



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

# Summary of Representations

Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan



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# Executive summary

Wollemi 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 Wollemi National Park Plan of Management. The Wollemi National Park Plan of Management was adopted in 2001 under the NPW Act and sets aside several specific areas for horse riding and overnight horse-based camping on the western side of the park.

In the south-east of the park, however, more detailed planning was required to identify appropriate areas for horse riding. The Wollemi National Park Plan of Management included a commitment to prepare a horse riding management plan for the Wheeney Creek and Mountain Lagoon area of the park that identified authorised horse riding routes in conjunction with user groups.

As an initial step in developing the horse riding management plan, potential horse riding routes such as management trails and bridle trails were identified by interested horse riders. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) evaluated each potential route by applying a set of decision-making criteria based on the NPWS Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in National Parks, NPWS Horse Riding Policy and private property rights. The application of this decision-making framework identified those routes that are:

- accessible via public and park roads
- accessible via management trails that continue to be maintained by NPWS for management purposes
- not likely to impact any known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites
- not likely to have a significant impact on threatened species or ecological communities
- not likely to have an adverse impact on the safety or enjoyment of other visitors.

A draft horse riding management plan identifying routes meeting these criteria was prepared. This draft plan was reviewed by a statewide Horse Riding Reference Group, National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, the Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee. These committees provided feedback that informed a draft plan for public exhibition.

The Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan was placed on public exhibition from 18 December 2020 to 14 March 2021 to provide interested members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the potential authorised horse riding routes.

Eighty-three submissions were received on the draft plan during this period, including 73 from horse riding advocates. All submissions received were valued, have been carefully considered and have helped NPWS to better understand the community's views.

The final Horse Riding Management Plan for south east Wollemi National Park was approved by NPWS after consideration of all submissions received on the draft plan.

# Theme 1: Benefits of horse riding

The Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan identified that horse riding is a popular activity in the Wheeny Creek and Mountain Lagoon area, the south-east section of the Wollemi National Park, and plays an important role in providing trail horse riding for clubs and individuals as well as also being a key location for the amateur sport of endurance horse riding, which has a historical association with this part of the park.

## What points were made in the submissions?

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
<b>Benefits of horse riding</b>	Benefits of horse riding to health, wellbeing and the local economy.	Plan revised. The final plan has been revised to highlight the opportunity to participate in endurance riding events and to ride trails within Wollemi National Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• attracts people to the park and generates economic benefits for the region</li><li>• provides opportunities for people to enjoy the park and realise the physical health and wellbeing benefits derived from spending time and exercising in natural areas.</li></ul>

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## Theme 2: Consultation on the draft plan

The Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan was developed in consultation with park user groups, particularly horse riders. Information was provided by horse riders on their preferred horse riding routes in the planning area, including existing management trails and informal, historic bridle trails and potential new trails.

NPWS evaluated 48 potential horse riding routes identified by horse riders by applying a set of decision-making criteria based on NPWS Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in National Parks, NPWS Horse Riding Policy and private property rights.

A draft horse riding management plan identifying routes meeting these decision-making criteria was prepared. This draft plan was reviewed by a statewide Horse Riding Reference Group, National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, the Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee. These committees provided feedback that informed a draft plan for public exhibition.

The draft plan was on public exhibition between 18 December 2020 and 14 March 2021 to provide interested members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the potential authorised horse riding routes.

Eighty-three submissions were received on the draft plan during this period, including 73 from horse riding advocates. All submissions were reviewed and carefully considered by NPWS.

Feedback highlighted that some proposals in the draft plan were broadly supported by the community and therefore were appropriate for progression. Many submissions did not support the closure of routes that had been used by riders in the past. Some feedback also sought further consultation on this issue.

### What points were made in the submissions?

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
<b>Community engagement and consultation</b>	Lack of community engagement and consultation.	Plan revised. The draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Plan was developed with input from stakeholders, however, the need for ongoing liaison with horse riders and their input into decision making about access is acknowledged. In response, the final plan has been revised to provide scope for further engagement between NPWS and representatives of the horse riding sector.
<b>Timing and length of public exhibition</b>	The draft plan should not have been exhibited over the Christmas period.	No change. The period of exhibition was extended in response to concerns raised.

