

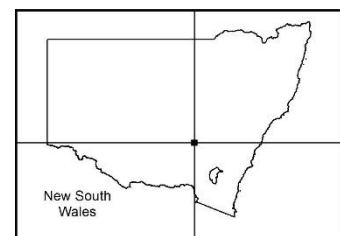


**NSW National Parks
& Wildlife Service**
Office of Environment & Heritage

Weddin Mountains National Park



Draft Amendment for Horse Riding: Weddin Mountains National Park Plan of Management



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Acknowledgments

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

This plan of management amendment was prepared by NPWS, part of the OEH, in consultation with the Western Rivers Regional Advisory Committee.

For additional information about Weddin Mountains National Park, its plan of management, or this amendment to the plan, contact the NPWS Office at Level 2, 203-209 Russell Street, Bathurst NSW 2795 or by telephone on 02 6332 7640.

Front cover image: View of Weddin Mountains National Park. Photo: M Cooper, OEH

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Background

Weddin Mountains National Park is located 20 kilometres south-west of Grenfell in the central west of New South Wales. The park was reserved in 1971 and covers an area of 8377 hectares.

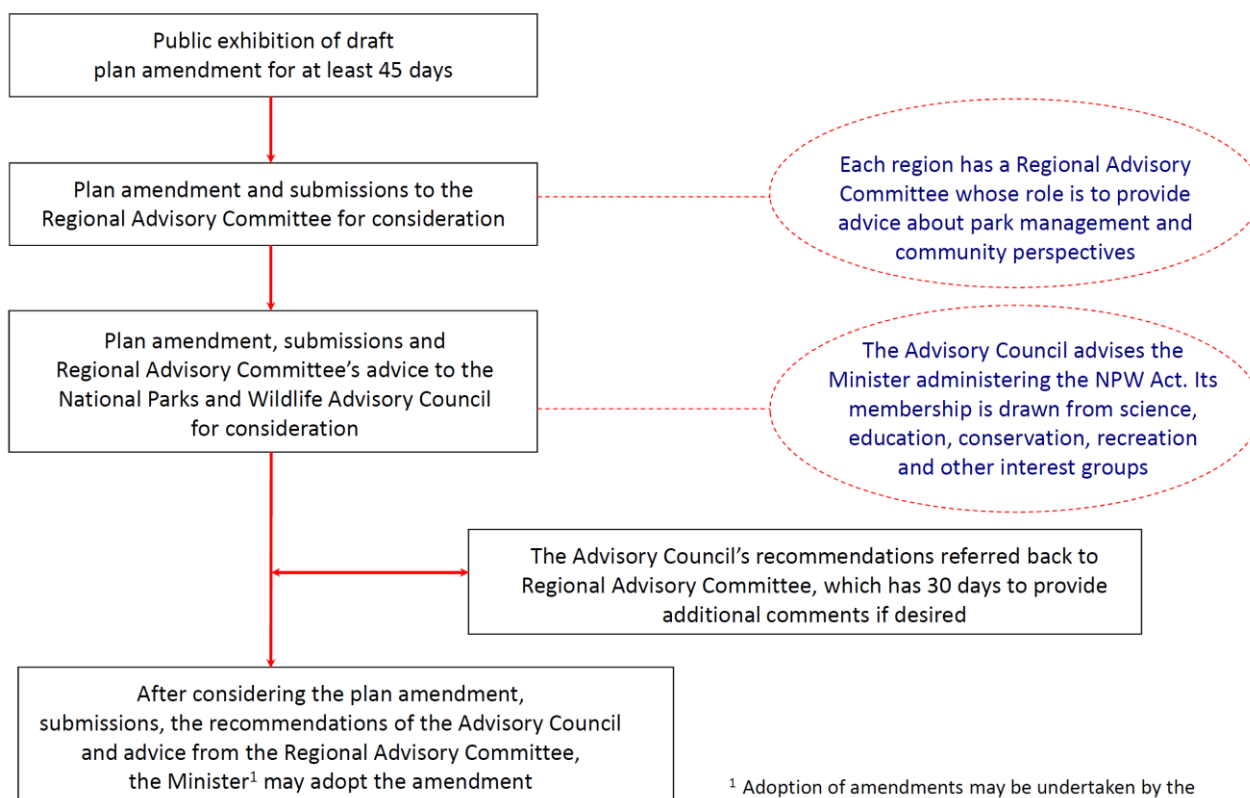
Following public consultation, including the exhibition of a draft plan of management, the *Weddin Mountains National Park Plan of Management* was adopted in 1995.

