



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area

Draft plan of management



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Cover photo: View west along the escarpment towards Dorrigo National Park. Sinclair Black

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Acknowledgement of Gumbaynggirr Country

Ngiyalagay junga-ngarraynggi yaam: Dandarra yuwaraygam, Bindarray yuwaraygam, Bindarray yuwaraygam-wunba, yaanga-ndi jalaarla mangga-bayilaygamba baguurli, Gumbaynggirr-Girwaa-gundiya jagunda jalumgala, ngayinggi.

Gumbaynggirr-Girwaadu, manggarla daalbirwirr-ambang, yidaa gungangulam juluum-, guunyju-, ganganan-, bindarraygundi marlanyay. Yaam wajaarr malaaw yidaa, yilaana yidaa Girwaanbigundi marlanyay.

Gumbaynggirr-girwaa yaam wajaada ngindaygunay gani-yay, muyalu jagiiyu, guunu-warluuny-ju, Yuludarlanyarr. Julu wumaaga yaanga jaagi; jaany jibaanga, baarlu, buyuum jaagi-wunba.

Yaam mangga-bayilaygambu junga-ngarraynggi yaam: Girwaanbi yaam wajaada ganiyay, yilaana yaambiin yuwaraygam yidaa yirraaygam-wunba-garri Girwaanbigu.

NPWS-u junga-ngarraynggi yaam: Gumbaynggirr girwaa yaam jagunda gungangulam-ay, yilaana ngiyalagay yanggidam juungawaygam, bayaygam garla-ngarraynggi.

This acknowledgement of Country translates as follows:

We acknowledge that Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area are within the ancient homeland of the Gumbaynggirr people.

Gumbaynggirr people are the first protectors and continual custodians of these mountains, valleys, plains and rivers, and this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Gumbaynggirr people have a deep spiritual and cultural connection to this Country since the Dreaming. Many features, including waterholes, caves and mountain tops are places of special significance.

Connections to Country and the significance of these parks to Aboriginal peoples - past, present and future - are acknowledged in this draft plan.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) acknowledges and respects the rights and aspirations of Gumbaynggirr people as custodians of their Country.

Have your say

Submissions may be lodged via:



the online submission form at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult>



email to npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au



post to Manager, Planning and Assessment, NPWS, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124.

Written submissions must be received by 15 January 2024.

All written submissions on this draft plan will be considered in the preparation of a final plan of management. Submissions are most effective when we understand your ideas and the outcomes you want for park management. Some suggestions to help you write your submissions are:

- write clearly and be specific about the issues that are of concern to you
- note which part or section of the document your comments relate to
- give reasoning in support of your points – this makes it easier for us to consider your ideas and will help avoid misinterpretation
- tell us specifically what you agree or disagree with and why you agree or disagree
- suggest solutions or alternatives to managing the issue if you can.

What happens to your feedback?

Your submissions will be provided to the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and may also be provided to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council. Each of these bodies is established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and has a formal role in the preparation of plans of management through the provision of advice.

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Information that identifies you may be gathered when you use our website or send us an email. If you indicate in your written submission that you object to your submission being made public, we will ask you before releasing your submission in response to any access applications under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Summary

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) requires the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to prepare plans of management for parks and historic sites. This draft plan of management outlines proposed management themes and actions, and a scheme of operations for Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area and any future additions to these parks. Once adopted this plan will also apply to areas vested in the Minister responsible for the NPW Act that are not yet reserved as park. These areas are referred to as Part 11 land (see Figure 1).

All operations undertaken in these parks need to be in accordance with the relevant plan of management. In preparing this draft plan, the following were considered:

- the objects of the NPW Act (Appendix A)
- the management principles for national parks and state conservation areas in the NPW Act (see Appendix B)
- the matters listed under section 72AA(1) of the NPW Act, which include the protection of World Heritage values and the management of World Heritage properties
- the management principles for Australian World Heritage and National Heritage places listed in Schedules 5 and 5B of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000.

Section 72AA(4) of the NPW Act requires each plan of management to include a scheme of operations, which can be found in Section 6 of this draft plan of management. These operations and the authorised activities listed in Table 2 are the means by which the plan's objectives will be achieved.

This draft plan of management focuses on strategic, higher-priority actions that will be necessary to achieve the plan's objectives. In a dynamic environment that contains uncertainties, natural variability, new technologies and information, an adaptive management approach is required. Actions will be adjusted as necessary. Subsidiary plans such as feral animal and weeds strategies, master plans and fire management strategies may be developed to guide actions at an operational level.

1. Introduction

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area are in the traditional Country of the Gumbaynggirr people. Located on the Mid North Coast region of New South Wales (NSW), the parks have a combined area of over 17,500 ha (see Figure 1). The name Dorrigo is believed to have derived from Dun Durriga, the Gumbaynggirr word for the tallowwood trees (*Eucalyptus microcorys*) that grow in the area. The naming of Bindarri National Park and State Conservation Area (SCA) is derived from the Gumbaynggirr word Bindarray, meaning river.

These parks protect values that are of World Heritage and National Heritage significance. Parts of Dorrigo National Park (see Figure 1) are included in the series of reserves that comprise the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage property (Gondwana Rainforests). First inscribed in 1986 and extended in 1994, the Gondwana Rainforests were added to Australia's National Heritage List in 2007. Bindarri National Park, Bindarri SCA and the remaining area of Dorrigo National Park are part of proposed extensions to the existing World Heritage property and are on Australia's World Heritage Tentative List.

These parks are valued for their rich biodiversity, cultural significance, diversity of landscapes, protected water catchments, scenic values and nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities. The diversity of landscapes ranges from high, cool, windswept and often mist-shrouded plateaus; to warm, sheltered, low-altitude river valleys with highly significant gorge systems and spectacular waterfalls.

