



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek

Consultation report



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Background

The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) commenced preparation of a plan of management for Goolawah National Park, Limeburners Creek National Park and Goolawah Regional Park in 2012 after changes in land status and several additions to the conservation estate.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act sets out the process for preparation of a plan of management. This process includes public exhibition of a draft plan. The planning process also provided an opportunity for the community to have a say in the future management of these areas.

Consultation undertaken

Engagement with stakeholders and traditional custodians commenced in 2012.

Consultation with Dunghutti people and Birpai people was facilitated through meetings with representatives of the Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council, Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council, Dunghutti Elders Council and several Aboriginal family groups.

A Goolawah Consultative Committee was established at the outset to advise NPWS and assist in the plan's development. More recently, the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee assisted in preparing the plan.

Throughout the planning process, meetings and discussions with the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee, local council representatives, park neighbours, community groups and clubs, volunteers, commercial fishers, apiarists and local recreation groups occurred.

The *Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park draft plan of management* was placed on public exhibition from 10 December 2021 to 11 March 2022. During the public exhibition, an information session was conducted online to outline the content of the draft plan, answer questions and encourage people to contribute to the preparation of the plan by making a submission.

Emails and letters were sent to over 250 state and local stakeholders and park neighbours, media releases and notices were published in local newspapers, which were further distributed by *Mirage News*, *Port Macquarie News* and *Macleay Argus*, social media posts were published, including the local Crescent Head Facebook group and posters were displayed in the parks and community.

An online survey was conducted during the public exhibition of the draft plan of management in which over 100 people responded. A total of 149 submissions were received during public exhibition.

The Karst Management Advisory Committee, the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and National Parks and Wildlife Council each have responsibilities under the NPW Act to assist in the preparation of plans of management.

The Karst Management Advisory Committee considered the draft plan and provided advice to the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council after the completion of the public exhibition.

The North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council provided advice to the Minister for Environment and Heritage in September 2022 after their consideration of the draft plan, submissions received and advice from the Karst Management Advisory Committee.

Submissions received, advice provided by the North Coast Regional Advisory Committee and advice provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council were considered before the Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park Plan of Management was adopted by the Minister for Environment and Heritage under the NPW Act.

The NPWS acknowledges the community's interest in the preparation of this plan of management and would like to thank those members of the community that contributed.

Providing for appropriate and sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park have been used for recreational activities for generations. Each year many people visit these parks to enjoy their unique undeveloped coastal setting. NPWS aims to ensure that visitors can enjoy, experience and appreciate the parks while also ensuring that each park's special values are conserved and protected.

Goolawah National Park, Goolawah Regional Park and Limeburners Creek National Park are reserved to achieve the objects of the NPW Act. These objects are centred on conserving nature, conserving cultural heritage values and fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these special values. The NPW Act sets principles for management of national parks and regional parks.

The wilderness area in Limeburners Creek National Park is also managed in accordance with the objects of the *Wilderness Act 1987*, which provide for the permanent protection of wilderness areas, their proper management and for education of the public in the appreciation, protection and management of wilderness. The *Wilderness Act* also sets principles for the management of wilderness areas, which complement the management principles for national parks.

The final plan describes how the park will be managed to achieve the objects of the NPW Act and the *Wilderness Act 1987*, consistent with the management principles, and where appropriate, provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment that is compatible with the conservation of the national park's natural and cultural value.

The main feedback on the draft plan and the NPWS response is summarised below.

Access for dog walkers

Pets are generally not allowed in parks as they can harm native animals and disrupt park visitors' enjoyment. Under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and Regulation, domestic dogs may be taken into regional parks but not national parks.

Goolawah Regional Park provides access for dog walking at Delicate Beach, Big Hill Beach and Delicate Camping Area in Goolawah Regional Park. It is also one of the few parks on the NSW North Coast where visitors can camp with their dogs or walk them off-leash on the beach. These opportunities have not been affected by adoption of the new plan.

The draft plan proposed prohibiting access for dog walking in Limeburners Creek National Park and Goolawah National Park, including Goolawah Beach, to increase the level of protection for coastal wildlife. Submissions were received in support of these proposed restrictions. Submissions were also received that opposed these proposals.

Submissions expressed the view that access to the beach for dogs should continue and that access through the park was needed so that people could access a Kempsey Shire Council off-leash area at the northern end of Goolawah Beach.

The concerns raised were carefully considered before adoption of the plan. The plan allows people to walk with their dog on a leash along a designated route through Goolawah National Park until 30 June 2025 (see Figure 2 Map 1A in the plan of management). This will enable people to continue to walk through the park to the Kempsey Shire Council dog walking area until a new pedestrian access route to the Council dog walking area can be constructed outside the park. Dogs will not be allowed anywhere in Goolawah National Park after 30 June 2025.

Access for 4WD and fishing on Goolawah Beach

Four-wheel drive access is permitted in areas of the parks where it is compatible with conservation and visitor management objectives.

The draft plan proposed maintaining vehicle access on public park roads, the intertidal zone of North Shore Beach (south of the Queens Head vehicle access), and Plomer Road south of Queens Head in Limeburners Creek National Park. The draft plan proposed prohibiting vehicle access to Goolawah Beach in Goolawah National Park to ensure beachgoers' safety and protect threatened shorebirds and turtles.

Submissions both in support and in opposition to this proposal were received. Submissions expressed concern that adopting this plan would further contribute to the loss of opportunities on the North Coast to access beaches by four-wheel drive for fishing.

The continuation of vehicle access to Goolawah Beach is not compatible with responsibilities under the National Parks and Wildlife Act for the protection of biodiversity. However, the final plan has been revised to improve access to beaches in the area for fishing in other ways. The plan includes an action to:

- investigate establishment of an additional pedestrian access point to Goolawah Beach, between the existing north and south access points
- to work in partnership with partners to ensure the public are aware of opportunities to access beaches outside these parks
- investigate, and if appropriate, upgrade Point Plomer Day Use and Camping Area to improve access.

Park infrastructure and services

NPWS constructs and maintains visitor facilities to protect park values, provide opportunities for visitors, and facilitate management operations. These parks require infrastructure, including roads and management trails, car parks, walking tracks, water, toilets, and work storage. Submissions raised concerns that park infrastructure should be managed within the existing footprint.

The final plan confirms that improvement to visitor facilities is not intended to increase the overall size of the campgrounds or day use areas. Improvements to camping areas will be focused on the existing footprint. Existing facilities may be replaced or upgraded to improve the visitor experience, accessibility and safety and to manage impacts on the parks' natural and cultural values. Upgrades to camping areas or visitor facilities will be subject to environmental and cultural assessments.