



**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park**

**Plan of management**



# Acknowledgement of Country

Aboriginal people have a long connection with the area now known as Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park. The parks play a fundamental role in the lives of local Aboriginal people, helping to maintain a link to the past, enabling continued connections to Country and contributing to the cultural identity of local Aboriginal people.

The parks are important to a number of Aboriginal language groups, in particular, the Dunghutti and Birpai Aboriginal peoples. Despite the impacts of colonisation and dispossession, this connection has endured. Aboriginal people maintain a vibrant and active association with the parks. Cultural knowledge about this place is held and safeguarded by Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal communities continue to have an association with and connection to the land. Aboriginal communities associate the land and its natural resources with the use and enjoyment of foods and medicines, caring for Country, passing on cultural knowledge, kinship systems and strengthening social bonds. Aboriginal heritage and connection to the natural environment are inseparable from each other and need to be managed in a holistic manner across the landscape.

Connections to Country and the significance of these parks to Aboriginal peoples — past, present and future — are respected by NPWS and acknowledged in this plan. NPWS supports and acknowledges the role of Aboriginal people in identifying traditional connections and custodians for this place.

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# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

## Summary

This plan of management was adopted by the Minister for the Environment on 6 March 2024.

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park are reserved to achieve the objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. These objects are centred on conserving nature, conserving cultural heritage values and fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these special values.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act sets principles for management of national parks and regional parks. The Act requires that all operations undertaken in these parks are in accordance with this plan of management.

The wilderness area in Limeburners Creek National Park is also managed in accordance with the objects of the *Wilderness Act 1987*, which provide for the permanent protection of wilderness areas, their proper management and for education of the public in the appreciation, protection and management of wilderness. The Wilderness Act also sets principles for the management of wilderness areas, which complement the management principles for national parks.

This plan of management has been prepared after consideration of the:

- objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Wilderness Act
- management principles for national parks under section 30E of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, wilderness areas under section 9 of the Wilderness Act and regional parks under section 30H of the National Parks and Wildlife Act (see 'Management principles' below)
- matters listed under section 72AA of the National Parks and Wildlife Act
- submissions received during public exhibition of the draft plan of management
- advice received from the Karst Management Advisory Committee after consideration of the draft plan of management
- advice received from the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee on the draft plan of management, after their consideration of submissions received during public exhibition.

Sections 1 to 5 of the plan summarise the parks' key values, management principles and management considerations. These matters are outlined thoroughly in the *Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park planning considerations* report.

The scheme of operations (Section 6) describes the desired outcomes for the parks' values and actions the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposes to undertake to achieve these outcomes.

The park use regulations tables (Section 7) set out the recreational and commercial activities that are permitted in the parks and any requirements to undertake these activities, including if consent must be sought from NPWS.

## Acknowledgements

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park are in the traditional Country of the Dunghutti and Birpai Aboriginal peoples.

This plan of management was prepared by staff from NPWS.

## **Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management**

### **Contact us**

For more information about this plan of management or Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park or Limeburners Creek National Park contact the NPWS Hastings-Macleay Area Office at [npws.macleay@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:npws.macleay@environment.nsw.gov.au), PO Box 5657 Port Macquarie NSW 2444, or by telephone on 02 6561 6700.

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

## Our vision for the parks

The vision for Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park is to:

- maintain the natural environment of this beautiful stretch of undeveloped coastline
- protect the parks' ecological integrity and biodiversity, ensuring that important environmental values and services are maintained for the future
- celebrate and protect the parks' rich Aboriginal heritage and provide support for its use by Aboriginal communities
- maintain the wilderness values of the declared wilderness area in Limeburners Creek National Park
- maintain the parks' critical role in providing regional-scale connectivity which supports essential ecological processes, such as the movement of fauna
- provide sustainable recreational opportunities for visitors to the parks
- work in partnership with the local community to preserve and present the parks' important natural and cultural values.



**Photo 1** Point Plomer Camping Area and Barries Bay, Limeburners Creek National Park.  
John Spencer/DCCEEW

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park are located between Port Macquarie and Crescent Head on the NSW Mid North Coast. The parks extend 20 km along the coastline (see Figures 1 and 2).

## Why these parks are important

The community values the parks for their scenic and largely undeveloped coastline, nature-based visitor experiences, and significant conservation and cultural heritage values. The Aboriginal community has important spiritual and cultural connections to the parks.

- The parks form part of a significant biogeographic corridor of coastal reserves and are important remnants of threatened ecosystems that have mostly been cleared along the east coast of Australia.
- The parks contain 8 threatened ecological communities and large areas of wetlands that are of national importance. Fifty threatened animal species have been recorded in the parks (including 7 threatened bat species), and 23 migratory birds which are protected under international treaties have also been recorded.
- Over 85% of Limeburners Creek National Park is declared as a wilderness area. This is one of a small number of coastal wilderness areas in northern New South Wales. In addition to protecting significant ecological and cultural values, Limeburners Creek Wilderness Area provides important opportunities for self-reliant recreation and solitude.
- The parks are important to the Dunghutti and Birpai peoples, who continue to have spiritual and cultural connections to these lands. The parks contain significant evidence of Aboriginal occupation, including burial sites, shell middens, stone tools and axe-grinding grooves. The lands of the parks were a traditional meeting place and continue to be important for Aboriginal people to connect with Country.
- Early European use of the area dates from the 1820s and included lime production, gold mining, whaling, fishing and more recently sandmining, although much of the parks' historic heritage has been lost due to previous mining activities and wildfires.
- The parks contain outstanding scenery along a largely undeveloped coastline and have a long history as a visitor destination. This unique coastal setting caters for those seeking a coastal camping experience and recreational opportunities in an undeveloped setting.



# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

**Table 1 The parks and their regional setting**

Features	Description
Area	The parks cover approximately 10,780 ha. Goolawah National Park is 572.5 ha, Goolawah Regional Park is 65.7 ha and Limeburners Creek National Park is 10,144.6 ha. The parks also include the intertidal zones along Goolawah, Delicate and Big Hill beaches, and the northern half of North Shore Beach. Limeburners Creek National Park includes Saltwater Lake, part of the bed of Limeburners Creek and several islands within the creek.
Reservation date	<p><b>Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park</b> were transferred to National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) under the terms of the <i>Regional Forest Agreement for North East NSW</i> in 2010. Further additions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2011</b>: 12 ha of Crown land south of Crescent Head were added to Goolawah National Park.</li> <li>• <b>2015</b>: Delicate Nobby islands (approximately 26 ha), Racecourse Headland and the intertidal zones (approximately 8.7 ha) along Goolawah Beach were added to Goolawah National Park; and Delicate and Big Hill beaches were added to the regional park.</li> </ul> <p><b>Limeburners Creek National Park</b> was originally dedicated as Limeburners Creek Nature Reserve in 1971 with an area of 6,880 ha. Between 1972 and 1999 there were 10 further additions to the park totalling 2,093 ha.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2003</b>: the majority of the park was declared as <b>wilderness</b> (8,360 ha).</li> <li>• <b>2010</b>: reclassified as a national park consistent with the recreational use of the area.</li> <li>• <b>2018</b>: 714 ha to the south-east of the park, 197 ha to the north-west of the park and 9.6 ha of Crown roads were added to the park.</li> </ul>
Previous tenure	<p><b>Goolawah National Park and Goolawah Regional Park</b> were previously managed by NSW Department of Lands as part of the Goolawah State Park. Goolawah State Park, established in 2007, formed part of a cluster of remnant Crown land parcels, known as the Maria River Regional Crown Reserve, which was managed primarily for environmental protection and public recreation.</p> <p><b>Limeburners Creek National Park</b> was previously a mix of private tenure and Crown reserve, and was used as a recreational area prior to becoming a nature reserve.</p>
Biogeographic region	The parks all lie in the NSW North Coast Bioregion, which is characterised by a subtropical climate, with a marked spring dry period, hot summers and a summer–autumn wet period.

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

## Management principles

Development of the objectives, actions and regulations in this plan has been directed by the management principles outlined in the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires that a **national park** be managed to:

- conserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, protect geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and maintain natural landscapes
- conserve places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values
- having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values:
  - provide for the sustainable use (including adaptive re-use) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas
  - provide for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act 1991*) in the national park that is permitted under section 185A
- provide for appropriate research and monitoring.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires that a **regional park** be managed to:

- provide opportunities, in an outdoor setting, for recreation and enjoyment in natural or modified landscapes
- identify, interpret, manage and conserve the park to maintain and enhance significant landscape values
- conserve natural and cultural values
- promote public appreciation and understanding of the regional park's natural and cultural values
- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the regional park's natural and cultural values
- having regard to the conservation of the regional park's natural and cultural values:
  - provide for the sustainable use (including adaptive re-use) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas
  - provide for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act*) in the regional park that is permitted under section 185A.

The Wilderness Act requires that **wilderness areas** shall be managed to:

- restore (if applicable) and to protect the unmodified state of the area and its plant and animal communities
- preserve the capacity of the area to evolve in the absence of significant human interference
- permit opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation (whether of a commercial nature or not).

