

PLANNING ACCESS AND RECREATION IN YURAYGIR NATIONAL PARK



A DISCUSSION PAPER

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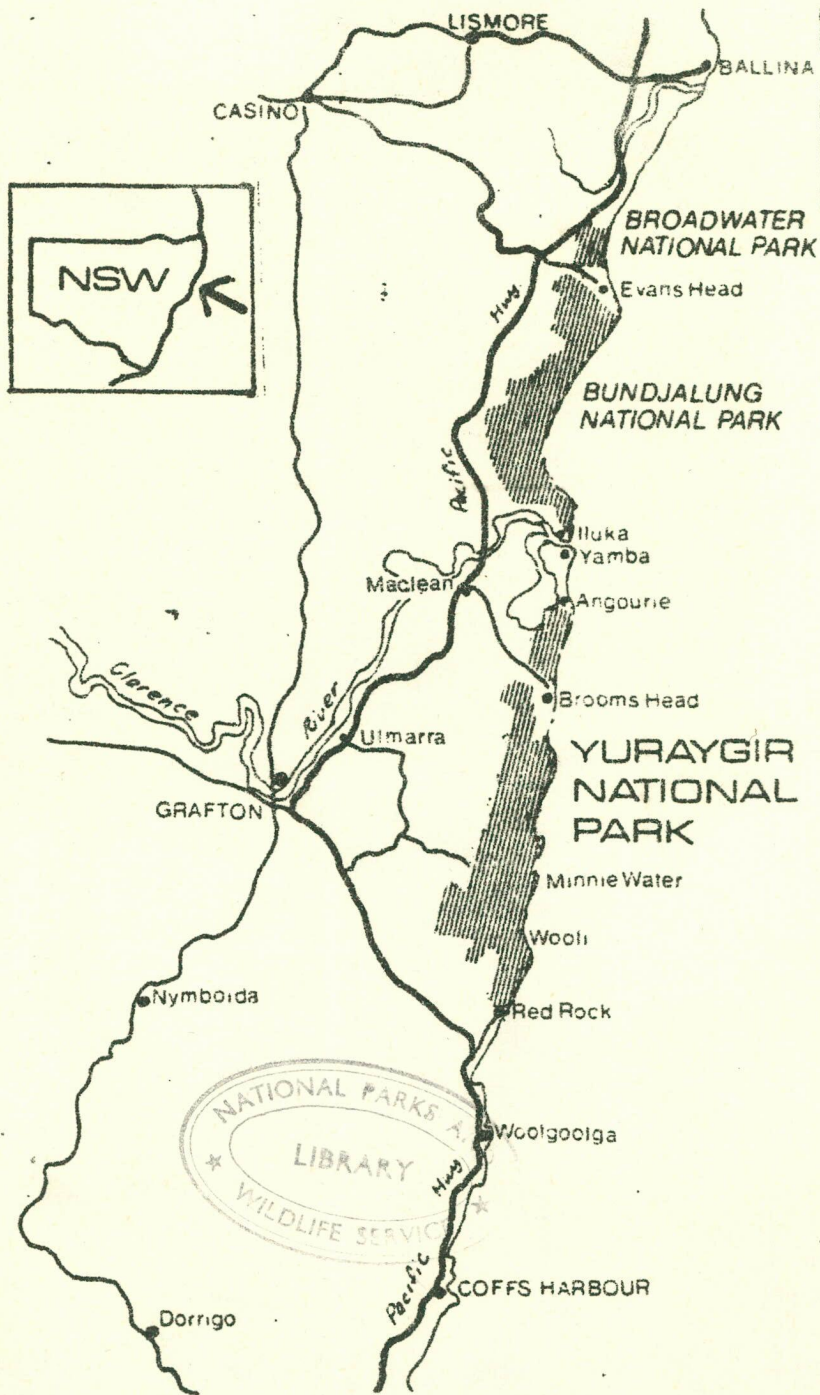
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LOCATION MAP

INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper seeks to stimulate interest and involvement in planning for the future management of Yuraygir National Park. Management of the park by the National Parks and Wildlife Service must ensure conservation of its flora and fauna, outstanding scenery and other special features, while providing for appropriate use, understanding and enjoyment by the public. This discussion paper outlines a range of options for future management of recreation and vehicle access within the park and indicates which option the National Parks and Wildlife Service prefers. These issues have been chosen for discussion because they are important to park visitors and because decisions that are made about vehicle access and recreation will influence how well the natural and cultural features of the park will be conserved.

There are many differences of opinion about the best way to balance conservation and recreation in Yuraygir. These differences must be resolved so that a clear course of action can be taken. We hope that you will share not only in the appreciation of this important national park but also in the responsibility of protecting it by commenting on the issues in this discussion paper. Your comments will assist in the preparation of a plan of management for the park.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974* requires that a plan of management be prepared for each national park. In the preparation of a plan of management regard must be given to a number of objectives, including:

- ☆ the conservation of fauna and native plants
- ☆ the preservation and protection of the park's special features
- ☆ the preservation of historic sites and Aboriginal relics
- ☆ the encouragement and regulation of appropriate use, understanding and enjoyment of the park
- ☆ the protection of catchment areas and the protection of the park against damage from fire and erosion.

The plan of management must be released for public comment in draft form. Public representations on the draft are considered before a plan of management is adopted by the Minister for Planning and Environment.

Once a plan of management is adopted no operations can be undertaken in the park unless they are in accordance with the plan.

The Service is about to prepare a draft plan of management for Yuraygir National Park in consultation with the Yuraygir National Park Advisory Committee.

As well as presenting proposals for future vehicle access and recreation use, the draft plan will propose strategies for all other aspects of park management including:—

- ☆ fire management
- ☆ control of weeds and feral animals
- ☆ interactions with adjacent villages
- ☆ professional fishing access.

By commenting on this discussion paper and later, on the draft plan, you will assist in resolving conflicts over the future management of Yuraygir National Park. The address and closing date for comments on this discussion paper are given on page (17).



ABOUT YURAYGIR NATIONAL PARK

Yuraygir National Park is located on the scenic north coast of N.S.W., 650 km north of Sydney, and 40 km east of Grafton. The park conserves a range of natural environments and vegetation types including coastal heaths, wetlands and forests. Yuraygir was reserved in its present form in 1980, and now covers about 14,000 ha in three sections. It incorporates the former Angourie and Red Rock National Parks (reserved in 1975) and the former Minnie Water Nature Reserve proposal. The nature conservation values of each of these three core areas were identified in the 1960's.

