

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Cycling Strategy



Vision

Cycling experiences in our parks will be sustainable, located in suitable locations that ensure the protection of natural and cultural heritage values, and will support tourism and deliver health benefits to communities.





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Purpose

The New South Wales (NSW) National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is directly or jointly responsible for managing more than 890 parks in New South Wales, covering more than 9% of the State. We manage protected areas for the conservation of natural and cultural values and the provision of visitor experiences in these natural settings. Over the last 10 years, increasing numbers of people are realising the physical and mental health benefits of cycling and connecting with nature.

Parks located along the coastline of New South Wales within the North Coast, Hunter and Central Coast, Metro and South Coast regions are experiencing the greatest demand for localised, off-road mountain biking opportunities. The Southern Ranges region offers major cycling destinations like Thredbo Mountain Bike Park and Thredbo Valley Track in Kosciuszko National Park, which continue to grow in popularity. Other regions such as Northern Inland provide future potential for destination-based cycling opportunities. Figure 1 provides examples of existing cycling experiences in our parks.

In some parks, networks of cycling tracks have been developed by members of the public without adequate planning or appropriate consent. In many locations, the development and continued use of these tracks has caused significant damage, and poses an ongoing risk to native vegetation, soil and cultural objects.

The scope of this strategy is broad. It includes all types of cycling experiences in our parks and recognises:

- our statutory obligation to conserve natural and cultural values while providing for appropriate visitor experiences
- the increasing demand, changes in equipment and desire for a variety of cycling experiences on park
- the need for an NPWS statewide, coordinated and collaborative approach to our planning and management of cycling experiences on park, including working with land managers across a range of land tenures where appropriate to enhance cycling experiences
- the need to provide greater accessibility to cycling experiences in our parks that not all cycling activities will be appropriate in all parks.



