



Tracks and Trails Plan

October 2014

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Glossary of terms

The table below lists the definitions of the terms used within this report.

Term	Definition
Horse riding	Activities conducted on horse back including cross country, recreational, endurance and long distance horse riding.
MTBA	Mountain Bike Australia (www.mtba.asn.au/).
Mountain bike riding	While there is a range of forms of mountain bike riding, for the purpose of this document, the term refers to endurance mountain bike riding, mountain bike touring and cross country riding, unless specified.
National Park	A national park is a relatively large area set aside by the state government for its predominantly unspoiled natural landscape, flora and fauna, permanently dedicated for public enjoyment, education and inspiration and protected from all interference other than essential management practices so that its natural attributes are preserved. (Definition of Australian Council of Nature Conservation Ministers, 1988).
Natural recreation area	An area of land predominately in a natural state, or containing sensitive natural sites of significance for recreation. Its purpose being for public recreation and education, consistent with conserving the natural and cultural values of the area of land (Reserve Nature Conservation Act 2002-Tasmania).
Nature-based recreation	Activities not requiring substantial modification to the natural environment (modifications usually limited to managing impact e.g. track surfaces and camp sites) where a natural setting is critical to participation, and fosters an appreciation of natural resources or their management.
Recreation tracks and trails	Any clearly defined track, trail, corridor, route or path, which can be used by persons with the appropriate knowledge, fitness and skills held or rapidly attainable by most people (SEQ Recreation Trails Strategy 2007).
State Forest	Part of a timber reserve; or any land that is, or is part of, a forest reserve under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Forestry Act 1959). Timber reserves can have commercial and/or recreation purposes.
Trailhead	The point where a trail begins. Usually trailheads include information pertaining to the trail (maps, signage, regulatory and other information) as well as other supporting facilities (such as car parking, toilets, seating, shelter areas, picnic facilities etc.).
Walking	For ease of reference within this document, walking includes any activity conducted on foot. This can include: bushwalking, recreation walking, dog walking, trail running, education experiences, nature appreciation (e.g.birdwatching), geocaching or strolling.

Executive summary

The Gympie region spreads across an area of approximately 6900km² and includes coastal, rural and urban hinterland settlements. Approximately one third of the Gympie region comprises either national parks or state forests. A number of these areas provide trails and tracks for natural recreation activities, such as walking, mountain bike riding and horse riding.

The Tracks and Trails Plan investigates opportunities to increase and enhance the trails and trail-based activities (namely walking, horse riding and mountain bike riding) within the public areas of the region, for both the local community and for tourists.

Provision of quality trails, trail networks and trail facilities provide a number of benefits within a region, including economic, health and wellbeing, education, liveability, environmental and cultural benefits.

The Gympie region has great potential to develop a first class trail network, due to its landscape setting, natural environment and topography, thereby reaping these benefits.

The findings of the trails analysis revealed that, while there is a substantial amount of natural open space within the Gympie region, very few of these areas actually comprise a formal trail network. Furthermore, those that did have trail networks, had very limited trails, trail lengths and trail diversity. There was generally a lack of trail facilities including maps and signage. The findings also revealed that there is a large gap in the provision of comprehensive trail network information within the Gympie region.

The proposed trail network within this Plan has been developed to be simple, realistic and achievable, particularly given the resources available. It aims to develop a quality trail network that, while responding to the demand, provides a quality user experience as well as an equitable range of trail types across the region. The Plan therefore is focused on providing "quality" trails as opposed to "quantity" of trails, identifying and prioritising trails that can be accomplished within a 5-10 year period.

The trail plan also identifies some of the practicalities of trail development. For example, tracks and trails should be well designed, well-constructed, provide interest for the user, protect the environment and provide improved value of the area.

Studies have shown that there is an increased demand for non-organised recreation activities as well as for people seeking outdoor recreation opportunities. While these trends are certainly positive for the health and wellbeing of communities, the increase in demand for outdoor spaces can put pressure on these natural areas (and ultimately result in environmental degradation). Trail activities and infrastructure therefore need to be managed carefully to ensure that the natural area can sustain the demand.

A trail network cannot be sustainable without a sound management regime. The Plan identifies the need for the establishment of trail management and maintenance plans as well as ensuring that all stakeholders and user groups are on-board. This can be achieved by forming a trail management group as well as forming partnerships with various bodies.

A successful trail network requires an effective marketing strategy. The plan outlines a marketing strategy that includes ensuring ease of access to trail based information (i.e. via one comprehensive website as well as a well-developed trails brochure suite). The marketing strategy also identifies ways to increase trail use (thereby promoting the trails). This includes developing quality trails and trail information, creating a unique experience for users, developing a cohesive trail brand and identity and creating awareness of the trails.

The Tracks and Trails plan proposes the development of a quality trail network within the Gympie region that could become a destination drawcard for visitors and tourists, while also providing great outdoor recreation opportunities to the local community.

1.0 Background

1.1 Preamble

The Gympie region spreads across an area of approximately 6900km² and includes coastal, rural and urban hinterland settlements.

The region boasts a spectacular coastal landscape which includes the Great Sandy Strait Biosphere (UNESCO), incorporating the northern section of the Cooloola National Park to Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach. This area provides the gateway to the Fraser Island World Heritage Site.

The Gympie hinterland includes the Mary Valley region (providing a scenic rural landscape located along the Mary River), the historical and agricultural areas to the north and west surrounding Kilkivan and Goomeri and the growing town of Gympie and its surrounds.

Approximately one third of the Gympie region comprises either national parks or state forests. A number of these areas provide trails and tracks for natural recreation activities, such as walking, mountain bike riding and horse riding.

1.2 Purpose and aim of this plan

ROSS Planning was engaged by Gympie Regional Council to develop a Tracks and Trails Plan for the region that investigates opportunities to increase and enhance the trails and trail-based activities (namely walking, horse riding and mountain bike riding) within the public natural areas of the region.

The aim of the project is to develop a plan that ensures that trail provision meets demand (from both the local community and visitors) and provides a diverse range of quality trail-based opportunities.

The project also provides strategies to increase tourism and economic opportunities within the region by enhancing and promoting the region's trail networks as well as increasing local awareness of the existing trail network.

1.3 Scope

The report is focused on existing and future provision of recreation tracks and trails that are:

- located within the Gympie Regional Council boundary
- located within government owned natural recreation areas (primarily State Forests and National Parks as well as natural areas owned by Gympie Regional Council)
- utilised for nature-based recreation activities, namely those activities that are non-motorised, including walking, mountain bike riding and horse riding. *Note: It does not include water based recreation such as kayaking or canoeing.*

1.4 Methodology

This tracks and trails plan follows sequential stages of the projects development. These stages are outlined below.

Stage 1: Background research and desktop analysis

- Reviewing relevant documentation.
- Desktop analysis and mapping of existing natural areas and trails.
- Researching the type of information pertaining to the tracks and trails within the region and where the information can be accessed.
- Researching the current trends in the use of tracks and trails.
- Researching the benefits of tracks and trails.

Stage 2: Site audits and trail mapping

- Conducting detailed site audits and analysis of the existing trail network, including mapping thereof.

Stage 3: Consultation

- Community, Council and stakeholder consultation.

Stage 4: Summary of findings/key outcomes

- Assessing gaps in trail provision and distribution (including trail supply, demand, type and diversity).
- Summarising findings including identification of issues and opportunities.
- Identifying proposed new tracks and trails as well as opportunities to improve and reinforce the existing trails.

Stage 5: Tracks and trails plan development

- Compiling draft plan including:
 - refining and summarising the findings to date
 - setting the direction for the future planning of the trail network
 - developing trail marketing and tourism initiatives
 - staging and prioritisation of the proposed track and trail network.

Stage 6: Finalisation

- Finalising the draft plan.
- Council endorsement for finalisation.
- Community and stakeholder consultation.
- Amendment of plan based on consultation outcomes.
- Adoption of plan by Gympie Regional Council.

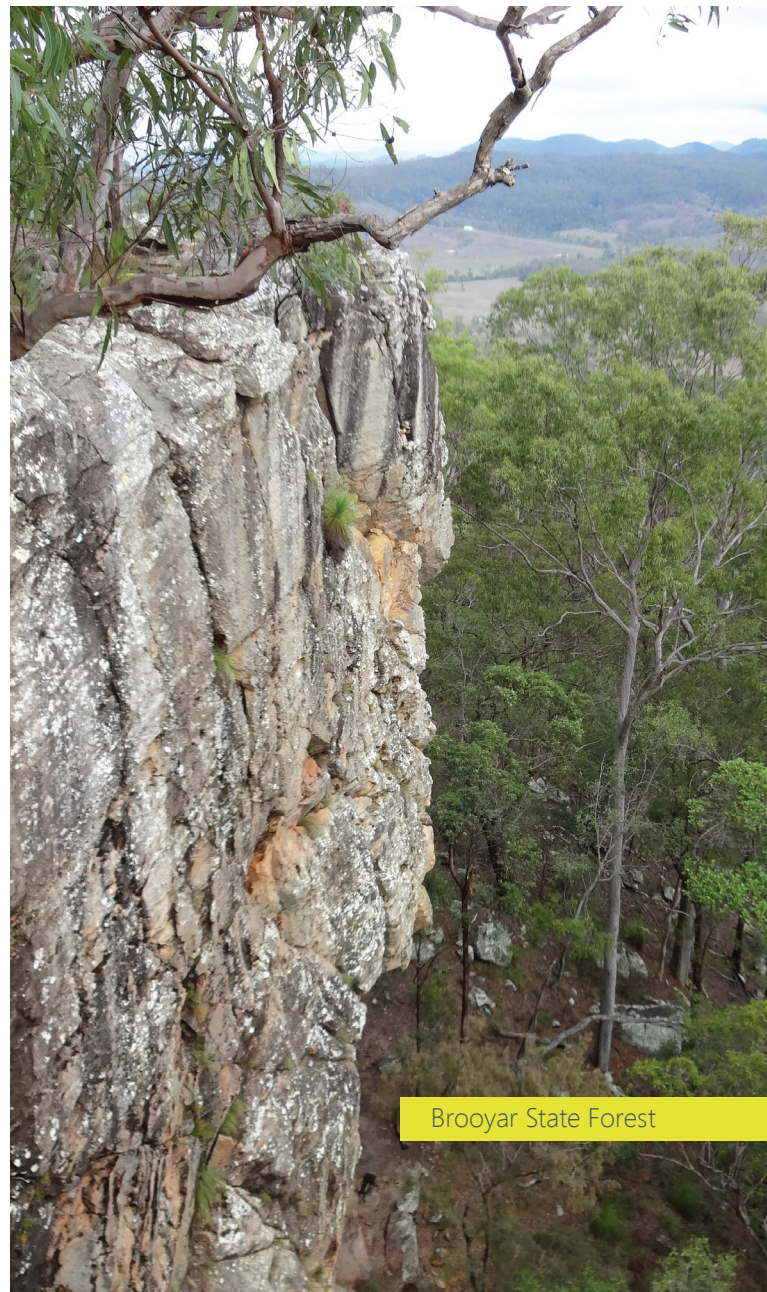
1.5 The Gympie regional profile – a snapshot

The region's 2012 population was approximately 45,794¹ with the median age being 43 years (compared to a state average of 36). A median age of 44.4 years is projected for 2031.

The average annual population growth rate is approximately 1.6 per cent.

Gympie has an aging population with the 65 years and over age group representing 18.4 per cent of the population (compared to a Queensland average of 13.2 per cent). Additionally, by 2031 this proportion is anticipated to increase to 22.8 per cent (remaining higher than the State average of 19.6 per cent).

¹ Australian Bureau Of Statistics 2011.



2.0 Benefits of trails

There is growing evidence that recreation trails provide significant benefits, both to trail users, and the host communities. Relevant to this plan, the Victoria's Trails Strategy 2013-23 states that:

“Trails deliver jobs and economic benefits to Victorians. They also play an important part in improving health and wellbeing, enhancing the liveability of communities and providing prospective visitors to the region/state with reasons to visit and stay. To gain maximum benefit from trail networks through increased use and visitation, there needs to be further: market research; investment; development of infrastructure and complementary tourism experiences and products; and consumer information provision.”

2.1 Economic benefits

Trails play an important role in nature-based tourism. Trails encourage visitors to stop, stay longer, and increase their spend.

A number of trails-related research projects have identified economic benefit. These include:

- Use and Users of the Appalachian Trail: A Source Book 2000
- an Economic Analysis of Rail Trails in Victoria, Australia 2003
- Trails Research Project (South Australia) 2004
- Regional Communities and Cycling: The Case of the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail, Victoria, Australia 2006
- Bibbulmun Track User Research Report 2008
- Cycling in Regional Communities: A Longitudinal Study of the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail, Victoria, Australia 2009
- Otago Central Rail Trail User Survey 2010/11.

Taken together, these provide a comprehensive understanding of how much trail users are spending in local communities. When considered together, the average figures for expenditure associated with trails are shown in the tables below.

Commercial trail-based businesses, including guiding services, equipment and passenger transport and equipment hire, create local jobs and provide opportunities to package and promote regional products to establish destination experiences.

Trail-based events, such as mountain-bike competitions and adventure races, are gaining in popularity and can attract significant visitor numbers to regional locations. Competitors, spectators and organisers can boost the demand for accommodation, food and beverage (and other services).

Table 1: Trail user expenditure by category for overnight visitors (overnight users includes those staying 1 night or more on-trail or in the region to do a specific trail).

Expenditure item	Average expenditure/day
Accommodation	\$23.10
Food and beverage	\$54.35
Transport	\$18.90
Retail	\$15.44
Other (inc cycle maintenance)	\$11.34
TOTAL	\$123.13

Table 2: Trail user expenditure by category for day trippers.

Expenditure item	Average expenditure/day
Accommodation	\$0
Food and beverage	\$23.53
Transport	\$18.90
Retail	No figures available
Other (inc cycle maintenance)	\$30.02
TOTAL	\$72.45

Examples of benefits

- A 2001 investigation showed that the Mundaring Trails Network (1 hour from the Perth CBD,) injected some \$12.62 million into the local economy and a further \$15.21 million into the State economy annually. Local residents spent \$4.06/visit to the network and visitors (primarily day users) spent \$23.71/visit. The key is that the total annual number of trips on the trails was 2.45 million (Jessop and Bruce, 2001).
- Users of the Riesling Trail (a 35km rail trail in the Clare Valley) are estimated to spend \$1.08 million/year (Market Equity, 2004).
- The Bibbulmun Track had an estimated benefit in 2008 of around \$39 million (Colmar Brunton, 2009). The 2007/08 study shows that the average day walker (some 70 per cent of all users) is spending \$50-60/day, while those walking the track for 2-3 days are spending around \$200/visit. Those using the trail for 6 days or more, while small in number, are spending \$1,400/visit.
- Research undertaken on the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail in Victoria over Easter 2006 found that average daily expenditure was \$258/user/day (Beeton 2006). The bulk of this expenditure was on food and beverage (57 per cent of daily expenditure). The Trail contributes \$26.3 million per annum as a regional output/income and adds \$13.5 million per annum in regional value (SGS Economics and Planning, 2011).

2.2 Health and wellbeing benefits

Trails are an accessible form of recreation. Trail-based recreation is generally free, self-directed and available to all people, every day. Good quality, accessible trails encourage physical activity and improved health.

Physical activity has been shown to improve mental health and help relieve stress. The economic cost of mental illness is high in Australia – estimated to be approximately \$20 billion/year. Trail use is a form of readily accessible physical activity.

People can use trails in a variety of ways, depending on their abilities and preferences. Participation in trail activities:

- improve physical and mental health, assisting with disease prevention particularly cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, respiratory, nervous and endocrine systems as well as reducing obesity, hypertension, depression and anxiety and promotes psychological well-being. The obesity epidemic is now estimated to cost Australia \$1.3 billion/year (Australian Bicycle Council)
- facilitate participation and social interaction between a diversity of community members, age groups, individuals and families e.g. community walking groups, voluntary trail maintenance and conservation work
- offer a wide range of opportunities to a diverse group of people. Depending upon design, trails can accommodate the elderly, people with disabilities or satisfy those seeking challenging adventures and a sense of achievement
- help connect people and places and to develop community pride.

In the United States of America, a comprehensive health economics study showed every \$US1.00 invested in recreational trails for physical activity yielded a direct medical benefit of \$US 2.94 (Wang et al., 2005).

2.3 Education benefits

Trails present a unique opportunity for education. People of all ages can learn more about nature, culture or history along trails. Of particular importance, trails provide firsthand experience that can educate users about the importance of the natural environment and respect for nature by leading the learner into a natural classroom.

Enhanced, active education along trails is achieved through the use of comprehensive trail guides and signage to encourage awareness of the natural, cultural and historical attributes of the trail.

Trails have the power to connect us to our heritage by preserving historic places and by providing access to them. They can give people a sense of place and an understanding of the importance of past events.

2.4 Liveability benefits

Quality recreation facilities, such as trail networks, can help create attractive places to live (and visit). Well-planned trail networks can make it easier (and cheaper) for people to move around, granting an alternative to the use of private cars. Trails also provide a low impact means of travelling through the landscapes and play an important role in connecting people with nature.

Local users of the trail will enjoy social interaction within the community and with greater social interaction, the social capital of the area may be boosted. There are a number of benefits of enhanced social capital, including improving the capacity for people to trust others (SGS, 2013) as well as it providing the opportunity for socially isolated individuals to integrate into the community. Types of social interaction activities could include bird watching, dog walking and trail-based club activities.

Trail projects also help build partnerships among private companies, landowners, neighbouring municipalities and local government. In addition, when residents are encouraged to become involved in a trail project, they feel more connected to the community (SGS, 2013).

2.5 Environmental and cultural benefits

Trails provide a number of environmental and cultural benefits. These include:

- opportunities for the community to experience natural and cultural environments
- protection of the adjacent environments by localising impacts and facilitating management of visitation effects
- educational and interpretive opportunities and increased environmental and cultural awareness and appreciation
- provision of green commuter journeys leading to a decrease in the use of motorised vehicles for transportation and recreation. This helps reduce the production of emissions that cause global warming and respiratory problems
- increased community ownership which helps to preserve natural and cultural values
- the opportunity to preserve historic infrastructure that has benefits beyond its utility value as part of the trail
- opportunities for community participation in conservation and re-vegetation work.

3.0 Trends in trail use

3.1 What do people do?

Given the vast distances and large land parcels associated with trail use, it is often difficult to monitor the types of outdoor activities and the number of people participating in natural area settings. However there has been sufficient evidence to indicate that there is an increased demand for more non-organised recreation activities.

Furthermore, the types of activities sought in natural areas have, and are changing. Understanding these changes in trends is crucial to understanding current participation trends and/or demand in trail-based activities and their future provision. Drivers of trail-based activities include:

- population growth
 - between 2006 and 2011, Queensland's population grew by 9.8 per cent (2012 ABS Data).
A growing population means that the number of people seeking outdoor recreation opportunities will increase and if not managed properly can lead to the degradation of protected land and inappropriate use of natural areas
- changing population
 - the region is aging and the older generation prefers more passive activities, such as bushwalking and nature appreciation. However, population increases (yet not population cohort proportions) will continue for young people, who are likely to seek more adventurous and active types of activities, such as mountain biking
- increasing health and environmental awareness
 - people are becoming increasingly concerned about their health, with conditions such as obesity and stress on the rise. This, combined with society's growing awareness of the environment and its problems, has facilitated a growth in visitation to natural areas. 'Returning to nature' is a term now used, where people feel the desire to become reconnected to their natural environments from which they can escape their modern lifestyles
- increasing affluence and expectations of recreation
 - as individuals become more affluent, the proportion of income spent on goods and leisure increases. Between 2006 and 2011, the average weekly household income increased by \$202 a week in Queensland. As people spend more money on outdoor recreation and associated equipment, an increase in outdoor recreation activities, previously offered by commercial operators, has been observed. As such, a diversification for natural areas offering unique experiences and higher levels of infrastructure are often in demand
- technological advances
 - significant technological advances in equipment design and function have created new forms of outdoor activities and extended the scope and levels of participation for the general population
 - with the all-pervasive influence of the internet, and the increasing use of smart phones and 'apps', people are able to obtain information, communicate with each other very quickly and provide feedback on their recreation experience at any time of day or night. Many outdoor recreation participants make their decisions on where to recreate based on the information available via the internet, blogs, forums and social media
 - changes in technology for recreation are also bringing about an increasing divergence of outdoor recreation activities. Participants are able to map, record their times and upload digital images of their experience, allowing them to compete and compare results with past and/or future users. Growth in these activities has encouraged research into more refined technologies to encourage wider participation, such as geocaching and mountain biking.

In general, people are making increased 'lifestyle' choices that associate with greater access and contact with the natural environment. Further to this, findings from the latest ¹Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) Report show that:

- walking is the most popular form of activity and has been since 2001 (increasing by 44 per cent). This percentage has been consistent since 2001 and is likely to remain the most popular activity as the population ages
- cycling is the fourth most popular form of activity. Cycling has been amongst the top five activities since the ERASS began in 2001 and has increased by 45 per cent between 2001 and 2010. The 2010 level is the highest in 10 years
- bushwalking is the seventh most popular form of activity
- an estimated 6.7 million persons aged 15 years and over participated at least three times per week in non-organised physical activity (which includes walking, cycling and bushwalking).

Walking trends

Distinguishing between 'walking' and 'bushwalking' is an interesting task. Trails are now seen to be a resource for walkers as well as the smaller, more traditional bushwalking community.

Studies have found a clear preference for shorter walks (up to 6km and taking between 30 minutes and two hours to walk). The success of the Great Short Walks of Tasmania program is testimony to the fact that there is a significant market for these walking distances. This does not discount the fact that there remains a demand for walks up to 4 hours as well as for day walks. However, while a trail network should cater for a range of trail users, it should focus on those areas of most demand.

There is limited research on the demand for long walk trails. There are long walk trails in Australia aimed to cater for those seeking such an experience. In the case of the Bibbulmun Track (West Australia), many users access the track for short to medium walks (2 hours up to a weekend), rather than attempt to walk the entire trail (some 7-8 weeks). Long walk trails need significant investment and often cross local government boundaries and, thus, require significant coordination between land managers.

¹ Australian Sports Commission, 2010 Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey

Horse riding trends

Horse riding is an activity undertaken by a relatively small number of participants (around 7 per cent of outdoor recreation activities).

Horse riding demand can also be highly localised. For example, there are a number of rural residential areas within the Gympie region. These localities often attract horse enthusiasts likely to seek areas for riding.

Though there is limited background research of how long horse riders seek to ride for, industry knowledge indicates that horse riders are generally looking for loop rides of approximately 3-4 hours (about 25 -30km) in addition to short 'after school' or 'after work' rides.

Cycling trends

At a general level, bicycles have outsold cars over the last ten years with most households owning a bike (Bicycle Network Australia website).

Off-road cycle touring and mountain biking is a rapidly growing recreational pursuit in Australia. There is a growing trend toward seeking non-urban areas for this activity.

Cycle tourism is a growing market within the Australian tourism sector, particularly within the nature-based tourism segment.

New Zealand Cycleway Market Research (2009) found that, in general, international cycle tourists want easy multi-day trips with good supporting services or events. The holidays can also be location-based and utilise nearby trail networks. Domestic cycle tourists and recreational riders are not primarily focused on cycling but on the broader experience. This group is likely to be older or consist of families rather than single visitors or couples. Both markets are looking for easy access to safe and traffic-free trails. Trail gradient is a critical factor in successfully designing a trail for a specific market or type of rider. For a large portion of the location-based cycling and cycling holiday market average trail gradients of 2-3° are required (this explains the popularity of rail trails for this market).

Mountain biking has been one of the 'boom' recreational pastimes of the last decade and this is creating growing demand for off-road cycle trails.

Over the last three years, much of the trail planning and building activity across Australia has focused on mountain bike trails, either within reserves or in specifically prepared mountain bike parks.

Table 3: Trail definitions by length (amalgamated from several sources).

	Short	Medium	Long
Walking			
Trail length	Less than 4km	4-12km	More than 12km
Duration	Less than 1.5 hours	Less than half a day	More than half a day
Cycling			
Trail length	Less than 15km	15-25km	More than 25km
Duration	Less than 2 hours	Less than half a day	More than half a day
Horse riding			
Trail length	Less than 15km	15-30km	More than 30km
Duration	Less than 2 hours	Less than half a day	More than half a day

Table 4: Mountain bike riding distance preferences.

Distance	Riders
10-20km	30 per cent
21-30km	37 per cent
30+ km	25 per cent

Table 5: Mountain bike riding time preferences.

Time	Riders
1-2hrs	41 per cent
2-3hrs	45 per cent
3+ hrs	11 per cent

Queensland Outdoor Recreation Forum (June 2013).

3.2 Supply generated demand

There is strong anecdotal evidence from around Australia that a large part of the demand for trails is supply driven, meaning trail users are attracted to developed trails that are both 'known' or advertised in some way, and offer a range of facilities such as signage and interpretation, parking, toilets and water.

Data to verify the proposition that "if you build it they will come" (induced demand) is rare in trails research. However, evidence of usage on two recently developed trails in Western Australia, the Mundaring trails network and the Bibbulmun Track, show steadily growing usage. Studies have also shown that the development of trails may stimulate visitation to an area because of the existence of the trails. There are a number of stories of towns in decline that over-turned that trend by developing a trail (often a trail along an abandoned railway line).

Summarising demand research indicates the need to develop a trails network based primarily on short, with some medium, walks. This provision will respond to a continuing demand for such facilities from both residents and new residents and will importantly add a new element to the attractiveness of the region for visitors. There is also a growing demand for mountain biking trails of a challenging nature.

3.3 Trails and nature-based tourism

It is estimated that the market for nature-based tourism is increasing at six times the rate of tourism overall (World Tourism Organisation, 2006). Some of the factors that have contributed to this growing trend in nature-based tourism are that people are looking for new experiences, adding diversity to their experiences, combining business travel with holidays, and looking to "get back to nature".

The number of nature-based visitors to Queensland (QLD) increased between 2002 and 2006 by 4 per cent, with 27 per cent of the visitors from Brisbane, 29 per cent from QLD (excluding Brisbane), while the remaining were from interstate. In 2006, QLD was the second most popular destination for international visitors partaking in nature-based activities.

Bushwalking/rainforest walking and visiting national/state parks were the top two activities for domestic travellers in 2009. Clearly, recreation trails provide an important piece of tourism infrastructure and provide experiences in the nature-based tourism market and particularly the adventure tourism market.

Research undertaken by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) indicates the number of nature visitors² in Australia in 2009 totalled 28.31 million people; made up of 3.3 million international visitors, 12.46 domestic overnight visitors and 12.55 million domestic day visitors. TRA estimates that 48 per cent of domestic overnight nature-based visitors take part in bushwalking/rainforest walks, whilst 36 per cent of domestic day visitors and 38 per cent of international visitors enjoy this type of activity (TRA Snapshots 2009). Users are attracted to developed trails that are both 'known' or advertised in some way, and offer a range of facilities such as signage and interpretation, parking, toilets and water.

It is critical to consider the needs of visitors as they provide much of the economic benefits associated with trail development. Recreation trails provide an important piece of tourism infrastructure and provide experiences in the eco-tourism market.

Visitors are interested in what is local and authentic. Successful tourism destinations are built on factors that give a place its own distinctive character. These factors are lifestyle, heritage, cultural activities, landscape, flora and fauna; characteristics of the basic tourism product of any destination. Recreation trails provide opportunities to highlight many of these characteristics.

Cycle tourism is a growing market. In 2010, Australia recorded approximately 258,000 international overnight visitors who participated in cycling (Victoria's Cycle Tourism Action Plan 2011-2015). Domestic overnight visitors who participate in cycling on their trip stay longer and do more while on holiday when compared with other tourists, making them a stronger source of income for regional areas.

Additionally, it is important not to overlook the contribution of local residents to the success of a trail. Local trail users expenditure on trail-related expenses can also be significant for the local area.

² A nature visitor is a visitor who participates in at least one of a number of nature-based activities while travelling including visiting national parks or state parks, visiting wildlife parks, zoos or aquariums, visiting botanical gardens, and bushwalking or rainforest walks.

The Victory Heights Recreational Trail network is a great example of supply generated demand. The network is well advertised with a good range of facilities including signage.

Victory Heights Recreational Trails

Trail Etiquette
Guidelines for safe and enjoyable trail activity:

- ✓ Stay on formed trails and observe all signage
- ✓ Plan Your ride or walk; Wear an appropriate helmet; Be self sufficient
- ✓ Control your speed and always ride within your limits
- ✓ Leave no trace; Respect the trails and the environment
- ✓ Avoid damaging the trails and causing erosion by staying off them when wet
- ✓ Stay alert for approaching trail users; Be respectful to all trail users

Trail Suitability
Trails marked with the Blue Bicycle are "Bike-Specific Trails"
For safe and enjoyable trail use Pedestrians and Horse riders should avoid using these trails
All other trails and fire roads are open to Bicycles, Pedestrians & Horse Riders

Trail Difficulty Ratings for Mountain Biking
The following symbols are used within the trail network on the "Bike-Specific Trails"

- Green Circle** Easy Grade Trail, firm stable surface, some low obstacles.
- Blue Square** Intermediate Grade Trail, Variable narrower surface with larger obstacles.
- "Caution"** Approaching Technical feature, advisable for Experienced Riders only.

If you enjoy the trails, consider getting involved in maintaining the trails with CTCA Inc, or making a donation to help cover the costs of building them.

CTCA Inc. is a not-for-profit community group and a member of the International Mountain Bicycling Association - Australia

SPEAK BUILD RESPECT RIDE

CTCA Inc COOLOOLA TRAIL CARE ALLIANCE

GYMPIE REGIONAL COUNCIL

A joint community initiative provided by the Coooloola Trail Care Alliance and the Gympie Regional Council.

4.0 Background documents

4.1 Strategic and legislative framework

The Acts, policies and guidelines listed below are to be considered during the planning and developing of the track and trail network within the Gympie region.

Local

- Gympie Regional Council Planning Scheme 2013

The Gympie Regional Council's Planning Scheme (2013) provides a framework for managing development within the Gympie region, and seeks to coordinate and integrate infrastructure and land use planning.

Of relevance to the tracks and trails plan, its recommendations will inform Council's development assessment process as undertaken under the guidance of the planning scheme.

State

- *Queensland Local Government Act 2009*
- *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*
- *Land Act 1994*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1994*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Recreation Areas Management Act 1992*
- *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- *Forestry Act 1959*
- South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009
- Draft State Planning Policy 2013
- Seqwater Land and Water Development Guidelines 2012

Commonwealth

- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*

International

- UNESCO (Great Sandy Biosphere)
- RAMSAR (Great Sandy Strait and Moreton Bay)

4.2 Relevant regional and local documents

A review of background literature in relation to trails and tracks planning has been undertaken, with a summary provided in the following tables.

Table 6: Summary of relevant regional and local documents

Regional
Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan 2011
<p>The Plan establishes a clear vision and direction for the region for the next 20 years. The Plan outlines its purpose as managing regional growth and change "in the most sustainable way to protect and enhance quality of life in the region". The Plan also recognises the pressure that the population growth is putting on the region, including, placing pressure on the environment and open spaces.</p> <p>The Plan recognises the following relevant opportunities within the Gympie region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• its unique natural environment and abundant natural resources – recognising the wealth of environmental and biodiversity assets, including the Great Sandy Biosphere, national parks, rural hinterland areas and coastal environs. The Mary River and Six Mile Creek riparian corridors are dominant features of the region• its tourism opportunities – recognising the requirement of low impact, nature-based tourism attractions to be located within, or in close proximity to, areas of high ecological significance. Where appropriate, this will allow for investment in nature-based tourism opportunities. These facilities play an important role in increasing visitor awareness about the values that make this a region of outstanding ecological significance and improving the overall visitor experience. <p>Relevant identified programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• green space network – define, identify and map a preferred future regional green space network that meets community, biodiversity and ecological service requirements and investigate the development of a recreational rail trail along the decommissioned Kingaroy to Theebine rail corridor• tourism opportunities – identify and use the natural environment and natural assets to maximise sustainable tourism and recreation opportunities and encourage the development of tourism niches, such as horse-trail riding.