A plan of management is prepared under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. It determines how the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will manage a park. Once the Minister has adopted a plan, the plan must be carried out and no operations may be undertaken in relation to the lands to which the plan relates unless the operations are in accordance with the plan.

Under section 73B(3) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, a plan of management may be changed following public exhibition of a formal amendment.

It is proposed to change the *Weddin Mountains National Parks Plan of Management* to provide for low-key recreation in the southern part of the park, including horse riding access, which is currently prohibited under the plan.

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



How to read the draft amendment

This document outlines the reasons the amendment is proposed. It also includes detailed information on changes to the text of the plan of management. This draft amendment should be read in conjunction with the *Weddin Mountains National Parks Plan of Management*, as adopted in 1995.

The adopted plan may be accessed on the Office of Environment and Heritage website from the link at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parkmanagement/ParkManagementPlans.htm. A hardcopy of the plan can be obtained by contacting the NPWS Bathurst Office on telephone 02 6332 7640.




The plan of management has been prioritised for replacement by NPWS in the next five years, as many actions have been completed and a range of information needs updating. The changes outlined in this draft amendment have been limited to information relevant to the permissibility or management of horse riding and its potential impacts.

References in this draft amendment relate to the page numbering used in the online version of the adopted plan.

Have your say

We want to know what you think about this draft amendment. Your knowledge may help us manage recreation in Weddin Mountains National Park more effectively.

To give us feedback on the draft amendment you can send a written submission in any of the following ways:

-  use the online submission form at <https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/consult>
-  email us at npws.parkplanning@environment.nsw.gov.au
-  post your submission to The Planning Officer, PO Box 552, Katoomba NSW 2780

Written submissions must be received by Monday 3 April 2017.

To help us make the best use of your feedback:

- Make sure we can tell what issue or part of the draft amendment you are talking about. One way you can do this is to include the section heading and/or page number from the document in your submission.
- Tell us how we can make the draft amendment better. You may want to tell us what you know about the park or how you or other people use and value it.
- We are happy to hear any ideas or comments you may have and will consider them all but please be aware that we cannot always include all information or ideas in the final adopted amendment.

All submissions received by NPWS are a matter of public record. Your comments on the draft amendment may include 'personal information', and information that in some way identifies you may be gathered when you use our website or send us an email. NPWS complies with the NSW *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, which regulates the collection, storage, quality, use and disclosure of personal information.

Weddin Mountains National Park Plan of Management: DRAFT amendment for horse riding

Why amend the plan?

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

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

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRideStrat.htm.

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.

An interest in horse riding in Weddin Mountains National Park exists locally.

Under the existing *Weddin Mountains National Park Plan of Management*, horse riding is not permitted in the park. Currently there are provisions for camping and bushwalking in the northern section of the park. Bird watching is a popular activity and there are interesting historic features such as Seatons Farm and Ben Hall's cave.

This proposed amendment provides for low-key horse riding in the southern part of Weddin Mountains National Park, in an appropriate location and under conditions that provide for the protection of its natural and cultural values and visitor safety and enjoyment. The activities enabled in the southern part of the park by this amendment are dependent on the permitted use of Weddin State Forest for horse riding by Forestry Corporation of NSW and access through the state forest to the park.