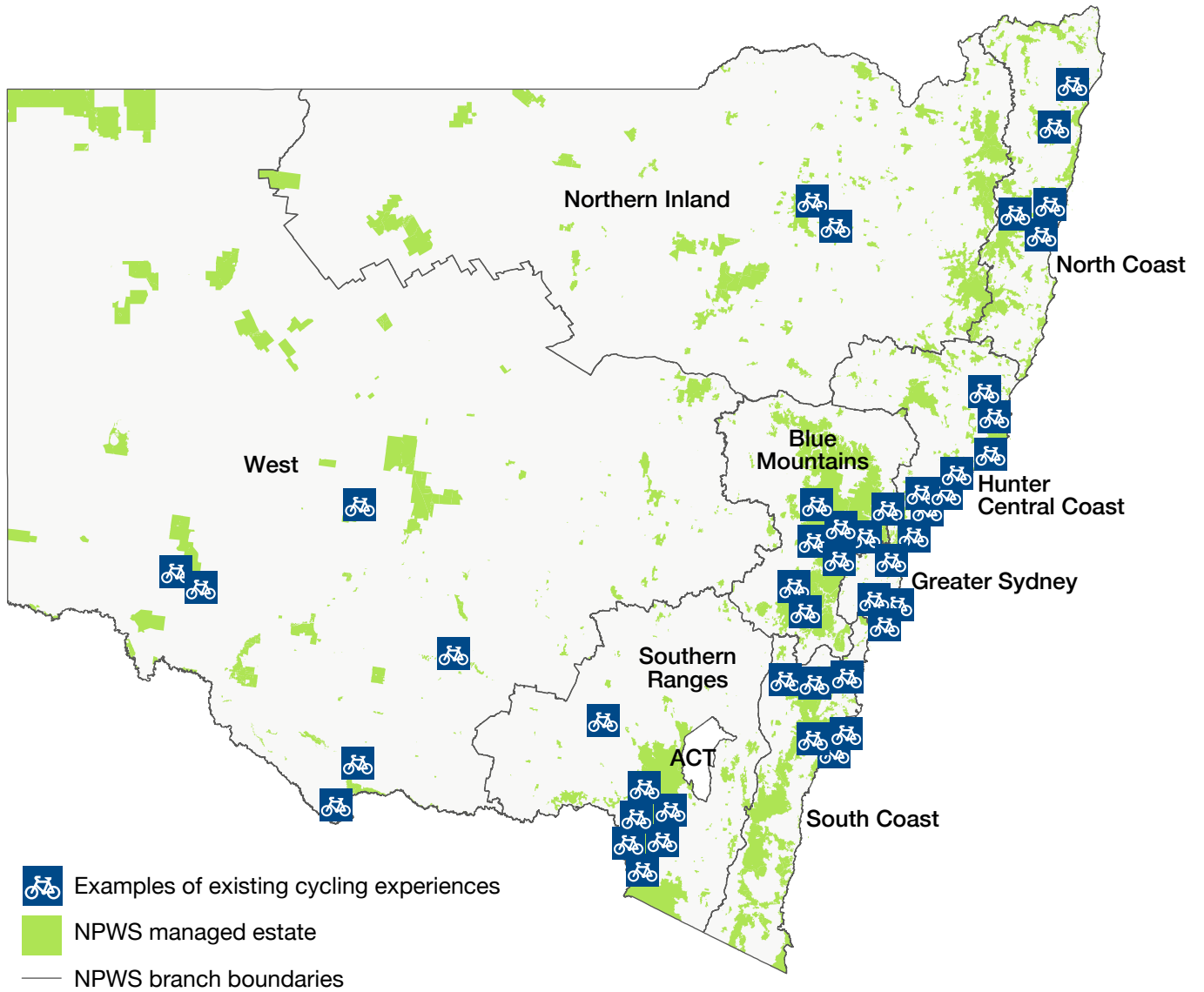


Figure 1 Examples of existing cycling experiences in NPWS parks.





How to use this strategy

This statewide strategy outlines our vision, objectives and priority actions for the future provision of cycling opportunities in our parks. The strategy will complement directions and management actions in plans of management and, in some instances, separate cycling/mountain biking plans.

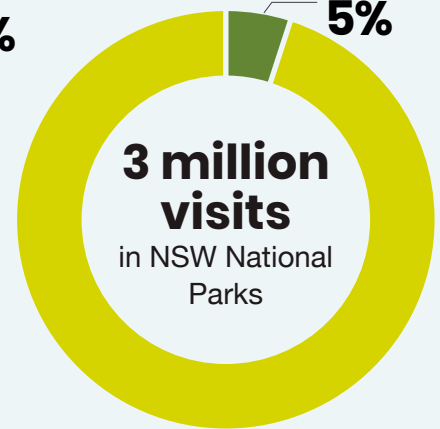
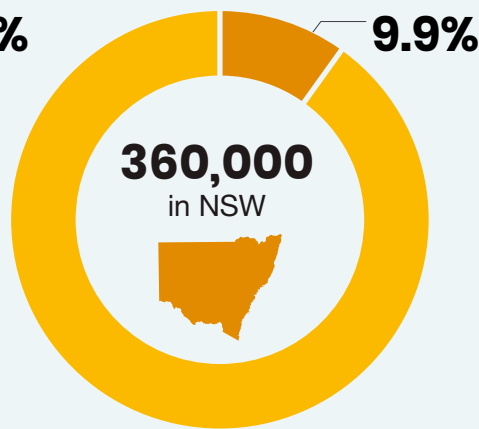
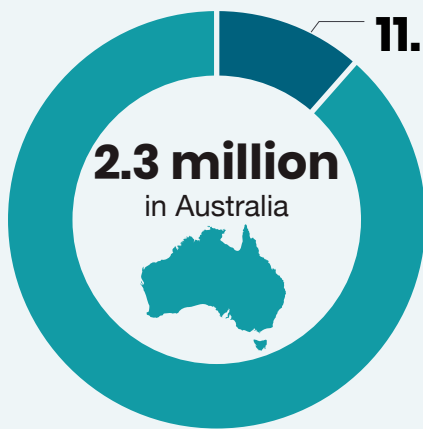
It is recommended that readers of this strategy refer to the NPWS Cycling Strategy: Guidelines for Implementation document, which details the processes and procedures we undertake to deliver cycling experiences across parks. These guidelines provide our statewide framework for the sustainable management of cycling experiences in our parks, to ensure the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage values that make our parks so unique.

