



# Draft Nature Based Recreation Plan 2015 - 2025



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## A message from the Mayor

**Gold Coast 2020** reflects the community's desire for the Gold Coast to be the best place to live and visit, where our coastline and environment is protected and we can work and play in our local suburban and rural neighbourhoods.

As Mayor of this dynamic and prosperous city, I am committed to encouraging active and healthy lifestyles. Hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Games is a unique opportunity to showcase the Gold Coast to the rest of the world and to deliver profound long-term benefits for future generations of Gold Coasters. Our coastal subtropical climate and diversity of natural areas makes the Gold Coast a world class location for residents and visitors to enjoy activities such as picnicking, bushwalking, horse riding and mountain biking.

The Gold Coast is one of Australia's most biodiverse cities, with more than 13,000 hectares (32,000 acres) of natural areas under City management. Of this, more than 4,200 hectares (10,500 acres) has been acquired through our Open Space Preservation program over the past 15 years. This program has contributed to preserving valuable habitat for native plants and animals while creating some unique nature based recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

This plan seeks to encourage sustainable recreation in our natural areas and at the same time ensure that we protect our remarkable biodiversity.

Tom Tate  
MAYOR

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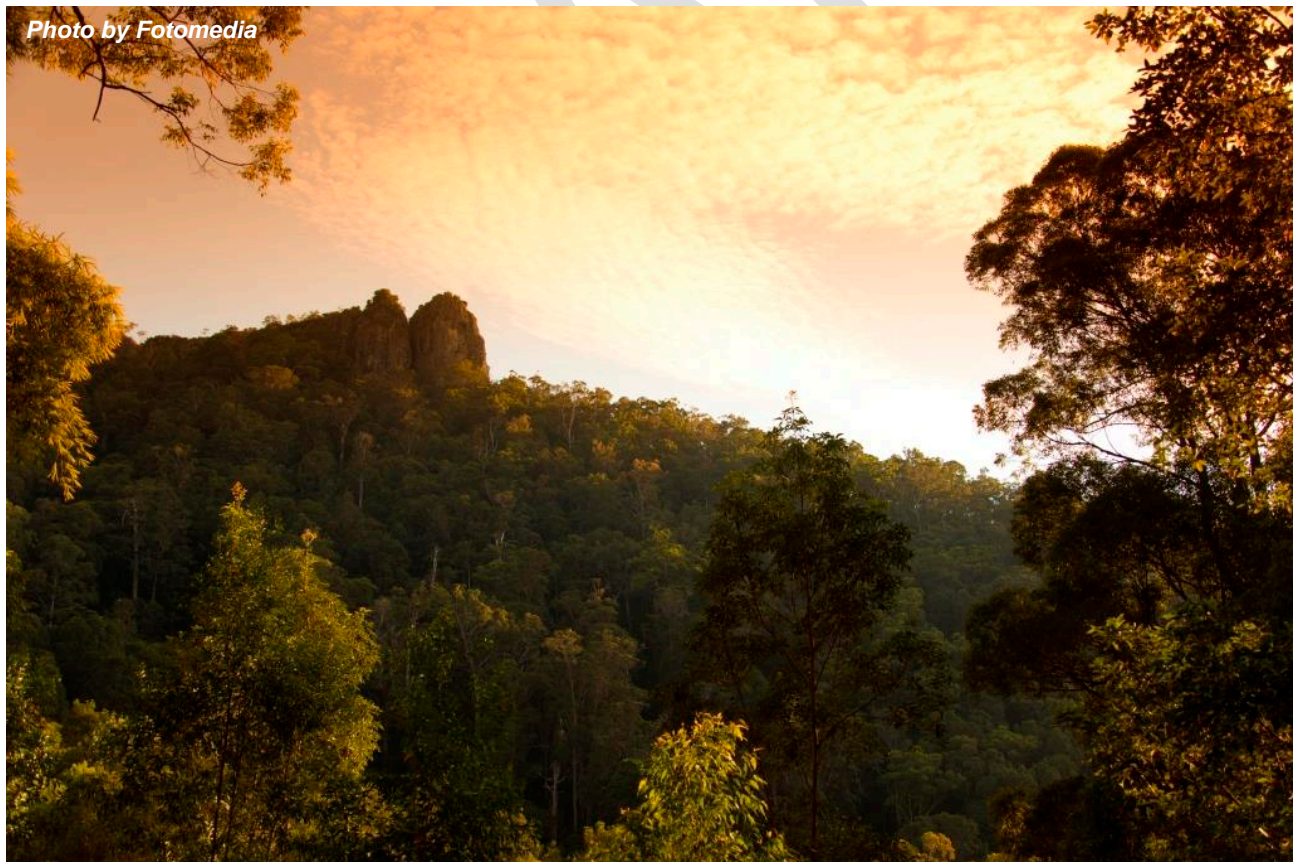
## Introduction and scope of plan