Bushwalkers currently use this area and local pony clubs have expressed interest in using two management trails, Weddin Gap Trail and Black Spring Trail. These, together with an additional Forestry Corporation of NSW trail (Stoney Creek Trail), form a 20-kilometre loop.

Because the proposed horse riding trails are:

- steep and susceptible to erosion, especially in periods of high rainfall (which usually occurs in winter)
- relatively weed free
- and in the vicinity of potential nesting sites used by threatened species particularly at lower altitudes,

visitor use needs to be kept at low frequency, low-key in character and undertaken in the appropriate season.

The conditions set out in this amendment will make horse riding available to individuals and modest-sized groups of riders, but not for groups larger than 16 horses or competitive events.

NPWS has liaised with Forestry Corporation of NSW about permitted use of Stoney Creek Trail to enable a loop trail for horse riding. Horse riding is generally allowed on trails in state forests in New South Wales.

Weddin State Forest is also declared public land for hunting under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*. The licence required to hunt (NSW restricted game hunting licence), obtained through the Game Licensing Unit of the Department of Primary Industries, mitigates against visitor safety risks. Forestry Corporation of NSW advises that licensed hunting is a legitimate and safe recreational pursuit and is compatible with other forest activities.

It is acknowledged that the *Weddin Mountains National Park Plan of Management* is over 20 years old. Many actions in it have been completed and some key information needs updating. This amendment is for the purpose of permitting horse riding on a shared-use loop trail in the southern part of the park on existing management trails. A full replacement of the plan of management will be undertaken as a priority in the next five years.

DRAFT amendment

This section details text that is proposed for replacement in the 1995 adopted plan. Changes have been grouped according to the logic for the change. For example some changes relate directly to the permissibility of horse riding, while other changes update information about values that may be impacted by horse riding and how relevant threats are managed in the park.

Permissibility of horse riding

1. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Replace the following policy:

Horse riding will not be permitted in the park.

With:

Horse riding will be permitted on Weddin Gap and Black Spring trails during summer and autumn (December through to the end of May) on a maximum of 20 calendar days.

Horse riders will require an approved written activity consent. The maximum number of horses allowed on the trails is 16 per day. The maximum number of activity consents allowed per group is two days per annual horse riding season.

Consents will be subject to conditions that minimise impacts on park values and other visitors. Horse riders will be required to follow the *NPWS Code of Practice for Horse Riding in Parks* (OEH 2014). NPWS encourages riders to wear helmets for safety reasons. Horse feed is not permitted in the park. Camping overnight with horses is not permitted in the park.

The two trails authorised for horse riding may be temporarily or permanently closed to riders at any time depending on trail conditions, weather conditions or management needs. This includes wet weather periods, total fire bans or after fire events.

Consultation with user groups will be undertaken prior to implementation of any permanent closures.

2. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Add underneath the paragraph beginning 'A walking track exists':

This 20-kilometre loop trail in the southern part of the park is authorised for horse riding. While there is little history of horse riding in the park, a low-key level of recreational horse riding will be permitted due to local interest. Horse riding will be

allowed on a seasonal basis to avoid both the wettest part of the year (and therefore difficulties in accessing the parks and erosion damage to park values and infrastructure) and the breeding season of the threatened bush stone-curlew.

3. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Replace in the last paragraph of text:

Three management tracks are maintained for management purposes and will be promoted as part of the walking track system.

With:

Five management trails are maintained for management purposes and three of those will be promoted for use by bushwalkers and horse riders.

4. In Section 3 Objectives of Management (page 6)

Replace the statement:

The protection of opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation in the balance of the park.

With:

The provision of opportunities for targeted low-key recreational activities in a natural setting in the balance of the park.

5. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Replace the following policy:

The balance of the park will be managed to provide opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation.

With:

The balance of the park will be managed to provide opportunities for targeted, low-key recreational activities in a natural setting.

6. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (pages 18-19)

Remove the four actions.

Replace with:

Manage Weddin Gap and Black Spring trails and Stoney Creek Trail in conjunction with Forestry Corporation of NSW, as authorised horse riding trails.