Gympie Regional Council

Community Plan 2030

The Community Plan recognises the assets that contribute to the Gympie region including; its scenic environment, community involvement, strong economy, and facilities and services available. It also recognises that there are challenges to provide services to meet growing demands, managing development, meeting the needs of an aging population, maintaining the condition of natural resources and adapting to a changing economy...”

Directions relevant to the development of the Tracks and trails plan include:

- Environmental Management
 - opportunities to benefit from key environmental assets such as the Great Sandy Straits
- Infrastructure
 - developing all abilities pathways where possible
 - advocating for improved facilities and services for people with a disability and for young families
 - extending the walking track network particularly in outlying communities
- Engaged Governance
 - establishing more facilities in parks and public spaces including toilets, walking/bike tracks, play areas and barbecues
 - upgrading local road and pathway networks
 - supporting the development of eco-tourism
 - liaising with State Government departments to improve access to national parks for the community and eco-tourism
 - support the Mary Valley community in implementing the “Mary Valley Community and Economic Action Plan”
 - establishing more cycle and walking tracks and more safe horse riding trails
 - advocating for development of an Imbil-Brooloo rail trail
 - minimising the impact of trail bikes on amenity and safety
 - developing and implementing the local tourism development and marketing plan “Mary Valley Country – come out to play”
 - improving tourism signage
 - maintaining and improving equestrian/showground facilities in Kilkivan, Tansey and Goomeri
- Social Wellbeing
 - developing and progressing ‘healthy communities’ with emphasis on facilities and resources for residents to maintain healthy lifestyles
 - investigating opportunities to establish a sport and recreation coordinator position to provide capacity building and support for sport and recreation groups with volunteering, collaboration and funding
 - enhancing the accessibility of activities for people with a disability and support organisations that allow people with a disability to be active.

Gympie Region Walk and Cycle Strategy³

This report presents research findings into walking and cycling along off-road pathways and on and off-road bikeways. It also provides future walking and cycling network recommendations including:

- updated design guidelines
- indicative costs for path and bikeway construction
- a prioritised network implementation plan with supporting maps.

The report also recognises the need for pathways in high growth areas, particularly Southside, Cooloola Cove and Victory Heights.

³ GHD 2011, Gympie Region Walk and Cycle Strategy. Volume 1 Strategy Report and volume 2 Network Maps and Implementation Plan.

Consolidated Open Space and Recreation Plan⁴

This report aims to consolidate the open space and/or recreation strategies of the former Councils prior to amalgamation. Some of the relevant recommendations include:

- investigate opportunities to access the old rail line between Imbil and Brooloo
- access multi-use tracks and trails planning for Mary Valley and Traveston Crossing Dam to incorporate relevant proposed trails in an Active Trails Strategy
- participate ... in the development of the Kingaroy to Theebine Rail Trail planning process
- develop a local park designed as a linear linkage from Bonnick Road to Fairway Drive (off Corella Street)
- encourage the continued development of walk/cycle paths in Cooloola Cove utilising existing resources where possible and link existing parks
- develop a trail along the southern side of Lake Borumba
- a designated trail to Yabba Creek at Kropp's Crossing is needed as the creek bank is degrading due to unregulated access
- develop a web-based resource for promotion of sport and recreation facilities and opportunities, including detail for tracks and trails.

Other relevant documents that were considered as a part of the background literature review for this report include:

- Wide Bay Burnett Statutory Regional Plan
- Wide Bay Burnett Environment and Natural Resource Management Plan 2012-2031
- Wide Bay Burnett Regional Recreation and Sport Strategy
- Great Sandy Region Management Plan
- Gympie Regional Council Corporate Plan
- Gympie Regional Council Environment Strategy 2012-2017
- Cooloola Park Management Plans (1-5) Bushfire Risk Reducers 2009.

⁴ Strategic Leisure Group 2012, Consolidated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Local documents and reports

Traveston Crossing Dam Trail Concept Plan⁵

The report was developed as a result of the proposed Traveston Dam development. The aim of the report was to propose "a unique opportunity for a first class multi-use trail network, catering for horse riders, recreational mountain bike riders and bush walkers." Key factors that were recommended for implementation, that may still be relevant to this project include:

- providing a link between Brooloo and Imbil on the disused railway line
- providing a connective link between Kandanga, Imbil and Brooloo
- creating links to the forests of Imbil, Amamoor, Mapleton and West Cooroy
- planning for trails that will provide important linkages to Australia's Bicentennial National Trail
- providing an east-west connection across the Bruce Highway
- providing linkages and connections to existing trail networks including the Noosa Trail Network, the Bicentennial National Trail, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, the Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk and trails located within the Forest Reserve Estates in South East Queensland (including Amamoor, Dagon and Kenilworth)
- providing a cost-effective trail network in terms of development and maintenance
- providing a trail network which has a range of options i.e. trails of various lengths and difficulty and catering to the needs of various users
- ensuring that the network is sustainable in the long term with minimal environmental impact
- providing a network of safe trails
- ensure the eco-tourism potential of the Mary Valley is fully realised
- creating a series of high-quality horse riding trails that contribute to a network rather than isolated individual tracks
- providing connectivity for horse riders between towns, particularly Amamoor, Kandanga, Imbil, Brooloo and Carters Ridge
- enhancing the extent of the existing horse trail network located within the state forests and forest reserves
- providing connectivity to existing and future commercial establishments including Brooloo Park, Traveston View (the workers construction camp) and Traveston Crossing Reserve including Garapine and Mary Valley Trail Rides where possible
- enabling circuits to be established in some locations.

Local documents and reports (continued)

Traveston Crossing Dam Trail Concept Plan⁵

It is worth noting that while the report has some valuable proposals, it was developed on the assumption that large tracts of additional public land would be acquired as a result of the dam construction, resulting in a relatively simple process for the construction of additional tracks and trails (as they would be on publicly owned land). This may no longer be the case given that the dam will no longer be constructed.

⁵ Coast to Country Pty Ltd 2008, Traveston Crossing Dam Trail Concept Plan Supporting Document.



Mary Valley Community and Economic Action Plan

This Plan was developed as a result of the Traveston Crossing Dam project ceasing and also as a result of the need to diversify the economic base of the Mary Valley.

The Plan includes a vision, guiding values, community goals and a set of strategies and actions. Relevant outcomes and recommendations include:

- building and nurturing a sustainable tourism sector which co-exists and compliments (the Mary Valley's) natural, cultural, environmental and heritage assets. To strengthen linkages and partner with local and regional tourism organisations to provide every opportunity for the Mary Valley as a significant destination
- provision of recreational and tourism trails
- reclaiming Traveston Crossing by:
 - revegetating
 - providing river access, including creating Kandanga Creek walk, with platypus and turtle viewing platforms
 - creating a river wildlife corridor and habitat enhancement
- develop a strategy for a network of trails (including non-motorised recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling, mountain bike riding, canoeing and horse riding) and river access parks
- secure the existing Garapine facility and develop a social enterprise model offering an interpretive environmental showcase, recreation e.g. mountain biking, training, education, camps for corporate/ youth, community activities
- increase tourism opportunities such as producing maps that include recreation opportunities and trails
- investigate opportunities to connect with Great Sandy Biosphere and Noosa Biosphere
- cross promote towns and join activities (canoe/hiking/ bike riding)
- promote the Mary River and its rare flora and fauna
- provide camping areas
- encourage mountain bikes and trail bikes at Kandanga
- create a conservation buffer along the Mary River allowing for public access and some recognition of the endangered species i.e. an interpretive centre/ walk.

⁶ 2010, Mary Valley Community and Economic Action Plan.

5.0 Existing situation

This section assesses the location, extent and provision of the existing trail network within the Gympie region, including the type, length and difficulty of each of the existing formal trails. It also provides information on the availability of information pertaining to these tracks and trails.

Site audits and mapping

Detailed site audits were undertaken to document and identify the formal trail routes that exist within the Gympie Regional Council Area. This exercise identified all of the existing trails including any gaps in an existing trail or trail head and facility provision.

The maps on the following pages show the main national parks and state forests within the Gympie region. Those natural areas that include a formal trail network have been highlighted.

Only trails that are regarded as being 'recognised' were included in the site audit. 'Recognised' means that the trail has some or all of the following characteristics:

- they are recognised by the land manager (e.g. Gympie Regional Council, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, etc)
- they have signposting (trail directional markers; trailhead signage; interpretive signage)
- they have some sort of information or mapping pertaining to the trail (such as a map contained within a trail brochure).

Table 7 on page 22 gives more detailed descriptions of each of the formal trails within the trail network.

Investigation of access to trail information

Easy access to comprehensive trail information is important as it ensures that tourists as well as the local community have a clear understanding of:

- what type of nature based recreation activities are available within a region (and their location)
- the difficulty, length and type of each of the trails within a natural area
- what facilities are available at the start and throughout the trail
- how to get there and where to go (and therefore avoid getting lost)
- what the trail offers (scenic views and vistas, birdwatching and wildlife opportunities, cultural heritage etc.).

An investigation was undertaken to determine what type of information is currently available to the public with regards to accessing the tracks and trails within the region, and where the information is available (either through websites or brochures).

Tables 8 and 9 list the sources from where the trail information can be found and what type of trail information is currently available. This exercise provided a thorough understanding of the availability of, as well as the gaps in accessing information pertaining to the tracks and trails within the region.

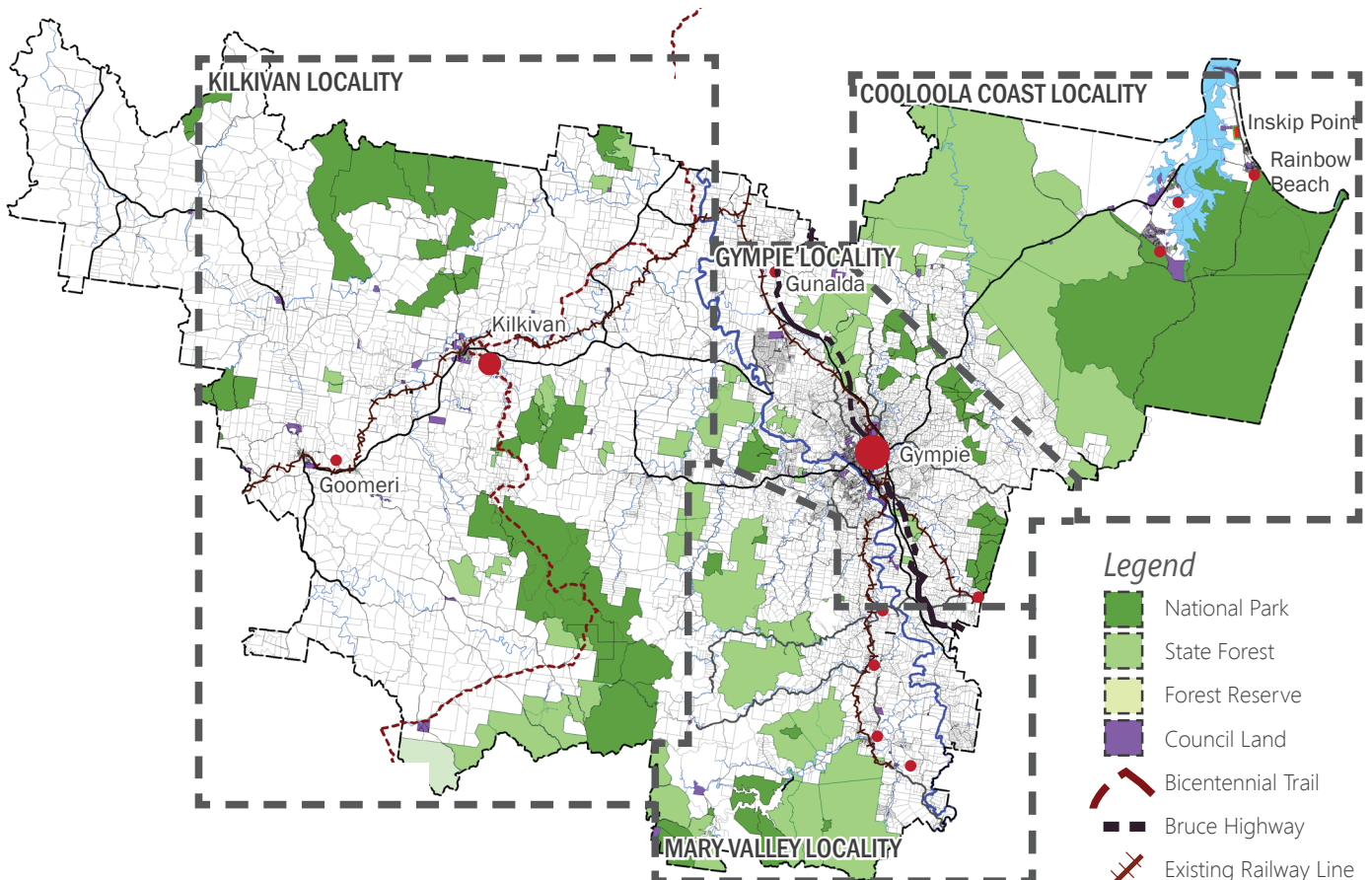
5.1 Site audits and mapping

Natural areas distribution and locality of formal trail networks

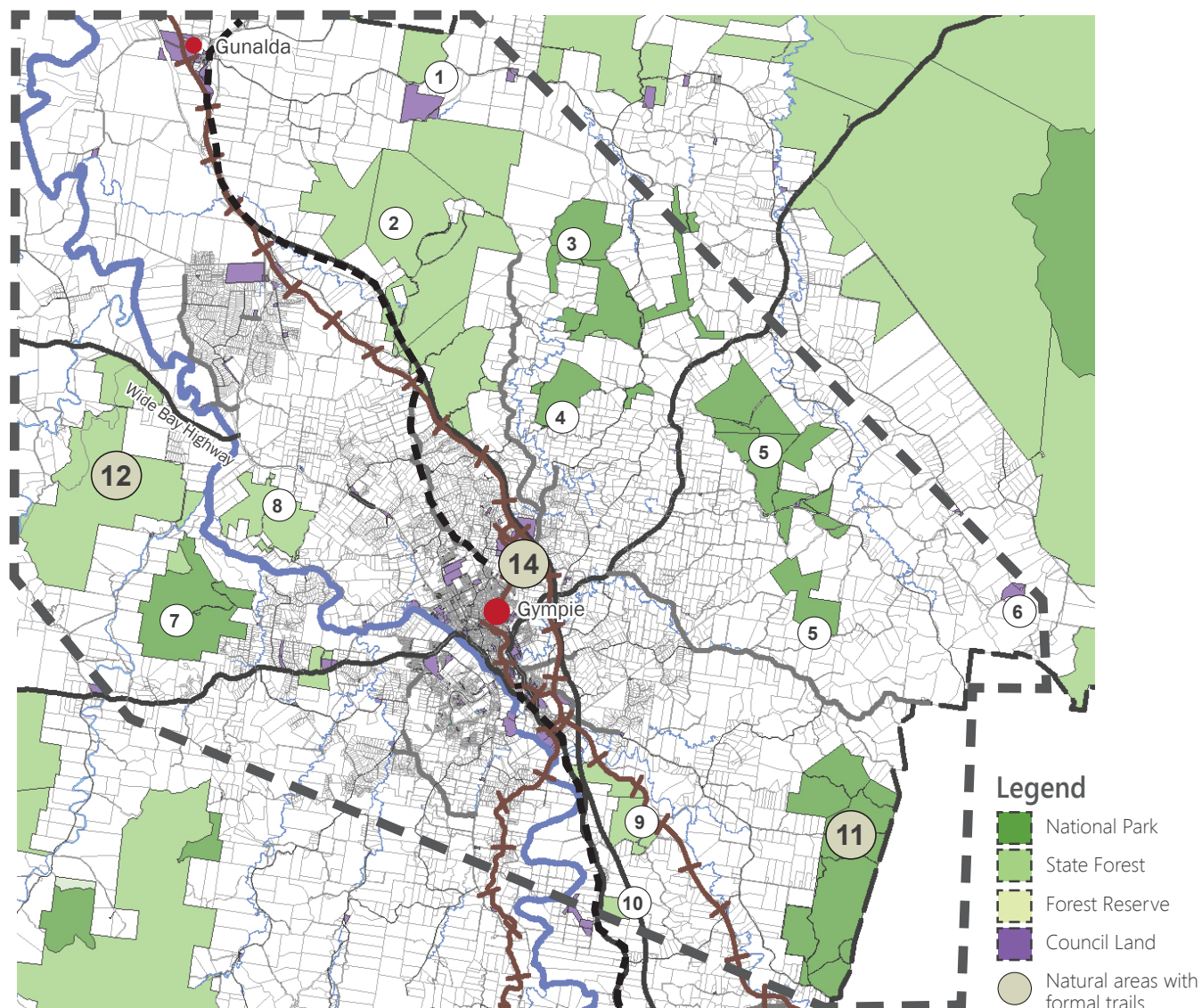
The trails analysis and site audits revealed that there were four distinct localities within the Gympie region, each with unique, environmental, community and landscape characteristics. The trails and tracks that were identified during the trail audits have been categorised within these four localities.

The areas include:

- Gympie and surrounds
 - including the natural areas within and around the town, providing easily accessible nature based recreation to those people based within Gympie
- Mary Valley
 - rural residential locality in close proximity to large natural areas such as Imbil and Amamoor State Forests. The Mary River provides an opportunity for nature based recreation. The disused railway line also provides trail based opportunities within the Valley
- Kilkivan and surrounds
 - a historical area with a “frontier feel”, comprising predominately pastoral grasslands for beef cattle. This land lends itself to primarily equestrian activities, especially being the home of the annual “Great Horse Ride”
- Cooloola Coast and surrounds
 - providing the “gateway to Fraser Island” within a coastal and wetland landscape setting. This area is therefore also the tourist “hotspot” within the Gympie region. It also forms a part of the Great Sandy Biosphere, a UNESCO listed area due to its unique floral and faunal biodiversity.



Gympie locality

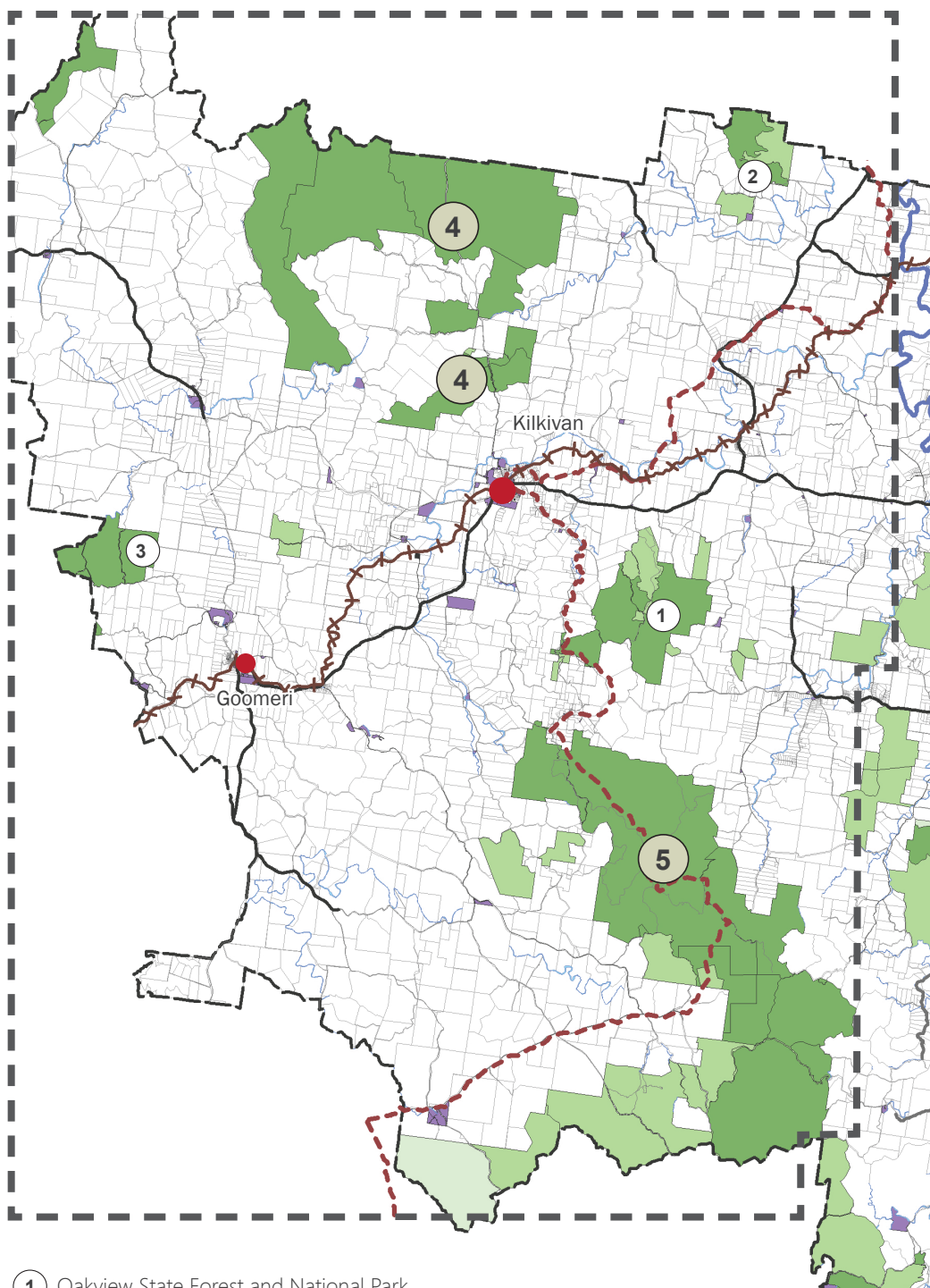


- ① Gunalda State Forest
- ② Curra State Forest
- ③ Downsfield National Park
- ④ Gympie National Park
- ⑤ Goomborian National Park
- ⑥ Mt Wolvi
- ⑦ Glastonbury State Forest and National Park (or King State Forest and Conservation Park)
- ⑧ Chatsworth State Forest
- ⑨ Woondum State Forest
- ⑩ Kybong State Forest

Natural areas with formal trails

- ⑪ Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park
- ⑫ Brooyar State Forest
- ⑬ Victory Heights

Kilkivan locality



Legend

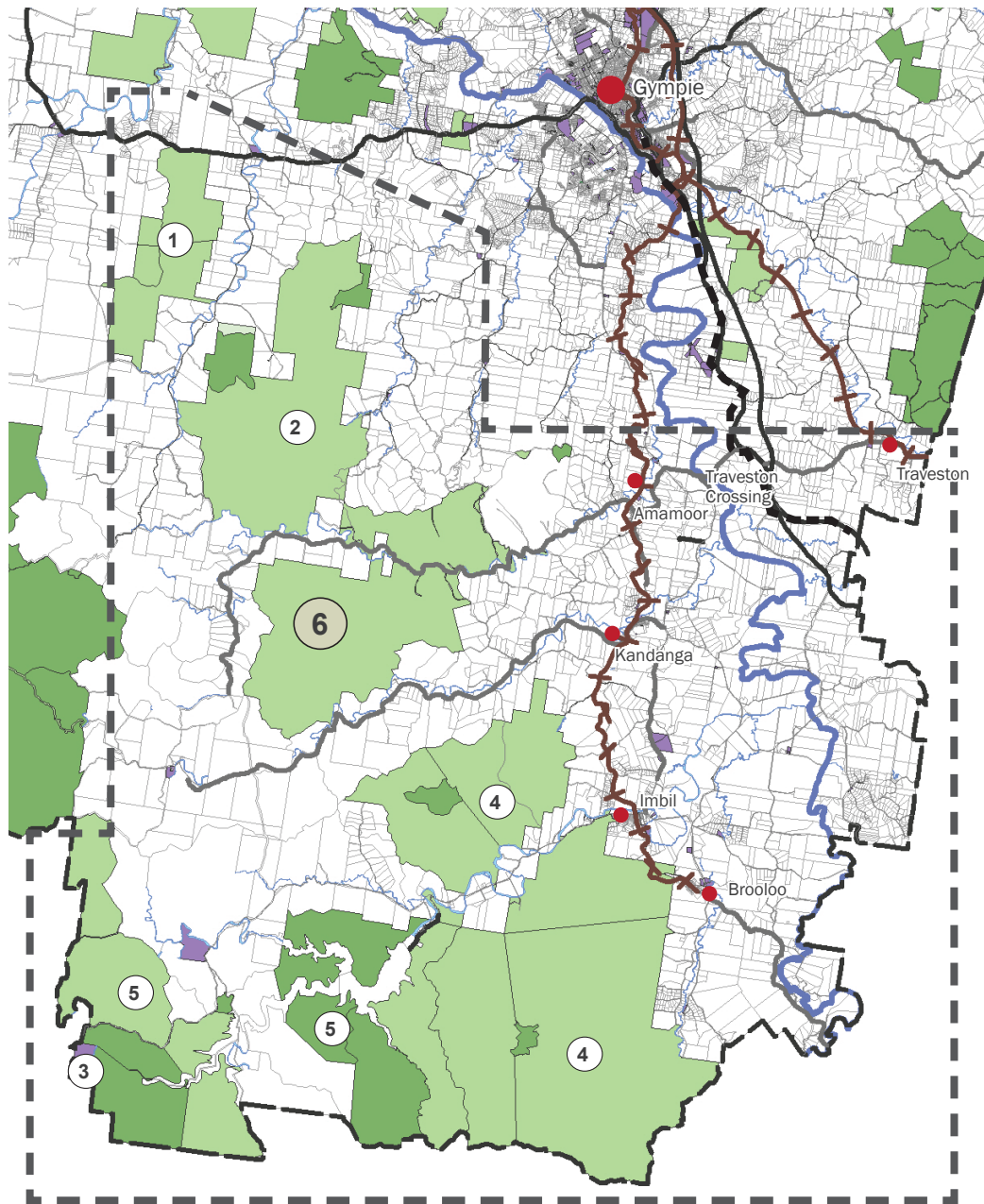
- National Park
- State Forest
- Forest Reserve
- Council Land
- Natural areas with formal trails

- ① Oakview State Forest and National Park
- ② Glen Echo State Forest and National Park
- ③ Goomeribong/Nuangur National Park

Natural areas with formal trails

- ④ Mudlo National Park
- ⑤ Wrattens National Park and State Forest

Mary Valley locality

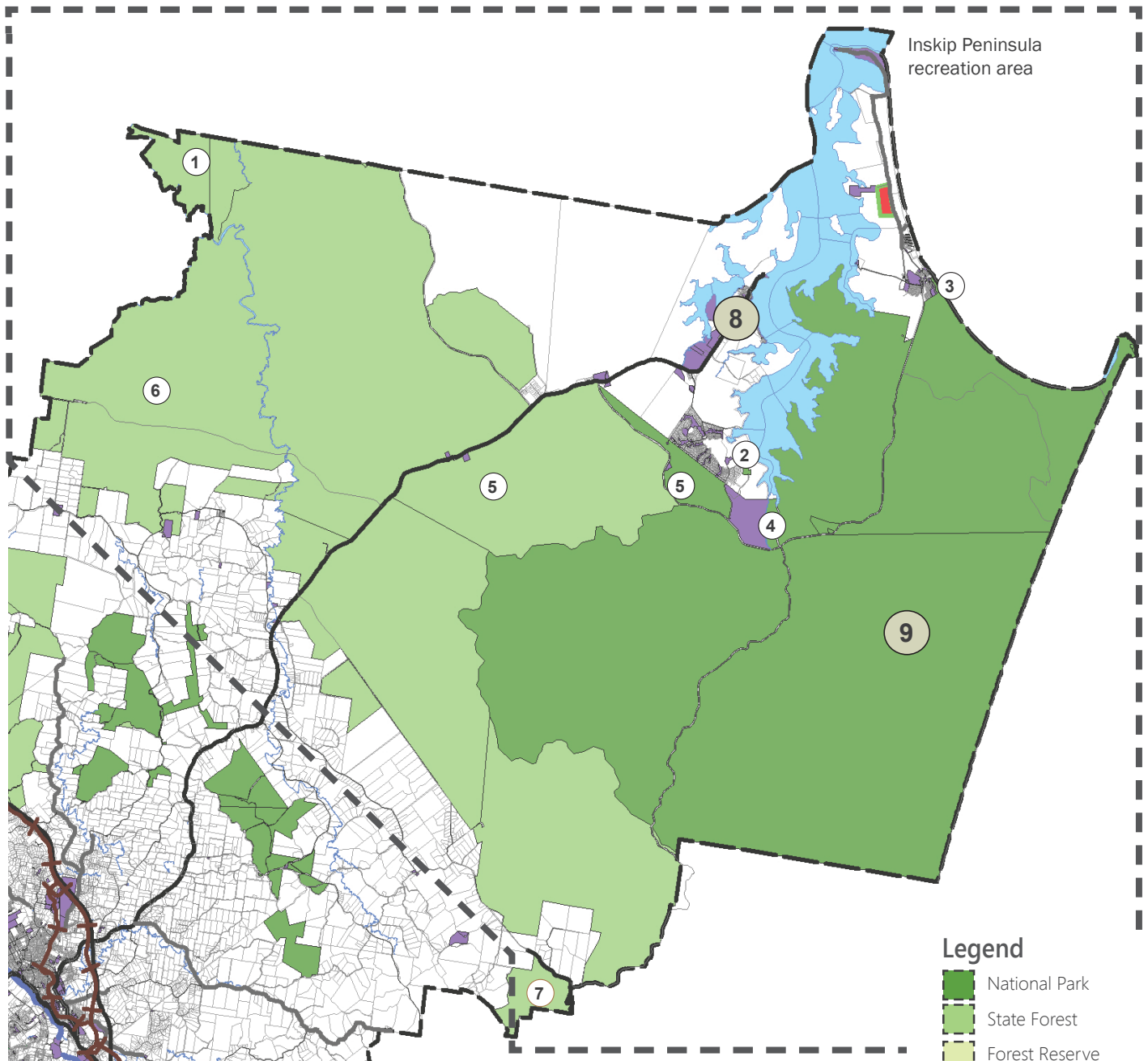


- ① Glastonbury State Forest
- ② Mary's Creek State Forest
- ③ Yabba Falls
- ④ Imbil State Forest and National Park
- ⑤ Lake Borumba State Forest and National Park

Natural areas with formal trails

- ⑥ Amamoor State Forest and Forest Reserve

Cooloola Coast locality



- ① Tuan State Forest
- ② Cooloola Cove/Pipeclay National Park
- ③ Rainbow Beach National Park
- ④ Cooloola Coast Reserve
- ⑤ Toolara State Forest and National Park
- ⑥ Neerdie State Forest
- ⑦ Coondoo State Forest

- Natural areas with formal trails**
- ⑧ Tin Can Bay Wildflower Walk and Foreshore Walk
 - ⑨ Cooloola National Park (Great Walk)

Provision of existing formal trails

The table below lists the existing formal tracks and trails within the Gympie Regional Council area. The table also describes each trail type as well as providing any relevant information pertaining to that particular trail. Only trails that are regarded as being 'recognised' are included in the table.

In other words, they are existing trails that:

- are recognised by the land manager (e.g. Gympie Regional Council, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, etc);
- have signposting (trail directional markers; trailhead signage; interpretive signage)
- have some sort of information or mapping pertaining to the trail (such as a map contained within a trail brochure).

Table 7: Provision of existing formal trails.