The Gold Coast is one of Australia's most biodiverse cities, with almost half of its area covered by native vegetation. The City of Gold Coast (the City) manages an outstanding network of more than 18,000 hectares of parks, including 13,000 hectares of natural areas, and a range of playgrounds, formal parks, sporting fields and community facilities. This variety of open space gives residents and visitors a choice of places to go bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding, kayaking, adventure racing, camping – and much more. The City is also afforded some flexibility in selecting locations for nature based recreation facilities. Some activities are appropriate in urban parks and others are suitable in natural areas. A summary of the existing, key nature based recreation locations on City managed land is presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

This plan primarily addresses nature based recreation in natural areas owned and/or managed by the City. However, if walking, horse riding or mountain biking tracks on City land continue through adjoining State or other land tenures, these have been included for consistency. The City's natural areas reserves (Figure 1) vary from large forested hinterland reserves to smaller suburban reserves. Although beach activities such as surfing and swimming are a significant part of the Gold Coast lifestyle, these are excluded from the plan, having been included in the *Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023*: [goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/ocean-beaches-strategy-2013-2023.pdf](http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/ocean-beaches-strategy-2013-2023.pdf)

For the purpose of this plan, sustainable nature based recreation is defined as outdoor recreation activities that:

- are dependent on the natural environment
- have an appreciation of nature as a key motivational factor
- do not require substantial modification to the natural environment
- are environmentally sustainable, as determined by an ongoing environmental monitoring program



*Nature based recreation includes activities that are dependent on the natural environment; have an appreciation of nature as a key motivational factor; do not require substantial modification to the natural environment, and are environmentally sustainable.*

