



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



Kosciuszko National Park Cycling Strategy

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The Kosciuszko National Park Cycling Strategy Report was prepared by TRC Tourism for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

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Executive summary

Overview

This is a strategy for the management of cycling in Kosciuszko National Park. The document has been prepared by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The strategy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- increased contribution towards conservation of park values through growth in new markets that enjoy and value national parks
- environmentally sustainable, fit-for-purpose cycling opportunities that enhance or protect conservation, recreational, social and cultural values
- increased visitation including overnight stays to the Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding region
- transparent and consistent assessment of new proposals to ensure they achieve the outcomes above.

The strategy covers on-road and off-road cycling and in line with the NPWS Cycling Policy, allows the use of e-bikes in the park. Its scope is to identify appropriate cycle networks and their management and promotional requirements. Although the strategy is focused on Kosciuszko National Park, it recognises that the full range of opportunities for cycling can only be delivered in partnership with other stakeholders. The desired outcome is a suite of complementary cycling opportunities spread across the park and other land tenures. The strategy sets out how proposals for new trails or cycling experiences will be assessed to ensure that they are ecologically sustainable and do not impact on park values.

Preparation of this document has involved an initial round of consultation, field visits and desktop research between late February and May 2015. Results from a summer park visitor survey (2014–15) have also been used in developing the strategy.

There is strong evidence that the demand for cycling experiences is increasing in NSW and Australia. Kosciuszko National Park is uniquely situated to capitalise on this growing demand.

The strategy consists of an analysis of relevant legislation and policy, market demand for cycling at national, state and local levels and the aspirations and concerns of stakeholders. That analysis informed the preparation of a vision, four main Goals and 21 Actions that will guide implementation of this strategy.

Vision

By 2025 Kosciuszko National Park will have made a positive contribution to the wider Snowy Mountains region, being recognised nationally for outstanding ecologically sustainable cycling experiences.

Goals

Goal 1

Manage cycling to produce positive and sustainable outcomes for conservation, recreation and tourism.

Actions

1. Protect significant and popular bushwalking experiences in the park by keeping bikes off these tracks, as per the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park. Examples would include the Main Range to Kosciuszko Summit, Waterfall Track, the majority of the Pallaibo Track and Dead Horse Gap to Thredbo Village.
2. Monitor riders' and walkers' satisfaction and potential conflict on the Thredbo Valley Track and other shared-use tracks established in future. Take management action quickly should visitor survey results show 25% or higher levels of dissatisfaction with or conflict between walkers and bikers.
3. Consider using a range of options to reduce visitor conflicts and improve safety. Options include one-way systems, seasonal or part-day closures to two-way traffic, booking systems or other techniques to manage shared-use tracks and trails. NPWS will trial a partial closure to two-way traffic on the Thredbo Valley Track over the busy summer school holidays, e.g. from 10am to 2pm.
4. Ensure all proposals for new trails are assessed against criteria designed to ensure that only tracks that can deliver positive and ecologically sustainable outcomes for conservation, recreation and tourism are approved.
5. Electric or e-bikes are defined as a bicycle designed to be propelled by human power with auxiliary propulsion motors generating a combined power output not exceeding 250 watts. These bikes are allowed on all fire trails, management trails and tracks within the park that are approved for cycle use in the plan of management (see Table 6 - Current opportunities within the park, and the Kosciuszko National Park overview map).
6. Electric powered bikes or motorised bikes with greater than 250 watts capacity are defined as motor vehicles under the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974* and are only allowed on public roads within the park if registered. These bikes are not allowed on fire trails, management trails or shared use tracks.
7. Fat-tyre bikes will be permitted to use tracks and trails currently used by standard mountain bikes.

Goal 2

Improve existing tracks, trails and cycling experiences to meet consumer demand and add value to the park's natural and cultural values.

Actions

1. Complete the extension to the Thredbo Valley Track.
2. Over the next decade, focus investment in Kosciuszko National Park on a selection of 'Top Rides' that will complement other cycling opportunities outside the park.
3. Focus promotional effort on a number of quality mountain-biking experiences to simplify decision making for new park visitors.
4. Undertake regular monitoring of cycling activity in the park (along with other visitor activities) in order to better understand use of existing tracks and trails, cyclist preferences, demographics and spending patterns.

5. Work with Roads and Maritime Services and cycling organisations to:
 - investigate the appropriateness of providing cycling lanes along sections of public roads within the park
 - investigate the need for roadside signs indicating shared use for cyclists.

Goal 3

Develop new tracks and opportunities that meet consumer demand and are compatible with Kosciuszko National Park's natural and cultural values including responding to external investment proposals.

Actions

1. Explore opportunities for trails in and around the accommodation visitor nodes including Yarrangobilly, Currango and Kiandra.
2. Explore options and the ecological feasibility of extending the Thredbo Valley Track from Thredbo to the Cascades Trail via the river.
3. Investigate options and viability for commercial and recreational tour operators to provide day and/or overnight biking tours including from the Yarrangobilly Caves precinct and other opportunities identified above.
4. Consider opportunities for new trails that meet ecological sustainability, visitor safety, resource availability and quality experience criteria.
5. Encourage private investment in cycling opportunities.
6. Assess proposals for cycling experiences using criteria that includes:
 - ecological sustainability
 - appropriateness of the location
 - provision of a quality experience for cyclists
 - balancing competing visitor demands
 - consideration of opportunities and demand for cycling across the region, including other land tenures
 - protection of visitor safety
 - availability of resources to provide and maintain the experience.

Goal 4

Collaborate with cycling organisations, local communities and the private sector to maintain and promote cycling opportunities in the park.

Actions

1. Explore options with stakeholder groups for shared mountain bike trail maintenance and potential new single-track development within the park.
2. Advocate for and collaborate with other stakeholders to complete the proposed Lake Jindabyne Foreshore Track linking Jindabyne with the Thredbo Valley Track extension.
3. Engage with cycle tourism operators, regional tourism organisations, shires and local mountain bike and cycling groups to transfer skills and share lessons learned with trail construction, marketing, management and sustainable financing arrangements for trail maintenance.
4. Collaborate with the alpine resorts to maximise and improve the connectivity of cycling experiences across the park, ensuring consistency in sustainable track construction and management.

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope and application

This is a strategy for the management of cycling in Kosciuszko National Park. The 2006 Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management (POM), in Section 8.11.1, Recreation and Management – Policies and Actions (action 12), calls for a Cycling Strategy. The strategy should recognise that ‘opportunities exist to promote cycling as an alternative means of experiencing and appreciating the values of the park in a leisurely and relaxed way beyond the confines of motorised vehicles’.

The strategy has been developed in the context of the wider region and with regard to existing facilities and future plans for cycling. Its purpose is to provide direction for managing and investing in cycling opportunities into the future (cycling and biking are used interchangeably in this report).

The strategy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- increased contribution towards conservation of park values through growth in new markets that enjoy and value national parks
- environmentally sustainable, fit-for-purpose cycling opportunities that enhance or protect conservation, recreational, social and cultural values
- increased visitation including overnight stays to the Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding region
- transparent and consistent assessment of new proposals to ensure they achieve the outcomes above.

Cycling includes a number of different activities ranging from cycling on conventional or racing bicycles on sealed roads through to technical downhill mountain bike riding on specifically designed tracks.

In line with the NPWS Cycling Policy, cycling in this strategy also includes e-bikes or power assisted pedal cycles designed to be propelled by human power with auxiliary propulsion motor up to 250 watts.

The scope of the strategy is to identify appropriate track and trail networks and their management and promotional requirements.

Whilst the strategy is focused on Kosciuszko National Park, it recognises that the full range of opportunities for cycling can only be delivered in partnership with other stakeholders. The desired outcome is a suite of complementary cycling opportunities spread across the park and other land tenures. As such, the strategy will be important to a range of stakeholders including but not limited to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, nearby shires, tourism businesses, cycling groups (road and mountain bike), other government agencies and existing and potential investors.

The strategy also allows for the consideration of new cycling opportunities that can be considered against criteria designed to ensure protection of park values whilst increasing visitation.

Preparation of this document involved community and stakeholder consultation, field visits and desktop research between late February and May 2015.