Locality	Park/ Reserve/ Location	Track name	Trail type	Length	Circuit	Grade	Comments
Gympie	Woondum/ Mothar Mountain National Park*	Turpentine Circuit	Walk	500m	Yes	AS Class 3	Trails are accessible from Rock Pools Day Use Area
		Boulder Mountain Hiking Trail	Walk	3.2km return	No	AS Class 5	
	Brooyar State Forest	Point Pure Lookout	Walk	300m	No	AS Class 3	
	Victory Heights	Various	MTB and shared use	Various	Yes	Varied gradings	There are 9 trails in total within the network, as well as children's loop trail, a Jump Track and Pump Track. Some trails are designated for mountain bikes only, with other trails being shared-use.
Kilkivan	Mudlo National Park	Scrubby Creek Walking Trail	Walk	1.2 m	Yes	AS Class 2	No signposting or evidence of the trail from Mudlo Gap Picnic Area. No signage or information at Scrubby Creek Picnic Area about this trail.
		Pearsons Lookout Walk	Walk	3km return	No	AS Class 4	
	No specific location	Bicentennial National Trail Section 5	Multi-use	Unknown	No	Unclassified (uses road reserves)	No signage.
Mary Valley	Amamoor State Forest	Platypus Walk	Walk	300m (return)	No	Unclassified	Heads off from Amama Day Use Area. No signage at day use area (only management and interpretive signage on the walk).
		Amama Walking Track	Walk	1.4km return (NPRSR website) 1.5km (Mary Valley brochure)	Yes	AS Class 4 (according to NPRSR); AS Class 3 (according to Mary Valley brochure)	Heads off from Amama Day Use Area. On-ground signage shows a hiking track of 2.2km. Cascades destination of 800m one way (making a circuit of 1.6km). 2.2km hiking track goes beyond Cascades.
		Rainforest Walk	Walk	1km	Yes	AS Class 3	Heads off from Cedar Grove Camping area with no signage indicating trail. Only indication is a set of exclusion gates. Note there is no day use area at Cedar Grove.
		Cedar Grove Hiking Trail	Walk	4.6km	Yes	AS Class 4	
		Amamoor Creek Hiking Trail	Walk	2.5km	Not known	AS Class 4	

Locality	Park/ Reserve/ Location	Track name	Trail type	Length	Circuit	Grade	Comments
Coolooloa Coast	No specific location	Wildflower Walk	Walk	Unknown	No	Unclassified	Most likely a Class 2 as it is not wide enough for wheelchairs
		Tin Can Bay Foreshore Walk	Walk (very short section wide enough for shared use)	Unknown	No	Unclassified	
	Coolooloa Recreation Area/ Great Sandy National Park	Rainbow Beach – Carlo Sandblow	Walk	3.8km (1.2km option)	No	Class 4 (1.2km option is a Class 3)	Promoted at trailhead at Seary's Creek and Bymien
		Coolooloa Great Walk	Walk	102km (one way) (two routes possible)	No	Class 4	
		Rainbow Beach – Coloured Sands	Walk	6km	Not known	Class 4	
		Freshwater Lake – Bymien	Walk	17km	Not known	Unclassified	
		Dandathu Circuit at Bymien	Walk	250m	Yes	Unclassified	
		Freshwater Campground – Freshwater Lake	Walk	2.4km	Not known	Unclassified	
		Freshwater Lake Circuit	Walk	4.7km	Yes	Unclassified	
		Bymien – Poona Lake	Walk	4.2km	Not known	Unclassified	
		Teewah Beach – Double Island Point Lighthouse	Walk	2.2km	Not known	Unclassified	
		Seary's Creek	Walk	250m	No	Class 2	
		Rainbow Beach – Bymien	Walk	15km	Not known	Unclassified	
		Coolooloa Wilderness Trail	Walk	47.9km (one way)	No	Unclassified	

* Woondum National Park has several horse and mountain bike riding opportunities shown on NPRSR maps and websites (but only as horse riding). However, these trails have no formal trailhead or starting point other than a classification sign at the Day Use Area. In addition, some of the trails appear inaccessible from the Gympie side and are only accessible from the Noosa side. For example, a horse riding trail in the northern section appears to head off from the Mt Boulder Walking Trail – it cannot be accessed from this trail as it is a walk-only trail but needs to be accessed from the east.

5.2 Availability of trail information

An investigation was undertaken to determine where and what type of information is currently available to the public with regards to accessing the tracks and trails within the region. It was noted that there were a number of information sources, most providing only some of the trail information, however, there was no source that provided a complete picture of the trail network within the natural public areas of the Gympie region.

The information below lists the sources from where the trail information was found and the type of information available. Please note there may be other smaller private forums or blogs that provide additional information regarding the tracks and trails, however, the aim of this exercise was to determine what information was more easily available to the wider public.

Online information

Table 8: Online information

Source	Description	Trail information
Australia's Nature Coast www.australiasnaturecoast.com	This is a tourism initiative that promotes natural experiences from the Glasshouse Mountains north to Fraser Island.	There is limited trail-specific information available on this website. Searches are available by activity and/or region. The 'Bushwalking and Hiking' search leads the user to a number of walking opportunities each with a brief description and links for additional information. None of these walks are within the Gympie region, however a link is provided to the Cooloola Recreation area section within the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing's (NPRSR) website. The 'Horse Riding' search provides information on three operators – Kiah Park Horse riding, Mary Valley Adventure Trails and Rainbow Beach Horse Rides. In each instance, a short description and contact details (including website links) are provided. A search on 'Tours and Cruises' identifies the Ride on Mary operator. A brief description of services and contact details (including website link) are provided.
Mary Valley Country www.maryvalleycountry.com.au	This website is a volunteer-driven initiative covering three areas – tourism, business and community.	A range of searches are available including bushwalking, horse riding, canoe/kayak and mountain biking, all under the 'Play' heading. For each of these activities a link is provided to a detailed brochure (see the brochure table below for additional detail).
Destination Gympie Region www.visitgympieregion.com.au	The Gympie Regional Council maintains this website that is primarily designed for tourists and visitors.	Under the 'Play' heading short descriptions of three walking opportunities are provided. None of these sections include maps and only the Cooloola Great Walk description includes length and walk duration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicentennial National Trail (Section 5) • Cooloola Great Walk • Amamoor State Forest • Inskip Peninsula Recreation Area • Mudlo National Park – Mudlo gap track and Scrubby Creek.

Source	Description	Trail information
Gympie Regional Council www.gympie.qld.gov.au	The Gympie Regional Council website provides a range of trail-related information.	Under the 'Our Region/Recreation and Tourism' headings information can be found regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National parks – links to the relevant sections within the Queensland Government website Victory Heights Trail Network – short description and link to a map that outlines the location and permissible use of individual tracks.
Rainbow Beach Australia http://rainbowbeachaustralia.wordpress.com	A community-maintained website and blog providing information for visitors and locals.	A list of walks with short descriptions (including Great Sandy National Park, Cooloola Section) is provided under the Activities heading. There are no maps provided and only limited information regarding each walk.
Gympie Cooloola Tourism www.cooloola.org.au	This website is an initiative of Gympie Cooloola Tourism Inc. and includes information on accommodation, dining, tourism and recreation opportunities.	Under the 'Explore Nature' heading, the user can choose a number of options including Walks and Trails and Water Based Experiences. The 'Walks and Trails' section provides a list (and short description) of walks by location. (<i>Note: There are no maps, distance or class information.</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooloola Coast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlo Sandblow Coloured Sands Tin Can Bay Foreshore Bird Walk Wildflower Walk Mary Valley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amamoor State Forest (has links to NPRSR online map) Imbil State Forest (has links to NPRSR online map) Kilkivan – Goomeri <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kilkivan Forest Reserve and Mudlo Gap.
Rainbow Beach www.ourrainbowbeach.com.au	An initiative of the Rainbow Beach Commerce and Tourism Association. It includes information on tourist destinations and activities, accommodation options, events guide, business and community directory.	Bushwalking opportunities within the Great Sandy National Park, Cooloola Section can be found under the 'Activities' heading. For each walk, the location, distance, walk time and brief description are provided. There are no maps available in this section, however, a link is provided to the Queensland Government website. A description of horse riding on Rainbow Beach is also provided under the 'Activities' heading.
Organised Grime www.organisedgrime.com.au	This website advertises the book " <i>Where to Mountain Bike in South East Queensland</i> ".	The website includes maps for mountain bike riding locations that can be found within the book. While there are no areas from within the Gympie region contained within the book, a map of Victory Heights is included as an online 'addition'.

Source	Description	Trail information
<p>Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing</p> <p>www.nprsr.qld.gov.au</p>	<p>This Queensland Government website provides a wide range of information regarding recreation opportunities.</p> <p>For each site, the website provides a short description, facilities and activities, information on location, travel alternatives and a map.</p>	<p>The following Gympie region locations are included within the website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amamoor Area Parks and Forest (no maps of the walking tracks) • Brooyar State Forest • Cooloola Great Walk • Cooloola Recreation Area, Great Sandy National Park (including Rainbow Beach to Carlo Sandblow) • Imbil State Forest (horse trail only) • Inskip Peninsula Recreation Area • Tuan State Forest • Woondum National Park • Mudlo National Park. <p>The maps for these areas outline opportunities for walking, mountain bike riding and horse riding. However, none of the maps provide information regarding track class, distances, walk times or individual track names.</p>

Brochure information

Table 9: Brochure information

Brochures	Description	Trail information
Mary Valley Country – Mountain Biking	The brochure includes information regarding permit requirements, 'top spots' and links to additional information. It does not include maps.	Short descriptions are provided for each trail/forest area. Information with distances are provided for Imbil Circuit, Amama Park, Cedar Grove, Conondale and Imbil State Forests, with no information on track classes.
Mary Valley Country – Horse Riding	The brochure includes information regarding state forest regulations, camp options, short trail and endurance rides and links to additional information. It does not include maps.	The brochure outlines short trail ride opportunities within Imbil State Forest (including descriptions on locations and access). Additionally, the brochure outlines opportunities for endurance riding in the Mary Valley.
Mary Valley Country – Bushwalking	The brochure includes information regarding flora and fauna within the Conondales, walk alternatives and links to additional information. It does not include maps.	The brochure outlines the class, length and duration of five different bushwalking options within Amamoor, Conondale and Imbil State Forests.
Cooloola Recreation Area and surrounds	This brochure was developed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The brochure provides a wide range of information regarding location and access, camping opportunities, walking, 4WDing, paddling, coastal care and permits. A two-page detailed recreation map is also provided.	The brochure provides detailed information on 26 separate walks. A description, distance, duration and class is provided for each walk. Further, each walk is marked on the two-page map.
Gympie Forests – Amamoor and Brooyar State Forests, Woondum National Park	This brochure was developed by the Queensland Government's Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.	For each of the forest areas, the brochure includes a description of location and access, picnic and camping opportunities, map and walks (including class, distance and duration).
Tin Can Bay Wild-flower Walk	This brochure was a joint initiative of Cooloola Shire Council, Queensland Government, Queensland Heritage Trails Network and Cooloola Coastcare. The brochure includes a photo and description of the range of wildflowers along the walk.	With regard to the walk itself, the brochure includes a map (with no scale). There is no description of the length, duration or difficulty of the walk.
Mothar Mountain Rockpools	This brochure was developed by the Gympie Regional Council. It provides a description of the Rockpools, location and access considerations.	The brochure outlines two walking opportunities in the area. Distance and duration are provided for each walk.

Discussion

The tables above show that a number of websites and brochures showcase some of the trail systems within the region, however:

- there are a number of different trail information sources
 - this makes it quite difficult to know which website to access to get a complete trails 'picture'. This can be very confusing for potential trail users
- there is limited information relating to individual tracks
 - information is not presented for all possible tracks. This is particularly evident with regards to horse riding trails
 - few of the trail information sources provide a complete picture of what a trail has to offer (i.e. maps (clearly showing with trails), trail names, trail types, trail distances, trail difficulty etc.)
 - only the "Coolooloa Recreation Area and surrounds" and the "Gympie Forests – Amamoor and Brooyar State Forests, Woondum National Park" brochures provide comprehensive information as to what those areas have to offer. It should be noted that these brochures are not available online
 - NPRSR, Organised Grime (Victory Heights) and the Coolooloa Trail Care Alliance are the only websites that include maps, and even then the supporting information is very limited (no information on length time, distance etc) Furthermore, the tracks within the NPRSR maps generally lack information as to the type of recreation activity that is permitted on those trails.



Coolooloa Great Walk

6.0 Consultation

6.1 Consultation approach

A series of community and stakeholder engagement events were undertaken over a two-month period. The aim of this process was to obtain information from industry groups, Council members, user groups and from the general community as to some of the current gaps and future opportunities with regards to trail provision and promotion. This section provides a summary of the engagement strategy.

The consultation processes were found to be highly valuable, particularly due to the fact that many of the tracks and trails within some of the localities are only known by some trail users within the local communities, and information regarding these trails have been passed on largely by word-of-mouth.

At this stage, we also gained a deeper understanding from some of the stakeholders, as to some of the management issues, and any other similar tracks and trail project initiatives being undertaken by other groups. We also gained an feedback on the demands, gaps and trail opportunities observed by Council, stakeholders, user groups and the local community.

Engagement overview

A summary of the community and stakeholder engagement undertaken for the development of the Trails and Tracks Plan is provided in the table below.

Consultation	Details
Councillor meeting	A meeting was held with Councillor Julie Walker (Division 8 Councillor, Chair for Tourism and the Development of The Mary Valley).
Council officer workshop	A workshop was held with a range of Council Officers. The workshop was attended by staff from land use, sport and recreation, heritage and parks.
Industry and tourism stakeholders	Individual meetings were held with representatives from key tourism and industry bodies. These organisations have an interest in promoting the tracks and trails for both locals and for tourism for the region. They included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF)• Destination Gympie• Gympie Cooloola Tourism.
Land owner and manager stakeholders	Individual meetings were held with stakeholders that are responsible for managing the parcels of public owned natural open space within the Gympie Council region. For example, within national parks, state forests or around Lake Borumba. Stakeholders include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Queensland Parks and Wildlife (Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing)• Seqwater recreation, planning and management• HQ Plantations• Cooloola Trail Care Alliance (CTCA).

Consultation	Details
User group meetings	<p>Individual face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations were held with representatives from interested user group organisations, some of which are involved with trail-related project initiatives. These groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooloola Nature • Gympie Bushwalkers Club • Melawondi Spring Retreat • Cooloola Coast Care
Community and general user group engagement	<p>Community survey</p> <p>A community survey was developed and distributed online and in hard copy through the local libraries. A total of 166 survey responses were received (both online and hard copy). The purpose of the survey was to gain feedback from local user groups and the community as to some of the issues and gaps within the current trail network. Additionally, the survey assesses how respondents would like to see the tracks and trails improved within the region. The full survey is found at Appendix 1.</p> <p>Face-to-face interviews at the Lake Alford Markets (Gympie)</p> <p>A stall was manned at the Lake Alford Markets. Here, the community was given the opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion regarding the existing and future tracks and trails provision within the region.</p> <p>Promoting the community engagement process</p> <p>The survey, as well contact details for face-to-face interviews or written emails or letters, were provided on Gympie Regional Councils website and was promoted through their Facebook page and through media releases.</p> <p>Furthermore, Facebook was used as a key tool in promoting the community engagement process with ROSS Planning directly targeting relevant Facebook pages of relevant user groups, industry organisations, community clubs and organisations.</p> <p>Posters that promoted the online survey and face-to-face interviews, as well as providing telephone and email contacts, were also emailed to relevant user groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedal Power Plus • Bob Sample (Easter Endurance Carnival) • Burnett Mary Regional Group • Mary Valley Adventure Trails • Ride on Mary • Brooloo Park Eco Retreat and Equine Resort • Gympie Horse and Rodeo Association (GHARA) • Gympie and District Pony Club • Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) • Great Kilkivan Horse Ride • Higher Ground • The Tin Can Bay Treadlies • Gympie and District Landcare Group • Save the Mary River Coordinating Group • Mary Valley Inc • Gympie Cooloola Tourism • Gympie Bikes • Conservation Volunteers Australia

It needs to be noted that whilst ROSS Planning made every attempt to contact a number of known relevant stakeholder and user groups, not all stakeholders who were contacted responded or participated in the consultation process.

6.2 Summary of consultation outcomes

During the consultation process, there were some strong themes that emerged from the community, stakeholders and user groups. These have been summarised below. A more comprehensive description of the consultation findings, trends and outcomes can be found in Appendix 1.

- This plan needs to be realistic and achievable, particularly with regards to providing trails that meet demand, can be maintained and that are accessible.
- There are few formal tracks within the region. Most of these trails lack signage and trailheads, facilities, wayfinding and information provision. There is a need to provide signage and supporting trailhead facilities at all trails (including river trails). These could include maps showing the trail network, interest points, distances, grading as well as regulatory information.
- Trails need to have easily accessible entry points that are clearly marked.
- It is very difficult to find trail information within the Gympie region. Many of the trails are only known by locals, through word-of-mouth.
- Trails need to be advertised better. There is a need for one website with all of the trail information on it, other sites and operators can link into this and add to this one source as needed.
- Trail information should include comprehensive (easy to read) maps and specific trail information. These should be available online and within brochures.
- Walks need to have points of interest (e.g. to summits, scenic views or water), with the trails based around these points of interest.
- Eco/nature based tourism (for example wildlife tourism and birdwatching) is very popular, and therefore adequate tracks and trails provision is important. These could be interpretive trails and could promote the wildlife in the region.
- Gympie region has some short walking trails and some long trails, but few medium range trail distances. Provide additional walking tracks (8-10km/2-4 hours), preferably loops.
- Safety and accessibility of trails, particularly within forestry plantations needs to be considered in the trail development 'for commercial logging operations' and reinforce safety requirements.
- Unauthorised trail riding and 4WDs, within these natural areas, need to be regulated and managed as they cause damage to the trails.
- Council and local volunteer groups could work in partnership with state government and national parks and state forestry departments to gain access and funding to develop new trails.
- Promote the trails to local and visiting organisations and community groups as well as providing tourism initiatives to attract visitors.
- Promote trail based events (races or endurance events) to attract people into the region.



Foreshore Bird Walk, Tin Can Bay

Gympie region

- Link open spaces to the town centre (for example from Deep Creek trail network, Victory Heights, Victory Bridge, Curra State Forest etc.).

Mary Valley region

- The Mary River should be incorporated into the Tracks and trails plan. It should be celebrated and access to/from the River improved.
- Integrate all outdoor activities, including the canoeing trail. This could provide multi-sport adventure opportunities (e.g. camping, kayaking and walking).
- Opportunity to make the region very appealing for tourists, potentially becoming a national icon with a combination of smaller trails (for families) to more extreme outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Management and operation of Garapine needs to be addressed to create a viable recreation destination and hub for the area, as it has numerous recreation opportunities.
- Formalise tracks at Imbil State Forest, including the track up to the fire tower as well as providing links to Lake Borumba.
- Opportunity to build tracks around the Lake Borumba. These need to be built in a sustainable manner as to not cause erosion and affect water quality. Birdhides along the tracks may also provide additional nature based recreation opportunities. Provide a trailhead at Lake Borumba.
- Existing trails, disused rail network, road reserves and easements could be upgraded and link the towns of Imbil, Brooloo, Kandanga and Amamoor.
- Improve access to, and create more walking tracks and improved trailhead facilities within Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park, These trails could link to the Noosa Trail network.

Kilkivan region

- Opportunity to create a rail trail (along the Goomeri-Theebine rail corridor). Horse trail networks could plug into this rail trail as well as the Bicentennial Trail. These need to be well signposted and mapped.
- Create horse trail loops, not just out and back rides.

Cooloola Coast

- Opportunities for more off-road trails within the natural areas.
- Opportunity to connect different existing trails and natural areas. The linked trail network could provide quality (coastal) tourism opportunities by providing more short nature based walks with coastal scenery and appropriate interpretive signage.
- Provide trails within Toolara State Forest.



Talking to the community at the Lake Alford Markets

7.0 Key findings and opportunities

7.1 Trail supply analysis

Overview

There is a limited supply of formal trails across the Gympie Regional Council area with a large gap in the provision of comprehensive trail network information within the Gympie region, making it difficult for locals and visitors to readily access these natural recreation opportunities. It is likely that many residents of the region would be unaware of the existence of some of these trail opportunities and therefore the level of use is probably low (certainly a lot lower than it could be if they were well promoted).

Trail provision

The information provided in the site audit showed that while the Gympie region has extensive reserves of open space (approximately one third of the region, the majority of which is managed by State agencies), it has limited existing formal trails opportunities. Furthermore, of those that do have a trail network, the number of trails, trail lengths and trail diversity is limited, generally with no/poor trail signage, maps and information.

The information below gives a summarised snapshot of the formal trail network within Gympie Regional Council and the information specifically pertaining to the trail and/or natural open space.

- Short walk trails dominate availability. There are approximately 17 short trails (less than 4km or 1.5hrs), available exclusively for walkers:
 - three are in the Gympie town area. In addition, Victory Heights provides a number of shared use trails for walkers
 - two are in the Kilkivan locality
 - five are in the Mary Valley
 - seven are in the Cooloola Coast area.
- Medium and long walk trails are also provided though a lesser number is available (reflecting demand). The Cooloola Coast has three medium walk trails (4-12kms) and four long walk trails (more than 12kms). The Bicentennial National Trail is also available to walkers in the Kilkivan area.

- Formal dedicated mountain bike trails are only provided at Victory Heights, while mountain biking can be carried out on the Bicentennial National Trail.
- The Bicentennial National Trail also provides for formal horse riding opportunities, as do some of the trails in Victory Heights.
- State Government reserves also provide for mountain bike riders and horse riders, though the trails are not as well promoted as the walk trails and, for the purposes of the audit, were not considered as formal trails.

Gympie Locality

Comprises three natural areas that have a formal trail network:

1. Woondum National Park/Mothar Mountain
 - has two short walks with a total distance of 3.7km
 - information regarding the trails can be found in two brochures (one has a map) and on the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (NPRSR) website (limited information, primarily riding opportunities)
 - riding opportunities (cycle and horse riding) shown on the NPRSR maps (as horse riding) have no formal trailhead or starting point other than a classification sign at the Day Use Area. Some of the trails appear inaccessible from the Gympie side and only accessible from the Noosa side. For example, a horse riding trail in the northern section appears to head off from the Mt Boulder Walking Trail – it cannot be accessed from this trail as it is a walk-only trail but needs to be accessed from the east.
2. Brooyar State Forest
 - only has one walk (300m long)
 - information regarding the trail can be found in a brochure (with maps) and on the NPRSR website (limited information).
3. Victory Heights
 - a range of trails exist – approximately 12km of multi-use trails and 9km of mountain bike trails
 - information regarding the trails can be found on Gympie Regional Council, the Cooloola Trail Care Alliance and Organised Grime websites.

Kilkivan

Comprises two natural areas that have a formal trail network:

1. Mudlo National Park
 - has two short walks (1.2km and 3km) with limited signage and information
 - information regarding the trails can be found on the NPRSR website (limited information). Destination Gympie and Gympie Cooloola Tourism website offer short descriptions only.
2. Wrattens National Park
 - one unmarked trail (Bicentennial trail).

Mary Valley

Comprises one natural area that has a formal trail network, however, there are a number of roads within forests reserves in the Mary Valley that are used as a trail network:

1. Amamoor State Forest
 - has five walks, the longest being 4.6km. The trails are poorly signed
 - information regarding the trails can be found on the NPRSR website (limited information with no maps of walks), Gympie Cooloola Tourism website and Mary Valley Bushwalking Brochure give trail descriptions.

Note:

Imbil State Forest (the part within Gympie Regional Council area) has no formal advertised walk trails. Horse riding is permitted on State forest roads and the Horse Trail Network. The map of the horse trail network available on the NPRSR website indicates lots of horse riding opportunities in State Plantation Forest – adjacent to Imbil SF1 but this is subject to operational requirements of State Plantation Forests. Mountain bike riding is permitted in the same areas and on vehicle tracks unless otherwise signed. Horses and bikes are not permitted on designated walking tracks (most of this network falls within the portion of the State Forest that lies outside of Gympie Regional Council). There is one isolated section of finalised horse trail in state plantation forest and a couple of indicative trails on state forest and timber reserves. Most of these are accessible only via Yabba Creek Road or Western Creek Road. Horses are permitted overnight in a large enclosed paddock beside Charlie Moreland camping area (outside the Gympie Regional Council area). They are not permitted in the camping areas.

Cooloola Coast

Comprises two areas that have a formal trail network

1. Cooloola Recreation Area/Great Sandy National Park
 - many walks with a variety of difficulties, lengths and types. Has a trailhead
 - comprehensive information with maps, distances etc can be found within a number of brochures and websites.
2. Tin Can Bay
 - two short walks (Wildflower and Foreshore walks). Neither are classified
 - both walks have a short description on the Gympie-Cooloola Tourism website. Wildflower walk has a brochure with a map and information.

Access to trail information

The research shows that there is a large gap in the provision of comprehensive trail network information within the Gympie region, making it difficult for locals and visitors to readily access these natural recreation opportunities. This finding was reinforced during the consultation process with both user groups and individuals noting the absence of comprehensive information, both in an overall sense (online, in brochures etc.) and on each trail.

It was found that there were a number of trail information sources, each providing information on only some of the trails within the region. There was no source that provided a complete picture of the trail network, and what the individual trails have to offer, within the natural public areas, thereby creating confusing for potential trail users. Additionally availability of interpretation on the formal trails is extremely limited.

Each individual track has varied and limited information (depending on which brochure and website is being referred to). This is particularly evident with regards to horse riding trails. Very few information sources included maps (that clearly show the trails), trail names, trail types, trail distances, trail difficulty as well as general information pertaining to the local area. The lack of information about the existence of these trails is likely to have a flow-on effect of lower usage levels. The availability of interpretation on the formal trails is extremely limited.

Summary of issues and opportunities

The table below summarises the key issues, as well as opportunities and design drivers aimed to help enhance and improve the track and trail provision and useability within the region.

Table 10: Summary of issues and opportunities/design drivers

Summary of issues	Summary of opportunities/design drivers
Lack of trail provision to meet the demand (including insufficient trails and trail networks and a limited variety of trail types, difficulties, length, and diversity).	<p>Develop a quality trail network within the Gympie region increase trail network within natural areas to provide a diverse trail network that meets the needs of all users.</p> <p>Ensure the trail network provides a good, evenly distributed range of trail types (i.e. for horse riding, mountain bike riding and walking) within the four localities. This includes both shared and single-use trails.</p> <p>Develop links, where possible, and where such links address a demonstrated demand, to adjoining natural areas land parcels to connect and increase the trail network.</p> <p>Develop sufficient supporting trail facilities and infrastructure.</p> <p>Ensure that the trail network can be maintained.</p>
Lack of supporting trail infrastructure and way finding opportunities within trail based natural recreation areas.	<p>Develop a clearly marked trail network with trails that are easy to locate and navigate, with clear entries/exits.</p> <p>Ensure trails are well formed and can easily be identified.</p> <p>Develop trailheads, including signage and maps (showing the trail network, interest points, distances, grading as well as regulatory information).</p>
Difficulty in accessing comprehensive trail information within the region.	<p>Develop a comprehensive trails brochure suite that gives detailed trail information on the trails and tracks systems within each locality. This includes information on both the overall trail network within each natural area as well as information pertaining to individual trails. Trail information to include trail maps, distance, duration, difficulty (class) as well as any information regarding the area (cultural, natural etc). This information is to be easily available online and in hardcopy.</p> <p>Develop one website source to which all relevant online trail information can be sourced from. Information is to be clear and comprehensive with access to the online brochures. Other tourism websites (including private operators) can link to the website.</p>
Lack of unique trail experiences.	<p>Develop trails that are interesting and provide a unique experience for visitors. Trails to have a point of difference to other regions trail networks (e.g. Sunshine Coast).</p> <p>Tails networks to be based around and to include points of interest (e.g. to summits, scenic views or water).</p> <p>Provide trails that allow for eco/nature based tourism (for example wildlife tourism and birdwatching).</p> <p>Trails that are located within areas of interest to include interpretative signage and theming, to promote the local values (e.g. flora and fauna or cultural values) of the area, thereby increasing visitor experience and awareness.</p>
Lack of trail awareness within the local community as well as insufficient trail promotion.	<p>Trails to be actively promoted and marketed through social media and other online initiatives.</p> <p>Promote the trails through events (races or endurance events) to attract people into the region and to create trail awareness.</p> <p>Promote the trails to local and visiting organisations and community groups (e.g. scouts, school groups, special needs groups).</p> <p>Provide tourism initiatives to attract visitors and actively involve and encourage private operators and other organisations (e.g. birdwatching groups) to utilise and promote the trail networks.</p>
Lack of co-ordination Between different landowners and stakeholders as to the development of a comprehensive trail network provision within the region.	<p>Develop a forum that includes land owners, land managers, stakeholders and volunteer organisations.</p> <p>Develop partnerships between land owners, land managers and local volunteer groups to assist in trail building and to ensure quality and on-going maintenance, as well as to gain to funding for trail development (see section 13).</p>

Potential trail networks

The following text outlines opportunities for improving and enhancing the existing trail network within the Gympie region. This section looks particularly at specific natural areas and track and trail opportunities within these areas, including the identification of possible new, as well as expanding/consolidating existing track networks, thereby:

- meeting the demand of the users and user types
- providing a clear, well distributed and comprehensive trail network that is attractive and accessible to both locals and tourists.

Gympie locality

- Victory Heights – secure land and further trail and associated infrastructure development.
- Curra State Forest – develop a variety of formal trails (for walkers, mountain bike riders and horse riders). Provide trailhead facilities and infrastructure. Regulate unauthorised motorised vehicles. Note that Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study and options analysis for a proposed shooting facility within the Curra State Forest. The development of any trail projects will have necessary regard for the outcomes of the project.
- Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park – develop a variety of trails and trail lengths (preferably including loops). These trails could link to the Noosa Trail network. Develop formal trailheads and trail infrastructure.
- Brooyar State Forest – promote Point Lookout walk. Investigate future opportunities for the provision of additional formal trails (within Brooyar State Forest and Glastonbury National Park).
- Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)
 - Deep Creek – develop single tracks network
 - Mary River Trail/s – develop trails where possible along the Mary River. These can be linked to the proposed Canoe Trail.

Kilkivan locality

- Develop a multi-use rail trail from Kingaroy to Kilkivan in consultation with South Burnett Regional Council. *Note: Only the section of the trail from the western local government area boundary to Kilkivan is under the control of Gympie Regional Council.* There may be opportunities to create other trails that link to this network, including the opportunity to extend to Woolooga. This may be explored further in any subsequent feasibility studies, however this extension is considered a low priority and is subject to addressing physical barriers to achieving this connection. Extension of the rail trail further to the east to Theebine is not considered practicable given missing bridge crossings and other significant topographical constraints.
- Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)
 - the promotion of the existing Bicentennial National Trail. Improve signage and create loop trails that link into the proposed rail trail (above)
 - Mudlo National Park – maintenance, promotion and better signposting of the two walk trails. Possible future provision of additional (medium length) trails, preferably a series of loops
 - Kinbombi falls – provide additional (safer) walking tracks around, including formalising walks at Kilkivan mines with interpretive signage highlight a range of indigenous and non-indigenous heritage features, as well as to the birds and wildlife
 - further development of horse riding and mountain biking trails (in loops) in this area utilising reserves.

Mary Valley locality

- Imbil State Forest – formalise and increase the track and trail network including:
 - formalising the track up to the fire tower
 - provide links to Lake Borumba, Amamoor State Forest, Charlie Moreland and the Conondale Great Walk
 - trails to be single use and shared, both short and long (preferably a series of loops) to provide a variety of trails for all user types

- develop trailheads and signage (including a formal trailhead in Strilings Crossing vicinity)
- formalise links between Imbil State Forest and Lake Borumba.
- Imbil-Brooloo Rail Trail – develop a shared rail trail. Rattler could allow bicycles on the train to allow for a unique tourism experience, where the trail for walkers and bike riders continues on from the last stop of the Rattler service (currently assumed to be Imbil as per the previous route) to Brooloo.
- Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)
 - Amamoor State Forest – promote existing walks. Possible future opportunity for additional walks and upgrade of trailhead trailheads and trail infrastructure. Regulate 4WD access
 - develop an interpretive walk along Mary River i.e. at Kandanga Creek, promoting the flora and fauna (e.g. provision of a turtle viewing platform)
 - Lake Borumba – develop a formal trailhead as well as a walking trail around. Opportunity to develop bird hides along these tracks
 - develop Garapine as a viable recreation destination
 - develop more formal (signed) horse riding trails along roads and easements
 - Mary River Trail/s – develop trails where possible along the Mary River. These can be linked to the proposed canoe trail.

Cooloola Coast locality

- Tin Can Bay Foreshore Walk – extend and widen. Create formal trailhead. Connect Wildflower and Foreshore Walks.
- Rainbow Beach – promote existing walk trails. Improve signage within business area to promote access.
- Cooloola Cove Trails – Develop a local walking trail using creek side fire trails.
- Toolara State Forest – provide a variety of formal multi-use trails within, including trails heads, signage and trail infrastructure.

