



Office of  
Environment  
& Heritage



**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE**

**MARRAMARRA NATIONAL PARK, MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE AND MARROOTA  
HISTORIC SITE**

**PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

**Part of the Office of Environment and Heritage**

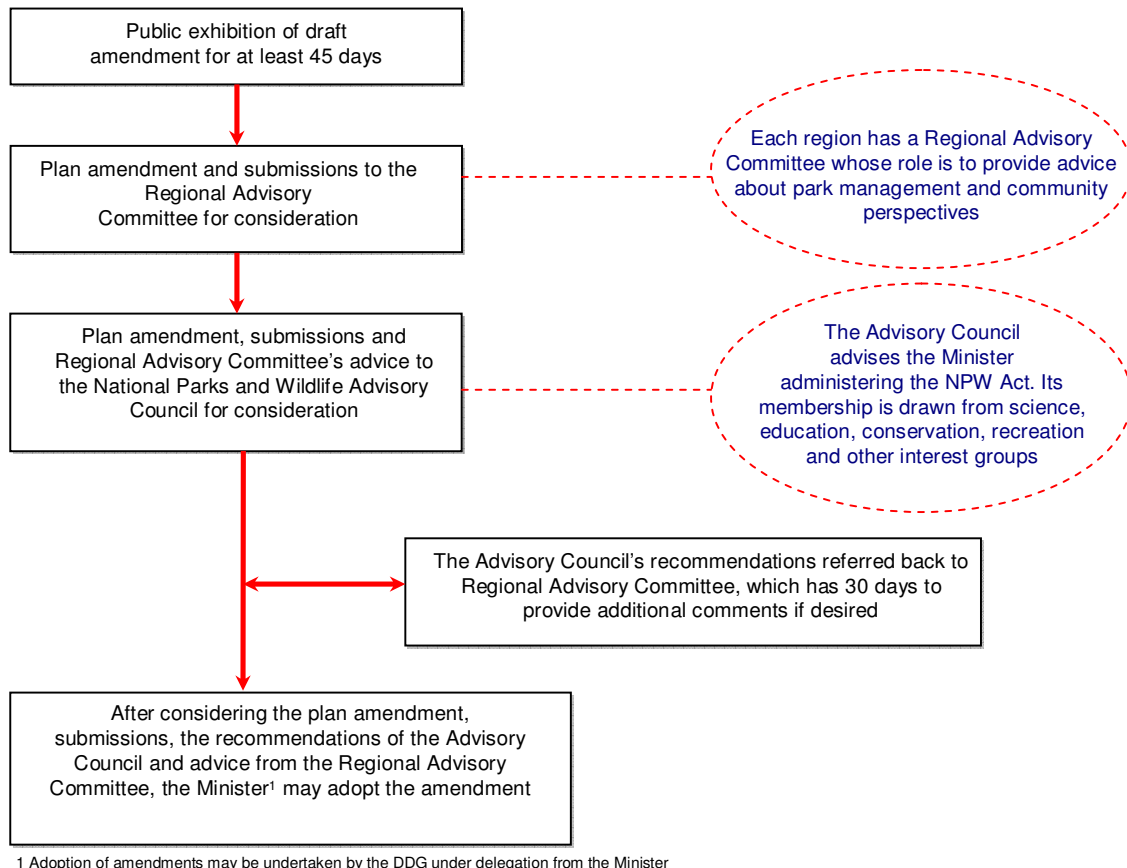
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## INTRODUCTION

A plan of management for Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve and Maroota Historic Site was adopted in 1998. The plan is available on the Office of Environment and Heritage website: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au>, then use the 'Quicklinks' to find 'Park management plans'. Section 73B of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) provides that the Minister may amend a plan of management.

The procedures for the amendment of plans of management are specified under Part 5 of the NPW Act and involve the following stages:



This plan amendment is now being placed on public exhibition for comment. Members of the public, whether as individuals or as members of community interest groups, are invited to comment in writing on this amendment to the plan of management.

The draft amendment is on exhibition until Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

Submissions can be made by:

- i) Writing to The Planner, Metropolitan North East Region, National Parks and Wildlife Service, PO Box 3031 Asquith NSW 2077
- ii) Submitting comments on-line at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult)
- iii) E-mailing your submission to [mne.planning@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mne.planning@environment.nsw.gov.au)

To make consideration of your submission as effective as possible it would help us if you:

- Identify the section heading and number to which your comment relates; and
- Briefly explain the reason for your comment and, if appropriate, suggest other ways to address the issue.