A proposal to establish the enlarged Yuraygir National Park was placed on public exhibition in 1978 and attracted considerable interest. In 1979 the N.S.W. Government determined the boundaries of the proposed park. Selected land already in Crown ownership was reserved as Yuraygir National Park and the Interim Development Orders of Maclean and Ulmarra Shires were amended to zone an additional 13,500 ha of private and Crown leasehold land for future national park extension. Planning controls restrict permissible land uses in this "8b zone" and the land within it is being purchased and added to the park when present owners wish to sell.

Ultimately Yuraygir will be one of the largest coastal national parks in N.S.W. It will cover about 28,000 ha, including 60 km of coastline between Red Rock and Angourie villages.

Although the proposed park extensions in the "8b zone" cover a large area, they are generally located away from the coast in the foothills of the Coast Range and along the Wooli and Sandon Rivers. It is the existing national park areas, especially the beaches and headlands on the coastal strip, which are the focus for most of the estimated quarter of a million people who visit the park each year. This discussion paper therefore concentrates on planning for access and recreation in this important coastal area. Sympathetic planning will help to ensure that visitors can continue to enjoy the park's spectacular natural coastline without destroying its special character in the process.

Historically, fishing and holiday villages have developed on those sections of the eastern Australian coastline that are most attractive to human settlement and outdoor recreation. The Yuraygir coastline is no exception.

Angourie and Wooloweyah villages adjoin Yuraygir National Park to the north and Red Rock village adjoins the park to the south. The villages of Brooms Head, Sandon, Minnie Water, Diggers Camp and Wooli lie on the coast between Angourie and Red Rock. Land adjoining these villages is either reserved as part of the park or is in the "8b zone".

Initially, road access to villages on the Yuraygir coast was poor. Nowadays bitumen or gravel roads provide easy access for family cars to all these villages except Sandon. The Service has extended this infrastructure of coastal roads by constructing gravel roads to some beaches and headlands within the national park. Greatly improved access has opened up the park as well as the villages for vehicle based recreation.

Ultimately, extensive road access and recreation facilities are expected to be provided to the north of the park along the coastline from Yamba to Angourie. The N.S.W. Government has proposed a resort in this area, to cater for 300,000 tourists a year. "Yamba Waters" resort, together with the expanding town of Yamba and the villages of Angourie and Wooloweyah, is planned to provide fully integrated tourist facilities capitalising on the area's natural features — specifically Lake Wooloweyah to the west, Yuraygir National Park to the south, and Bundjalung National Park and the Clarence River estuary to the north.

To the south of the park, the coastline from Sawtell through Coffs Harbour to Red Rock is one of the fastest growing urban areas in Australia. Extensive road access and recreation facilities already exist along this coastline as a result of integrated urban and tourist development.

Although the last ten years has seen a significant increase in road access along the Yuraygir coast, three small but important parts of the coastline remain inaccessible to conventional vehicles. They are located in the sections of the park between:

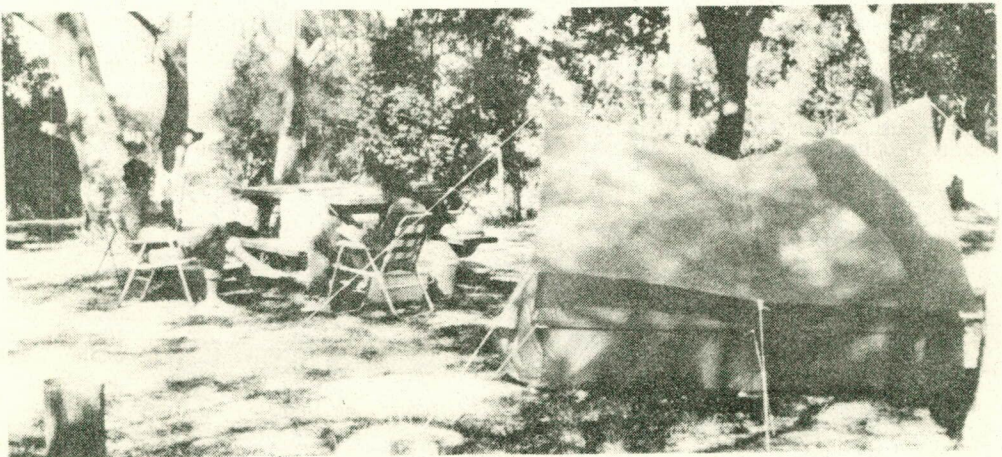
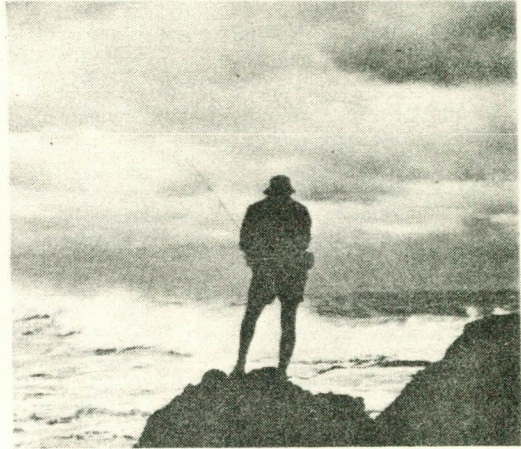
- ☆ Angourie and Red Cliff
- ☆ Sandon and Minnie Water
- ☆ Wooli and Red Rock.

Looking at the coast of eastern Australia from Forster to Noosa Heads, undeveloped areas like these are very scarce. Most of the coastline between Forster and Noosa Heads has extensive road access for conventional cars to towns, villages, picnic areas, camping areas, beaches and headlands.

The undeveloped sections of the Yuraygir coastline can offer an experience of secluded beaches backed by spectacular and varied natural scenery that is now difficult to find in eastern Australia.

At present, most of the Yuraygir coastline (including the undeveloped sections of the park) is accessible to off-road vehicles (ORV's) on a network of sandtracks. These tracks are often a consolidation of temporary roads and tracks constructed for sandmining and mining exploration. They give ORV users access to secluded fishing and bush camping spots.

Many other visitors also seek the uncrowded seclusion of the undeveloped sections of Yuraygir National Park to fish, sunbake, swim or surf. For them, access is by walking from villages and park rest areas. Often these visitors are seeking to get away from the pervasive presence of vehicles.



