



Figure 1 A general view of the Secret Creek Public Access Route

Report by Geoff Couper and John Collins.

Location: Karratha / Onslow / Secret Track - Uralla Station.

When: 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2013.

Purpose: To classify the Secret Creek Public Access Route (Appendix 1).

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### Introduction:

The development of the Wheatstone Project near Onslow has resulted in the loss of approximately 20 informal coastal recreation sites and associated access tracks<sup>1</sup> (from a total of 80) once publically accessible in the Shire of Ashburton. As a result, in accordance with the provisions of the *Land Administration Act 1977* (LAA; s63 to s71), the Department of State Development undertook a project that resulted in a Public Access Route (PAR) being declared on the 29 April 2013 (Appendix 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Discussion Paper: Development of Regional Coastal and Terrestrial Access Planning for the Pilbara, April 2012 by the Western Australian Department of Planning.



PARs are aimed at providing legal access across Crown Land to remote sites of recreational and/or tourist interest (for example fishing or scenic spots), where a Local Government body does not wish to take responsibility for a dedicated public road. Under section 65 of the LAA, a PAR is a form of statutory easement (in the nature of an easement under section 144 of the LAA) granted by the Minister in favour of members of the public generally. Further, PARs may be declared to provide access to areas of recreational or tourist interest, over Crown land whether unallocated or subject of reservation, management order, dedication, lease or any other tenure, or subject to an Act such as the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*. Other important principles relating to PARs can be found in Section 5.11 Public Access Routes of the Crown Land Administration & Registration Practice Manual July 2012.

It is important to note that there is no obligation on the Department of Lands, Local Government or the person holding an interest in the affected land to construct or maintain a PAR. As there is no maintenance requirement associated with a PAR, the Government Land Policy Manual (2000) recommends there should be consultation with relevant local tourism, conservation and other interest groups, and with Track Care Western Australia Inc. (on behalf of Four Wheel Drive Clubs). The Manual recommends the provisions of limited funding to facilitate some maintenance under a management agreement with groups such as Track Care Western Australia Inc. and the pastoral lessee.

The Pilbara Regional Council (PRC) working on behalf of the Shire of Ashburton and with the Department of State Development requested Track Care Western Australia Inc. (TCWA) to assist by providing expertise to; classify the PAR using the unfinished methodology developed by the Motorised Off-Road Working Group in partnership with Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) for use in the conservation estate, determine the suitability of the PAR for a community based management intended to provide limited maintenance along similar lines to a DPaW track or area adoption and to assist the PRC to identify a suitable community based management group able to adopt the PAR. TCWA agreed to assist the PRC with the first of these objectives and nominated Geoff Couper (Webmaster TCWA) to undertake the PAR assessment and that future dialog is required with regard to investigating the possibility of a community group undertaking an "adoption" of the PAR.

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### **Track Classification (12/12/2013)**

Track Classification was undertaken by Geoff Couper, Track Care WA Inc. with the assistance of Robbie Bullen and John Collins.

To prepare and perform the track classification process, the Track and Trails Unit of the Department of Parks and Wildlife loaned a Clinometer and the slide rule used. The even though PAR is not within their jurisdiction, the Track and Trails Unit have provided their assistance to ensure the track classification and signage developed for use in the conservation estate is available for use by local government or other Western Australian land managers.

Other equipment made available was two 4wd vehicles, a responsibly modified Nissan Patrol and hire stock standard Nissan Navara, a couple of GPS systems, hand held UHF radios tape measure and supporting documentation.

Vehicle recovery gear provided for this venture - Maxtrax and an exhaust jack.





**Figure 2. The draft track classification signage developed by the Track and Trails Unit, Department of Parks and Wildlife with assistance from the Motorised Off-road Working Group**

The survey undertaken in accordance with the draft Track and Trails Unit of the Department of Parks and Wildlife track classification guidelines.

The survey found that the Secret Track – Uralla Station during the dry is a level one Green circle EASY classification (Figure 2). Both the Patrol (Figure 3) and Navara individually tested the worst possible section of the 4wd track/s both ways, up and back down again.



**Figure 3. Obstacles such as this tidal creek were measured in accordance with the draft guidelines developed by the Track and Trails Unit, Department of Parks and Wildlife.**

Current 4wd track/s already in use traverse some wet low lying areas that are subject to flooding during spring tide. Inundation may also result from localised rainfall and/or rainfall in other parts of the catchment that can significantly raise water levels in the Ashburton River. These conditions could prove to be problematic with un-modified 4wd vehicles, especially those that have a low clearance and road tyres.

During the wet it was concluded that the track is rarely used by non-locals as the camping area along the Ashburton River is shut down by the Onslow Shire during the Cyclone seasons.

