



**Office of  
Environment & Heritage**  
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service



**Proposed Amendments to the  
Coorabakh National Park  
Plan of Management**

**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

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

**September 2015**

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### **Acknowledgments**

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) acknowledges that Coorabakh National Park is in the traditional Country of the Birpai People.

This plan of management amendment was prepared by staff of the Lower North Coast Region of NPWS, part of the Office of Environment and Heritage.

For additional information about the plan of management, this amendment or the park, contact the NPWS Manning Hastings Area Office at 22 Blackbutt Road Port Macquarie NSW 2444 or by telephone on 02 6588 5555.

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# Introduction

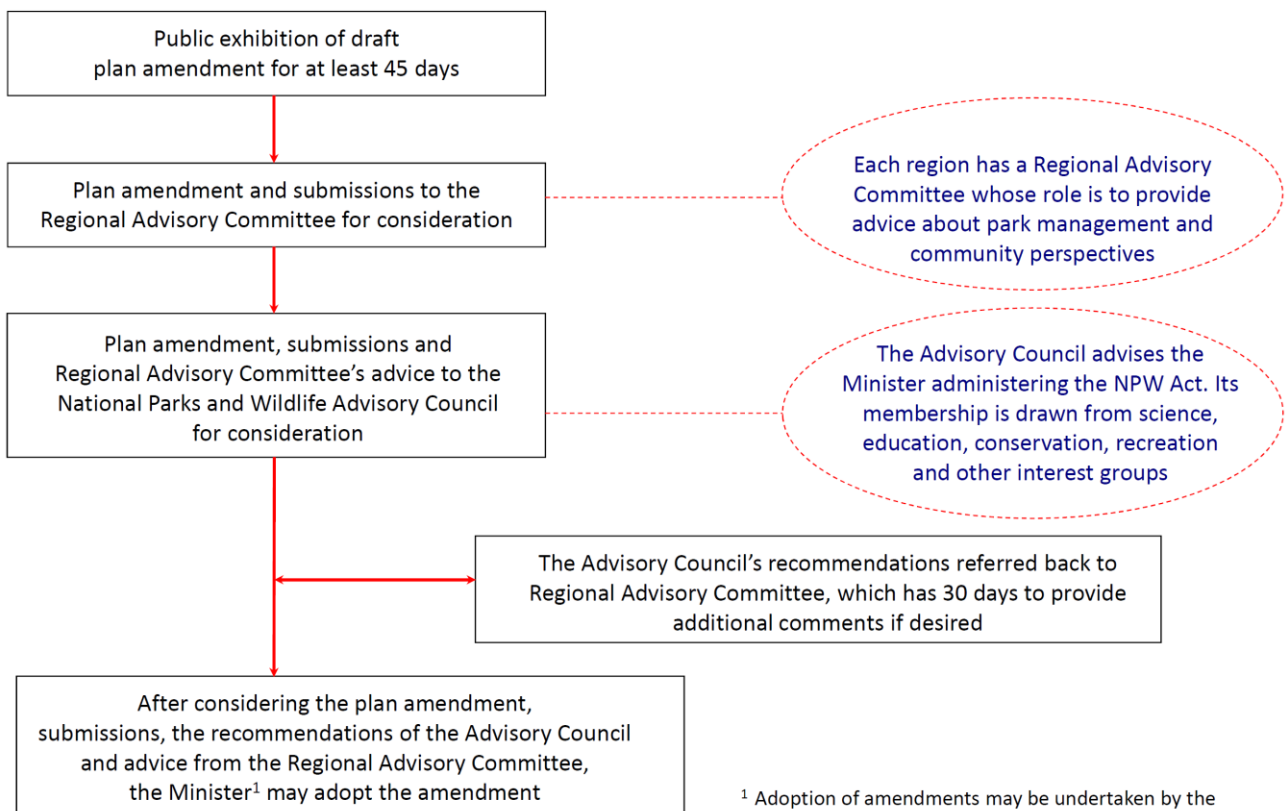
## Background

Coorabakh National Park is located about 22 kilometres north of Taree in the hinterland of the NSW mid north coast. The park was reserved in 1999 and covers an area of 1840 hectares.