Engagement with stakeholders to date has included:

- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service – Tumut, Khancoban, Yarrangobilly, Jindabyne
- mountain bike groups – Tumut, Wagga Wagga, Jindabyne, Cooma-Monaro, Tumbarumba

- tourism operators/resorts – alpine resorts, Jindabyne, Lake Crackenback
 - Tourism Snowy Mountains
 - Jindabyne Trail Stewardship Group
 - Snowies Mountain Trail Bike Destination Group
- Snowy River, Tumbarumba and Tumut Shires
- Southern Ranges Regional Advisory Committee.

Results from an NPWS summer park visitor survey (2014–15) have also been used in developing the strategy.

1.2 Starting position

Recreation and tourism in Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding areas is dominated by walking/hiking, camping, fishing, horse riding and sightseeing in summer and skiing and snowboarding in winter. To a lesser extent it is known for cycling and 4WD activities.

Of all the recreation activities occurring in the park, mountain biking has shown the most growth in the past 5–10 years. This has led to approximately 24 park management trails (outside of the alpine resorts) being identified and promoted for mountain biking, the development of a network of downhill and cross country single-use tracks within the Thredbo Resort Area (with more planned pending approval) and at Lake Crackenback resort, and construction of the shared-use Thredbo Valley Track linking Thredbo to Lake Crackenback Resort and Perisher Skitube. Surrounding the park, other important mountain biking opportunities are now available. Examples include track networks at Khancoban, Tumut, Jindabyne, Cooma, Lake Crackenback Resort and Bungarra.

In terms of mountain biking, Kosciuszko National Park complements the range of regional opportunities by having an extensive network of backcountry and wilderness management trails.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has recently invested \$6 million in mountain biking infrastructure associated with the Thredbo Valley Track, a significant investment of government funds. Opened in January 2015, this track is aimed at beginner to intermediate riders and has proven extremely popular in its first year of operation. The Thredbo Valley Track complements other cycling opportunities in Thredbo and outside the park.

This track is now being extended another 17 km downstream through to the park boundary to enable it to link with the Jindabyne community trails.

Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding areas are also popular for road cycling, with opportunities for arduous long-distance riding through mountainous terrain. The area attracts elite and semi-elite road cyclists and triathletes as well as cycling clubs from as far as Sydney because of the steep terrain and high altitude. The largest organised road cycling events are the Tour de Snowy Mountains, Ultimate Snowy Challenge and L'Etape. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service works with road cycling groups and road authorities to ensure safe and rewarding road cycling in and around the park.

1.3 Vision

By 2025 Kosciuszko National Park will have made a positive contribution to the wider Snowy Mountains region, being recognised nationally for outstanding ecologically sustainable cycling experiences.



2 Situation analysis

2.1 Kosciuszko National Park

Kosciuszko National Park is located in the south-eastern corner of New South Wales, five hours south-west of Sydney and two hours south of Canberra. Part of the Australian Alps national parks, it is contiguous with the Alpine National Park in Victoria to the south, and Namadgi National Park in the Australian Capital Territory to the north-east. The larger towns of Cooma, Tumut and Jindabyne lie just outside and service the park. Visitors from Wagga Wagga, Albury, Canberra and Sydney are regular riders in the park.

At 673,542 hectares Kosciuszko National Park is the largest national park in New South Wales and contains a significant proportion of Australia's alpine landscape. The alpine area of Kosciuszko National Park is less than 0.001% of the Australian mainland. The area is extremely fragile with highly erodible soils and slow-growing endemic plants, 21 of which are not found anywhere else. The area is easily damaged by human activity and is extremely slow to recover.

As the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management states, the park is unique:

'The seasonal presence of snow, more than anything else, sets the Australian Alps apart from most other places on mainland Australia. Beyond this, the Alps contain unusual assemblages of plants and animals, many of which are endemic to the mountains. The summer displays of alpine wildflowers, the glacial and periglacial landforms, the extensive subalpine grasslands and snow gum woodlands, and the swift-flowing alpine streams are all rare, if not unique, features in Australia.'

Managed under the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, the park is also a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and Blue Lake and environs on the Main Range are listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. As one of the 12 areas constituting the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves, the park was listed on the Australian National Heritage List in 2008.

The park also contains karst areas at Yarrangobilly and Cooleman Plain that are nationally significant because of their geomorphological and biological attributes, and are very popular visitor destinations. The waters of the Snowy, Murray, Murrumbidgee, and Tumut rivers all rise in the park. The lakes of the Main Range are the only water bodies on mainland Australia formed by glaciers. As noted in the POM, alpine lakes and rivers in Australia are regarded as nationally significant in that they form only a very small percentage of all running waters in the country.

Aboriginal people occupied the Monaro from about 20,000 years ago (Young 2000). Immediately preceding occupation by Europeans, at least 500 people lived in the Monaro area speaking the Ngarigo language. The POM records that Aboriginal clans and people of the mountains included the Wiradjuri, Wolgalu, Ngunnawal and Monaro Ngarigo people. The mountains are very old and an ongoing life force that strengthens the ancestral link of Aboriginal people, who have a living, spiritual connection with the mountains. The family stories and memories of the mountains make them spiritually and culturally significant to Aboriginal people.

The area was first explored by Europeans in 1835 and in March 1840 Paul Edmund de Strzelecki carried out a geological survey of the Alps and climbed Australia's highest peak, naming it after Polish national hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The mountains were then used by stockmen during the summer

months and were romanticised in Banjo Paterson's poetry. The cattlemen built huts for shelter, many of which remain in the park and attract walkers and bike riders. In the 19th century gold was discovered at Kiandra, and this community grew to a population of 4000 people at its peak. It was here, in the early 1860s, that skiing was first introduced to Australia. The construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric scheme between 1949 and 1974 saw many immigrants come to the area, particularly from Europe following World War II. Many of these people had skied in their own countries, and saw the potential for skiing in the Australian Alps. The first lifts were constructed at Guthega and Thredbo in the late 1950s.

The park is located within five local government areas – Snowy River, Tumut, Cooma-Monaro, Bombala and Tumbarumba. The ski resorts of Thredbo, Selwyn Snowfields, Perisher and Charlotte Pass lie within the park. An electric railway – Skitube – connects the Alpine Way to Perisher Valley.

2.2 Policy context

Management of Kosciuszko National Park is governed by a range of legislation and policies, which outline the responsibilities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to protect the environment whilst also providing recreational experiences in natural settings.

The legislation is over-arching and requires an act of parliament to change. The policies and procedures are more responsive to changing community attitudes and aim to balance demands for access and facilities with conservation of heritage values. It is assumed that any changes to legislation, the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management or NPWS statewide policy will take precedence over policies and procedures contained within this document.

Road cycling

Management of the majority of roads in Kosciuszko National Park comes under the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). The RMS and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service collaborate to ensure safe cycling opportunities along the Alpine Way, Snowy Mountains Highway and other roads popular for road cycling (including events such as the Tour de Snowy Mountains, Ultimate Snowy Challenge and L'Etape).

The *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and a number of other statutory and non-statutory plans and policies guide the development and management of cycling in Kosciuszko National Park.

NSW Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan

The NSW Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan provides strategies and actions to achieve the NSW Government's goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020 – resulting in an economic impact of \$36.6 billion. This plan identifies the need for national parks to offer a more diverse range of experiences that enable visitors to appreciate the natural and cultural values of parks.

Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management 2006

Zoning and policies under the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management 2006 (POM) are the principal tools for managing visitation in Kosciuszko National Park. Approximately 50% of the park is declared wilderness in nine separate wilderness areas.

The map of Kosciuszko National Park zones illustrates how the park is subdivided into the following five management zones:

- wilderness zone – wilderness areas declared under the *Wilderness Act 1987*
- backcountry zone – those parts of the park without public road access and not within declared wilderness areas
- minor road corridors – corridors along minor public roads and associated visitor developments
- major road corridors – corridors along major sealed and unsealed public roads and associated visitor developments
- visitor services zone – alpine resorts, development nodes and operational centres.

Note: For the purposes of this document the alpine zone will refer to those areas above 1850 metres within the Main Range Management Unit and excludes the ski resort areas.