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

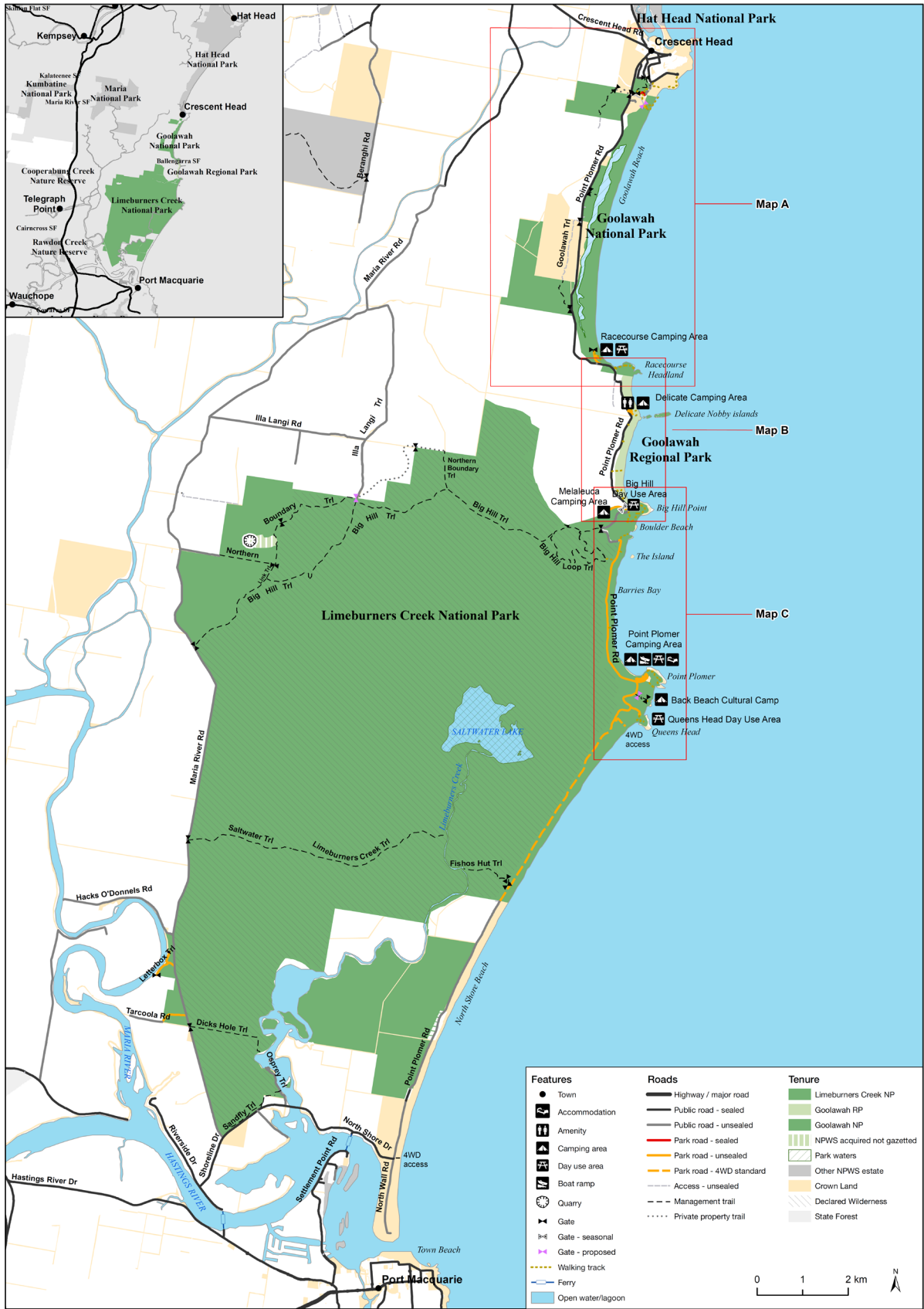


Figure 1 Map of Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management



Figure 2 Inset maps of Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

## 1. Protecting the natural environment

The parks contain a wide range of **landscape features**, including islands, vegetated dunes, beaches, headlands, tidal flats and creeks, Saltwater Lake, Goolawah Lagoon (an inter-barrier lagoon), sand plains, swale swamps and flat coastal swamps. Limeburners Creek National Park protects wetlands, estuaries and intertidal habitats, including a 9,100-ha wetland that is listed in *A directory of important wetlands in Australia*. The estuary environments are important, biologically diverse ecosystems and provide habitat for juvenile fish, waterbirds and invertebrates. Limeburners Creek National Park also protects a small limestone deposit outside of the main arc of the Macleay Karst Arc, which is the most significant deposit of limestone between Sydney and the Queensland border.

The extensive lengths of beaches and dune ecosystems in the parks are vital ecological resources, providing habitat for native invertebrate and vertebrate fauna, including threatened shorebirds and turtles. The dunes also provide the important function of protecting adjacent land and infrastructure from coastal erosion.

The parks are located in one of the most biodiverse regions in New South Wales and form part of a significant vegetation and **wildlife corridor** that stretches from wilderness on the coast, through to Gondwana World Heritage rainforests on the Great Escarpment in the west. The parks also contribute to a north–south interconnected mosaic of remnant coastal vegetation communities between South West Rocks and Port Macquarie. Eight of these communities have been identified as threatened ecological communities and support essential ecological processes, including migration and movement of fauna species such as the endangered swift parrot and critically endangered regent honeyeater.

**Limeburners Creek Wilderness Area** covers most of Limeburners Creek National Park and is one of the few coastal areas in northern New South Wales to qualify for declaration under the Wilderness Act. No new tracks will be constructed in wilderness or wetland areas, except realignments to protect park values.

Over 370 species of **native plants** have been identified in the Goolawah parks and around 500 plant species in Limeburners Creek National Park, including 9 threatened or rare plant species.

The diversity of plant communities provides habitat for over 320 species of **native fauna**, including 50 threatened species, with particularly diverse assemblages of bats, birds, frogs ground-dwelling mammals and arboreal mammals.

The parks support an estimated 53 species of **mammals** and regionally important koala habitat. The endangered spotted-tail quoll has been recorded in Limeburners Creek National Park, and the parks provide important habitat for bats.

The parks also support a large variety of **aquatic birds**, including migratory and resident shorebirds, seabirds and waterbirds. The intertidal zones and dunes are particularly important as habitat for resident and migratory shorebirds, 23 of which are listed under international conservation agreements.

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**Photo 2** A group of crested terns and a lone silver gull resting on Goolawah Beach. John Spencer/DCCEEW

There are a number of **threats** to the parks' natural values. Past sandmining activities have significantly impacted on landforms across the parks, resulting in the closure of the sea entrance of Goolawah Lagoon and extensive pest plant infestations along the coast. The parks' sandy soils are prone to erosion, particularly where native vegetation has been damaged through pedestrian activity or illegal off-track 4-wheel drive and trail bike access. Mitigating the impacts of these activities on the dunes and beach ecosystems, and improving water quality and aquatic ecosystem health in the lagoon are priorities for management.

Vegetation communities in the parks are susceptible to threats at the landscape level, including climate change and its associated influence on hydrological processes (including erosion and sedimentation) and fire regimes. An ecological burning program is needed to protect the parks' biodiversity and habitat values.

Vegetation communities are also being impacted by several site-specific factors, including impacts from pigs, dust from Point Plomer Road, illegal track creation, pest plant incursion and visitor impacts. Fine-scale vegetation mapping and survey work is required to better inform management decisions, particularly in relation to the location and condition of threatened species and ecological communities.

Native fauna and their habitats are being impacted by a range of factors, such as habitat fragmentation, pest plants, climate change, feral predators and other introduced animals. Many species of shorebirds and turtles are under threat. Their conservation is compromised by disturbance created by dogs, beachgoers and 4-wheel drive vehicles on beaches and dunes. Illegal collection of firewood and vegetation clearing around camping areas are also a threat to the parks' native fauna. Monitoring and mitigating impacts on flora and fauna from increasing visitor use is a priority for these parks.

Climate change impacts are predicted to affect the biodiversity of the parks, particularly those species that are already under threat or unable to adapt.

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The parks are likely to be subject to increasingly frequent and severe storm events, changes in wave activity and the effects of king tides. This can result in severe coastal erosion and loss of foreshore areas.

Reducing the pressures on the parks' biodiversity from threats such as habitat fragmentation, invasive species and bushfire are a management priority in these parks and may also help reduce the severity of the effects of climate change. It also will be important to identify values at risk from coastal erosion and implement appropriate management actions. Climate change impacts will also need to be considered in planning for infrastructure in the parks, particularly in the coastal zone.

Continuing **partnerships** with volunteer and community groups and partnering with other land management agencies will be vital to the ongoing success of feral animal and pest plant control programs within the parks. Targeted surveys are required to guide management of threatened fauna and other fauna of significance such as migratory species or those at a distributional limit within the parks. The habitat requirements of seasonal migrants, including bats, honeyeaters and migratory shorebirds, need to be better understood so that essential resources are protected.



Photo 3 Wetlands in Limeburners Creek National Park. David Finnegan/DCCEEW

## **2. Looking after our culture and heritage**

The parks play an important role in the lives of local **Aboriginal people**, helping to maintain a link to the past, enabling continued connections to Country and contributing to the cultural identity of local Aboriginal people. The parks are important to a number of Aboriginal language groups, in particular, the Dughutti and Birpai Aboriginal peoples.

Although impacted by settlement and sandmining, the parks are significant as they contain numerous Aboriginal sites concentrated in a relatively small area, including burial sites, shell middens, open camp sites, stone tool working sites, quarries and axe grinding grooves.