In this strategy, the term 'cycling' is used to refer to all forms of cycling. It includes mountain biking and 'power-assisted pedal cycles' (also known as e-bikes; refer to the definitions). Where the detail is important, we have specifically referred to either mountain biking or road cycling. Between these 2 types of cycling there are many other experiences, such as cycling on paths, which are also captured by the term cycling.



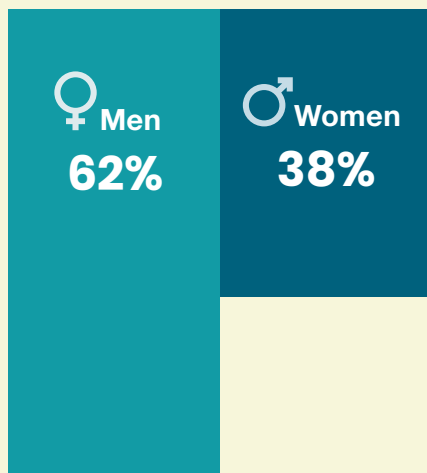
Road cycling market overview

How many people cycle?

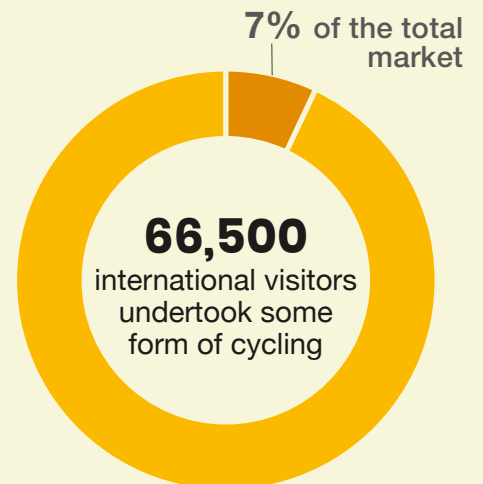
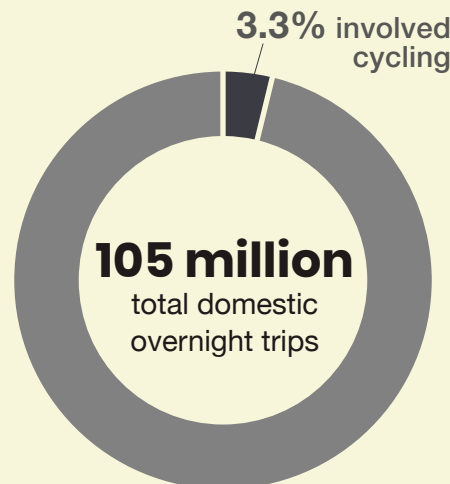


+410,000 considering cycling
-54,000 considering stopping
2.7 million
total market opportunity

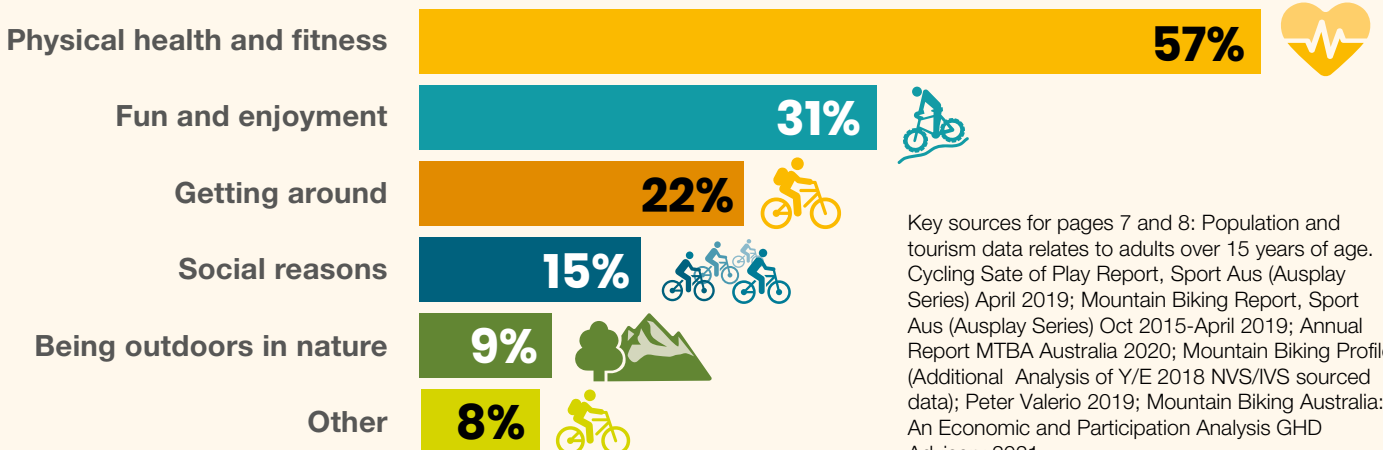
Who cycles?