There has been a long history of interest that culminated in the protection of Dorrigo Mountain and continues to support the protection of these parks. The first written account followed an inspection of the area by the NSW Government botanist Mr JH Maiden in 1893, who reported on the variety, size and quality of plant species.

Part of Dorrigo Mountain was first protected in 1901, becoming known as Dorrigo Mountain Reserve. The reserve was managed by passionate community leaders and neighbours as part of a trust. In 1976, after 6 decades of dedicated volunteer services by the trust, management was transferred to NPWS. In response to rising community concern for rainforest protection in the 1970s, the park doubled in size with the protection of parts of Killungoondie, Brooklana and Never Never state forests. Further additions to the park, previously part of Never Never State Forest and the remaining sections of Brooklana and Killungoondie state forests (including Mount Moombil), were made in 1999.

Bindarri National Park was reserved in 1999 and was previously part of the Orara West, Never Never and Tuckers Nob state forests. The park adjoins Dorrigo National Park on its south-western boundary.

Bindarri SCA comprises 2 separate areas that adjoin Bindarri National Park to the north and south-west (see Figure 1). It was reserved in 2003 and was formerly part of Orara West State Forest. It has been subject to several mining exploration licences, with an exploration title still current.

The surrounding areas of the Dorrigo Plateau, East Dorrigo Plateau, Bellinger Valley and Upper Orara Valley have been developed for cattle grazing, light agricultural activities, forestry, banana and blueberry farming and rural settlement. The main coastal population centres of Coffs Harbour and Nambucca Heads are within 1 hour's drive from these parks (see Figure 1). NPWS estimates annual visitation to these parks is currently over 130,000 people per year. The skywalk and rainforest centre in Dorrigo National Park is one of the most popular attractions.

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area draft plan of management

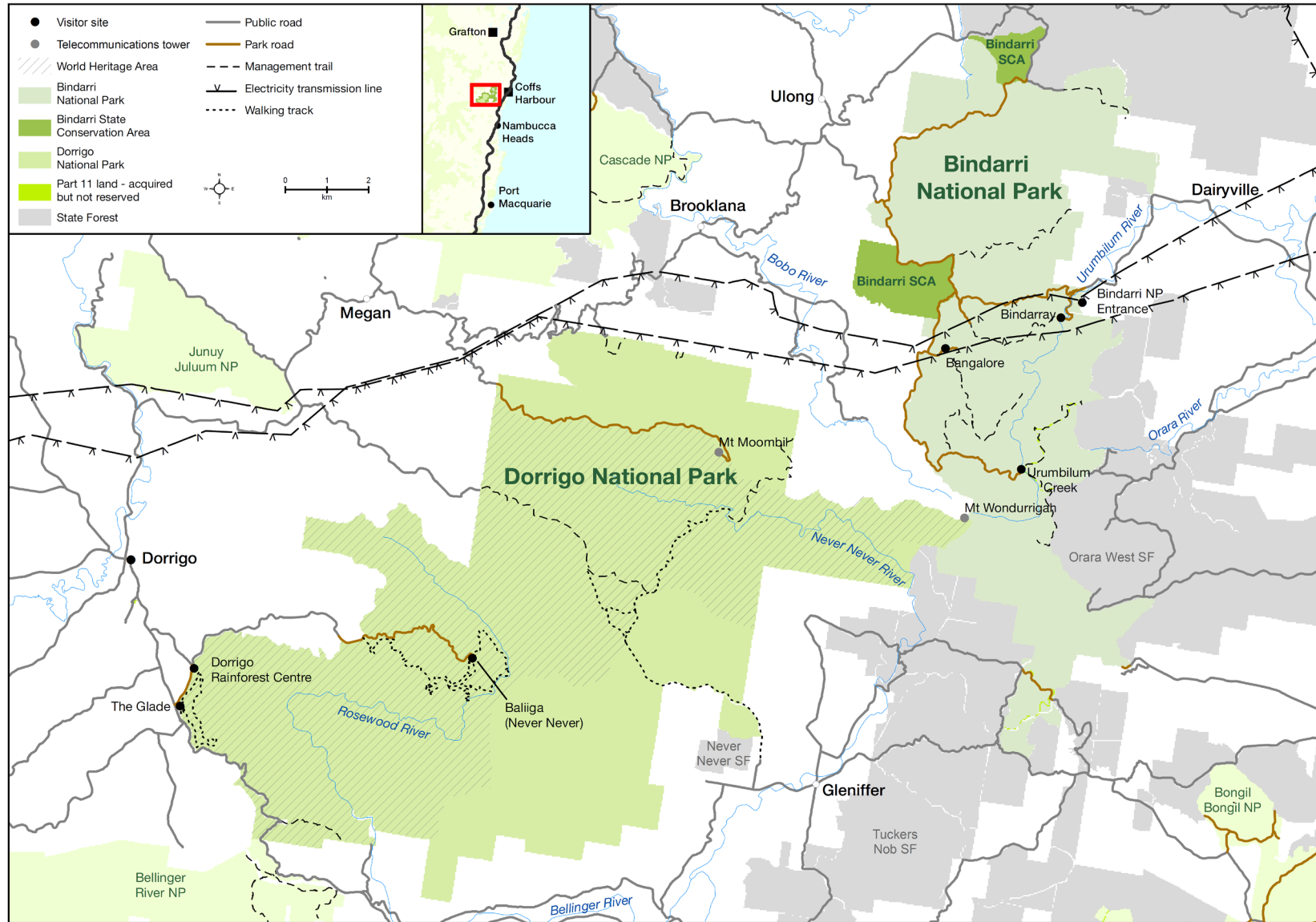


Figure 1 Park location and planning area

2. Significance of Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area

Gumbaynggirr cultural landscape. Gumbaynggirr Country has special significance to Aboriginal people, who have an ongoing connection to Country. The Aboriginal cultural and heritage values of these parks are significant. Despite only limited archaeological surveys having been completed, there is evidence of people from the Gumbaynggirr Nation living in the area for thousands of years, using the subtropical rainforest as a valuable resource supplement to the rich plateau and coastal ecosystems.