FUTURE OPTIONS

There are differing community aspirations about how Yuraygir National Park should be managed — especially with regard to the undeveloped coastal sections of the park.

Some people would like these areas to be "opened up" with roads constructed to remote headlands and beaches, and camping areas provided. Others would like some walking tracks to be built instead. Many off-road vehicle owners, including vehicle-based recreational fishermen, argue that these areas should remain undeveloped but available for off-road vehicle use.

Many people are concerned about the disturbance that off-road vehicles cause, particularly in coastal areas, and advocate excluding recreational off-road vehicles because of their environmental and social impacts. The State Pollution Control Commission's 1979 inquiry into off-road vehicle use identified driving on vegetated sand dunes and beaches as the most significant adverse effect of off-road vehicles in coastal environments.

Not only is the widespread and uncontrolled use of off-road vehicles physically damaging to the park, but it is increasingly conflicting with other recreational users. Increasingly, the community is asking for peace, quiet and safety on its beaches.

Yuraygir National Park embraces one of the few areas of scenically magnificent coastline on the eastern Australian seaboard that remains in a natural condition. The park was reserved because the people of N.S.W. were conscious of the need to ensure protection and conservation of the coast and adjoining lands so that this and future generations would continue to enjoy its beauty in active and passive recreation.

The most pressing problem we face is how to manage recreation in Yuraygir National Park so that:

- ☆ the special character of the park's coastline is retained
- ☆ the scenic and conservation values of the park are not damaged.

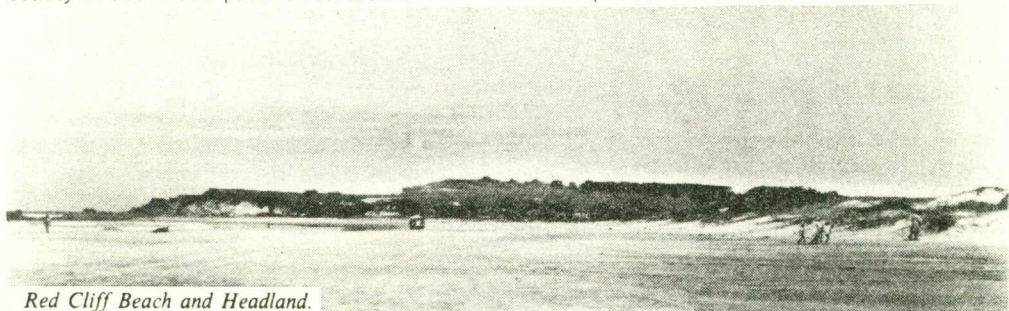
Recreation use of the park should also be planned so that:

- ☆ the park contributes to a diversity of recreation opportunities, both in a local and regional perspective
- ☆ the recreational facilities in the park complement those in the Yuraygir coastal villages and the urbanising coastline to the north and south of the park
- ☆ traditional recreation uses are able to continue in the park where these are compatible with conservation of the park's resources.

The range of viewpoints expressed in the community about how the park should be managed gives rise to a number of options for future access and recreation facilities in different parts of the park. To simplify discussion of the various options in this paper, the Yuraygir coastline has been divided into five sections. These are:

1. from Angourie to Red Cliff
2. from Red Cliff to the Sandon River
3. from the Sandon River to Minnie Water
4. from Minnie Water to Wooli
5. from Wooli to Red Rock.

A sixth section, "Mountains and Rivers" looks briefly at other recreation settings in the park and the "8b zone".



Red Cliff Beach and Headland.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "OFF-ROAD VEHICLE" USE?

Throughout this discussion paper the term "off-road vehicles" (ORVs) is used to refer to vehicles that are being driven off formed gravel or bitumen roads. Most ORV use in Yuraygir National Park involves four-wheel-drive (4WD) vehicles and trail bikes being driven on beaches and on fire trails and other unformed tracks. In some cases conventional vehicles, without 4WD capacity, are used in these off-road situations. In a relatively small number of cases 4WD vehicles and trail bikes are driven through bushland where no tracks exist.

At present, the Service allows off-road vehicle (ORV) use on all tracks, fire-trails and beaches in Yuraygir National Park except on the three small beaches between Angourie Point and Shelley Headland and on some tracks which have been closed to vehicles by sign-posting and barriers.

None of the options presented in this discussion paper would relax the basic regulations that apply for vehicle use in Yuraygir National Park. These are that:

- ☆ vehicles are not permitted to be driven off existing tracks or in contravention of any sign
- ☆ all vehicles must be registered, and drivers must be licensed.



1. ANGOURIE TO RED CLIFF

Cliffed headlands, sheltered beaches and lakes, high heath covered dunes and forested ridges combine to make this a most attractive area for outdoor recreation.

In this section of the park all-weather road access, picnic and parking facilities and low key facilities for car-based camping are currently provided on Red Cliff headland and at the southern end of Lake Arragan. (These facilities are further discussed on Page 10). Facilities for park visitors are not provided anywhere else in this section of the park.

Vehicle access to the nine kilometre stretch of coastline between Angourie and Red Cliff is exclusively by off-road vehicle (ORV). Among the most heavily used of the tracks are derelict sand mining roads and sand tracks which give largely uncontrolled ORV access to every beach and headland. Little Shelley Beach and Shelley Headland are very popular camping places for ORV users. The Service, in agreement with the Maclean Shire Council, recently attempted to prevent recreational vehicle access onto the three small beaches between Shelley Headland and Angourie because of conflicts between vehicles and pedestrian beach users. This closure has been respected by many ORV users, but others have made new tracks onto these beaches.

Options for future vehicle access and recreation facilities in this area include:

1(a) MAINTAIN STATUS QUO OF LARGELY UNCONTROLLED ORV USE

This option will have the least short term effect on people who now visit this section of the park by off-road vehicle as such access would continue on all existing tracks in the area.

However, with increasing ORV use, environmental damage to the scenic and nature conservation values of this area will escalate. The number of ORV tracks will continue to proliferate as drivers make new tracks around boggy areas. There will be increasing conflict between recreational use of ORVs and visitors seeking peace and quiet away from vehicles.

1(b) UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN EXISTING TRACKS FOR CONTROLLED ORV USE

Under this option many of the existing tracks would be maintained to ensure they are trafficable to ORVs. Other

tracks would be closed, barriers would be constructed to keep all vehicles out of eroding areas. This option would cause minimal inconvenience to people who now visit the area by off-road vehicle. Upgrading of the tracks would make ORV access easier and would reduce the need for ORVs to make new tracks around boggy areas.

