



NSW NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Blue Mountains National Park

Amendment to the Plan of Management –
Accessibility improvements



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Cover photo: Govetts Leap lookout, Blue Mountains National Park. Simone Cottrell/DPIE

This amendment was adopted by the Minister for Energy and Environment on 23 March 2021.

Blue Mountains National Park is in the traditional Country of the Dharug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri People.

This plan of management amendment was prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), in consultation with the Blue Mountains Regional Advisory Committee.

For additional information about Blue Mountains National Park, its plan of management or this amendment to the plan, contact the NPWS Office at end of Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath NSW 2785 or by telephone on 02 4787 8877.

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Why amend the plan?

Planning framework

Plans of management are legal documents prepared in consultation with the community, as outlined in Part 5 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Once the Minister adopts a plan of management, operations in a park must be carried out in accordance with the plan.

The plan of management for Blue Mountains National Park (NPWS 2001) outlines park-specific objectives, including:

- protection and promotion of the outstanding scenic values of the park, including protection of views from within and outside the park
- provision of a range of high-quality visitor facilities and information to encourage awareness and appreciation of the park and maintain the regional significance of the park in providing nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities
- management of wilderness areas in conjunction with the adjoining national parks and reserves to maintain and enhance opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation while ensuring the maintenance of natural processes
- management of recreation and tourism within the park to ensure sustainable use, minimise impacts on the park's natural and cultural features and maintain opportunities for a diverse range of recreational experiences.

In addition to these objectives, park-specific management strategies include the assessment and improved management of the park's historic recreation and tourism facilities.

Four recreation settings are defined in the plan of management to assist in the provision of recreation and ensure conservation of the park's natural and cultural heritage and water catchment values:

- developed areas
- natural areas
- wilderness areas
- restricted areas.

Table 4 in the plan of management outlines the general principles for management of these settings in Blue Mountains National Park, including visitor density, type of recreation, public vehicle access, visitor facilities, locations, visitor regulation and access for management or other authorised purposes.

The plan of management states that site plans (referred to in this document as visitor precinct plans) for any major redevelopments will be made available for public comment before finalisation.

A visitor precinct is a definable zone or area of park that can be considered as a whole and often has a consistent landscape setting, character and purpose. Visitor precinct planning is detailed planning that considers the specific site conditions, including cultural uses and visitor needs, to determine the selection and arrangement of facilities. Typically, this planning considers microclimate, natural features, recreational opportunities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, curtilage, cultural uses and functional requirements. Designs are finalised following environmental impact assessment.

NSW Government Improving Access to National Parks Policy

In 2019, the NSW Government announced the *Improving Access to National Parks Policy* and committed to invest in improving accessibility to national parks across NSW. The policy includes the Visitor Infrastructure and Facilities Program, which focusses on:

- increasing the safety and accessibility of walking tracks and trails
- enhancement of visitor facilities (e.g. picnic areas, barbecues etc.)
- increased support for families and people with restricted mobility, including upgrading access to iconic lookout points to a mobility-impaired access standard.

Blue Mountains National Park context

Blue Mountains National Park, part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, is the most visited park in New South Wales. It had an estimated 8.4 million visits in 2018, a significant increase in visitation since 2008, when the park received 3.6 million visits.

Under the program to improve access as outlined above, a range of priority projects are being considered including:

- Govetts Leap, Blackheath – redevelopment of the visitor precinct
- Green Gully, Megalong Valley – improved visitor facilities
- Narrow Neck, Katoomba – improved visitor infrastructure and parking.

These projects have been identified as some of the priority areas for enhancing the visitor experience and managing increased visitor demand while minimising impacts on the park's globally significant values.

The works are in line with the plan of management's objectives, strategies and defined recreation settings. The amendment to the plan of management provides for:

- the redevelopment of Govetts Leap
- the Green Gully visitor precinct, its key park values and definition of its recreation setting (see Table 4 in plan of management)
- Narrow Neck's existing visitor facilities included in the Visitor Facilities inventory (Table 5).