Where are our overnight cycling trips?



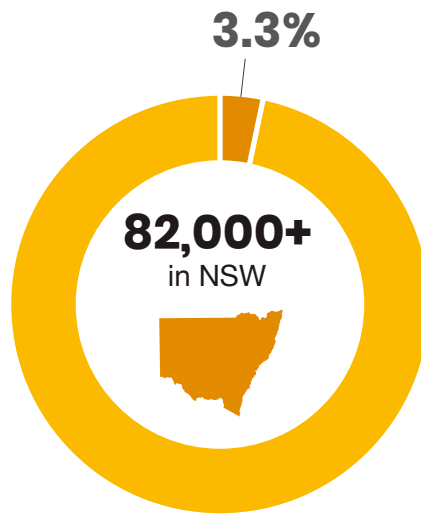
Why people cycle?



Key sources for pages 7 and 8: Population and tourism data relates to adults over 15 years of age. Cycling State of Play Report, Sport Aus (Ausplay Series) April 2019; Mountain Biking Report, Sport Aus (Ausplay Series) Oct 2015-April 2019; Annual Report MTBA Australia 2020; Mountain Biking Profile (Additional Analysis of Y/E 2018 NVS/IVS sourced data); Peter Valerio 2019; Mountain Biking Australia: An Economic and Participation Analysis GHD Advisory 2021.

Mountain biking market overview

How many people mountain bike?



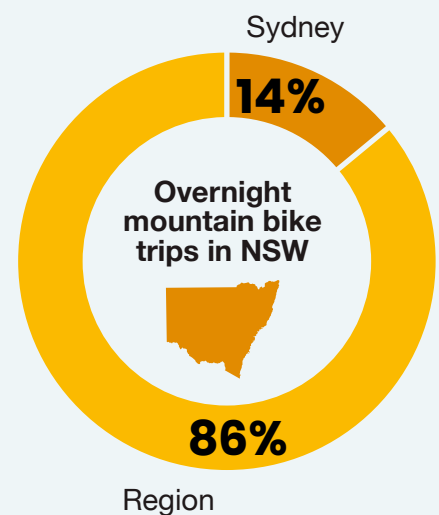
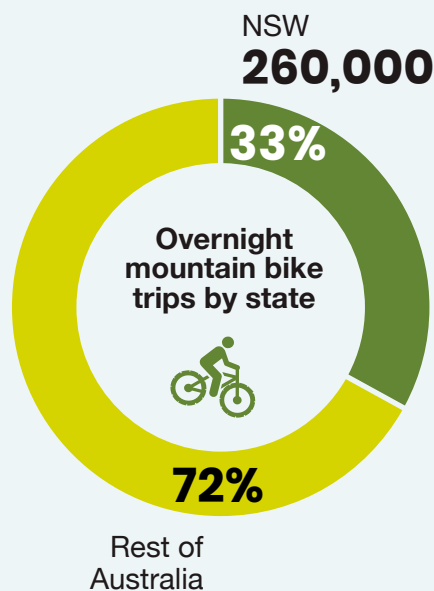
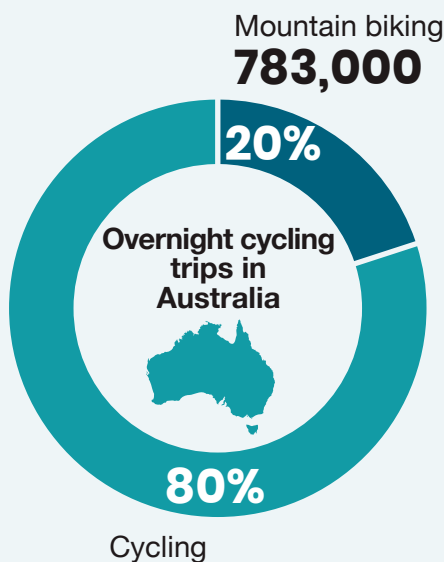
NSW National Parks has over **30,000 km** of **management trails**