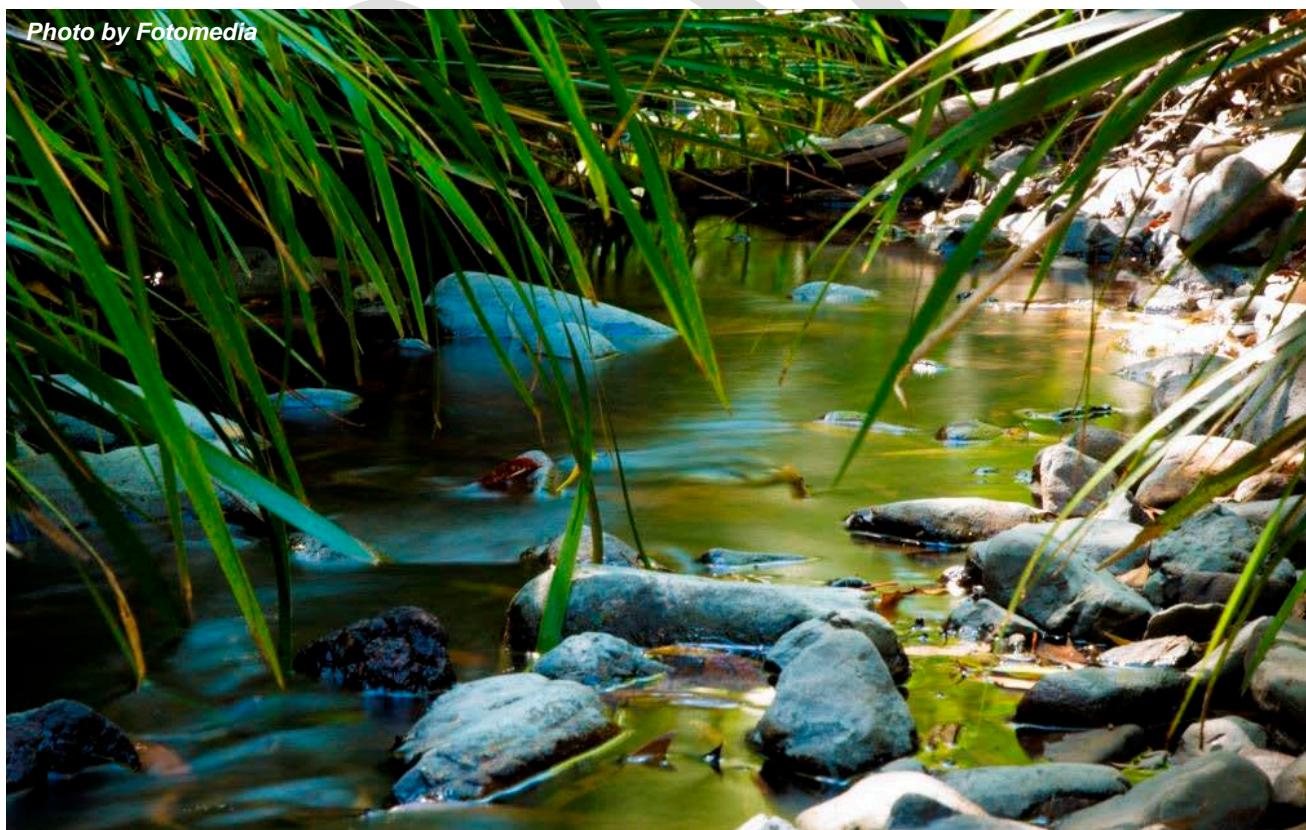
In addition to City managed land, Gold Coast residents and tourists have access to 23,000 hectares of state managed land. This includes Hinze Dam (Advancetown Lake), conservation parks such as South Stradbroke Island and Pine Ridge, marine parks such as Moreton Bay and national parks such as Springbrook National Park, Nerang National Park, Tamborine National Park and Lamington National Park. The nature based recreation activities available in these areas complement those offered in the City's natural areas and City of Gold Coast will continue to work with the State to deliver integrated and enhanced opportunities for residents and visitors.

Over 2,500 native plants and animals call the City home, and 150 of these are listed as endangered, vulnerable or near threatened. These significant environmental values need to be preserved so that the City's growing population of residents and visitors will be able to access outstanding locations for nature based recreation for generations to come. This plan provides a framework for the management of nature based recreation in the City's natural areas, aiming to balance the growing demand for nature based recreation with the preservation of the environment upon which it depends.

The City has an unprecedented opportunity to showcase our outstanding natural areas when we host the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Also, many of our mountain biking tracks, waterways and other recreational tracks represent potential training grounds for athletes preparing for the games.