However, the cost of maintaining tracks and of constructing barriers around eroding areas would be high. There are few natural barriers to ORVs in this section of the park. Irresponsible drivers find that these vehicles are well equipped to overcome the challenge of any artificial barriers erected by the Service.

Under this option continuous hardening of tracks would be necessary to repair erosion problems as they occur and to cater for inevitable increases in ORV use. Track hardening is likely to lead eventually to formal road construction. The piecemeal management scheme envisaged under this option will make it very difficult to protect the scenic and nature conservation values of this section of the park.

1(c) PROVIDE ALL-WEATHER THROUGH ROAD

Under this option a through road would be constructed between Angourie and the Brooms Head road, making this part of the park more readily accessible to visitors in all kinds of vehicles. Recreational vehicles would be restricted to this road. The environmental damage being caused by ORV use would thereby be reduced.

Through road access would attract large numbers of casual visitors, and the increased tourist traffic would undoubtedly benefit local business. However, in a broader perspective, Australians would lose the rare and increasingly valued recreation opportunity that still exists on this undeveloped section of coastline.

The remote character of this part of the park would change and the seclusion sought by people who now visit the area either on foot or in off-road vehicles would be much harder to find. Constructing a road through the open sandy terrain of this section of the park

2. RED CLIFF — BROOMS HEAD — SANDON

The village of Brooms Head with its attractive beach, headland and lagoon is the focal point for visitors to this section of coastline. Red Cliff headland, situated within the national park four kilometres north of Brooms Head, and the Sandon River foreshores, which will soon be reserved as part of the national park, are also important destinations.

Picnic and short term camping facilities are provided by the Service on Red Cliff headland and the loop road gives good access to surfing, fishing and swimming areas. Low heath vegetation, poor drainage and highly erodible soils on much of Red Cliff headland make it a difficult site to manage. Because there is no reticulated water supply at Red Cliff rest area some campers allegedly use facilities in the Maclean Shire caravan park at Brooms Head without permission. Supplying water to Red Cliff might reduce this problem but is likely to lead to an increase in camping use, in excess of the carrying capacity of the site. Any future extension of development on this headland therefore needs careful consideration.

Management of vehicles on the beach between Red Cliff and Brooms Head and the beach between Brooms Head and Sandon involves the Service, Maclean Shire Council and the Crown Lands Office since part of the beach and foredune area is within the national park and part is vacant Crown land or public reserve. At present, vehicles holding Council permits are allowed to use these beaches except in small areas adjacent to Brooms Head and Sandon River camping area. Beach access points are located near Brooms Head, in the park at Red Cliff headland and at Sandon River camping area. The Service envisages that the joint management strategy developed by Maclean Shire Council and the Service will continue to allow recreational vehicles to use these beaches.

On the north bank of the Sandon River a popular camping and picnic area, a boat launching ramp and a group of houses will soon be included in the national park. The ramp and parking area are used by people launching small boats for ocean and estuary fishing and for boat access across the river to Sandon village.

The narrow sand spit on which these facilities are located is a dynamic landform, eroding in storms and building up during calmer periods. Restoration works have been carried out by the Soil Conservation Service to repair past storm damage. The standard of road access to the camping area is poor and the road becomes partially inundated at very high tides.

The houses in this area are held under Permissive Occupancies. As they expire, the sites will revert to the Crown and the houses will be removed.

There are several options for future management of the camping area. These include:—

2(a) MAINTAIN STATUS QUO

The narrow sand spit on which the camping area is located is used for boat launching, picnics, fishing and surfing as well as camping. If the status quo remains, increasing numbers of people will place even more stress on the very limited facilities present. Even if the area does not become more popular, some upgrading of facilities is urgently needed if it is to remain attractive to visitors.

2(b) UPGRADE CAMPING FACILITIES

Providing modern facilities for campers would require major expenditure on amenity blocks and water supply. Because this area has proven to be very susceptible to periodic coastal erosion, such major capital investment cannot be justified here.

Space is very limited on this sandy peninsula. Upgrading camping facilities would make camping here more attractive to many people but would involve developing a considerable proportion of the available space. Day use and boat launching facilities would become very crowded.

would also be extremely expensive and is likely to have a significant impact on the scenery and wildlife of the area particularly if the road is sited close to the coastline.

1(d) PROVIDE ALL WEATHER ROAD FROM ANGOURIE TO SHELLEY HEADLAND

This option involves constructing an all-weather road to the Shelley Headland area from the north. Recreational vehicle use would be restricted to this road. Parking facilities and walking tracks would be sited to give access from the road to points of interest such as One Man Bluff. At the road terminus near Shelley Headland, picnic and short-term camping facilities would be provided for fishermen and other beach users.

Under this option the area would be more readily accessible to visitors in conventional cars and the environmental damage being caused by ORV use would be reduced. Facilities in the vicinity of Shelley Headland would attract a large number of visitors to the area. With increasing visitation the secluded character of Little Shelley Beach, to the north of Shelley Headland, would change markedly because of the small size of this beach and the difficulty of concealing parking and camping areas in the low heath vegetation behind the beach.

Constructing a road through the open sandy terrain north of Shelley Headland would be extremely expensive. Even upgrading the existing ORV track to an all-weather road would be costly, would probably have a significant impact on the natural features of the area and would compound the visual impact of the existing track.

1(e) CLOSE AREA TO RECREATIONAL ORVs; PROVIDE NO NEW FACILITIES FOR RECREATION USE

Under this option access by visitors to this part of the park would be on foot only. No walking tracks would be provided and access would be primarily along beaches and rocky foreshores and on tracks retained for fire fighting and professional fishing access.

This option would protect the special undeveloped character of the area and

would have least impact on its natural features. It would also involve least expenditure by the Service on track and facility maintenance and on erosion control.

Under this option the area would be much less accessible to those people who now travel through it in off-road vehicles. It would remain accessible to walkers including fishermen.

1(f) CLOSE AREA TO RECREATIONAL ORVs; PROVIDE WALKING TRACKS AND FACILITIES WITH TRACKHEADS AT ANGOURIE AND LAKE ARRAGAN






Under this option loop walking tracks of varying distances would be constructed to give relatively easy foot access to the coastline and to Lake Wooloweyah and Lake Arragan. In conjunction with the walking tracks, facilities such as picnic tables, barbeques and toilets would be provided to accommodate family groups, fishermen, walkers, school and youth groups, surfers and other people who enjoy this style of coastal recreation. The Service would negotiate with relevant authorities about the provision of parking and picnic facilities at Angourie Bay, to serve as a trackhead on the northern park boundary as there are no sites within the park which are as suitable and which could be readily developed.