Provides an important part of the **recreational track network** in parks.

Ideal for **multiple users**, including e-bikes and adaptive cyclists.

Where are our overnight mountain bike trips?



Objectives

Our vision is underpinned by the following seven objectives. The objectives ensure that NPWS is strategic and transparent when assessing, enabling, providing and managing sustainable cycling experiences.



1. Protect and conserve park values

Ensure the placement of cycling infrastructure considers and protects parks and sites of significant natural, cultural or social value on park.



2. Support community wellbeing and connection to nature

Provide cycling experiences to promote physical and mental wellbeing while enabling a connection to nature and culture.



3. Improve accessibility

Provide inclusive cycling opportunities and reduce barriers to cycling experiences.



4. Deliver coordinated and collaborative planning

Coordinate planning in parks, across state, regional and local levels and collaborate with cross-tenure land managers to provide cycling experiences.



5. Engage effectively with the community

Provide opportunities for stakeholders to be part of developing the cycling experiences in parks and foster a culture of stewardship.



6. Promote nature tourism and enhance the visitor economy

Provide high quality cycling experiences in nature that attract New South Wales, interstate and international visitors and contribute to the economy.



7. Provide effective management and resourcing

Ensure cycling experiences are feasible and viable by using consistent and comprehensive assessments and evaluations.

Develop consistent and firm strategies for non-compliance.



Objective 1

Protect and conserve park values

NPWS is responsible for conserving the natural and cultural values of parks.

Section 2A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) outlines the 4 key objects of the Act, that the management of our parks must be in accordance with. These are:

- a. the conservation of nature
- b. the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape
- c. fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation
- d. providing for the management of land reserved under this Act in accordance with the management principles applicable for each type of reservation.

Park classification, purpose, values, and the physical environment need to be carefully considered in the design and delivery of cycling experiences. New opportunities for cycling may be facilitated through its inclusion in a plan of management following environmental and cultural assessments. These steps ensure that all park values are adequately protected.

Not all parks will be suitable for cycling activities, and in some parks cycling experiences will be limited.

It is an offence to damage land reserved or acquired under the NPW Act and to create or use unauthorised tracks. Our focus will be to close and rehabilitate unauthorised tracks while providing properly planned and constructed track networks in appropriate locations.



Objective 2

Support community wellbeing and connection to nature

The cycling community utilise protected areas to maintain their connection to nature. In this way, cycling experiences contribute to fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation.

The NSW Government promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents through the use of open spaces and national parks. National parks offer exceptional opportunities for cycling experiences, as well as opportunities to educate users about the park values which NPWS protects.

Our focus is to continue to provide viable cycling experiences that are accessible and contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of NSW residents and visitors. We will provide experiences and communication that improves the education of users about the natural and cultural heritage values within our parks.



Objective 3 Improve accessibility

The NSW Government's [NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030](#) includes a commitment to develop and promote accessible tourism, products, experiences and visitor precincts.

There is evidence that many Australians are missing out on opportunities to connect with nature. Inaccessible tracks and facilities, as well as inaccurate information and lack of communication can be barriers to participating in cycling experiences in our parks.

