



**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Submissions summary**

**Public exhibition of Tweed Byron Hinterland  
Walk draft master plan  
(now known as the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk)**



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Cover photo: Breathtaking view from Jerusalem Cliffs, Mount Jerusalem National Park.  
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## Background

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is delivering a signature multi-day walking experience in the Tweed Byron hinterland on the far north coast of New South Wales.

The initial working title for the walk was the Tweed Byron Hinterland Walk. However, following consultation with Aboriginal custodians, the walk has been named the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk.

The Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk will be a new 36-kilometre, 3-night, 4-day walk traversing the ancestral lands of the Widjabul Wia-bal and Minjungbal people of the Bundjalung Nation, from Mount Jerusalem National Park to Nightcap National Park. The draft master plan outlined the key concepts such as the walk's proposed route and visitor facilities, including remote walker camps and lookouts.

To provide the community with the opportunity to have a say on the proposed walk and associated facilities, the Tweed Byron Hinterland Walk draft master plan (Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk) was placed on public exhibition from 27 October to 23 December 2022. This report provides a summary of the community feedback received and outlines how the feedback has been considered in the master plan.

## Community consultation

Prior to and during the development of the draft master plan, the NPWS conducted extensive stakeholder consultation and engagement, including:

- targeted consultation with key stakeholders
- consideration of comments from more than 300 people who registered their interest in the project online
- consultation with Aboriginal custodians and advisers.

NPWS also conducted public consultation on:

- the draft master plan for Unicorn Falls, which guides development of the northern visitor hub in Mount Jerusalem National Park, including the Manns Road trail head
- the draft master plan for Minyon Falls, which outlines upgrades to the existing day-use areas at the end of the walk, in the Minyon Falls area.

The Tweed Byron Hinterland Walk draft master plan (Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk) was placed on public exhibition from 27 October to 23 December 2022. This provided members of the community with the opportunity to comment on the proposed walk and visitor infrastructure.

More than 430 people were notified about the public exhibition, including those listed on the Tweed Byron Hinterland Trails register of interest. It was also widely promoted through local media, social media and posters.

The draft master plan was available online and at NPWS offices in Murwillumbah, Byron Bay, Kyogle and Alstonville, and individuals and organisations were invited to provide their feedback through the online survey, online form or by email or written submission.

The Review of Environmental Factors and the Natural Heritage Values Assessment were also available online, along with a video to help people understand the vision of the project.

## Submissions received

We appreciate the time and effort that was put into the submissions we received.

We received a total of 62 submissions from a range of stakeholders, including individuals, residents, business operators, local councils, park users and bushwalking groups.

This included 23 online survey responses, 26 written submissions via the online form and 13 written submissions by email. Submissions and survey responses were received from 57 individuals and 4 organisations.

### Origin of respondents



### How often people visit the parks

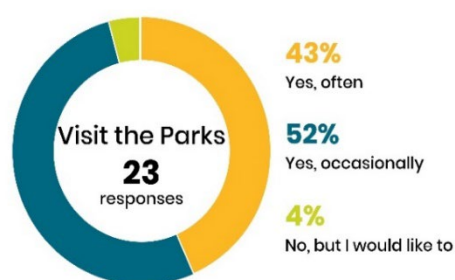


Figure 1 Origin of respondents and how often people visit the parks

## How submissions were analysed

Every point raised in every submission was documented and considered by NPWS. Similar points were grouped together in themes according to specific issues raised. Themes and their points were then assessed using criteria to determine whether a change should be made to the master plan. Key points raised in submissions were categorised under the following themes.

Table 1 Themes and number of submissions

Theme	Number of submissions
Track location, route, side tracks and short walks	34
Location and scale of camps, shelters, lookouts	23
Bookings and walk management	16
Protecting natural and cultural values	16
Parking, roads and traffic	15
Park management, compliance and safety	13
Economic and tourism opportunities	10
Other recreational activities	3
Neighbour amenity and community wellbeing	8
Interpretation and signage	3
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## Summary of feedback

There were a range of views and points raised in submissions, with some supporting the general intent of the master plan, others strongly opposed and some out of scope for the project. Alternative options to the NPWS proposals were also provided in some submissions.

In response, the NPWS considered where changes could be made to the draft master plan to improve outcomes for the park's natural and cultural heritage values, visitors and the community. The feedback received and how this has been considered are summarised below.

### Track location, route, side tracks and short walks

Submissions suggested adjustments to the track route, including alternative locations for the start of the walk, provision of sheltered areas for groups, and a range of feedback on the walking distance between camps. Some submissions did not support walking on roads and management trails, in particular the Eastern Fire Break.