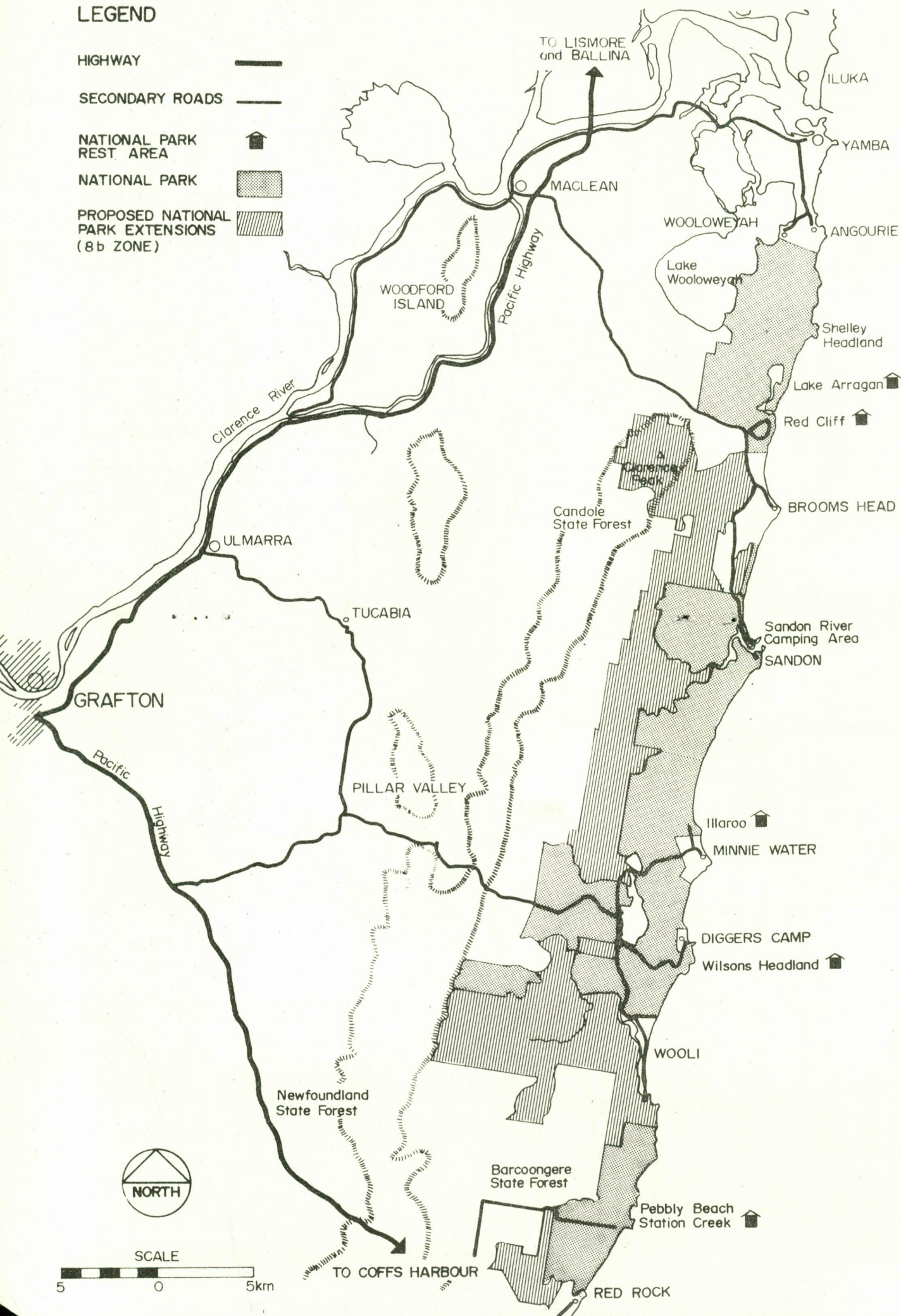
Under this option the area would be less accessible to ORV users but with graded walking tracks it would be more appealing to many other park visitors. Carefully designed walking tracks, including raised boardwalks through fragile swamps, would cater for large numbers of people with minimal environmental disturbance. Moderate expenditure by the Service would be necessary for construction and maintenance of tracks and facilities and for erosion control.

This is the Service's preferred option. It is seen as providing the best long term protection for the secluded style of outdoor recreation available to date in this area. It is also seen by the Service as complementary to other outdoor recreation opportunities on the N.S.W. north coast, including those provided by the adjoining settlements of Yamba, Angourie and Wooloweyah and the proposed "Yamba Waters" resort.

YURAYGIR NATIONAL PARK

LEGEND

- HIGHWAY 
- SECONDARY ROADS 
- NATIONAL PARK REST AREA 
- NATIONAL PARK 
- PROPOSED NATIONAL PARK EXTENSIONS (8b ZONE) 



SCALE



TO COFFS HARBOUR

TO LISMORE and BALLINA

ILUKA

YAMBA

MACLEAN

WOLOWEYAH

ANGOURIE

Lake Wooloweyah

Shelley Headland

Lake Arragan

Red Cliff

Clarence River

WOODFORD ISLAND

Pacific Highway

Clarence Peak

Candole State Forest

BROOMS HEAD

Sandon River Camping Area

SANDON

GRAFTON

TUCABIA

PILLAR VALLEY

Pacific Highway

Illaroo

MINNIE WATER

DIGGERS CAMP

Wilsons Headland

WOOLI

Newfoundland State Forest

Barcoongere State Forest

Pebble Beach Station Creek

RED ROCK

2(c) PHASE OUT VEHICLE ACCESS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