The parks continue to remain immensely important for use by the Aboriginal community, particularly for cultural practice, fishing and camping. Aboriginal people have a strong interest in being part of the management and protection of the parks' natural and cultural values. There are significant opportunities to share and celebrate the Aboriginal identity of this important cultural landscape and to build community understanding and awareness. A strategy for managing cultural camping opportunities at Delicate Camping Area and Back Beach Cultural Camp will be developed in consultation with the local Aboriginal community to facilitate continued access in these areas.

Threats to Aboriginal cultural values include impacts on Aboriginal sites and values from vehicles driving on dunes and beaches, physical weathering, climate change, wildfire, and damage by visitors and management activities. Some walking tracks and lookouts are located close to significant Aboriginal cultural sites and have the potential to damage cultural values. Cultural heritage assessments will help to reduce the risk of damage to sites, but further identification and recording is required to guide their future management.

Fishing is one of the earliest known **European uses** of the parks and remained an important industry into the 1950s. Commercial beach hauling continues today both within and adjacent to the parks. During the 1820s, Limeburners Creek was a regionally important site for lime production, with oyster shells collected from oyster beds and coastal deposits, including Aboriginal middens. The practice is considered to have given rise to the current European name for Limeburners Creek.

Sandmining for ilmenite, monazite, rutile and zircon began in the Macleay area in the 1950s and was conducted over most of the dunes in the Goolawah parks. The majority of Limeburners Creek National Park was not mined. Point Plomer Road was created in 1964 to support mining operations, allowing access between Crescent Head and Port Macquarie. Other historic uses of the parks include gold mining, whaling and farming.

The European history of the parks is not well documented, and opportunities exist to better interpret the historic values of the parks, preserve records and acknowledge past use of the parks.



### **3. Providing for visitor use and enjoyment**

The parks have been used for recreational activities for generations, with visitors attracted to the area's unique undeveloped coastal setting. The parks provide opportunities for walking, sightseeing, picnicking, camping by the beach, fishing, swimming, surfing, bird watching and whale watching.

The parks currently provide a range of low-key **camping and accommodation** options that complement the more developed opportunities off park (see Figures 1 and 2). Cultural camping opportunities are provided at Delicate Camping Area and Back Beach Cultural Camp for the Aboriginal community to connect with culture on Country. Self-reliant walk-in camping is allowed in Limeburners Creek Wilderness Area.

No additional camping areas are planned for the parks, in keeping with the low-key setting currently offered. Improvements to camping areas will be focused on the footprint of areas that are already impacted. Existing facilities may be replaced or upgraded to improve the visitor experience, accessibility and safety and to manage impacts on the parks' natural and cultural values. Upgrades to camping areas or visitor facilities will be subject to environmental and cultural assessments.

**Day use areas** across the parks provide visitors with opportunities for picnicking and as a base for beachside activities such as sightseeing, fishing, surfing and swimming. Several vantage points in the parks offer spectacular views along the coast. The more protected northern and southern ends of beaches provide opportunities for families, recreational fishers and surfers to access the beaches in sheltered locations.

A range of basic facilities, such as picnic tables, toilets, beach access tracks and car parking (see Figures 1 and 2) are provided across the parks. Opportunities for formalising a day use site off Maria River Road will be investigated to help mitigate impacts from informal use occurring in Limeburners Creek National Park. No other new formal day use areas are proposed, however, existing facilities may be replaced or upgraded to improve the visitor experience, improve safety and manage impacts from the increasing level of use.

Visitor numbers in many areas of the parks are nearing capacity, while some areas are operating at capacity or beyond. This places pressure on the natural environment, creates safety issues and changes the low-key visitor setting valued by visitors. The Kempsey Shire Council has completed sealing of Point Plomer Road and Port Macquarie-Hastings Council is working in collaboration with Kempsey Shire Council on sealing of Maria River Road. These works will improve access to the parks and lead to increasing numbers of visitors.

To protect the parks' values and ensure a sustainable level of visitor use, online bookings have been introduced and a range of other strategies will be implemented, including precinct planning, to manage capacities in camping areas. Other measures may need to be introduced in the future to ensure that the park is not overcrowded, and levels of recreational access are sustainable.

Goolawah Regional Park remains one of the few parks on the NSW North Coast where visitors can camp with their dogs or walk them off-leash on the beach. Dogs must be under the effective control of their owners.

To assist in the conservation of the parks' fauna, domestic animals including dogs will not be allowed in Goolawah National Park or Limeburners Creek National Park. However, people will be allowed to walk with their dog on a leash along a designated route through Goolawah National Park until 30 June 2025 (see Figure 2 – Map 1A). This is a transitional arrangement. It is intended to enable people to continue to walk through the park to the Kempsey Shire Council's dog walking area until a new pedestrian access route to the council's dog walking area can be constructed outside the park.

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The parks provide scenic **walking opportunities** along beaches, short walks over headlands and a nature walk along Big Hill Loop trail. Walking opportunities are available on management trails and walking tracks across the parks as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Walking tracks are generally unformed and there is minimal signage, which is in keeping with the low-key experience offered in these parks. Bushwalking along management trails within Limeburners Creek Wilderness Area is suitable for more experienced walkers.

A small number of new walking track connections may be constructed, or existing sections may be rerouted or realigned to improve walking experiences, expand opportunities and to protect park values, including Big Hill walking track. Options for improving visitor pedestrian access at the northern and southern ends of Goolawah Beach will be investigated, including the feasibility of formalising a pedestrian beach access track from Racecourse car park to the beach. Options for improving pedestrian access from Big Hill Day Use Area to the beach will also be investigated. Signage will be installed at the beginning of the trail to Back Beach Cultural Camp to reduce vehicle use of the trail, and its impact will be monitored. A gate may be installed, if required to assist in the management of this trail.

Unauthorised walking tracks will not be maintained. Where walking tracks are damaging the natural or cultural values of the parks or are a public safety risk they may be hardened or closed. There are 2 beach access tracks between Point Plomer Road and Big Hill Beach that pass through private property before traversing the regional park. If neighbours agree to an easement to secure access, then these tracks will be formalised and maintained.

The parks have a long history of **recreational fishing** and bait collection. As the parks include the coastline, intertidal areas and Saltwater Lake and Limeburners Creek estuary, the plan of management applies to these lands but does not prohibit any action authorised under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*.



Photo 4 Recreational fishing is a popular activity in the parks. John Spencer/DCCEEW

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**Four-wheel drive** access is permitted in areas of the parks where it is compatible with conservation and visitor management objectives. Recreational 4-wheel driving is permitted on North Shore Beach in Limeburners Creek National Park, south of the access track at Queens Head and within the intertidal zone only. Vehicles must enter and exit the beach at designated vehicle access points. All vehicles require a permit and park use fees apply.