It is likely that groups camped on the grassland plains on the fringe of the rainforest at certain times of year to access abundant foods, medicines and resources. Land management practices such as burning the rainforest margins to maintain the grasslands and stimulate new growth, attracting increased numbers of grazing pademelons and wallabies, were likely implemented by Gumbaynggirr people.

There are many sites of spiritual significance in the broader landscape, including in these parks. For example, McGraths Hump in Dorrigo National Park, known as Old Man Dreaming, features in the Dreamtime story of a young boy who was left sleeping and is now an old man. His tears of sadness being the waterfalls in the area.

World, National and State Heritage values. A large portion of Dorrigo National Park is part of the serial listing that comprises the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage property, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is also on Australia's National Heritage List and the NSW State Heritage Register.

Diverse vegetation, habitats and species. Located in the subtropical region described as the Macleay–McPherson Overlap (where both temperate and tropical influences are present), the parks' vegetation and species are particularly diverse and include:

- 14 vegetation communities, including 5 threatened ecological communities (TECs) listed under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and some of which are also listed as TECs under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- Killungoondie Plain, an important example of the Dorrigo Plateau's grassy plains which provides evidence of land management practices conducted over thousands of years and provides regionally significant habitat for ground orchids
- refugia for dry, cool temperate, warm temperate and subtropical rainforest communities including highly significant gorge systems
- priority koala habitat (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), particularly in Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area
- over 275 vertebrate animal species, of which more than 40 are considered threatened, including the southern greater glider (*Petauroides volans*), spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*), threatened frogs such as the stuttering frog (*Mixophyes balbus*), giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*) and Booroolong frog (*Litoria booroolongensis*), and the southern pink underwing moth (*Phyllodes imperialis* southern subspecies)
- over 585 plant species, 10 of which are listed as threatened, including the scrub turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*), woodland babingtonia (*Kardomia silvestris*), Dorrigo daisy bush (*Olearia flocktoniae*), slender marsdenia (*Marsdenia longiloba*) and milky silkpod (*Parsonsia dorrigoensis*).

Geological significance. The geological structures and rock types of these parks demonstrate the tectonic evolution of the Australian continent with the uplift of the Great Dividing Range and the development of the Great Escarpment, interacting with the ongoing erosion of the remnants of the Ebor Volcano.

An integral component of a larger protected area landscape. The parks are part of a broader conservation corridor protecting sections of the New England Tableland and the Great Escarpment (which traverses much of eastern Australia). These parks link vegetation corridors from the plateau to the coast, extending from Dorrigo National Park through the mountain ranges to Bindarri National Park, to the coastal habitats of nearby Bongil Bongil National Park.

Protected waters. The headwaters of the Orara River, Rosewood River, Never Never River, Urumbilum River and parts of the catchment of the Nymboida River are protected in these parks. These waters provide relatively undisturbed habitat for a range of animals including several threatened frog species, platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), and threatened fish species including galaxiids occurring on the Dorrigo Plateau (*Galaxias sp.*) and eastern freshwater cod (*Maccullochella ikei*). The parks are within the Bellinger and Clarence River catchments, parts of the Bellinger Shire Council water supply and Coffs-Clarence Regional Water Scheme. These waters have cultural, environmental, economic and social significance.

Historic heritage. These parks contain evidence of past forestry use, including snig tracks, old machinery, bridges, and the remains of a tramway, used to extract logs on Syndicate Ridge.

A visitor destination focused on the Gondwana Rainforests. Dorrigo National Park's elevated walkways, sealed walking tracks, the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre and proximity to regional centres make it one of Australia's most accessible World Heritage properties. As a regionally significant visitor destination, the parks bring direct and indirect economic benefits to the region. The parks provide opportunities to promote Gondwana World Heritage values, and for low-key, low-impact recreational activities in natural settings. This includes accessible lookouts, vehicle touring, short to long walks, self-reliant recreation in remote areas and scenic waterfalls.

Outstanding scenic qualities. The parks protect the scenic backdrop for the headwaters of the Bellinger Valley, including striking vertical cliffs and precipitous waterfalls.

3. Planning context

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri SCA are reserved under the NPW Act and are managed in accordance with the objects of the Act and management principles for these reservation types (see Appendix B). The objects of the Act include conserving the natural and cultural values of the park, while also fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these values (see Appendix A).

The custodial role of Aboriginal people and the importance of incorporating local Aboriginal knowledge into the parks' ongoing management is recognised and respected. Aboriginal communities will continue to play a lead role in the management of Country and in the promotion and presentation of Aboriginal culture and history.

World Heritage properties and National Heritage places in Australia are 'matters of national environmental significance' protected under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. These parks will be managed to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit World Heritage values to future generations, consistent with World and National Heritage principles. World Heritage values and attributes are managed whether they are located inside or outside the boundary of the World Heritage property within these parks.

As an important visitor destination for experiencing the Gondwana Rainforests, Dorrigo National Park is the centrepiece for these 3 parks. The current facilities are no longer adequate to meet future demand and provide a visitor experience commensurate with the park's national and international profile. This draft plan outlines proposals to maintain and improve opportunities for visitors.

The development of a new rainforest centre, skywalk and multi-day walking opportunities have been proposed as a way to enhance visitor experiences in this unique landscape. These concepts are outlined in this draft plan. This draft plan also proposes other suitable recreational activities in these parks, including canyoning opportunities in some gorges with appropriate group sizing.

Bindarri SCA is reserved to protect natural and cultural heritage, while also providing scope for the authorisation of mining and exploration activities. Bindarri SCA does not contain visitor facilities, and the development of facilities in this park is not proposed. Facilities are available in the adjacent Bindarri National Park.