Figure 1 in the amendment is a regional overview map of the three precincts. Figures 2 and 3 are maps of the Govetts Leap and Green Gully precinct boundaries.

In accordance with the plan of management, the *Govetts Leap Draft Visitor Precinct Plan* was publicly exhibited (between 26 June and 24 August 2020). Visitor precinct plans for any proposed works considered to be major redevelopments will be made available for public comment as they are prepared.

How to read the amendment

The amendment should be read in conjunction with the Blue Mountains National Park Plan of Management as adopted in 2001.

Plans of management are available at: [Plans of management on the NSW Government's Environment website.](#)

Page number references in this document correspond to page numbers as they appear on the pages of the online PDF version of the adopted plan.

Amendment

1. Redevelopment of Govetts Leap

Govetts Leap is a key visitor destination in the World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains National Park that overlooks Govetts Gorge, the upper Grose Valley and Grose Wilderness. The Grose Valley (the Blue Gum Forest in particular) is historically important for its association with the development of the early conservation movement in Australia. During the 1800s the escarpment scenery of the Grose Valley was given formal recognition and protection through the creation of Crown land reserves for public recreation known as 'Blue Mountains National Sites Reserves'. This iconic escarpment scenery has been captured by painters and photographers since that time. The park was reserved in 1959 and the Grose Wilderness was declared in 2001.

The lookout includes both unsealed and sealed parking areas on the edge of the escarpment. Vehicles using the carpark include coaches, minibuses, standard vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles. In peak periods, this mix of congested vehicles in unmarked parking areas compromises pedestrian safety. The precinct will be re-designed to improve visitor enjoyment and safety in the context of a key World Heritage Area destination. This will include better access for people with a disability or restricted mobility and other pedestrians.

Changes

1a. Section 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping

Plan reference: page 71, underneath 'Grose Valley (southern side and valley floor)' heading, 'Govetts Leap' subheading

Remove:

Options for redevelopment of the lookout area will be investigated, and any proposals will be exhibited as an amendment to this plan.

Replace with:

Redevelopment of the visitor precinct (see Figure 2 of this amendment) will be undertaken in accordance with the final Govetts Leap Visitor Precinct Plan and will be subject to relevant environmental and heritage assessments and approvals.

1b. Table 6: Plan Implementation

Plan reference: page 97, under 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping, Grose Valley (southern side and valley floor) heading

Remove:

- Govetts Leap – investigate options for redevelopment

Replace with:

- Govetts Leap – redevelop in accordance with the final Govetts Leap Visitor Precinct Plan, subject to relevant environmental and heritage assessments and approvals

2. Provision for Green Gully visitor precinct

NPWS purchased the initial parcels of land in Green Gully in 1998 to provide public access to the Coxs River area and protect wilderness values. It was reserved as part of Blue Mountains National Park in February 2003, after the plan of management's adoption. NPWS has acquired additional parcels of land in this area that have not been reserved as part of the park yet.

The Carlon family was associated with Green Gully for over 150 years. For many years the family operated a horse riding business at the property, enabling visitors to experience the bush on horseback and stay overnight. The land also has a long history of association with bushwalkers and prominent conservation advocates.

Green Gully is a key access point for bushwalking in the Coxs River area, including the Wild Dog Mountains. The site is accessible by vehicle, 20 kilometres from Blackheath and yet retains a sense of remoteness, being located at the end of the Megalong Valley and next to the Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness (designated as a wilderness recreation setting by the plan of management). Its accessibility, popularity and presence of previously-disturbed land provide the basis for the continuation of appropriate visitor facilities, such as vehicle-based camping and accommodation in the existing cabins.

The continuation of the use of the cabins for visitor accommodation and their renovation is provided for under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Adaptive reuse is defined under section 5 of the Act as the modification of the building or structure on land and its curtilage to suit an existing (or proposed) use, and the use of the building or structure, but only if:

1. the modification and use is carried out in a sustainable manner
2. the modification and use are not inconsistent with the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the land
3. in the case of a building or structure of cultural significance, the modification is compatible with the retention of the cultural significance of the building.

