee	Unrestricted	Fenced Reserve
Carina Bay Reserve Como	Unrestricted	Unfenced reserve
Bonnet Bay or Barden Ridge	Proposed	Reserves

Wanda Beach

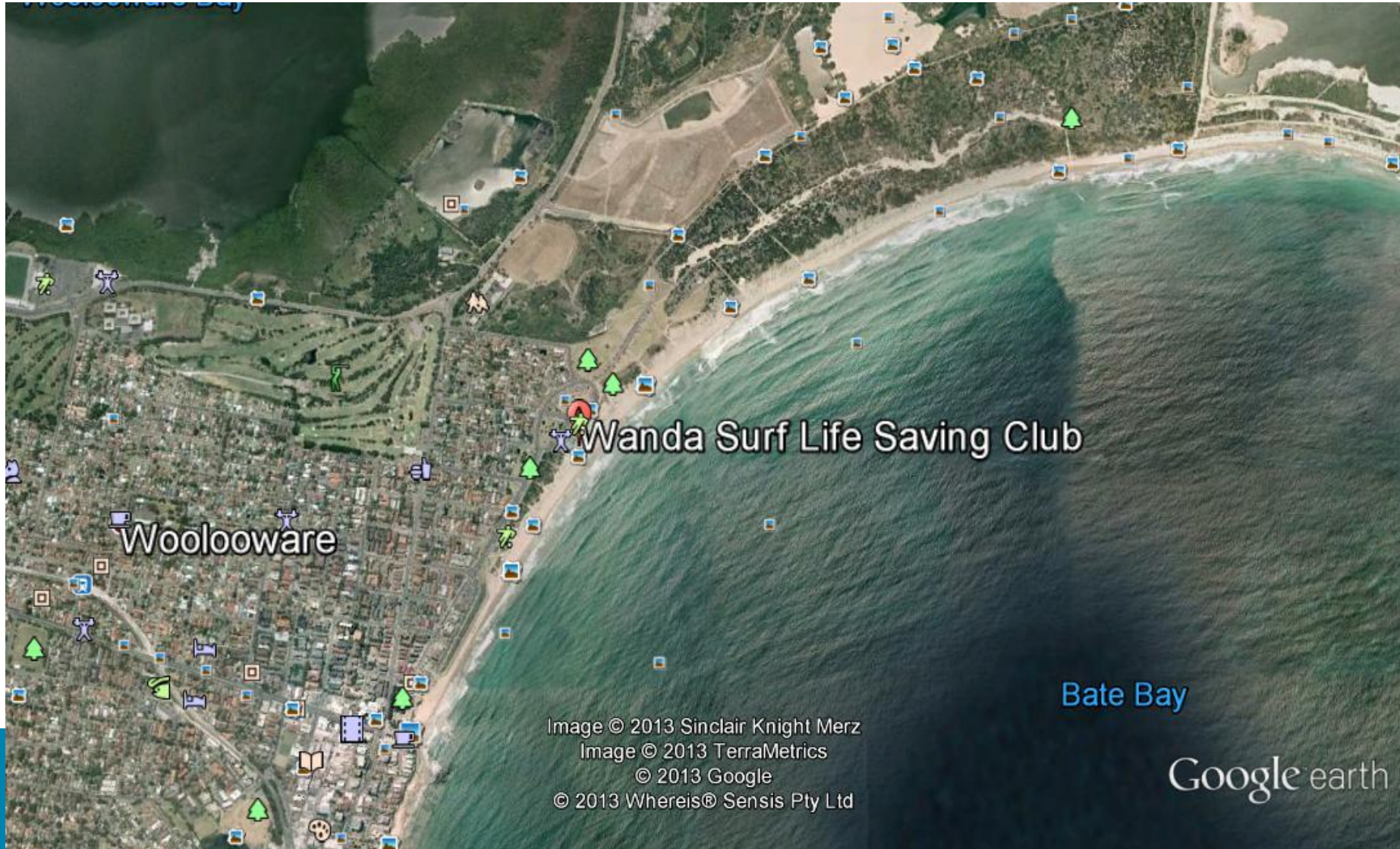
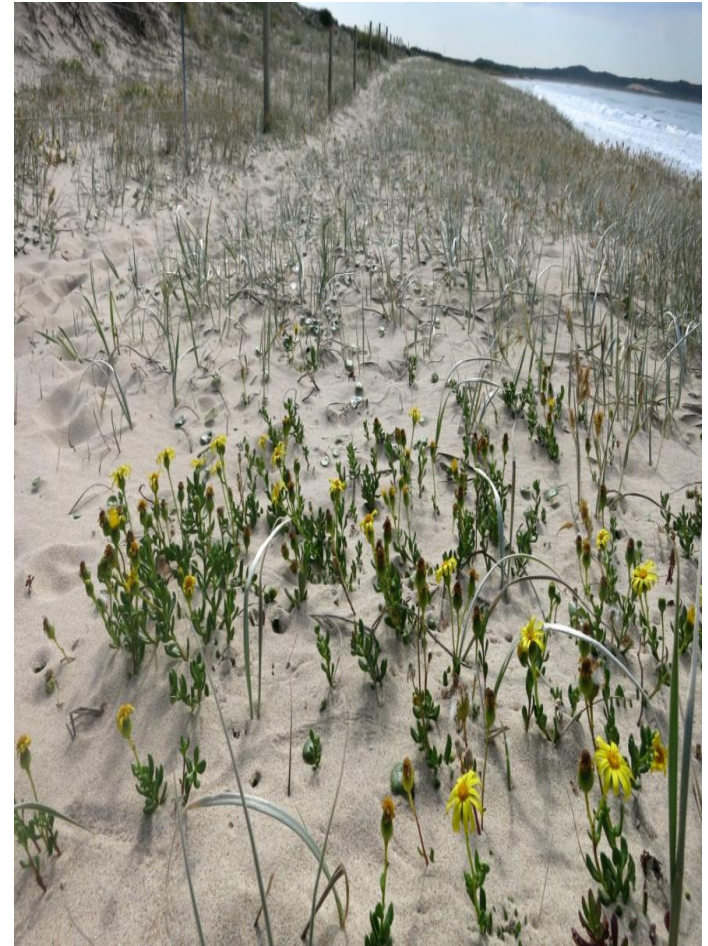