This draft plan includes proposals to protect this outstanding landscape, including the continuation of the existing prohibition on any new broadcasting or telecommunication facilities within these national parks.

4. Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area

World heritage areas represent the very best examples of the World's cultural and natural heritage. The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage property was first inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1986 and is one of 20 World Heritage areas in Australia. The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia encompasses approximately 40 separate reserves between Newcastle and Brisbane and includes most of Dorrigo National Park (Figure 1).

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia protect and represent outstanding examples of major stages of the earth's evolutionary history, ongoing geological and biological processes, and exceptional biological diversity. It includes extensive areas of critical habitat and provides a refuge for a wide range of plant and animal lineages and communities, including many threatened species. Many of these communities and species have ancient origins in Gondwana, and many are restricted to the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

Dorrigo National Park contributes to 3 criteria that led to the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia receiving World Heritage status:

- Criterion (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.
- Criterion (ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.
- Criterion (x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Dorrigo National Park is located on the eastern edge of the Dorrigo Plateau, formed through successive lava flows from the Ebor volcano. The park preserves evidence of these lava flows and the erosion process, which resulted in the westerly retreat of the plateau and the formation of the dramatic escarpment.

A significant portion of the Dorrigo Plateau was cleared for dairy farms in the late 19th century. Consequently, the uncleared areas protected within Dorrigo National Park are thought to have provided a refuge for many species, including rich populations of regional birds and a diverse range of habitats and ecological communities that were once widespread across the plateau.

The park protects excellent examples of cool temperate rainforest that support stands of Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus moorei*), warm temperate rainforest, sub-tropical rainforest and dry rainforest communities, as well as a diverse range of wet and dry eucalypt communities. The rainforest communities in the park are relatively widespread and in good condition, making them particularly effective areas for biodiversity conservation.

The long-term protection of these World Heritage values requires visitors and the broader community to understand their fragility and significance, and to support their ongoing management.

Facilities are provided so that visitors to Dorrigo National Park can enjoy the park and gain an appreciation and an understanding of the park's World Heritage values. A network of walking tracks and lookouts in the park lets visitors be immersed within beautiful rainforest communities and enjoy spectacular views of waterfalls, the escarpment and the surrounding volcanic landscape. Through these experiences, visitors can learn about the formation of the

Australian landscape, the ongoing ecological processes that support life and the significant biodiversity that remains intact within the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

The proposed redevelopment of the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre and elevated boardwalk, and the establishment of the Great Escarpment Walk have been proposed to further enhance the role that Dorrigo National Park will play in the promotion and protection of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

Conserving the World Heritage values of Dorrigo National Park is a primary objective for management. The World Heritage values within the park receive the very highest levels of protection by virtue of the park's reservation as a national park under the NPW Act. The World Heritage values are conserved through fire, weed and feral animal management programs conducted within the park, in adjacent parks and across the broader landscape. Any activities that could disturb or impact World Heritage values, including proposed improvements to visitor facilities, are carefully assessed to ensure that any risks to these values are understood and avoided.

Detailed information about the park's biodiversity, including the location of rainforest communities, threatened species and threatened ecological communities is maintained by the NSW Government and continues to be refined in response to new information and knowledge about the park and the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia.

A strategic plan for the NSW section of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia is currently under development. This plan will outline how the Australian and NSW governments will continue to protect the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia consistent with Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention and in accordance with the provisions of the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Once adopted, the Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area plan of management will complement the strategic plan by describing management objectives and actions for the protection of world heritage values within Dorrigo National Park.

5. Management themes

5.1 Supporting healthy Country

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri SCA and the surrounding lands are within the traditional Country of the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal peoples. These parks' land, water, animals, plants and landscapes have traditional and contemporary significance for local Aboriginal communities. NPWS acknowledges these parks as a cultural landscape and works to protect natural and cultural values, strengthen Gumbaynggirr partnerships, recognise and support connection to Country, and support a cultural visitor experience.

Maintaining a strong connection to Country also includes opportunities to care of Country. NPWS recognises incorporating Gumbaynggirr perspectives into the management of Country is essential, including participation in planning and operations for these parks.

Gumbaynggirr-led cultural tourism will help enhance visitors' perspective of these parks as a cultural landscape. NPWS will continue to work with Gumbaynggirr people to support sharing of culture, where appropriate. This includes incorporating Aboriginal language, art and perspectives in the interpretation, signage and naming of places. For example, Never Never picnic area in Dorrigo National Park is proposed to be renamed Baliiga, the Gumbaynggirr word for rosewood. The remote camping area at Wild Cattle Creek is proposed to be named Waygarrgala, the Gumbaynggirr word for 'at the Antarctic beech'.

5.2 Conserving a unique and biodiverse landscape

The significant ecological values of these parks include a rich biodiversity, amongst other World Heritage and National Heritage values, and protected water catchments. These ancient Gondwanan rainforests have been refuges that have persisted during past climate fluctuations. It is important this resilience is supported and maintained into the future by managing key threatening processes.

Conservation management actions have been effective in addressing many of the current threatening processors present in these parks. However, further management responses may be required to address future threats that are likely to increase such as bushfire, invasive species, pathogens and disease, and climate change.

NPWS must continue to review and evolve its fire management practices in response to prolonged draught and more intense fire weather. Fire will continue to be managed to protect life and property, while also providing a fire regime that promotes diversity in fire dependent vegetation communities (e.g. grasslands) while protecting communities sensitive to fire (e.g. lowland rainforests).

Pest plant species threaten floristic diversity. These parks have established pest plant programs focused on protecting the ecological integrity of significant vegetation communities. NPWS collaborates with park neighbours when controlling fox and wild dog populations. These programs address a threatening process for significant mammal species, such as koalas, and minimise livestock losses upon neighbouring properties.