The continued visitor use and renovation of the existing cabins at Green Gully meets the definition and criteria for adaptive reuse. There are no proposed new uses of the buildings.

Changes

2a. Section 4.2.1 Aboriginal Heritage

Plan reference: page 45, second paragraph

Add:

The Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) applies to a significant portion of the park. It is a 'non-native title' agreement which means the Gundungurra people are non-exclusively recognised as being appropriate people to be engaged to provide heritage advice.

2b Section 4.3.2 Recreation Opportunities

Plan reference: page 55, second paragraph

Remove:

Facilities for tourism in the park are focussed on the park's natural environment, e.g. scenic lookouts and associated walking tracks, complementing the more developed tourism opportunities and facilities in the adjoining Blue Mountains City area. Resorts, caravan parks

and other forms of built accommodation are available in Blue Mountains City and are therefore not appropriate in the park.

Replace with:

Facilities for tourism in the park are focussed on the park's natural environment, e.g. scenic lookouts and associated walking tracks, complementing the more developed tourism opportunities and facilities on other lands in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. Resorts, caravan parks and other forms of built accommodation are available elsewhere in Blue Mountains City and are therefore not appropriate in the park. The only form of built visitor accommodation in the park is the adaptive reuse (as defined by the National Parks and Wildlife Act) of existing buildings appropriate to their defined recreation setting, and which are not required for other park management purposes.

2c. Section 4.3.3 Vehicle access

Plan reference: page 63, under Policies, third paragraph

Add the following road to the list of roads that will be maintained for public access within the natural setting:

- Green Gully Cabins Road

2d. Section 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping

Plan reference: page 65, third paragraph

Remove:

Vehicle-based day/camping areas in the natural setting are currently provided at Burrellow Creek in the lower Blue Mountains, Ingar and Murphys Glen in the mid-mountains, Perrys Lookdown in the upper Blue Mountains and Bats Camp in the southern Blue Mountains.

Replace with:

Vehicle-based day/camping areas in the natural setting are currently provided at Burrellow Creek in the lower Blue Mountains, Ingar and Murphys Glen in the mid-mountains, Perrys Lookdown and Green Gully in the upper Blue Mountains and Batsh Camp in the southern Blue Mountains.

2e. Section 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping

Plan reference: page 66, third dot point

Remove:

- More sophisticated, high impact accommodation facilities such as lodges, cabins and caravan parks will not be permitted in the park

Replace with:

- More sophisticated, high impact accommodation facilities such as lodges, cabins and caravan parks will not be permitted in the park. The existing buildings at Green Gully (see Figure 3) may continue to be used for visitor accommodation where their adaptive reuse meets the definition under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, is appropriate to their defined recreation setting and they are not required for other park management purposes.

2f. Section 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping

Plan reference: page 71, immediately before Grose Valley (southern side and valley floor)

Add:

Megalong Valley

Green Gully: The Green Gully precinct will be managed and maintained to provide day use and overnight stay opportunities consistent with the Natural setting. The precinct which was previously known as Carlons Farm, offers a camping and cabin-stay experience below the Narrow Neck escarpment and provides walk-in access to the adjacent declared Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness. The precinct boundaries are shown on the map (Figure 3 in the amendment).

