



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Vehicle access strategy



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

Cover photo: Four-wheel drive vehicle. Destination NSW

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Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area vehicle access strategy

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has prepared an access strategy for Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to provide a framework for safe and sustainable vehicle access in accordance with the park's plan of management and the *Vehicle Access Policy*.

The strategy balances the demand from a diverse range of user groups with the protection of the park's natural and cultural values and visitor safety and aims to:

- protect the park's natural and cultural values
- cater for a diverse range of park users
- deliver a coordinated network of roads and trails for public vehicle use
- support community wellbeing and connection to nature
- cater for future visitor experiences
- provide appropriate maintenance and resourcing.

We will continue to monitor vehicle use in the park, and if visitor safety, natural or cultural values are being impacted or it becomes unsustainable – then the strategy may be reviewed and adjustments made to access arrangements.

This strategy only addresses vehicle use. Arrangements for walking, cycling and other forms of public access to the park are being addressed in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area master plan, expected to be completed in 2024.

Why does the park need a vehicle access strategy?

An extensive network of unauthorised vehicle trails were created and used when the land was state forest. This has had a devastating impact on natural and cultural values of the area – resulting in severe erosion, soil compaction and vegetation removal. Poorly constructed unauthorised trails are also a visitor safety risk.

It is not feasible, or consistent with the objects of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, to maintain access to all existing roads and trails in the lands that are now part of the Gardens of Stone Conservation Area. Many of these are degraded, impacting the environment, or are unsuitable for public vehicle use.

This access strategy identifies roads and trails to be maintained for vehicle use, in accordance with the park's plan of management and the *Vehicle Access Policy*.

The strategy provides for safe and sustainable vehicle access to appropriate public use standards, in accordance with environmental regulations and relevant road standards.



Photo 1 Degradation caused by unauthorised trails in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. DCCEEW

What was considered in developing the strategy?

All existing roads and trails in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area were assessed to determine their condition, appropriateness of location, park user needs and potential impact on park values – in consultation with a broad range of user groups.

The following criteria was considered as part of the assessment:

- routes that minimise impacts to natural and cultural values, and are ecologically sustainable
- routes that facilitate an enjoyable and safe visitor experience
- routes that are essential for mining operations, park management and emergency response
- routes with reasonable and sustainable maintenance costs.

What will happen with surplus trails?

Roads and trails identified as inappropriate or surplus due to safety, condition, impacts on natural or cultural values or maintenance requirements will be prioritised for progressive closure and rehabilitation.

Suitable trails may be repurposed for bushwalking or cycling, as part of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area master plan.

What roads and trails will be available for use?

The strategy provides over 256 kilometres of vehicle roads and trails in the park for public and management use. This caters for a diverse range of use including dry weather 2-wheel drives, 4-wheel drive touring, regulated 4-wheel drive trails, registered motorbike riding, cycling and operational and emergency management.

The map below shows vehicle roads and trails to be maintained in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. This includes the following public vehicle access roads and trails:

- Baal Bone Trail
- Beecroft Trail
- Deep Pass Trail
- Gardiners Gap Trail
- Glowworm Tunnel Road
- Lost City Trail
- Moffits Trail
- Maiyingu Marragu Trail from Wolgan Valley
- Long Swamp Road from Wolgan Valley
- Old Bells Line of Road, Clarence (Zig Zag railway)
- State Mine Gully Road from Lithgow
- Sunnyside Ridge Trail
- Waratah Ridge Road
- Wollangambe Trail

The 'Spanish Steps' and 'Ranger Bob's' 4-wheel driving trails will be also retained for use via a pre-booked permit system. These are shown on the access strategy map below as 'regulated public access' trails. We will notify people when the online permit system is available.

How will vehicle access in the park be managed?

NSW road rules apply when driving or riding at Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. All vehicles must be registered and are only permitted on designated public vehicle access roads and trails. It is illegal to drive or ride unlicensed or unregistered vehicles on public land, or to drive in areas not identified for public vehicle use. This is consistent with the former state forest rules.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has a zero-tolerance approach to the creation and use of unauthorised vehicle trails and to accessing areas that are not available for public vehicle use. Visitors are urged to obey road closure signs and barriers. Penalties apply. We will continue to monitor vehicle use in the park, and the strategy may be reviewed and adjustments made to access arrangements as needed.