A plan of management outlines how the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manages a park or reserve and is a formal document under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act). The *Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management* was adopted in 2007. This followed extensive public consultation, including the exhibition of a draft plan of management for three months in late 2002 and early 2003.

Under section 73B(3) of the NPW Act, the Minister may amend or alter a plan of management from time to time on the recommendation of NPWS. It is proposed to amend the *Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management* to provide for horse riding access on a route through the park.

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



## How to read the amendment

This amendment proposes replacing the map in the plan of management and changing sections of text in the plan. Ideally, this amendment should be read in conjunction with the *Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management*, as adopted in 2007.

This version of the plan is available on the Office of Environment and Heritage website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/ParkManagementPlans.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/ParkManagementPlans.htm). A hardcopy of the plan can be obtained by contacting the NPWS Manning Hastings Area Office on telephone 02 6588 5555.

References in this amendment to pages in the existing plan relate to the page numbering of the online version of the plan.

## Invitation to comment

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 **7 December 2015**.

Submissions can be made in either of the following ways:

- i) writing to The Planner, Coorabakh NP, NPWS, PO Box 5657, Port Macquarie NSW 2444
- ii) submitting comments online at <https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult>
- iii) emailing your submission to [LowerNorthCoast.Region@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:LowerNorthCoast.Region@environment.nsw.gov.au)

To make consideration of your submission as effective as possible, please:

- identify the section heading and amendment number to which your comment relates
- briefly explain the reason for your comment and, if appropriate, suggest other ways to address the issue.

All submissions received by 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 Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management

## Justification for the amendment

The NSW Government is committed to providing appropriate, high quality horse riding experiences in NSW national parks and reserves. Horse riding in national parks provides an opportunity for horse riders to experience national parks and appreciate their natural heritage.

NPWS has developed the *Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks* (the Strategy) to guide the provision of improved horse riding opportunities over the coming years. The Strategy is available at:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRideStrat.htm](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 our parks are protected and the safety of all park visitors is maintained. The NPWS Lower North Coast Region is one of eight priority regions identified in the Strategy which will be the focus for new and improved horse riding opportunities.

Horse riding has not previously been permitted in Coorabakh National Park. The existing *Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management* prohibits horse riding in the park on the basis that the roads are not suitable for shared access by horses and vehicles due to their steep, narrow and winding nature and poor lines of sight.

In February 2013, NPWS met with key horse riding representatives in the Lower North Coast Region to identify and prioritise potential new opportunities for horse riding in the Region's parks for consideration. One of the proposals made by a commercial horse riding operator was to provide access through Coorabakh National Park to link riding opportunities available in Lansdowne State Forest and Comboyne State Forest.

Following consideration of the proposals raised during these discussions and consultation with the NPWS Regional Advisory Committee, a horse riding work plan was developed for Lower North Coast Region. The work plan outlines the actions that NPWS will undertake to provide new and improved horse riding opportunities in the Region. The work plan is available at: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/130407LNCRPlan.pdf](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectedareas/130407LNCRPlan.pdf)

The work plan includes the following actions for Coorabakh National Park:

- Liaise with the Forestry Corporation of NSW and attempt to identify a suitable horse riding route for a commercial operator through state forest in the vicinity of Coorabakh National Park.
- If this is not possible, prepare an amendment to the plan of management for Coorabakh National Park seeking to allow horse riding access along Cooperbrook Forest Road.

NPWS has since consulted with the Forestry Corporation of NSW and the commercial operator. Neither party was able to identify a suitable route to link these two state forests which did not involve using roads and/or management trails within Coorabakh National Park. As such, in line with the work plan action, this plan amendment has been prepared to seek to allow horse riding on a suitable route through the park.