2g. Table 6: Plan Implementation

Plan reference: page 97, under 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping, directly below Jamison Valley escarpment section

Add a new Day Use and Camping area:

Megalong Valley

- Green Gully – Provide for both walk-in and vehicle-based camping facilities as per Figure 3 [High priority]

2h. Table 6: Plan Implementation

Plan reference: page 98, following 4.3.4 Day Use and Camping and before 4.3.5 Walking Tracks and Bushwalking

Add a new subsection and re-number others as appropriate:

4.3.5 Accommodation

- Green Gully cabins – continue to provide overnight visitor accommodation in existing buildings (see Figure 3) appropriate to their natural setting and the adjacent wilderness setting. Consider the needs of park visitors in their adaptive reuse. [High priority]

3. Relevant factual corrections

Narrow Neck is a 10-kilometre long peninsula that separates the Jamison Valley from the Megalong Valley and Wild Dog Mountains. It is an important access point for bushwalks in the park, including the remote three-day hike between Katoomba and Kanangra. The peninsula contains approved abseiling and climbing sites and offers bird watching, mountain biking and trail running opportunities. Currently, visitors can drive around 2.5 kilometres from the start of Glenraphael Drive (a public road) to a locked gate marking the start of the management trail. This road section is comprised of public road and park road tenures (see Glossary).

The popularity of this precinct has grown simultaneously with the significant overall increase in visitation to the Blue Mountains National Park and the growth of sports such as trail running, mountain bike riding and rock climbing. Parking congestion occurs along the length of the road during peak periods, compromising emergency access, pedestrian safety and vegetation protection. There is also continued damage occurring along the road section, resulting in high maintenance requirements. A visitor precinct plan will be prepared for public comment.

The visitor facilities table in the plan of management requires incorporation of the Narrow Neck and Green Gully precincts and facilities. The background for adding the Green Gully precinct to the table is addressed in section 2 of this amendment.

Changes

3a. Table 5 Visitor facilities in Blue Mountains National Park

Plan reference: page 67

Add the following rows to Table 5 between the Jamison Valley escarpment and Grose Valley (southern side) visitor precincts

Table 1 Additional rows for inclusion in Table 5

Table 5 Visitor Facilities in Blue Mountains National Park (excludes facilities managed by Blue Mountains City Council)									
Precinct	Locality	Developed setting				Natural setting			
		L.O.	Picnic	Camp	Track-head	L.O.	Picnic	Camp	Track-head
Jamison Valley escarpment	Narrow Neck					● V, W	● V, W		● V, W
Megalong Valley	Green Gully					● V, W	● V	● V, W +cabins	● V

