



Information Sheet – Visitor Access and Camping Proposals

Draft Joint Management Plan for Barmah National Park

The Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board has released a Draft Joint Management Plan for Barmah National Park for public comment. The Draft Joint Management Plan proposes many aspects of management and visitor use will continue as at present and also proposes some changes. This information sheet provides background on the proposals. The proposed changes are subject to the outcomes of public consultation on the Draft Plan.

What are the key proposals for visitor access and use?

The Draft Joint Management Plan proposes:

- revitalising the Dharnya Centre and its surrounds to provide a gateway to the park, and a vibrant hub for the development of Yorta Yorta culture, visitor and schools education and for tourism services and events
- maintaining the popular dispersed camping opportunities in the Dhungalla zone, along the Murray River, and providing additional boat ramps and toilets at key locations to reduce environmental impacts and improve amenity for visitors. Investigations to provide for improved trailer parking and a boat ramp at Rice's Bridge are also proposed
- improving the facilities at designated camping areas and introducing bookings and fees for sites in these designated areas. A new designated camping area will be developed in the southern section of the park to provide accessible camping opportunities during flooding when the park is at its most spectacular
- developing a plan for the park's road and track network in consultation with community stakeholders and emergency managers to close or rehabilitate unneeded tracks, and raise key roads and tracks in low areas to improve access during flooding
- expanding the mapping of cultural heritage in the park and taking protective action to re-align roads or relocate campsites where cultural sites are at risk
- establishing a cultural and historic trail through the park suitable for vehicles, walkers and bicycling to promote and interpret Yorta Yorta cultural heritage and the post-colonial shared history of the park
- increasing the education of visitors to reduce impacts such as bank erosion and water contamination that threaten turtles, waterbirds and other native animals and plants in the park
- no longer allowing horseriding in the park (except along Sand Ridge Track from Rice's Bridge to access the Dharnya Community Use Area for permitted events) consistent with many other Victorian national parks

- developing the tourism attractiveness of the park in partnership with the Murray Regional Tourism through improved and new services and visitor experiences
- working with Moira Shire to improve waste disposal facilities for campers.

These changes are described in more detail in Section 10 of the Draft Joint Management Plan.

Background to the proposals

The Draft Joint Management Plan is the first management plan for Barmah since the declaration of the National Park in 2010. It is also the first plan that recognises the culture and knowledge of the Yorta Yorta in the decision-making and management of the National Park. The Draft Plan proposals are designed to ensure that the environment and heritage of Barmah are protected - as required by both Yorta Yorta culture the National Parks Act - while welcoming all people to visit, enjoy and appreciate the park.

A number of the Draft Plan proposals introduce restrictions or conditions that are common in Victorian national parks including restrictions on firewood removal, the use of generators and chainsaws, horseriding. The Draft Plan also proposes active steps to protect the park environment by re-aligning tracks and campsites on cultural heritage sites, and to provide better facilities for boat launching and for waste disposal. The Draft Plan recognises the need for targeted enforcement of park regulations to minimise illegal behavior that can threaten the park and the safety and enjoyment of visitors.

Questions and answers

Are the proposed changes to access and activities designed to make it harder for people to visit the park?

No, the Draft Plan has a clearly stated objective of welcoming and providing services for all people to visit and enjoy the park, and to understand and appreciate its environment and heritage. The Draft Plan contains numerous proposals to improve facilities and access, and to work with the tourism industry and local communities to develop the tourism potential of the park.

What about the proposal to introduce bookings and fees for camping?

The Draft Plan proposes that bookings and camping fees be introduced for designated camping areas only, such as Barmah Lakes, where toilets and other facilities are provided. There will continue to be opportunities for dispersed, self-reliant camping in the Dhungalla Zone of the park which are not subject to bookings or camping fees. A booking system for designated camping areas will give people who are new to camping in Barmah more certainty about opportunities and services, while the money raised from camping fees will assist in improving the park and its facilities.

How will people book designated campsites and pay camping fees?

The details of a booking and fee system will not be worked out until the public consultation period is completed and the Joint Management Plan has been finalised. However, a system similar to, or part of, the Parks Victoria 'Parkstay' online booking system could be used, with other ways for people to make bookings and pay for designated campsites if they do not have internet access.

Why is there a proposal to 'rationalise' roads and tracks?

The park contains a large network of roads and tracks that have been developed in the past. This includes 18 separate road entry points to the park. Roads and tracks are important for park

management, bushfire management and for visitors to access and explore the park. However, some tracks that run close to each other are not necessary for any of these purposes but take time and funds to maintain. It is expected that a plan to rationalise some tracks and entry points, developed in consultation with emergency managers and community user groups, would result in a modest reduction in the overall network. Most roads and tracks will be retained and the Draft Plan includes a proposal to improve access along some of these roads and tracks during periods of flooding by raising the road level at low points.

Why does the Draft Plan propose that horseriding no longer allowed in most of the park?

A major priority of the Draft Plan is to restore the health of the Country in the National Park, consistent with the legal requirements of the National Parks Act and the cultural obligations of Yorta Yorta. Horses, as non-native animals, are not allowed to be brought into Victorian national parks except where areas are specifically designated to allow them or as part of a permit. Horseriding is not allowed or restricted to small areas in most of Victoria's 45 national parks.

Barmah National Park's fragile and internationally significant wetlands and the frequent flooding of other areas of the National Park including roads and tracks, makes the National Park vulnerable to the impacts of horses. There are nearby alternative areas for horseriding which are not subject to the same levels of environmental and cultural heritage protection as Barmah National Park, including the Barmah Island area close to the western edge of the National Park, the Ulupna Island area of the Murray River Reserve to the east, and the Community Use Area and Barmah Muster Yards for permitted events.

More detail is available in a separate Information Sheet for Horseriding Proposals.

August 2019