

Bushwalking NSW

Bushwalking NSW Inc. PO Box 3008, Uki NSW 2484 O: L1, 79 Myrtle Street, Chippendale P: (02)8003 5545
E: admin@bushwalkingnsw.org.au W: bushwalkingnsw.org.au [f bushwalkingnsw](https://www.facebook.com/bushwalkingnsw) [@BushwalkingNSW](https://twitter.com/BushwalkingNSW)

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT – COMMERCIAL RECREATION – KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Bushwalking NSW Incorporated is the peak body for bushwalkers in NSW and the ACT. It represents the interests of over 11,000 bushwalkers from 70 bushwalking clubs throughout NSW and the ACT, and provides a united voice to local, state and federal government agencies and other bodies on issues affecting bushwalkers.

The Kosciuszko National Park is visited by many of our affiliated clubs. It is considered one of the premier areas for bushwalking, including remote area walking.

Proposed Amendments to the Plan of Management

Bushwalking NSW Inc has reviewed the proposal to allow commercial recreation groups into Wilderness Areas and considers that the proposal should go ahead subject to the following conditions. We have only considered commercial recreation to cover walking (hiking), mountain biking, kayaking/canoeing and horse-riding. If there are other commercial recreation activities that we have overlooked, then we would need to consider them separately.

Commercial Walking Groups

- Commercial groups should be limited to 8 people including the guide(s).
- Commercial groups should be subject to strict biosecurity protocols including controls on the spreading of *Phytophthora* spp.
- Commercial groups should adhere to Leave No Trace principles.
- Commercial groups should be self-sufficient including for shelter. They should not stay overnight in huts unless to shelter from poor weather or during an emergency.

Mountain Bike Groups

- Commercial groups should be limited to 8 people including the guide(s).
- Commercial groups should be subject to strict biosecurity protocols including controls on the spreading of *Phytophthora* spp.
- Commercial groups should adhere to Leave No Trace principles.
- Commercial groups should be self-sufficient including for shelter. They should not stay overnight in huts unless to shelter from poor weather or during an emergency.
- Mountain bike routes should be confined to existing fire trails. There should be no new routes.

Kayaking/Canoeing

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Horse Riding

It is the understanding of Bushwalking NSW that commercial horse-riding activities are permitted in the Pilot Wilderness, specifically on the fire trail between the Pinch River campground and the Tin Mines (Carters) Huts. At this point in time Bushwalking NSW does not support the expansion of horse-riding in Wilderness Areas in Kosciuszko NP. Horse-riding in Wilderness Areas brings biosecurity concerns as well as damage from trampling, grazing of vegetation and damage to trees from tethering of horses. There is also a likelihood that a horse-riding party of 8 would also require additional pack horses carrying supplies.

The park is already under considerable stress from a range of impacts and additional horse-riding access in Wilderness Areas is not appropriate.

Therefore, any consideration of expanding commercial horse-riding should be deferred.

All of the above activities should be subject to regular audits to ensure that conditions of permits or consents are being followed. There should also be a limit of the number of commercial trips to ensure that tracks and campsites are not overloaded. This limit should relate to the number of operators allowed in an area any one time as well as the overall cumulative effect of commercial trips over the course of the year.

Bushwalking NSW is aware that there will probably be applications from commercial groups to exceed the 8-person limit in Wilderness Areas. We urge the National Parks and Wildlife Service to take a strict approach to assessing such applications. They should only be approved in limited circumstances and subject to stringent environmental safeguards. Their approval should be the rare exception.

Yours sincerely,



David Bell
President
Bushwalking NSW Inc.
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