8.0 Trail planning and development

8.1 The approach

There are four basic elements to trail planning and development prior to actual construction of a trail:

- state or regional trails master plan
 - identifies strategic trail initiatives at a state or regional level; identifies trends in recreation and recommends range of trails to satisfy demands; recommends key projects for implementation
- local government trails master plan
 - identifies existing range of trails; identifies 'gaps' and 'missing links' in the supply of trails; identifies priority trail projects (including repairs, upgrades and extensions to existing trails, signage requirements and marketing and promotional materials) identifies key stakeholders; identifies potential trail corridors
- individual trail feasibility study
 - refines potential trail routes; identifies issues/challenges to trail development; identifies the possible market for the trail; broadly identifies costs; provides feasibility statement on the practicalities of developing the trail
- trail development plan
 - identifies precise route of proposed trail; identifies construction techniques and materials; provides reliable costs estimates and detailed works lists; identifies signage requirements and costs; provides trail inspection and maintenance schedules.

State or regional trail master plan	Local govt trails master plan	Individual trail feasibility study	Trail development plan	Trail construction	Trail maintenance
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The tracks and trails master plan is at the earliest stage of the trail planning and development spectrum. Further detailed trail planning will be required for trail projects to proceed successfully.

Once planning is completed at the appropriate level, trail construction can then begin. This process ensures a maximum return on the investment of local governments and other groups (state government departments, community groups) in trail development work. Far too often, people leap to construct trails without any idea of who uses them, why, when, how much it is going to cost, how to market a trail etc. The result is often trails that are underused and eventually 'return to the bush'.

The approach has been recognised in North America (through work by the well-respected Rails-to-Trails Conservancy) and Western Australia (through its trail funding under the Lotterywest program overseen by the Department of Sport and Recreation) as one that ensures that trails are well designed and supportive of relevant trails master plans. This approach is becoming accepted as good practice in other states.

8.2 Some underlying philosophies

Constructing and maintaining trails can be expensive. The history of the development of trails in Australia has demonstrated that there are limited funds available for the construction of trails – and few, if any, funding programs provide money for the maintenance of trails.

All too often the maintenance of a trail is left in the hands of some willing, enthusiastic (and capable) volunteer group, but over time personnel in the group changes, enthusiasm wanes or focus changes. When that happens, the trail surface deteriorates badly through erosion, vegetation becomes overgrown, trail signage disappears and brochures/leaflets become non-existent. The original expense and effort in developing the trail has been wasted.

It is imperative therefore to be aware of not developing an over-ambitious trail development program, that may fail due to limited availability of funds and other resources.

In this regard, it makes more sense to have a few QUALITY trails rather than a vast QUANTITY of poorly constructed, poorly maintained and little used trails, thereby focusing on providing a well-reasoned (small) suite of trails – a program that can be accomplished over a 5-year or 10-year implementation period.

When proposing a trails network, fundamental questions must be answered:

- who is going to use the trail
- who is going to maintain the trail
- where is the money going to come from?

When faced with a daunting (and expensive) list of trail development (or upgrading) projects, a community can often abandon plans for the trails network as it all becomes too hard.

This Tracks and trails therefore limited number of key trail projects that have the potential to deliver solid and real benefits to the Gympie Regional Council area. It recognises the needs and demands of local residents (in particular) and visitors, and it takes advantage of the diverse range of attractive landscapes on offer.

This Tracks and trails plan recognises the limited capacity of the Council. It has been felt more appropriate to embark upon a restricted program of activity – but one that is achievable – rather than a ‘pie in the sky’ list of projects that could well seem too daunting to even attempt.

Many of these trails are likely to attract users from within the Gympie region but outside the trail’s ‘neighbourhood’ (what could be termed district trails) and users from outside the Gympie region (what could be termed regional trails).

Note:

The one missing element in the existing package is a rail trail given its market appeal (this is discussed further on). Development of rail trails would provide Gympie Regional Council with a major ‘point of difference’ to other local governments in the region. Two proposed rail trails are along the Goomeri-Theebine and the Imbil-Brooloo disused rail lines.

8.3 The proposed trail projects

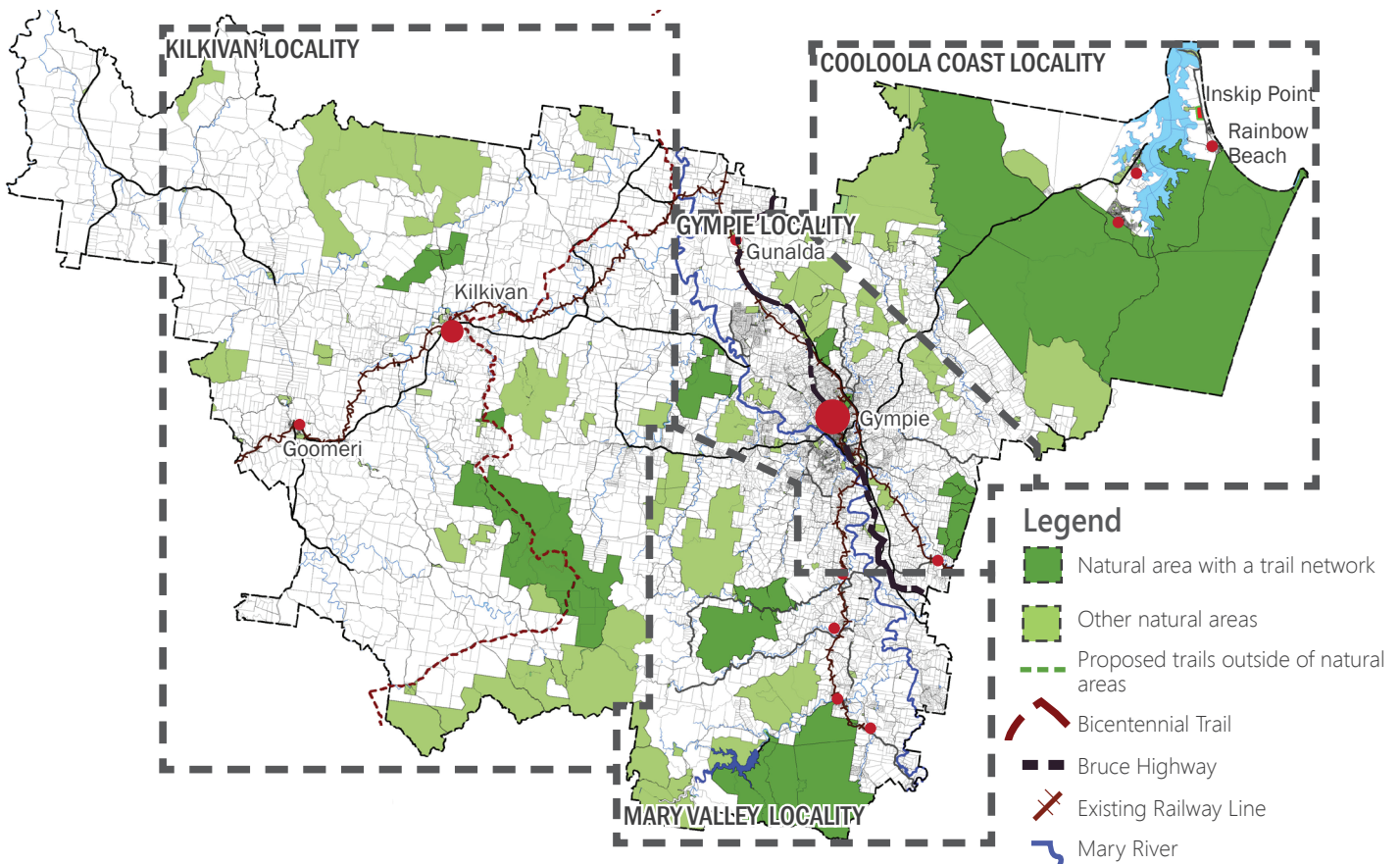
The key elements considered in the determination of trail opportunities were:

- trail demand – the majority of users are seeking short trail opportunities. Though they are very difficult to quantify, the health benefits to be gained by increasing the propensity of local people to exercise and get fit on local trails and pathways should not be underestimated as part of the demand consideration
- Council staff, elected representatives and community input
- value for money (recognising that there will be limited budget). Trail projects should look to provide value for money and a good return on the investment made by the Council and other land managers. Several high quality, well built, well maintained and well promoted trails highlighting the best features of the Gympie region is preferable to a large number of poor quality trails badly constructed and not maintained. Where appropriate, trail projects should build on existing trails, and broader recreation and other community facility investments

- practicalities of trail development – costs, land tenure and access, environmental issues, cultural issues, funding possibilities, possible (on-going) community support and the possibility of opposition, and the safety of users
- user experience. Trails have to provide a high quality user experience or else people will not use them or will not come back – word of mouth is a much stronger advocacy tool than marketing strategies particularly in an electronically connected world. The trail projects need to ensure a high level user experience.

Assessment of each of the candidate trails was done in a broad sense against all these criteria, rather than assessing each trail against each individual criteria. Combined with the field assessment, consideration of these elements allows the determination of trail projects.

The following pages describe the proposed trail network provision. For consistency throughout this report, the trails and local trail networks have been categorised within the four localities.









Gympie locality

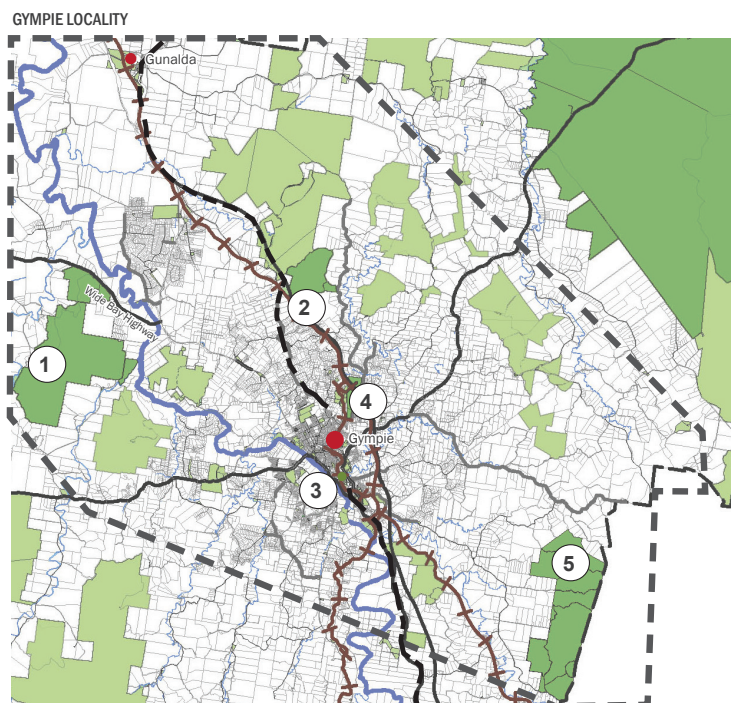
Vision

To provide easily accessible nature based recreation to those people based within Gympie, and to provide connections to Noosa Trail Network.

	Natural area	Land manager
1	Brooyar State Forest	QPWS
2	Curra State Forest	QPWS
3	Victoria Bridge Conservation Area	Gympie Regional Council/ENERGEX
4	Victory Heights	Gympie Regional Council
5	Mothar Mountain/ Woondum National Park	QPWS

Legend

	Natural area with a trail network		Other natural areas
	Proposed trails outside of natural areas		Bicentennial National Trail
	Bruce Highway		Existing Railway Line
	Mary River		



Trail project 1 – Victory Heights

Secure land and further trail and associated infrastructure development.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>The project proposed for Victory Heights builds on and supports the work undertaken to date by the Cooloola Trail Care Alliance (CTCA). The project aims to add to existing stock of trails, some are designed specifically for mountain biking, others are multi-use).</p> <p>The Victory Heights multi-use trail area was originally undertaken under a one year management agreement, however due to the high usage on the site the area under this original agreement was increased significantly. The management agreement was also further rationalised to a ten year lease with Gympie Regional Council as landowner and CTCA as lessee.</p> <p>This project provides more trail opportunities primarily for mountain bikers but also includes opportunities for walkers and horse riders within easy access for residents of Gympie.</p>	<p>Gympie Regional Council to work with CTCA which has a program of trail planning and development it views as suitable and appropriate for the parcel of land under its stewardship.</p> <p>Gympie Regional Council to secure the land tenure by ensuring that the land currently under CTCA's management remains appropriately zoned for recreation</p> <p>Gympie Regional Council to support applications by CTCA to build facilities such as a trailhead along Bath Terrace (it is understood that this application has been prepared. Development of a trailhead is a critical project.</p>

Trail project 2 – Curra State Forest

Develop a variety of formal trails (for walkers, mountain bike riders and horse riders). Provide trailhead facilities and infrastructure. Trails planning is to be conducted in conjunction with the feasibility study and options analysis (currently underway) into the Curra State Forest Shooting Facility.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Currently being used by a range of user groups (mountain bikers, some horse riders and motorised users).</p> <p>This project provides more trail opportunities primarily for mountain bikers primarily but also additional opportunities for walkers and horse riders within easy access for residents of Gympie.</p>	<p>Gympie Regional Council to work with CTCA, other user groups and QPWS (the land manager) to develop a formal trail network within southern half of forest.</p> <p>Some trail construction has been unauthorised up to this point and will need to be rationalised.</p> <p>Network to include short and medium distance trails for the three user groups (with more mountain bike opportunities), with the provision of these trails as loop trails. Trails to be single use where possible.</p> <p>Provision of signposting and trails to be designed to reduce use by motorised vehicles.</p> <p>Develop a formal trailhead at North Deep Creek Road.</p>

Trail project 3 – Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park

Develop a variety of trails and trail lengths (preferably including loops). These trails could link to the Noosa Trail network. Develop formal trailheads and trail infrastructure.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>This project provides more trail opportunities for all user groups within easy access for residents of Gympie. It also provides a range of trail opportunities and distances.</p> <p>Providing a trail connection between Gympie and the Noosa Trail Network provides a good opportunity for serious overnight and long day walks or rides.</p> <p>Woondum also provides geocaching opportunities. Refer to page 54 for more information.</p>	<p>Develop a medium length touring trail (for all users but aimed primarily at off-road cyclists and horse riders), providing a connection from Woondum National Park (and possible Woondum State Forest) to access the Noosa Trails network to open up a range of network opportunities. Work with user groups and QPWS to signpost a route (it may be possible to use existing fire trails for this connection and/or the existing 4WD tracks (though these do not provide ideal trails for non-motorised users).</p> <p>Develop a limited number of medium walking trails within Woondum National Park. Develop these trails in consultation with bushwalking groups and QPWS.</p> <p>Maintain and promote existing walk trails at Rock Pools Day Use area.</p> <p>Some uses proposed within this trail project will need to be formalised with the land manager zoning regime, as some of the proposed uses are currently incompatible.</p>

Trail project 4 – Brooyar State Forest

Promote Point Lookout walk. Investigate future opportunities for the provision of additional formal trails (within Brooyar State Forest and Glastonbury National Park).



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Brooyar State Forest currently includes the Point Pure Lookout Walk, a short 300m walk trail. This area is also used for rock climbing with various anchor points fixed into the rock face at Point Pure. The general location also includes the Glastonbury Day Use and Camping areas that have no formal trails.</p>	<p>Promote the Point Pure Lookout Walk.</p> <p>Gympie Regional Council to work with QPWS (the land manager) to investigate the provision of some formal trails within Brooyar State Forest and Glastonbury National Park. <i>Note: This is a low priority project and may involve a limited number of short walk trails from the day use and camping areas. The development of trails in Projects (1), (2) and (3) provide a significant opportunity for the Gympie and visitor communities and also will represent the commitment of significant resources from stakeholders.</i></p> <p>The Glastonbury National Park is land locked by private land and has limited possibility of inter-connectivity within the greater trails network.</p>

Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)

A number of other projects were suggested in consultation and have been subject to preliminary investigations.

Description
<p>Victoria Bridge Conservation Area – develop a single-track network. CTCA is involved in developing a 3km cross country shared trail and a single track. This provides an opportunity for a specific type of mountain bike use that has not been covered by this trail plan. Importantly, it represents a commitment by CTCA that will impact on their ability to be involved in other trail projects over the next five years. The project should be supported as it does provide for a specific opportunity in a relatively small space close to Brisbane.</p> <p>Mary River Trail/s – develop trails where possible along the Mary River, potentially connecting Deep Creek with the CBD and riverside assets such as Albert Park. There is a possibility to develop a trail along both sides of the river, and a stand-alone bridge for non-motorised users could be built to connect both sides at Normanby Bridge. A river walk would ideally connect Normanby Bridge and Kidd Bridge along the riverbank. The trails could be linked to a possible future Canoe Trail in the area. A trail on the northern side of the river has some merit particularly as a link between Victoria Bridge and Albert Park which could be constructed almost entirely on publicly owned land. However, such a trail may be subject to constant inundation and would require significant maintenance. The trail needs further investigation to address flooding in Gympie. A connection across the river would also be subject to potential flood damage if built at a low level (and would be quite expensive). Furthermore there appears to be no public land along the river on the southern side, so it is difficult to know where a trail would go once it crossed the river.</p> <p>It was suggested that safe links need to be developed between the hubs of activity (Victory Heights, Deep Creek, Curra State Forest) and Gympie residential areas. This is the task of a bicycle and pedestrian strategy; a trails plan needs to focus on trails in natural areas. In addition, such development may detract from Council's ability to deliver on the trail projects.</p>



Trail Head, Victory Heights Recreational Trails

Kilkivan locality








Kilkivan advertises itself as the town on the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) and hosts the annual Great Horse Ride. The BNT is in place north and south of Kilkivan on a series of made and unmade roads.

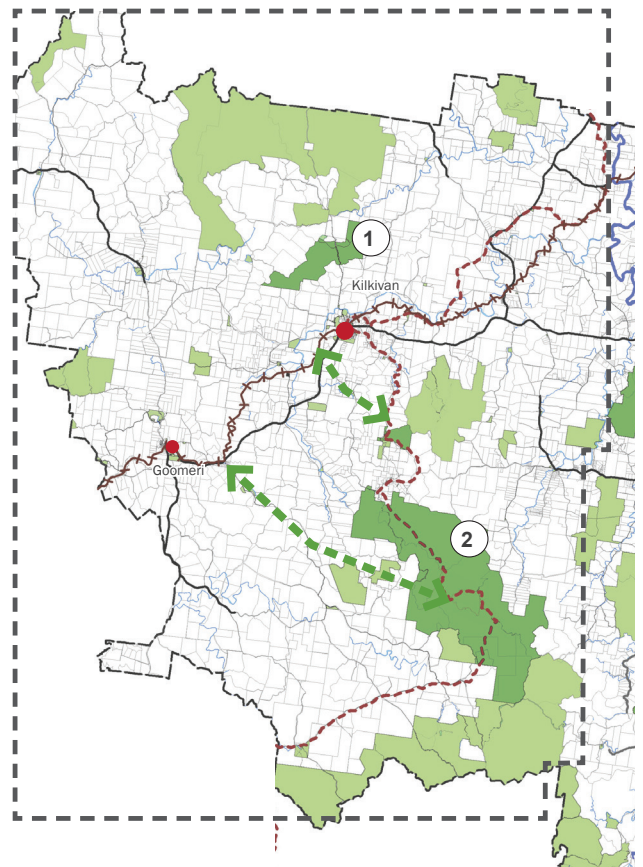
Vision

To provide more formal (linked) trails, that are clearly signposted and that are primarily focused on horse riding.

	Natural area	Land manager
1	Mudlo National Park	QPWS
2	Wrattens National Park and State Forest	QPWS

Legend

 Natural area with a trail network	 Other natural areas
 Proposed trails outside of natural areas	 Bicentennial National Trail
 Bruce Highway	 Existing Railway Line
 Mary River	



Trail project 5 – Kingaroy-Kilkivan Rail Trail

Develop a multi-use rail trail (Kingaroy to Kilkivan) and create loop trails that link into this network. Trails can include longer trails to provide for horse riders and bike touring. *Note: Only the section of the trail from the western local government area boundary to Kilkivan is under the control of Gympie Regional Council.*

The Queensland Government has recently announced additional funding for rail trails. The Kingaroy to Kilkivan link has been identified as a suitable recipient for shared funding between Gympie Regional Council and South Burnett Regional Council. Given the availability of this funding this project is considered a high priority opportunity and has been scheduled for short-term implementation accordingly.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>The rail trail is a project worth pursuing – there are significant benefits to be gained by developing the rail trail, both for local residents and potential visitors. It also provides a point of difference for the Gympie region, particularly from its adjoining neighbours.</p> <p>Developing the trail would also be beneficial as it would provide an opportunity to develop a loop trail running off the BNT.</p> <p>The trail should be built to a standard that allows/encourages cyclists (main market for this type of trail).</p> <p>The main issues and benefits associated with rail trail development is discussed further on Page 53.</p>	<p>Undertake a trail feasibility study to better determine costs, benefits and whether a trail can be achieved (addressing issues such as whether the entire corridor is in public ownership). The feasibility study will include investigating the possibility of overcoming the physical constraints presented by historic rail bridges and watercourse crossing points, as well as consider associated maintenance implications for Council.</p> <p>Should it be deemed feasible to construct the rail trail, the section between Goomeri–Kilkivan may present an opportunity for the first stage of the rail trail development (or there is a possibility it may be deemed the only feasible section for the rail trail development), due to the fact that it is less physically constrained and could be used to determine demand for a trail of this type in this location.</p> <p>It needs to be noted that rail trail projects may need consent from adjacent free-hold properties as a consideration, and may only cater for a small demographic.</p>

Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)

A number of other projects were suggested in consultation and have been subject to preliminary investigations.

Description
<p>The promotion of the existing Bicentennial National Trail. Improve signage and create loop trails that link into the proposed rail trail (above).</p> <p>Ongoing maintenance, promotion and better signposting of the two walk trails in Mudlo National Park. Consultation suggested it may be appropriate for longer walk trails, however given its remoteness and the suggested provision of, and demand for, such trails, developing medium length walk trails is not seen as a priority at this time.</p> <p>Possibility of providing additional walking tracks around Kinbombi Falls. The walking track could be themed in order to highlight a range of indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage features such as the caves (Indigenous significance) and used to promote trail-based tourism. There is already some developed facilities at the picnic area and it is recognised on a number of caravanning websites. It is a trail that would have local significance as well as providing an opportunity for passing travellers to learn more about the area's history. Refer to page 52 for more information on theme based trail opportunities.</p> <p>Consultation suggested further development of horse riding and mountain biking trails (in loops) in this area utilising reserves such as Wratten State Forest. This is a fairly remote area not easily accessed by vehicle. While there may be some opportunity for trail development, trails would be catering for a small minority of people. Given the relatively extensive program of trails proposed, development of trails is not seen as a priority.</p>

* While Amamoor has limited walking trail opportunities, there are 5 short walk trails that exist. There is significant provision of medium to long walk trails across the Gympie region if the trails along the Cooloola Coast are considered and the proposed new trails at Woondum National Park. The Conondale Great Walk and the Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk are in relatively close proximity to the Mary Valley. Provision of medium to long walk trails in the Mary Valley needs to be considered when the implementation of this trail plan is well underway to ensure sufficient resources.

Mary Valley locality

Mary Valley is a rural residential locality in close proximity to large natural areas such as Imbil and Amamoor State Forests.

The Mary River provides an opportunity for nature based recreation. The disused railway line also provides trail based opportunities within the Valley.

Vision

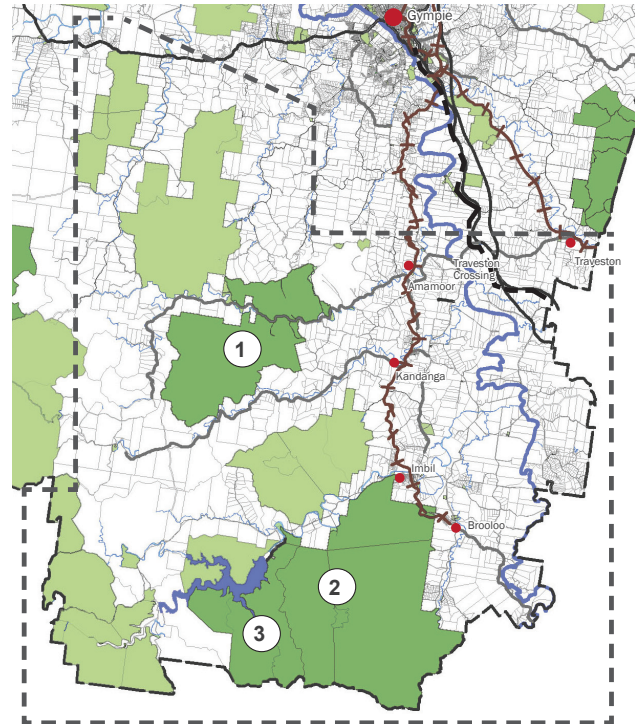
To become a tourist destination, by providing a range of unique trail based recreation opportunities.

There is an opportunity to integrate the outdoor activities (including the canoe trail) to provide multi-sport adventure opportunities (e.g. camping, kayaking and walking), while also providing shorter, more interpretive trails for those less active.

	Natural area	Land manager
1	Amamoor State Forest and Forest Reserve	HQ Plantations, QPWS
2	Imbil State Forest and National Park	HQ Plantations, QPWS
3	Lake Borumba State Forest and national Park	HQ Plantations, QPWS

Legend

- Natural area with a trail network
- Other natural areas
- Proposed trails outside of natural areas
- Bicentennial National Trail
- Bruce Highway
- Existing Railway Line
- Mary River



Trail project 6 – Imbil State Forest

Formalise and increase the track and trail network, with opportunities to connect to adjacent natural areas.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Imbil State Forest presents significant opportunities for the development of formal mountain bike and horse trails and the subsequent coordinated promotion of these trails.</p> <p>Here, it is likely that demand for mountain bike trails will be higher than for horse riding trails, however, 5-6 trails is a reasonable number to develop in a 10 year timeframe considering other demands across the Council area.</p> <p>Imbil State Forest also has opportunities for both nature based and themed trail-based tourism opportunities, including provide wildlife and nature photography trails (including night walks) and indigenous bushtucker walks. (Refer to page 52).</p> <p>Currently there is a private operator that provides nature based guided and self guided walks for tourists within Imbil State Forest.</p> <p>Imbil State Forest has the potential to become a geocaching and/or graining destination (refer to page 54).</p> <p>A number of trails already exist within the Forest and therefore may be a low priority.</p>	<p>Work with land managers (QPWS, HQ Plantations) and user groups, to identify, mark and map a variety of trails for all users (walking, horse riding and mountain bike riding) and include possible formal links to Lake Borumba, Amamoor State Forest, Charlie Moreland and the Conondale Great Walk. Trails to use existing tracks and access roads (including those promoted in Mary Valley brochure and SOME of those identified in the 2008 document prepared by CCMP*). Trails to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-6 horse riding trails including: at least one 40km loop with the majority of loops around 20km in length. Horse trails could also include the proposed horse riding trail between Kandanga and Amamoor National Park via Cookies Knob Fire Tower and Lookout (through Amamoor State Forest) (as identified by CCMP, 2008, however such a trail would be lengthy and may be under-utilised; and therefore may be preferable to start at Kandanga) • 5-6 mountain bike riding trail, providing a variety of loops for short and medium rides. Providing multiple loop options allows some trails to be closed for logging use while ensuring that there is always an option for riders to use (information needs to be included on maps and websites as trails are closed). <p>Develop a formal trailhead in the vicinity of Stirlings Crossing (at old loggers camps). Trailhead to include float parking and other horse facilities, as well as trailhead panels incorporating map panels and bike parking.</p>

CCMP, 2008 propose 143km of trail for Stage 1 and a further 382km of future potential trail. These may need to be prioritised to ensure the supply meets the demand and maintenance budgets/resources.

Trail project 7 – Imbil-Brooloo Rail Trail

Develop a shared rail trail between Imbil and Brooloo (assuming Imbil is the last stop when train service recommences).

Description	Key elements and actions
<p>The Imbil to Brooloo Rail Trail is a project worth pursuing – there are significant benefits to be gained by developing the rail trail, both for local residents and potential visitors. It also provides a point of difference for the Gympie region, particularly from its adjoining neighbours and opens up a whole new market segment.</p> <p>The trail should be built to a standard that allow/encourages cyclists as this is the main market for this type of trail. The main issues and benefits associated with rail trail development is discussed further on Page 53.</p>	<p>Undertake a trail feasibility study to better determine costs, benefits and whether a trail can be achieved from the last 'Rattler' train stop on to Brooloo (addressing issues such as whether the entire corridor is in public ownership and the likely extension of the train service if it does not travel to Imbil upon re-commencement).</p>

Other possible trail options (pending further investigation)

A number of other projects were suggested in consultation and have been subject to preliminary investigations.

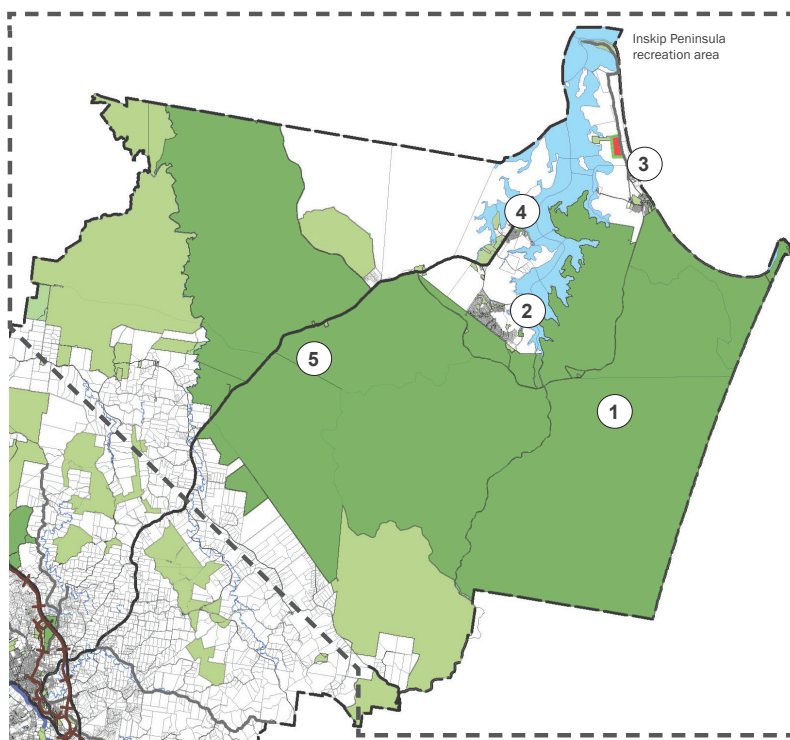
Description
<p>Promote existing walks in Amamoor State Forest (this is a key project). investigate future possibilities (depending on demand, resources etc) to develop additional (medium to longer) walks including the upgrade of trailhead and trail infrastructure*. Regulate 4WD access.</p>
<p>Investigate the opportunity to develop an interpretive walk along the Mary River, including the provision of interpretive signage promoting the flora and fauna (e.g. with a turtle viewing platform). <i>Note: Further investigation is warranted given likely demand and trail alignment on public land needs to be determined. Refer to page 52 for nature based tourism opportunities.</i></p>
<p>Investigate the opportunity to develop walking (only) trail around Lake Borumba linking to a series of bird hides. <i>Note: Walking trails around the Lake are currently incompatible with its zoning. The opportunity needs to be assessed in consultation with Seqwater and QPWS and built in a sustainable manner. Particular care will need to be taken when building such a track to ensure that erosion is minimised to prevent sediment from entering the Lake.</i></p>
<p>Consultation suggested developing Garapine as a viable recreation area, and possibly a trailhead for a multi-trail network. Local and state government will need to work together, and support this venture, to create Garapine as a key destination area.</p>
<p>Consultation also suggested the development of more formal (signed) horse riding trails along roads and easements. Developing trails alongside roads is not ideal for a range of users (such as family groups). It is acknowledged that the proposed trails in Imbil State Forest may include roadside riding where necessary. The provision of such rides should satisfy demand for a period of time. In addition, signposting and maintaining such rides (even if it is only roadside slashing) can use considerable resources.</p>
<p>Investigate future opportunities to develop trails where possible (along public land) along the Mary River. These can be linked to the proposed Canoe Trail. <i>Note: Further investigation is warranted given likely demand and environmental factors (slope, erosion, flooding etc).</i></p>

Cooloola Coast locality

Vision

To provide highly interpretive formalised walks within the tourist locations, as well as additional walking, mountain bike and horse riding opportunities (where appropriate).