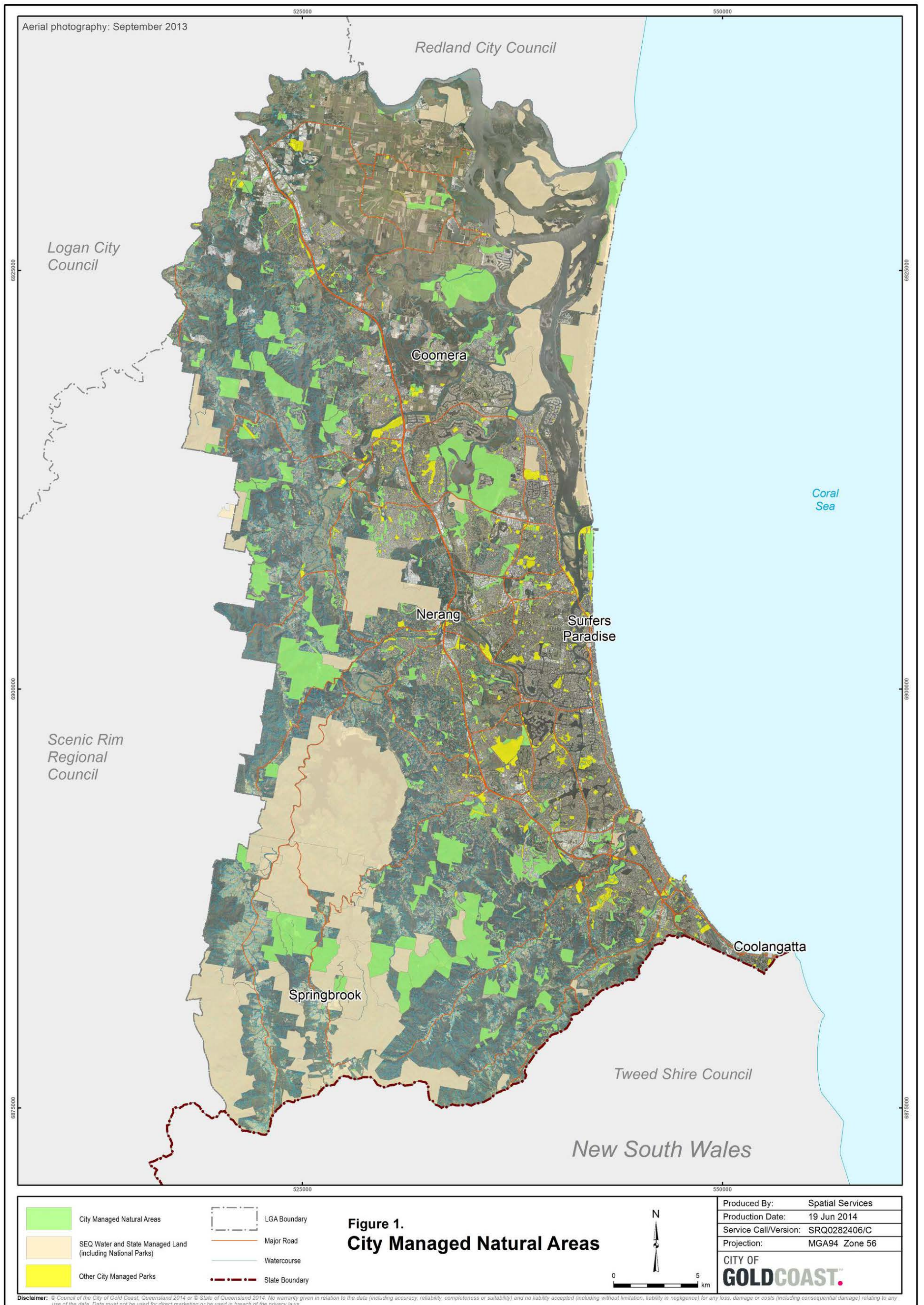
Many documents were considered in the preparation of this plan, including the following:

- The City's Conservation Reserve Management Plans
- City of Gold Coast Nature Conservation Strategy 2009 – 2019
- Our Natural Playground: A Parks and Recreation Plan for the Gold Coast 2004
- Gold Coast Sports Plan 2013 – 2023
- Gold Coast 2020 (Corporate Plan)
- Gold Coast Destination Tourism Management Plan 2014 - 2020