#### NPWS response

- The suggestion to use North Chowan Road as an alternative start point for the walk was scoped during the project planning and may provide a future opportunity to extend the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk pending future funding. This will be recognised in the final master plan. It was also suggested to link the walk to the new Northern Rivers Rail Trail via Upper Burringbar. This would require the use of an unused road easement, which is not managed by NPWS, but could be considered in the future in consultation with the Tweed Shire Council.
- Due to site constraints at Unicorn Falls, it was decided to start the walk at the Manns Road site, as it can accommodate a larger carpark and amenities block.
- One submission thought the Clay Pot Road to Rowlands Creek side track has a relatively steep decline at the Rowlands Creek end and is uninspiring, and a better rainforest experience could be offered by following a former logging road just south of Hell Hole. While it was proposed as a re-route of the main walk, the suggestion also has merit as an alternative to the Clay Pot Road to Rowlands Creek side track and will be added to the final master plan as an alternative alignment to be considered when funds allow.
- The NPWS has also investigated realigning part of Day 3 of the walk to avoid using the Eastern Firebreak, as suggested by 2 submitters. Subject to the completion of due diligence (natural and cultural values assessments), a new alignment utilising former logging tracks, part of Peates Mountain Track, and some newly constructed track will be incorporated into the final master plan.
- The option of including the Koonyum Range to create a multi-day loop walk was deemed not feasible as it crossed land not managed by the NPWS, it was difficult to find a suitable route descending off the range, the limit of the project budget and safety issues related to walking on the narrow Huonbrook Road.

## Location and scale of camps, shelters and lookouts

Some submissions said there should be a camp at the start of the walk, or that NPWS could partner with a nearby private campground operator, and proposed alternatives for the location of the camps.

Feedback on the camp platform design varied, with some supporting the design, some suggesting that there should be no camp platforms, and others suggesting the platforms should include a roof and seating.

There were also comments on the size and design of the proposed shelters and lookouts, including a suggestion for alternative lookout locations and shelter design to include a roof and walls for weather protection.

### NPWS response

- There is no compelling reason to change the design, capacity or location of the camps, shelters and lookouts in the master plan. Camp locations were based on a number of criteria, including:
  - accessibility
  - aesthetics
  - proximity to other features (such as viewpoints, water features and spectacular forest)
  - potential impacts on natural and cultural values.
- Further due diligence at Camp 2 and scoping for an alternative nearby location has been undertaken, due to its proximity to threatened species and potentially hazardous trees. This included expert advice from an independent ecologist and arborist confirming that the proposed location for Camp 2 is preferable and that management approaches can adequately protect the environment and walker safety in this location.
- To allow servicing, maintenance and emergency response, each camp needs to be accessible by vehicles. Camp 1 is positioned at the end of a former logging road and is the southernmost vehicle-accessible point on the walking track in Mt Jerusalem National Park. Camp 2, in Nightcap National Park, is the northernmost vehicle accessible location in the park which can accommodate the camp site. This means that Day 2 has already been shortened as much as possible.

## Bookings and walk management

Some submissions said that there should be more flexibility with the camp booking process, to enable people to walk at their own pace or to only walk part of the track. It was also raised that walkers should be free to walk the track in whichever direction they choose, that bookings should be based on the number of tents (rather than walkers), that the number of overall walkers should be reduced or limited, and that the camp platforms for guided walkers could also be available to independent walkers.

### NPWS response

- The Review of Environmental Factors (REF), which considers environmental impacts of the walk, was approved based on 22 walkers per section per day.
- The number of walker interactions is managed by ensuring that all track users walk in one direction only. Accordingly, the walk will be promoted as a north to south single direction, with the spectacular Minyon Falls providing a fitting end point. This also:

- ensures the booking system can operate at peak efficiency and that each camp can be booked sequentially
- minimises contact between walkers, promoting a greater sense of remoteness
- allows easier scheduling of drop-offs and pick-ups by shuttle service operators
- Independent walkers will be allowed to use sites in the guided camps providing they are not already booked. Greater detail on the booking system will be provided in future.

## Protecting natural and cultural values

Several submissions raised concerns about increased visitor numbers, vehicles and pest animals, and the impact of the proposed walk on the natural habitat and native wildlife. It was raised that the impacts of walkers needed to be monitored and the plan adjusted accordingly, and that there should be a higher standard and more robust scientifically informed methodology.

Some people commented that the walk should have an Aboriginal name and that further consultation with Aboriginal custodians is required.

### NPWS response

- Development of the walk and visitor infrastructure will be in accordance with strict environmental and cultural heritage planning approvals.
- The REF for the walk was based on the concepts in the draft master plan and determined that the proposals would not have a significant impact on these values.
- NPWS has a monitoring program in place for key species in the project area. This includes threatened species and Assets of Intergenerational Significance.
- The Widjabul Wia-bal Native Title Holders, Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Wollumbin Consultative Group were consulted extensively throughout the planning process and endorsed the track route and location of Camps 1, 2 and 3.
- 'Gidjuum Gulganyi' (meaning Old People's Track) was provided as an appropriate name for the walk by the Widjabul Wia-bal Native Title Holders and the Wollumbin Aboriginal Consultative Group. In response, the walk has been renamed the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk.