The POM recognises cycling including mountain biking as a growing and legitimate activity and identifies that:

‘Opportunities exist to promote cycling as an alternative means of experiencing and appreciating the values of the park in a leisurely and relaxed way beyond the confines of motorised vehicles. Managed appropriately, cycling can be enjoyed by significant numbers of visitors with few environmental or social impacts.’

An amendment to the POM in 2014 was made to allow appropriate consideration of sustainable mountain biking opportunities in Kosciuszko National Park consistent with the Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy 2011, Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and subject to merit-based statutory environmental assessment through Development Consent under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Under the POM and the 2014 amendment cycling is permitted on all roads, management trails, purpose-built cycling tracks, shared-use tracks and multiple-use trails within the visitor services zone, major and minor road corridors and backcountry zone subject to risk and environmental assessments and approval. Within wilderness zones cycling is restricted to the following designated management trails:

- Cascades Trail and Nine Mile Trail – Pilot Wilderness Area
- Dargals Trail, Grey Mare Trail, Hell Hole Creek Trail, Round Mountain Trail and Valentine Trail – Jagungal Wilderness Area.

Commercial tourism operators

Commercial recreation and tour operators (CTOs) play a key role in facilitating public use and enjoyment of national parks in New South Wales by promoting their unique values and encouraging tourism and recreation.

NPWS licenses CTOs who offer guided tours, instructional or educational courses and other leisure activities in NSW parks and reserves. Their activities enable more people to participate in recreation in a safe way.

CTOs are permitted in wilderness areas but vehicle access is not permitted. Group sizes in wilderness areas are restricted to eight visitors per group. Overnight use of huts is currently not permitted for mountain bikers or other visitors. The rationale for these policies is to protect the sense of isolation and wilderness for visitors, ensure safety and access in emergency situations, and because huts are not built to appropriate health and building standards.

NPWS Cycling Policy

The Cycling Policy defines a bicycle as any pedal powered vehicle with wheels, including mountain bikes, road bikes, tricycles and e-bikes. E-bikes mean bicycles designed to be propelled by human power with auxiliary propulsion motor up to 250 watts output. The Cycling Policy applies to lands managed under the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Its objectives are to provide:

- ecologically sustainable cycling in parks
- proactive and responsive management of cycling in parks
- effective communication between the park authority, cycling communities and other land managers.

The policy considers ‘the most appropriate cycling experiences in parks are those which in addition to providing a quality visitor experience also foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage.’ New cycling experiences may be developed on existing roads or trails by constructing new tracks or by modifying existing tracks. The policy states that the following criteria will be used for managing new or improved tracks and trails:

- ecological sustainability
- appropriateness of the location
- provision of a quality experience for cyclists
- balancing competing visitor demands
- consideration of opportunities and demand for cycling across the region, including other land tenures
- protection of visitor safety
- availability of resources to provide and maintain the experience.

These criteria will also apply to the Cycle Strategy for Kosciuszko National Park.

Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy 2011

This strategy provides a framework for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to develop mountain-biking experiences in parks. The vision for the strategy is to ensure that ‘high quality mountain-biking experiences are provided in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner across the landscape’.

The strategy clearly states that only a few single-track developments will be provided in parks. This suggests a preference for fewer yet quality rides being created in parks. National park cycling opportunities will complement and not be divorced from or duplicate opportunities outside of parks.

Outlined in the strategy are the planning requirements needed for new trails, track design requirements and some priority projects.

The 2014 amendment to the POM addressed the issues associated with restrictions on mountain bike riding in the plan at that time. It also identified that the opportunity exists for additional amendments to improve the intent of providing cycling opportunities in Kosciuszko National Park if the proposed experiences satisfy criteria in the Cycling Policy. This strategy will therefore identify if and where future amendments to the POM could be required.

2.3 Situation summary

- Road and mountain bike riding is permitted in Kosciuszko National Park.
- The most appropriate cycling experiences in parks are those that foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage.
- NPWS will provide a few high quality single-track experiences.
- NPWS will provide a diversity of cycling experiences that suit a variety of people, including families with children, road cyclists and mountain biking enthusiasts.
- Ecological sustainability will hold the highest priority when deciding upon cycling opportunities in the park.



3 Market demand

This section provides an overview of trends in cycling and how this relates to Kosciuszko National Park.

3.1 Overview

Cycle tourism (which includes mountain biking) is considered to be increasing globally. A recent survey (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2014) showed that:

- cycle tour companies saw a 59% increase in profits over 2013
- the Pacific, including Australia, is a small part of the global market (although showing strong growth)
- mountain bike tours form 20% of total cycle tours – 13% on dirt tracks/roads and 7% on single track
- mountain bikes are provided by 57% of tour companies – suggesting there are unsealed road/track components in non-mountain bike specific tours – the survey indicated that 14% of trips were on gravel roads.

Cycle tourism

Just over 1 million domestic day-trippers went cycling in Australia in 2013, representing growth of 15% from the previous year and an annual average growth rate of 15% from 2006. This growth rate is much greater than that of day trips across Australia over the same period (5%).

For domestic overnight visitors, approximately 1.5 million cycled while on holiday in Australia in 2013. This rate has remained stable since 2011, but grew steadily from 2006 when close to 900,000 domestic overnight visitors participated in cycling while on holiday. Victoria and New South Wales generate the lion's share of cycle tourism activity followed by Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia (Tourism Research Australia 2014).

International visitors

In 2013, it was estimated that 314,120 international visitors went cycling while in Australia, representing growth of 6.5% on the previous year and an average annual growth of 11% from 2006. The percentage of international visitors who go cycling in Australia has increased at a much greater rate than the growth rate in international visitors over the same period (2%).

3.2 Mountain biking

Types of mountain bike riding

Mountain bike riders can be broadly divided into core and non-core riders:

- Core mountain bikers tend to be more experienced riders who may differentiate into one or more different genres. They tend to have high levels of mountain bike participation, are high spenders on gear and equipment, are willing to travel to mountain biking destinations and have a high likelihood of participating in competitive events.
- Non-core mountain bikers include novices, families seeking safe enjoyable places to ride away from cars, school groups (often guided by tour operators), off-road bike tourers (from rail trails to trails in steeper and more difficult terrain) and people seeking a different outdoor experience or adventure (such as undertaking a guided experience or hiring a bike while on holiday).

- Activities undertaken by core mountain bikers have evolved into a range of mountain biking types or genres, each with different characteristics, trail/facility requirements, bicycle equipment and competitive circuits. Currently, the core mountain biking types or genres can be described as:
 - cross-country
 - downhill/freeriding
 - all mountain/gravity enduro
 - dirt jump/pump track
 - trials.

Cross-country mountain biking (the oldest type of mountain biking) remains the most popular type of mountain biking activity. It can be undertaken in a variety of places and terrains, from management trails to shared trails to purpose-built single track.

Cross-country riding is most suited to delivery by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as it offers opportunities for participants to appreciate the natural and cultural values of the park as they ride. The mountain bike tracks provided by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are more likely suited to non-core riders. Infrastructure suited to core riders is more likely provided by other stakeholders such as Thredbo Resort and Lake Crackenback Resort.

The Australian mountain bike visitor market

The current Australian mountain bike visitor market is estimated at 438,600 Australians and 50,000 international visitors per annum (Tourism Research Australia 2014).

Not surprisingly most mountain biking activity occurs in and around Australia's major urban centres where people commonly ride urban tracks and rail trails, coastal trails and other easily accessible bushland trails. Demand is highest for easy to moderate biking trails within a two-hour drive from a major centre. Cyclists and mountain bikers will also travel considerable distances for high quality tracks and trails of all levels of difficulty (e.g. interstate to Forrest and Mt Buller, Victoria's rail trails and Stromlo, ACT).