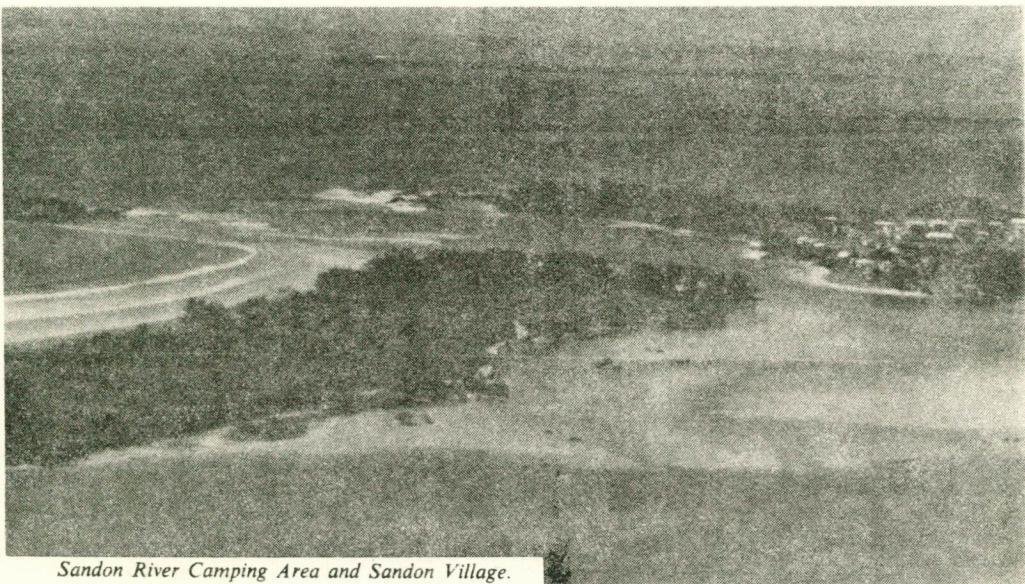
This option would remove the burden of protecting the road and facilities from periodic coastal erosion. Revegetation of the site would help protect the sand spit against future storm damage. Ultimately this area could become an attractive feature for coastal walkers.

However, this option would make access difficult for occupants of houses in the area and for residents and visitors crossing the Sandon River by boat to get to Sandon village. Boat launching would no longer be possible making boat access to the Sandon estuary and the ocean much more difficult. Campers who now use the area would be displaced. For these reasons the Service doesn't consider this to be an acceptable option.

2(d) PHASE OUT CAMPING, UPGRADE FACILITIES FOR DAY USE

Phasing out camping will provide much more space to upgrade facilities for picnickers, beach users, boat launching and parking. Moderate capital investment would be required to provide attractive facilities for day visitors. This option would provide a more attractive and less crowded area for day visitors and for boat launching. Access to Permissive Occupancy houses and parking for residents of Sandon village, on the south bank of the river, would not be affected.

Because of the limited space available and the constraints imposed by the coastal erosion hazard, this is the Service's preferred option. The area would, in the long term, serve as a day use area for Clarence Valley residents and for holiday makers camping at Brooms Head and elsewhere in the region. The Sandon River's traditional role as a fishing port would be preserved.



Sandon River Camping Area and Sandon Village.

3. SANDON RIVER — MINNIE WATER

The long beach between Sandon River and Minnie Water is the focus for recreation use in this area. It is popular for beach fishing and surfing and is the main vehicle access route to Sandon village, at the north end of the beach. In the past three years the Service has upgraded and maintained four-wheel-drive beach access tracks at the northern and southern ends of the beach. The Service has also provided picnic and short-term camping facilities at Illaroo rest area (at the southern end of the beach) and all-weather road access to the rest area from Minnie Water village. Illaroo rest area is now a popular destination for car-based campers, youth groups, picnickers and fishermen. Rocky Point headland, which was redeveloped in 1981 as a walk-in camping and picnic area, provides a "buffer zone" and an attractive walking route between Minnie Water village and Illaroo.

The quiet character of Sandon village at the north end of the beach reflects its isolation and difficult access. As well as the beach access route, the village is reached by boat from the northern bank of the Sandon River and by a long four-wheel-drive "back-track" from Illaroo rest area which runs parallel to the beach for much of its length. The back-track was constructed by Sandon Village residents in the early 1970's to provide emergency vehicle access when the beach is cut by high tides and heavy seas.

Off-road vehicle use is the most significant ongoing disturbance to the natural features of this section of the park, and it is currently restricted to the beach and the village back-track. Use of the back-track by recreational ORVs is almost impossible to control and there are several places where vehicles can forge new tracks from the beach up the foredune to the back-track.

The beach itself is heavily used by ORVs for fishing access and pleasure driving. Vehicle use conflicts with the peace and quiet sought by other park visitors especially around Illaroo rest area.

There are a number of options for future management of off-road vehicles on the beach and on the back-track to Sandon village. These include:—

3(a) MAINTAIN STATUS QUO

Under this option vehicle access on the beach and back-track would be retained for recreational ORVs and village residents.

The back-track would be maintained partly by village residents who would be authorised to gravel and/or reroute steep sections of the track to keep it trafficable. This option would cause minimum inconvenience to residents in the short term.

While the back-track is not heavily used by recreational ORVs at present, it is becoming better known. Increasing numbers of ORVs using the track will add to the existing erosion problems and maintenance burden.

Experience of uncontrolled ORV use of similar sand tracks in Yuraygir and other coastal parks indicates that continuing use of the back-track will inevitably lead to major erosion problems. Such use will also lead to increasing ORV traffic in the steep dunes and swamps behind this long beach.

3(b) RESTRICT USE OF BACK-TRACK TO VILLAGE RESIDENTS ONLY; MANAGE BEACH FOR RECREATIONAL ORV USE AND VILLAGE ACCESS

Under this option gates would be built across the back-track and keys issued to Sandon residents.

This strategy would aim to prevent the track deterioration and erosion problems that could be caused by large numbers of recreational ORVs and to minimize inconvenience to Sandon residents.

In practice, however, control of recreational ORVs would be extremely difficult. There will be even more temptation for recreational ORVs to drive over the frontal dune between the beach and the back-track to bypass barriers.

Damage caused to the area by ORVs could, in the long term, be much the same as if the status quo were maintained.

**3(c) CLOSE BACK-TRACK TO ALL VEHICLES;
MANAGE BEACH FOR RECREATIONAL
ORV USE AND VILLAGE ACCESS**

Under this option the back-track would be closed and revegetated without any alternative emergency vehicle access to Sandon village being provided. Vehicle access to the village would not be possible when the beach route is cut by high tides and heavy seas. At these times villagers would have to rely on boat transport or rescue helicopter services (if available) for access to and from the village.

This option would reduce the impact of ORV use in the sand dunes that the back-track traverses between Minnie Water and Sandon. It would also avoid the expense and environmental disturbance involved in constructing an alternative vehicle access route. However this option would inconvenience residents who are now accustomed to having vehicle access in all weather conditions. For this reason it is not the Service's preferred option.

