

Submissions summary

Exhibition of Murramarang South Coast Walk Draft Master Plan and Draft Review of Environmental Factors



Background

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is working with the community to deliver the Murramarang South Coastal Walk, a multi-day 48 kilometre walk between Maloneys Beach (near Batemans Bay) and Bawley Point (near Ulladulla).

The project is funded by the NSW Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism Fund program, an initiative of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, that provides funding for infrastructure that supports regional economic growth, creates local employment opportunities, and drives growth in the visitor economy.

The project will upgrade existing coastal walking trails and create new connecting sections so walkers can traverse the length of Murramarang National Park and Murramarang Aboriginal Area. The walk will also traverse the beaches that connect the coastal villages of Maloneys Beach, Durras, Depot Beach, Kioloa and Bawley Point.

The draft master plan was placed on public exhibition in July and August 2020 so the community could comment on the types of changes and improvements proposed. This enables us to refine the vision for the Murramarang

South Coast Walk and identify actions required to deliver the walk to a high standard. A total of 105 submissions were received from a broad range of stakeholders. NPWS reviewed all submissions received before finalising the master plan. View the [Murramarang South Coast Walk Master Plan](#).

This summary outlines the main issues raised in submissions and NPWS response following the review.

We value your input

We appreciate everyone's ongoing interest in the project. During the public exhibition period we hosted a series of meetings with stakeholder group representatives. We also engaged with the community and other stakeholders about the project in the following ways:

- [Murramarang South Coast Walk webpage](#) and online register.
- Project progress updates and notifications sent to stakeholders.
- Tourism and visitor research and market sounding.

What you told us

We received a total of 105 submissions (one online petition) on the draft master plan from a range of stakeholders, including; residents and business operators, other NSW Government agencies, local governments, non-government organisations and private individuals. Of the 105 submissions received, 55 provided overall support and 50 submissions either raised objections to the proposal or detailed matters requiring consideration from NPWS.

The submissions raised a wide range of issues that required consideration from NPWS. These have been summarised into key themes:

Key themes raised in submissions



Summary of issues raised

Submissions were well considered and offered constructive input. Here's some of what people had to say:

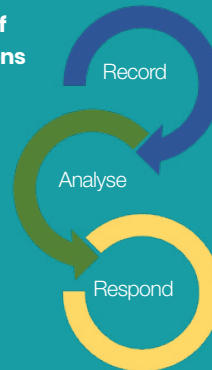
General support for the project

Many submissions provided overall support for the project as it was proposed in the draft plan, including the upgrades of key visitor sites at Maloney's Beach and Durras. With some noting that they liked the idea of linking the current trails and keeping the current natural surfaces. Further adding that this retains the experience of walking in nature and so not risking over development of the walk.

How submissions were analysed

All submissions were reviewed in full and every point raised was given full and proper consideration. We grouped similar issues into themes to allow us to present a succinct summary of the feedback and the changes that have resulted.

Analysis of submissions



- Record: Every point raised in every submission is carefully considered and recorded.
- Analyse: Every issue is reviewed to determine whether or not a change should be made to the plan.
- Respond: Where the need for change is identified, the relevant stakeholders are consulted before the master plan is finalised.

Change of park's character

Some submissions expressed concern that the walk might harm the park's environmental values or change the park's character. Whilst others were concerned walkers would disturb endangered shorebirds. The potential loss of the sense of remoteness and solitude was also raised.

Maloney's Beach precinct plan

Some submissions expressed concern about the proposed precinct design at Maloney's Beach. Many of these submissions wanted to retain vehicle access to the beach and/or expressed concern about a potential increase in traffic. Some of these submissions recommended the walk start at an alternative location.

Litter, waste, camping and campfires

Some submissions were concerned that there would be an increase in littering, human waste disposal and illegal camping. Some people were also concerned there would be an increase in illegal campfires – leading to an increased risk of bushfire.

Impact on local communities

Some submissions were concerned about the effect an increase in visitors would have on the life and wellbeing of residents, and on the character of the villages.

Expand the concept

Some submissions expressed the desire to expand the project. Many of these submissions recommended the walk continues to Batemans Bay. Others suggested that the walk be turned into a shared trail suitable for both mountain bikers and walkers. We also received submissions requesting that the requirements of sea kayakers be taken into consideration.

Walking track route

Some submissions suggested that the track route was too close to cliff edges, didn't adequately utilise existing tracks or allow visitors to experience a range of environments.

Concerns with Durras Lake

Some submissions were concerned that walkers may attempt to cross Durras Lake when it is not safe.

How has NPWS responded to issues?

We would like to thank everyone who submitted comments on the draft master plan. Every submission was reviewed in full to determine whether or not a change should be made to the plan. Where the need for change was identified, the relevant stakeholders were consulted before the master plan was finalised.

The following points describe where changes were made and outlines reasoning where changes were not made.

Change of park's character

The Murramarang South Coast Walk will be sympathetic with local concerns and the environment.

While activity may increase in areas of the park, much of the track is already in place. Where new track sections will be built, every effort will be made to retain the character of the landscape and minimise impacts on the environment and cultural heritage.

