



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Kosciuszko National Park

Summary of Representations

Draft Amendment to the Plan of Management

Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct



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Cover photo: Island Bend campground, Kosciuszko National Park. John Spencer/DPE

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ISBN 978-1-922840-87-5
EHG 2022/0340
July 2022

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Executive summary

Kosciuszko National Park is reserved to achieve the objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). These objects are centred on conserving nature, conserving cultural heritage values, and fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these special values.

All operations undertaken in the park must be in accordance with the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management. An amendment to the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management was proposed by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to facilitate appropriate tourism development in Kosciuszko National Park as contemplated in the Draft Snowy Special Activation Precinct Master Plan.

The Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management Draft Amendment – Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct was prepared to outline proposed amendments to the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management to members of the public. The draft amendment was placed on public exhibition from 2 July 2021 to 23 August 2021.

A total of 903 individual submissions and 14,551 form letters were received. Submissions were received from individuals and organisations, including from a range of stakeholder groups. All submissions received are valued, have been carefully considered and have helped NPWS to better understand the community's views about the proposals outlined in the draft amendment.

The final amendment to the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management was adopted by the Minister for Environment and Heritage on 30 June 2022 after consideration of all submissions received on the draft amendment and advice received from the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Southern Ranges Regional Advisory Committee.

Theme 1: Development control mechanisms

What did the draft amendment propose?

Kosciuszko National Park and its accommodation precincts offer unique nature based experiences which are the foundation of an economically important tourism industry for New South Wales. These experiences also enable people to enjoy the park and develop an appreciation of the park as one of Australia’s most iconic and important protected areas for the conservation of biodiversity.

The draft amendment proposed changes to the plan of management that were intended to ensure that appropriate tourism development in the park is facilitated consistent with the National Parks and Wildlife Act (NPW Act) and the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct (SAP) Master Plan (SAP Master Plan) and its associated planning mechanisms. These planning mechanisms are intended to supplement Chapter 4 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts—Regional) 2021 (the Precincts-Regional State Environmental Planning Policy [SEPP]) (formerly the Alpine State Environmental Planning Policy [Alpine SEPP]) and complement the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management (PoM).

The draft amendment proposed that:

- Any future non-NPWS development at Island Bend, Thredbo Ranger Station and Creel Bay would be assessed under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), (as currently occurs in the Alpine Resorts) and implemented in accordance with the plan of management and the Precincts-Regional SEPP.
- Maps in the plan of management would be updated to show the type and location of future developments contemplated by the draft SAP Master Plan.
- Schedule 8 be removed from the plan of management and replaced with a list of bed limits for the alpine resort management units and surrounding accommodation nodes within the plan of management. Bed limits for individual premises would be governed through alternative mechanisms such as the terms of leases under the NPW Act.

What points were made in the submissions?

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
Consistency of the proposals with the NPW Act	The tourism development and activities which would be enabled through the amendment are not consistent with the NPW Act.	No Change. Appropriate and sustainable tourism development in the park is consistent with the objectives of the NPW Act. Developments that may be facilitated by the amendment continue to be subject to the NPW Act, the plan of management and relevant development controls.
The role of NPWS in controlling resort development	The role of NPWS in controlling resort development is being diminished.	Amendment was revised. Changes to the role of NPWS in controlling resort development were not proposed in the draft amendment. However, the amendment was further revised to clarify that development approval in the alpine resorts will continue to be undertaken by Department of Planning and Environment Planning and Assessment under the Precincts-Regional