The spread of pathogens and disease is a key threat for significant plant and animal species, not only in these parks but across New South Wales. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is a soil pathogen that infects a range of plant species and can threaten floristic diversity. The amphibian disease *chytridomycosis* is likely to threaten populations of significant frog species found in these parks, however, further research and monitoring are required to determine their prevalence. Careful planning and management of visitor access will assist minimising the spread and impacts associated with pathogens and disease. Research and

monitoring of park values and threats to these values will also continue to ensure that the best available science supports management actions.

Climate change predictions for northern New South Wales indicate a shift to warmer temperatures, leading to more extreme fire weather days. Some fauna species may be able to migrate to cooler, higher elevations to find refuge from hotter, drier weather. Important actions that improve the parks' resilience to climate change include minimising threatening processes, improving our understanding of values and threats, and landscape-level structural connectivity that connects populations and prevents isolation.

The parks protect water quality in several catchments, including those used to supply drinking water to nearby population centres. All activities with potential to impact on water quality will be carefully managed.

5.3 Providing a world class Gondwana Rainforests visitor experience

The Dorrigo Rainforest Centre is the primary destination in New South Wales for the presentation and interpretation of the World Heritage Gondwana Rainforests of Australia. Improvements to this precinct, and others, are proposed to establish a world-class visitor experience. The proposed enhancements include a replacement rainforest centre and elevated walkway, a new visitor and community use facility at The Glade, a multi-day walk and associated hiker camps, and improvements to existing visitor facilities as detailed below. These improvements will significantly boost tourism in the region, promote World, National and State Heritage values, and ultimately increase community support for the ongoing protection of these parks.

Currently welcoming over 130,000 people each year, the main visitor precincts provide access to numerous short walking tracks to spectacular waterfalls and rainforest experiences. Dorrigo National Park and Bindarra National Park offer visitors a range of facilities and recreational opportunities described in Tables 1 and 2. Improved facilities to create a world-class Gondwana Rainforests experience include:

- A **replacement rainforest centre and elevated walk** in Dorrigo National Park. Set over the edge of the escarpment and above the rainforest canopy, an elevated walkway called the Arc will replace the existing skywalk. The primary purpose of the replacement rainforest centre will continue to be education and interpretation of the parks' natural and cultural values.
- A new **multi-use building at The Glade** for activities such as education and events, providing a small all-weather venue in a high-rainfall area.
- A new **multi-day walk** includes establishing new trails that connect existing tracks and trails, allowing walkers to be immersed in the parks' values. This challenging 4 to 5 day walk, from the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre in Dorrigo National Park to Bindarray Day Use Area in Bindarra National Park (see Figure 2), will be one of the great walks of New South Wales. In the future, the walk may connect with other suitable tracks, on and off-park. Walkers will camp overnight at low-impact, small-scale **hiker camps**. These camps will have toilets and may also include camping platforms and communal huts for shelter and hiker accommodation. Minor extensions to existing management trails will be required to service these camps.
- An upgrade of the existing Never Never picnic area, including a new low-key **camping area** to support opportunities to experience day walks in the area. This area is proposed to be renamed Baliiga.
- Formalising the existing **remote camping area** on Slingsbys Trail at Wild Cattle Creek. This may include adding camping platforms and a toilet to minimise impacts and support

alternate remote overnight walking opportunities. This camping area is proposed to be named Waygarrgala.

A summary of existing and proposed visitor facilities in the visitor facility zones are provided in Table 1. Further assessment of trail design options for the multi-day walk may identify the need for alternate hiker camp locations and/or an additional hiker camp.

The location and design of proposed new visitor facilities will be subject to detailed environmental and cultural assessments and will be designed and constructed in accordance with best practice principles for visitor facility development in sensitive landscapes. Draft master plans (including precinct plans) have been developed and are published for the replacement rainforest centre, elevated walk, the Glade upgrades and the multi-day walk. Plans may also be developed for additional facility improvements within the parks in consultation with the community.

Enabling visitors to experience and appreciate these parks helps foster public connection and support for their long-term conservation. A broader range of outstanding visitor experiences will be achieved through visitor facility improvements, digital interpretation at the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre, education programs and guided activities delivered by NPWS, Gumbaynggirr and other commercial tour operators.

These parks provide for a range of recreational activities, including bushwalking, self-reliant hiking, mountain biking and canyoning. These activities are permitted where they are undertaken in accordance with the provisions described in Table 2.

Dorrigo National Park and Bindarri National Park have existing walking tracks, management trails, boardwalks, bridges and lookouts that support park management and visitor access. Minor improvements to these existing facilities may be required for park management purposes, to minimise impacts to park values and/or improve visitor safety (see Table 2).

Canyoning has occurred in a number of gorges within these parks. This draft plan proposes to allow access for canyoning in some gorges within Dorrigo and Bindarri national parks. Other adventure activities are prohibited in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019. Visitor use of the lower Rosewood River and lower Never Never River areas will be monitored and managed to ensure sustainable use.

Table 1 Existing and proposed visitor facilities

Park	Visitor facility	Description
Dorrigo National Park	Dorrigo Rainforest Centre	Replacement rainforest visitor centre (still to include food and beverage service, retail shop) and improved parking (proposed). Elevated walkway to replace the existing skywalk (proposed). Day use area providing access for a range of mobility levels (existing).
	The Glade	Day use area (existing). Upgrade the existing day use area to include improved parking and an all-weather facility for visitor and community use (proposed). Food and beverage service may be considered (proposed).