Image © 2013 Sinclair Knight Merz
Image © 2013 TerraMetrics
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Google earth

Description of Wanda Beach

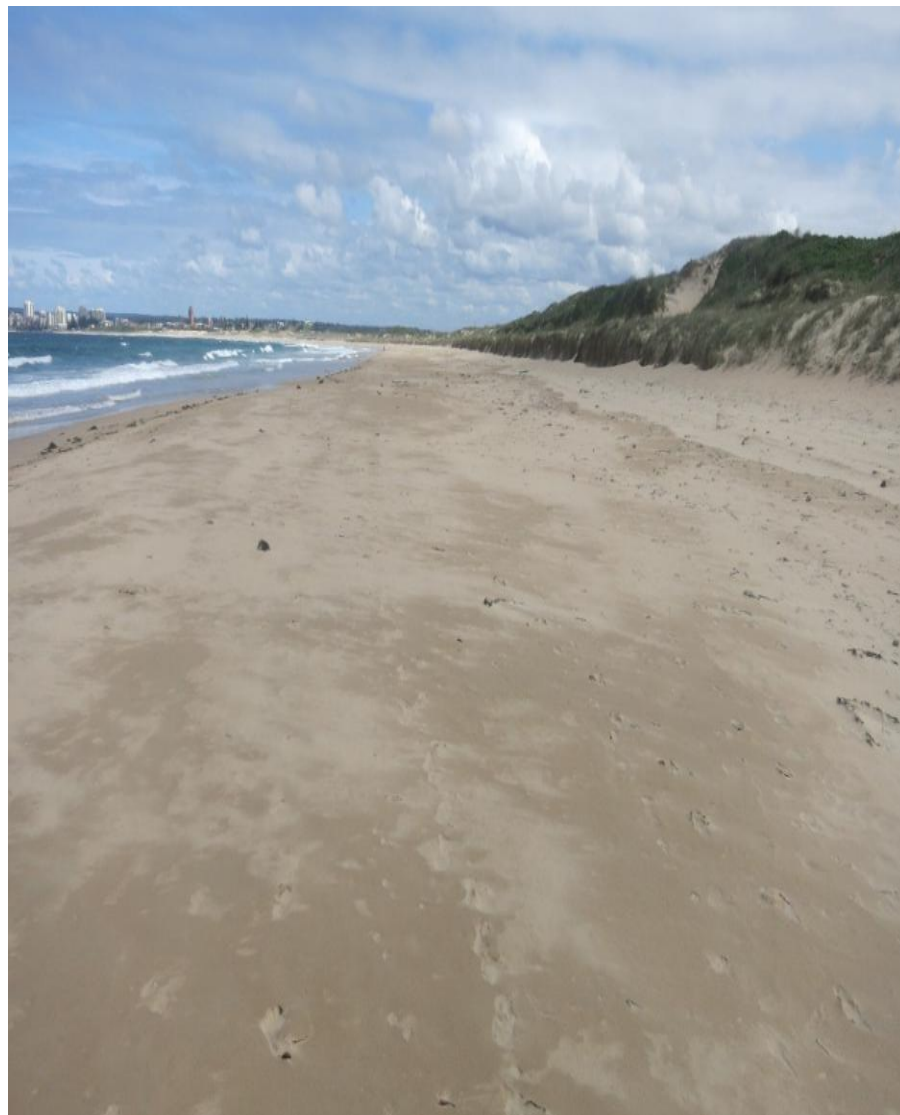
- Wanda Beach between gate 5 and 1 is 1.7 kilometres long and 40 metres wide
- Entrance to the off leash area is by gate 5 only
- There are 20 metres of foredunes next to the beach consisting of spinifex grassland which includes endangered Coast Groundsel *Senecio spathulatus*
- Behind foredunes are vegetated dunes with mix of coastal dune heath and weed species. This area backs onto the Heritage Track and is approximately 400 metres wide.
- Area contains considerable heritage significance
- High archaeological sensitive area with a number of Aboriginal sites found in area.
- Sand dune area was previously privately owned and only transferred to Council in December 2009.
- Prior to December 2009 area not patrolled as private property but was used as an off leash area by dog owners.