Goolawah Beach will be closed to recreational 4-wheel drive vehicles to ensure the safety of beachgoers and to protect threatened shorebirds and turtles. There are a number of alternative beaches in the area that offer 4-wheel drive opportunities. Commercial fishers' access to beaches is not affected by these changes.

Due to the steep terrain, dense vegetation, sandy soils and low-lying, wet nature of the parks, **cycling** opportunities are generally limited to park roads and beaches (Figures 1 and 2). To protect the parks' natural values, cycling is not permitted on walking tracks or management trails in the parks, including within Limeburners Creek Wilderness Area.

**Horse riding** is not permitted in these parks as it is incompatible with other recreational uses, particularly along the coastal strip, and with the protection of the parks' wilderness and wetland values, sensitive dune systems, threatened species and ecological communities. Horse riding is not permitted in Goolawah Regional Park due to safety issues with domestic dogs being allowed off-leash on Big Hill and Delicate beaches. Recreational horseriding opportunities are available in nearby parks, state forests and council-managed beaches.

There are opportunities to improve the **interpretation** of the parks' natural and cultural values and make this information more accessible to park visitors and schools. NPWS will work with relevant agencies to provide consistency in information (signs, online information and vehicle permits) across tenures, particularly in relation to management of the intertidal zone and impacts on threatened fauna.



Photo 5 Point Plomer Camping Area. John Spencer/DCCEEW

## Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

### 4. Park infrastructure and services

NPWS will continue to construct and maintain infrastructure necessary to protect park values, provide opportunities for visitors, and facilitate management operations.

Plomer Beach House is currently used for overnight **visitor accommodation**. The Plomer manager's cottage and workshop support management of the Point Plomer Camping Area and are currently used by the campground management contractor for this purpose. During camping area precinct plan development, NPWS will investigate road layout modifications to improve the precinct layout and reduce pedestrian safety issues and dust impacts on camping areas.

An operating **gravel quarry**, Christmas Bells Quarry, is located in the north-west area of Limeburners Creek National Park. The quarry, its immediate surrounds and Quarry Trail (the current access trail) are retained as Crown land vested in the Minister under Part 11 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

There are 2 **water** bores in the parks which provide water for camping areas. New bores may need to be constructed in the future if groundwater levels change. A water treatment system is in place to manage the quality of water supplied to campers at Point Plomer and a new water treatment system is proposed for Delicate Camping Area, subject to funding. Other than at Point Plomer Camping Area, water is currently not suitable for drinking and visitors must bring their own supplies.

**Public roads** provide access to the parks, and the parks contain a network of management trails (see Figures 1 and 2) that are only accessible to vehicles for NPWS authorised purposes, including emergency response and commercial fishing. The public's use of management trails is limited to walking due to the low-lying, inundated soils and sensitive ecosystems. Illegal activities, including vandalism of gates and boundary fences and unauthorised access, negatively impact park values and neighbouring assets and will be addressed through ongoing patrols and compliance management.

The **management trails** in the parks are an important fire management asset. Under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* the relevant bush fire management committee prepares a fire access and fire trail plan that identifies access for fire suppression and management purposes, including fire trail standards. NPWS will minimise impacts on the parks' environmental and cultural heritage values by implementing trail construction and maintenance works to meet these standards. Some sections of management trails that are critical in managing fire are accessed through private property, and NPWS will seek to secure access with relevant landowners. Proposals for new management trails will be subject to environmental and cultural heritage assessment consistent with the National Parks and Wildlife Act and other relevant legislation.

Currently, the Big Hill **boat ramp** (on Crown land) is used by visitors to access the beach, however, it is in a state of disrepair. NPWS will investigate its repair in consultation with the relevant regulatory authorities.

The sandy and erodible soils in the parks, coupled with high rainfall and regular storm activity, mean that roads, management trails and beach access points require periodic maintenance at relatively high cost. Beach access points will be regularly reviewed to consider the impacts of coastal erosion on infrastructure and the parks' natural and cultural values.

Locations, assets and values at risk from coastal erosion and sea level rise will be identified and assessed, and appropriate management actions will be determined and implemented. Park assets are recorded, managed and maintained through the NPWS asset management system and the Historic Heritage Information Management System.

## **Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management**

Assets no longer necessary for park management or visitor use may be decommissioned or removed after relevant environmental and cultural assessments and approvals.



**Photo 6 Beach fishing, Goolawah Regional Park. John Spencer/DCCEEW**

## **5. Non-park infrastructure and services**

The parks contain infrastructure and other assets owned and operated by other organisations or individuals that are not related to use or management of the parks. This includes public utility infrastructure (e.g., an artificial drainage channel, underground powerlines) and apiary sites. Access is required for the use, operation, maintenance and/or repair of this infrastructure. Infrastructure may also be provided in the parks by other authorities or for other purposes authorised under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Several **public roads** that traverse the parks are on road reserves and are therefore not subject to the provision of the National Parks and Wildlife Act or this plan of management. Point Plomer Road (north of Big Hill) has recently been sealed by Kempsey Shire Council and sealing of Maria River Road by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council in collaboration with Kempsey Shire Council is also planned. NPWS may seek to acquire the section of road over Big Hill (which is currently off park) for management purposes.

The NPWS may facilitate **access** through the parks accordance with Part 12 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Access agreements with park inholding owners and other authorities may be formalised in line with the reserve access strategy. In order to simplify management arrangements, a number of Crown road reserves either adjacent to or within the parks may be considered for addition to the parks.

Easements, leases and licences ensure that the operation and maintenance of non-NPWS infrastructure and **use of the parks by third parties** minimises impacts on the environment and on NPWS operations. NPWS will seek to formalise agreements for all non-NPWS infrastructure and uses in the parks. The maintenance of some sections of road may be carried out by neighbours or other agencies subject to NPWS consent or a licence and conditions. NPWS maintains a public register of leases, easements and rights of way.

Existing **apiary sites** in Goolawah National Park are recognised as existing interests under the National Parks and Wildlife Act as they pre-date the park's gazettal. New or additional apiary sites will not be permitted in the parks unless the activities satisfy the provisions of the NPWS *Beekeeping policy*.