NPWS, in consultation with the commercial operator, the Forestry Corporation of NSW and the Lower North Coast Regional Advisory Committee, investigated four potential horse riding

routes through Coorabakh National Park to provide access between Lansdowne State Forest and Comboyne State Forest. Each route was assessed for potential impacts on significant flora and fauna, accessibility and terrain, visitor safety, existing visitor use, potential impacts on neighbouring private property and the quality of the visitor experience.

A route which follows sections of Coopernook Forest Way and Flat Nellie Trail was identified as the preferred horse riding route within Coorabakh National Park (see attached map). This route avoids ecologically sensitive areas in the vicinity of Newbys Creek and Starrs Creek. It is proposed to allow controlled horse riding access on this route by organised groups and/or commercial operators subject to conditions to minimise impacts on natural values and other users, and to address safety considerations.

## Proposed amendments

### 1. In Section 2 Park Map (page 4)

**Replace** the existing map in the plan of management with the map included in this amendment.

The new map:

- shows the route along which horse riding may occur in Coorabakh National Park (namely along parts of Coopernook Forest Way and Flat Nellie Trail)
- is bigger than the existing map and is in colour to better show the roads and trails in the park.

**Insert** a new title of the map: **Map 1. Coorabakh National Park**

Throughout the plan, **replace** 'park map' or 'map' **with** 'Map 1'.

### 2. In Section 2.4 Recreation Opportunities (page 9)

**Replace** the last paragraph:

Horse riding will not be permitted in the park because Coopernook Forest Way is not suitable for shared access by horses and vehicles. The road is steep, narrow and winding with poor lines of sight in a number of locations. Management trails in the park are also steep and are unsuitable for vehicle access and horse riding. The park also has a limited history of use by horse riders. Most riders use the surrounding areas, such as State Forests, which have an extensive trail network and are located closer to settlement areas.

**with** the following:

Horse riding opportunities in the park are limited. Most sections of the road and trail network are steep, narrow and winding with poor lines of sight in a number of locations. The park also has a limited history of use by horse riders. Most riders use the surrounding areas, such as state forests, which have an extensive trail network and are located closer to settlement areas. To link the horse riding opportunities in neighbouring Comboyne and Lansdowne state forests, the plan allows for controlled horse riding access by organised groups and/or commercial operators on parts of Coopernook Forest Way and on Flat Nellie Trail (see Map 1). Horse riding access will be subject to conditions to minimise impacts on natural values and other users, and to address safety considerations. This provision of access for horse riding is consistent with the *Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks* (OEH 2012).

Horse riding groups (commercial and non-commercial) may require separate approval from the Forestry Corporation of NSW to ride in the adjoining state forests.

### 3. In Section 2.8 References (page 11)

**Add** the following reference:

OEH (2012) *Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney.

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRideStrat.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRideStrat.htm)

### 4. In Section 3 Management Issues & Strategies, Recreation Opportunities (page 16)

**Replace** the last paragraph in the Current Situation which reads:

Horse riding in the park is considered unsuitable due to the steep, winding and narrow roads which are considered unsuitable for shared access with vehicles. Horse riding opportunities are available in the surroundings State Forests.

**with** the following:

A route has been identified along which controlled horse riding by organised groups and/or commercial operators may occur through the park. The route follows parts of Coopernook Forest Way and Flat Nellie Trail, and provides a link between Landsdowne State Forest and Comboyne State Forest.