Our focus will be on delivering an increased number and variety of inclusive cycling experiences. Where suitable, we will consider the creation of tracks and facilities that meet the [Australian Adaptive Mountain Biking Guidelines](#) and improve the accessibility of experiences in our parks. We will improve the quality of information (such as track locations, accessibility and track classification system), communication and promotion of this information to users through our website and park signage.





Objective 4

Deliver coordinated and collaborative planning

Collaborating with cross-tenure land managers to deliver more holistic experiences across regions will enhance visitor experiences, improve accessibility, reduce replication and attract residents and visitors to a variety of opportunities in the most appropriate locations. Experiences that are not considered suitable on park, may be provided off park through collaborative partnerships.

A consistent approach in our planning across New South Wales will provide a benchmark for cycling experiences on park and meet the conservation expectations of the community.

Our focus will be to take a landscape view of constraints and opportunities across New South Wales and consider both on-park and off-park opportunities. Suitability of cycling activities will be assessed at a regional and local level and enabled where appropriate through park plans of management. Where required, separate cycling or mountain biking plans may be developed that provide the specific details needed to develop and manage a network for a park.





Objective 5 Engage effectively with the community

We have a wide variety of stakeholders who visit our parks and/or have an interest in the protection of the values within our parks. Feedback from all stakeholders is important in the process of developing new cycling experiences or assessing the closure of unauthorised tracks or the inclusion of unauthorised tracks into an authorised track network. This includes seeking community feedback on how they want to use parks, as well as encouraging and expanding the extensive volunteer networks that exist within our parks.

Our focus is to engage early with our communities. We will provide stakeholders with opportunities to assist with the design, construction and maintenance of tracks, as well as the rehabilitation of unauthorised tracks.



Objective 6 Promote nature tourism and enhance the visitor economy

NPWS parks are a significant driver of visitation to many regional areas in New South Wales, with parks already providing many cycling (Figure 1). Some of our parks have the capacity to develop destination-based cycling experiences in collaboration with other land managers and the creation of track networks both on and off park. This is consistent with the objectives of the NSW Government's [NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030](#).

Our focus is to promote and enhance existing, authorised cycling experiences and develop new cycling opportunities where suitable. NPWS will prioritise high-quality experiences that are most likely to drive sustainable visitation, economic and social benefits for communities. Working within the capacity of each park's sustainable visitor numbers, we will look at opportunities to improve authorised tracks, create new tracks where suitable, and collaborate with cross-tenure land managers to enhance cycling activities.





Objective 7 Provide effective management and resourcing

The closure of unauthorised tracks and development of new cycling experiences, as well as the associated ongoing maintenance requirements, can be resource intensive. NPWS will assess and balance the capacity to provide and maintain new experiences with other existing assets and emerging priorities and commitments.

The multi-criteria assessment method in Appendix C of the NPWS Cycling Strategy: Guidelines for Implementation, includes consideration of the financial feasibility of new on-park cycling experiences. Decommissioning cycling experiences that have poor environmental performance, safety concerns and/or low relevance can also assist in managing resources.

Our focus will be on ensuring quality cycling experiences that are viable and do not replicate cycling experiences offered off park. Initial suitability assessments of all proposals, as well as regional monitoring and evaluation of tracks will inform our processes. We will develop a consistent and firm approach to non-compliant activities and work with user groups to develop a self-regulating culture of stewardship for the parks they enjoy.






Priority actions

To achieve the vision for sustainable cycling experiences in parks, the following priority actions have been developed.