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Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
		SEPP. NPWS will continue to be a referral authority under the Precincts-Regional SEPP and lessor of the resorts.
Interactions between planning mechanisms	Development planning in the park should be governed by the plan of management, not the Precincts-Regional SEPP, SAP Master Plan or other planning instruments.	No change. It is appropriate that development planning is controlled by the Precincts-Regional SEPP. The NPW Act and the plan of management do not contain the necessary mechanisms to control development.
	The addition of Schedule 12 to the plan of management overlaps unnecessarily with the SAP Master Plan and should be removed.	Amendment was revised. Schedule 12 was removed from the final amendment to avoid duplication with the SAP Master Plan.
	The plan of management should not overlap with any provisions of the SAP Master Plan as this could result in conflict between planning documents.	No change. As a result of removing Schedule 12 from the final amendment the plan of management does not overlap with the SAP Master Plan. The amendment ensures the SAP Master Plan is complimentary to the plan of management.
Bed allocation mechanisms	Schedule 8 provides transparency on the number of beds allocated to each premises and should be retained.	Amendment was revised. Schedule 8 has been retained in the plan of management to provided transparency on the number of beds available in each premises. Maximum bed limits for the alpine resorts have been increased however, bed allocations, specified in Schedule 8 of the plan, are retained and are not changed. The plan allows for bed allocations to be increased if such an increase can be supported without adversely impacting park values and sets requirements that must be met before the bed allocation for an alpine resort may be increased.
	Bed numbers should be removed.	No change. Bed limits set in Section 10.2 and Schedule 8 of the plan of management are appropriate mechanisms to manage the overnight capacity of the alpine resorts and therefore have been retained in the plan of management.
	Protections on the volunteer ski patrol bed allocations would be lost from the plan of management if Schedule 8 is removed.	Amendment was revised. The amendment was revised to add volunteer ski patrol bed allocations to Section 10.2 of the plan of management (Alpine Resorts Management Units) and retained in Schedule 8.

Theme 2: Management of future tourism growth

What did the draft amendment propose?

The Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management includes provisions to ensure that any future expansion of tourism infrastructure is appropriate to the setting, sustainable and consistent with the plan's objectives for conservation. The plan of management defines the sites where the development of tourism infrastructure may be contemplated, defines the type of infrastructure that may be contemplated and sets limits on the amount of overnight accommodation at each site.

The plan of management currently sets bed limits for the 4 alpine resorts (Thredbo – 4820 beds, Perisher – 4982 beds, Charlotte Pass – 611 beds and Selwyn – 50 beds) and the 3 leased accommodation sites on Kosciuszko Road (Kosciuszko Mountain Retreat – 72 beds, Ski Rider Hotel – 339 beds and Sponars Chalet – 116 beds). Bed limits do not exist at the other existing accommodation nodes of Creel Bay, Camp Hudson, Currango Homestead, Kiandra, Yarrangobilly Caves and Thredbo Ranger Station.

The draft plan amendment proposed that:

- Bed limits would be increased at Thredbo (6444 beds), Perisher (6385 beds) and Charlotte Pass (845 beds) and leased accommodation at Kosciuszko Mountain Retreat (122 beds) and Sponars Chalet (222 beds). No bed limit increases were proposed for Selwyn or the Ski Rider Hotel.
- Bed limits would be set at Creel Bay, Camp Hudson, Currango Homestead, Kiandra, Yarrangobilly Caves, Thredbo Ranger Station, Island Bend and Cotterills Cottage.
- Accommodation could be developed at Island Bend, the Major Road Corridor at Kiandra and Cotterills Cottage.

What points were made in the representations?

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS response
Bed number increases	Additional accommodation development should occur off-park.	No change. The development of a limited amount of environmentally sensitive accommodation in appropriate locations within the park offers a unique experience that will further objectives for regional tourism and can also assist in conserving park values.
	Increasing resort bed numbers will not serve to reduce the seasonality of visitation to the region.	No change. The increases to bed numbers are not a primary strategy to reduce the seasonality of visitation. Improvements and diversification of accommodation offerings are intended to complement a range of other initiatives proposed to reduce visitation seasonality.

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS response
	Growth and demand data exhibited was insufficient to demonstrate the need for the proposals.	No change. The increases have been informed by growth and demand analysis.
	Bed increase is supported.	No change. This is consistent with the amendment.
	Additional beds are required beyond what is proposed in the amendment.	No change. Modelling of future visitor demand did not provide sufficient justification for further increases to those enabled through the amendment.
	Additional beds should not be provided at on-park accommodation sites outside of the SAP.	No change. As a result of the amendment, the adaptive reuse of heritage structures and a limited amount of new accommodation development at Currango Homestead, Yarrangobilly Caves and Cotterills Cottage may be considered. These increases are necessary to diversify the range of visitor experiences and address demand for accommodation in the north of the park.
	Not enough is understood about the park's carrying capacity and the potential impacts of additional development to changes to maximum bed limits.	Amendment was revised. Investigations undertaken during development of the draft amendment showed that there is potential for environmentally sustainable increases to resort accommodation. Additional requirements have been incorporated in the plan of management through the amendment to ensure that any future decisions about increases are cautious and evidence-based. These requirements include demonstration of environmental performance through an environmental management system. Bed allocations may not exceed the maximum bed limits specified for each alpine resort management unit in Chapter 10 of the plan.
Compatibility with the NPW Act	Further urban development within the alpine resorts is inconsistent with the purpose of a national park.	No change. The location, type and scape of future development contemplated by the amendment are consistent

