



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Amendment to Coorabakh National Park

Plan of Management



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Cover photo: Coorabakh National Park. John Spencer/DPIE

This amendment was adopted by the Minister for Energy and Environment on 22 August 2019.

Coorabakh National Park is in the traditional Country of the Biripi People.

This plan of management amendment was prepared by staff of the North Coast and Hunter Central Coast operations branches of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

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

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Introduction

Background

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

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

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

This amendment was exhibited between 9 October and 7 December 2015. The submissions received on the amendment have been considered in finalising the amendment.

How to read the amendment

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

This version of the plan is available on the [Department of Planning, Industry and Environment](#) website.

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

Amendment to Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management

Justification for the amendment

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

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has developed the Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks (the Strategy) to guide the provision of improved horse riding opportunities over the coming years.

The Strategy recognises the need for horse riding proposals to be sustainable and to ensure that the natural and cultural values of our parks are protected and the safety of all park visitors is maintained. The NPWS Lower North Coast Region is one of eight priority regions identified in the Strategy which will be the focus for new and improved horse riding opportunities.

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

In February 2013, NPWS met with key horse riding representatives in the Lower North Coast Region to identify and prioritise potential new opportunities for horse riding in the Region. These opportunities included the following actions for Coorabakh National Park with the aim of linking the horse riding opportunities available in Lansdowne State Forest and Comboyne State Forest:

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

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

NPWS, in consultation with the commercial operator, the Forestry Corporation of NSW and the Lower North Coast Regional Advisory Committee, investigated four potential horse riding routes through Coorabakh National Park to provide access between Lansdowne State Forest and Comboyne State Forest. Each route was assessed for potential impacts on significant plants and animals, accessibility and terrain, visitor safety, existing visitor use, potential impacts on neighbouring private property and the quality of the visitor experience.

A route which follows sections of Cooperook Forest Way and Flat Nellie Trail was identified as the preferred horse riding route within Coorabakh National Park (see attached map). This route avoids ecologically sensitive areas in the vicinity of Newbys Creek and Starrs Creek. It

is proposed to allow controlled horse riding access on this route by organised groups and/or commercial operators subject to strict conditions to address safety considerations and to minimise impacts on natural values and other users.

Changes to the plan included in this amendment

1. In Section 2 Park Map (page 4)

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

The new map:

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

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

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

2. In Section 2.4 Recreation Opportunities (page 9)

Replace the last paragraph:

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

with the following:

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

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

3. In Section 2.8 References (page 11)

Add the following reference:

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

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

Replace the last paragraph in the Current Situation which reads:

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

with the following:

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

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

Replace the strategy:

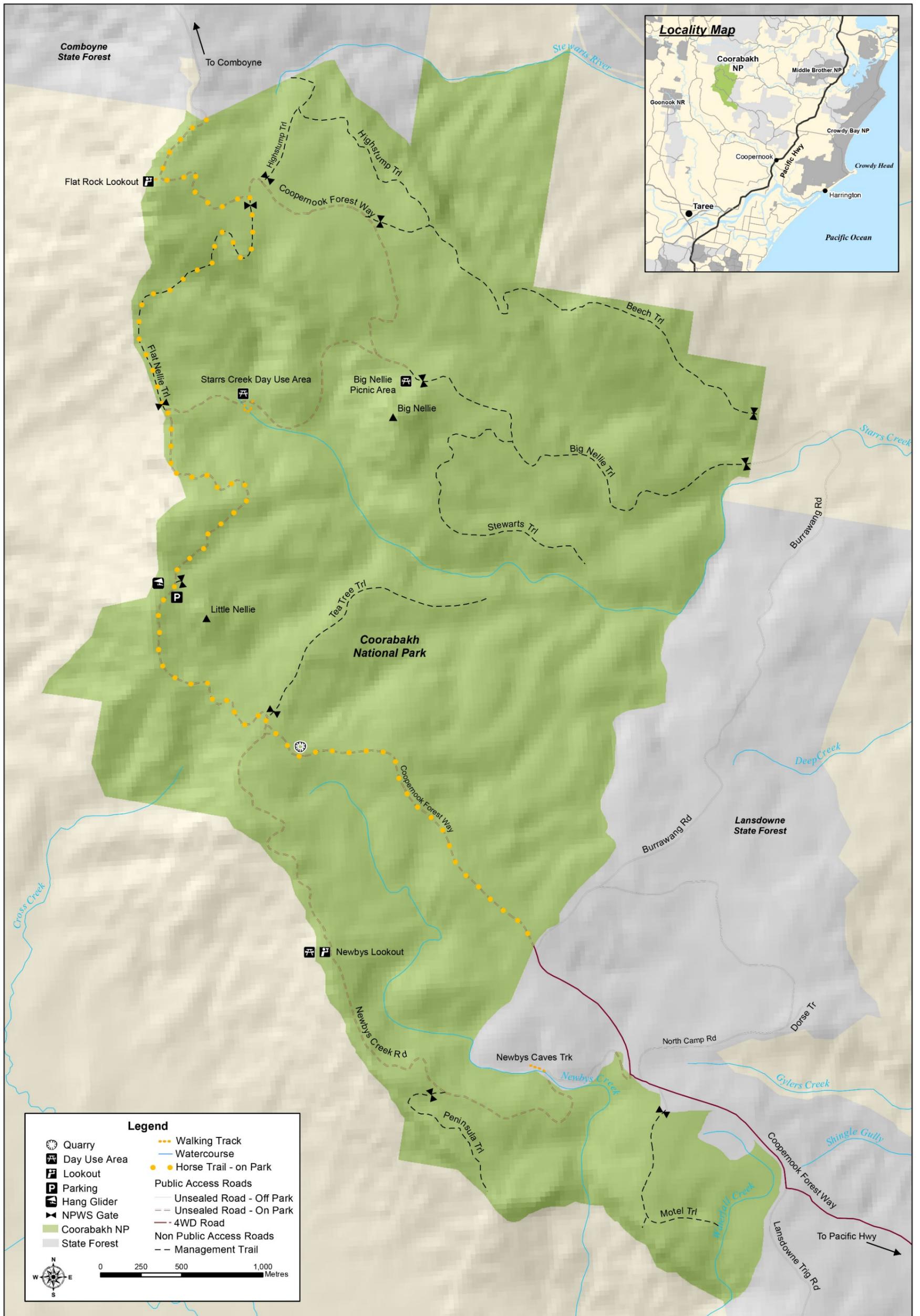
- Horse riding will not be permitted in the park and will be signposted accordingly.

with the following medium priority strategy:

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

Add the following medium priority strategy:

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



Proposed new map for the Coorabakh National Park Plan of Management