In Australia, popular mountain bike destinations include the trail networks and associated facilities at Thredbo (NSW), Stromlo Forest Park (ACT), Mount Buller, Forrest and the You Yangs (Victoria), Melrose (South Australia) and Atherton and Smithfield near Cairns (Queensland). New networks are being established in Tasmania. According to the ABC News, 18 May 2015, in the north-east town of Derby cycle tourism is the driver of economic recovery. A selection of these areas is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Selected mountain bike destinations and points of difference

Area	Features and point of difference
Stromlo Forest Park (ACT)	A nationally recognised mountain trail bike park. Over 50 km of cross-country, downhill and jump park. Large selection of beginner and intermediate trails to the same tracks used at the 2009 UCI World Mountain Bike Championships.
Mt Buller (Vic)	Australia's first Epic Trail. Alpine resort focus with a network of trails. Multi-purpose destination summer and winter. Rapid growth in biking since 2007–08. Now 20,000+ cyclists a year with new businesses and market profile
You Yangs (Vic)	Regional park less than 1 hour from Melbourne. Gravity downhill flow destination + events. Technical riding destination. About 55 km of trails. Single-purpose destination. Over 100,000 riders a year. Local users have MOU to manage/provide uphill transport.
Forrest–Great Otway NP (Vic)	2 hours from Melbourne. 66+ km of trails. A single-purpose riding destination. Rural recovery story. Approx. 20,000–30,000 cyclists a year. Rural, small-town atmosphere. Events and endurance riding mostly. Limited appeal to young families.

4 Cycle tourism

Visitation to the Snowy Mountains has been static or declining over the last five years, with 2.2 million domestic overnight visitors for the year ending December 2014, down by 12.4% on the year before. The region receives about 20,000 international overnight visitors each year. An exception is the Snowy River Shire, where, according to Tourism Research Australia, Jindabyne (one of the main gateways and key drivers of tourism in the park) is experiencing increasing visitation (Tourism Research Australia 2014).

4.1 Recreation and tourism in Kosciuszko National Park

Skiing and access to Australia's highest mountain have ensured Kosciuszko National Park's positioning as a popular tourism destination since the early 1900s. Some mountains in the park are typically covered by snow for up to four months of the year and as such have attracted winter recreation since skiing was first introduced to Australia at Kiandra in 1861. With the maturing of ski resort villages and awareness of the exceptional and accessible natural areas, the popularity of the park for both winter and summer recreation has grown. The park now receives an estimated 2.3 million visits each year.

Sightseeing/car touring and bushwalking have traditionally been the main summer activities within the park and camping and fishing are also popular. In the northern part of the park there are areas zoned as appropriate for four-wheel driving and horse riding with the majority of facilities for these activities are to be found there.

The infrastructure associated with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric scheme is dispersed around the park and lakes such as Jindabyne, Blowring and Khancoban are popular for water sports such as water skiing. Cycling in its various forms has occurred within and around the park for many years. In the past, trails have been established at Thredbo as well as the nearby settlements of Cooma, Khancoban, Jindabyne, Tumbarumba and Tumut.

A NPWS survey (unpublished) conducted amongst summertime visitors in 2015 identified the following take-up of activities, with respondents able to nominate more than one activity:

- walking – 76% used a walking track and 3% went on an overnight walk
- cycling – 6% reported using the downhill trails at Thredbo, 13% the Thredbo Valley Track, 3% with back-country touring and 6% used the Tyrolean/Mill Creek or Lake Crackenback trails and 5% went road cycling
- car touring – 21%
- fishing – 15%
- overnight camping – 19%
- 4WD – 5%.

The park's size and topography means that there is a wide variation in landscape, climate and visitor activities across the park. The resorts and alpine areas of the park have the highest visitation with large numbers of people visiting in winter for skiing, snowboarding and snow play. In summer, alpine walks such as from Thredbo or via the Main Range track to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko are popular. The displays of wildflowers are a major drawcard.

The Alpine Way is popular for car touring due to the stunning views of the dramatic western face of the Main Range and pockets of cool temperate rainforest. The dry rugged areas along the lower Snowy River in the east of the park are less popular with visitors but are a favourite for many local residents for camping, canoeing and some horse riding.

The north end of the park is characterised by extensive treeless plains. Visitation to this part of the park is much lower than in the south with horse riding, camping, 4WD and bushwalking the most common activities. Karst formations at Blue Waterholes and Yarrangobilly Caves are important attractions as are the heritage accommodation at Currango homestead and Caves House at Yarrangobilly Caves.

Camping is popular across the park with many campgrounds busy in summer including Geehi, Tom Groggin, Ngarigo, Thredbo Diggings, the Snowy River, Blowering Dam and Blue Waterholes.

4.2 Cycling in Kosciuszko and surrounding areas

Cycling in the park on sealed roads as well as riding on management trails on mountain bikes has been occurring for many years.

Road cycling

Sealed roads within the park offer the best road cycling experience, in particular Kosciuszko Road, the Alpine Way from Jindabyne to Dead Horse gap and the Snowy Mountains Highway. Many of the other public roads within the park both sealed and gravel are less popular because they are very narrow and or steep and safety is an issue.

Cycling experiences within the park could be improved through the addition of cycle lanes or widened road verges. In most instances this would require substantial additional investment.

Road cycling occurs by way of events such as the Tour de Snowy Mountains, The Ultimate Snowy Challenge and L'Etape as well as a series of loop rides within and adjacent to the park (Table 2, page 13). Events like the Tour de Snowy Mountains attract up to 100 riders on a three-day course involving big days and comfortable resort accommodation.

In 2016 the Snowy Mountains Region hosted the L'Etape Australia cycle event which attracted approximately 4,000 participants.

The Ultimate Snowy Challenge attracts over 200 riders annually, offering long-course and short-course options between Dead Horse Gap and Charlotte Pass. The most popular loop and return rides undertaken by riders include:

- Eucumbene Dam – 62 km
- Tumut to Talbingo – 80 km
- The Dalgety Loop – 85 km
- Jindabyne to Charlotte Pass – 80 km
- Around the Block (Jindabyne to Adaminaby to Kiandra to Khancoban and back to Jindabyne) – 315 km
- Jindabyne to Dead Horse Gap – 70 km
- Barry Way – 52 km
- Berridale Loop – 60 km.

Table 2: Examples of road cycling rides

Day	Ride description	Distance (kilometres)
1	Khancoban–Dead Horse Gap–Thredbo	80
2	Thredbo–Jindabyne–Charlotte Pass–Jindabyne–Thredbo	150
3	Thredbo–Cooma	100

Cycling clubs from Sydney and Canberra are known to visit the area for the excellent rides in the alpine environment.

Mountain biking

Over the last 10 years, growth in interest in mountain biking has seen:

- continued development of new single-use tracks within the Thredbo Resort
- the construction of the shared-use Thredbo Valley Track linking Thredbo to Lake Crackenback Resort and the Skitube at Bullocks Flat
- new tracks constructed at Lake Crackenback adjacent to the park
- new tracks off-park at Tyrolean Village/Mill Creek and Bungarra near Jindabyne
- track construction near the towns of Khancoban, Tumut and Cooma as well as identification of management trails suitable for mountain bike riding by other land managers such as Forestry
- the identification and promotion of a suite of 24 management trails suited to mountain biking in Kosciuszko National Park
- a number of mountain bike events in the Jindabyne and Tumut areas.

With the development and promotion of additional riding opportunities there has been further growth in participation. In the Jindabyne area, for example, a new cycling club was formed and has seen high levels of participation in road cycling, mountain biking and events across all demographics. The town of Jindabyne is understood to have a higher proportion of women mountain bike riders than any town in Australia.

Table 3 presents the main mountain bike opportunities currently provided by other stakeholders both on- and off-park in the region.

Table 3: Mountain bike opportunities provided by other stakeholders

Provider	Summary
Thredbo Resort	The only chairlift-assisted trail network in the region with a wide variety of trails suited to all levels, mountain biking clinics, tours, lessons, pump track, jump park and winter fat-tyre snow biking.
Lake Crackenback	Over 25 km of scenic tracks from beginner to advanced as well as a purpose-built Caroline Buchanan Pump and Flow Track with berms, bridges, logs and rails.
Tyrolean/Mill Creek/Jindabyne	An active mountain biking community with existing and planned trails. Existing options include the Lake Jindabyne Foreshore and Tyrolean Mill Creek. The former is suitable for all levels of ability and is planned to connect to a proposed extension to the Thredbo Valley Track. There is a long-term vision for the trail to go around the whole lake.
Bungarra	A trail network of over 20 km, professionally built to meet the needs of all levels of mountain bikers. These trails are only open to users by agreement with the land owner or through the Jindabyne Cycling, Triathlon and Mountain Bike Club.
Khancoban	Difficult and advanced single-track trails maintained by local mountain bikers.
Tumut	Tumut Mountain Bike trails are highly regarded by riders of all standards being 7.3 km in length, with a 70/30 mix of single track/fire trail. The single tracks have been purpose built and are made up of three well signposted loops and one connection trail that is more XC-focused. Total trail length is 7.3 km.
Cooma	Mix of old service roads, walking trails and motorbike trails close to Cooma.