### 5. In Section 3 Management Issues & Strategies, Recreation Opportunities (page 17)

**Replace** the strategy:

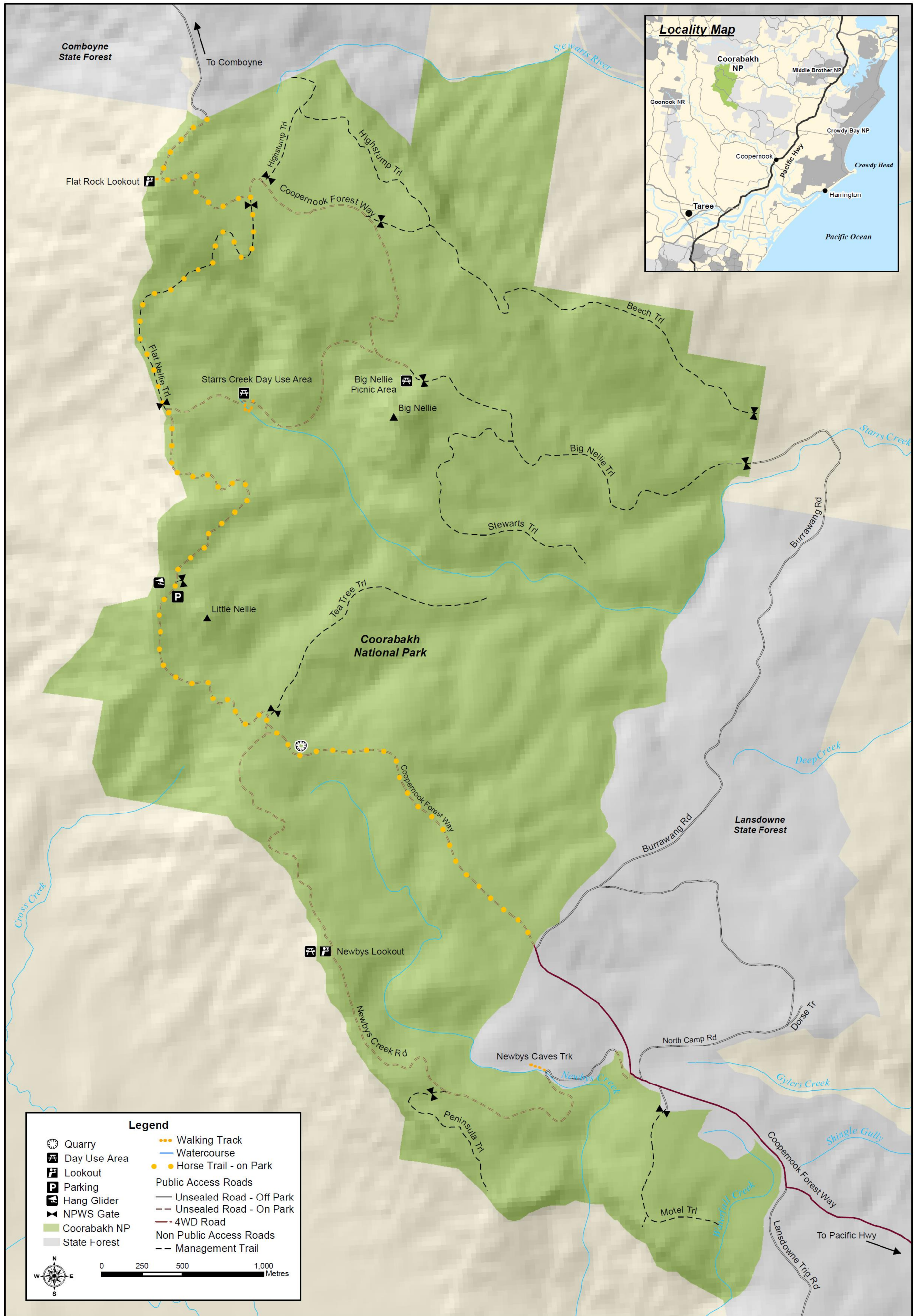
- Horse riding will not be permitted in the park and will be signposted accordingly.

**with** the following medium priority strategy:

- Controlled horse riding access will be permitted by organised groups and/or commercial operators along the route shown on Map 1. Organised groups will require written consent from NPWS and all commercial activities require a licence. Horse riding access will be subject to conditions to minimise impacts on natural values and other users, and to address safety considerations. Horse riding will not be permitted elsewhere in the park.

**Add** the following medium priority strategy:

- Monitor the environmental and social impacts of visitor use and recreation, and implement measures where necessary (including temporary trail closures) to address unacceptable environmental or social impacts.



Proposed new map for the Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management