Develop a local activity consent system that is based on the horse riding conditions set for the park as outlined above.

7. In Section 4.3.4 Management Operations (page 20)

Replace the following text from the first paragraph:

Because of the size and shape of the park only three management tracks are required and maintained:

- major management access into the park is via the Weddin Gap track
- the Holy Camp track follows the eastern boundary of the park from the end of Holy Camp road to the northern tip of the park and

- a track along the south-eastern boundary between the Stock Route road and Weddin Gap.

With:

Five management trails are required and will be maintained as essential or important: Seatons and Holy Camp trails in the northern section of the park; and Weddin Gap, Black Spring and Cochrans Lease trails in the southern section.

Park values

8. In Section 4.1.2 Native and Introduced Plants (page 9)

Replace the following phrase and indented dot points from the second paragraph:

; of these, the following vegetation types are poorly conserved in the nature conservation system but are found in Weddin Mountains National Park:

large areas of woodland and open forest dominated by mugga ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*);

areas of woodland dominated by white box (*E. albens*), Blakely's red gum (*E. blakelyi*), grey box (*E. microcarpa*) and fuzzy box (*E. conica*). Fuzzy box is particularly important as it is not protected elsewhere in NSW; and

large areas of heath dominated by *Allocasuarina diminuta ssp. diminuta*.

With:

. There are three threatened ecological communities found in Weddin Mountains National Park:

- Fuzzy Box Woodland on alluvial Soils of the South Western Slopes, Darling Riverine Plains and Brigalow Belt South Bioregions
- Inland Grey Box Woodland in the Riverina, NSW South Western Slopes, Cobar Peneplain, Nandewar and Brigalow Belt South Bioregions
- White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Woodland.

9. In Section 4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals (page 12)

Add in the first paragraph after the sentence ending in 'incomplete':

There are 24 threatened animal species recorded in the park, all of them are birds.

10. In Section 4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals (page 12)

Add in the second paragraph, immediately before the last sentence:

The endangered bush stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*) has been recorded in the vicinity of the park. Large parts of the park and adjoining Bimbi and Weddin state forests contain potential habitat for this species, particularly at the lower altitudes.

11. In Section 4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals (page 12)

Replace the following sentence, the last in the second paragraph:

It is important that their habitat requirements are understood to ensure their survival.

With:

It is important the habitat requirements of all of these bird species are understood to ensure their survival.

Park threats

12. In Section 4.1.1 Geology, Landforms, Hydrology and Soils (page 9)

Replace the third policy:

All management activities will incorporate soil erosion and sedimentation control principles and practices developed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management of NSW.

With:

All management activities will incorporate soil erosion and sedimentation control principles and practices in accordance with OEH guidelines (OEH 2012a).

13. In Section 4.1.2 Native and Introduced Plants (page 12)

Replace the fourth and fifth policies with:

Weeds in the park will be managed in accordance with the *Regional Pest Management Strategy* (OEH 2012b).

14. In Section 4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals (page 14)

Remove the three actions and **replace** with:

Pest animals in the park will be managed in accordance with the *Regional Pest Management Strategy* (OEH 2012b).

Other factual corrections

15. In Section 2.2.1 Location and Regional setting (page 2)

Update the reserved area of the park as follows:

8377 hectares

16. In Section 2.2.2 significance of Weddin Mountains National Park (page 3)

Replace the sentence in the first paragraph:

These include the Conimbla Range, Cocopara and Nangar national parks and the Currumbenya, Cocopara, The Rock and Tabletop nature reserves.

with:

These include Conimbla, Cocoparra, Goobang and Nangar national parks and the Cocoparra, The Rock and Tabletop nature reserves.

17. In Section 2.2.2 significance of Weddin Mountains National Park (page 5)

Replace the number 10 **with:** several

18. In Section 2.2.2 significance of Weddin Mountains National Park (page 5)

Replace the following sentence contained in the third paragraph:

Other similar camping opportunities are provided in the Towyal, Cumbidjowra, Nangar and Weddin state forests and in Conimbla National Park.