**Commercial and recreational fishing** must be in accordance with licence conditions specified by the relevant regulatory authority. Reservation of the parks to the mean low water mark does not change this authority and fishing operations in the park will continue to be managed by the relevant regulatory authority. This includes land-based activities (such as hauling of nets by hand), whether or not the fisher is situated below or above the mean high water mark.

Commercial bait collecting for pipis and worms is undertaken seasonally on the parks' beaches. Existing commercial bait collectors will be permitted to continue this activity, consistent with the conditions of the relevant regulatory authority. A commercial fishing vehicle access permit is required to access the beaches within the parks. Vehicle access for commercial fishing is permitted on the following beaches: Barries Bay, Big Hill, Delicate, Goolawah Beach, and the northern corner of North Shore Beach.

Any proposal for new non-NPWS infrastructure will only be authorised if it meets the relevant statutory criteria for a lease, licence or easement/right of way under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and subject to environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. NPWS will seek removal of all redundant infrastructure and rehabilitation of disturbed sites and access roads that are no longer required, except where other relevant considerations, such as environmental impact, justify leaving them in situ.

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## 6. Scheme of operations

The scheme of operations in Table 2 has been developed taking into consideration matters described in section 72AA of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It details the desired outcomes for the parks' values, and the actions that NPWS proposes to undertake to achieve these outcomes, subject to resourcing. Actions in the scheme of operations may contribute to more than one desired outcome (such as threat mitigation), but to avoid repetition actions are only listed once against the most significant outcome.

A management priority has been assigned to each action to guide the allocation of resources.

- **Very high** – Loss or significant decline in the condition of the park value is likely if action is not taken, or significant improvement in the condition of the value is likely if action is taken.
- **High** – Decline in the condition of the park value is likely if action is not taken, or improvement in the condition of the value is likely if action is taken.
- **Medium** – Some decline in the condition of the park value is possible if action is not taken, or some improvement in the condition of the value is possible if action is taken.
- **Low** – While decline in the condition of the park value is not likely in the short term, the action would help build the long-term resilience of the park value.

NPWS's performance in meeting the **outcomes** in the scheme of operations will be measured through periodic assessments. Performance in delivering the **objectives** in the scheme of operations will be measured through regular audits of plans of management.

The scheme of operations sets strategic goals and priorities. Subsidiary plans consistent with this plan of management may also be developed to guide actions at an operational level. Subsidiary plans enable adaptive responses to new information or changed circumstances, such as for feral animals, pest plants, fire and recreational activities, as required by NPWS policy. Assessments of performance and reviews will be used to inform adaptive management in these subsidiary plans as well as any required adjustments and improvements to future plans of management for the parks.

Conservation action plans will be prepared and implemented to manage and monitor assets of intergenerational significance declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The implementation of actions set out below may be subject to statutory responsibilities under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and other relevant state and Commonwealth legislation, including environmental impact assessments and approvals. Further community consultation on the proposed actions may be undertaken as part of these processes.

Information on popular recreational or commercial activities that are permitted in the parks is provided in the park use regulations tables in Section 7. More detailed information on other activities is available on the NPWS website.

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**Table 2 Scheme of operations**

Outcome	Actions	Priority
<b>Protecting the natural environment</b>		
1. Maintain or improve wildlife corridors between the parks and surrounding region	a. Work with neighbouring land managers to secure or establish corridor areas to allow species to migrate, with a priority given to improving connectivity with Maria National Park.	High
	b. Maintain and protect intact vegetation and pursue strategic acquisition of lands with a focus on improving east–west connectivity with Maria National Park and widening the north–south corridor.	High
	c. Consider acquisition of any remaining headland areas in Limeburners Creek National Park to improve management of flora and fauna, visitor education, safety and compliance.	High
	d. Revegetate areas impacted by past sandmining, pest plant invasion and other disturbances using plant species native to the parks.	High
2. Protect the geological values and landform features of the parks	a. Maintain and upgrade existing tracks to minimise impacts on park values. Tracks may be realigned, hardened or closed where impacts continue to occur.	High
	b. Manage and protect karst areas within the parks as guided by the Macleay Karst Area management plan.	Medium
3. Maintain or improve biodiversity values of the parks	a. Manage feral animal and pest plant species in partnership with volunteer groups, neighbours and other agencies.	Very high
	b. Implement an ecological burning program to protect biodiversity and habitat values, with a focus on managing threatened ecosystems and habitat for significant fauna.	Very high
	c. Monitor the ability of flora to recover between fires and review and adjust burning regimes.	High
	d. Implement relevant actions in the Biodiversity Conservation Program and any conservation action plans, including actions at key management sites for threatened species, populations and ecological communities in the parks.	Very high
	e. Undertake surveys to map the presence and distribution of threatened ecological communities, habitat for significant fauna and significant plant species.	High



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Outcome	Actions	Priority
	f. Undertake or encourage research in these parks, particularly for threatened fauna, invertebrates and fauna of significance with a focus on shorebirds, little penguins, koalas, wild dogs/dingoes, micro-bats, native frogs, native violet and the Australian fritillary.	High
	g. Monitor and manage the impact of visitor use on the parks' natural values with a focus on the wilderness area, key visitor precincts, dunes, beaches and significant fauna. This may include temporary or permanent closure of walking tracks, beach access points, camp sites and leash-free zones.	High
	h. Implement strategies to conserve the natural ecological role of the dingo in the parks, where they do not have negative impacts on agriculture or the community.	Medium
	i. Continue to support on-park, community-driven and partnership programs for conservation of threatened flora and fauna species and habitats, in particular for threatened ecological communities, corridor enhancement, research, and survey and monitoring work.	Medium
	j. Review existing strategies and develop new fire management strategies for the parks.	High
4. Maintain or improve wetland and riparian habitats and associated ecosystem services	a. Control aquatic pest plants and feral animals that negatively impact water quality and wetland values.	Very high
	b. Investigate options for improving the natural condition and ecological function of Goolawah Lagoon.	Very high
	c. No new tracks will be constructed in wilderness or wetland areas, except realignments to protect park values.	Very high
5. Improve the condition of foredunes and intertidal areas as important habitat for threatened species	a. Monitor recreational use of the intertidal zone and dunes, and implement closures or controls as required to protect park values.	Very high
	b. Close off Goolawah Beach to vehicles, except for management and commercial fishers' access. Maintain the carpark at the end of Back Crescent Beach Access for pedestrian access to the beach only.	Very high
	c. Develop and implement an education program with relevant agencies to promote park values and responsible use of beach and dune areas.	High
<b>Protecting cultural heritage values</b>		
6. The identity of the parks as an Aboriginal cultural landscape is enhanced	a. Work with Aboriginal communities to communicate Aboriginal culture and heritage to park visitors, including the use of traditional language in signage and interpretation.	Very high