*Over 2500 plants and animals call the Gold Coast home; 150 species of which are listed as endangered, vulnerable or near threatened. This plan sets down a framework for the management of nature based recreation, aiming to balance the growing demand for nature based recreation with the preservation of the environment on which it is so dependent.*







## 1. Vision

*Gold Coast. Embracing sustainable nature based recreation*

## 2. Outcomes and Objectives

Outcomes	Objectives	Initiatives
<b>Outcome 1</b> Diverse nature based recreation opportunities are available and accessible.	<b>Objective 1.1</b> - Provide a diversity of nature based recreation opportunities appropriate to the natural environment.  <b>Objective 1.2</b> - Provide nature based recreation opportunities appropriate to the level of demand, and at locations convenient to the City's population centres.  <b>Objective 1.3</b> - Ensure the City's natural areas are as safe and accessible as possible to people of varying ages, cultures and abilities.  <b>Objective 1.4</b> - Collaborate with external groups and providers to maximise sustainable nature based recreation opportunities in the natural areas estate.	See Section 3 and Appendix A for Strategic Initiatives that will support the Objectives.
<b>Outcome 2</b> Community wellbeing is enhanced by sustainable nature based recreation.	<b>Objective 2.1</b> - Actively promote existing nature based recreation opportunities and provide information about these opportunities to residents and visitors.  <b>Objective 2.2</b> - Foster an appreciation of the values of our natural areas.	See Section 4 and Appendix B for Activity Specific Initiatives for each recreational activity.
<b>Outcome 3</b> The environment is protected through well managed nature based recreation.	<b>Objective 3.1</b> - Assess, minimise, mitigate and monitor the impacts of nature based recreation activities in natural areas.  <b>Objective 3.2</b> - Participate in regional partnerships for nature based recreation planning and management.	
<b>Outcome 4</b> The community is connected to cultural heritage through sustainable nature based recreation.	<b>Objective 4.1</b> - Build public understanding and a sense of connection to the cultural heritage of the natural areas estate.	

### 3. Strategic action plan

This plan provides a framework to achieve our vision of the Gold Coast embracing sustainable nature based recreation. The outcomes, objectives and strategic initiatives are outlined below. Section 4 discusses each of the main types of nature based recreation activities, and provides activity specific initiatives for improving opportunities for each of these activities.



*Beree-Badalla boardwalk is a popular location for locals and visitors alike to walk, jog or wheel their way through mangrove habitat on Currumbin Creek.*

#### **Outcome 1: Diverse nature based recreation opportunities are available and accessible.**

##### **Objective 1.1**

Provide a diversity of nature based recreation opportunities appropriate to the natural environment.

**Strategic Initiative 1.1.A** Prioritise and implement the key nature based recreation actions from adopted Conservation Reserve Management Plans.

**Strategic Initiative 1.1.B** Audit existing and potential recreational trails and kayak routes for signage requirements, infrastructure repairs, current usage level, mapping requirements, and waterway access requirements.

**Strategic Initiative 1.1.C** Consolidate nature based recreation opportunities by repairing, signing and mapping existing tracks and recreational locations prior to expanding into new areas.

**Strategic Initiative 1.1.D** Develop and implement a recreational track classification system for the city, keeping this consistent with existing classification systems if appropriate.



## Objective 1.2

Provide nature based recreation opportunities appropriate to the level of demand, and at locations convenient to the City's population centres.

**Strategic Initiative 1.2.A** Liaise and develop formal agreements with clubs, recreation groups, environmental groups, residents and tourists to ensure this plan is providing desired opportunities for our community.

**Strategic Initiative 1.2.B** Utilise track counters and other data capture methods to determine the level of use of a variety of nature based recreation locations across the city, especially where usage levels are unknown.

**Strategic Initiative 1.2.C** Review the needs of the Gold Coast community to determine the gaps in nature based recreation activities and locations.