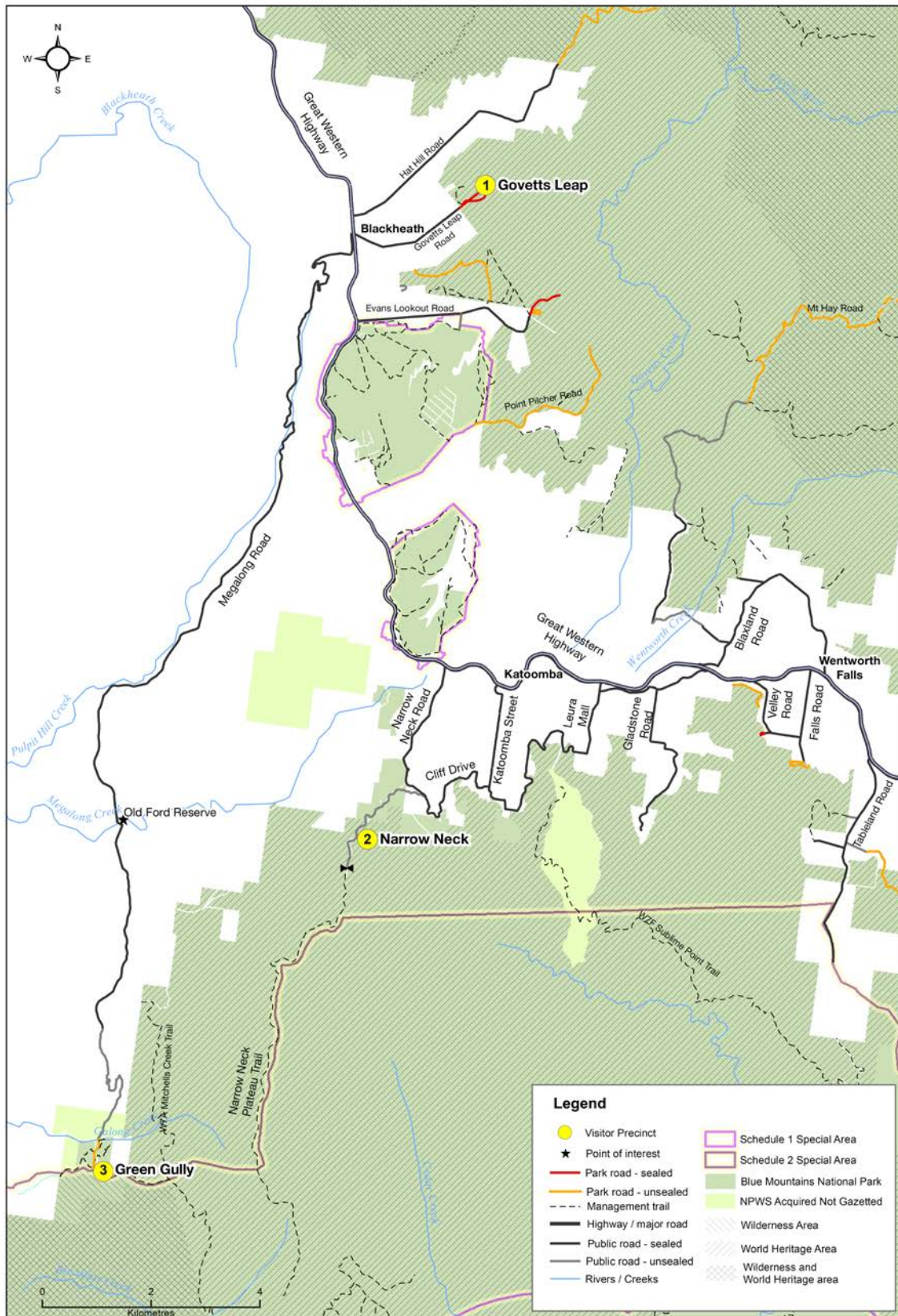
Key: V – Vehicle access; W – Walk-in access.