	Natural area	Land manager
1	Cooloola National Park	QPWS
2	Cooloola Cove/ Pipeclay National Park	Gympie Regional Council, QPWS
3	Rainbow Beach Walks	Gympie Regional Council, QPWS
4	Tin Can Bay Wildflower Walk and Foreshore Walk	Gympie Regional Council
5	Toolara State Forest and National Park	HQ Plantations, QPWS



Legend

	Natural area with a trail network		Other natural areas
	Proposed trails outside of natural areas		Bicentennial National Trail
	Bruce Highway		Existing Railway Line
	Mary River		

Trail project 8 – Tin Can Bay Trails

Extend and widen Tin Can Bay Foreshore Walk. Create formal trailhead. Connect Wildflower and Foreshore Walks.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>The Tin Can Bay Foreshore Walk consists of a large number of interpretive signs along the waterfront. The trail has no constructed section before reaching its end (defined by inclusion of interpretive panels at Norman Point). A small section of the trail has been developed as a shared path (walk and cycle) but most of it is walk only. The Wildflower Walk, on the opposite (northern) side of the peninsula to the Foreshore Walk, is a formed and signposted walk trail. It has no formal starting point but includes a large number of interpretive signs. These have the potential to become a good local network of short trails for visitors to Tin Can Bay.</p>	<p>Extend and widen the existing Foreshore Walk path/trail to Norman Point. This creates a longer shared use (built to a 2.5m width). Provide a connection at the southern end of the existing trail along Trevally Street to the Tin Can Bay Tourist Park.</p> <p>Create a formal trailhead (perhaps with a interpretive shelter) at the southern end of Wildflower Walk (near the Buffalo Club). The trail could possibly be extended further west (though this would mean the trail would go behind some houses).</p> <p>Link the two trails together using the footpath network (through signage and improvements), thereby creating a circuit trail.</p>

Trail project 9 – Rainbow Beach Trails

Promote existing walk trails. Improve signage within business area to promote access.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Given the present supply of walk trails in Rainbow Beach, no major projects are proposed. The trail project consists of promoting existing trails and a local trail project to be developed as part of future town development.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> During the consultation process, other trails were suggested for Rainbow Beach, including formal walk trails between Rainbow Beach and Inskip Point, and along connecting roads. Given the existing provision and likely demand, these are not considered necessary.</p>	<p>Promote existing walk trails in Rainbow Beach, including better signage within the business area to promote access.</p> <p>Existing trails should include upgraded interpretation (through a number of means – fixed signage, smart phone apps, QR codes). This would encourage more people to use the trails and provide for user education. Interpretation should be planned properly and delivered through high quality to ensure the investment made is worthwhile.</p> <p>Develop a short boardwalk trail on the western edge of town known as the “Wetland Walk” Council commissioned some artists impressions and some landscape architects impressions. While this seems a reasonable approach, Rainbow Beach already has a good supply of trails (albeit not directly in town like this one would be). It is a local trail that may keep people a little longer in town if it offered a unique experience (for example, it was heavily interpreted). It is a trail proposal that should be done as land develops in Rainbow Beach as the eastern end of the proposal is part of land designated as Future Urban.</p>

Trail project 10 – Cooloola Cove Trails

Develop a local walking trail using creek side fire trails.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Given the likely demand and its nature in Cooloola Cove (i.e. mostly residents), no major projects are proposed. The trail project consists of developing a local trail building on where people currently walk. Cooloola Cove has a series of fire trails (slashed grass trails) that local residents use for walking. There is a desire for these to be formalised as a walking trail network.</p>	<p>Develop a local walking trail using creek side fire trails. The project requires detailed planning to work out a reasonable loop trail and connections to the existing path in the new development north east of Queen Elizabeth Drive. This is important as many of the existing fire trails run along creek corridors and are parallel to each other. There is no obvious trailhead, though Billabong Park provides a set of facilities that are already developed. The trail planning should also consider trail surfacing and the potential for interpretation.</p>

Trail project 11 – Toolara State Forest

Provide a variety of formal multi-use trails within, including trails heads, signage and trail infrastructure.



Description	Key elements and actions
<p>Mountain bike riders and horse riders are already accessing some forestry roads north and south of Tin Can Bay Road though each group is starting from different points. Mountain bike riders are heading alongside Coondoo Creek South, Coondoo Creek North (to the Lagoons) and from Kellys Fire Tower downhill to The Lagoons. The two Coondoo Creek rides are relatively flat while the third ride goes down from the fire tower to the Lagoons. At 19-30km, these rides are an ideal length for many bike riders. Horse riders are undertaking rides of a similar length but are starting out from the forestry offices further west along the road.</p>	<p>Working with land managers (QPWS, HQ Plantations) and user groups, identify, mark and map some mountain biking and some horse riding trails (these may be shared trails between these groups). Build on those trails already used.</p> <p>Develop a formal trailhead for all user groups. The trailhead needs to include float parking and other horse facilities, as well as trailhead panels incorporating map panels and bike parking. One trailhead for both user groups would be preferred (to minimise costs) however, this depends on the location of trails to be developed.</p> <p>While walk trails could be included in this package, the size of the loops and the nature of the landscape make it less attractive for walkers.</p>

Trails with a purpose

Destination Gympie are currently promoting the Gympie region (primarily the Cooloola Coast) to the overseas market. Other private ventures, including retreats and bed and breakfasts are also targeting people from overseas (particularly Europe) to visit and experience (parts of) the region. Trails that provide a visitor with a unique local experience can be a big drawcard for tourists.

Nature-trail based tourism

Nature based tourism is becoming a very popular recreation past time. People will travel long distances to visit, and experience a unique natural place or to view wildlife. The community consultation revealed a significant interest in bird trails. This is a major market, especially for European visitors and it can bring significant expenditure to a region.

Nature based tourism opportunities that should be explored further include the development and promotion of:

- birdwatching tourism trails (using a themed dedicated bird map)
- wildlife spotting trails (this can be done either utilising guides or self guided with interpretive material)
- nature photography trails (usually guided).

Themed-trail based tourism

Trail-based tourism initiatives that promote sustainable tourism as well providing a complete experience of what the local region/s have to offer can provide visitors with an authentic local experience.

Some trail-based tourism initiatives can either be self guided or can be run by local private tour operators (thereby stimulating the local economy). These initiatives should be developed to accommodate a range of budgets as well as fitness levels, and can include:

- development of a local food and wine trail, to experience the local produce
- trails that explore the local Aboriginal history. Here there is also an opportunity to train Aboriginal guides. This experience may also include bushtucker tours

- development of trails that allow for multi-sport/ multi-day recreation activities (for example, integrating all outdoor activities within the Mary Valley, thereby providing multi-sport adventure opportunities. The Mary Valley also has camping facilities, rock climbing areas and a proposed canoe trail
- developing a unique rail trail experience involving allowing bikes on the Rattler, where tourists can explore the Mary Valley towns along the proposed rail trail. Local operators could tailor this experience (pick-up drop-offs, lunch and drinks packages etc.).

Indigenous and wildlife tourism can be a good market, catering for overseas visitors. For example a unique experience for tourists is to see koalas and kangaroos in the wild as well as to get a taste of the indigenous culture.

The bird trails of the Crows Nest Shire attract significant usage. Though a 'drive trail' (i.e. users travel to sites by motor vehicle), it nonetheless enables users to access natural areas – including existing walk trails.



Rail trails

"Rail trails are shared-use paths recycled from abandoned railway corridors. Usually managed by local Councils for the enjoyment of the general public. Rail trails can be used for a range of purposes including walking, cycling and horse riding."
(<https://www.railtrails.org.au/>)

The process of turning a closed railway into a recreation trail is a large undertaking, neither is it a simple or cheap task. In the years following closure of a railway, deterioration of the assets of the corridor occurs. Fences fall over, or are removed, bridge decking and structural components are removed. The rail corridor becomes a stretch of unused area, waist high with grasses and sometimes can become a somewhat dumping ground.

Turning a disused rail line into a rail trail can have a range of benefits:

- because of their grade, they are less challenging than many other cycle trails, thus encouraging more families to use them
- rail trails are few and far between in Queensland and this alone would attract visitors
- they provide a series of longer trails thereby allowing visitors to stay longer (e.g. multi-day cycle tours)

- a trail can help further develop a sense of community in an area. For example, the Riesling Trail has an active and effective Management Committee, a "Friends of..." group, and volunteers that maintain the trail. It can also get much support from local businesses
- they provide environmental benefits though weed eradication and control (which also provides a more amenable visual landscape) as well as possibly improved fire management
- developed rail trail also allow for unhindered access for emergency vehicles along the corridor.

Further to this, the economic benefits can be substantial with the encouragement of ancillary investment in accommodation, bike hire, food and drink outlets etc. In the Clare Valley, the conversion of the former railway corridor into one of Australia's best known trails (the Riesling Trail) has benefited local businesses, walkers and cyclists.

Several wineries are now creating picnic locations along the trail. There are more than 30 bed and breakfast cottages, several hotel/motels and caravan parks close to the rail-trail, enabling users to turn a comfortable one day ride into a multi-day outing. The Riesling Trail is enjoyed by over 12,000 people each year, bringing an estimated \$1,000,000 in economic benefits to the region.



Development of rail trails within the Gympie region, particularly the Imbil-Brooloo rail trail, would be advantageous, particularly as the rail corridor:

- it is situated in relatively close proximity to the 2.4 million people living in South East Queensland and is easily accessible by car (a maximum of 2 hours drive)
- does not have complicated routes through and getting out of urban areas, involving numerous, difficult crossings of busy highways
- would provide an off-road alternative loop opportunity for bike riders and horse riders (in particular) using Imbil State Forest (instead of using Imbil Brooloo Road)
- is located in highly scenic surrounds, with wonderful views of the surrounding landscapes full of variety and interest (though local people who have farmed this area for decades may not realise the inherent beauty of the landscape)
- provides a gentle gradient, suitable for all types of cyclists, walkers, and where appropriate, horse riders.

The potential for interpretation along rail corridors is often quite high. Topics often include: geology of the landscape (in one of the numerous cuttings); changing agricultural use; flora and fauna; old siding sites; social and cultural history of both the railway and the area through which it passes. The primary issue with rail trails is often the perceptions of adjoining landowners about the problems that will occur if a trail is developed.

Often, there is not a concerted effort by advocates to discuss in detail the concerns of farmers, and the possible solutions. It needs to be acknowledged that, over time, many people have taken on a de-facto management role of 'their' section of the corridor. In a not-inconsiderable number of cases the corridor is often been 'absorbed' into neighbouring farmland and has become an intrinsic part of farming operations. These people are often disturbed about the prospect of change to a situation that they have grown accustomed to. The proposal for a recreation trail along a corridor arouses quite understandable concerns – these are raised in numerous similar 'rail-trail' conversion situations right around the world.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of experience from similar situations around the world (including numerous examples around Australia). Almost without exception, experience suggests that trails along abandoned rail corridors do not cause the problems and issues that are commonly anticipated.

Geocaching and GeoTrails

Geocaching

Geocaching is rapidly becoming a very popular recreational activity. This adventure sport/hobby involves the use of a hand-held GPS receiver or Smartphone (with the appropriate app), and based on information provided on the official geocaching website (geocaching.com), the GPS receiver (or Smartphone) guides its operator to hidden treasures to be found all over the world.

Geocaching represents an activation program that would see existing trail users educated and the use of trails enhanced by encouraging more people onto trails.

Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. There are currently (April 2014) over 2.3 million active geocaches (hidden containers) and over 6 million geocachers (people) worldwide. Many geocachers are family groups, as the activity (i.e. finding hidden treasure) appeals to children (as well as adults).

Every geocache hunt is a completely different experience. In many cases, the search for a hidden cache leads to new and unusual places, that may not have seen if the geocacher hadn't been guided by their GPS receiver and the hider's directions. Thousands of caches around the world are hidden along trails and in natural areas.

The geocaching.com website offers ways of monitoring all visitor contact with caches. Specific caches can be put on a Watch List so that whenever visitors find them, the person who selected the Watch List option is alerted to the discovery (or a note left by the finder). This could be a Visitor Centre, a staff person from the Gympie Regional Council or a member of the local community. The Watch List option also lets people know if the cache has disappeared or has been damaged in some way so it can be replaced and repaired.

There are already dozens of geocaches (randomly) hidden around the Gympie Regional Council area, including:

- two within the Victory Heights trails network
- along the Boulder Mountain Trail at Woondum National Park
- at the commencement of the Cooloola Wilderness Trail
- at the old Imbil railway station.

The placement of additional geocaches along each existing trail (and as each new trail is developed) will help promote the Gympie trails network to people already involved in geocaching as well as being of interest to local people and an inducement to get out and explore their local area. It is therefore recommended that, to further promote the existing trails within the area (and on future trails), additional caches could be installed along the trails within the Gympie Regional Council.

GeoTrail

A geocaching trail (GeoTrail) a series of geocaches tied together by a common theme – such as a walk, cycle or drive trail. Usually, between 10 and 20 designated geocaches make up a “GeoTrail”. The quest to find the geocaches along a GeoTrail will take participants throughout a region, discovering aspects of its history.

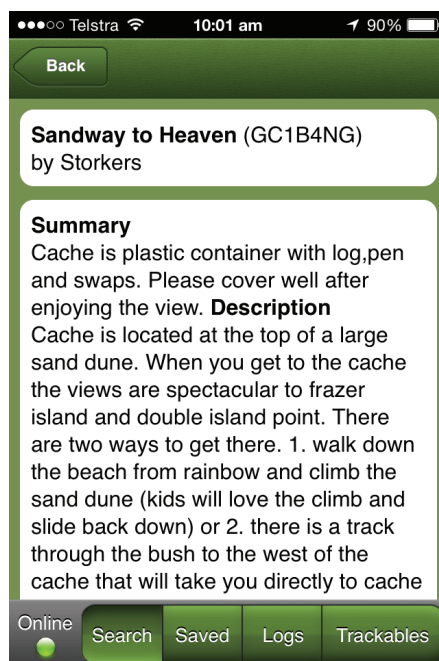
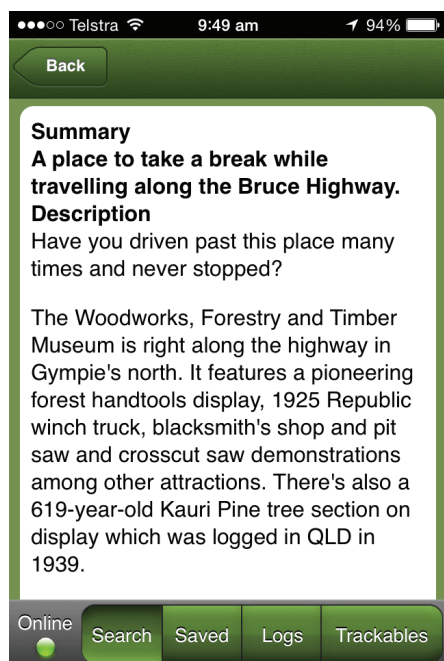
Participants can choose which participating caches they wish to seek, based on their choice of location, difficulty, and terrain levels. Typically, there is an incentive to finding all caches along a “GeoTrail” (such as the Gympie Region Heritage Trail), such as a unique souvenir provided by the Gympie Regional Council.

To add interest to the GeoTrail, a clue would be added at every geocache (for example, a letter of a special phrase). When all caches are found and all letters found, the entire phrase (perhaps a puzzle) will be revealed. In the case of the Gympie Region Heritage Trail, the phrase could be: **“OCEANTOOUTBACK”**

Once the phrase is revealed, the successful geocacher could claim the souvenir at, for example, the Gympie Visitor Centre.

Geocaches and interpretation

Many local governments are using digital media (such as Trail Apps for Smartphones) to provide interpretation to visitors. A feature of a geocache is that interpretive material can be provided by inserting a story in the cache ‘description’ within the Smartphone app (see examples below). Several geocaches around Gympie have included some basic information in the cache description.



The Geocaching app available for Smartphones also includes the ability to include a description of the geocache and an interpretive story. In the Gympie Regional Council area several existing caches have been used to promote existing tourist attractions (such as the Woodworks Museum), heritage sites (such as the Imbil Railway Station) and places of interest (such as the Carlo Sandblow near Rainbow Beach).

9.0 Implementation

Further development of the Gympie Trails Network is a complex project. There are several stakeholders all with strong interests. Gympie Regional Council has been the primary driver of this phase of work (the preparation of the trails plan) and should be commended for being prepared to carry primary responsibility through this process. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has an interest as many of the trails are on land managed by the Department. Seqwater and HQ Plantations have similar interests.

Research from elsewhere in Australia lends weight to the belief that a well developed and promoted trail network has the potential to be a recreational resource of significance for the Gympie region.

It is therefore recommended that Council continue to provide significant support to the project and continue to take a leading role in the next phase of the project. Following consideration of this work, the Council and its staff will have developed a detailed understanding of many of the issues and opportunities, and is ideally placed to continue to facilitate future stages. The benefits to the region, its residents and its visitors of trail development are significant. The active involvement of the Council can help deliver these benefits.

The next logical step (in many cases) is to prepare trail development plans to prepare construction-ready material. This process ensures a maximum return on the investment of Local Governments and others in trail development work. The preparation of trail development plans will deliver high quality, locally focused and well managed and maintained trails for use by residents and visitors.

To manage this work, Council should establish a Trails Management Group to oversee the implementation of this Plan (this is discussed in detail within the Appendices).

While an effort has been made to keep this Trails Plan relatively simple (ideally with a limited number of projects), there are quite a few worthwhile and deserving projects – mainly as a result of a desire to provide facilities for local people (in addition to visitors).

Too many trail plans are overloaded with ‘actions’ and projects, and can be daunting for those agencies charged with delivering on the outcomes proposed.

This trails plan is project-focused, as this targeted approach appears the most likely to actually deliver outcomes ‘on the ground’. A range of substantial benefits could be garnered by simply proceeding with any of the projects – these are all simple, stand-alone projects that would deliver tangible benefits to the region.

The prioritisation of the trails will be dependent on available resources, funding opportunities and how they link with other Council projects. It is also predicated on the assumption that much of the first year or so of any project will be taken up negotiating and consulting with interested parties (both user groups and land managers). Table 11 recommends an implementation timetable that indicates what trail projects should be undertaken in what years. It should be noted that it would be possible to develop more than one trail at any given point in time due to the variance in requirements and implementation.

The entire set of trails should be regarded as a complete package. It is unlikely that any one trail project would be sufficient to attract substantial numbers of new visitors to the Gympie region. The provision of a complete package of trail opportunities is far more likely to deliver benefits to the region. For this reason it is recommended that Council proceed with implementation of all trail projects in a timely manner. With sufficient funding, all these projects could be brought to fruition in a shorter timeframe, providing skilled and experienced project management is available.

The suggested implementation program is a guide only and could be variable given current resources, funding, and community interest in any given year. It should be noted that only the clearly identified projects are included in this schedule. Other projects which have not been as fully explored can be included once more details are known.

Prioritisation of track and trail projects

The table below provides a summary of the proposed trail projects across the four localities, derived from pages 41 to 52. The schedule aims to provide equitable trails development within the different localities. This schedule should be viewed as a guide only, whereby resources, programming priorities or funding opportunities may change or arise, thereby altering the sequence of project development.

Table 11: Implementation schedule

Year	Gympie	Mary Valley	Kilkivan	Cooloola Coast	Project legend
Year 1	Project 1	Project 6	Project 5	Project 11	Project 1 – Victory Heights Trails and associated infrastructure development
Year 2	Project 1	Project 6	Project 5	Project 11	Project 2 – Curra State Forest Trails and associated infrastructure development
Year 3	Project 1 Project 4 (subsequent development depends on investigation)	Project 6 Project 7	-	Project 8	Project 3 – Woondum State Forest/National Park Trails and associated infrastructure development
Year 4	-	Project 6 Project 7	-	-	Project 4 – Brooyar State Forest Investigate trail options
Year 5	Project 3	Project 7	-	-	Project 5 – Kingaroy-Kilkivan Rail Trail*
Year 6	Project 3	Project 7	-	Project 9	Project 6 – Imbil State Forest Trails and associated infrastructure development
Year 7	-	-	-	Project 9	Project 7 – Imbil-Brooloo Rail Trail
Year 8	Project 2	-	-	Project 10	Project 8 – Tin Can Bay Trails
Year 9	Project 2	-	-	Project 10	Project 9 – Rainbow Beach Trails
Year 10	Project 2	-	-	-	Project 10 – Cooloola Cove Trails
					Project 11 – Toolara State Forest

*Note: Not all under the control of Gympie Regional Council

Strategic recommendations


Further to the individual track and trail recommendations above, the following table provides the strategic recommendations required by Council in order to achieve a successful track and trail network.

Table 12: Strategic recommendations

Reference	Recommendation	Justification	Priority
1	Establish a trail management group with interested stakeholders and community members. Key representatives to include those identified in Appendix 3 section 1.0)	To oversee the implementation of the Plan, and ultimately the development, management and maintenance of tracks and trails in the Gympie region	High
2	Commit to an annual capital and operational program for the planning, development and maintenance of tracks and trails in line with the Plan recommendations	To fund the development and ongoing maintenance of tracks and trails within the network	High (and ongoing)
3	Initiate a marketing and promotion campaign for the region's tracks and trails, in conjunction with the local tourism promoters (i.e. Destination Gympie and Gympie Cooloola Tourism)	To provide the track and trail network with an identifiable brand that can be used for promotion as well as on-trail branding	High
4	Develop a 'one-stop-shop' website for tracks and trails within the Gympie region (i.e Destination Gympie Website)	To provide both existing and potential trail users with a complete resource on the region's tracks and trails	High
5	Undertake individual trail feasibility and/or development plans	To detail specific trail alignments, surfaces and treatments, and cost estimates of the trail development prior to funding allocation and construction	Ongoing

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Appendix 1

Consultation Outcomes

Councillor meeting

A meeting was held with Councillor Julie Walker in early May 2014. Some of the issues and opportunities that were discussed within the meeting include:

- many of the current trails lack signage and trailheads. QR codes are becoming popular and can be used as a form of wayfinding and information provision
- opportunity to build a track up to the fire tower at Imbil now that permits are no longer needed in the forest reserves
- opportunity to build tracks around the Borumba Dam as a part of the dam raising proposal
- the trail plan should incorporate the birdwatching groups and potential trails for bird tourism. Wildlife in the region should be promoted. This could be done through interpretive signage.

Council officers meeting

A meeting was held at the Council officers in late March 2014. Outcomes of the meeting include:

- future relocation of Shooters Range to be considered. Option to be relocated to the northern side of Curra Forest, however the infrastructure costs may be higher (road, services etc.). A detailed plan will need to be developed. Meanwhile, they could be relocated north of the proposed Bruce Highway bypass
- Kandanga and Kilkivan town centres are being upgraded as a part of the Rural Towns Beautification project
- consideration to be made to developing Council owned land that is within Council's management capacity
- opportunity to rezone land at Victory Heights to secure outdoor recreation use there as a result of development pressure
- trail opportunities could include:
 - Brooloo trailhead at George Burtenshaw Protection Area
 - land near the weir at Kandanga could possibly become paddling area for children and an area for horses
 - Kilkivan has plenty of rail land, as well as under-utilised land (along Wide Bay Creek) and Kilkivan Tansey Road that could be utilised

- Bicentennial Trail goes around the mountain near Kilkivan. This mountain might have some interesting vegetation and Aboriginal caves
- possible future use of closed landfill site at Amamoor and Kandanga Road
- shelter at Amamoor near Busby Creek could potentially be utilised as a trailhead
- there is ample Council-owned land in Gunalda, However there are currently few connections
- opportunity to provide a link between Cooloola Cove to Tooloora Forest (along Tin Can Bay Road)
- the Mary River is such an under-utilised opportunity for trails. This could be promoted, however it can be prone to erosion. Possibility to develop safe and sustainable tracks along the creek. For example from Kidd Bridge, Deep Creek to One Mile Ovals or Deep Creek via Victory Bridge to Gympie on the south side of the creek, connecting through the new pool.

Industry and tourism stakeholders

Destination Gympie

- The Australia Nature Coast initiative is a large tourism campaign aimed at the European market and promotes "soft adventure" initiatives. There might be an opportunity to use this initiative to tap into the Noosa trail network and loop into Gympie's network.
- There are many backpackers that spend one day at Fraser Island. These people depart from Tin Can Bay/Rainbow Beach.
- One brochure with maps and descriptions, showing the different trails per region would be useful. People want one document to refer to and one source of reference. It is currently very difficult to find trail information within Gympie region.
- Many of the trails are inadequately signposted and marked (e.g. Bicentennial Way).
- Nature based tourism is very popular, and therefore adequate tracks and trails provision is important.

- Future opportunity to catch the Rattler to Amamoor with a mountain bike on the carriage and then ride between the southern towns. This would make the Rattler experience more interesting, with more tourism opportunities.
- If relaying the railway line as a rail trail, some of the bridges may need to be rebuilt or the trail rerouted along the road bridge.

Gympie Cooloola Tourism

- Gympie Cooloola Tourism (used to be the "local tourism operator". It is now a voluntary organisation run by members.
- Gympie Cooloola Tourism are very active with their social media and are trying to be a leading digital marketing organisation. They have an active blog bank with media releases, and could help with promoting track and trail progress through social media. For example, if a trail gets built they could promote it during and after construction. By actively promoting trails through their webpage and social media forums, GCT may be able to attract grants.
- Need one website with all of the trails information, other tourism websites could have links to it. Information should also be in print.
- Council could partner with private ventures, community groups and stakeholders. This can assist in gaining funding and grants.
- Trail map information is limited. There are also only few formal trails. Need more formal trails to be able to market and map them.
- Previous liability issues prevented maps being generated, but under new legislation there is an opportunity to map and signpost trails.
- Opportunity to create a walking and bike trail from Rainbow Beach to Inskip Point.
- "Conservation Volunteers" did work on the canoe trails and entry points. Would be good to ensure that any (possible) riverside walking trails meet up with canoe exit/entry points.

Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF)

- Many of the parks are a distance from and difficult to get access from main routes, e.g. Wrattens Forest can only be accessed from Kilkivan and, therefore, realistically are not going to be major destinations. The Plan needs to be realistic in this sense.

Mary Valley region

- The region needs to be revitalised.
- The Mary River is an important feature and therefore the connectivity of the river as a potential integrated nature based opportunity should not be discounted.
- The canoe trail is an important feature for elements such as multi-use and multi-day events, including canoeing, running and mountain bike riding. Opportunities to have multi-day expeditions and create circuits, and/or multiple groups conducting multiple activities. The canoe trail would likely start around Moy Pocket to Glastonbury/Brooyar and beyond. There is also a lot of horse ownership and equestrian activity. Integrating these disciplines could create a tourist destination on a grand scale. For example, Brooyar State Forest has rock climbing and there is a campground at Glastonbury Creek.
- There is opportunity to make the region very appealing for tourists. The Mary Valley could be similar to the 7 Stanes in Scotland, where trails could run between reserves, forestry and rural residential areas. This area could potentially become a national icon with a combination of smaller trails (for families) to more extreme outdoor recreation opportunities. Locals could also use the trail network (e.g. children could ride to school).
- There is a good opportunity to tap into and enhance the existing trail network and easements within the rural residential areas and state land.
- Private owner opportunities should not be discarded as there is a good tourism and economic opportunity for the private outdoor recreation sector.

- Garapine is a ready-made mountain bike park (currently for sale), near the Traveston Crossing. This is a one-day paddle from Moy Pocket. Council and state government need to work together to create a viable recreation destination and hub for the area, as it has numerous recreation opportunities (existing mountain bike park with tracks, high ropes, flying foxes etc.). This is an existing opportunity that just needs an operator and support from local and state government.
- Garrapine is very accessible from the highway and could be the trailhead for a multi-trail network. More recreation activities could be conducted within this area and the more extreme activities be conducted within Imbil State Forest and around Lake Borumba (the National Parks generally have more extreme terrain, and therefore lend themselves to more extreme activities, such as Glastonbury, Amamoor, Imbil).
- Imbil State Forest, in particular, has endurance horse riders, serious mountain bike riders, trail running and Kokoda-style walking tracks.
- There is an opportunity to have a trailhead near Lake Borumba for the more extreme activities. Borumba camping area is operated privately, users such as Brisbane Grammar School frequents the area.
- Recreation trails could be designed similarly to the Noosa Trail Network utilising the existing trails, road reserves and easements. These trails could link the towns (Imbil, Brooloo, Kandanga, Amamoor). Brooloo to Imbil railway line has been earmarked for a rail trail. Gympie to Imbil is the proposed Rattler trail. If this does not take off, there is an opportunity in the future to create a larger railtrail here.

Kilkivan region

- The old railway to the north does not go all the way up to Gympie, thereby creating an opportunity to create a rail trail (Theebine to Gympie).
- The Bicentennial Trail goes through this region, where horse trail networks could plug into that. This trail network could become more of a horse precinct, where it would service the western part of Gympie for a trails hub. Consideration should be given to providing loops and not just out and back rides.

Gympie region

- Victory Heights is a mountain bike area that could possibly link up to Curra State Forest. This is a quality reserve as it is not too hilly, therefore providing opportunities for all trail types, close to the town and easy to access for recreation i.e. "Gympie's backyard"(the town's recreation trail area). Curra State Forest is presently heavily utilised by motorbikes and is a potential site for the shooting complex.
- Trails could connect to both Victory Heights and Victory Bridge (currently an Energex offset program).

Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach Area

- Cooloola Coast has many tourism opportunities, including opportunities for off-road trails within the natural areas.
- Opportunity to look at connecting different existing trails and natural areas. However, the sandy terrain may not always be suitable. For example connections to the Cooloola National Park may need to be along sealed roads.
- The linked trail network could provide quality (coastal) tourism opportunities, for people heading to Fraser Island. It could provide more short nature based walks with coastal scenery(with appropriate interpretive information).

Landowner and manager stakeholders

Queensland Parks and Wildlife (QPWS) (Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing)

- Opportunity for trail development in the Mary Valley now that the proposed dam is not proceeding.
- A problem is that trails are being promoted that QPWS have not been consulted on and have not endorsed. For example, Sunshine Coast Council have published information about mountain bike trails on QPWS land that haven't been agreed to by QPWS. Additionally, GPS co-ordinates and tracks can be readily downloaded and QPWS has little control over this. Evidence in the Sunshine Coast shows that once a trail is promoted on a website, use increases rapidly and demand for improvements to infrastructure (e.g. car parking) and management follows.
- There is a need to establish a demand for trails. Evidence in the Sunshine Coast (on the established bridle trail network) suggests very little use (three users a month on the busy trails). Track counters on the trails verify this.
- There is a noticeable growth in mountain biking on the Sunshine Coast. It is estimated there is a 10-15 per cent growth per year.
- No 'double black' trails or downhill, because of lack of sustainability. Have concentrated on cross-country trails, rated 'green' and 'blue'. These grades cater for larger riding groups.
- Motorised trail users (i.e. motorbikes and 4WD) are a big problem and almost impossible to manage. They like challenges and new areas and get bored quickly with existing tracks.
- The National Parks in the west of the region are remote with some areas very inaccessible. For example, Wrattens National Park is mountainous and access is difficult. It does, however, include the Bicentennial Trail, used by some horse riders.
- QPWS has three campgrounds, with short walks (1-5km). Trails leaflets and information is available on the QPWS website.
- QPWS has prepared a recreational zone/plan (including consideration for future use and management) for each state forest and National park in the region.
- Hardwood forests are still open for recreation. They are only closed when harvesting is occurring.
- Advised that no-one uses 'links'. Most trail users want 2-4 hours on a trail at most. Safe parking at the trailhead is a fundamental requirement.
- Long walks in Gympie area are well catered for and shorter walks (1-2 hours) are not well catered for.
- Local use of trails and fire trails in state forests close to Gympie. For example Glastonbury, Amamoor Creek and Cedar Grove.
- Mudlo National Park has a day use area with a very short walk to a lookout.
- Most unformalised trails are on estates close to Gympie (i.e. Curra). Management of illegal use is difficult.
- QPWS reacts to demand, such as the Mountain bike trails in Curra Forest. If demand for new trails in new areas can be identified, they would look at it and would work with trail proponent (e.g. CTCA).
- Many horseriders do not know where to go, and presumably need more activity brochures with maps. There are, however, horse facilities at Kenilworth and Charlie Moreland. There is some horse use around Imbil State Forest near Lake Borumba.
- QPWS has some information about horse riding areas on its website. Despite this, there is very little use of the horse trails particularly in the south and south west of the region.
- A good outcome from the Sunshine Coast trail planning process is the publication of three brochures for mountain biking, horse riding and walking. All trails are in one brochure.
- There is an opportunity for more trail links within Woondum (Mothar Mountain), however, parking is a constraining factor.
- Brooyar has many recreation activities, including commercial activities, such as rockclimbing and mountain bike riding.