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS response
The impacts of further growth on the environment	Further tourism development will negatively impact park values.	with the purpose of a national park as defined in the NPW Act.
	The SAP Master Plan should focus on tourism development outside the park and should not focus within the park.	No change. The potential impacts on the environmental values of the park were considered during preparation of the amendment. The provisions of the plan of management, in conjunction with the planning mechanisms that control development, will ensure that the impact of future development is within acceptable parameters.
Bushfire risks	Increasing visitation to the alpine resorts is inappropriate as they are at high risk of being bushfire affected.	No change. While the SAP Master Plan contemplates specific tourism development proposals within the park, all future development within the park remains subject to the requirements of the NPW Act and the plan of management. No change. The amendment does not significantly alter the risks to resorts associated with bushfire. Resort development will continue to comply with the <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> and <i>Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019</i> , which address bushfire risk.

Theme 3: Environmental management systems and the carrying capacity mechanism

What did the draft amendment propose?

The plan currently requires an environmental management system (EMS) to be in place for all activities in the park, including park management activities to operations and facilities delivered under a lease or licence. The current plan outlines an extensive list of considerations which must be addressed in each environmental management system. The draft amendment proposed that:

- The number of factors to be addressed in each environmental management system in the park would be reduced, consistent with the type of development and likelihood of risks to park values.
- The requirements of each environmental management system for the alpine resorts should be strengthened to be independently accredited to international standard ISO14001.
- A carrying capacity assessment mechanism would be developed and applied as a part of each environmental management system.

What points were made in representations?

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS analysis
Environmental management system	The list of factors which must be considered in an environmental management system should not be simplified.	Amendment was revised. The amendment was revised to expand the factors listed in section 12.1 of the plan of management that must be addressed in resort environmental management system. This includes monitoring requirements for 'essential environmental performance indicators'.
	Draft resort environmental management systems should have been developed before preparation of the amendment and placed on public exhibition so the public could assess their adequacy.	No change. The finalisation of the amendment before the development of each environmental management system is an appropriate and practical way to ensure that each environmental management system developed in the future is adequate.
Carrying capacity	The draft carrying capacity framework developed prior to consultation on the draft SAP Master Plan should have been considered during preparation of the amendment.	No change. Further work is required to develop a suitable carrying capacity framework. This will consider environmental, engineering and social factors throughout the project's life. It will require approval by NPWS before its incorporation into the development approval process and each environmental management system.

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS analysis
	<p>The draft carrying capacity framework developed prior to the master plan does not demonstrate that sufficient capacity exists for the proposed developments.</p>	<p>No change. Investigations undertaken during development of the draft amendment demonstrated the potential for environmentally sustainable increases to resort accommodation.</p>
	<p>The roads to the resorts and parking at the resorts are already at capacity during the ski season and cannot accommodate an increase in visitation.</p>	<p>No change. Transport studies undertaken prior to the development of the SAP Master Plan identified that further visitation growth could be accommodated at the alpine resorts through improvements to transport such as increased parking and improved public transport. Transportation capacity will be considered in the ongoing carrying capacity mechanism.</p>
	<p>Insufficient water is available to support resort growth and increased snow making, which will be required as natural snow decreases.</p>	<p>No change. Studies undertaken to facilitate development of the SAP Master Plan did not identify water availability as a constraint. Water availability will be considered in the ongoing carrying capacity mechanism.</p>

Theme 4: Specific tourism proposals

What did the draft amendment propose?

The draft amendment proposed that:

- The landing and take-off of helicopters would be allowed via a consent at Thredbo, Perisher and Charlotte Pass for commuting purposes.
- Vehicle access to the Summit Trail (behind the locked gate at Charlotte Pass) for the transport of multi day Snowies Alpine Walk participants would be allowed for a commercial tour operator.
- A basic walk in campsite would be developed at Guthega.
- Camping facilities at Island Bend would be redeveloped to include powered campsites, flushing toilets, a camp kitchen and built accommodation. It was also proposed that this site could be operated under a concession.
- Additional beds would be allowed at Thredbo Ranger Station, and that camping would no longer be allowed at this site.
- Additional beds and visitor services, including upgrades to Caves House, development of a new visitor centre, development of eco pods and cottages and bath houses alongside the Yarrangobilly River.