**3(d) CLOSE BOTH THE BEACH AND BACK-
TRACK TO ALL VEHICLES**

Under this option access to Sandon village would only be possible on foot or by boat. Although this was the only access to Sandon village in earlier times it is difficult to justify nowadays because of the inconvenience to residents and visitors who have become accustomed to the convenience of vehicle access.

Closing the beach to vehicles would also prevent access by vehicle-based amateur fishermen to a very popular beach-fishing area.

**3(e) CONSTRUCT ALL-WEATHER ROAD TO
SANDON VILLAGE; CLOSE BEACH AND
BACK-TRACK**

This option would provide all-weather road access to Sandon village so that it would no longer be necessary for residents to drive on the beach. It would then be feasible to close both the beach and back-track to vehicles. This would make the beach more attractive to walkers and would make it easier to prevent ORV damage to the beach and dunes.

However, closing the beach to vehicles would prevent access by vehicle-based amateur fishermen to a very popular beach fishing area. Road construction would also be very expensive. Apart from direct impacts on the natural environment, it would change the isolated character of Sandon village, and alter the natural character of this section of the park.

**3(f) CLOSE BACK-TRACK TO ALL VEHICLES;
PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY
ACCESS TO SANDON VILLAGE; MANAGE
BEACH AS MAIN VILLAGE ACCESS AND
FOR RECREATIONAL ORVs**

Under this option the back-track would not be closed unless alternative emergency access is made available for Sandon residents. Several alternatives for emergency access warrant further investigation and continuing consultation with residents. These involve constructing a 4WD access track from the west and may involve a bridge or punt across the Sandon River. Recreational ORVs would not be permitted to use this track and Sandon residents would be encouraged to use it only when the beach is cut by high tides and heavy seas.

This option will involve some expenditure and environmental disturbance in locating, constructing and maintaining the alternative track and preventing its use by recreational ORVs. Inconvenience to residents is expected to be minimal. Access along the beach by residents and vehicle-based fishermen would not be affected. Under this option the present uncontrolled use of the back track by ORVs would be removed. It would then be easier to prevent ORV damage to frontal dunes.

Under this option, the Service would also investigate relocating the vehicle beach access track at the southern end of the beach so that it would no longer be necessary for recreational vehicles to drive along the section of the beach in front of Illaroo Rest Area.

This is the Service's preferred option because it would minimize damage to this area by ORVs while retaining emergency access for Sandon residents and beach access for residents and vehicle-based fishermen.

4. MINNIE WATER TO WOOLI

Public road to Minnie Water, Diggers Camp and Wooli provide good vehicle access to all the beaches and headlands in this area and to the Wooli River for boat launching. The villages and adjacent beaches are the focal points for most visitors. Illaroo rest area (north of Minnie Water) and Wilsons Headland (south of Diggers Camp), both within the national park, are also important destinations. In 1982 the Service constructed picnic and low-key camping facilities on Wilsons Headland, at Boorkoom rest area and Wilsons Headland picnic area.

The options for providing further recreation facilities near the coast in this part of the park are limited. It would be possible to provide facilities for beach users in the park between Minnie Water and Diggers Camp or between Diggers Camp and Wooli, but constructing and maintaining access roads into these areas would be expensive, would cause significant damage to sand dune systems and wetlands and would be unsympathetic to the isolated natural character of these beachfront areas. Public reserves, particularly those adjacent to the park at Tree Point (south of Minnie Water village) and at the north-eastern end of Wooli village are better located to provide parking and picnic facilities for car-based beach users.

Management of off-road vehicles on the beaches between Minnie Water and Wooli involves the Service, Ulmarra Shire Council and the Crown Lands Office since part of the beach and foredune area is within the national park and part is vacant Crown land or public reserve. At present use of these beaches by ORVs is uncontrolled. The Service believes these is a need for a joint management strategy for these beaches and will put a proposal to Council and the Crown Lands Office for continuing recreational use of vehicles on the beach between Wilsons Head and Wooli, and for the management of the beach between Minnie Water and Diggers Camp as a vehicle free beach. Under this strategy the Service would stabilise the vehicle access track through sand dunes south of Wilsons Headland which gives access to the beach between Wilsons Headland and Wooli.

5. WOOLI RIVER TO RED ROCK

Because there are no coastal villages in this section of the park, the area remains largely undeveloped. Good vehicle access exists on public roads to Red Rock village, which adjoins the park on the southern bank of the Corindi River. A gravel road provides access from the Pacific Highway through Barcoongere State Forest to Station Creek rest area. The Service has provided picnic and short term camping facilities at Station Creek, which is situated on the coast about half way between Red Rock and Wooli.

ORVs currently have uncontrolled access to all beaches and headlands between Wooli and Red Rock. Station Creek Headland and Pebbly Beach are especially popular for camping by ORV users. Vehicle access to these areas is either through unstable sand dunes south of Station Creek rest area and then north along Station Creek Beach, or across steep high dunes north-west of Pebbly Beach.

There is ongoing conflict between ORVs and other park visitors seeking peace and quiet in this undeveloped section of the park. This conflict is especially great on Station Creek Beach and Pebbly Beach since many people walk to these beaches from Station Creek rest area or Red Rock village to swim, sunbake and fish, and these beaches also carry heavy ORV traffic. Unregulated ORV use and camping at Pebbly Beach has already damaged the fragile foredune and headland vegetation in this area. Of particular concern is ongoing and extensive disturbance to a fine stand of horsetail oaks which were specifically protected from sand mining in the early 1970's. In many places ORV use in the sand dune systems and swamps of this section of the park has led to a proliferation of boggy eroding tracks. On Station Creek Beach some important nesting sites used by the little tern, an endangered bird species, are fenced each year by the Service in an attempt to minimise disturbance by ORVs.

There are several options for future management of this area. These include:—

5(a) MAINTAIN STATUS QUO

This option would have minimal effect on existing ORV users. Uncontrolled vehicle access would continue throughout this section of the park. Erosion on steep sand dunes, disturbance to foredunes at Pebbly Beach and the conflict between ORVs and pedestrian beach users would intensify. Under this option it would not be possible to give adequate protection to the nature conservation values of this section of the park or to provide an area here for park visitors who seek to get away from the noise and disturbance of ORVs.