Seqwater

- Seqwater are currently reviewing their recreation areas within dams. This commenced at the end of April 2014.
- Borumba Dam is currently utilised for powerboats, fishing, kayaking and canoes. There are basic picnic facilities near the ramp.

- Seqwater own and manage the land just around the water. There are no trails within Seqwater land (there are also steep banks). However, people use the picnic area for parking and as a trailhead for walking and mountain bike riding within Imbil State Forest. Car parking is limited but it is unlikely to change.
- The campground is managed by a commercial operator.
- Main access into the Dam area is through Yabba Creek Road. There is also a 4WD track entrance but closes when wet and when the dam is spilling.
- Any new trails near the Dam need to be built in a sustainable manner as to not cause erosion and affect water quality.

HQ Plantations

- HQ Plantations estates are forestry production areas (primarily Hoop Pine).
- There are periods where public access to areas is restricted to ensure safety of the public and industry personnel. This has implications on the creation or designation of permanent signed trails through the plantation estate, as there are often no potential viable detours to avoid operations. There are also issues around maintenance of trails, managing weeds, managing signage and liability.
- HQ Plantations maintain a close relationship with QPWS. Their borders are often quite blurred and public may go in and out of land tenures without knowing they have crossed boundaries.
- HQ Plantations would like to be kept informed and consulted throughout the process in regards to trails on and adjoining the HQ Plantations estate. They would appreciate the opportunity to view proposals and comment on their practicality and impact on operations, preferably before any proposed trails on the HQ Plantations estate are released for wider comment.

Cooloola Trail Care Alliance (CTCA)

- CTCA formed in early 2011 to develop mountain bike trails and multi-use trails and to advocate for trails within the Gympie region.
- CTCA follows the IMBA model for developing sustainable trails and for advocacy. The group has a multi-use focus.

- Twenty members (but membership is not a high priority). Can call upon a large workforce from within the community.
- Has made presentation to Council highlighting trails that stimulate tourism and economic activity in towns not normally known for tourism.

Victory Heights

- Victory Heights is the focus area for the next 3-5 years.
- Trying to make the trailhead obvious to passers by. Newly installed trailhead signage is very noticeable from the road.
- CTCA has a 10 year lease over 60ha of freehold bushland at Victory Heights on which they are developing a local network for mountain bike riding, horse riding and walking.
- The biggest issue is the possibility of future urban development pushing out the Mountain bike activity. The land is currently zoned for urban and rural-residential use. CTCA has a 10-year lease. The CTCA seeks planning certainty.
- Victory Heights was selected because it is close to town, was vacant, is owned by Council and there were some existing/informal (Mountain bike/walking) use.
- The trails network includes single track Mountain bike, multi-use single tracks (horse, Mountain bike, walk) and dual track. It also has a pump track, skills course and a beginner/children's track.
- There is a need for funding for toilets, information panels, picnic and parking areas, bollards, signage, shelters, horse loading/unloading plus a kids skills track.

Curra State Forest

- Not the focus of attention at present, although Mountain bike orienteering occurs here. The Australian Championships have been held in the forest. "Come and try" days have been arranged.
- Recreational mountain biking also occurs, south of Wood Road.
- CTCA is maintaining existing trails in the forest, but not building new trails.

- Biggest issue is the possibility of a rifle range being established (Note that Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study and options analysis for a proposed shooting facility within the Curra State Forest. The development of any trail projects will have necessary regard for the outcomes of this project).
- Forest blocks in this area are harvested from time to time.
- Formalised trailhead parking is needed and the existing parking needs improving if the area is to be further developed for mountain biking (and other) trails.
- There is approximately 80km of natural trail (including fire trails).
- CTCA wants to preserve the southern area because that's where single track is already there.

Deep Creek

- Old gold mining site, similar distance from town as Victory Heights.
- The site is devoid of environmental values, but Energex are undertaking vegetation offset planting (expected to be finished by September 2014).
- CTCA is involved in developing a 3km cross country shared trail through the area and once the planted vegetation is high enough, single track is to be built.
- The CTCA vision is that the area be Council managed but CTCA will develop and maintain the trails network (using volunteers).
- The contractor doing the revegetation is developing some of the future trail network (currently used for vehicle access).

River Walk

- Opportunity to construct a multi-use trail from the Deep Creek trail network along the river to link with the town centre. The route would use an old bridge, then pass under the road bridge (alongside creek). The link back into town would be via a road reserve. An advantage of the route is that it would pass the 'sandbar' swimming hole. This provides connectivity and a strategic link from town to Deep Creek. However, it would need to cross private property at the rear of Aldi.
- Ideally a bridge to bridge circuit involving both sides of the river could be developed.

Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park

- An informal downhill trail exists and is tolerated by QPWS.
- There is an informal trail connection between Gympie and Noosa Trail Network via Woondum State Forest and National Park. The route is 60-70km.
- For Gympie to become a trail destination it needs to link with the Noosa Trail Network. All that would be required would be directional signage.
- 70-75 per cent of the trails would be part of the Noosa Trails Network.
- There are some existing campsites on the Noosa Trail Network, and a private camp/accommodation at Mothar Mountain, near the rock pools (about 20km from Gympie). The rock pools themselves are a destination.

Garapine

- Private facility (outdoor education facility) on land owned by Seqwater. It has Mountain bike trails, including trails for enduro and 'gravity oriented' trails.
- It is not open to the public. Users need to be a member of Gravity Mountain bike Club or have MTBA insurance.

General

- Main focus of CTCA is to build a community recreational asset.
- Seek to provide a variety (i.e. different grades of trail) from beginner to advanced for mountain biking and ensure that trail networks are multi-use where possible.
- Have plans to raise the profile of the Victory Heights trails area by the addition of new facilities. They have a 5-year program for development, then maintenance the trail network.
- Have a \$25,000 grant for tables in shelters and bike wash down.
- Have made a grant application to Jupiters Casino for \$35,000.
- Have established a trail sponsorship scheme – \$250 for a plaque on trail markers. Plan to eventually have an honour board for sponsors.

User groups

Cooloola Nature

Cooloola Nature are a non-profit organisation "operating in the Field of Environmental Education". They have recently launched a website "Birding Cooloola Mountains to Shore", an associated project of "Bird Trails of Cooloola". The purpose being to promote birds and their habitats through sustainable avi-tourism to birdwatchers throughout Australia and worldwide.

Correspondence with one of the founders of Cooloola Nature was conducted via email, over the telephone and face to face. Outcomes from the correspondence include:

- the new website will provide visitors with information for bird watching groups from all over the world visiting the Cooloola region. Maps and brochures are to be developed and made available on the website, showing premium birdwatching sites including Cedar Grove, Amamoor State Forest and the road leading into Woondum State Forest (among others)
- the website will also provide links to local accommodation, road conditions, directions to birding sites as well as information on the diversity of bird species within the region
- provision of bird trails can inject money into a region (food, accommodation etc.), especially from the overseas market, who stay in the region for longer periods. There are large groups that come into the region just to watch birds already, and further provision for them could be advantageous
- generally birdwatchers do not walk long distances on trails, they mainly walk to a place to sit and watch birdlife. Interpretive trails showcasing the local bird and wildlife would assist in promoting eco-tourism as well as educating locals
- generally the groups meet at Lake Alford and then, head to the specific bird watching sites from there
- Marys Creek Rockpools have Aboriginal sites. From here, there is an informal trail that goes to Sterling Crossing and finishes at Coondoo Creek. The trail can be accessed from the road just before the Borumba Deer Park.


Gympie Bushwalker's Club

- Many of the existing trails within the region lack signage and defined trailheads.
- Woondum National Park could be opened up more with more walking trails. Presently, there are only two very short walking tracks (one of which goes straight up a mountain).
- Opportunity to link to some of Noosa's Great Walks.
- Tracks within Gympie region generally consist of a few short walks and a small number of long walks, but hardly any in between.
- There is an abundance of natural areas, yet very few walks in the region.
- There are volunteer trail associations who could help with trail care. This would cut maintenance costs for the land managers.
- Tourists would come to the region if there were better walking trails.

Melawondi Spring Retreat

A meeting was held with the owners of the Retreat. At the retreat guests are offered both guided and self guided walks. These walks are tailored for a range of fitness and budgets (including luxury style walks). They are promoting to the overseas market (with Destination Gympie as the local tourism operator). Outcomes of the meeting included:

- there is very little signage on and around the tracks within the region. The trails are also very fragmented
- different operators and organisations are doing different things, have their own agendas and are not really working together or talking to each other about trail opportunities
- opportunity to link trails to the Great Walk at Connondale, by creating shorter loop tracks
- current trails that Melawondi use include the fire trails from Lake Borumba through Imbil to the Retreat. Imbil Forest has many (informal and unmapped) trails
- opportunity to establish birdhides around Lake Borumba as a part of a trail network. This would give a purpose to the trail

- 
- opportunity for private operators (such as Melawondi) to provide a pick up/drop off service, along out and back trails (for example along the proposed Amamoor to Brooloo rail trail). This would also generate an economic spin for the local area, and could be tailored for the visitors (e.g. packed lunch, champagne at trip end etc.)
 - Amamoor Forest has Amama campground and well signed circuits
 - walks need to have points of interest, and the trails based around these points of interest
 - other purpose trail opportunities include:
 - Indigenous food and wildlife trails. Indigenous tourism can be a good market for overseas visitors as can wildlife tourism. Visitors like to see koalas and kangaroos as well as indigenous culture. This can be tailored for different budgets
 - star watching trails. These have also been popular at a high vantage points
 - photography tourism trails. For example, Imbil has good wildlife spotting opportunities for photography
 - permanent orienteering courses and geocaching.

Cooloola Coast Care

Cooloola Coastcare is the Cooloola Coast local natural resource management group, and is supported by Gympie Regional Council through a ratepayer's Environment Levy.

- In 2013 the group published a book called the Cooloola Cove Wetlands and Waterways.
- The Cooloola Cove wetland and tributaries have open space areas, with fire breaks that locals use as walking trails. If formal signed walking tracks were provided here, the waterways and parkland are more likely to get looked after and respected and this could assist with managing the land (environmental education). Land management plans were done for these areas.

Community and general user groups

Email responses

As a part of the community engagement process, the community were invited to provide input, via email, into the Tracks and Trail Plan.

These detailed email responses have been documented and can be found in Appendix 2. Many of these responses provide specific information pertaining to individual tracks and trails, and while, for the purpose of this Tracks and Trails Plan, some information may be too detailed, it will however be invaluable for the future detailed tracks and trails design stages. The key issues and opportunities pertaining directly to the tracks and trail master plan project are summarised below.

- Develop trails that are multi-use (bikes, hikers and horses). This is the most efficient use of scarce resources.
- Trails need to be constructed that allow all users to be able to enjoy them, all age groups and abilities.
- Trails need to be advertised better, with good maps that are easy to read.
- Provide more (safe) access to the Mary River, with more riverside parks and picnic areas, including jetties and access for water based activities.
- The eco-tourism potential is enormous but controllable. There is a large and growing demand for active ecological experiences. The location of this trail network within two hours from Brisbane and serviced by a dual lane highway and rail network will ensure its success. In time, permitting and fees could be introduced to provide a level of control and funding.
- There are tourism opportunities utilising the trails, such as birdwatching trails (e.g. at Dagon), food trails etc.
- Trail specific areas:
 - provide a Mary Valley Eco-Trail, turning the Traveston land purchase into a world class environmental experience. This trail could encompass both sides of the Mary River and its tributaries with camp and rest sites strategically located at road crossings
 - provide trails around Lake Borumba and Imbil State Forest
 - provide railtrails between Imbil and Kandanga and in the Kilkivan-Goomeri area

- Hill Road (to Mothar Mountain) is poorly maintained. There is only a short loop track and the creek track is non-existent. This is one of the closest and prettiest recreational and walking tracks
- management is an issue within Woondum State Forest where horses and illegal trail bikes have been seen using the walking tracks
- provide trails within Toolara Forest.

Walking

- Provide longer walking trails (8-10km or longer).
- Provide a walking trail along the Mary River (if possible) and second crossing at Kidd Bridge to Normanby Bridge (linked to the proposed Deep Creek multi-use trail area).
- Provide additional (safer) walking tracks around Kinbombi falls (Kilkivan). For example, there are walks at Kilkivan mines with ruins of old settlements, with walks that go past the old chimneys and lots of birds and wildlife.

Cycling

- Provide both A and B lines to allow for all skill levels.
- Provide trails that could commence within the city boundaries (to reduce driving distances to trails).
- Provide more signposted trails and safer, wider bike lanes.

Horseriding

- There is generally a reliance on word of mouth to find new horseriding trails (for example at Victory Heights).
- Provide more formal horseriding trails.
- Riding horses along the road can be unsafe with the increase in cars and semi trailers and dogs.

Lake Alford Markets

A manned stall was established as an additional opportunity for community feedback. Interestingly, most of the members of the community that approached the stall were asking for trail maps, particularly for walking and horseriding. This in itself shows the lack of available and adequate maps showing the trails within the region.

Some relevant comments pertaining to the tracks and trail within Gympie included:

- the potential for good horseriding and walking tracks in Widgee State Forest. Here, people can camp at the showgrounds
- good walking tracks in Glastonbury State Forest
- no trails within the region dedicated to Aboriginal history. There is an opportunity to have Aboriginal guides, bushtucker tours, etc bringing people and tourism into the region by dedicating some trails to indigenous history
- a lot of local knowledge regarding trails within the area, however, there is limited formal information and maps available.

Community Survey

A total of 166 surveys were received over the three week community consultation period. 145 of the surveys were received online and 21 were completed and dropped off at various local libraries throughout the region. The information below provides a summary of the main comments and feedback received from the community. An example of survey is found at Appendix 1.

Information regarding the respondents

- The majority of respondents came across the survey by Facebook (54.3 per cent), followed by the Council website (15.2 per cent) and through email or word of mouth (13.5 per cent) (see figure 1).
- 56 per cent of the respondents were from Gympie and surrounds, followed by the Mary Valley region (21.3 per cent). 12.8 per cent of respondents were from other regions; including Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Bundaberg and Maryborough/Hervey Bay (see figure 2).
- 55.2 per cent of respondents were male and 44.8 per cent were female.
- 85 per cent of the respondents used the trails within the Gympie region.
- The majority of the respondents were walkers (including birdwatchers) and/or mountain bikers (approximately 38 per cent and 39 per cent respectively). 6.8 per cent of the respondents were horse riders. The remaining respondents participated in activities not related to this study (e.g. road cycling, kayaking, camping, 4WD).
- The majority of respondents participated in unorganised activities.

Figure 1
Chart showing where respondents came across the survey.

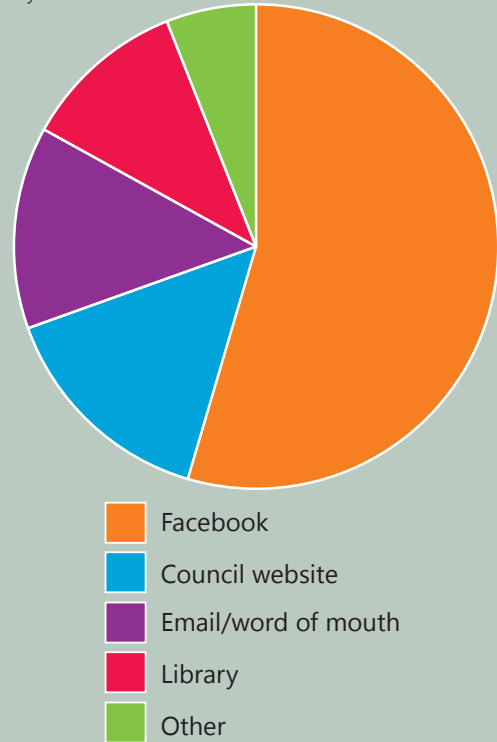
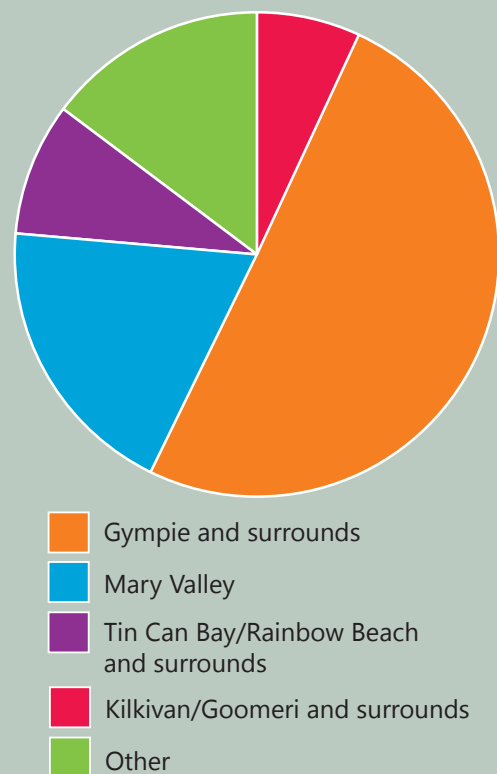


Figure 2
Chart showing local areas in which respondents reside in.



Respondents likes and dislikes regarding the existing tracks and trails

Mountain Biking

The table lists the most popular mountain biking locations within the region. Other less popular mountain bike riding areas include Amamoor State Forest, Widgee State Forest and Condoe Creek Forest Trail. Overall, respondents liked the natural environment, scenery and wildlife within the existing mountain bike trail areas, however most respondents felt there was a need for:

- more formal mountain bike trails (with A and B lines)
- more management and regulation with regards to 4WDs and trail bikes
- formal trailheads and facilities (toilets, water and formal car parking)
- formal marked trails, maps and signage (including online maps).

One respondent believed there was a need for a purpose built downhill track.

Table 1: Likes and dislikes with regards to mountain biking within the Gympie region

Location	Likes	Dislikes
Victory Heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good trail network (both back-country and single track). • Well constructed trails. • Close to town, with easy access (by bike). • Remnant native forest and wildlife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4WDs and trail bikes destroying trails. • Need better online maps (with trail names). • No toilets, potable water or shelter. • Lack of signage. • No formal car park with paths to/from trails. • Needs a kids track and visitors facilities. • No maintenance or management.
Curra State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good variety of trails. • Close to town, with easy access (by bike). • Remnant native forest and wildlife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of signage. • No formal car park with paths to/from trails. • No toilets, potable water or shelter. • No maintenance or management.
Imbil Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good trail network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dedicated bike tracks.
Garapine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to well constructed trails, varied trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trail maintenance on the trails. • Lack of facilities.
Toolara State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good few trails (found from local knowledge). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of directional signage.

Walking (including birdwatching)

The table below lists the more popular walking trail locations within the region. Other less popular walking areas, not shown below, include Yabba Creek, Brooyar, Wrattens, and Glastonbury State Forests. Nearly all respondents appreciated the natural environment and wildlife in which trails are located. However it was believed there was a need for:

- more of a variety of formal, cleared trails, particularly longer loop trails (i.e there are a small number of trails, with limited lengths- usually either too short or multi-day)
- regulating and minimising damage caused by four wheel drives
- more information about the trails within the region, lack of maps and signage.

Furthermore some respondents indicated that there were future walking opportunities along (off-road) public trails at:

- Lake Borumba
- both Amamoor and Yabba Creeks
- the Brooloo rail trail
- natural environments in close proximity to Gympie (e.g. along the Mary River).

It was mentioned that these trails would need to be marked, have signage and be clearly mapped (available in hardcopy and electronically).

Table 2: Like and dislikes with regards to walking within the Gympie region

Location	Likes	Dislikes
Victory Heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment and scenery. Variety of walking trails. Ease of access (close to town). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage, maps and trail information. Walking distances are too short (need longer trails closer to town) and limited trail variety. No water. Need more shade and seats.
Curra State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage. Too few trails. Need more shorter loops tracks.
Imbil State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment and wildlife. Trail network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of trail signage and up-to-date maps. Lack of cleared trails of which none are marked. Not enough walking trails.
Amamoor State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment and scenery. Variety of walking trails – good shorter trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage, maps and trail information. Not enough long walks. Damage from 4WD vehicles.
Tin Can Bay/Rainbow Beach/Cooloola National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment and scenery. Large variety of walking trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage and infrastructure. Not enough medium distance trails.
Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural environment/wilderness and wildlife. Easy walking trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage, maps and trail information. Damage from trail bikes and horses. Too few trails. Not enough medium distance trails.

Horseriding

The respondents generally felt there was a large network of horseriding trails, however most of the trail network is informal with a lack of maps or signage. Facilities such as float parking, toilets as well as ample space between the trail and cars, would be beneficial.

Table 3: Like and dislikes with regards to horseriding within the Gympie region.

Location	Likes	Dislikes
Mary Valley unformed roads, Imbil and Amamoor State Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large network of trails. Great riding conditions (Imbil). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of formal designated trails, signage and maps. Dirt bikes. Overgrown roadsides and excessive car speed limits.
Glastonbury State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of trails that are well maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many fences, making some tracks inaccessible.
Kilkivan region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trail network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not sign posted enough to follow.
Woondum National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of Noosa trail network (promoted by Sunshine Coast Council). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No promotion by Gympie Regional Council. Lack of connection with Tandur/Traveston areas. No parking areas and public amenities.
Imbil-Melawondi (along Rattler Line)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy ride through a natural environment (no traffic or dirt bikes). Tunnel is a great feature to ride through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not long enough and could extend to ride beside line or convert to multi-use rail trail.

Trail usage

Respondents were asked what makes it difficult for people to do more track and trail related activities. Generally respondents believed that this was because there was little information available pertaining to trails within the region and that there was a lack of trailhead facilities (signage, facilities, infrastructure, maps and information), once they were at the trail site.

Table 4: Most popular five reasons for making it difficult to do more track and trail related activities within Gympie Regional Council.

Reasons	Per cent*
It's difficult to know where to go or where to find the information.	43.3
I do not really know what the region has to offer.	40.0
There is little information available for my activity.	34.7
There is not enough signage at the beginning and throughout the trails, and I may get lost. There are insufficient loops and circuits within the trail network.	30.7
There are no suitable facilities nearby (parking toilets etc.).	30.7

* Some respondents marked more than one reason, and therefore the percentages may appear higher.

Other pertinent reasons included:

- its difficult to find the tracks
- there are not enough safe links from the town to the trail
- the track distances are too short.

Trail provision

Seventy four percent of respondents believed that there were insufficient trails within the whole Gympie region. Respondents generally felt there was a need for:

- more safe, accessible off-road trails and bike paths within and around the town of Gympie, including more single tracks (mountain bike parks) and loop tracks
- more trails within state forests and national parks, including more interesting trails (e.g. to summits, scenic views or water)

- more linkages within the region and linking up tracks through to adjoining regions (such as the Noosa Trail Network or through to Connondale National Park
- provision of signage and maps at trailheads
- better maintained, well planned trails to reduce 4WDs and trailbikes (i.e developing fewer well maintained trail based location areas as opposed to many not well maintained trails).

Respondents were asked to provide locations where they would like to see more trails. The most common natural areas were:

1. Mary Valley region (37 per cent) including:
 - Brooloo Bluff
 - Amamoor State Forest
 - Imbil State Forest (connecting to Lake Borumba)
 - Lake Borumba and Borumba State Forest
 - Mary Valley Rail Trail
 - Glastonbury/Widgee State Forests
2. Gympie and surrounding areas (26 per cent) including:
 - Victory heights (including linking up Victory Heights to Curra State Forest and providing a safe link from town to Victory Heights)
 - Curra State Forest
 - Brooyar State Forest
 - Mount Wolvi
3. Along rivers and creeks (18 per cent) including:
 - along the Mary River (including Kidd-Normanby Bridges and from Lake Alford to the Botanical Gardens, through parklands)
 - along Seary's Creek
 - along Yabba Creek to the Mary River (possibly connecting to Kandanga via easements)
4. Tin Can Bay/Rainbow Beach (10 per cent) including:
 - Inskip
 - Rainbow Beach to Carlo boat ramp
 - Toolara State Forest
5. Mothar Mountain/Woondum National Park (seven per cent) (including linking trails to Noosa trail network)
6. Wrattens State Forest/Blacksnake Road (two per cent).

Access to trail information

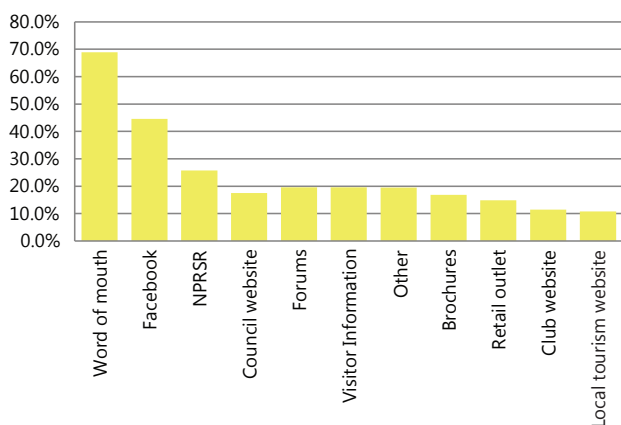
Sixty nine percent of respondents believed that there is insufficient information accessible for locals and tourists to be able to access and utilise the track and trail network for recreation activities. Many of these respondents commented that there was a strong need for:

- an increase in information/map accessibility
- an increase in signage across the network
- better promotion of existing tracks and trails
- further development and improvement of existing tracks and trails.

Many of the respondents currently predominately access the trail information via:

- word of mouth (68.9 per cent)
- Facebook (44.6 per cent)
- National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing website (25.7 per cent)
- forums (19.6 per cent)
- visitor information centre (19.6 per cent)
- Council website (17.6 per cent).

Table 5 Ease of access to trail information within the Gympie region



Improving and Promoting the trails

Respondents were given the opportunity to give their input as to how they believed more could be done to promote and improve the trail network within the region to increase use and to attract trail based tourism. A summary of these ideas include the following.

Trail Development

- Develop fewer (three or four) “good trail networks, that encourage visitors to stay overnight and spend money”. Prioritisation could be given to the “best trails” in the region and those that are most likely to get used i.e. easily accessible, attractive to day trippers (e.g. from Sunshine Coast), and that have good trail network with appropriate distances. These networks could all be distinctly different to provide varied trail experiences (e.g. Victory Heights, Curra State Forest and Mothar Mountain).
- Improve the current trail network (“build it and they will come”).
- Create both shared and dedicated trails (e.g. dedicated mountain bike trails with A and B lines).
- Ensure trails have easily accessible entry points that are clearly marked.
- Regulate motorised vehicles within national parks and state forests. Possibility to create dedicated four wheel drive and trail bike areas.
- Plan and develop a series of key trail networks, initially, within 20km radius of Gympie, then develop and sign safe access routes to these networks from town.
- Maintain infrastructure and road to Wrattens National Park, Shamrock Gold Mine, Mt Clara Chimneys, Mt Mia and Barambah Education Centre.

Trail infrastructure

- Provide signage and supporting trailhead facilities at all trails (including river trails). These could include maps showing the trail network, interest points, distances, grading as well as regulatory information.

Trail resources

- Opportunity to coordinate local volunteer groups (e.g. CTCA and SCTA) with QPWS to plan, develop and manage trails.
- Council to engage with experienced trail builders to ensure that needs of the target users are met.
- Council to be more active in utilising readily available (trail based funding) opportunities and state government grants. The funding can be utilised for advertising and promoting the trails as well as developing new and maintaining existing trails.

- Council and local volunteer groups could work in partnership with state government and national parks and state forestry departments to gain access and funding to develop new trails.

Promoting and access to trail information

- Develop, market and promote the region's unique natural attractions, for both locals and to attract visitors.
- Promote bushwalking, hiking, birdwatching using attractive signage and, media information.
- Develop specific tracks and trails brochures (specifically marked for horseriding, walking and mountain bike riding) with maps and information, showing location, contour lines, trail distance, grading, rest areas etc.) as well as photographs of features of trails (views etc.). The brochure range could provide a complete provision of the trails within the region and would be available online and printable (similar to Noosa Trail Network). Brochures should be readily available at local shops and tourist information centres.
- Ensure that trail information is easy to access (e.g. on Destination Gympie Region and Sunshine Coast Destination websites). Ideally there should be a single (non-commercial) website with all the trail related information. Other websites can link into this (e.g. Council and mountain bike organisations).
- Advertise trails, for example on Facebook, to increase trail awareness.

Opportunities for trail based activities and tourism

- Provide safe exit and entry points along the Mary River for kayaks/canoes. This could provide multi-sport adventure opportunities (camping, kayaking and walking).
- Promote trails to local and visiting organisations and community groups (e.g. scouts, school groups, special needs group for bushwalking, etc).
- Potential for the growth of education-based expeditions for Queensland, interstate and international schools by utilising lines of private/public partnership.(e.g. Council and Queensland Conference and Camping Centres).

- Develop the Amamoor to Brooloo rail trail to attract visitors (walkers, cyclists and horseriders). These could tie into other local tourism initiatives including local private businesses (BandBs, Mary Valley growers, local village markets and adventure companies).
- Promote trail based events (races or endurance events) to attract people into the region. A local organisation (e.g. mountain bike club) could promote events which advertise/showcase the trail network to users (cyclists, trail runners, etc.) from outside the immediate catchment and/or working with various event organisers such as "Run Queensland"" and TRAQ.
- Promote sustainable tourism utilising the trail network (e.g. food and wine trail, with varying levels and expertise) and provide complete experience of the region.
- Opportunity to utilise smart technology (e.g. geocaching) for trail experiences.
- Opportunity to promote and enhance wildlife spotting (including birdwatching) though the trail websites for example by featuring an animal each month, where and when to find it so that it is interactive and creates interest.

Appendix 2

General Trail Design Guidelines

1.0 Planning for trails

Tracks and trails should be well designed, well constructed, provide interest for the user, protect the environment and provide improved value of the area.

Furthermore trail design and planning needs to ensure that:

- there is an adequate supply and range of trails across a network to meet the demands and needs of all user groups:
 - including providing an equitable range of trails for all user groups
 - providing a range of lengths and difficulties (preferably loops) for each type of use
 - accommodate wheelchairs where appropriate
- the trail network is cost effective, realistic and achievable
- the trails are sustainable and are constructed with minimal disturbance to the natural environment
- the trails are built properly (even if it is at a higher initial cost) so that they require minimal maintenance in the longer term
- there is adequate infrastructure along the trail network, for example the provision of viewing platforms, signage and seating around places of interest (these places also provide for social interaction)
- the trails are clear and safe (particularly within forestry plantations) and built to Australian Standards.

The information on the following pages provides a general guidance to trail (and path) development and construction. It is important to note that this information does not provide the detailed information provided within a stand alone "Recreational Trail Construction Guidelines document", however it does give a summarised account of some of the important elements to be cognisant during the planning and design of trails.