All submissions received by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) are a matter of public record and are available for public inspection upon request. Your comments on this draft plan amendment may contain information that is defined as "personal information" under the NSW *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. The submission of personal information with your comments is voluntary.

# **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO MARRAMARRA NATIONAL PARK, MUOGAMARRA NATURE RESERVE AND MAROOTA HISTORIC SITE PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

## **(Additional Recreational Opportunities)**

### **1. Provision of Horse Riding Opportunities within Marramarra National Park**

#### **Background**

##### **Context**

Horse riding is a popular recreational activity in New South Wales and there is some interest in this activity occurring in national parks. Horse riding is a healthy way for visitors to enjoy NPWS parks and to appreciate their natural heritage. The NSW government is committed to providing appropriate, high-quality horse riding experiences in NSW parks and reserves. This commitment has been articulated in the *Strategic directions for horse riding in NSW national parks* (the Strategy) which was adopted in November 2012.

The Strategy provides a clear way forward to increase sustainable horse riding opportunities in NPWS parks. It was informed by over 200 public submissions and is publicly available at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRideStrat.htm>

The Strategy recognises the need for horse riding proposals to be sustainable and to ensure that the natural and cultural values of the park are protected and the safety of all park visitors is maintained. It provides for:

- horse riding opportunities to be primarily provided on established management trails which are generally already accessible to cyclists and management vehicles; and
- small extensions to existing trails to be considered if this is identified as a priority.

Horse riding has not previously been formally permitted in Marramarra National Park, although some unauthorised riding has occurred in the past. The *Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve and Maroota Historic Site Plan of Management 1998* has prohibited horse riding in all areas on the basis that the practice was causing environmental damage and that the trails within the park were unsuitable.

##### **Track Selection**

Metropolitan North East Region of NPWS is one of eight priority regions identified by the Strategy as a focus for providing the new horse riding opportunities. In late 2012, NPWS commenced assessing the suitability of existing management trails in northern Sydney for improved horse riding opportunities. During February 2013, a Regional Horse Riding Consultative Group was formed, with representation from key horse riding groups in the region. The group worked with NPWS to identify and prioritise specific trail and track proposals for consideration for inclusion in a work plan.

Issues of concern to the Regional Horse Riding Consultative Group included safe riding connectivity from suburbs to trails and to horse riding facilities, connectivity between trails and the provision of longer riding experiences.

The work plan identifies three existing management trails within Marramarra National Park with the potential to be made available to horse riding. They are wide, well-formed and hardened vehicle trails maintained by NPWS for management purposes.

## **Community and Key Stakeholder Participation**

The Marramarra National Park horse riding track proposals have been informed by key stakeholder engagement activities including:

- consultation through the statewide Horse Riding Consultative Group;
- public exhibition of the statewide Strategy, with over 200 submissions received;
- consultation with the Metropolitan North East Regional Horse Riding Consultative Group with representation from key horse riding groups; and
- consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Metropolitan North East Regional Advisory Committee.

## **Justification**

*Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve and Maroota Historic Site Plan of Management* was adopted in 1998 and currently persists in the same form as originally adopted. The plan of management requires amendment to respond to the statewide Strategy.

The three management trails proposed in the work plan are wide, well-formed shared-use trails maintained by NPWS for park management purposes. While management trail erosion has been a significant issue for NPWS, methods of construction and maintenance have changed in the past decades to remove water directly from management trails using high crossbanks and outlay drainage. Current maintenance regimes for management trails with low gradients are likely to be able to withstand the addition of low to moderate frequency horse riding in addition to the current usage by management vehicles. However, monitoring of the condition of trails and surrounding areas including waterways will be carried out prior to and during at least the first three years of horse riding, with trail closures considered if the change in usage is demonstrated to be having an unsustainable impact.

Partnerships will be formed between NPWS and horse riding groups for activities such as education of horse riders about the *Code of Practice for Horse Riding in Parks* (OEH 2010), bush regeneration and reporting of illegal activities and track condition.

Some trails proposed for opening to horse riders access the park across land that is managed by other agencies or is privately owned. Approval from these land managers/owners will need to be obtained before trails within the park can be approved for use by horse riders.