Due caution should be taken if traversing the Public Access Route during periods following rainfall or at times when rainfall is forecast for the Regions(Figure 4). At all times, drivers should determine

the track is safe to use by assessing the current conditions prior to making the decision to push on or turn around and go back. Best practice assessments are based on;

1. Type of 4wd vehicle (tyre size, clearance, travel, traction control devices);
2. What recovery gear is available;
3. Experience, knowledge and skill of the driver/s;



Figure 4. Rainfall events in the Ashburton River catchment will significantly alter this dry river bed.

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### Signage:

Consultation with the Department of Main Roads (DMR) indicates that the classification signage proposed below may need to be erected in accordance with the provisions of the *Road Traffic Code 2000* (RTC) s. 297. The DMR are currently investigating the matter and seeking a legal advice to clarify the signage requirements for a Public Access Route considering the provisions and requirements outlined in s. 297 of the RTC. It is anticipated that recommendations from the DMR will be applicable to the proposed Easy, More Difficult, Very Difficult and Extremely Difficult classification signs. The DMR has indicated that once the final sign layout has been agreed, the signage may be able to be placed in the special signs area of their webpage so that it is available to guide other local governments authorities in Western Australia.

Appendix 2 map shows the recommended location of signage required to guide users of the PAR and minimise the creation of multiple braided tracks, which unnecessarily damage the landscape. The map shows a number of Easy Access Marker Signs that should be included to direct traffic around areas of PAR that are subject to monthly spring tidal inundation.



### Single Classification Sign for Head of Public Access Route

A single sign is recommended for the head of the Public Access Route at the same location as those being installed by the Department of State Development. Nominally, Figure 5 is an example of the recommended sign to be placed at the trail head.

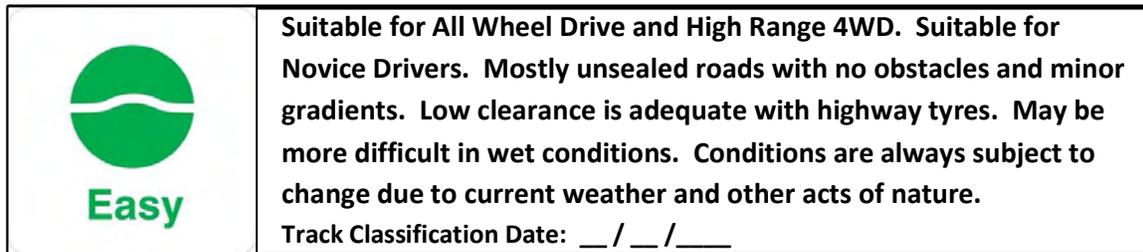


Figure 5: Recommended trail head sign for the start of the PAR.

### Access Route Marker Sign

Figure 6 is a nominal example of the direction signs required at locations where the existing track branches. The Figure 6 sign should be placed to guide users to travel along the recommended alignment. For example, at a number of locations the PAR guided users around salt marsh area but there are a number of short-cut tracks that cross land that is subject to tidal inundation. Not only does using these short-cuts damage sensitive bio-film algal mats that are essential food sources to fish fry, but the salt increases corrosion to the metal parts of vehicles.

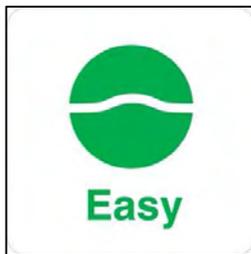


Figure 6: Nominal example of the PAR marker sign.

### Summary / Conclusion:

1. The track needs to be re-surveyed after each summer wet season to ensure the physical condition of the access route remains unchanged and that the trail classification continues to be appropriate.
2. Ongoing track classification and care could be undertaken by local people and/or an off road vehicle or other organisation interested in adopting this PAR with a reporting mechanism to the Shire of Ashburton. The Pilbara Regional Council may be able to facilitate an adoption agreement between interested parties.
3. The track classification date should be noted on the trail head classification sign and this should be updated annually or whenever the track is reclassified.
4. The Pilbara Regional Council should seek the approval of the Commissioner of Main Roads to erect and establish Easy Track classification signage developed by the Motorised Off-road Working Group in association with the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

More contextual photos can be seen on the Track Care WA Inc. Face Book page:

<https://www.facebook.com/TrackCare>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.285643278249676.1073741838.115442441936428&type=1>



**Appendix 1: Public Access Route Documents**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. If insufficient space in any section, Additional Sheet Form B1 should be used with appropriate headings. The boxed sections should only contain the words "See Annexure".
2. Additional Sheets shall be numbered consecutively and bound to this document by staples along the left margin prior to execution by parties.
3. No alteration should be made by erasure. The words rejected should be scored through and those substituted typed or written above them, the alteration being initialed by the person signing this document and their witnesses.