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Outcome	Actions	Priority
	b. Support Aboriginal communities in developing cultural tourism and education initiatives in the parks.	Very high
7. There are increased opportunities for Aboriginal people to build connections to Country and engage in caring for Country	a. Maintain contact and build relationships with Aboriginal land councils, custodial families and other relevant Aboriginal community organisations to discuss park management priorities and directions, and opportunities for caring for Country.	Very high
	b. Support the local Aboriginal community to access Country to maintain or develop cultural connections and practices.	Very high
	c. In partnership with the local Aboriginal community, develop and implement a strategy for managing cultural camping opportunities.	Very high
	d. Support partnerships with the local Aboriginal community for cultural fire management in the parks.	Very high
8. The condition of Aboriginal heritage sites, places and cultural values is maintained	a. Undertake a cultural heritage assessment, in partnership with the local Aboriginal community, to better understand the cultural values of these parks and inform management.	Very high
	b. Work with the Aboriginal community to monitor impacts on cultural values and implement strategies to protect values, including relocating track sections, fencing and signage. Priority should be given to cultural sites at risk from visitor impacts or coastal erosion.	Very high
<b>Providing for visitor use and enjoyment</b>		
9. The parks provide a range of appropriate, ecologically sustainable visitor opportunities	a. Provide a range of visitor opportunities as shown in Figures 1 and 2 and consistent with the park use regulations in Tables 3 and 4.	High
	b. Enable an appropriate range of events, functions and commercial activities (see Table 4) subject to bookings, approvals and conditions.	High
	c. Provide a network of walking tracks including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ formalising pedestrian access from Racecourse carpark to support safe access to Goolawah Beach</li> <li>○ a pedestrian beach access track at the southern end of Big Hill Beach</li> <li>○ improving beach access tracks and/or viewing platforms for visitors with restricted mobility</li> <li>○ close and rehabilitate unauthorised tracks.</li> </ul>	High
	d. Develop and implement strategies to manage visitor numbers at day use areas and other high-use areas. This may include restrictions on access to areas that are particularly vulnerable to disturbance or degraded through use.	High

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Outcome	Actions	Priority
	e. Provide information to that ensure visitors to Goolawah Regional Park understand the restrictions that apply while visiting with their dog.	High
	f. Partner with Kempsey Shire Council to create walking track access, outside these parks, to improve access to the northern section of Goolawah Beach.	High
	g. Communicate changes in dog walking access in Goolawah National Park.	Very high
	h. Investigate an additional pedestrian beach access point to Goolawah Beach, between the existing north and south access points.	High
10. Improved visitor facilities are provided to support accessible and sustainable visitor use of the parks	a. Replace or upgrade basic visitor facilities as required and subject to relevant environmental impact assessments. Ensure major works are consistent with precinct plans.	High
	b. Provide and maintain a range of accommodation and camping areas as shown in Figures 1 and 2.	High
	c. Develop and implement precinct plans for the camping areas to improve drainage and site layout.	Very high
	d. Investigate, and implement if appropriate, options for formalising a day use area along Maria River Road.	High
	e. Investigate, and implement if appropriate, upgrades to Queens Head Day Use Area to improve beach access and parking layout.	Medium
	f. Investigate, and if appropriate, upgrades to Point Plomer Day Use and Camping Area to improve the boat and day use carparking layout.	High
11. Visitor experience is enhanced and there is improved community understanding and appreciation of the parks' values	a. Interpret and promote the parks' values through a range of measures, including signage, tours and programs, and using innovative and emerging technology.	High
	b. Work with the community and neighbouring landholders to improve their understanding of park values, threats to values and management activities.	Very high
	c. Work in partnership with agencies to promote 4-wheel drive opportunities outside of the park boundaries.	High
<b>Park infrastructure and operations</b>		
12. Park infrastructure and operations adequately support management of the parks and have	a. Prepare and implement a reserve access strategy to secure park access for public use and management purposes.	High

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Outcome	Actions	Priority
minimal environmental impacts	b. Maintain and upgrade management trails identified in park fire management strategies consistent with Rural Fire Service fire trail standards and relevant legislation.	High
	c. Continue to work cooperatively with local councils, permit holders and other authorities regarding arrangements for the use, ongoing management and maintenance of beaches and beach access points within and adjacent to Limeburners Creek National Park.	Very high
	d. Undertake an assessment to identify and determine appropriate management actions to minimise risks to infrastructure and services from sea level rise or coastal erosion.	Medium
	e. Support research/monitoring of groundwater levels and liaise with relevant authorities for groundwater abstraction.	Medium
	<b>Non-park infrastructure and services</b>	
13. Non-NPWS uses have minimal impact on natural and cultural values and visitor experience, and are appropriately authorised where required	a. Ensure all non-NPWS uses and occupancies of NPWS land are authorised in accordance with Part 12 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.	Medium
	b. Ensure that public roads traversing the parks follow road reserves and are not within the park boundary.	High

## 7. Park use regulations

### 7.1 Recreational activities

There are many recreational activities that can be undertaken in the parks without consent from park managers. Other activities can occur if consent is provided by NPWS. All activities that occur in the parks are subject to relevant policies and legislation.





Conditions may be applied to ensure an activity is undertaken safely and to minimise environmental risks and risks to other users. Consent may be refused after consideration of the proposed activity and its likely environmental, visitor safety and park management impacts.

Activities may be subject to operating conditions or limits from time-to-time. For example, access to parts of the parks may be closed during periods of bushfire risk, bad weather or maintenance or improvement works.







Activities not shown in Table 3 may also be regulated by signage within the park or by consent.

Information regarding activities that require consent and obtaining consent is available on the NSW national parks visitor website or by contacting the relevant NPWS office (contact details at the front of this plan).