What points were made in the representations?

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS analysis
Helicopter commuting	Opposed to the proposal – based on the likelihood of a detrimental impact on park values and the experience of other visitors.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration of the impacts associated with this proposal it was not included in the amendment.
	Supported the proposal – based on business opportunities.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration of the impacts associated with this proposal, it was not included in the amendment.
Commercial tour operator access along summit road	Opposed the proposal – based on the likelihood of a detrimental impact on the experience of other visitors and on the likelihood that this experience would be only be available to high paying customers.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration of the impacts associated with this proposal and points raised in submissions, it was not included in the amendment.
	Supported the proposal – based on improved access for people with limited mobility.	Amendment was revised. Improvements in access for people with limited mobility is a goal for the park, however, this proposal would benefit a relatively small number of people.

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS analysis
Development at Island Bend	Objection to large scale development and the establishment of built accommodation and powered sites due to the potential to diminish the site's natural character.	Amendment was revised. The establishment of built accommodation and powered sites has the potential to diminish its natural character. After further consideration of the impacts to the visitor experience associated with this proposal and points raised in submissions, it was not included in the amendment.
	Support for improved facilities.	No change. Scope for improved camping facilities, including flushing toilets and a camp kitchen, was retained in the amendment.
	Objection to the site being operated as a commercial enterprise and concern about the cost of future access under privatised management.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration, it was concluded that this site should continue to be managed by NPWS. The amendment was revised to remove the provision for the operation of this site under a concession.
	Concern that the proposal would impede access to white water kayak access and haul out spots.	This is an operational/site planning matter which would be more appropriately addressed in site master planning. This issue does not need to be addressed through an amendment. Access to kayak entry and exit sites can be accommodated in any plans to upgrade the site and will be addressed in detailed site planning.
Guthega campground	The provision of camping at Guthega is not consistent with lessee objectives for Perisher Range Management Unit and should be removed.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration of this issue, the proposal to develop a walker campsite at Guthega was removed from the amendment. Dispersed walker camping continues to be permitted in the adjacent Main Range Management Unit.
Thredbo Ranger Station lodge and cabins	General support for the proposals.	No change. Support was expressed for the proposals.
	Capacity for camping should be retained at this site.	Amendment was revised. After further consideration into the potential uses of this site, the proposal to remove camping was removed from the amendment.
Yarrangobilly Master Plan	Opposition to proposals within the Yarrangobilly Master Plan, particularly the option proposed for Onsen cabin in the Yarrangobilly Master Plan.	No change. These comments relate to the Yarrangobilly Master Plan rather than the amendment. These comments will be considered during finalisation of the Yarrangobilly Master Plan.

Theme 5: Consultation on the draft amendment

What did the draft amendment propose?

The processes for consultation on draft amendments to plans of management is set out in the National Parks Act. To help people understand the relationship between the draft amendment to the plan of management and the draft SAP Master Plan, these documents were placed on public exhibition together.

What representations were received?

Topic	What points were raised in the representations?	NPWS analysis
Clarity	The simultaneous exhibition of several draft plans covering complex and interrelated planning matters made the issues difficult to understand and made the provision of feedback difficult.	<p>No change.</p> <p>Public exhibition of the draft amendment was consistent with the requirements of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that many found some aspects of the draft SAP Master Plan (and associated planning mechanisms), which was placed on public exhibition by the Department of Planning and Environment, difficult to fully understand.</p> <p>NPWS provided additional information to help people understand the issues related to the draft amendment.</p> <p>The period of exhibition of the draft amendment was extended in response to concerns about the complexity of the broader Snowy SAP project.</p>
Timing	The amendment should not have been exhibited over the busy winter season.	<p>No change.</p> <p>Public exhibition occurred during winter to coincide with public exhibition of the draft SAP Master Plan by the Department of Planning and Environment.</p> <p>The period of exhibition was extended in response to concerns raised.</p>