# Theme 3: Access routes and experiences for horse riding in the park

In preparing the Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan, a review of horse riding routes was undertaken that identified which routes that provide sustainable horse riding opportunities and experiences.

The draft plan, including the review process, was developed in consultation with park user groups, in particular, horse riders. Information was provided by horse riders on their preferred horse riding routes in the planning area, including existing management trails and informal, historic bridle trails and potential new trails.

NPWS evaluated 48 potential horse riding routes identified by horse riders by applying a set of decision-making criteria based on policy, the horse riding strategy and private property rights. The application of this decision-making framework identified those routes that are:

- accessible via public and park roads
- accessible via management trails that continue to be maintained by NPWS for management purposes
- not likely to impact on any known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites
- not likely to have a significant impact on threatened species or ecological communities
- not likely to have an adverse impact on the safety or enjoyment of other visitors.

The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, the Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee provided advice on the preparation of this plan to ensure that it considers the park’s natural and cultural values and relevant management issues.

The review of horse riding routes was developed consistent with the NPWS Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in National Parks and the NPWS Horse Riding Policy. A summary of the review process can be found in Appendix A.

## What points were made in the submissions?

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
<b>Horse riding access and experiences</b>	Restricts access and types of experiences for horse riding.	<p>Plan revised.</p> <p>The final plan acknowledges the aspirations of horse riders, reiterates the responsibilities of NPWS to protect park values, and provides scope for further engagement between NPWS and representatives of the horse riding sector.</p> <p>Restrictions on access for all forms of recreation are necessary to ensure the park is protected in accordance with responsibilities under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. However, the final plan has been further revised to ensure that the legal, policy and decision-making framework that underpins the authorisation of horse riding routes for public access and by consent in south-east Wollemi National Park is clearly communicated.</p>

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
		<p>The final plan provides scope for further engagement between NPWS and representatives of the horse riding sector.</p>
<b>Impacts of horse riding</b>	<p>Environmental impacts are not only caused by horse riding</p>	<p>No change.</p> <p>All recreational activities, including horse riding, can generate impacts on a park's environment and must therefore be managed consistent with legislation and the statutory objectives for which lands are reserved.</p> <p>To ensure the natural, cultural and social values of national parks are protected, it is important that all recreational activities, including horse riding, occur only in appropriate locations.</p> <p>NPWS welcomes opportunities to continue to work with a single point of contact for horse riders to identify opportunities to improve horse riding experiences, monitor levels of horse riding, identify and monitor any trails showing signs of significant erosion or other impacts arising from off-track recreation, and monitor levels of weed introduction and spread.</p>
<b>Inconsistent with policy</b>	<p>Inconsistent with the statewide policy</p>	<p>No change.</p> <p>The review and development of the Horse Riding Plan for South East Wollemi National Park was undertaken in accordance with the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> (NSW), National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019 (NSW), the Wollemi National Park Plan of Management which was adopted in 2001 under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> (NSW), NPWS Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in National Parks and the NPWS Horse Riding Policy.</p>
<b>Restrictions on specific routes</b>	<p>Objections related to restricting access to specific routes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wards (bridal trail)</li> <li>• Livingstones north trail (bridle trail)</li> <li>• Livingstones and Convict link</li> <li>• Livingstones east</li> </ul>	<p>NPWS evaluated the 48 potential horse riding routes identified by horse riders by applying a set of decision-making criteria based on policy, the horse riding strategy and private property rights. The review identified that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wards track (bridle trail) may be authorised through a written consent from NPWS for organised competitions and other organised horse riding activities (commercial and non-commercial) (refer to Appendix A).</li> <li>• Livingstones north trail (bridle trail) may be authorised for public access or by written consent from NPWS for organised competitions and other organised horse riding activities (commercial and non-commercial) (refer to Appendix A).</li> <li>• Livingstones and Convict link was not authorised for horse riding as it did not meet the decision-making criteria based on policy, the horse riding strategy and private property rights (refer to Appendix A).</li> <li>• Livingstones east was not authorised for horse riding as it did not meet the decision-making criteria based on policy, the horse riding strategy and private property rights (refer to Appendix A).</li> </ul>



Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ladder (to park boundary only) was not authorised for horse riding as it did not meet the decision-making criteria based on policy, the horse riding strategy and private property rights (refer to Appendix A).</li></ul>

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# Theme 4: Access routes through private property for horse riding in the park

The south-east section of Wollemi National Park has a complex boundary that is interwoven with freehold property. The Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan identified that a large number of routes proposed for horse riding would require riders to enter private property from the public road in order to access proposed horse riding routes in the park. Consistent with law and the Wollemi National Park Plan of Management, recreational use of the park is regulated to minimise user conflict, protect visitor safety and welfare, minimise nuisance to neighbours and protect the natural and cultural heritage values of the park.

## What points were made in the submissions?

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
<b>Access routes through private property</b>	Objections to restrictions proposed for tracks accessed via private property	<p>No change.</p> <p>NPWS evaluated 48 potential horse riding routes identified by interested horse riders by applying the decision-making criteria (Appendix A). This decision-making framework is consistent with NPWS Horse Riding Policy, NPWS Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in National Parks, and private property rights. Under the framework authorised routes must be accessible to the public via public and park roads.</p> <p>An access audit was completed by NPWS specialists for all 48 horse riding routes using a combination of desktop spatial analysis, cadastral adjustment and field surveys. The audit provided a clear picture of where current legal public access exists, as well as Crown road reserves adjoining the park that are suitable for gazettal as public access.</p> <p>Five management trails along Blaxlands Ridge Road that are maintained for access to inholdings were not identified as having public access.</p> <p>Of the 48 routes in the park, 30 have public access. Five of these routes have access from public or park roads (see Glossary) and are already authorised for horse riding.</p> <p>Eight horse riding routes without public access (including Blaxlands Ridge Road) have been authorised for approved horse riding events only based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the condition of the trails</li> <li>• the requirement to gain consent in line with the NPWS Events, Functions and Venues Policy</li> <li>• the option for event organisers to make appropriate one-off access agreements with private property owners.</li> </ul>

Topic	What points were raised in the submissions?	NPWS response
		Wards track (a bridle trail), has also been included because of its significant social and historical value to horse riders.

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# Appendix A    Review of horse riding routes

## Review criteria

In preparing the Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan a review was undertaken to determine specific locations in the Wheeny Creek – Mountain Lagoon area of south-east Wollemi National Park that could provide sustainable recreational horse riding opportunities. The review used criteria for the route assessment based on what is lawful, practical and consistent with relevant NPWS policies and strategies.

The following criteria were used to assess 48 proposed routes and identify which routes provide sustainable recreational horse riding:

- Criterion 1    **Visitor experience** – The route provides an enjoyable experience and does not compromise the safety and enjoyment of other visitors.
- Criterion 2    **Access** – There is existing legal access to the beginning of the route.
- Criterion 3    **Sustainability** – The route is in an appropriate location where park values are protected, and ongoing use is ecologically sustainable. Consideration will be given to:
  - 2a) consistency with the Wollemi National Park Plan of Management
  - 2b) risks to Aboriginal cultural and shared heritage values
  - 2c) risks to threatened species and ecological communities
  - 2d) risk of soil erosion
  - 2e) risk of weed invasion or plant pathogen spread
  - 2f) risks to the maintenance of water quality.
- Criterion 4    **Cost-effective use of resources** – The creation of any new assets is minimised; and resources are available to facilitate construction, any supporting infrastructure and ongoing maintenance.

## Results table

The list of 48 routes in the table below includes all park road and trail assets as well as informal horse riding trails and proposed new (i.e. non-existent) linking trails requested by user groups for consideration in the review.