Park	Visitor facility	Description
	Baliiga (Never Never)	Day use area (existing). Improvements to the existing day use area including parking and restoration of the heritage picnic shelter (proposed). Basic camping area with camping platforms and toilets (proposed).
	Waygarrgala	Remote camping area near Wild Cattle Creek (existing). Improvements to remote camping area to include camping platforms and toilets (proposed).
	Hiker camps 1 and 2	Low-impact camps for hikers undertaking the multi-day walk including camping platforms, toilets and communal huts for hiker accommodation and cooking (proposed).
Bindarri National Park	Urumbilum Creek	Day use area (existing). Improvements may be considered if necessary (proposed).
	Bangalore	Day use area (existing). Improvements may be considered if necessary (proposed).
	Bindarray	Day use area (existing). Improvements may be considered if necessary (proposed).
	Bindarri National Park Entrance	Day use area (existing). Improvements may include facilities to support hikers finishing the proposed multi-day walk (proposed).
	Hiker camp 3	Low-impact camp for hikers undertaking the multi-day walk (proposed). Facilities include camping platforms, toilets and communal huts for hiker accommodation and cooking.

6. Authorised activities

Two management zones are defined in Figure 2

- **General park management zone (GPMZ):** The purpose of this zone is to designate areas that will be managed to achieve conservation of natural and cultural values while also fostering an appreciation of these values. Typical land management activities include feral animal and pest plant control, fire management and threatened species programs. This zone also provides for visitor access along walking tracks and management trails.
- **Visitor facility zone (VFZ):** The purpose of this zone is to designate areas for the development of visitor facilities that are compatible with the conservation of the natural and cultural values.

Table 2 identifies permissible activities in each zone and the restrictions and conditions that apply.

Table 2 Authorised activities

Activity	GPMZ	VFZ	Restrictions and conditions
Visitor facility development			
Development of new visitor facilities	No	Yes	New visitor facilities will be consistent with Table 1.
Improvements to existing visitor facilities and access	Yes	Yes	Improvements to visitor facilities and access may be undertaken in accordance with Table 1, or for public safety, park management purposes or the protection of park values.
Multi-day walk	Yes	Yes	The indicative route of the proposed multi-day walk is provided in Figure 2
Extractive industries and site rehabilitation			
Mining and exploration activities	Yes	NA	Bindarri State Conservation Area only: Exploration, mining and petroleum/gas production may be authorised under NPWS consent, considering any necessary environmental and cultural heritage impact assessments, and subject to approvals and authorisations under other relevant legislation.
Rehabilitation of disturbed sites	Yes	Yes	Rehabilitation of sites may be undertaken by NPWS or authorised via a consent, subject to environmental and cultural assessments, as required.
Quarrying	No	No	Extraction and removal of bushrock, clay, rock, river gravel or any like substance is prohibited, except where necessary for park management works carried out by (or on behalf of) NPWS.
Utilities, telecommunication facilities and other non-park infrastructure			
Upgrades and access to existing non-park infrastructure	Yes	Yes	Existing facilities will be managed to minimise impacts to natural and cultural values, scenic values and park infrastructure and be subject to formal agreements, leases or easements. Upgrades would be subject to the terms of the existing authorisation and subject to environmental and cultural assessments.

Activity	GPMZ	VFZ	Restrictions and conditions
Installation of new non-park infrastructure	No	No	With the exception of infrastructure essential for the stabilisation of Dorrigo Mountain Road, the installation of new non-park infrastructure in Bindarri National Park and Dorrigo National Park (including transmission lines and additional telecommunication towers) will not be authorised. However, new non-park infrastructure in Bindarri State Conservation Area may be authorised following consideration of potential environmental and cultural impacts.
Research			
Research	Yes	Yes	Any research is subject to NPWS consent under the NPW Regulation (in addition to any licence required under the Biodiversity Conservation Act and ethics approvals).
Commercial activities, events and functions			
Commercial filming and photography	Yes	Yes	May be authorised under consent.
Commercial recreational or educational activities and tours	Yes	Yes	May be allowed under a licence, subject to NPWS consent. Group size limits apply to adventure recreational activities (see below).
Kiosk, café and/or restaurant	No	Yes	The operation of a kiosk, café and/or restaurant at Dorrigo Rainforest Centre may continue under a lease or licence; an additional food outlet may be considered at The Glade.
Commercial events, functions and other services	Yes	Yes	Commercial events, functions and other services provided for a fee (including mobile food vendors, transport services, party entertainers and celebrants) may be allowed under a consent or licence.
Beekeeping	No	No	Not permitted.
Visitor centre retail	No	Yes	A retail facility may be allowed at the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre under a lease or licence.
Visitor activities			
Use of barbecues, portable stoves, solid fuel fires	Yes	Yes	The use of fixed barbecues is allowed at sites where these are provided. The use of portable gas stoves and liquid stoves is allowed. Solid fuel fires (e.g. woodfires) are not permitted except in designated, constructed fireplaces (where provided). Fires are prohibited during total fire bans and park fire bans.
Bushwalking and trail running	Yes	Yes	Allowed, unless an area has been identified as closed for this activity by park signage and/or routine park visitor notification channels.
Camping (designated areas)	No	Yes	Vehicle-based and walk-in camping is allowed at specified sites at the proposed Baliiga Camping Area. Walker-only camping will be allowed at multi-day walk hiker camps and Waygarrgala Camping Area (see Figure 2). Commercial and group consent requirements apply.