- View from gate 5



- View from gate 1



Signage and only entrance to off leash area is through gate 5



Beach users.

- ❖ Walkers
- ❖ Joggers
- ❖ Bird watchers
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Swimmers
- ❖ Surfers
- ❖ Picnickers
- ❖ Kite Boarders/flyers
- ❖ Surf lifesaving & Nippers
- ❖ Organised sporting events such as fun runs.
- ❖ Personal Trainers
- ❖ Dog owners
- ❖ Whale/marine life watchers.
- ❖ All ages



Wanda Beach off leash area- History.



- Crown land under care and control of SSC.
- Trial commenced October 2004 – trial period of 6 months
- June 2005 resolved to maintain same conditions for further 2 year trial period
- Made permanent on 19 November 2007 – no weekends
- November 2009 further review – public consultation.
- 19 April 2010 further 12 month trial period with amended restrictions, off leash on beach area 4pm – 10am daily
- Dogs in Don Lucas Reserve and Service trail to be leashed at all times
- 5 August 2013 off leash all day everyday for 12 month trial.
- 26 August 2013 off leash trial suspended and reverted back to original conditions.

Initial Enforcement approach when area classified as off leash area

- Council's Environment Protection and Regulation Unit undertook one month education program handing out pamphlets and speaking to community and stakeholders
- Amended conditions were also advertised on Council's website, The Leader newspaper and information sent out in rates notices.
- In the next month Council issued 14 warnings, 36 penalty notices for dogs being in the prohibited areas and there were two dog attacks

Current restrictions

- Dogs on leash at all times in Don Lucas Reserve and Wanda Reserve and also on sealed service trail at the rear of the sand dunes
- Off leash north of gate 5 from 4pm to 10 am daily
- Dogs not allowed in dunes from the beach to the sealed service trail
- Dogs prohibited north of 4 wheel drive park – environmentally sensitive area – Merries Reef
- Map included on signs at each access point showing boundaries and times

KURNELL

Dogs prohibited in dune area.