With:

Other similar camping opportunities are provided in Goobang and Nangar national parks.

19. In Section 4.1.3 Native and Introduced Animals (page 13)

Replace the following policy:

Domestic animals will not be permitted in the park with the exception of guide dogs for the blind.

With:

Domestic animals in the park will be managed in accordance with the Pets in Parks Policy.

20. In Section 4.2 Cultural Heritage (page 15)

Add the words 'and Young' between 'Cowra' and 'Local Aboriginal Land Councils' in the first policy.

21. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 17)

Replace, in the first paragraph:

only opportunity for car based camping and bush walking within a national park in the Central West.

With:

an opportunity for car-based camping and bushwalking, in addition to Conimbla, Nangar and Goobang national parks in the central west.

22. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 17)

Replace, in the first paragraph:

Access to the park is from both the east via Holy Camp Road and from the west via Nowlands Road. These access roads are unsealed and are for dry weather use only.

With:

Access to the western part of the park is from the north via the Mid Western Highway, Back Piney Range Road, Nowlands Road and Bimbi State Forest. Access to the eastern side of the park is via Mary Gilmore Way and Holy Camp Road. There are clear roadside directional signs on the approach to the park from all directions.

23. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Remove from the paragraph beginning with 'Recreational facilities...' at Holy Camp and Seatons Farm (at the end of the first sentence)

Replace in the same paragraph, in the third sentence, nearby Seatons camping area

With:

nearby Ben Halls Camping Area

24. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Replace the paragraph beginning with 'A walking track...' with:

There are five walking tracks in the northern part of the park and one bushwalking loop trail in the southern part of the park. Ben Halls Cave Track, Berthas Gully track, Lynchs Loop Walk and Basin Gully to Eualdrie Lookout Track are accessed from the Ben Halls Camping Area in the north-west. Eualdrie Walking Track is accessed from

Holy Camp Camping Area in the north-east. Basin Gully to Eualdrie Lookout Track links these two camping areas. Weddin Gap and Black Spring trails in the southern part of the park, together with Stoney Creek Trail in the adjoining Weddin State Forest, combine to form a 20-kilometre loop trail. See Figure 1.

25. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Replace in the first policy:

Black Gin Gully

With:

Berthas, Little Basin

26. In Section 4.3.2 Recreation opportunities (page 18)

Add an additional policy after the second policy:

Ben Halls Camping Area will provide camping and day use facilities in the north-west part of the park.

27. In Section 4.3.4 Management Operations (page 21)

Remove from the second action:

in consultation with the Department of Conservation and Land Management

28. In Section 5 Plan Implementation (page 22)

Remove and **add** actions as outlined above.

29. In Section 6 Selected References (page 24)

Add the following in appropriate alphabetical order:

OEH 2012a, *Erosion and Sediment Control on Unsealed Roads: A field guide for erosion and sediment control maintenance practices*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney,
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/stormwater/120410unsealedroads.pdf.

OEH 2012b, *Regional Pest Management Strategy 2012–17: Western Rivers Region, A new approach for reducing impacts on native species and park neighbours*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney,
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/pestsweeds/20120377wrrpms.pdf

OEH 2014, *Code of Practice for Horse Riding in Parks*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney, www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseridingCOP.htm

OEH 2015, *Pets in Parks Policy*, Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/pets-policy.htm

30. Throughout the plan update all government department and other bodies' names as required.

31. Throughout the plan remove the word 'recent' where its use dates the plan.

32. Throughout the plan update styles and presentation, including improved disability access requirements. No changes will be made to the text other than editorial corrections

(e.g. spelling) and amendments made in line with this proposed amendment and as adopted by the Minister for the Environment.

33. Insert the following map (Figure 1) to replace the existing map in the plan (no map currently in the online version).