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area vehicle access strategy

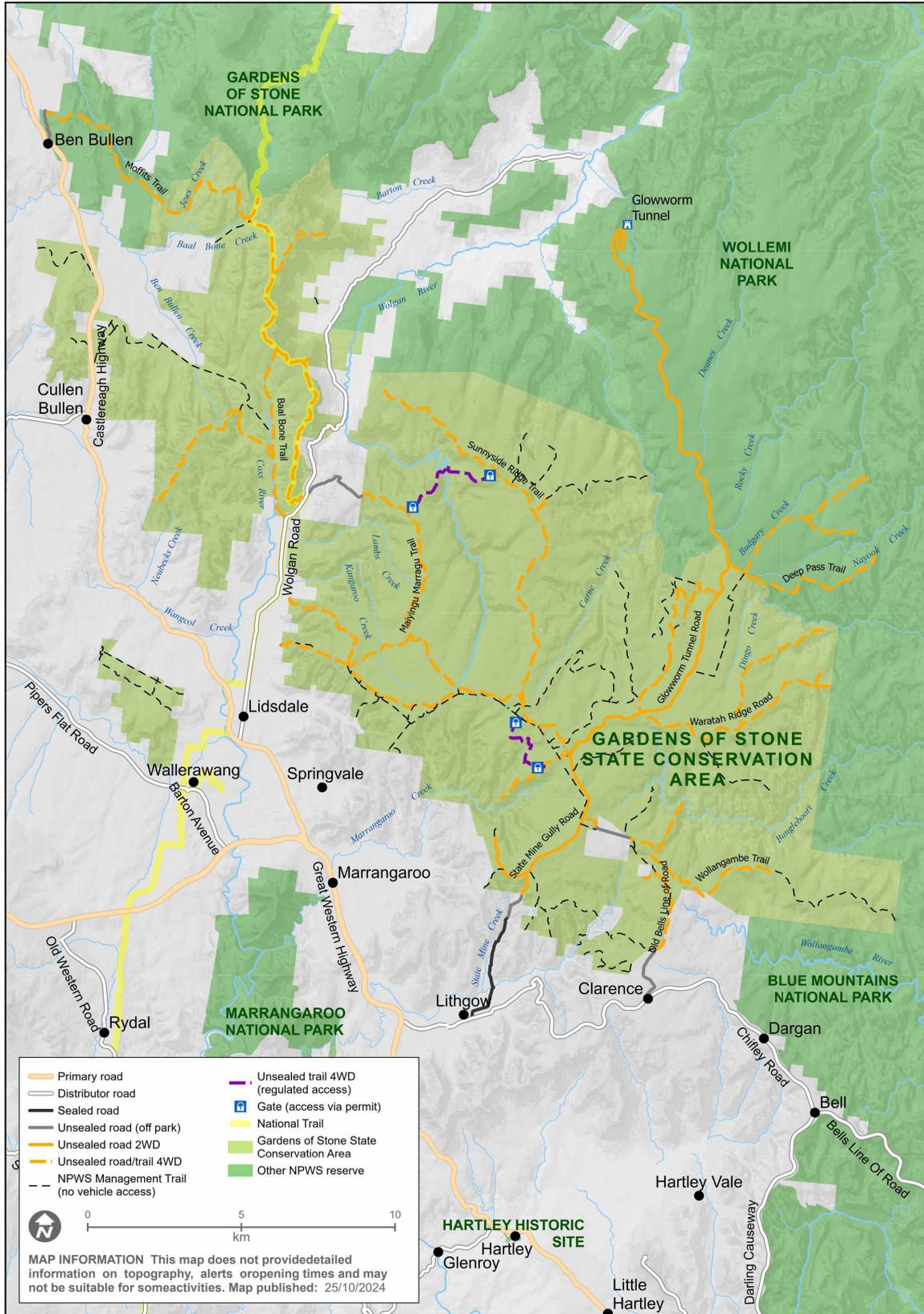


Figure 1 Vehicle access roads and trails in Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

How will roads and trails be maintained?

Roads and trails in the park are recorded in the NPWS Asset Management System and are prioritised for maintenance in accordance with relevant road standards.

Visitors are advised that roads and trails may be temporarily closed in wet weather, or for maintenance and improvement works or management operations – for safety and to prevent damage or environmental impacts.

People should check for closure alerts on the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area webpage before travel.

Catering for a range of visitors and interests

The establishment of the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is intended to provide sustainable and compatible visitor access for a range of nature-based recreational activities, including bushwalking, cycling, camping and canyoning, as well as 4WD and motorcycle touring. These opportunities will be outlined in the Gardens of Stone master plan, expected to be completed in 2024.

More information

- [Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area](#)
- [Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area alerts](#)
- [Vehicle access policy](#)