Thredbo Resort provides the most extensive and varied network of single-track riding for all skill levels within the park. Riding on management trails is also possible within the Perisher Resort. Thredbo Resort trails include downhill, flow, pump track, cross-country, skills park and jump park. Individual rides range from 1 kilometre to more than 15 kilometres. National events are hosted at Thredbo and a full range of bike hire, lessons and repair services is available. Trail examples include:

Mountain trails

1. Cannonball Downhill – 3.8 km (advanced)
2. Kosciuszko Flow Trail – 5.8 km (intermediate)

Valley trails

1. Lower Mountain Traverse – 2 km (intermediate)
2. Bridle Trail Loop – 3 km (intermediate)
3. Golf Course Trail – 3 km (easiest/intermediate)
4. Friday Flat Trail – 1.5 km (easiest)
5. Pipeline Trail – 2 km (easiest)

The Thredbo Valley Track (from Thredbo to Lake Crackenback Resort) received 10,000 to 12,000 rides between October 2014 and June 2015 (although not officially opened until January 2015). Even though this track will be closed during winter it is estimated that by May 2016 the Thredbo Valley Track could receive 14,000–18,000 riders. At 10–15% growth per annum this will equate to somewhere between 17,000 and 23,000 rides in 2020. A 10–15% growth rate is not unreasonable given that participation in cycling activities by domestic overnight visitors has been growing at 13% per year for the last 5 years (NVS/IVS 2009–14).

For the purpose of this strategy, it is assumed that most visitors will do only one run each, although anecdotally it is known that some riders will make multiple descents. This has been taken from NPWS track data and TRC Tourism demand estimates to 2020. Track counters on Thredbo Valley Track count passes of each bike, not unique individuals. For this strategy it is assumed that on average one pass equates to one unique rider. This is less than the ratio of rides to riders on the Thredbo downhill where riders are doing five to six runs on average (understandably because of the chair lift that provides access).



The number of downhill riders on the Thredbo chairlift grew from 3400 in 2013 to 5600 in 2015, or from 15,600 runs to 26,500 runs in less than three years (Thredbo Resort data, personal communication).

Current and future demand

Although data is incomplete, mountain biking appears to be the only recreation activity associated with Kosciuszko National Park that is showing continued growth, albeit off a small base (Table 4). Anecdotal accounts from local businesses in and around the park suggest more visitors are arriving with bikes than ever before. These are thought to be mostly repeat visitors bringing bikes with them. It should be noted that people on bikes, or carrying bikes on cars, are more noticeable than visitors coming to the park for walking or hiking. Yet walking and hiking remains the dominant summertime activity by far.

An estimate of total mountain bike participation in 2015 ranges from a low of 11,500 to a high of 16,500 visitors. This represents close to 2% of summer visitors (assuming 800,000 summer visitors). Although data on cycling activity in the park is incomplete, these estimates are close to the National Visitor Survey (NVS) 2014 results that indicate that as many as 1.1% of all Australian tourists participate in a cycling activity during their trip. By 2020, participation in off-road cycling could be in the range of 18,500 to 26,000 visitors per annum or up to 3% of summer visitors.

Table 4: Estimated future mountain bike use in Kosciuszko National Park

Track or trail	2015 estimated mountain bikers Low–high	2020 estimated mountain bikers at 10% per year Low–high
Thredbo Resort*	5,000–7,500	8,000–13,300
Thredbo Valley Track†	5,000–6,000	8,000–9,000
Management trails‡	500–1000	800–1,600
Events§	1,000–2,000	1600–3,200
Totals#	11,500–16,500	18,500–26,600

Notes: * Based on Thredbo Resort data and an allowance for any possible underestimate.

† Based on track counts between October 2014 and April 2015 and a rough assumption of two rides per person ride per rider.

‡ Preliminary estimate using Thredbo Valley as a comparison in terms of volume.

§ Based on current events. Domestic overnight cycle tourism has been growing at the rate of 13% p.a. since 2009. This rate is not applied to events although event participation is expected to grow.

Double counting is possible with the resort and Thredbo Valley figures as some visitors ride both.

Without further research, it is difficult to estimate the proportion of first-time visitors who are drawn to the park primarily because of biking opportunities. However, as opportunities such as the Thredbo Valley Track and the downhill and cross-country rides at Thredbo Alpine Resort become more widely known, the proportion of first-time visitors with bikes is likely to increase.

The primary hub of all cycling activity for the park is centred on Jindabyne and the Thredbo Valley (including Thredbo Resort and Lake Crackenback). Other visitor nodes such as Khancoban, Tumut, Cooma, Currango, Yarrangobilly and the alpine resorts of Perisher, Charlotte Pass and Selwyn have current and potential biking opportunities although they are not known as biking destinations. Biking in and around these locations is undertaken by local residents, summer campers and visitors who travel around the park staying at different locations. Due to travel distances between the park's visitor nodes, it is

unlikely that the high visitation levels of Jindabyne and the alpine resorts will drive any significant levels of demand for mountain biking elsewhere in the park. However, if great rides become established in the north of the park, it is conceivable that some visitors based in Jindabyne will make the effort to drive or take a shuttle there and back. The key to this will be the opportunity to have a great riding experience and minimal inconvenience with transport.

Market segments

The mountain biking market for Kosciuszko National Park has been segmented in terms of ability, life-stage and motivation (Table 5). Existing tracks and trails are matched against each segment to show how the park and nearby areas currently cater for each segment.

Table 5: Market segments and current matching rides in or near Kosciuszko National Park

Segment	Level of service	Matching rides
Non-core riders: Social trail riders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> riding with groups of friends and family important day and overnight trips – mostly day rides up to 40 km a day on easy to moderate terrain seek a challenge but nothing too risky or extreme a sense of adventure and achievement is important plenty of places to stop, cafes 	Thredbo Valley Track Jindabyne trail network Geehi camp area Thredbo cross-country Various park management trails
Non-core riders: Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy and varied terrain with occasional challenges (bridges, hills, exposed sections, stream crossings) safe up to 35 km per day (mostly 10–15 km) points of interest, views, places to rest to break the journey up and keep kids interested in their surroundings 	Thredbo Valley Track Jindabyne trail network Geehi camp area Lake Crackenback Thredbo cross-country Various park management trails
Non-core riders: Schools, corporate, special interest group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistent surface that is reasonably easy to ride approximately 8–20 km opportunity to ride in groups, socialise, have fun and learn bike skills attractive scenery 	Thredbo Valley Track Bungarra Lake Crackenback Jindabyne trail network
Core riders: Endurance / Cross-country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong desire for challenging terrain, steep climbs and descents, tight and sweeping corners, long-distance rides including at night rides of up to 75 km per day mix of competitive and non-competitive riders 	Cascade – Nine Mile Pinch Guthega – Geehi via Schlinks Pass Thredbo Valley Track Other management trails
Core riders: Downhill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> long or short rides – it's all about gravity can walk, bike, lift or fly into start points strong desire for excitement, challenge, skill development, speed and sense of adventure competitive and non-competitive elements amongst this market 	Thredbo Resort Thredbo Valley Track
Core riders: Technical and tricks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenge and skill development are strongest motivators prefer natural and built obstacles, downhill sections 	Bungarra Mill Creek, Jindabyne Thredbo Resort

5 Assessment of current and potential opportunities

This section provides an assessment of current and potential opportunities for Kosciuszko National Park. Current and future demand for riding in and around the park is discussed, pointing to where management effort could be directed over the next decade.

5.1 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

Kosciuszko National Park has an established reputation for walking, hiking and skiing/snowboarding. Mountain biking is still not strongly associated with the park but its reputation for this is growing quickly. The previous section estimates that up to 3% of all summertime visitors would participate in mountain biking by 2020.