DON LUCAS RESERVE

P

WANDA RESERVE

GREENHILLS

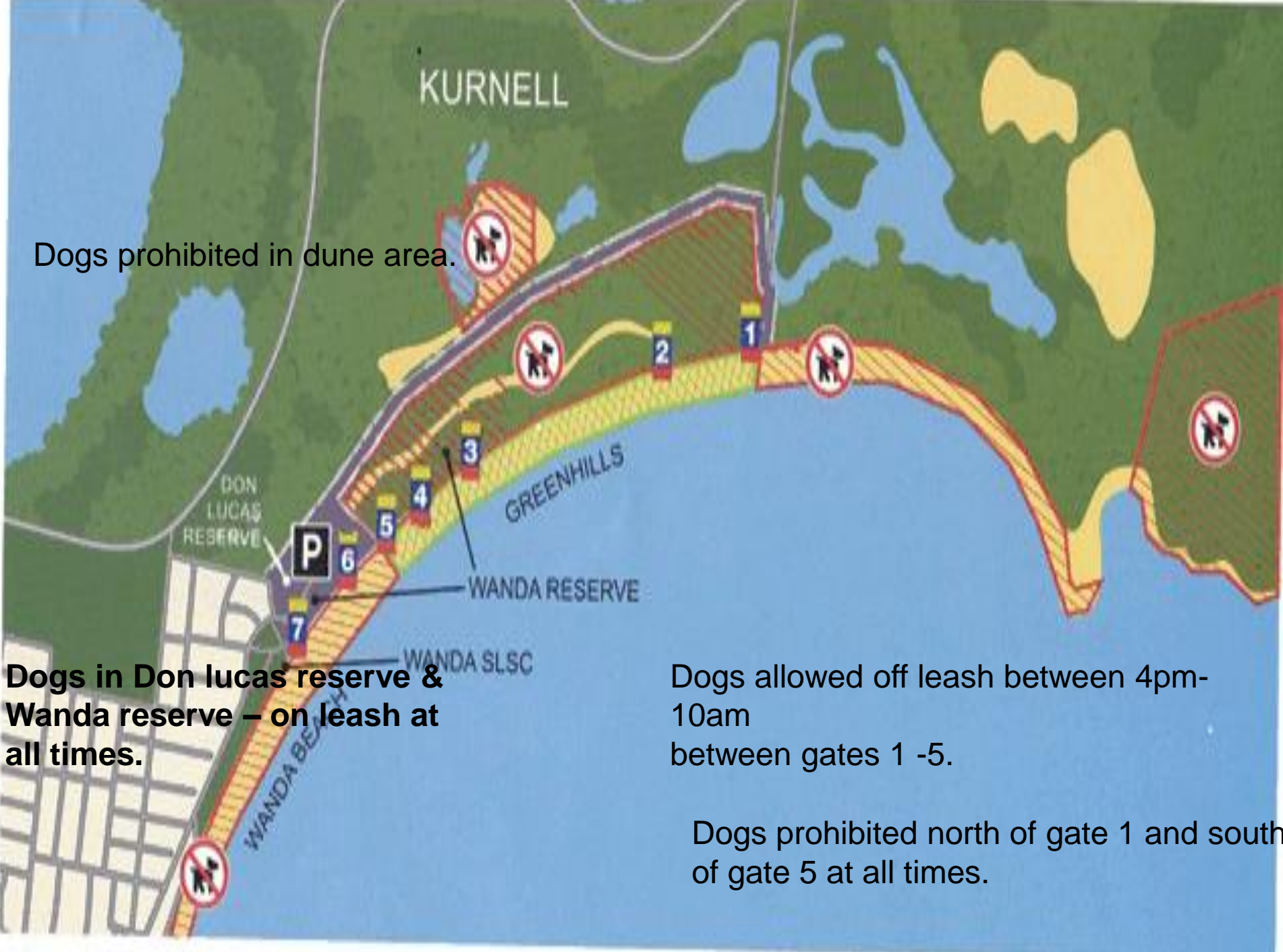
WANDA SLSC

WANDA BEACH

Dogs allowed off leash between 4pm-10am
between gates 1 -5.

Dogs prohibited north of gate 1 and south
of gate 5 at all times.

**Dogs in Don lucas reserve &
Wanda reserve – on leash at
all times.**



Trial of off leash 24 hours a day August 2013

- 5 August 2013 Councillors decide Wanda Beach north of gate 5 to be off leash 24 hours a day 7 days a week
- This information was circulated in weekend papers, Saturday Daily Telegraph & Sydney Morning Herald both having double page spreads
- Local newspaper 'The Leader' also advertised this in both Tuesday and Thursday editions.
- Information was also advertised on Council Website and local Community radio
- Information was also conveyed by local dog groups and by word of mouth
- Obvious need and a desire for dog off leash in this type of area with extended hours.
- Location proved very popular with numerous people attending from all parts of Sydney from Wollongong, Penrith and Castle Hill areas.
- Between 1500 and 2000 dogs and owners attend on each Saturday and Sunday (previously only 250 a day).
- Numerous social and environmental concerns from this amount of people and dogs in one confined location

Issues

- Uncontrolled dogs over 180 cautions issued on first Saturday in Don Lucas Reserve
- Dogs in prohibited areas, at least 100 dogs sighted in Sand Dune area
- Dogs off leash in car park.
- Dog attacks. Two dog attacks in first eight days of trial
- Dog faeces left on beach
- Bags of dog faeces left tied on fencing and also left in sand dune area
- Contagious disease, skin irritations or parasitic infection.
- Joggers chased by dogs
- Surfers having their towels urinated on
- Sheer number of dogs in area
- Limited numbers of Council staff to Police issues.