### Table key

<b>General:</b>	
A	Did meet criteria
X	Did not meet criteria
NA	Not applicable
U	Unknown
Blank cell	Not investigated
<b>Route type:</b>	
MT	Management trail (see Glossary)
MT*	Dormant management trail (see Glossary)
New	New trail
Nil	Overgrown
PaR	Park road (see Glossary)
BT	Bridle trail (see Glossary)
PR	Public road (see Glossary)
WT	Walking track
<b>Threatened ecological communities (TECs):</b>	
CEEC <sup>1</sup>	Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest, Critically Endangered Ecological Community
CEEC <sup>2</sup>	Shale Sandstone Transition Forest, Critically Endangered Ecological Community
EEC <sup>1</sup>	Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains, Endangered Ecological Community
EEC <sup>2</sup>	River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains, Endangered Ecological Community
EEC <sup>3</sup>	Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains, Endangered Ecological Community
VEC <sup>1</sup>	Blue Mountains Swamps, Vulnerable Ecological Community
<b>Threatened plant species:</b>	
TS <sup>1</sup>	<i>Leucopogon fletcheri</i> subsp. <i>fletcheri</i>
TS <sup>2</sup>	<i>Persoonia hirsuta</i>
TS <sup>3</sup>	<i>Pimelea curviflora</i> var. <i>curviflora</i>
TS <sup>4</sup>	<i>Zieria involucreta</i>

<b>Outcome:</b>	
Y	Authorised horse riding route (see Table 1)
EO	Authorised for approved horse riding events only (see Table 2)
N	Horse riding not allowed

Source: DPIE corporate geodatabase, rapid field assessment and internal consultation

Draft South East Wollemi Horse Riding Management Plan: Summary of Representations

Precinct name & Route name	Length of route (km)	Route type	1. Public access to route	2a. POM provision / An appropriate existing	2b. Aboriginal cultural and shared heritage is	2c. Threatened species and TECs are protected	2d. and 2e. Minimal soil erosion and weed invasion present	2f. Water quality is protected	3. Route facilitates an enjoyable and safe visitor experience	4. Best use of existing assets and sustainable use of resources	Outcome
<b>Mountain Lagoon precinct</b>											
Brendon	1.5	Nil	A						X	X	N
Cabbage Tree Creek	1.9	MT	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>1</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Cora Creek	1.4	MT*	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>1</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Cora Creek Cabbage Tree Creek link	0.5	New	A	X		CEEC <sup>1</sup>		X	P	X	N
Gospers Ridge	4.4	MT	A	A	A	TS <sup>4</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Long Ridge	0.8	MT	X	A						A	EO
Long Ridge loop	1.0	New	X	X						X	N
Long Ridge and Cabbage Tree Creek link	1.4	New	X	X						X	N
North Wheeny Gap	5.7	MT	A	A	A					A	Y
Prickle	2.0	BT	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	Y
T3	5.1	PaR	A								Y
Tootie Creek	2.9	MT	A							A	Y
Tootie Creek extension	2.6	New	X	X						X	N
<b>Upper Colo precinct</b>											
Ferrari	2.0	MT*	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>2</sup>	A	A	A	A	EO
Ferrari extension	4.0	New	A	X		VEC <sup>1</sup> in vicinity			A	X	N

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Gees Arm North	7.1	MT	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>2</sup> ; Red-crowned toadlet to north	A	A	A	A	Y
Gees Arm North extension	1.0	New	X	X						X	N
Gospers Lookout	1.7	MT	A	A	A	P CEEC <sup>2</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Mailes Ridge (no exit Colo Meroo)	5.8	WT	A	X	A	P CEEC <sup>2</sup>	A	A	X	X	N
Powerline 2, 6, 7, 8, & 9	3.5	MT	A	A	A	A	Whiskey grass present	A	A	A	Y
Powerline 10	1.2	MT	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	Y
Powerline extension	1.4	New	X	X		EEC <sup>2</sup>				X	N
Wards track (public access only one end)	5.3	BT	PX	A	A	CEEC <sup>2</sup>	soil erosion present	A	Experienced riders only	Only last 300m utilities maintenance	EO
<b>Wheeny Creek precinct</b>											
Boongarie	1.7	MT	X			EEC <sup>2</sup>					EO
Convict	1.8	PR	A							A	Y
Gees Arm North & Gees Arm South link	3.0	New	U	X						X	N