Consumer images of the park are strongly associated with alpine resorts and large tracts of wilderness. The Thredbo Valley Track and the extensive network of downhill and cross-country trails established and being extended at Thredbo Resort are the only purpose-built rides in the park. All other riding is on management trails and a small number of shared-use trails. Relevant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are summarised as:

Strengths

- iconic alpine tourism destination with a wide range of accommodation options
- a range of alternative adventure activities available including walking, horse riding, rafting
- established tourism flows in the south and along the Alpine Way and Snowy Mountains Highway
- cycling activity appears to be growing despite limited purpose-built trails in the park
- enthusiastic nearby communities want to see sustainable cycling opportunities
- extensive purpose-built trail networks provided at Thredbo Resort and areas surrounding the park as well as plans for extensions in these areas.

Weaknesses

- propensity for severe climatic conditions causing erosion on bare earth tracks particularly in sensitive alpine soils
- unresolved challenges to building sustainable bike tracks in fragile alpine environments
- limited range of nature and adventure tourism operators offering biking experiences
- lack of awareness of Kosciuszko biking opportunities in Sydney and Melbourne

- incomplete data on cycling activity associated with the park
- no public transport to the park and only limited transport to the region
- lack of commercial investment in transport and other bike support services.

Opportunities

- build on the growing reputation for cycling in and around Jindabyne, the alpine resorts, Lake Crackenback, Bungarra
- use the park's management trails as a point of difference that complements other providers of mountain biking (Thredbo Resort, Crackenback, Jindabyne, Tumut)
- harness the power of community bike groups for maintenance, promotion and events
- unrealised potential for commercial recreation and tour operators.

Threats

- ongoing and increasing costs of maintenance
- increasing costs of trail construction
- increasing number of competing destinations elsewhere in Australia
- environmental and social issues arising from illegal use, e.g. use of walking tracks by cyclists, illegal trail building.



5.2 Current opportunities within the park

More than 25 existing riding opportunities have been identified in the park (excluding alpine resorts; see Table 6 and [Kosciuszko National Park overview map](#)). The number of tracks and trails is not definitive as visitors ride the tracks/trails in different ways – some completing the whole journey while others complete only sections – meaning an exact number of options is difficult to pin down. Opportunities that are currently promoted via brochures and websites are summarised in the following table.

Table 6: Current opportunities within the park

	Track or trail	Distance	Park zone	Skill level
1.	Big Talbingo Ride	28 km	backcountry	advanced
2.	Mosquito Creek–return to Hainsworth Hut, Old Currango and Bill Jones Hut	34 km	backcountry	advanced
3.	Pocket Hut Ride–return (alternative ride to Blue Waterholes)	13 km	backcountry	intermediate
4.	Gooandra Homestead Ride	9.4 km	backcountry	intermediate
5.	Murrumbidgee Ride	20 km	backcountry	intermediate
6.	Nungar Bullock Ride	39 km	backcountry	advanced
7.	Long Plain Ride	21 km	backcountry	easy
8.	Four Mile Hut Ride from Kiandra	14 km	backcountry	intermediate
9.	Gavels Circuit	21 km	backcountry	intermediate
10.	Round Mountain Ride	41 km	backcountry and wilderness	advanced
11.	Major Clews Hut Loop	35 km	backcountry	easy
12.	Geehi Huts Ride	10 km	backcountry	easy
13.	Geehi Reservoir Ride	31 km	backcountry	intermediate
14.	Munyang–Schlink Pass via Disappointment Spur	11 km	backcountry	intermediate
15.	Burrungubugge Ride	15 km	backcountry	intermediate
16.	Perisher to Guthega Trail	18 km	backcountry	intermediate
17.	Aqueduct Hut Trail	3 km	backcountry	easy
18.	Perisher to Charlotte Pass (road ride)	20 km	visitor services	easy
19.	Pipers Creek Trail	14 km	backcountry	easy
20.	Summit Trail	14 km (return)	backcountry	easy
21.	Thredbo Valley Track	17 km	backcountry	intermediate
22.	Pilot Wilderness Ride to Cascade Hut	22 km	wilderness	advanced
23.	Bullocks Hut Track	2.3 km	backcountry	intermediate
24.	Muzzlewood Loop	2.4 km	backcountry	easy
25.	Bicentennial trail–Boardmans Run (Multi-use)–Tom Groggin to Geehi	21 km	backcountry	advanced

Note: The numbers in the first column refer to the tracks and trails in the [Kosciuszko National Park overview map](#)

Summary of supply and demand

Observations are made on these opportunities based on fieldwork, consultation and desktop research:

1. Jindabyne and Thredbo Resort are the key hubs for biking activity. Thredbo Resort offers over 30 kilometres of trails for core and non-core riders with over 20 kilometres of new trails planned.
2. Other networks outside the park including Lake Crackenback, Bungarra, Mill Creek/Tryolean around Jindabyne as well as networks at Tumut, Cooma and Khancoban play an important role for easy to advanced level riders (particularly the latter) because they have purpose-built single track.
3. The majority of the management trails in Kosciuszko National Park promoted for mountain biking are suitable for intermediate to advanced riders. The management trails are more demanding in terms of fitness rather than technical skill. Although data on the use of these trails are incomplete, national park staff have observed very little use of these trails. Nevertheless they are available and could be better promoted to encourage further use by riders seeking longer and/or more remote riding experiences at a range of levels.
4. The park has a smaller range of tracks for beginner to intermediate skill levels. The main options are the Thredbo Valley Track, a range of tracks in the Thredbo Resort, the Kosciuszko Summit Trail as well as management trails around Perisher Valley, Geehi Camping area, and Currango Homestead.
5. Many trails in the north and central parts of the park are disconnected from major visitor flows or hubs, or centres of activity such as where people make an overnight stay or camp. As such, doing many of the journeys is currently logistically challenging. As an example, although there are no obvious rides in and around Yarrangobilly Caves, this visitor hub could offer riding opportunities that link with existing trails in future if shuttle support was available.
6. There is a lack of commercially supported backcountry or wilderness rides that could enable better access for a wide range of visitors to some spectacular country.
7. In light of these observations, it is appropriate that NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service focus its investment on opportunities that will complement opportunities at Thredbo and off-park opportunities such as those available at Lake Crackenback, Bungarra, Jindabyne, Tumut and elsewhere. The key point of difference the park provides is in providing cycling journeys through backcountry and wilderness areas (Table 7).

Future possibilities and plan of management implications

A selection of improvements is suggested based on the assessment of the current opportunities in the park and likely future demand. Further investigation is required for each option.

Table 7: Future cycling options and plan of management implications

Track or trail	Zone	Requirements	POM implication
Thredbo Valley Track Extension down stream	backcountry and visitor services	A 17 km extension to the popular Thredbo Valley Track should be completed. This offers a potential to link to Lake Jindabyne foreshore and return to Jindabyne. It has potential to become the region's first Epic Trail. The extended trail would become the 'backbone' or centrepiece for off-road cycling in the park	No POM change required
Thredbo Valley Track extension upstream (Thredbo to Cascade Trail)	backcountry zone	Consider options and the ecological feasibility for a mountain bike track which would not impact on the existing River Walk experience	No change to POM
Connection between Thredbo Valley Track Extension and Jindabyne via lake foreshore	NA	Collaboration with Snowy Monaro Shire, wider community and local businesses. Currently in early planning stages. Strong support from Shire, community and businesses is evident	No change
Kiandra to Wallace's Fire Trail	backcountry	An easy to moderate day ride on existing management trails in the north. Needs improved information, marketing and signs	No change
Mosquito Creek–Blue Waterholes–Currango Homestead	backcountry	A possible overnight journey that could be pilot-tested. Potential to connect Yarrangobilly to this trail by vehicle. Overnight camps could be trialled at suitable sites. Enjoyable easy to moderate riding through expansive wilderness. A potential signature ride for the park	Potential change required to allow access for CTO support
Cascade–Nine Mile Pinch–Barry Way as a commercially supported ride with shuttle pick up	wilderness	Currently thought to attract less than 200 riders per year. Located in the south of the park, this ride has the potential to expose more visitors to the magnificent Pilot Wilderness Area. Short and longer ride options possible via CTO support, including overnight. Trial period suggested to test market response	Potential change to allow access for CTO support
Munyang Power Station to Geehi Dam with commercial support (day or overnight ride)	backcountry	Currently thought to attract less than 300 intermediate to advanced riders per year. Has the potential to expose riders from beginner to advanced to short and longer trip options, including overnight at Schlink Hut or a suitable campsite	Potential change to allow access for CTO support and overnight use of Schlink Hut
Summit Trail walk–bike combo	backcountry	Could be promoted as a great walk–ride experience. A trial period could be explored for CTO support to locate bikes at Rawson Pass – riders could ride the Summit Trail to Charlotte Pass and continue down the sealed road to Perisher Resort. Under the POM, there is a plan to convert the management trail between Rawson Pass and Charlotte Pass back to a walking track. Important that this be a shared-use track	Change to allow access for CTO support and to allow management trail remain open for cycle traffic
North Kosciuszko National Park accommodation precincts	exceptional natural and cultural significance	Explore the potential for rides accessible to visitors staying at Yarrangobilly Caves, Kiandra and Currango. May require development of new single-track should demand prove positive and cycle policy criteria can be met	Change to allow new tracks
Development of mountain biking tracks within other Alpine Resorts in Kosciuszko National Park	Visitor Services Zone	Construction of mountain biking tracks within the resorts is permissible subject to environmental approval	No change