## **Proposed Amendments**

### **1. Page 39 – Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Horse Riding**

Replace the following three paragraphs:

*Horse riding has never been formally permitted in Marramarra National Park although some unauthorised horse riding has occurred along the Smugglers Ridge, Marramarra Ridge and Coba Ridge Tracks. Horses have also been ridden off tracks within the park, causing accelerated erosion, redirection of water drainage and damage to vegetation.*

*The tracks within Marramarra National Park are unsuitable for horse riding. Both the Smugglers Ridge and Marramarra Ridge Tracks are very steep in places and horse riding has caused increased erosion along these tracks. The Smugglers Ridge Track also passes through a number of rare plant communities and recorded locations of red crowned toadlets. The Coba Ridge Track is not as steep as the other two tracks; however there are a large number of rare plants and a number of Aboriginal sites along the track, it leads only to private property, horse riding is prohibited by Hornsby Council on the first part of the track which is under their control and, because most of it is not essential for management purposes, much of the track will be kept only as a basic walking track (see map, centre pages).*

Horse riding will therefore continue to be prohibited in Marramarra National Park, however horse riding is permitted in other parks in the North Metropolitan District including Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal National Parks.

With the following:

Horse riding has not previously been permitted in Marramarra National Park, although some unauthorised horse riding has occurred along the Smugglers Ridge, Marramarra Ridge and Coba Ridge Trails. In 1998, evidence suggested that horses had also been ridden off management trails within the park, causing accelerated erosion, redirection of water drainage and damage to vegetation.

In 2012, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) endorsed a new approach to horse riding entitled 'Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks'. The strategy was developed to guide the provision of improved horse riding opportunities in national parks, in particular in eight priority regions including the NPWS Metropolitan North East Region (the region). The region formed a horse riding Consultative Group to identify and prioritise new horse riding opportunities within the region and to assist in the development of a work plan to implement these priorities.

The following three management trails are identified in the work plan as having potential to be made available to horse riding in the near future, pending minor works and negotiations with other land managers:

- Coba Ridge Trail;
- Marramarra Ridge Trail to the locked gate; and
- Canoelands Ridge Trail as far as a barrier to be installed some way short of the cliffs at the end of the trail.

Additional management trails may be made available for horse riding pending further environmental assessment, construction and maintenance considerations.

Methods of management trail construction and maintenance have changed in the past decades to remove water directly from trails using high cross banks and outlay drainage. Current trail maintenance regimes for low gradients are likely to be able to withstand the addition of low to moderate frequency horse riding to the current usage by mountain bike riding and management vehicles. However, monitoring of the condition of trails and surrounding areas including waterways will be carried out prior to and during the first three years of horse riding, with trail closures considered if the change in usage is demonstrated to be having an unsustainable impact.

## **2. Page 41 - Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Policies**

Amend the 8<sup>th</sup> Policy on this page from:

*Horse riding will not be permitted within Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve or Maroota Historic Site.*

to state:

Horse riding will be permitted on management trails sign-posted as such within Marramarra National Park.

## **3. Page 41 - Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Policies**

Add an additional Policy below the one above stating:

Horse riding will not be permitted within Muogamarra Nature Reserve or Maroota Historic Site.

## **4. Page 43 - Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Actions**

Add the following additional actions stating:

- The management trails identified in the Metropolitan North East Region Horse Riding Work Plan 2013 for Marramarra National Park will be investigated for their potential to be made available for horse riding and progressively opened from 2014 pending satisfaction of pre-requisites including cross-tenure approvals, environmental assessment for associated car parks and budget identification for minor works.  
The following will be installed, dependent upon the above pre-requisites to facilitate sustainable and shared use horse riding on designated management trails in Marramarra National Park:
  - signage at main park entry points indicating the locations where different recreational opportunities are available and permitted;
  - signage at the access points of all management trails indicating whether they are authorised for horse riding;
  - increased parking to accommodate trailer turning and saddling up at the start of the Coba Ridge Trail;
  - formalised parking to accommodate trailer turning and saddling up at the end of Canoelands Rd;
  - gating or similar barrier at the end of the Canoelands Ridge Trail prior to the final transmission line staunchion.
- Partnerships with local horse riding groups will be pursued to assist with park management activities such as reporting on trail condition and weed control.
- The impact of recreational use, including horse riding, on management trail condition and nature conservation values, will be monitored prior to and during the first three years (minimum) of horse riding being permitted in Marramarra National Park.  
Management trails may be closed to recreational use in the following circumstances:
  - a particular use results in significant erosion or other damage to the natural and cultural heritage of the park;
  - use creates risks to safety or conflicts with other recreational users;
  - the cost of maintaining trails exceeds available funding and resources;
  - temporary closure is necessary during and after significant wet weather events and during local emergency incidents or extreme fire conditions. Consultation with user groups prior to such action will be undertaken where practical.