3b. Name of camping area in southern part of the park

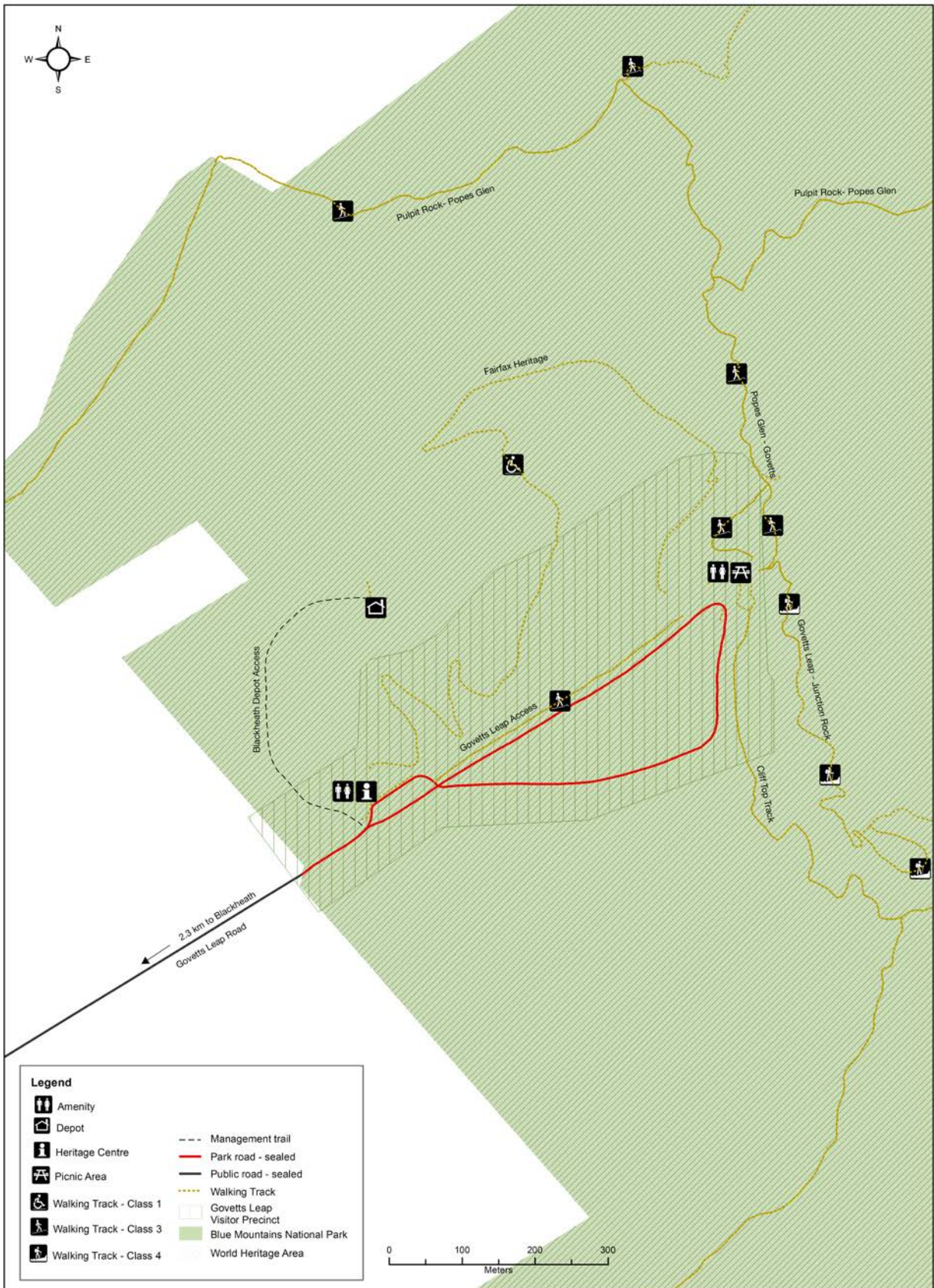
Plan reference: pp. 63 and 73

Correct the spelling of ‘Bats’ Camp to ‘Batsh’ Camp.