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Gees Arm South	4.9	PR	A			CEEC <sup>2</sup>					Y
Ladder (to park boundary only)	0.9	MT	A	A		X TS <sup>3</sup>	U			X	N
Livingstones and Convict link	0.5	New	X	X		EEC <sup>3</sup>		X		X	N
Livingstones north	1.9	BT	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>2</sup> TS <sup>1</sup> TS <sup>2</sup>	A	A	A		Y
Livingstones east		Nil	A	X		CEEC <sup>2</sup>				X	N
Prickle extension	1.5	New	A	X					A	X	N
Ruins	1.0	PR	A			CEEC <sup>2</sup>					Y
Powerline trail 12	0.6	MT	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N
Warrigal	0.8	WT	A						X	X	N
Warrigal Convict link	U	New	X	X		EEC <sup>2</sup> EEC <sup>3</sup>		X		X	N
<b>Blaxlands Ridge precinct</b>											
Gees Arm South and Ironbark link	U	New	X	X		CEEC <sup>2</sup> , EEC <sup>1</sup> , EEC <sup>2</sup> , EEC <sup>3</sup>				X	N
Ironbark Ridge	3.0	PR	A			CEEC <sup>2</sup>					Y
Lot 126 and 129 access	0.3	MT	X	X							EO
Lot 14 access	1.4	MT	X	X							EO
Lot 12 access	1.0	MT	X	X							EO

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Precinct name & Route name	Length of route (km)	Route type	1. Public access to route	2a. POM provision / An appropriate existing	2b. Aboriginal cultural and shared heritage is	2c. Threatened species and TECs are protected	2d. and 2e. Minimal soil erosion and weed invasion present	2f. Water quality is protected	3. Route facilitates an enjoyable and safe visitor experience	4. Best use of existing assets and sustainable use of resources	Outcome
Lot 11 access	0.7	MT	X	X							EO
Lot 2 access	1.9	MT	X	X							EO
Weatherboard Ridge	2.9	Off-park	NA	NA							NA
<b>Kurrajong precinct</b>											
Blue Gum	3.3	MT*	A	A		CEEC <sup>2</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Browns	0.2	Nil	A						X	X	N
McMahons trail	2.7	MT	A	A	A	CEEC <sup>2</sup>	A	A	A	A	Y
Zorbas (to park boundary only)	1.9	BT	A	A		CEEC <sup>2</sup>				X	N

## Glossary

**Park road:** A road reserved as part of a park that is open to the public, though it can be closed for park management reasons. Park roads are maintained by NPWS.

**Public road:** A road which is not part of a park and is designated as a public road under the *Roads Act 1993* or other legislation for the purposes of the Roads Act such as the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

**Bridle trail:** Also known as a bridle pathway or bridleway, is a thoroughfare used for riding horses where motor vehicles cannot pass or are excluded for other reasons. They are often suitable for walking and cycling. In this plan they indicate more informal and unconstructed trails.

**Crown road:** A public road under the care and control of NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Crown land (for the Minister administering the *Crown Lands Act 1989*) which remains Crown land.

**Dormant management trail:** A management trail that is not being maintained.

**Endurance horse riding:** An active and intensive form of recreational horse riding. It typically involves riding horses in planned and organised events, generally on loop trails with distances of around 80 kilometres but up to 400 kilometres (e.g., Shahzada event). Riders may undertake endurance training rides on shorter distances. Endurance NSW is the state division of the Australian Endurance Riders Association Incorporated, the peak body.

**Horse riding route:** The pathway taken using either an existing public road, or park road, or management trail, or bridle trail, or new 'link' bridle trail that links management trails.

**Management trail:** A vehicle trail on lands reserved or acquired under the *National Park and Wildlife Act 1974*, which is maintained by NPWS for the purpose of park management activities. If such trails are open to public vehicle use, then they are 'roads' under the roads legislation. See 'park road'.

**Park road:** A road reserved as part of a park that is open to the public, though it can be closed for park management reasons. Park roads are maintained by NPWS.

**Public road:** A road which is not part of a park and is designated as a public road under the *Roads Act 1993* or other legislation for the purposes of the Roads Act such as the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

**Sustainable horse riding:** Based on a definition of 'ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation' where the use of a natural setting for an activity is, a) within its capacity to sustain natural processes, and b) in a way that the benefit of its use to a present generation does not diminish the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.