5(b) UPGRADE AND MAINTAIN EXISTING TRACKS FOR CONTROLLED ORV USE

Under this option existing tracks, especially those giving access to the Pebbly Beach area, would be upgraded or re-routed to ensure they are trafficable by ORVs. This would minimize the need for ORVs to make new tracks around boggy areas. Camping at Pebbly Beach would be restricted to designated areas away from the foredune. This option would cause minimal inconvenience to existing ORV users. In the short term environmental damage might be reduced.

In the longer term, access for ORVs will be made easier, attracting more vehicles to the area and necessitating further track upgrading and maintenance. Maintenance costs would be high. Conflicts between vehicles and endangered fauna and between vehicles and other beach users would remain unresolved and would intensify. Ultimately, with increasing numbers of vehicles and progressive upgrading of tracks and facilities, the secluded undeveloped character of this area would be lost.

5(c) CONSTRUCT ROAD INTO PEBBLY BEACH AREA

It may be feasible, although very expensive, to construct an all-weather road along the north side of Station Creek from Barcoongere State Forest into the Pebbly Beach area.

Recreational vehicles would be restricted to this road and the Station Creek road. This would make the Pebbly Beach area more readily accessible to visitors in conventional cars, would reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians on Pebbly Beach and Station Creek Beach, and would reduce damage currently being caused by uncontrolled ORV use.

However, road construction and maintenance would be very expensive, would cause significant disturbance to the natural environment and would mean the loss of the special undeveloped character of this section of the park.

5(d) RESTRICT VEHICLES TO EXISTING ALL-WEATHER ROAD; MANAGE PEBBLY BEACH AS A WALK-IN CAMPING AREA.

Under this option recreational vehicles would be restricted to the existing all-weather road in this section of the park. Station Creek rest area would continue to provide picnic and short-term camping facilities for car-based campers. Pebbly Beach, about 20 minutes walk from the rest area, would provide camping and picnic facilities on a peaceful, uncrowded, vehicle-free beach.

The Service would also provide increased opportunities for car-based camping in this section of the park. Sites on Station Creek upstream of the existing rest area would be investigated. A foot bridge and walking track would be constructed to give direct access for walkers from any new rest area to Pebbly Beach.

Under this option this section of the park would be less accessible to those people who currently visit it in off-road vehicles including vehicle based recreational fishermen. However, it would be more appealing to very many other visitors. Conflicts between vehicles and other beach users would be minimised.

This is the Service's preferred option because it would provide the best long term protection for the natural features of the area and would preserve the area's undeveloped character.

6. MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS

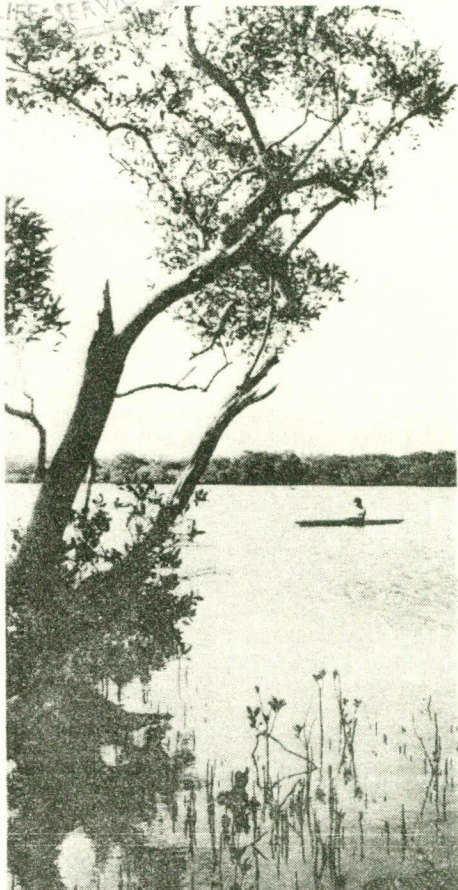


Although the coastline is the main attraction for visitors to Yuraygir and is the focus for recreation, the area's mountains and rivers are also important features.

The Sandon, Wooli and Corindi Rivers are all important attractions for visitors. There are quite good boat launching facilities associated with these rivers at Red Rock and Wooli villages and Sandon River camping area. Where there are suitable riverside sites in the park, the Service envisages that it will provide facilities for river-based recreation that complement those in the villages. One such site exists at Matenga Creek, near the tidal limit of the north arm of the Wooli River, and close to the Wooli Road. Other suitable sites will be investigated.

Clarence Peak, a prominent feature of the lower Clarence valley, lies to the west of Brooms Head in the proposed park extensions ('8b zone'). When this land is added to the park, the Service envisages it will provide recreation facilities such as a graded walking track to the summit from a parking and picnic area near the Brooms Head road.

In its management plan for the Grafton Forestry District, the Forestry Commission has proposed investigating a forest drive in Candole State Forest which lies to the west of the park. Such a drive, largely utilising existing forest roads, could link Brooms Head and Wooli along a scenic hinterland route. A short section of new road would need to be constructed from Candole State Forest to the Brooms Head-Sandon road through proposed national park extensions. This forest drive would give visitors an opportunity for forest based recreation complementary to the coastal experiences provided in the national park and villages.



WANTED: YOUR COMMENTS

This discussion paper has outlined various options for some aspects of future vehicle access and recreation in Yuraygir National Park. You may have other ideas to the ones discussed here or you may think there are other important aspects to be considered. Whatever your views, we would like to hear from you.

Your comments on the following questions will be particularly helpful:

- Which options do you prefer, and why?
- Are there important options which haven't been discussed?
- Which areas or features of Yuraygir National Park are important to you and why?

Your comments will be most useful if they are in writing and as detailed as possible.

Please address them to:—

The Senior Ranger, Grafton District,
National Parks and Wildlife Service,
P.O. Box 97,
GRAFTON. 2460.

Comments should be received by 31st July, 1983. If you need more time to complete your submission, please contact the Service before this closing date.

Please feel free to seek more information or to discuss any aspects of this paper with Service staff. Service officers are available to meet with clubs or community groups to clarify and discuss the issues this paper raises.

Contact:—

The Senior Ranger, Grafton District,
National Parks and Wildlife Service,
State Office Block, Victoria Street,
Grafton.

Phone: (066) 42 0613 or 42 0593
8.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

After the closing date, copies of all submissions made to the Service will be available for inspection at the Service's Grafton District office and at the Library in the Service's Head Office (1st Floor, 189 Kent St., Sydney).

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