## **5. Page 47 – Section 5 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Add the following Actions to the list of High Priority actions for implementation:

Investigate and implement opening of the Coba Ridge Trail, Marramarra Ridge Trail and Canoelands Ridge Trail to horse riding.

Install signage and gates as required for horse riding.

Monitor the impacts of horse riding.

Pursue partnerships with horse riding groups.

## **6. Page 50 Section 6 SELECTED REFERENCES**

Add the following references:

OEH (2012) *Strategic directions for horse riding in NSW national parks*. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney

OEH (2010) *Code of Practice for Horse Riding in Parks*. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney

## **2. Provision of Camping Behind the Beaches along Berowra Creek (Twin Beaches).**

### **Background**

The Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve and Maroota Historic Site Plan of Management was adopted in 1998 and currently persists in the same form as originally adopted. Since then a number of factors guiding management particularly of Marramarra National Park have changed and the plan of management requires amendment to reflect this.

### **Justification**

Recreational activities in Marramarra National Park are managed to cater for those wanting a more natural, low impact bush experience close to Sydney. A popular recreational pursuit in this reserve is bush camping. This occurs primarily at the Marramarra Creek and Gentlemans Halt campgrounds and also traditionally occurred behind two water access only beaches along Berowra Creek (Twin Beaches). The 1998 plan of management removed permission to camp at the Twin Beaches based on concerns that damage was being caused by people making tracks through the bush, collecting firewood, dumping rubbish and leaving human waste in the bush.

These concerns have progressively been addressed since 1998 through visitor education, regular maintenance visits, and in 2008, the installation of composting toilets behind both beaches. It is therefore now feasible to once again permit short stay camping at these locations.

### **Proposed Amendments**

#### **1. Page 38 – Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Picnicking and Camping**

Amend the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph from:

*Camping also frequently occurs behind two beaches along Berowra Creek which have water access only. The area around the beaches is being damaged by people making tracks through the bush, collecting fire wood, dumping rubbish and going to the toilet in the bush. During school holidays large tents are often set up behind the beaches for a number of weeks and occupants actively discourage other people from using the beach. The beaches will be closed to camping and wood fires prohibited to prevent further damage. The beaches will remain available for picnicking.*

to state:

*Camping also frequently occurs behind two beaches along Berowra Creek (Twin Beaches) which have water access only. In 1998 the area around the beaches was being damaged by unmanaged recreational use. Recreational impacts are currently being managed through visitor education, regular maintenance visits and the installation in 2008 of composting toilets. Short stay camping will be permitted at the Twin Beaches.*

#### **2. Page 41 - Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Policies**

Amend the 1<sup>st</sup> Policy on this page from:

*Camping will not be permitted within 300 metres of public access roads, at Big Bay or on/behind the beaches along Berowra Creek in Marramarra National Park. Bush camping will be permitted at other sites within the park provided that the camping is in accordance with minimum impact codes, complies with the other policies in this plan, and no unacceptable damage occurs.*



to state:

Camping will not be permitted within 300 metres of public access roads or at Big Bay. Bush camping will be permitted at other sites within Marramarra National Park, provided that it complies with the other policies in this plan and visitors adopt minimum impact practices.

Amend the 4<sup>th</sup> Policy on this page from:

*Wood fires will be permitted only in authorised fireplaces at Gentlemans Halt and the Marramarra Creek camping area. Portable fuel stoves must be used in all other areas of Marramarra National Park.*

to state:

Wood fires will be permitted only in authorised fireplaces at Gentlemans Halt, Marramarra Creek and Twin Beaches. Portable fuel stoves are to be used in other areas of Marramarra National Park.

### **3. Page 43 - Section 4.2.2 Recreation Opportunities: Actions**

Amend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Action on this page from:

*Signs will be erected at the beaches along Berowra Creek in Marramarra National Park indicating that no camping, fires or domestic animals are permitted.*

to state:

Signs will be erected at the beaches along Berowra Creek (Twin Beaches) indicating that short stay camping and wood fires are permitted, provided that visitors bring their own firewood and take their rubbish home.

### **4. Page 47 – Section 5 Plan Implementation**

Add the following Action to the list of High Priority actions for implementation:

Erect signs at Twin Beaches permitting camping.