Table 1 Priority actions

 1. Protect and conserve park values	
1.1	Coordinate the planning, authorisation and construction of sustainable cycling infrastructure that protects and conserves the natural and cultural values of our parks for existing and future generations.
1.2	Close and rehabilitate areas impacted by unauthorised cycling.
1.3	Incorporate educational learning opportunities about the natural and cultural heritage values of the park into cycling experiences.
1.4	Monitor authorised cycling infrastructure at a local level and evaluate its operational environmental performance and viability.
 2. Support community wellbeing and connection to nature	
2.1	Provide and promote a variety of cycling experiences that contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of NSW residents and visitors, and promote opportunities for visitors to understand, enjoy and appreciate parks.
 3. Improve accessibility	
3.1	Seek to establish cycling infrastructure around existing and feasible public transport options to support a diversity of users.
3.2	In consultation with accessibility stakeholders, consider accessibility options during the design phase of new or programmed upgrades to existing cycling infrastructure.
3.3	Use the Australia Adaptative Mountain Biking Guidelines to support the planning, design and construction of inclusive mountain biking facilities, where appropriate.
3.4	Provide general and site-specific safety information around cycling experiences on our website, on-park signage, and in-park visitor centres, as appropriate.
3.5	Adopt the Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines classification system and Adaptive Trail-Rating System for mountain bike tracks. Onsite signage will conform to these standards as they are replaced, and our website will reflect standard information.
3.6	Seek, where practical, to provide safe cycling experiences on park roads for road cyclists and off-road cyclists with connection to other cycling infrastructure.



4. Deliver coordinated and collaborative planning

- 4.1 Assess track proposals in accordance Section 3 of the strategy implementation guidelines.
- 4.2 Engage and contribute to cross-tenure planning to deliver a range of experiences in appropriate locations, meet community demand and to ensure the best use of resources.
- 4.3 Advocate for and work with park visitors to present concerns around safe cycling experiences to road managers.
- 4.4 Adopt the [Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines](#) for planning, design and construction of cycling infrastructure on park.
- 4.5 Ensure cycling infrastructure is designed by people with appropriate and demonstratable expertise.
- 4.6 Ensure cycling infrastructure is clearly designated (e.g., single-use, multi-use). NPWS may change the designation of a track if safety, environmental or other issues arise.



5. Engage effectively with the community

- 5.1 Engage early with stakeholders, including traditional owners, and stakeholders with limited mobility and/or those with particular access requirements when planning the development of new tracks and considering the closure of unauthorised tracks or inclusion of unauthorised tracks into a track network.
- 5.2 Continue to use and promote the [International Mountain Bicycling Association Rules of the Trail](#) as the standard code of conduct for mountain bike riders in NPWS parks.
- 5.3 Promote departmental projects that improve education and understanding of sustainable cycling in our parks.
- 5.4 Establish programs that engage volunteers from key user groups in the maintenance of cycling experiences and aid in the remediation of closed, unauthorised tracks to strengthen cyclist stewardship for parks.



6. Promote nature tourism and enhance the visitor economy

- 6.1 Consider opportunities to offer leases under the NPW Act for cycling infrastructure as they are proposed on an individual basis.
- 6.2 Use our events approval process to assess the use of park cycling infrastructure for commercial events and tours, and suitable locations that may be promoted for this purpose.
- 6.3 Identify and prioritise the development and funding of local, regional and nationally significant cycling experiences using the factors for consideration outlined in Table 2 of this strategy.



7. Provide effective management and resourcing

- 7.1 Ensure all cycling experiences and infrastructure development are aligned and guided by the NPWS [Cycling Policy](#).
- 7.2 Promote the use of our existing park management trail network as viable cycling experiences.
- 7.3 Ensure all new tracks or any unauthorised tracks considered for inclusion into a track network are fully costed for the lifespan of the infrastructure.
- 7.4 Identify relevant cycling network assets in an asset management system and implement a prioritised program of inspection and maintenance work.
- 7.5 Seek opportunities to offset some of the costs of maintaining on-park cycling experiences, including through cycling hubs, partnerships, sponsorship systems and commercial licensing of experiences.
- 7.6 As resources allow, close and remediate, cycling infrastructure that is unauthorised, no longer sustainable, has low demand or poor environmental performance.
- 7.7 Develop a consistent process for identifying and signposting authorised tracks and trails to assist with visitor engagement and compliance.
- 7.8 Seek to prevent the creation and use of unauthorised tracks through consistent signage, community engagement and compliance programs.
- 7.9 Prioritise the development and funding of cycling experiences using the factors for consideration outlined in Table 2 of this strategy.