Notes: CTO = commercial recreation and tour operator; POM = plan of management; All future proposals would require environmental assessment.



6 Stakeholder aspirations and concerns

Initial consultation undertaken during preparation of this strategy raised the following aspirations and concerns over cycling in and around the park:

- local councils are supportive of road and mountain bike riding but all have funding constraints for new trail development
- there is strong support for an extension to the Thredbo Valley Track although there are differences of opinion over what standard should apply
- most of the stakeholders consulted have realistic expectations that the park will not be all things to all riders
- bike clubs and other cycling groups from Jindabyne Tumut, Wagga, Cooma and the Jindabyne Trail Stewardship Group have potential to become powerful allies for bike opportunities in and surrounding the park
- there is growing concern about potential conflicts between walkers and bikers on some tracks (such as the Thredbo Valley Track)
- retailers and other tour operators are keen to support growth in mountain biking
- some intermediate to advanced riders are simply happy to have access to management trails – they do not expect much in the way of construction of new single track within the park
- there is concern to ensure that resources are available for the long-term maintenance of trails in and surrounding the park.

The Snowy Mountains Trails Destination Group has painted a bold vision to develop a cluster of rides that will capture the imagination of Sydney, Canberra and regional riders. This includes:

- a trail network linking Thredbo Resort and Perisher Valley
- linkages between Thredbo–Cascade–Nine Mile Pinch
- a descent down the Pallaibo Walk to link with the Thredbo Valley Track near Gaden
- an around-the-lake trail for Lake Jindabyne.

These concepts would potentially increase visitation to the park and offer unique riding experiences. The trail linking Thredbo Resort to the Cascades Track would complete the concept of the Thredbo Valley Track as an epic ride (40 km Dead Horse Gap to the Trout Hatchery) linking two well-promoted, high-quality mountain biking experiences.

However, there are potential issues to overcome including:

- conflicts with walkers on existing walking track (the River Walk from Thredbo to Dead Horse Gap and Pallaibo tracks)
- current lack of a long term proven sustainable construction method for bike trails in the alpine zone (above 1850 m within the Main Range Management Unit excluding the alpine resorts; see [map of Kosciuszko National Park zones](#), above the tree line between Thredbo and Perisher resorts)
- lack of riding appeal and difficulty in gaining access through private property to secure a trail completely around Lake Jindabyne.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is not prepared to construct mountain bike trails in the alpine zone unless an affordable, ecologically sustainable solution is available. This is because:

- The soils and vegetation in the alpine zone are exceptionally fragile and susceptible to erosion from wind and frost-heave. The soils and vegetation communities in the alpine zone are slow to recover following disturbance.
- The alpine ecosystems make up only a small percentage of the Australian mainland and are of great conservation value.
- Some of the existing walking tracks in the alpine zone have erosion issues and are costly to repair and maintain.
- Any new mountain bike track in this environment would have to be surfaced with a natural imported material or an environmentally acceptable Kevlar/synthetic material that would minimise impacts to surrounding soil and vegetation. The use of an imported natural material would be expensive, remove vegetation, impact on visual amenity and potentially lead to impacts on surrounding soil and vegetation. Use of a synthetic platform would alleviate impacts on soil and vegetation communities but this form of construction is also expensive.
- There would need to be significant unmet market demand to justify any investigation into developing new trails or allowing riding on existing trails (excluding Summit Rd) in the alpine zone (above 1850 m). It should be noted that construction of mountain bike trails in the alpine zone within the alpine resorts is permissible subject to environmental approval.
- The strategy is designed to allow scope for stakeholders and the community to submit proposals for consideration which will be assessed against the criteria on page 6. NPWS welcomes proposals that could be financed through grants or private investment and contribute to recreational values whilst not impacting on other park values.



7 Goals and actions

Goal 1: Manage cycling to produce positive and sustainable outcomes for conservation, recreation and tourism.

Rationale

A sustainable mountain bike track is one that has a minimal environmental and social impact, has minimal maintenance requirements and is safe.

In settings such as Kosciuszko National Park (KNP), there is a risk of creating adverse conflicts between cyclists and other recreationists and between cyclists and the environment. New styles of riding have also emerged in the last five years including electric bikes or e-bikes and fat-tyre mountain bikes, the latter being specially designed for snow and soft terrain.

Sales of electric bikes in Australia and New Zealand with silent power-assisted motors up to 250 watts are increasing. Most use appears to be on roads and easy cycle trails. Sales of fat-tyre mountain bikes are very low by comparison and do not appear to be making much of a penetration into cycle tourism. At this stage, fat-tyre bikes do not appear to pose much risk to the environment or to other visitors in the park.

Although it appears that participation in mountain biking is increasing, the predominant recreation activity in the park is walking and hiking. This strategy recognises that many walkers/hikers also ride mountain bikes.

The relationship between walkers and cyclists and the natural environment is dynamic and evolving. A variety of approaches is required to manage these relationships. The provision of single-purpose tracks for cyclists and walkers avoids any conflict between visitors but this is not always possible due to the configuration of existing track/trail networks and the cost of building new tracks. Shared-use tracks can work very well but require careful monitoring of inter-group conflicts.

The 25% threshold level (see Action 2) is to be used as a guide only. It is based on international literature on inter-group conflict in natural settings. It has been applied by the Department of Conservation in New Zealand for over a decade in the management of inter-group conflict in Westland National Park, Mount Cook National Park and Fiordland National Park based on results from annual visitor surveys. The response to conflict varies by site and by issue so there is no general solution that will fit all situations. These need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In light of this discussion a number of key actions are recommended to deliver on the vision of this strategy:

Actions

1. Protect significant or popular bushwalking experiences in the park by keeping bikes off walking tracks, as per the POM for KNP. Examples would include the Main Range to Kosciuszko Summit, the Waterfall Track, the majority of the Pallaibo Track and Dead Horse Gap to Thredbo Village.

2. Monitor riders' and walkers' satisfaction and potential conflict on the Thredbo Valley Track and other shared-use tracks established in future. Take management action quickly should visitor survey results show 25% or higher levels of dissatisfaction with or conflict between walkers and bikers.
3. Consider using a range of options to reduce visitor conflicts and improve safety. Options include one-way systems, seasonal and partial closures to two-way traffic, booking systems or other techniques to manage shared-use tracks and trails.
4. Ensure all proposals for new trails are assessed against criteria designed to ensure that only tracks that can deliver positive and ecologically sustainable outcomes for conservation, recreation and tourism are approved.
5. Electric or e-bikes are defined as a bicycle designed to be propelled by human power with auxiliary propulsion motors generating a combined power output not exceeding 250 watts. These bikes are allowed on all fire trails, management trails and tracks within the park that are approved for cycle use in the POM see Table 6. Current opportunities within the park and [Kosciuszko National Park overview map](#).
6. Electric powered bikes or motorised bikes with greater than 250 watts capacity are defined as motor vehicles under the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974* and are only allowed on public roads within the park if registered. These bikes are not allowed on fire trails, management trails or shared use tracks.
7. Fat-tyre bikes will be permitted to use tracks and trails currently used by standard mountain bikes.