2.0 Trail design and development considerations

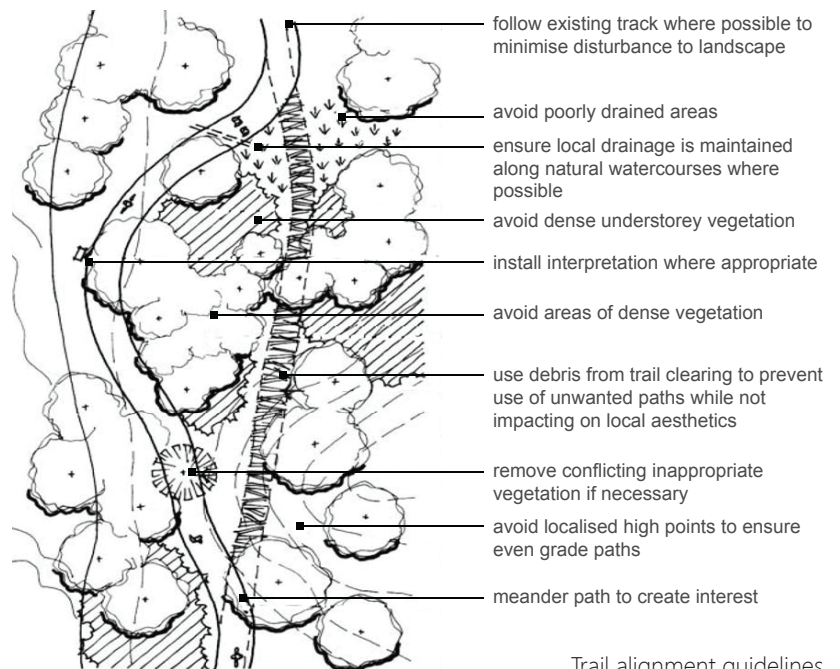
2.1 General considerations

The following general design and location considerations should be taken into account before and during construction of any new trail within the Gympie Regional Council area:

- follow existing tracks/trails where possible to minimise disturbance to the landscape and to minimise clearing requirements
- avoid poorly drained areas
- ensure local drainage is maintained along natural watercourses where possible
- avoid dense understorey where possible
- avoid areas of dense vegetation that may require heavy clearing
- avoid environmentally sensitive areas (e.g. areas of endangered flora)
- use debris from trail clearing to prevent use of unwanted paths (debris placed alongside the trail can provide a visual barrier to the development of short cuts in particular)
- remove conflicting inappropriate vegetation if necessary and as approved
- avoid Aboriginal heritage sites (unless particular attention is approved and desirable)
- avoid localised high points to ensure even path grades
- trail should meander to take advantage of natural and built features and to create interest
- avoid areas with high erosion potential
- locate trail/path near to points of interest
- take note of safety hazards and avoid where possible.



Good trail design can encompass re-use of material. At Uluru, the trail builder has used debris from trail clearing to prevent creation of unwanted paths.



Trail alignment guidelines

Drainage and control of erosion are fundamental issues when developing any trail – especially where trails cross low-lying areas and especially given some of the torrential downpours common throughout the Gympie region.

Trail construction and associated signage should comply with relevant Australian Standards and Austroads guidelines.

2.2 Trail width and height

Walk trails should preferably have a maximum trail width of 1.5m. On some trails, the surface may need to be wider, as it may need to follow existing vehicle tracks. Where new purpose-built walk trail is developed, there is an opportunity to provide a more intimate experience by reducing the trail width to around 0.8 to 1.0m (see sketch).

Walking only trails (where horse riding and mountain biking are to be excluded) height clearance should be around 2.5m. Pruning of overhanging branches should occur where necessary to enable safe passage without the need for stooping under branches.

Single-use trail

Used by one user group only and whereby only one activity type is permitted. For example a mountain bike single track that may only be utilised by mountain bike riders.

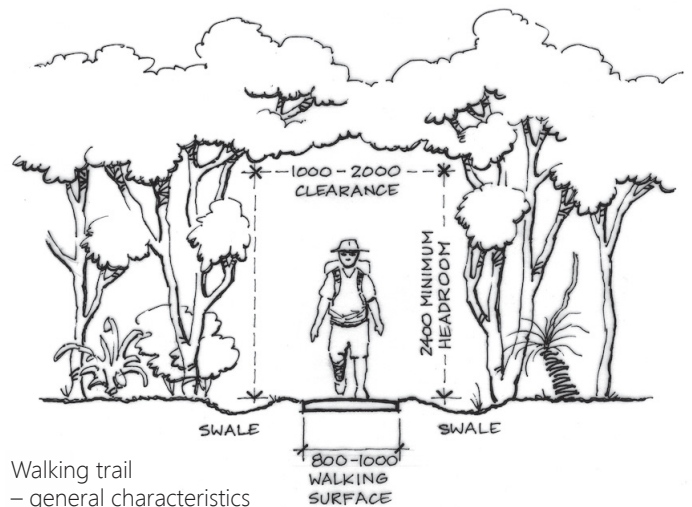
Shared-use trail

Shared by both walkers and cyclists. These trails may also be used as secondary fire trails. Shared-use trails should have a width of 2.0-2.5m (see sketch). In some situations, such as along rail trails, the width may be as wide as 3.0m (given the width of the existing formation).

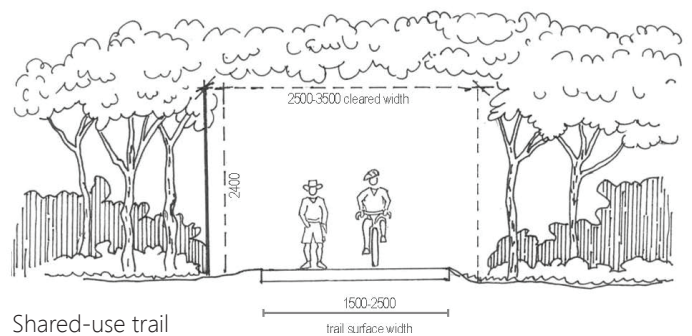
Multi-use trail

Shared by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. These trails may also be used as primary or secondary fire trails (depending on trail width).

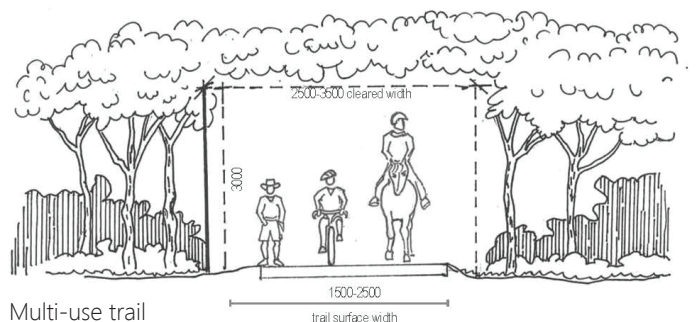
Multi-use trails width will vary. For example, low use trails should be cleared to the minimum width (1.5m) while medium-high use trails should be cleared to the maximum width shown (2.5m). An alternative trail clearing envelope for multi-use trails involves creating a separate and adjacent trail for horses. The horse trail would be 1.2m wide while the trail width to cater for shared use between walkers and cyclists will be 1.5-2.5m wide. A separate trail for horses prevents hoof damage to shared use trail surfaces. This approach is best adopted in high-medium use trails, as these are the use levels that justify the additional construction and maintenance costs.



Walking trail
– general characteristics



Shared-use trail



Multi-use trail

Shared-use and multi-use trails

Shared-use and multi-use trails are advantageous as they accommodate the needs of the majority/all of the users. Because they are shared, they are more cost effective as the infrastructure, such as signage are shared among all of the users. It also provides greater length of trail for all users. Because these trails are shared, clear signage indicating risk, warning, permitted users and relevant regulatory signage are important at trail entries and intersections. Clear sight-lines are also imperative to ensure all users can be seen from an adequate distance to be able to slow down or move to the side of the path.

2.3 Trail classification and grading

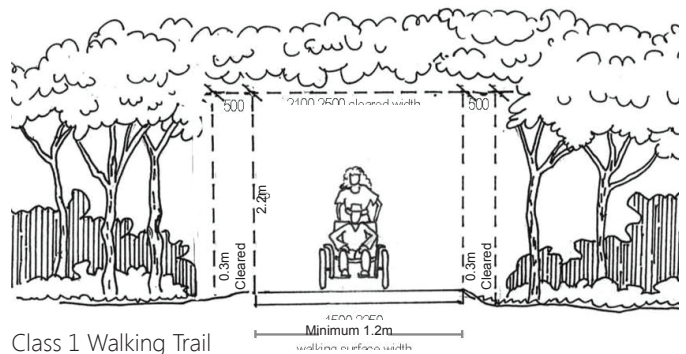
Walking trails

According to the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks (AS 2156.1-2001) there are five classes of walking trails. These are based on trail elements such as gradient, signage, infrastructure, terrain and weather. It is probable that within the Gympie region, only four trail types may be appropriate. They are illustrated below.

Class 1 Walking trail

Tracks provide opportunities for large number of visitors, including those with reduced mobility, to traverse the natural environment easily. They provide a high level of interpretation and facilities. Steps area allowed but only with adjoining ramp access. Users need no previous experience and are expected to exercise normal care regarding their personal safety.

- Width: minimum 1.2m.
- Surface: Well defined, firm even surface, (e.g. concrete, asphalt, fine gravel, sawn wood planking). Edges clearly defined.
- Grades: In accordance with the AS 1428.

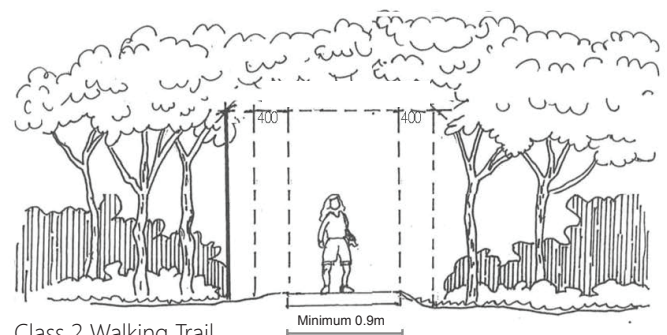


Class 1 Walking Trail

Class 2 Walking trail

Tracks provide opportunities for large numbers of visitors to walk easily in natural environments. They provide moderate to high level interpretation and facilities. Generally low gradients. Users need no previous experience and are expected to exercise normal care regarding their personal safety.

- Width: minimum 0.9m.
- Surface: Generally a modified or sealed surface. Well maintained with minimal intrusions.
- Grades: Generally no steeper than 10 per cent but there may be short sections along the trail that exceed this gradient. There is minimal use of steps.

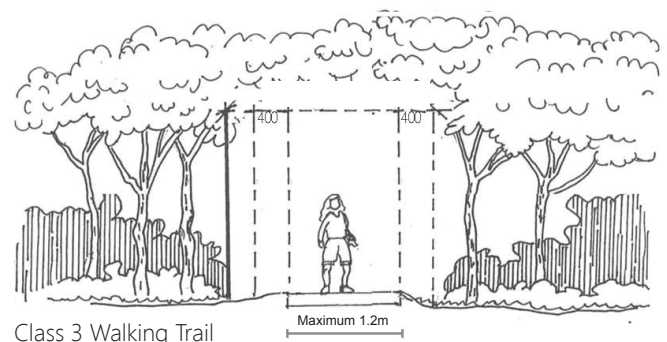


Class 2 Walking Trail

Class 3 Walking trail

Tracks provide opportunities for visitors to walk in slightly modified natural environments requiring a moderate level of fitness. Users need no bushwalking experience and a minimum level of specialised skills. Users may encounter natural hazards such as steps and slopes, unstable surfaces and minor water crossings. They are responsible for their own safety.

- Width: maximum 1.2m.
- Surface: Modified surface. May be rocky and uneven in places. Some mud and water to 10cm is acceptable in places. Extensive hardening is acceptable where required.
- Grades: May exceed 10 per cent for short sections but are generally no steeper than 10 per cent.



Class 3 Walking Trail

Class 4 Walking trail

Opportunity for visitors to explore and discover relatively undisturbed natural environment along defined tracks with minimal (if any) facilities.

- Width: maximum 0.75m (distinct track without major modification).
- Surface: Improved surfacing/drainage (minimal surfacing).
- Grades: limited to environmental and maintenance considerations.



Class 4 Walking Trail



Mountain biking trails

Construction of mountain bike trails should be based on the International Mountain Bicycling Association Trail Solutions (IMBA 2004, IMBA 2007).

Single track trails wind around obstacles and tend to slow cross country riders. The tracks should allow areas where people can pass. Two way tracks are wide enough for two bikes to just pass.

Optional lines should be incorporated into trails (A and B lines). These lines should have natural obstacles and technical features in accordance with the IMBA classification table.

IMBA Classification table






According to the IMBA mountain bike classification system, there are five different difficulty grades as tabled below.

Note:

It is recommended that within the Gympie Regional Council area, within state owned/managed lands there be no 'double black' trails or downhill, due to the environmental damage it causes. It is anticipated that white, green and blue grades will be more prevalent in the region as they cater for a larger user group.



IMBA Classification system

Easiest	White Circle	
Easy	Green Circle	
More Difficult	Blue Square	
Difficult	Black Diamond	
Extremely Difficult	Double Black Diamond	

Criteria used to determine these ratings include:

- tread width
- tread surface
- trail grade
- natural obstacles and technical
- trail features.

Horse riding trails

The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association has classified three classification types for horse trails. These are tabulated below.

Horse riding classification system

Easy	Flat, no obstacles
Moderate	Moderate slope, minor obstacles
Difficult	Steep slope, major obstacles

Restricting motorised vehicles

Unauthorised use of tracks and trails by motorised vehicles (especially trail bikes) can cause conflicts for both legitimate trail users (non-motorised) as well as for trail managers through the degrading of trail surfaces. There are often impacts for the natural environment when unauthorised users go off-trail.

Step-overs can provide a significant barrier to trail bike riders and vehicles. When coupled with a separate bike access gate, walkers, mountain bike and horse riders can easily access the trail.

The choice of barrier depends on a number of factors, including; road type, traffic volumes, trail capacity, crossing and trail visibility, likely illegal vehicle use (trail bike or 4WD), nature of the trail (single, shared or multi-use), and location of trail (urban or rural).

2.4 Trail surface material

A smooth natural earth surface is most appropriate for walk trails. In many situations the existing earth surface should be firm enough to provide pleasant walking conditions, and should be pleasing to the eye of walkers.

A smooth compacted surface is most appropriate for shared-use trails. The surface should be firm enough to provide cyclists with a relatively smooth ride, and free of potholes and undulations.

Where new trails pass through stony areas, clearing the loose stones from the trail surface should create a safer and more comfortable trail route. This would simply involve raking any loose rocks clear or hand picking loose rocks.

When upgrading existing (but eroded) tracks, replenishment of material from locally sourced gravel and dirt is environmentally appropriate and will help create a smoother, flatter surface and thereby resist further erosion. Care should be taken to ensure that the soil material used is clean and its use does not inadvertently spread weeds. Local material can provide the fill that is required to restore a trail surface to appropriate levels and maintain a 'natural' look.

Construction of rock or timber water bars and rock steps will also assist in controlling stormwater runoff and thereby preventing gullying. Directing water off the trail surface before it has developed velocity is one of the surest ways of ensuring minimal erosion is caused by torrential rainfall events.

Improving the ascent/descent in some steep sections of the proposed trails will need to be made through the creation of flights of rock steps.

2.5 Safety considerations

The most significant safety issue on many trails is that of potential conflict between motorised vehicles and trail users. Installing management access gates and fences and other barriers to prevent unauthorised entry by motor vehicles (while still allowing entry/exit by legitimate trail users) is the best means of preventing conflict between trail users and motor vehicles. Effective signage will also limit this potential problem.

Another major safety issue is that of the bridges over watercourses. Handrails on bridges will help ensure the safety of users of bridges, preventing people from falling over the sides – a Standards Australia requirement. Handrails should be installed on high bridge crossings (where drop is greater than 1.0m) to give a sense of safety, uniformity and consistency along the trail.

Major fire events in Victoria in February 2009 and more recent fires across Australia and elsewhere have highlighted the risks of bushfire as a very significant safety issue. New trails should include the preparation of a comprehensive Fire Management Plan that will define a set of fire management objectives and a series of actions to be undertaken.

2.6 Road use and road crossings

Road/trail crossings always present a special hazard which must be addressed carefully. Each trail should be clearly marked on each side of the road for easy recognition and the crossing be designed to move the trail user away from the road as quickly as possible.

Details pertaining to shared path crossings of roads can be found in Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 4: Intersections and Crossings – General (Australia). These same guidelines can be applied to trails. Generally, the treatment required at road crossings includes:

- installation of signage on the trail (both sides of the road crossing) advising/warning of the upcoming crossing of a road. These could be either (or both) "Give Way" signs and "Road Ahead" signs (depending on whether road is a 'major' or 'minor' road)
- warning signage on the road (both sides of the trail crossing) warning road users of the upcoming trail crossing
- management access gates and chicanes (permitting access by legitimate trail users)
- clearing of vegetation on both sides of the trail, on both sides of the road to provide clear visibility of approaching vehicular traffic. *Note: Austroads guidelines for shared path design have information relating to clearances and sight distances.*
- miscellaneous signage (including trail name and logo; distance signs, Emergency Marker signs; road name signs; "Unauthorised vehicles prohibited" signs; "Trail Bikes Prohibited" signs, etc).



Quality construction, such as these rock steps on the Golden View Trail in Kalamunda (WA), is the hallmark of a quality trail.

3.0 Signage

Several kinds of signage are required on trails including distance, directional, warning, promotional, etiquette and interpretive signs. It would be preferable for trail signage to be standardised across the Gympie Regional Council area, regardless of management agency. It should accord with relevant local or Australian Standards or practices.

It is recommended that the Gympie Regional Council have a consistent colour scheme and consistent and uniform suite of signs (with a logo unique to each trail).

The use of distinctive trail markers and colour scheme is important to engender a sense of uniqueness. A Style Guide should be developed.



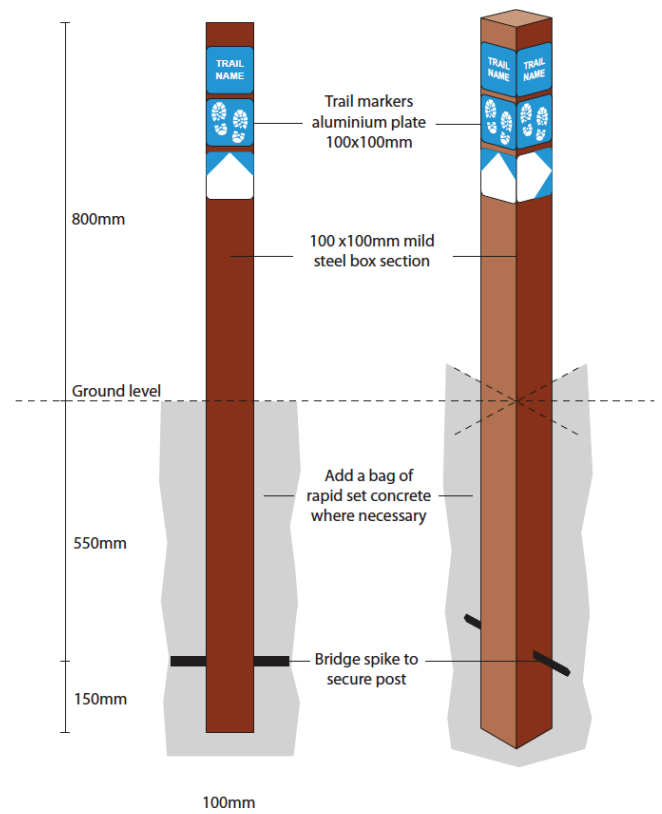
Examples of directional marker posts with directional arrows: Above left is an example from Meekatharra in WA and above right is an example from Forrest MTB Park in Victoria.

3.1 Directional Signage

Directional signage enables inexperienced trail users to feel confident and comfortable. The extent of directional signage will depend on the target market – the more ‘rugged’ the trail, the lesser the need for trail markers. A higher number of directional trail markers is required where there are potentially confusing and difficult situations.

Recognising that users may join a trail at any number of points, installing distance and direction signs at road crossings (and at intervals along each trail) will not only benefit those joining the trail at that location, but also provide additional information for users already on a trail. The distance sign should indicate the distance to the upcoming localities along the trail. In addition, such signage provides good reference points for emergency services.

Trail markers need to be placed at regular intervals along trails – and particularly at corners and junctions. The spacing and location of these markers will depend on local factors such the number of junctions and alternate tracks/routes. The intended user groups also need to be considered. The trail markers should have a distinguishing symbol or logo and an easily identifiable colour scheme.



Trail directional marker post for installation in soft ground. Hole can be dug to accommodate post and rapid set concrete is then poured into hole.

Depending on various factors such as vegetation density and number of intersecting tracks, trail markers could be installed every 100-200m or, on long straight sections of trail without intersections (such as rail trails), as much as 800-1000m apart.

Markers should include trail name, grading (difficulty), route, direction (if applicable), navigational information, as well as emergency phone numbers.

Markers are usually not required along straight sections of trail as the trail is usually clear and obvious, but given the fact that some trails will attract entry-level trail users, it is recommended that additional trail directional markers be used to assist these users. The use of a higher number of directional trail markers will result in even the most inexperienced of users feeling confident that they can remain on track. Marker arrows should be either vertical (straight ahead) or horizontal (turn here). They must be affixed (glued and screwed) to posts to prevent them being turned or removed by vandals.

At the recommended spacing's they should be clearly visible in the near distance and minimise confusion and uncertainty. It is recommended that directional markers be placed on square-section rusty steel posts.

Aluminium plates (with directional arrows and other symbols) can be attached to steel, aluminium or timber posts.

3.2 Warning and emergency signage

Warning signs are used to caution trail users of upcoming hazards. They should be prominent and easily seen by the trail user. In addition to warning signs, emergency signage needs to be provided.

There will situations along some trails that demand warning signage, primarily at road crossings facing trail users. In the case of road crossings, a "Road Ahead" yellow diamond warning sign (W6-8) some 50-70m before a crossing is recommended (on a stand-alone post), with a triangular "Give Way" sign (R1-2) on the verge at the road crossing (on a stand-alone post). Bicycle/pedestrian warning signs (W6-9) with arrow (W8-23) are recommended for installation on roads, either side of a trail crossing.

The steepness of the topography in the Gympie Regional Council area results in some trails being developed on steep hillsides with drop-offs to the side. The installation of warning signage at the commencement of these steeply sided trail routes (as well as barrier fencing) would be appropriate.

Distance signage along a trail provides good reference points for emergency services.

The emergency signage that should be erected on a trail consists of:

- distance signs at regular intervals showing distances to next town, trailhead or road crossing (double-sided)
- GPS identifiers at all road crossings (attached to the sign posts or gating systems)
- trailhead signage specifying what to do in an emergency, the numbers to call, the location of public phones, and the capacity for a flip-down sign indicating trail closure (due primarily to fire, flooding or maintenance work).

It is strongly recommended that "Emergency Markers" be installed along trails within the Gympie region, as is common along many trails in Victoria and within National Parks and other natural areas.

3.3 User etiquette signage

Managing interaction between user groups is important on all trails, and standard signage and protocols already exist. Providing adequate signage is installed and users are well aware of the likelihood of meeting other user groups, such interactions should generally be non-threatening and relatively safe.

The use of management access gates and chicanes for (authorised) trail users at various locations is regarded as the best method of enabling walkers and cyclists to access a trail, and still keep unwanted trail bike riders and motorists out.

Education through signage and use of locked gates or other vehicle exclusion barriers will help, as will encouraging bona-fide users – and local residents – to report registration numbers of illegal users.

A Code of Conduct for each user group provides all trail users with guidelines to minimise their impact on the environment, and on other trail users.

Codes of Conduct help to:

- prevent soil erosion and minimise trampling
- prevent the introduction and spread of noxious and exotic plants and protect environmentally sensitive sites
- protect waterways
- reduce the risk of fire
- minimise potential conflict with other users of the trail; and
- ensure the safety of all trail users.
- trailhead signage is the best place to provide Code of Conduct signage.

3.4 Promotional signage and mapping

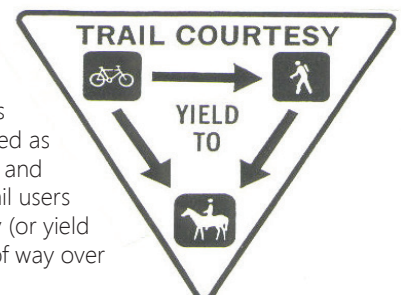
Promotional signage has been used to great effect on other trails throughout Australia, increasing general awareness of the trail network among the broader community. For the trails within Gympie Regional Council, 'promotional' signs could be incorporated into the on-road 'warning' signs. They are an excellent means of communicating the message to road users that they need to be alert for the presence of cyclists and pedestrians.

An essential requirement of any trail is appropriate and adequate mapping – for use both on trailhead signs and promotional material including brochures and web sites. A map panel – installed at the very beginning of the trail network (and occasionally at specific locations along a trail where intersecting trails exist) provides a quick visual representation – indicating the route of the trail, the destination, circuits trails and spurs.

Good trailhead mapping will contain an array of information, including:

- a stylised map with the trail route and key features
- access roads from the town (and distances)
- north point and scale bar
- trailhead facilities (e.g. parking, picnic tables, toilets, barbecues, etc)
- location of other trailheads and access roads to them
- difficulty level (easy; moderate; difficult; disabled)
- length and duration (and direction of travel if one-way loop)
- local 'experiences' and activities for trail users to engage in
- symbols indicating location of interpretive panels
- other relevant and appropriate information, such as crossroads, cross tracks, trailside furniture (seats, shelters, lookouts), viewpoints, emergency (fire) escape routes, etc.

User etiquette signage is most commonly displayed as a user 'code of conduct' and communicates which trail users are required to give way (or yield to), and have the right of way over other users.



3.5 Other attractions and facilities signage

Signs should be installed along a trail clearly directing visitors to other attractions that may be nearby (such as wineries, toilets, cafes, delis, accommodations and natural attractions).

3.6 Trail logo

It is recommended that a logo be devised for use on all trail signs associated with the Gympie Regional Council, and on trail promotional material and trailhead signage. The use of a logo unique to the Gympie Regional Council trail network will provide greater prominence and recognition of the trails, and an identifiable branding.

3.7 Interpretive signage

Interpretation is the key to the success of many trails. Trails tell stories, they entertain and engage. Trails without interpretation do not fulfil their potential and often leave users wondering why they bothered. The quality of interpretation is often the key to the success – or failure – of trail projects. What will make the trails of Gympie region popular attractions will be the quality of the interpretive material, and the manner in which that interpretive material is presented and delivered. The trail interpretive material will encourage interaction and immersion, thus providing a far more rewarding learning experience.

A wide range of materials are used for interpretive panels across Australia. These vary substantially in terms of longevity and price. Put simply, the cheaper the panel the more prone it is to vandalism and the shorter the period that it will retain its full original colour and aesthetic appeal. Experience in many locations has shown that a combination of vandalism and the weather impact on the life of interpretive panels, and can quickly erode the investment made by the host organisation.

Architectural-grade etched anodised aluminium panels retain their high-quality aesthetics into the 10 year (and beyond) time-frame – regardless of weather. Further, this material has the greatest resistance to vandalism (paint, ink, pen, felt pens, scratching, impact damage etc) of any known option on the Australian market.



These interpretive panels at the base of Uluru combine steel cut-outs, text and a solar-powered audio story.



Uniquely designed interpretive panels – similar to these on Bribie Island – could be a feature of any of the recommended trails.



Colourful and eye catching signage and displays is commonly used on trails. The above example is from Russell Falls, in Tasmania.

There are a number of innovative and artistic ways that information can be presented “on-trail” other than simply by a standard interpretive panel. Sculptures and wrought steel are two ways that provide interesting ways to present information to an audience that may be jaded by standard interpretive panels.

4.0 Boardwalks and bridges

Boardwalks are good solutions in environmentally sensitive areas where an access structure of flexible design and alignment is required to avoid ecologically critical areas, or minimise vegetation clearance. Boardwalks may be required for some of the proposed projects – the need is to be determined by detailed trail planning.

Boardwalks are a well-accepted trail construction technique, and can often replace conventional trail and path construction resulting in:

- less damage during the construction
- no erosion problems caused by construction processes
- trail surface does not wash away at times of higher water levels
- no revegetation needed because of minimal construction disturbance
- no change in drainage patterns (and subsequent effects on flora and fauna) caused by the damming effect of pavement construction or concentration of water by use of stormwater pipes.

Constraining the users to the defined pathways and minimising damage to flora. Proper evaluation of soils is critical to the economy of the system and the performance of the boardwalk. In most trails, the underfoot conditions are poor and variable. A detailed soils evaluation of the site enables more informed design decisions as well as reducing the risk for the construction contractor.

As the main use of the proposed boardwalks is recreational, it is unlikely that they will be used during extremes of weather (as opposed to those serving trips to work/education). For economy, all timbers (headstock and above) should be above the extreme water level (occasional wetting is not a problem). The boardwalk width should be similar to the trail width though cost will be an important consideration in determining final width.

The issue of whether to use handrails on a boardwalk is a complex one. The purposes for using handrails are many:

- confining the user to the boardwalk to prevent damage to the
- environment
- guiding the user
- preventing falls from the boardwalk especially when the consequences could be serious e.g. on to rocks, into deep water
- providing rest opportunities – to lean against
- crowd control – so users are not pushed over edge
- providing for the disabled.

Disadvantages of handrails include:

- increased cost
- visually intrusive especially on trails in natural areas
- debris catchers especially on trails that can be submerged in flood
- nearer the eye height so minor misalignment, poor workmanship, timber defects are more evident i.e. requires competent carpenter
- handled surfaces have to be free of splinters and preservative oils. This requires paint systems that are more labour intensive to apply and maintain.

Handrails are required where the fall to the wet land is more than 1m. The construction of a boardwalk without handrails will significantly reduce costs, and provide for a low profile and less obtrusive structure that is more aesthetically pleasing. Interpretive panels can be affixed to any boardwalks, and these will add considerably to the trail experience (and the trail cost).

Pre-cast concrete boardwalks are an innovative technique being used around Australia. Pre-cast concrete boardwalks may offer a better and more cost-effective design solution than traditional jarrah or pine boardwalks. The manufacturers (Rocla) claim they have low impact site access, are environmentally friendly, are suitable for most terrains, have longer life and less maintenance, are quicker to install and are fire and termite proof.

Composite Fibre Technologies (manufactured at Toowoomba by Wagner) are another innovative potential product that could be used for boardwalk construction. The manufacturers claim that the technology offers high strength, low weight and long service life. One significant advantage over concrete is easier shipping due to weight. Individual bridges shall be constructed to suit each specific location and are to be designed by a suitably qualified engineer. The design of a bridge is subject to a number of variables that need to be considered. These include:

- loading (determined by types of users)
- span
- flood levels and velocity
- accessibility for construction
- soil and bank stability
- handrails/balustrades – fall heights, user groups, flood impacts
- fire risk.

A clear statement of the bridge's purpose i.e. what load will it be carrying – people, horses, vehicles – will determine the bridge loading and design. Vehicle loading may be necessary for trail maintenance. A bridge carrying a horse will need to be designed for 5kPa loading.

Bridges are suitable for use on multi-use trails with applications of non-slip surface material and suitable structural loading to carry horses. Where fall to the ground exceeds 1m, balustrades are required. On any multi-use trail that has bridges over 1m height, appropriate warning notes should be included on all trailhead signage and trail publications alerting horse riders. Install a 'Bridge Ahead' sign 50m from either end of any bridge that will carry horses.

Bridge width should be similar to the trail width though cost will be an important consideration in determining final width. When using a pre-fabricated bridge, the width may be determined by the manufacturer's standard lengths. Like boardwalks, bridges can be constructed from a number of materials:

- timber should be Class 1 and Class 2 treated hardwood, H4 kiln dried ACQ treated pine or other durable timber. Timber decking should be superdeck (hardwood – F14 (minimum grade) though F17 is the preferred option (+/- 135 x 35mm sized, pencil round) with minimum cuts no smaller than 50mm to the small end

- composite Fibre Technologies (CFT) provides an alternative construction material to timber. The material is light to use and long lasting but is more expensive
- recycled plastic (such as Replas Enduroplank) can be used. This material is light to carry if site access is an issue. It is not the cheapest material but maintenance costs should be lower than for timber. Handrails, girders and bearers come in one length. These bridges can carry horses
- hot dipped galvanised steel provides an option for bridges. Detailing and corrosion protection needs to be taken into account in the design of structures utilising hot dipped galvanised steel. Evidence suggests this material can provide up to 30 years maintenance-free.

In coastal environments, all steel constructed items, components and fastenings should be stainless steel.