Prioritising cycling experiences on park

Cycling experiences assessed as suitable and sustainable (as per the NPWS Cycling Strategy: Guidelines for Implementation) will be prioritised for development. Prioritisation will consider the factors in Table 2 and are aligned with the objectives of this Cycling Strategy. Table 2 provides further detail and examples of what should be considered under each factor. Where relevant, links are provided to resources to assist the process. Prioritisation of the development of a cycling experience should be considered before the track design and construction phase.

Table 2 Factors for consideration when prioritising the development of possible on-park cycling experiences.

Factors for consideration	Strategy objectives	Description
1. Demand	4, 5 and 6	User-demand and market analysis including participation numbers, demographic and types of experiences. Early consultation with key stakeholder groups may assist.
2. Ease of access	2, 3	Proximity to public transport, parking or distance from a local community. Consider track difficulty and opportunity for adaptive cyclists. Refer to Australian Adaptive Mountain Biking Guidelines .
3. Uniqueness	4 and 6	Assess the 'experience' provided and whether the proposed network enhances an existing opportunity both on and/or off park.
4. Connectivity	3, 4 and 6	Consider the connection of the track or track network across different land tenures and within parks. Undertake an audit of surrounding experiences.
5. Size and scale	4 and 6	Consider the significance hierarchy criteria in Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines .
6. Economic benefit	6	Consider potential benefits for the local and regional economy, including accommodation, food and potential tour group operators. Refer to Destination NSW website .
7. National and state strategies, plans and policies	4 and 6	For example, refer to Destination NSW website including, NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 , Statewide Destination Management Plan .
8. Compatibility with other uses and park management operations	3, 4, 5 and 7	Consider the compatibility with other user groups, e.g. walkers, horse riders, 4WD groups, as well as any management priorities e.g. fire management activities.



Definitions and abbreviations

Adaptive bicycle: refers to a range of bicycles, including hand cycles, knee cycles, tandem cycles, quadricycles or other cycles modified to suit a person's physical, intellectual, neurological and sensory abilities.

Bicycle: means any pedal-powered vehicle with wheels, including road bicycles, tricycles, power-assisted pedal cycles (see definition below), adaptive bicycles and mountain bikes.

Cycling: means riding a bicycle in any style. Cycling does not include the riding of motorised bicycles other than those defined as a 'power-assisted pedal cycle' (see definition below).

E-bike: means power-assisted pedal cycle.

Management trail: are vehicle trails on lands reserved or acquired under the NPW Act and which are maintained by NPWS for the purpose of park management activities. They are generally not open to public motor vehicle access.

Mountain bike riding: refers to riding on unsealed trails and off-road tracks, and may be on single-use, preferred-used or multi-use tracks.

Road cycling: refers to riding on sealed roads, often public roads, which traverse parks.

Power-assisted pedal cycle: is a form of bicycle defined by the [NSW Road Rules](#) in accordance with Commonwealth law ([Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule – Definitions and Vehicle Categories\) 2005](#) and [Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989](#)).

This type of bicycle may also be referred to as an electrically power-assisted cycle, pedelec or e-bike. This definition does not include any form of vehicle that has an internal combustion engine.

Track: means an access way that is not open to motorised vehicles (other than motorised wheelchairs and other mobility devices).

Trail: see 'management trail'.

Single track: a narrow track that is only wide enough to accommodate cyclists or walkers in single file.

Single-use track: means a track designated for use by only one form of activity. In this strategy, the term is used to describe cycling-only tracks.

Preferred-use track: a type of multi-use track that is designed primarily for cycling, but which other users are not excluded from using.

Multi-use track: means a track designated for shared use by multiple forms of activity. In some instances, multi-use tracks may be limited to just two uses, such as cycling and walking.

NPW Act: *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*

NPW Regulation: National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019

MTBA: Mountain Bike Australia (now AusCycling)

IMBA: International Mountain Biking Association

Park(s): means a reserve gazetted under the NPW Act, including a national park, nature reserve, historic site, Aboriginal area, state conservation area, karst conservation reserve, or regional park, or any land acquired by the Minister under Part 11 of the Act. It includes a park managed jointly with the Aboriginal community under Part 4A of the Act.

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