Goal 2: Improve existing tracks, trails and cycling experiences to meet consumer demand and add value to the park's natural and cultural values.

Rationale

Cycling activity is growing in the park with on-road activity increasing on a number of main roads and a growing community interest in mountain bike riding. The largest volume and fastest growth rate involving mountain biking is occurring on the Thredbo Valley Track and the downhill tracks at Thredbo Resort. There is increasing interest from mountain bikers and some local businesses to access the alpine zone connecting Thredbo and Perisher Resort areas. While this could produce some outstanding riding, the threat to the alpine zone is considered to be too great at this point.

As cycling activity increases nationally, there is a risk of over-investing in tracks and trails on the assumption that growth will continue. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has already invested \$6 million on the Thredbo Valley Track and has invested in extending the track to link with the Jindabyne trail network. Apart from this extension, the priority now is to consolidate and monitor that investment rather than continue building single track. It should be noted also that the main recreation activity associated with Kosciuszko National Park is walking and hiking. Cycling is estimated to make up approximately 5% of total summer use. Therefore any investment in new tracks and trails needs to keep the balance between walking/hiking and cycling in perspective.

Actions

1. Complete the extension to the Thredbo Valley Track.
2. Over the next decade, focus investment in KNP's 'top rides.' An indicative list is included in Table 8.
3. Rationalise the number of other management trails promoted for mountain biking if there is no or very limited response from visitor markets, as evidenced by track/trail use data
4. Undertake regular monitoring of cycling activity in the park (along with other visitor activities) in order to better understand use of existing tracks and trails, cyclist preferences, demographics and spending patterns.
5. Work with the Roads and Maritime Services and cycling organisations to:
 - investigate the appropriateness of providing cycling lanes along sections of public roads within the park
 - investigate the need for roadside signs indicating shared use for cyclists.

Table 8: An indicative list of Kosciuszko National Park's 'top rides'

Cycle experience	Rationale	Suggested improvements or opportunities
Thredbo Valley Track	A significant investment has already taken place into the only single track in the park. Suitable for a wide audience and increasingly popular. Potential to become the region's first Epic Ride, gaining national attention	Increased marketing Extension to Lake Jindabyne Assess possible extension track to link Thredbo with Cascades trail head
Thredbo Alpine Resort	Privately owned trails within head lease Popular summer and winter resort with the only purpose-built downhill and cross-country tracks in the park. Suitable for a wide audience	Collaborative marketing
Dead Horse Gap– Cascade–Nine Mile Pinch	An appealing and challenging wilderness ride connecting with the Alpine Way and Barry Way. Short and longer ride options possible via CTO support, including overnight. Suitable for intermediate to advanced riders	Trial period suggested to test market response to CTO support Increased marketing Improve signage
Charlotte Pass– Kosciuszko Summit by walking along the Main Range Track and riding back from Rawson Pass	One of the most popular day trips in the park that could be further promoted and enhanced with CTO support for bike descent from Rawson Pass. Suitable for beginner to advanced riders	Increased marketing CTO trial period
Kiandra to Wallace's Fire Trail	A classic ride in the north of the park suitable for a wide audience	More effective marketing Improve signage
Munyang Power Station to Geehi Dam with commercial support (day or overnight ride using huts)	A rewarding and challenging backcountry ride with potential for overnight stay at suitable location. This would be unique for the park. Suitable for intermediate to advanced skill levels	CTO trial period Increased marketing
Mosquito Creek– Blue Waterholes– Currango Homestead	Day and overnight options available with potential development of a CTO-supported experience. This would enable a wider audience to ride through this expansive landscape and learn about this part of the park	Improved signage and interpretation.

Note: CTO = commercial recreation and tour operator.

Goal 3: Develop new tracks and opportunities that meet consumer demand and are compatible with Kosciuszko National Park's natural and cultural values including responding to external investment proposals.

Rationale

Kosciuszko National Park is not intended to be 'all things to all riders' and hence, new track development will be limited to trails that can be demonstrated to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes for conservation, recreation and tourism in the park. This is in keeping with OEH Cycling Policy and the POM.

Looking ahead 10 years, the obvious place for any new track development would be close to Jindabyne and the alpine resorts. This is where the greatest volume of visitation takes place and demand is greatest for cycling opportunities. Other possibilities include Yarrangobilly, Kiandra and Currango, which are strategically located in the north of the park with a backdrop of country suitable for cyclists of all abilities.

Actions

1. Explore opportunities for trails in and around the accommodation visitor nodes including Yarrangobilly, Currango and Kiandra.
2. Explore options and the ecological feasibility of extending the Thredbo Valley Track from Thredbo to the Cascades Trail via the river.
3. Investigate the options and viability for CTOs to provide day and/or overnight biking tours including from the Yarrangobilly Caves precinct and other opportunities identified above.
4. Consider opportunities for new trails that meet ecological sustainability, visitor safety, resource availability and quality experience criteria.
5. Encourage private investment in cycling opportunities.
6. Assess new proposals for cycling opportunities from stakeholders funded through private or grant funding using criteria that includes:
 - ecological sustainability
 - appropriateness of the location
 - provision of a quality experience for cyclists
 - balancing competing visitor demands
 - consideration of opportunities and demand for cycling across the region, including other land tenures
 - protection of visitor safety
 - availability of resources to provide and maintain the experience.

Goal 4: Collaborate with biking organisations, local communities and the private sector to maintain and promote cycling opportunities in the park.

Rationale

The development, maintenance and promotion of cycling is most effective in destinations when stakeholders collaborate. An extensive trail network requires considerable resources to ensure standards are maintained. Tracks such as the Thredbo Valley Track will create high expectations amongst riders. This is a critical issue that will require effective collaboration.

Park agencies in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, UK and US have over the last decade entered into agreements with local bike groups, businesses and community trail trusts to facilitate trail development and maintenance. Examples include:

- The development, maintenance and promotion of mountain biking in the You Yangs, Forrest and Anglesea, Victoria is undertaken by Melbourne and Torquay-based cycling groups in partnership with Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Geelong and Great Ocean Road Tourism. Cycling groups have negotiated management and liability agreements with the relevant park agencies. At Forrest, DELWP manages the maintenance of tracks with volunteers. At Anglesea, cycling volunteers undertake track building and maintenance in agreement with Parks Victoria.
- The development, maintenance and promotion of the Queenstown Trails Network in New Zealand is a partnership between the Queenstown Lakes District Council, Department of Conservation (DOC), Destination Queenstown and the Queenstown Trails Trust. The Trust provides the strategic direction for trails, mobilises community support, sponsorship and grants for new trail development. Council and DOC maintain the trails that are in turn promoted by Destination Queenstown. A similar partnership arrangement is also in place for New Zealand's other iconic riding destinations at Lake Taupo and Rotorua.

These partnerships help to create opportunities that might otherwise have not been possible with core park budgets. Events, sponsorship and trail naming rights have also been used in other destinations to help spread the burden of maintenance and promotion.

The examples outlined here would also potentially work well for Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding areas. Looking ahead, the Thredbo Valley Track and its possible extensions will likely become the primary maintenance challenge for cycling within the park. By contrast, the management trails used for cycling elsewhere in the park are less of a maintenance burden directly for biking as these are maintained primarily for fire and other management purposes.

Initial consultation with stakeholders for this strategy indicates there is willingness by mountain biking groups, local Shires, Snowy Mountains Tourism and businesses to explore partnership arrangements with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Actions

1. Explore options with stakeholder groups for shared mountain bike trail maintenance and potential new single-track development within the park
2. Advocate for, and collaborate with, other stakeholders to complete the proposed Lake Jindabyne Foreshore Track linking Jindabyne with the Thredbo Valley Track extension.
3. Engage with cycle tourism operators, Regional Tourism organisations, Shires and local mountain bike and cycling groups to transfer skills and share lessons learned with trail construction, marketing, management and sustainable financing arrangements for trail maintenance.
4. Collaborate with the alpine resorts to maximise and improve the connectivity of cycling experiences across the park, ensuring consistency in sustainable trail construction and management.

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