Fibreglass Reinforced Polyester (FRP) Mini-Mesh Grating is rapidly increasing in popularity as a walkway surface in sensitive reserves, such as here at Waverley in Sydney.



A pre-cast concrete boardwalk can be integrated with timber elements, such as here at Secret Harbour in south-west WA.



5.0 Trail furniture

All trails, especially in natural areas, should include places where users can sit and rest and relax and enjoy the views.

There are a number of locations, such as at trailheads and at intervals along each section of trail, well suited to the placement of facilities that would benefit all trail users. This furniture could include shelters, tables and seating in appropriate and attractive locations with expansive outlooks. Care should be taken in the selection of styles of seating and tables. Many styles commonly used on trails are more suited to backyard gardens, or city parks. Few look 'right' in the natural environment.

6.0 Trailheads and parking

A trailhead is usually defined by the existence of a car parking area, often with picnic facilities, interpretive signage and a map panel of the trail network and features of interest. They should have ample places for parking of cars.

Usually in a trail development project it is valuable to have a specific Trailhead from which all directions and distances are taken, and to which users, particularly visitors to the region, can be directed.

Appendix 3

Trail Management, Marketing and Resourcing

1.0 Trail management and maintenance

The increased demand for people participating in more nature based recreation activities can put pressure on these natural areas (and ultimately result in environmental degradation). Therefore the activities, trails and trail-based infrastructure needs to be maintained and managed carefully to ensure that the area can sustain the demand and that the user can obtain a safe, quality experience.

Trail management group

The trail development program set out in this plan is reasonably substantial, and the ongoing implementation may be somewhat complex. There are many stakeholders, both private and public, all with a strong interest in this project.

To ensure a smooth trails development program, it is recommended that Council establish a trails management group to oversee implementation of the plan.

At a general level, skill sets that would be useful for the group members to have as a whole include:

- leadership skills – critical to hold the committee/s together, to inspire and motivate, to advocate to a wider audience and to maintain focus on a long term vision
- community skills – to motivate community and volunteer efforts
- business skills – to understand, communicate and tap into locally based businesses, in ways that garner their support
- entrepreneurial and administrative skills – General administration skills with a business-like approach is critical, as is expertise and knowledge of government grants, and how to apply for them. are also critical
- environmental/scientific skills – understanding of native flora and fauna and wider environmental issues

- engineering skills – the capacity to understand design and construction of all manner of trail infrastructure
- governmental skills – the ability to liaise with and understand government departments and politicians
- users – understanding the needs and requirements of various targeted user groups.

The group should ideally comprise a representative from:

- Gympie Region Council Councillors and staff
- Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
- user groups (including Cooloola Trail Care Alliance)
- local environmental groups
- the business community
- other people or groups as deemed appropriate.

The roles of the group would include the following tasks:

- oversee the implementation of this trails plan
- preparation of funding applications to external funding sources
- actively managing the trails network
- co-ordinating regular maintenance of the trails
- co-ordinating community involvement in the development of the trails, trails usage and events on the trails
- marketing and promotion of the Gympie regional trail network (through such activities as developing maps, newsletters and other publications)
- preparing trail management plans (discussed adjacent).

Establishing partnerships

Creating and maintaining partnerships between a number of different stakeholders and groups can assist in lowering maintenance costs, help develop trails, assist in advocating the trails as well as creating interesting and unique trail experiences. Some examples of what partnerships could exist and how they could benefit the trail network within the Gympie Regional Council are summarised below.

- Establishing land owner/manager partnerships
 - co-operation and partnerships between land managers and landowners assist in managing land across all tenures (for example Council, Hancocks, SeqWater and QPWS).
- Trailcare and environmental volunteer partnerships
 - local volunteer groups (e.g. Cooloola Trail Care Alliance, Mary River Catchment Group, "Friends of" groups) or government funded volunteer programs (e.g. Green Corps and Conservation Volunteers Australia) can partner with Council and/or land managers, assisting in planning, developing and managing trails and the surrounding natural environment. These groups can also assist in gaining funding for trail development.
- Local business/sponsors partnerships
 - local business (such as local bike shops or cafes) can promote their businesses by sponsoring trail infrastructure elements (trail markers, signs etc.) with their name/logo placed within the sponsored element
 - local businesses can also local help map and market trails.
- Peak bodies partnerships
 - partnerships with peak bodies (such as Parks and Leisure Australia, Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation and the Heart Foundation) can help assist in advocating and promoting the trails.
- Community partnerships
 - partnerships with organisations (including schools, scouts, special needs and other relevant local clubs) can be beneficial, where their outdoor programs may assist promoting and increasing trail use as well as assist in gaining grants.

- Local tour operator partnerships
 - partnerships with local tour operators e.g. Destination Gympie, Mary Valley Tourism, Gympie Cooloola Tourism can help streamline tourism initiatives.
- Partnerships to develop local tourism opportunities
 - partnerships with local tour operators and private/community organisations (such as BandBs, retreats, Mary Valley Growers, local village markets, adventure companies, private tour companies, local Aboriginal groups, birdwatching organisations) to develop and promote unique local tourism initiatives.
- Public/private partnerships
 - public private partnerships between (e.g. Council and Queensland Conference and Camping Centres) can allow for the growth of education-based expeditions
 - partnerships with event organisers (such as TRAQ, Multisport Australia, to promote the trail network and bring event-based tourism into the area.

Trail management plans

Individual trail management plans should be prepared for trail networks covered in this report, incorporating elements of this report and broader trail management issues. The plan should be both flexible and responsive to change, yet set a firm guiding outline for future directions and priorities. Trails which do not have a management plan suffer from decisions taken on the run, out of context or as knee-jerk responses to critical situations.

Trail Management Plans involve detailed consideration of a number of matters:

- clarification of management roles and responsibilities
- risk management policy (including CPTED management, Fire management and emergency evacuation procedures)
- group and commercial usage policy and guidelines
- provision of essential services for trail users (water points, toilets, rubbish bin, lighting and other desirable trail furniture)
- identification of any outstanding access/egress works for the trail, including disability works)

- promotional and interpretation management sub-plans, including signage specifications and interpretation suggestions
- marketing policies
- mapping and brochures – guiding principles
- timetable for reviewing and updating the plan
- trail construction standard
- revegetation and weed control policies
- litter/rubbish management
- flood and erosion management (where required)
- water quality management
- environmental protection of significant areas
- education and/or volunteer group management
- vermin and feral animal control
- target user groups and user experiences
- ongoing enhancements
- trail maintenance plan
- monitoring programs, including a hazard inspection timetable
- clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Bush fire management plans

Fire risk is becoming an issue of increasing importance to land managers, (particularly in areas where people are frequenting). Bush fire risk management therefore is critical in order to address landowners/managers duty of care (managing risk) and climate change. Bushfire management plans should:

- provide a safe recreation trail for all user groups
- provide safe access for all emergency vehicles
- minimise the risks of fires spreading from or onto the trail
- develop annual maintenance works and maintenance programs (with an accent on fire hazard reduction).

Plans should include:

- risk identification – assets and hazards (maps and data layers)
- risk assessment – identifying key risk areas
- risk treatment – identification of a local works program (table form) with specific agency/land manager Annual Schedules of Works.

Trail maintenance

Ongoing trail maintenance is a crucial component of an effective management program, yet countless quality trails have literally disappeared because no one planned a maintenance program. It is therefore essential that funds be set aside in yearly budgets for maintenance of these trails.

Trail maintenance can cost up to and over 10 per cent of total construction costs (depending on a number of variables). An overall trails maintenance budget cannot be determined until individual trail planning is undertaken which determines trail length, trail materials, ancillary facilities etc. In general terms, \$5/metre/year should be allowed for path maintenance, \$20/metre/year should be allowed for boardwalk and bridge maintenance, while \$2/metre/year should be allowed for crushed (limestone/granite/basalt) and natural surfaces trail maintenance.

Resourcing a maintenance program is crucial, and funds will be required on an ongoing basis to enable this essential maintenance. It would be short sighted to construct a trail/trail network without preparing for the demands of managing and maintaining it.

It should be ensured that whoever is charged with ongoing responsibility for managing the trails has genuine and specific trail knowledge. It is not sufficient to be a skilled gardener, conservationist or environmental scientist. If training is required to bring staff knowledge levels up to a high standard, this should be seen as a priority to be undertaken early in the construction process. Trail skills are better learned over a longer time, with hands-on practice, than in short briefing sessions.

Trail maintenance plans/programs

Future maintenance demands can be minimised through careful planning and construction. Building good trails is the best way of minimising future problems and costs. A clear and concise management plan with a regular maintenance program written into it will also aid significantly in managing ongoing resource demands.

The goals of a trail maintenance plan are to:

- ensure that trail users continue to experience safe and enjoyable conditions
- guard against the deterioration of trail infrastructure, thereby maintaining the investment made on behalf of the community
- set in place a management process to cover most foreseeable risks (and thereby minimising the trail manager’s exposure to potential public liability claims arising from trail based incidents).

Erosion, vegetation regrowth, fallen trees and branches and damage to signage are likely to be the greatest maintenance activities on the trails.

The plan needs to include not only the replacement of damaged facilities but also preventative maintenance and the replacement of worn out facilities. Providing these effects are attended to early, they are largely labour intensive rather than capital expensive. Calamitous events such as fire or flood will naturally generate significant rebuilding activity and consequent costs. These events are generally unmanageable, and should simply be accepted as part of the longer-term reality of a trails program.

Trail maintenance activities

The discussion that follows provides general guidance for the development of maintenance plans for each trail. It is not a substitute for specific maintenance plans for each of the trails.

Table 1: General maintenance activities

Activity	Site	Frequency
Undertake full inspections of all trails	Entire trail	Every second month
Check, repair or replace all trail signage, esp. road-crossings and directional markers	Entire trail	Every second month – at each trail inspection
Check and cut-back overhanging or intruding vegetation (not trail surface)	Entire trail	Every six months, unless obviously requiring attention at regular inspections
Sweep or rake debris from trail surfaces, especially at road crossing points	Various sites along entire trail	Every six months
Check condition of trail surface for erosion (or other) damage and arrange repairs if necessary; trim off regrowth vegetation	Entire trail	At each inspection. Arrange repairs immediately if acute, or schedule maintenance for six monthly work sessions if not; rake-hoe regrowth vegetation each inspection
Check structural stability of built structures such as bird hides, viewing platforms, boardwalks, interpretive signage, interpretive shelters	Various locations	Every six months
Undertake Hazard Inspection and prepare Hazard Inspection Report	Entire trail	Annually

It should be noted that this schedule does not allow for repair works above and beyond ‘normal’ minor activities. For example, if a section is subject to heavy rain, and erosion control fails, additional repair works will need to be undertaken.

Maintenance on all trails will be divided between regular inspections and simple repairs, a one (or two) person job, and quarterly programs undertaking larger jobs such as significant signage repairs or weed/vegetation control. A range of basic machinery, tools and equipment will be required for this work.

Clear records of each activity/inspection will be kept by the agency with responsibility for maintenance. Such pro-formas serve to maximise user safety and minimise liability risks. It should also provide a valuable record of works undertaken and make for efficient use of maintenance resources over time.

The activities set out in this document could be built in to other maintenance activities of the Gympie Regional Council – such as regular monitoring and maintenance program for a range of other recreational facilities.

In general, maintenance plans are based around regular inspections, at which time simple maintenance activities should take place concurrently. More time-consuming maintenance activities should take place every six months, while detailed Hazard Inspections should occur annually. Further, the capacity to respond immediately to random incoming reports of hazards or major infrastructure failures should be built into the Plans. Table 12 gives a suggested schedule for general maintenance activities to achieve acceptable maintenance levels. Explanatory notes pertaining to each Activity follow the table below, and should be read prior to undertaking the activity.

Trail signage

The majority of signs will occur at trailheads. Each trailhead should be carefully checked to ensure that all signage is present, and that all signs are clearly visible and legible. An inventory of locations needs to be prepared to assist in regular maintenance.

Vegetation

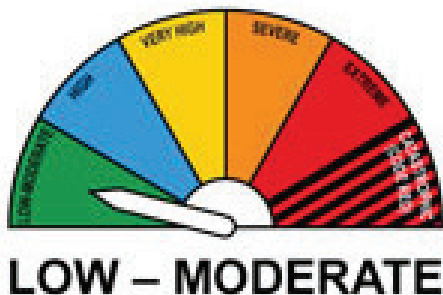
Undergrowth vegetation grows quickly, and over time will continue to intrude into the trail 'corridor'. Such intruding vegetation will be cut back to provide clear and safe passage – a minimum clear space 1.5m wide and 2.5m high (on walk trails), and 2.5m wide by 3.5m high (on shared use trails) should be provided at all times. Care will be taken to ensure that sharp ends are not left protruding into the trail as these can harm trail users. It should be noted that trailside vegetation hangs lower when wet, and allowances should be made for this when assessing whether or not to prune. "Blow-downs" – trees or limbs which have fallen across the trail – will be cleared as a part of this process. Sight lines must be kept clear either side of road crossings as a part of this process, to ensure that users can clearly see a safe distance either way at road crossings.

Trail surfaces

Many of the trail sections will require regular surface maintenance. Primary focus will be on erosion damage caused by water flowing down or across the trail and by illegal motor vehicle use. This must be repaired as soon as it is noted, or it will get worse, quickly.

Interpretive signage

Once interpretive panels have been installed along the trails, these should be checked for vandalism and cleaned if necessary. If damage is too great, replacement is essential. An inventory of locations needs to be prepared to assist in regular maintenance.

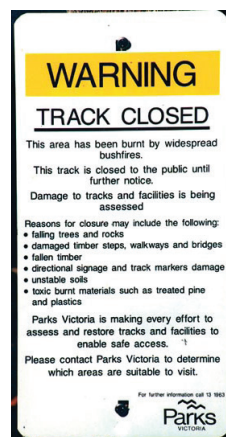


Public liability and risk management

It is prudent that the land managers carry a significant duty of care towards those visitors accessing lands vested in them. The maintenance of quality trails is therefore critical from this perspective. Recent legislative changes across Australia have reduced the number of small claims against land managers. However, liability generally rests with the land managers and hence, every attempt should be made to minimise the risk of accident or injury to trail users (and therefore the risk of legal action).

While public liability is certainly an issue for all land managers, it is not a reason to turn away from providing safe, sustainable and enjoyable resources. It is simply a mechanism by which to recognise the responsibilities inherent in managing natural and built resources. Dealing with a perceived liability threat is not about totally removing that threat – it is about doing all that is manifestly possible to provide safe access opportunities for visitors, thereby minimising the risk of liability claims.

A formal Hazard Inspection process is crucial in the ongoing maintenance plan. Not only will this define maintenance required and/or management decisions to be addressed, it is vital in ensuring safe conditions and therefore in dealing with any liability claim which may arise in the future. Courts are strongly swayed by evidence of a clear and functional program, and a regular series of reports, with follow-up actions, will go a long way to mitigating responsibility for injuries. Further, clearly defined 'User Responsibility' statements in brochures, maps, policy documents, plans and public places will assist this process.



2.0 Marketing and tourism

Availability of trail information

Access to information describing the location of existing trails is surprisingly difficult in many places in Australia. In most locations, a multitude of organisations, both state government and local government, and community groups that manage the natural areas and parks within a local government area (and surrounding local government areas) makes the accessibility of pertinent information complex.

For most people, land management boundaries are meaningless and irrelevant. The community does not discern any difference between management agencies. Therefore, when attempting to acquire information, the community would assume that whatever trails information is available would be readily accessible at many outlets. However, in reality, information about trails is usually difficult to obtain.

This situation is clearly evident within the Gympie region, where access to trail information can be accessed through a number of trail information sources, each providing limited and varied trail information, usually pertaining only few of the trails within the region. This makes it quite difficult to know which source to access to get a complete trails 'picture' and can be very confusing for potential trail users.

Online Information

A priority action would be to establish one (non-commercial) centralised website containing the trail and trail-related information within the Gympie region. Trail information is to be clear and comprehensive, and is to be constantly updated, particularly, as the trail network develops and progresses. Other tourism websites (including private operators and community organisations) can provide links to the website. It is recommended that "Destination Gympie" host this website.

Develop a Facebook page to promote the trails through social media. Ideally this should be an active page and operated by the web host.

Brochures

Develop a comprehensive trails brochure suite that gives detailed trail information on the trails and tracks systems within each locality. This includes information on both the overall trail network within each natural area as well as information pertaining to individual trails. Trail information to include trail maps, distance, duration, difficulty (class) as well as any information regarding the area (cultural, natural etc).

All trails-related brochures and leaflets (when prepared) should be readily available at visitor information centres within each of the four localities (and also available online). Potential trail users should not be expected to travel all over the Council area seeking the information they desire.

When trails are upgraded and/or constructed, new brochures following a consistent theme are to be prepared.

Mapping of trails

An essential requirement of any trail is appropriate and adequate mapping – for use on trailhead signs and promotional material (including brochures and web sites). These maps also need to be able to be downloaded onto Smartphones (either from the website or via an app).

Maps provide a quick visual representation of the trail route, indicating primarily the route of the trail, the destination, whether it is out and back, or a loop.

Trailhead mapping is recommended for all trails.

Good mapping will contain an array of information, including:

- access roads from nearby towns (and distances)
- north point and scale bar
- trailhead location and trailhead facilities (e.g. parking, picnic tables, toilets, barbecues, etc)
- difficulty level (easy; moderate; difficult; disabled)
- length and duration (and direction of travel if one-way loop)

- points of interest along the trail, including geographical features
- symbols indicating location of interpretive panels (if any)
- other information if relevant and appropriate, such as crossroads, cross tracks, trailside furniture (seats, shelters, lookouts), viewpoints, emergency (fire) escape routes, etc.

QR Codes located on hardcopy maps, brochures or signage are also good ways of providing additional information of interest that pertain to the trails.



Marketing of trails

One of the best mechanisms for ensuring the sustainability of the trails is to have lots of people using them, including local residents and visitors. Key steps that need to be taken to build usage of the trails include:

- developing quality trails and trail information
- creating a unique experience for users
- developing a cohesive trail brand and identity
- creating awareness of the trails.

Developing quality trails and information

Trails need to be developed as a high-quality experience for potential users, that is, the quality of experience becomes the primary focus of the trails.

Trail networks should be based around and to include points of interest (e.g. to summits, scenic views or water) and the sites that support the trails should not be degraded (in fact, they should rather be upgraded).

Trail information is to be provided using high quality interpretive material as well as preparation of clear, concise, informative brochure(s) or booklets, including an easy to read map.

Online information needs to be easy to access and concise, with sufficient information able to be downloaded or easily read on Smartphones.

Creating a unique experience

The purpose of a marketing and promotional campaign is to create awareness of the unique features and attractions within the region, and the means of accessing them via the trails.

Generally, tourists visit a certain area for a unique experience. For example, overseas visitors are likely to visit an area to see local fauna (such as native birdlife and marsupials), flora (such as rare or flowering plants and local floral biodiversity) as well as to experience the local history and indigenous culture. A region should therefore be marketed, whereby it sets itself apart from other surrounding regions, showcasing its unique landscape, environment and cultural heritage.

A trail potentially provides a visitor with a means experiencing close-up encounters of the environmental and cultural features of a place, thereby also providing visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the local or regional area they are visiting. Trails should therefore allow for eco/nature based tourism (for example wildlife tourism and birdwatching) and include interpretative signage and theming, to promote the local values

Developing trails that are interesting and that offer a unique experience, can provide a good base for economic and social regional tourism development. Celebrating these unique features will also generate local support and enthusiasm for the project, as well as generating state-wide promotional coverage of the project through local and state media and the formation of partnership opportunities through networking.

Branding and identity

When marketing the trail network, a comprehensive brief needs to be developed. Designers are to be engaged to develop branding strategy including design and developing a (unique) logo, style manual and design standards. Logo should have colour and mono output versions.

This brand type is to be utilised across the entire trails network to ensure style and branding consistency.

Creating awareness

It is necessary to ensure that tourists (e.g. visitors to the region or those passing through) and locals are made aware of the trails existence and their recent development. To facilitate this usage, a marketing and promotional campaign is proposed. This campaign can include:

- market planning and target marketing by engaging marketing consultants to work with a local implementation group/tourism operators to review existing tourism products and market test trails concepts
- developing a 12-month promotional program to promote trails and other facilities, including targeted advertising, listing of websites, briefing and information distribution to information to linked visitor information outlets, publicity program to niche and mainstream print and radio media
- develop online social media coverage through Facebook and blogs, targeting many groups, including local and international birdwatching, bushwalking, mountain biking or horse riding groups and organisations, private ventures (bike shops, bed and breakfasts, retreats, private tour or adventure operators, events organisers, etc.). Many of these groups are (sometimes only) active via webpages and social media, and by linking new information (such as liking or posting information), can generate a huge amount of trail awareness. This coverage needs to be active e.g. showing the progression of building a track network. This activity can also help attract grants
- develop a familiarisation program for the tourism industry network e.g. local visitor centres, Queensland tourism, RACQ, media, Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation, Destination Gympie and local businesses

- develop partnerships with peak bodies such as Parks and Leisure Australia, Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation and the Heart Foundation to assist in advocating and promote the trail network
- partner with event organisers and sponsors to hold a variety of events within the trail network. Events can either be races or endurance and include mountain bike, rogain, trail running, multisport, walking (e.g. Heart Foundation or kokoda style)
- contract specialist brochure distribution firm/s for targeted brochure delivery to key information outlets throughout Queensland
- partner with local and visiting organisations and community groups (e.g. scouts, school groups, special needs groups).

3.0 Resources and funding

Facing an ambitious project that encompasses significant trail development can be daunting indeed. Proponents may well ask: "Where are the funds going to come from for trail development, promotion and the range of other matters necessary for the creation of this trail?"

Resourcing trail construction and promotion programs can certainly be challenging, as can resourcing ongoing maintenance. It must be recognised that projects such as this are an investment in the future.

Once the decision is taken to proceed with developing the trail/a portion of the trail network, one of the first tasks will be to seek development funding. All funding sources available at that time will need to be identified and funding applications prepared as soon as possible and dedicated resources made available.

Commonwealth and State Government grants

Commonwealth Government programs are currently the subject of various reviews and some announced grants have been withdrawn. Such decisions make the need to review this section at the time of seeking grants critical.

The Commonwealth Government has indicated its desire to support demand-driver infrastructure for the tourism industry. Through this program, the government will seek to ensure that the benefits of any government investment can be multiplied across the tourism, hospitality and accommodation sectors. The program is planned to come into effect from 1 July 2014. Details on this program are yet to be made public. The other major tourism funding source which has been previously accessed for these types of projects – the T-QUAL grants; tourism quality projects (now finished). The Regional Development Australia Fund is also under review.

State government funding over the past few years has tended to move away from infrastructure and planning, and appears to be more focused assisting in active participation. However a recent budget announcement (2014/15 State budget) is of direct relevance to two of the proposed projects.

The Queensland Government is seeking to partner with Queensland Councils, with closed or non-operational rail corridors in their area, to expand the state's rail trail network. The grants program will only be available to Councils, as government entities that can hold tenure over the rail trail corridors. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will need to agree that the corridor is no longer needed for rail purposes and can be converted to a recreational rail trail. The state will invite expressions of interest from Councils with suitable rail trail proposals. New rail trail proposals will need to demonstrate clear support from local businesses and community groups. Further details can be found at www.dsdp.qld.gov.au/infrastructure-and-planning/recreational-rail-trail-grants-program.html

Federal grants

Current federal grants can be found at:

- [Business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au/Grantfinder/Grantfinder.aspx) (www.business.gov.au/Grantfinder/Grantfinder.aspx)
- [Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development](http://www.regional.gov.au/regional/programs/rdaf.aspx) (www.regional.gov.au/regional/programs/rdaf.aspx)

State government

Current state grants can be found at the following.

For local governments

- [Queensland Government](http://www.qld.gov.au/community/community-organisations-volunteering/funding-grants-resources/) (www.qld.gov.au/community/community-organisations-volunteering/funding-grants-resources/)
- [Queensland Government](http://pan.search.qld.gov.au/search/search.cgi?query=grants&dx=0&dy=0&num_ranks=10&tiers=off&collection=qld-gov&profile=qld&form=grants) (http://pan.search.qld.gov.au/search/search.cgi?query=grants&dx=0&dy=0&num_ranks=10&tiers=off&collection=qld-gov&profile=qld&form=grants)
- [Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing](http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/funding/overview/index.html) (www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/funding/overview/index.html)
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs](http://www.datsima.qld.gov.au/datsima/grants-and-funding/economic-participation-grants-program) (www.datsima.qld.gov.au/datsima/grants-and-funding/economic-participation-grants-program)

For local communities

- [Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing](http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/funding/other-grants.html) (www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/funding/other-grants.html)
- [Queensland Government](http://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/) (www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/)
- [Department of Transport and Main Road](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Community-and-environment/Community-engagement/Grants-and-subsidies.aspx) (www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Community-and-environment/Community-engagement/Grants-and-subsidies.aspx)
- [Department of Justice and Attorney General](http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/corporate/sponsorships-and-grants/grants/community-benefit-funding-programs/funding-guidelines) (www.justice.qld.gov.au/corporate/sponsorships-and-grants/grants/community-benefit-funding-programs/funding-guidelines)
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- [Department Of Communities, Child Safety And Disability Services](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/community-support/caring-for-our-community-grants) (www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/community-support/caring-for-our-community-grants)
- [NRMA Insurance](http://www.communitygrantsprogram.com.au/) (www.communitygrantsprogram.com.au/)

Local government

Developer contributions

The Sustainable Planning Act and documents prepared pursuant to the Act such as the planning schemes (with associated schedules and policies) provide mechanisms to secure contributions for community purposes and are one mechanism for securing trail corridors and contributions. Council should seek updated advice if it wishes to pursue this option.

It should be noted that developer contributions are only likely to supply a small amount of necessary funds for trail development, particularly when it comes to upgrading existing trails.

Council could consider recouping some of the costs of the trails through either an Infrastructure Charges Schedule (ICS) or a separate rate or charge. Should a separate rate or charge be imposed, this could also cover all rateable properties, but this may not be politically acceptable to Council.

Other Council-based funding mechanisms

There is a range of rating and charging mechanisms available to all Councils. An introduction to the mechanisms is provided below. If any of these mechanisms were to be applied to funding trail projects, a further level of investigation would be required to ensure that the 'nexus' principles were maintained. That is, the 'rules' associated with the application of the rates to development differs with the different rates and charges noted below.

- **General Rates**
 - applies across all rateable properties and is treated as a tax. General rates can be used to fund the costs of any or all of the functions of local government.
- **Differential General Rates**
 - a notional user pays charge, which is struck for particular areas or sites to generate funds. Differential rates can apply to areas with different servicing arrangements (e.g. urban residential areas vs. rural residential) and designed to distribute the rate burden more equitably across different classes of land within the community (as opposed to a general rate).
- **Special Rates and Charges**
 - special rates and charges may be levied in addition to a general rate or differential general rate or in combination with any other rates. A local Council may levy more than one special rate or charge. Each rate or charge must relate to the provision of a service, facility or activity. A special rate or charge is only levied on specifically identified rateable land. Special rates have been used to fund retail centre streetscape improvements. A special rate or charge is effectively a local tax used to fund infrastructure works or services benefiting a particular area and applying as a one-off, up-front payment, or as a series of periodic payments.

- General and Regulatory User Charges
 - a Council may, by law or resolution, fix (general) user charges for services and facilities supplied by it. Charges are not a taxing power and, as such, must be no more than the cost of providing the service or facility for which it is levied. Charges can be levied for trading activities, where user charges are fixed in connection with the supply of goods and services (e.g. admitting a person to a structure or place such as a community hall or public swimming pool). They can also be levied to cover the cost of regulatory activities, where regulatory charges are imposed as a condition of obtaining an approval to carry out an activity.

Private sponsorship

Sponsorship is big business – and very competitive. Significant sums can be gained if benefits can be proven. Any company with an operation within the region would appear to be a potential sponsor.

Two main options exist:

- negotiate with local/national corporate entities (which have a geographical and social connection with the area through which a trail passes)
- go after the 'big' players for big projects. Many large companies have formalised sponsorship programs.

For example:

- Alcoa has been a major contributor to Western Australia's two premier long distance tracks – the Bibbulmun Track (walk) and the Munda Biddi Trail (mountain bike)
- BHP Billiton provided over \$200,000 for the Coast to Crater Rail Trail in western Victoria to help construction
- GlaksoSmithKline Australia donated \$10,000 to the development of the Warrnambool to Port Fairy rail trail project to encourage employees to combine their physical exercise with commuting to work.

Companies are looking to be good local citizens and being associated with a positive asset such as a trail can be good for business. Companies should be approached with the message that such a project will bring a number of benefits to the region.

Corporate entities are looking to make community commitments in a number of ways other than direct funding. The Macquarie Bank Foundation looks to supply time and expertise as well as funding. Many other banks have both a competitive grants program and a volunteer scheme that provides paid volunteer leave to every employee. Organisations such as the ANZ and National Banks also look for community development options for their staff e.g. corporate team building days are held on a trail.

What is important in dealing with potential sponsors is to have:

- a clear trail development plan (the next stage of work should the trail proceed)
- a well-developed message
- clear pointers as to what and where their engagement might be
- a clear indication of how they might benefit from their involvement.

Other trail resourcing opportunities

Heart Foundation

The Heart Foundation Local Government Awards are held each year to acknowledge projects and initiatives that local councils and organisations are delivering in their communities to promote and improve heart health. While not a significant source of funds, there is a \$5000 prize for the overall winner and a \$2000 prize for each State winner. The award also offers positive promotional opportunities. For further details, the Heart Foundation's website is www.heartfoundation.com.au.

Green Corps

Green Corps activities include conservation and natural resource management roles working with local community groups, charities and/or government organisations on environment projects. Green Corps is a federally funded program, whereby a major project provides a host partner agency with trainees and a supervisor for a specified timeframe to undertake the project. All materials, tools and technical supervision, accommodation and some other basic requirements must be provided. This program may assist Council in the physical development or maintenance of a trail related program.

Work for the Dole

Schemes to provide meaningful work experience and some training for long-term unemployed are provided under the Work for the Dole scheme. The program generally only supplies labour – the host agency is responsible for tools, materials, technical supervision etc. (Both Work for the Dole and Green Corps programs are being updated to reflect new Commonwealth government arrangements).

Conservation Volunteers Australia

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) provides small crews of volunteers, with a supervisor, to undertake environmental activities. Teams of between of people work for a specified timeframe (usually a couple of weeks). An administration fee is imposed by CVA. Materials, tools and technical supervision need to be provided by the host agency. CVA has been involved in trails project elsewhere in Australia – they were heavily involved in construction of a new walking track around the base of Mt Tibrogargan in the Glasshouse Mountains in South East Queensland. This trail is of the highest quality and is a testimony to their skills as trail builders.

Prison Work Crews

Crews of minimum custody program offenders have worked extensively in trail construction in Western Australia in the last 15 years. In the Northern Territory and NSW, prison crews have been successfully used recently on trail and park projects.

Volunteers

Volunteers are often the last thought-of resource but are often the most effective. Many trails are only built – and then kept alive – by volunteer input. A good example of this within Gympie region are the Cooloola Trail Care Alliance. Establishing a specific local 'Trail Volunteers' or 'Friends of...' group, or tap into existing community organisations such as service clubs, progress associations, schools, scouts etc can also assist in trail development.

Volunteer labour can also be used in innovative ways to benefit a number of community sectors. The Lilydale Warburton Rail Trail (Victoria) needed bridge construction and put out a public tender for the work. The tender was won by the local branch of the Country Fire Authority, which needed a new fire engine. Labour in bridge construction was "swapped" for a new fire engine.

Philanthropy

There are a number of philanthropic organisations in Australia. The brief has not permitted time to extensively research all these.

The Macquarie Bank Foundation currently contributes more than US\$2 million a year in community grants. Its core areas include the health, education, the arts, welfare and the environment (trails can address each of these core areas).

The Ian Potter Foundation has a number of interests, including environment and conservation (details can be found at www.ianpotter.org.au). Its' Environment and Conservation program supports projects that combine elements of biodiversity and ecology preservation, volunteerism and community education. A trail development could fall within this mandate.