Activity	GPMZ	VFZ	Restrictions and conditions
Camping (remote areas)	Yes	NA	Pack camping outside of designated camping areas is allowed in the parks without consent, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 200 m of the park boundary or from park infrastructure such as roads, trails, walking tracks, camping areas, hiker camps, formalised lookouts or other visitor facilities within 30 m of watercourses anywhere it is signposted as not permitted.
Cycling	Yes	Yes	Cycling is allowed on park roads and management trails, unless an area has been identified as closed for this activity by park signage and/or routine park visitor notification channels. Cycling is not allowed on walking tracks or off-trail.
Non-commercial events, functions and group gatherings	Yes	Yes	Private functions and group gatherings involving more than 40 people may be allowed under a consent. Public events such as public ceremonies, club and sporting events may be authorised via a consent.
Dog walking	No	No	Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the parks. This prohibition does not apply to a person being accompanied by their trained and registered assistance animal.
Drones and model aeroplanes	Yes	Yes	Consent is required for recreational use of drones in the parks. Drone exclusion areas apply. Drones may be used for park management purposes and commercial use may be authorised via a consent. The operation of drones is subject to conditions and relevant civil aviation regulations.
Fossicking	No	No	Not permitted.
Horse riding	No	No	Not permitted.
Swimming and aquatic activities	Yes	Yes	Swimming and aquatic activities are allowed.
Vehicle access (including motorbikes)	Yes	Yes	Registered vehicles are allowed on public and park roads (see Figure 2). Roads may be temporarily closed to prevent damage, such as in wet weather, or to support management activities. Vehicles (including motorbikes, quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles) are not permitted on management trails, off-road or on walking tracks, unless for management purposes.
Adventure recreational activities			
Abseiling, rock climbing and canyoning	Yes	No	These activities are only allowed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangalore and Urumbilum River gorges (Bindarri National Park) Upper Rosewood River gorge (Dorrigo National Park). <p>However, these areas (or sites within these areas) may be closed on a temporary or ongoing basis.</p> <p>NPWS will not install or assess bolts or other fixed protection points. Participants in these activities are responsible for their own safety.</p> <p>The group size limit for abseiling and canyoning is 8.</p>

Activity	GPMZ	VFZ	Restrictions and conditions
			<p>The group size limit for rock climbing is 5 (including a guide to client ratio of 1:4).</p> <p>Larger group sizes may be considered and authorised via a consent.</p>
Other adventure activities	No	No	<p>Other adventure activities are not permitted. Other adventure activities include (but are not limited to) the following: base jumping, bungee jumping, hang-gliding, parachuting, paragliding, parasailing, via ferrata and zip lining.</p>

Yes - Permissible (subject to any restrictions or conditions)

No – Not permissible

NA – Not applicable

Dorrigo National Park, Bindarri National Park and Bindarri State Conservation Area draft plan of management

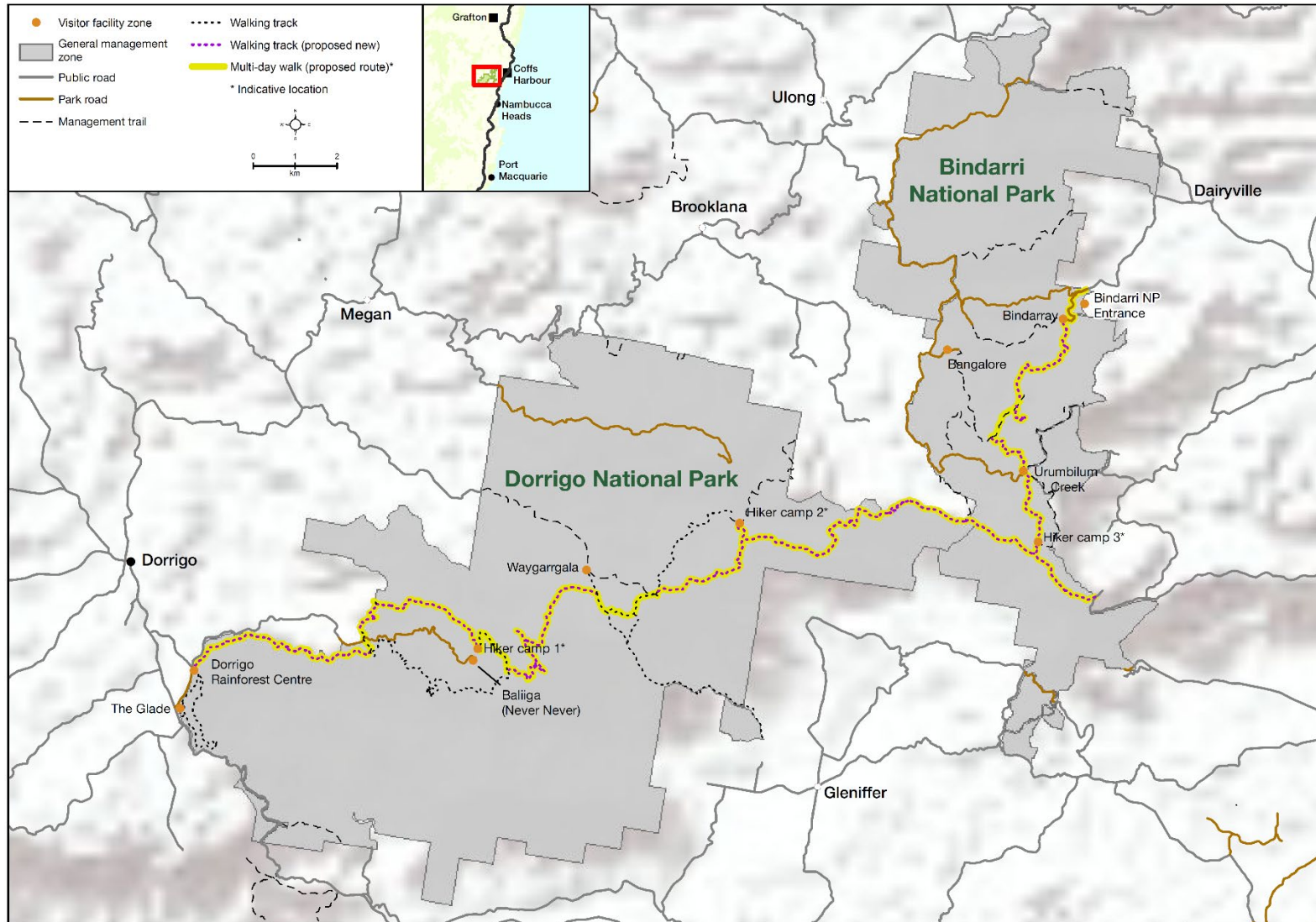


Figure 2 Management zones and proposals

7. Scheme of operations

This scheme of operations describes actions that will be undertaken to achieve the objects of the NPW Act, consistent with the management principles for national parks and state conservation areas.