**Table 3 Park use regulations – recreational activities**

	Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	Barbecues – portable (gas, liquid, solid fuel)	Yes	Wood fires are only permitted in raised braziers or NPWS-designated fireplaces. Other restrictions or controls may be prescribed. No fire during total or park fire bans.
	Camping	Yes	At the designated camping areas (shown on Figures 1 and 2): Racecourse, Delicate, Melaleuca and Point Plomer camping areas. Cultural camping at Back Beach and Delicate camping areas is permitted with consent of NPWS. Self-reliant, walk-in camping is permitted in the Limeburners Wilderness Area, more than 1 km from roads and existing camping areas. Prior consent must be obtained from NPWS.
	Cycling	Yes	On park roads, 4-wheel drive beach access tracks and beaches. No cycling on walking tracks or management trails or off-trail. Not permitted in the wilderness area.
	Climbing and abseiling	No	Not permitted due to the lack of suitable safe locations and risks to conservation values.

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	Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	Access with dogs	Yes	<p>Dogs are allowed in Goolawah Regional Park on Delicate Beach, Big Hill Beach and in the Delicate Camping Area (Figure 2). Dogs must be leashed in the Delicate Beach Camping Area and beach access points.</p> <p>Dogs are not allowed in Limeburners Creek National Park. Dogs are not allowed in Goolawah National Park, however, people may walk with their dog on a leash through the transitional dog walking route in Goolawah National Park until 30 June 2025 (see Figure 2 – Map 1A). Dogs will not be allowed anywhere in Goolawah National Park after 30 June 2025.</p>
 	Four-wheel driving and motorcycling	Yes	<p>Registered motorcycles and vehicles only. Permitted only on park/public roads, the intertidal zone of North Shore Beach (south of the Queens Head vehicle access) and Plomer Road south of Queens Head (Figure 2). A park use pass is required and access must be in accordance with NPWS <i>Vehicle access policy</i>.</p> <p>Not permitted on sand dunes, management trails, walking tracks or other off-road areas. Vehicle access may be restricted or removed on a temporary or permanent basis if it is impacting park values or if the beach is unsafe due to coastal processes.</p> <p>Commercial fishers are permitted access to beaches in accordance with the <i>Commercial fishing access policy</i>.</p>
	Fossicking	No	<p>Not permitted due to potential environmental impacts and consistent with NPWS <i>Fossicking policy</i> for national parks and regional parks.</p>
 	Group gatherings – non-commercial (e.g., family or social gatherings, school groups)	Yes	<p>Consent is required for groups of more than 40 people as per the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation.</p> <p>Consent is required for larger groups to ensure limited available space can be managed.</p> <p>Large groups (40 plus) generally not permitted in karst areas, Aboriginal sites or within declared wilderness. Consent in these areas may be granted by the NPWS only in special circumstances (e.g., specific Aboriginal cultural heritage ceremonies).</p>

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	Type of activity	Allowed	Note/Exceptions
	Hang-gliding	No	Not permitted due to a lack of suitable safe locations and potential risks to other park users.
	Horse riding	No	Not permitted as it is incompatible with other recreational uses and with the protection of the parks' natural values.
 	Model aeroplanes and drones	No	Not permitted due to the high level of visitation in the coastal strip and the potential impacts on birds and other fauna. Drones may be used for park management purposes and may be authorised as part of a commercial filming consent, in accordance with the NPWS <i>Drones in parks policy</i> .
	Walking	Yes	Walkers are encouraged to walk on tracks, beaches and management trails.
 	Water-based recreation (e.g., fishing, swimming, surfing, diving and snorkelling)	Yes	Vehicle access to the Point Plomer boat ramp is permitted for boat launching and retrieval only; vehicles must not remain on the beach.  Other legislative requirements outside of the National Parks and Wildlife Act may apply to these activities, such as fish catch limits and use of certain types of recreational or safety equipment.
	Wood fires	Yes	Only in NPWS-designated fireplaces provided or in raised braziers in camping areas. Ground fires are not permitted.  Firewood collection is not allowed.  Wood fires are prohibited elsewhere in the parks.  Wood fires are prohibited during total fire bans and park fire bans.

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## **7.2 Commercial and non-commercial activities requiring approval**

Commercial and non-commercial activities in national parks requiring prior approval are varied, ranging from guided tours and commercial events to filming and photography and mobile food vendors.

The following table lists some common events and commercial activities that may be permitted in the parks with approval from NPWS under a consent, licence or lease. It is not a definitive or exhaustive list of permitted commercial or other activities. Information on relevant policies, required approvals and fees is available on the department website.

Commercial activities, such as tours, are licensed under the Parks Eco Pass program which is the NPWS program for licensing operators who conduct commercial tours, recreational and educational activities in national parks and reserves. Information is available on the department website.

Commercial filming and photography in parks and reserves requires approval. Information is available on the department website.

Approval to use supporting equipment, such as marquees, amplified sound or drones, will be determined on a case-by-case basis, subject to an assessment of potential impacts on park values and other park users. Use of any supporting equipment will be subject to consent conditions. NPWS aims to ensure the natural values of these parks are not adversely affected when considering commercial or non-commercial activity consents or licences.

NPWS is committed to ensuring that opportunities to experience Aboriginal culture in the parks are developed and delivered in a culturally sensitive way. These experiences must respect the authenticity and integrity of local Aboriginal people and their culture, adhere to cultural protocols, and recognise that Aboriginal culture is the intellectual property of Aboriginal people. The process of licensing of commercial tour operators, and recreational and educational operators includes conditions on the delivery of Aboriginal cultural heritage interpretation and requirements for Aboriginal cultural awareness training.

**Table 4 Park use regulations – events, function and commercial activities**

<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Group size</b>	<b>Type of approval required</b>
Commercial and charity events	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence. Not permitted in wilderness areas.
Sporting activity that is part of an organised competition or tournament	All groups irrespective of size	Consent.
Commercial tours, recreational and educational activities, mobile food vendors, transport services and any other commercial services	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence.
Private, non-commercial, organised (e.g., club-based, student) events	All groups of 40 or more	Consent. Not permitted in wilderness areas.
All other events and gatherings involving groups of more than 40 people	All groups of 40 or more	Consent. Not permitted in wilderness areas.



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Filming and photography	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence.
Research (scientific, educational, or related to conservation or park management)	All groups irrespective of size	Consent or licence.
Commercial fishing	All commercial fishers	NPWS beach access permit. Relevant fisheries authority commercial fishery licence.

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## More information

- [Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park planning considerations](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service](#)
- [Park policies](#)
- [Privacy and security](#)

# Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park plan of management

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