**Strategic Initiative 1.2.D** Where there is significant demand, ensure that newly emerging nature based recreation opportunities are maximised, within easy reach of the City's residents and visitors.



*Photo by Matt Holmes*

*Mountain biking is growing in popularity in the City's natural areas.*

## Objective 1.3

Ensure the City's natural areas are as safe and accessible as possible to people of varying ages, cultures and abilities.

**Strategic Initiative 1.3.A** Update nature based recreation opportunities on the Gold Coast Access website ([goldcoast.qld.gov.au/community/gold-coast-access-2978.html](http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/community/gold-coast-access-2978.html)).

**Strategic Initiative 1.3.B** Deliver nature based recreation opportunities that comply with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and equal access specifications wherever possible.

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## Objective 1.4

Collaborate with external groups and providers to maximise sustainable nature based recreation opportunities in the natural areas estate.

**Strategic Initiative 1.4.A** Develop a commercial use/ ecotourism permitting system for the natural areas estate.

**Strategic Initiative 1.4.B** Where external providers such as ecotourism operators and cultural tourism operators can increase the range of sustainable nature based recreation activities available, work collaboratively to deliver on such opportunities, e.g. guided cycling tours, ecotours, bush food tours, trail running, etc.



*Participants in one of the City's "Naturally GC" workshops learn about mangroves at Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area. A key objective of this plan is to build a sense of connection to the natural areas estate*

## Outcome 2: Community wellbeing is enhanced by sustainable nature based recreation.

### Objective 2.1

Actively promote existing nature based recreation opportunities and provide information about these opportunities to residents and visitors.

**Strategic Initiative 2.1.A** Use digital technology (e.g. online track maps, phone apps, and QR (Quick Reference) codes) to show the locations of nature based recreation opportunities.



**Strategic Initiative 2.1.B** Develop a promotion and communication plan that considers signage, maps, digital media, etc as ways to promote the best existing locations for bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding and other nature based recreation opportunities before promoting newly emerging locations.

*Naturally GC is a fantastic program that connects the Gold Coast community with the environment through free or low educational activities including reptile awareness, geology walks, gardening workshops and bush tucker tours as well as recreation activities such as bushwalking, trail running, responsible runners events and dune walks. The program allows people of varying ages and abilities to explore the City's outstanding natural areas. The Nature Based Recreation Plan advocates the incorporation of more physically active recreation (e.g. mountain bike tours) and cultural heritage information (e.g. bush tucker walks) into the Naturally GC program. For more information on Naturally GC, telephone 07 5581 6984 or download the brochure at: [geparks.com.au/userfiles/files/NATURALLYGC\\_2014-2015.PDF](http://geparks.com.au/userfiles/files/NATURALLYGC_2014-2015.PDF)*

## **Objective 2.2**

Foster an appreciation of our natural areas, not only as places of natural value, but as places to stay active and healthy.

**Strategic Initiative 2.2.A** Promote nature conservation and sustainable visitation through improved interpretative signage, park events, online information and other forms of community engagement.

**Strategic Initiative 2.2.B** Use digital media such as photographs, maps and video footage to showcase the values of the Gold Coast natural areas estate and to encourage people to connect with these places as nature based recreation destinations.

**Strategic Initiative 2.2.C** Continue to expand the Naturally GC program, incorporating activities not only for environmental education, but also for nature based recreation as a way to stay active and healthy.

## **Outcome 3: The environment is protected through well managed nature based recreation.**

### **Objective 3.1**

Assess, minimise, mitigate and monitor the impacts of nature based recreation activities in natural areas.

**Strategic Initiative 3.1.A** With assistance from the City's environmental planning officers, undertake environmental assessments to minimise environmental impacts and inform planning for nature based recreation activities across the network.