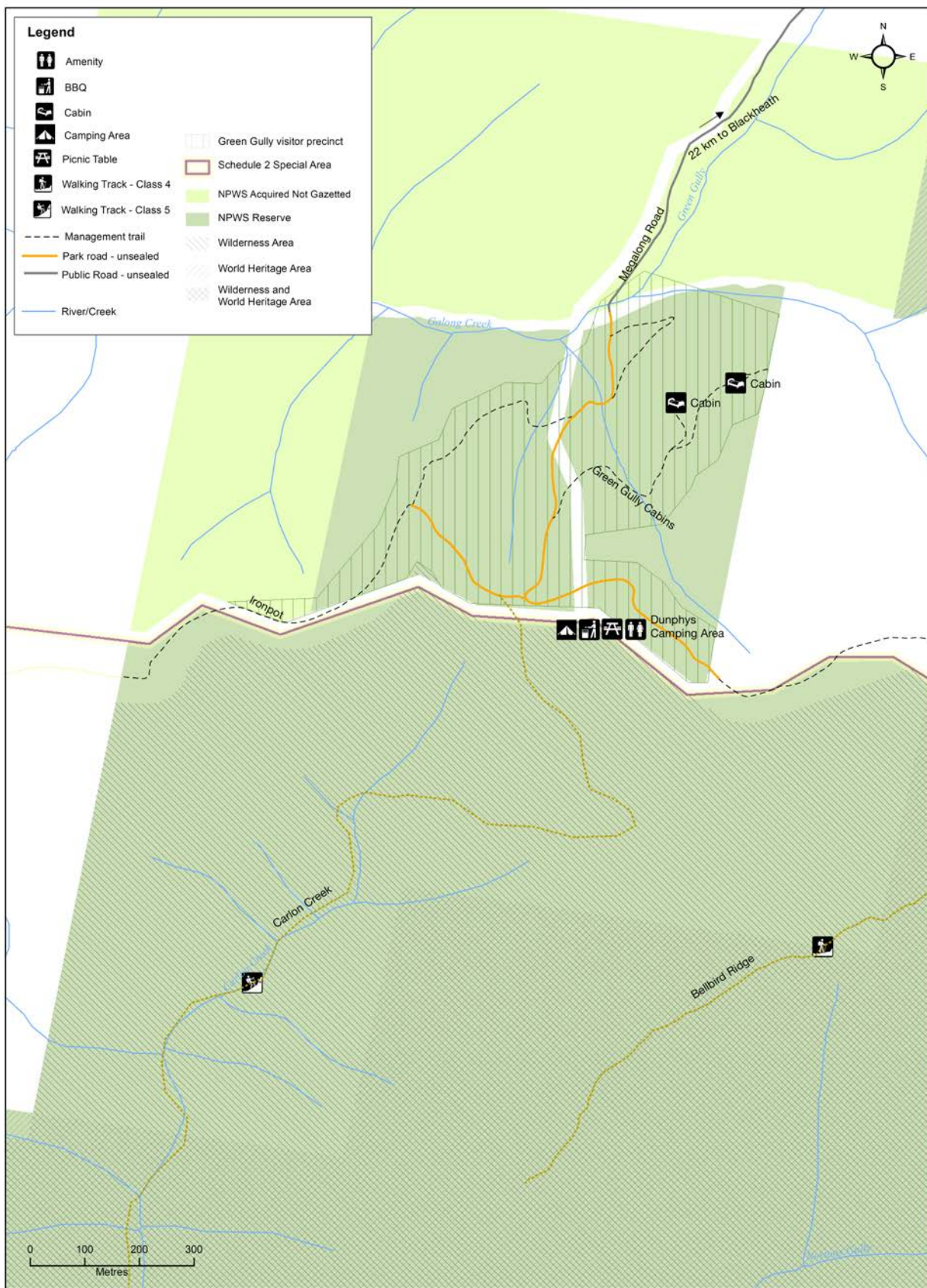
4. Amendment maps



Map 1 Regional overview of 3 precincts subject to the amendment to the plan of management



Map 2 Govetts Leap visitor precinct



Glossary

Accessibility: In this document, ‘accessibility’ refers to improving physical and practical access for families and people with restricted mobility. In the NSW Government’s *Improving Access to National Parks Policy*, this term has a broader definition.

Capital works: Building and engineering works that create an asset, and/or constructing or installing facilities and fixtures associated with and forming an integral part of those works.

Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area: comprised of 8 parks and reserves, the World Heritage Property is listed by UNESCO for its outstanding universal values. For more information see: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/917/>

Management trail: A vehicle trail on lands reserved or acquired under the *National Park and Wildlife Act 1974*, which is maintained by NPWS for the purpose of park management activities. If such trails are open to public vehicle use, then they are ‘roads’ under the roads legislation. See ‘park road’.

Park road: A road reserved as part of a park that is open to the public, though it can be closed for park management reasons. Parks roads are maintained by NPWS.

Public road: A road that is not part of a park and is designated as a public road under the *Roads Act 1993* or other legislation for the purposes of the Roads Act such as the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

Visitor precinct: a definable zone or area of park that can be considered as a whole and often has a consistent landscape setting, character and purpose. Visitor precinct planning is detailed planning that considers the specific site conditions, including cultural uses and visitor needs, to determine the selection and arrangement of facilities. Typically, this planning considers microclimate, natural features, recreational opportunities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, curtilage, cultural uses and functional requirements.

References

NPWS 2001, *Blue Mountains National Park Plan of Management*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, accessed 29 October 2019, www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Parks-plans-of-management/blue-mountains-national-park-plan-of-management-010129.pdf