**NOTES**

1. DESCRIPTION OF LAND  
Lot and Diagram/Plan number or Location name and number to be stated.  
Extent - Whole, part or balance of the land comprised in the Certificate of Crown Land Title to be stated.  
The Certificate of Crown Land Title Volume and Folio number to be stated.  
The width of the route must be indicated on the diagram or plan.
2. ENCUMBRANCES  
To be identified by nature and number, if none show "nil".
3. ATTESTATION  
This document is to be executed by the Minister for Lands or a person to whom the power has been duly delegated under the Land Administration Act 1997.

EXAMINED

**M255313 XE**  
20 Apr 2013 15:58:31 Perth



**PUBLIC ACCESS ROUTE DECLARATION (XE)**

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PREPARED BY State Land Services

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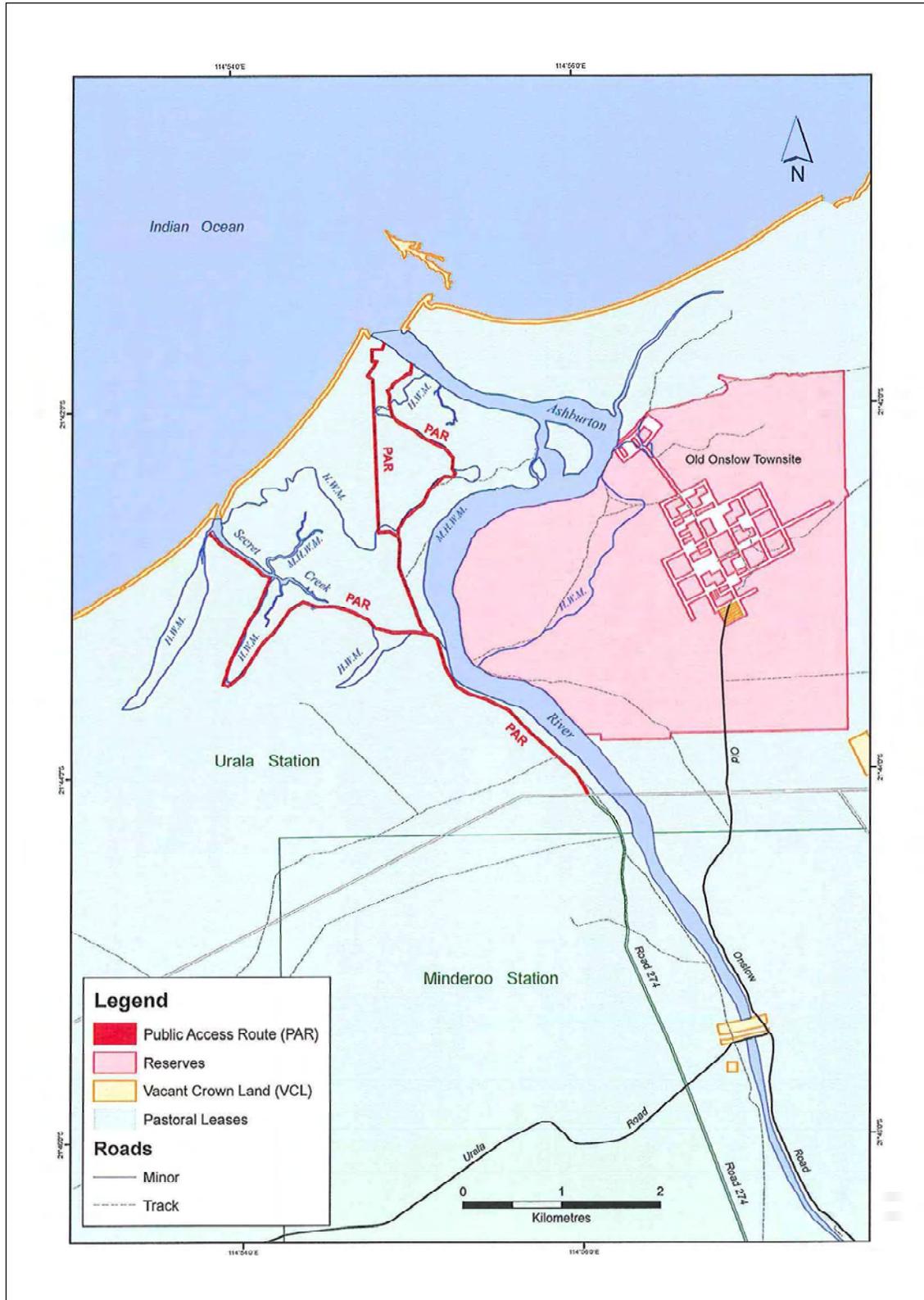
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Appendix 1: Public Access Route Documents





Appendix 2: Public Access Route Nominal Signage Locations