## Parking, roads and traffic

Submissions raised points about parking, including that there should be overnight carparks for walkers, that parking should be improved at the entrance and that limited parking is already an issue.

Feedback said that Manns Road would need to be upgraded to cope with increased traffic to the trail head and that Main Arm Road, Wilsons Creek and Huonbrook Road are not suitable for increased traffic because of poor road condition. Concerns about road safety, access for residents and a lack of road repair following the floods were also raised.

### NPWS response

- The carpark at the Manns Road trail head has been designed to allow for a small shuttle bus and day parking. Multi-day walkers will be encouraged to use the shuttle service.



- The Byron Shire Council has been progressively repairing Main Arm Road following the floods and is actively seeking funding to upgrade all water crossings between Upper Main Arm and the park.

## Park management, compliance and safety

Submissions raised points about the maintenance of the facilities, including toilets, rubbish collection and the need for long-term maintenance and monitoring of facilities. This included concerns about the possible increase in illegal and unauthorised activities, impacts on local water supply quality, trespassing on neighbouring private property, and the need for NPWS to patrol the track.

Some people suggested that access along the walk was needed for emergency response and some raised concerns about the potential need for communities to assist walkers in emergencies. Other submissions raised points about carpark security, mobile phone service and park closures in emergencies.

### NPWS response

- Maintenance of facilities will be undertaken by park staff or contractors on an ongoing basis. Revenue from the walkers will contribute towards ongoing management costs.
- NPWS staff undertake regular patrols of the parks, which will be increased to manage the walk. Surveillance cameras will also be installed at key locations.
- The walk will undergo regular risk assessment to ensure the safety of visitors. Mitigation will include the careful design of high-use areas, signage, protective barriers, bushfire mitigation, park closures during periods of high weather risk, and tree assessment and management.
- Much of the walk is covered by mobile phone coverage, and emergency airlift evacuation points have been identified for areas not accessible by vehicles.

## Economic and tourism opportunities

Submissions raised points about the proposed shuttle bus service, the management of commercial operators and groups, and expected visitor numbers. One submission was opposed to commercial use and huts in the parks, and another said that priority for new cultural experiences should be given to Aboriginal Traditional Owners.

### NPWS response

- NPWS encourages the development of Aboriginal cultural experiences within national parks and will continue to work with Aboriginal custodians to develop Aboriginal cultural tourism products and consult about other possible commercial opportunities.
- NPWS will be releasing an expression of interest for commercial opportunities for the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk in 2023, to offer shuttle services and guided walking tours.

## Other recreational activities

Some submissions objected to the closure of the Eastern Fire Break to cycling and horseriding and suggested that trail running should be permitted on the track.

## **NPWS response**

- Cycling, horseriding and trail running are incompatible with providing a remote walking experience and are well catered for in other areas in Mount Jerusalem and Nightcap national parks and nearby Whian Whian State Conservation Area.

## **Neighbour amenity and community wellbeing**

Submissions raised concerns about potential impacts on park neighbours and communities, the local environment, loss of visual amenity, increased anti-social and illegal activity, increased use of roads by commercial operators, and concerns with flooding and safety.

## **NPWS response**

- Shuttle services to the start and end of the walk will minimise vehicle traffic on local roads. NPWS will ensure that signs are placed at Doon Doon Road and Wilson Creek Road advising walkers that no access is possible from the Doon Doon Valley or Huonbrook Valley.
- Walkers will be actively discouraged from swimming or bathing in the creeks that supply water to residences in the Huonbrook Valley.

## **Interpretation and signage**

Submissions suggested that wayfinding signs should be installed at key locations throughout the region and that interpretive signage about fires and recovery should be installed.

## **NPWS response**

- Signs along the route will be restricted to directional route markers. Walkers will be provided with information via the NPWS webpage, a brochure and trail head signs.
- Interpretation of natural and cultural values will be provided at Unicorn Falls and Minyon Falls.
- Local councils will be consulted about off-park tourist signs to ensure visitors are directed to the most appropriate routes to the Manns Road trail head and Minyon Falls.

## **Consultation process**

Feedback on the consultation process included the need for further consultation with specific groups, with some commending NPWS on the consultation.

## **NPWS response**

- NPWS will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community to deliver the walk.

## Next steps

The NPWS is finalising the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk Master Plan (formerly Tweed Byron Hinterland Walk draft master plan) and will advise people when the plan is available online at [Tweed Byron Hinterland Trails](#).

The master plan will provide a framework for the delivery of the Gidjuum Gulganyi Walk and associated visitor facilities in Mount Jerusalem and Nightcap national parks.

To progress this exciting new visitor experience, preliminary work on the walking track commenced in May 2023, in accordance with rigorous environmental and heritage planning approvals.

## More information

We will continue to update you as the project progresses. Anyone who has not yet registered their interest in the project can do so on our [Tweed Byron Hinterland Trails](#) webpage.