Mitigation measures

- More bins placed at area to encourage waste disposal
- Bins collected more regularly to try and deter owners tying dog bags to fence and leaving in dune area.
- More educational signage placed in area
- More regulation signage placed at location
- Better signage placed at area to indicate entry to off leash area
- High profile patrols for at least 10 hours a day each Saturday and Sunday.
- Enforcement Officers giving out information brochures and educating dog owners on responsibilities
- Dog bags placed at entry to gate 5 to encourage dog owners to pick up after their dog.
- Impacts occurring despite all these measures in place.



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Wanda Beach

W
Wanda Beach is a public beach and is open to all beach users from 10am to 6pm.

No vehicles	No dogs	No alcohol
No pets	No smoking	No fires

Beach is public and open to all beach users on public land. No commercial activities are permitted on this beach. Please do not use the public beach - unless permitted beach is clearly signed.

Warning Heavy and uneven sandstone

Recreational activities in coastal environment are only those that can be undertaken in a public beach - unless permitted beach is clearly signed.

Sutherland Shire Council

Sutherland Shire Council

DOG WASTE MUST BE BAGGED AND PLACED IN GARBAGE BINS PROVIDED IN CARPARK

Sutherland Shire Council

'DOG OFF LEASH' AREA GATE 5.

←

OFF LEASH TIMES

Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Before 10am and after 4pm

DOGS PROHIBITED

Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Between 10am and 4pm

26/10/2013 10:18

DOGS PROHIBITED

The dog Off-Leash entry
is located at gate 5.
Please refer to signs at
gate 5 for details
of operation.



Surrey Shire
COUNCIL



26/10/2013 10:16

Sutherland Shire
COUNCIL

**'DOG OFF LEASH'
AREA GATE 5.**

**OFF LEASH
TIMES**

Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Before 10am and after 4pm

**DOGS
PROHIBITED**

Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Between 10am and 4pm

26/10/2013 10:02

Wanda Beach Greenhills
Pursuant to s632 Local Government Act 1993 (LGA)
← 
Dogs prohibited on beach
This area is protected and sensitive both for fishing
overlays with the terms of the relevant notices.
Please adhere to guidelines by Sutherland Shire Council
For the health and enjoyment of the community
Please do not litter and please do not smoke
Please do not drink alcohol and do not use drugs
For more information, please contact the Council
on 9571 2200 or visit our website at www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au

Sutherland Shire COUNCIL
**END OF
'DOG OFF LEASH'
AREA**
**DOGS MUST NOW
BE HELD ON A LEAD**
**DOGS
PROHIBITED
SOUTH OF GATE 5**
←