Where possible the track will be rerouted around known shorebird nesting locations. We will also erect shorebird education signs and place clear and prominent messages on our website to educate walkers about these birds and how walkers can lessen their impact.

Each concern raised about the environmental impact of the project will be reviewed through the Review of Environmental Factors assessment process to ensure all issues are adequately addressed.

Maloneys Beach precinct plan

In response to the submissions, we will reduce the size of the car park within the national park and seek to improve drainage along the access road. We will also plant native vegetation near the car park and access road to improve privacy for nearby houses.

We acknowledge some members of the community expressed a strong preference to retain vehicle access to the beach to launch small vessels. This activity is not permitted under the Plan of Management. After serious consideration, NPWS has determined it will not seek to amend the Plan of Management for several reasons. However, facilities will be provided to enable people to launch small watercraft such as kayaks.

We will also install a staircase to provide direct link to the Acheron Trail. To ensure that the planned facilities provided are appropriate for the area and in the right location, we will continue to work with the local community and council to refine the precinct plan.



Photo: Kangaroo at Pebbly Beach (Michael Jarman/DPIE)

Litter, waste, camping and campfires

NPWS has a zero tolerance for littering and are committed to ensuring that illegal human waste disposal, illegal camping and campfires are kept to a minimum.

We will provide clear and prominent messages on the NPWS visitor website and at public sites within the park about the negative impact of these activities and the risks associated with campfires.

We will monitor visitor use of the walk and implement strategies to mitigate negative environmental impacts. We will also seek to increase our compliance response. Additionally, we will increase the number of public facilities along the walk including BBQs. NPWS will continue to initiate, promote and enforce Park Fire Bans as well as uphold Total Fire Bans.

In response to the submissions, the toilet at Yellow Rock will be re-instated. This is in addition to installing new toilet facilities at Oaky Beach. NPWS will review public access to toilets and bins provided at Depot Beach and Pretty Beach Campgrounds with the intent on providing access to walkers.

NPWS remains committed to working closely with the local councils regarding potential improvements to public facilities along the walk.

Impact on local communities

The concerns of residents and other stakeholders will be explored in full during the detailed design phase of this project. Every attempt will be made to minimise the potential impact on residents.

NPWS are working with local councils and other stakeholders to address traffic and parking impacts.

Vegetation screens will be planted at Maloneys Beach to improve privacy for nearby houses.

Construction works will be tailored to ensure that the impact on residents is kept to a minimum.

Expand the concept

We support the notion of extending the walking track from Maloneys Beach to Batemans Bay. We are willing to continue to work with the other land managers and residents to explore options to extend the walk.

NPWS has a mountain bike policy that supports mountain biking in some national parks. Mountain biking however, can have impacts on a park's environment and must be managed consistent with the relevant legislation and the objectives for which a park is reserved. In the case of Murramarang National Park, a dual-purpose walking and mountain bike track is not consistent with the Plan of Management.

Walking track route

The track alignment has been re-surveyed to ensure a diverse range of landscapes are covered along the walk. In sections where the existing tracks are adequate they will be used.

A detailed geotechnical assessment has been undertaken following public exhibition to ensure safety and stability matters were thoroughly addressed in the final track alignment.

Concerns with Durras Lake

Durras Lake is an intermittently closed and open lake. When the lake is open to the ocean, walkers will need to get their feet wet or arrange transfers by water or vehicle. NPWS is investigating the feasibility of these transfers being undertaken by commercial operators.

We will explore options to ensure walkers are informed of any safety risks along the route. If conditions are deemed unsafe, NPWS will close the track within the national park using existing online channels, media release and alert systems. There are no plans to install a crossing of Durras Lake or alternative walking track.

Next steps

Further detailed planning

The Murramarang South Coast Walk Master Plan has been updated to address comments received and is available to view on the [Murramarang South Coast Walk webpage](#).

The master plan will guide the detailed design phase of the project and associated improvements to visitor facilities, while remaining consistent with the Plan of Management.

Assessment process and finalising details

Before work commences, NPWS will finalise comprehensive and detailed environmental and cultural heritage assessments to determine the impact of the proposal.

The draft Review of Environmental Factors that was exhibited was prepared before the Curowan Fire which burnt much of the Murramarang National Park over the 2019–20 summer.



Photo: Walking between Pebbly Beach to Pretty Beach (B Webster/DPIE)

Additional field work is being undertaken to better understand the bushfire impacts.

We have also engaged a consultant to work with the Aboriginal community to survey the proposed walking route area and prepare an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit to avoid potential impacts to the greatest extent possible.

The draft Review of Environmental Factors will be updated to incorporate the outcomes of the post-fire environmental and cultural heritage assessments and the public consultation before being submitted for approval. This approval process will determine whether further changes are required to the Murramarang South Coast Walk and outline appropriate mitigation measures.

Anyone who has not yet registered their interest in the project can do so on the [Murramarang South Coast Walk webpage](#).

More information

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Cover photo: Depot Beach at Murramarang National Park. J Yurasek/DPIE.