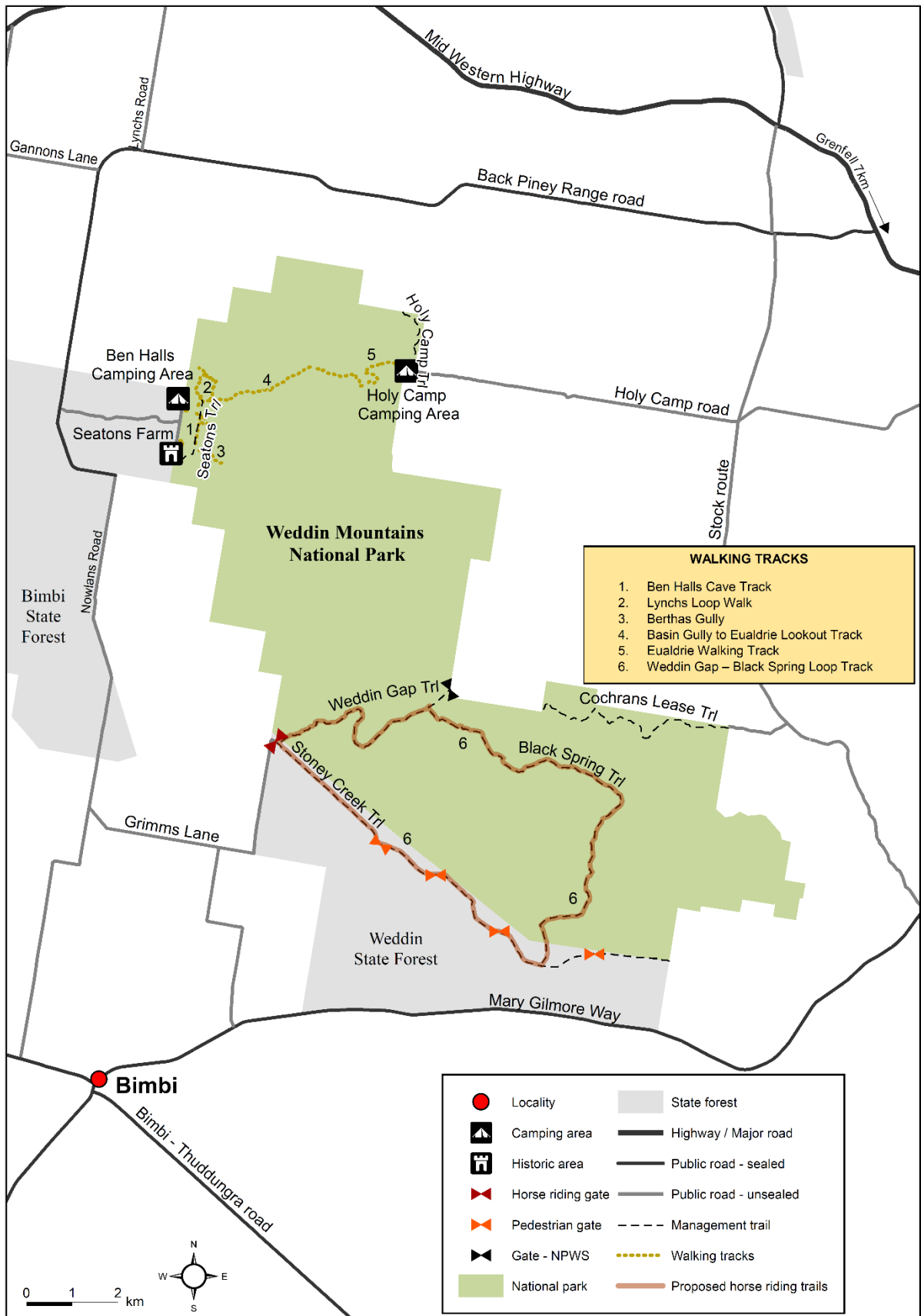


Figure 1: Weddin Mountains National Park proposed horse riding trails