26/10/2013 09:58

**'DOG OFF LEASH'
AREA GATE 5.**

ENTRANCE

**OFF LEASH
TIMES**

**Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Before 10am and after 4pm**

**DOGS
PROHIBITED**

**Mon - Sun incl. Public Holidays
Between 10am and 4pm**

26/10/2013 09:34

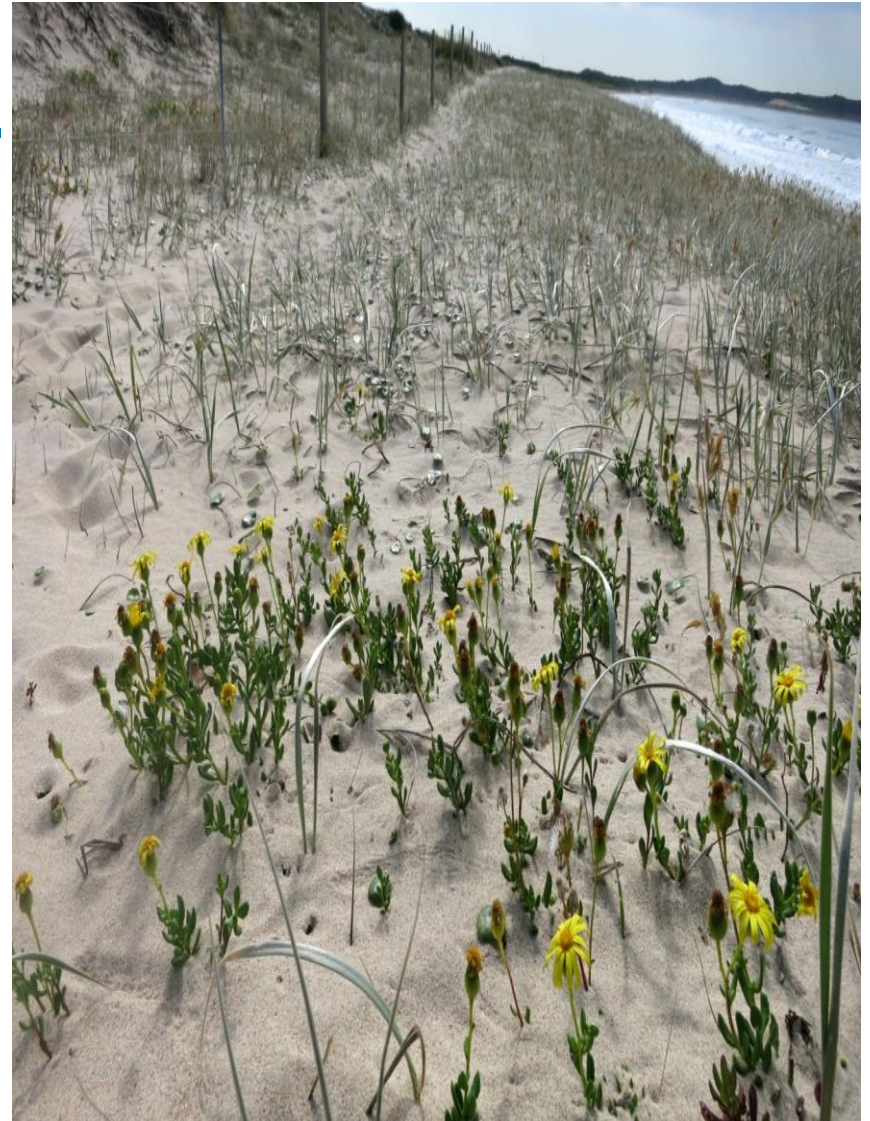
Enforcement issues/ observations

- Impacts on flora, fauna, water quality, public health, visual amenity, heritage and impacts on other users and areas



Environmental impacts.

- Coastal Groundsel 'Senecio spathulatus' on foredunes is listed as endangered under NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- This is the only location in the Sutherland Shire where Coastal Groundsel occurs
- Dogs constantly running and digging in area
- Any impact is undesirable.
- Ponds in dune area are listed as an Endangered Ecological Community on the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.