The scheme of operations describes strategic actions relating to each management theme. Subsidiary plans consistent with this plan of management may also be developed to guide actions at an operational level. Subsidiary plans enable adaptive responses to new information or changed circumstances, such as for pests, weeds, fire and recreational activities, as required by NPWS policy.

The implementation of actions set out below may be subject to other relevant state and Commonwealth legislation, including environmental and heritage impact assessments and approvals. Further community consultation on the proposed actions may be undertaken as part of these processes.

Table 3 Scheme of operations

Objective	Action	Priority
Supporting healthy Country		
1. Work with Gumbaynggirr people to support healthy Country	a) Support access to Country for the local Aboriginal community to maintain, renew or develop cultural connections and practices, including cultural fire management activities.	High
	b) Improve understanding, protection, interpretation and promotion of the cultural values of the parks through strengthened partnerships between NPWS and Gumbaynggirr people.	High
	c) Acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal cultural values and language as part of a cultural visitor experience. This includes encouraging cultural tourism and opportunities for language in the naming of places.	High
	d) Support research and cultural surveys that assist in the understanding, recording and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage values.	High
Conserving a unique and biodiverse landscape		
2. Ensure the ongoing protection and enhancement of the natural values	a) Develop and implement feral animal, weed and pathogen management strategies to target priority threats and adapt to emerging threats and improved knowledge and practices. Strategies should prioritise protection of significant park values including World, National and State Heritage values and threatened species.	High
	b) Develop and implement reserve fire management strategies (including maintaining access for fire management and response). These strategies should prioritise protecting key park values including World, National and State Heritage values and threatened species.	High

Objective	Action	Priority
	c) Encourage research and undertake monitoring to build knowledge about priority values, trends in their condition and responses to management actions.	High
	d) Protect water quality values by minimising impacts of activities within the parks' catchment areas.	High
	e) Support landscape-scale conservation activities by delivering complementary conservation actions on-park, including advocating for strategic additions to the national park estate to improve connectivity.	Medium
	f) Undertake or support the implementation of relevant actions (as identified in the Biodiversity Conservation Program and any conservation action plans) to promote the recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities in these parks.	High
Providing a world-class Gondwana Rainforests visitor experience		
3. Provide a range of visitor opportunities that support the protection and promotion of World Heritage values	a) Develop an iconic multi-day walk that showcases the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, with overnight hiker camps along the route (see Figure 2).	High
	b) Replace and upgrade existing visitor facilities as guided by Table 1. This includes replacing the existing Dorrigo Rainforest Centre and Skywalk, creating an all-weather visitor and community use facility at the upgraded Glade, and upgrading the existing Never Never picnic area (proposed Baliiga).	High
	c) Create a new, basic Baliiga Camping Area at the existing Never Never picnic area and formalise the existing camping area near Wild Cattle Creek. Other existing visitor sites may be upgraded in response to increased visitation.	Medium
	d) Develop and deliver engaging interpretation and education programs to improve the visitor experience. This includes opportunities for local Aboriginal guided experiences	High

Appendix A: Objects of the National Parks and Wildlife Act

The objects of the NPW Act, set out in section 2A(1) of the Act are:

- (a) The conservation of nature, including, but not limited to, the conservation of—
 - (i) habitat, ecosystems and ecosystem processes, and
 - (ii) biological diversity at the community, species and genetic levels, and
 - (iii) landforms of significance, including geological features and processes, and
 - (iv) landscapes and natural features of significance including wilderness and wild rivers,
- (b) the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape, including, but not limited to—
 - (i) places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people, and
 - (ii) places of social value to the people of New South Wales, and
 - (iii) places of historic, architectural or scientific significance,
- (c) fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation,
- (d) providing for the management of land reserved under this Act in accordance with the management principles applicable for each type of reservation.

Appendix B: Management principles

National parks

The management principles for national parks, as set out in section 30E of the NPW Act are:

- (a) the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of geological and geomorphological features and natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes,
- (b) the conservation of places, objects, features and landscapes of cultural value,
- (c) the protection of the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations
- (d) the promotion of public appreciation and understanding of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- (e) provision for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- (f) provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- (g) provision for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act 1991*) in the national park that is permitted under section 185A having regard to the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural values,
- (h) provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

State conservation areas

The management principles for state conservation areas, as set out in section 30G of the NPW Act are:

- (a) the conservation of biodiversity, the maintenance of ecosystem function, the protection of natural phenomena and the maintenance of natural landscapes,
- (b) the conservation of places, objects and features of cultural value,
- (c) provision for the undertaking of uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas (including uses permitted under section 47J) having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area,
- (ca) provision for the carrying out of development in any part of a special area (within the meaning of the *Hunter Water Act 1991*) in the state conservation area that is permitted under section 185A having regard to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the state conservation area,
- (d) provision for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the state conservation area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas,
- (e) provision for the sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to the conservation of the state conservation area's natural and cultural values and with uses permitted under other provisions of this Act in such areas,
- (f) provision for appropriate research and monitoring.

More information

- [NSW Environment and Heritage website](#)
- [Department of Planning and Environment's privacy and security webpage](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service \(NPWS\) website](#)
- [Fire management strategies](#)
- [Park management policies](#)
- [Regional pest management strategies](#)
- [Australia's National Heritage List](#)
- [World Heritage places - Gondwana Rainforests of Australia](#)
- [UNESCO Gondwana Rainforests of Australia](#)
- [UNESCO World Heritage Convention](#)

Legislation

- [Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009 \(NSW\)](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 \(NSW\)](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 \(NSW\)](#)