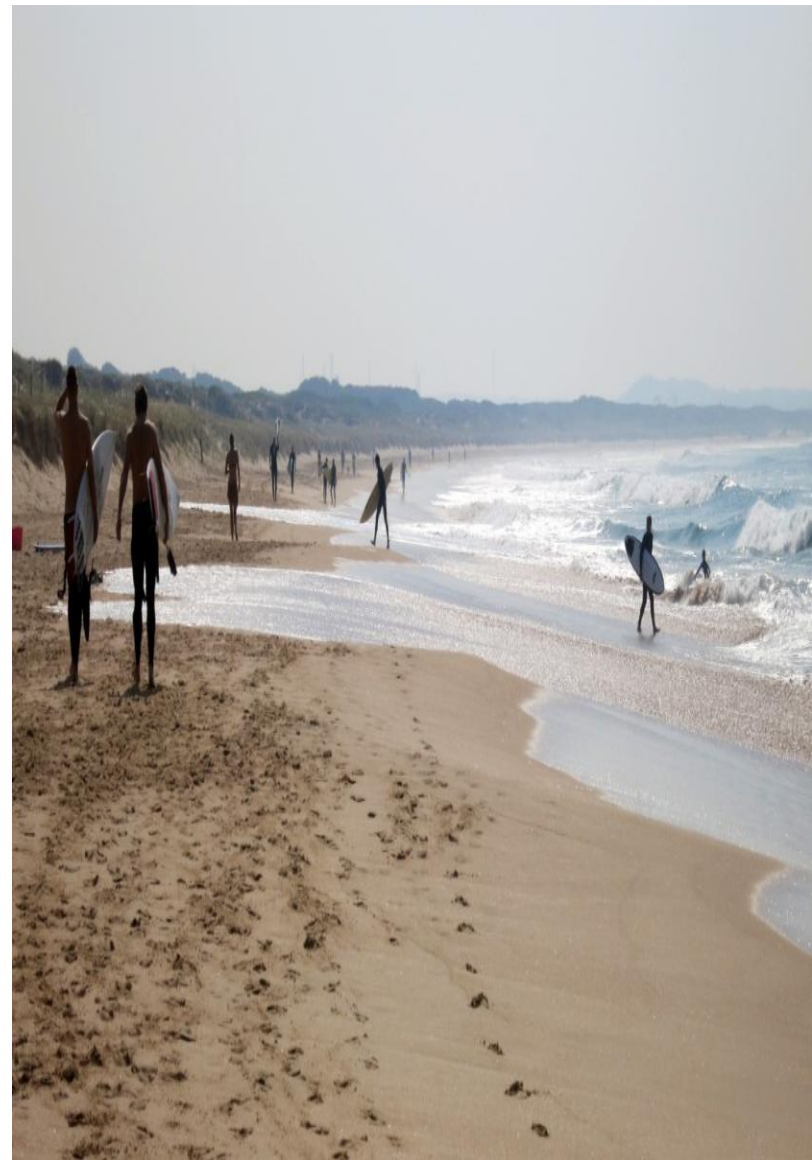
Fauna

- Area offers suitable habitat and refuge for a number of shorebird species if left undisturbed
- Any impact in this area should be avoided considering dramatic decline of shorebird numbers in Sydney in the past 50 years
- Location is also home to endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog.
- There have been recent sightings of white fronted chats in the area with no recorded sightings since 2000.
- Advice received is that '*area is not subjected to disturbance as chats are highly sensitive and will fly away if humans (or dogs) are nearby*'



Water Quality

- Wanda Beach rated as good
- Recent inspections have revealed dog faeces below high tide mark which leads to localized contamination of water
- This compromises the high level of water quality



Public Health

- Faeces contain disease causing micro-organisms called pathogens which can be transferred to humans through water
- Dog faeces are the biggest cause of the pathogen
- Cause gastroenteritis, infections of the eyes, ears, skin and upper respiratory tract.
- Dog faeces also contains worms and parasites which can infect humans. These can live for weeks in the faeces after being discarded
- Main victims are the elderly, children and visitors
- Risk of coming into contact with faeces is high when it is mixed with the sand or buried – biggest risk for infection in children



- Pollution from dog faeces and dog bags undermines heritage significance of the site
- Negatively impacts on visual amenity
- Distracts people from appreciating the area



Aboriginal Heritage

- 4 sites on edge of off leash area, one burial site and three middens
- Dogs can disturb sites by digging and trampling area



Coastal Biodiversity

- Dunes which are a restricted area are constantly accessed by dogs
- Habitat loss from trampling of vegetation and disturbance of nests and burrows.
- Reduced food supply for shorebirds and to other fauna from dogs foraging and disturbing the area
- Reduced number of shorebirds and fauna from dog threats and attacks
- Recent scientific paper concluded, '*It is very likely disturbance at Wanda Beach from dogs off leash has contributed to a decline in shorebird numbers. Dog walking in natural habitats adversely affects bird diversity and abundance.*'
- Dogs been identified as the major threat to migratory birds. They are instinctively alarmed by the sight of dogs which they view as predators. Sight of a dog causes them to take flight and move on expending valuable energy supplies required for long migratory journeys.
- This is why area is classified as a dog free area



- Dogs intrude into this environmentally sensitive area.
- Scent of dogs proven to disturb small animals and birds
- Area used by threatened species for foraging and roosting
- Breeding site which needs to be left undisturbed
- Dogs detrimental to breeding success of these animals.

- Foredunes have well worn paths, littered by dog faeces and dog bags along entire area
- Recent study undertaken shows a higher prevalence of dog faeces and dog bags in the dunes area than on the beach.
- Generally the lay of the land does not allow dog owners to see their dogs at all times when they are in the dune area.
- Cumulative effect is a reduction in the quality of the dune environment and threat to its biodiversity



Educational opportunities

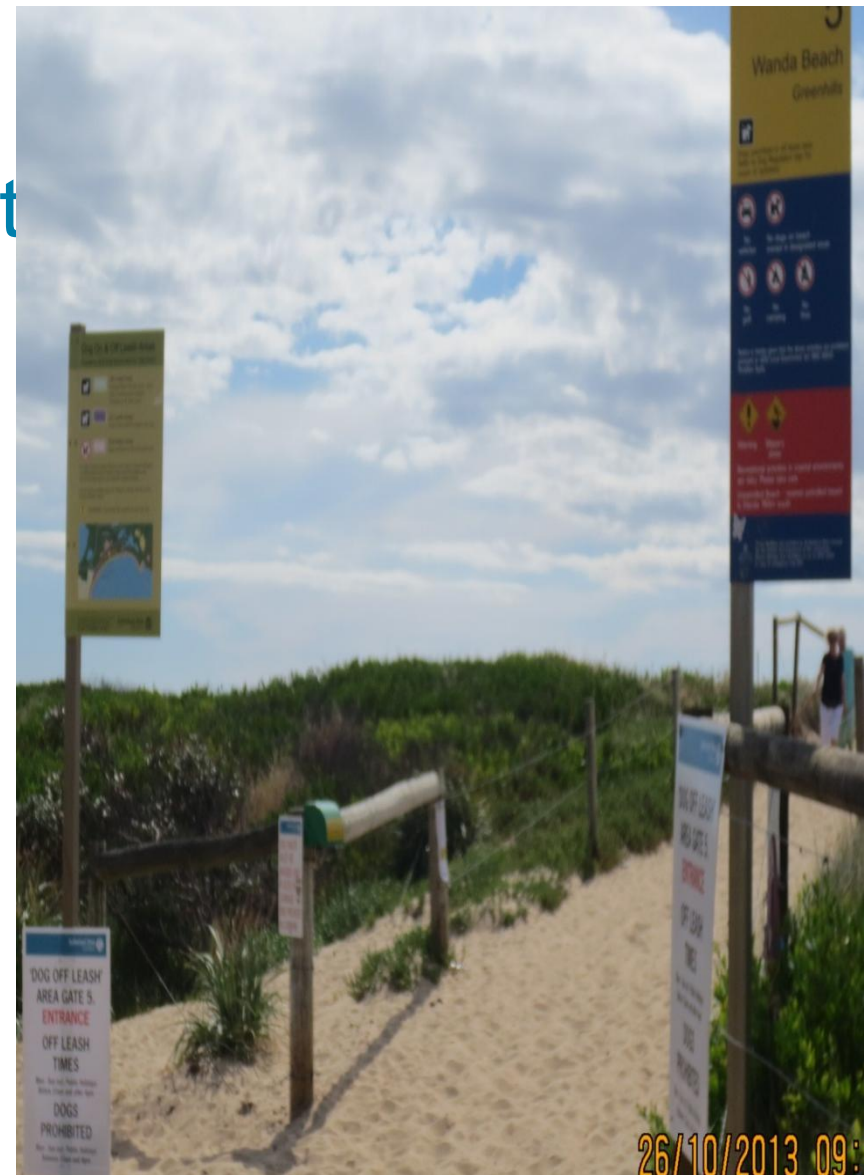
- Area is a well regarded educational source due to its biodiversity.
- With the introduction of dogs in this area this opportunity is somewhat diminished.

Greenhills Beach Estate

- New estate next to dune area with a number of covenants placed on pet owners in estate.
- Limit of two cats per property. Cats to be contained on premises at all times
- Limit of two dogs per property. Dogs to be restrained on property between sunset and sunrise, to be leashed on all tracks and not to be in indigenous vegetation area at any time.
- This is to primarily protect Green and Golden Bell Frog and aquatic birds.
- Conditions need to be consistent between pet owners in estate and with visitors to the area.

Reversal of trial – education/enforcement

- 26 August 2013 Council suspended trial decision to allow dogs off leash 24 hours a day at Wanda Beach and reverts back to 4pm to 10am daily
- Two serious dog attacks on beach in eight days where owner of offending dog left location without providing any details to victim/s.
- Between 1500 and 2000 dogs and their owners attend location each day over two weekends
- Media coverage encouraged large amount of dog owners from all over Sydney area to attend.
- In one day over 180 cautions were issued for dogs unleashed in Don Lucas Reserve.
- Mayor sites main reason to suspend trial due to some irresponsible dog owners and sheer number of dogs in area.
- Council not able to resource due to limited resources and number of breaches occurring at the same time in various locations



- Bins and dog bag dispenser at gate 5 has not stopped dog bags or faeces being left on beach and in dune area
- Dogs still walked in prohibited times and in prohibited areas, with signs ignored or misinterpreted by dog owners
- Dune fencing not stopping dogs or owners entering area
- Inspectors not able to be present at all times to regulate prohibited activity
- Further planning and funding needed to assist with mitigation measures
- Unpredictable actions of dogs not under effective control are hard to prevent regardless of bins, signage and patrols.
- Main mitigating factor is to limit impacts already caused by dog activity under current off leash restrictions.



Conclusion

- Should the right to exercise dogs in a recognised sensitive fauna habitat outweigh Council's obligation to protect the environment.