**Strategic Initiative 3.1.B** Protect sensitive natural areas from the impacts of nature based recreation activities, ensuring that any high impact activities are only located in areas that are able to sustain such activities without a loss of environmental values.

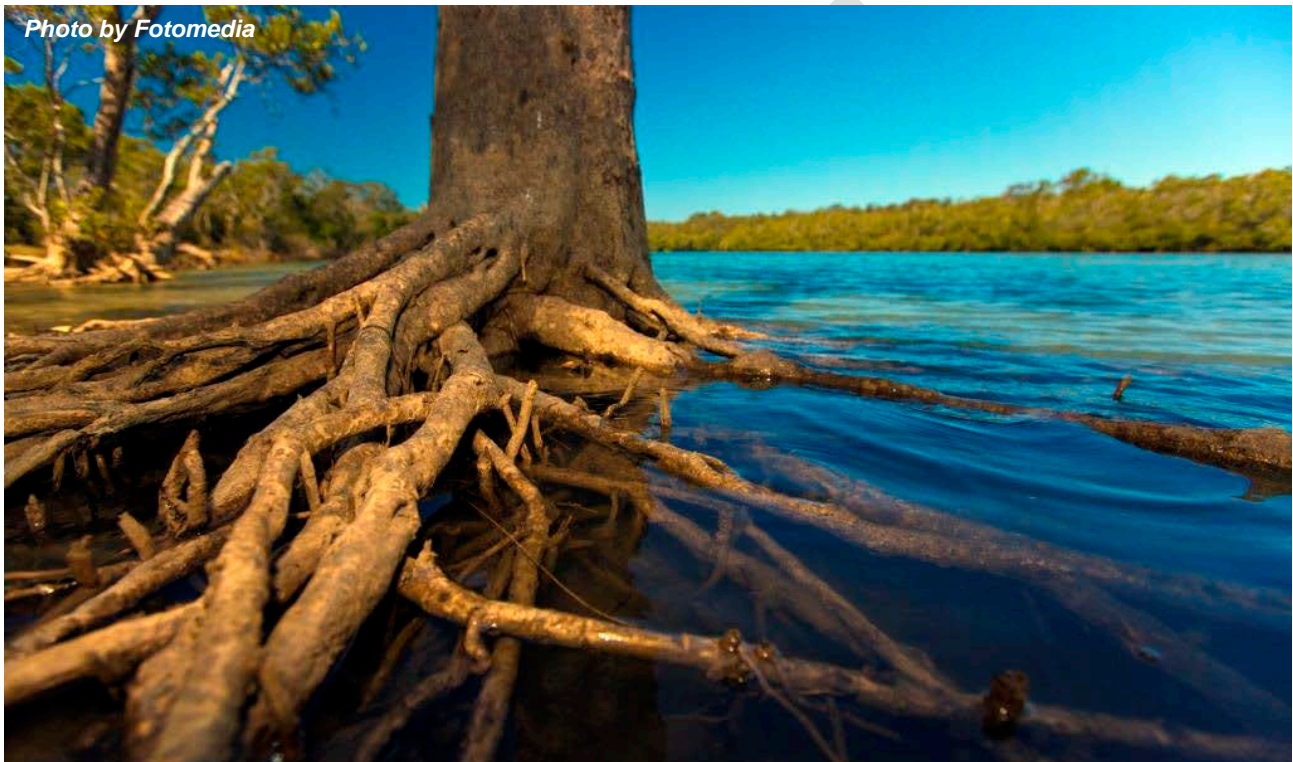
**Strategic Initiative 3.1.C** Monitor the impacts of nature based recreation to continually adapt and improve management practices.

## **Objective 3.2**

Participate in regional partnerships for nature based recreation planning and management.

**Strategic Initiative 3.2.A** Plan for nature based recreation on a regional scale by working with regional nature based recreation partners including other local governments, the State Government and non-government organisations, e.g. Queensland Outdoor Recreation Foundation (QORF).

**Strategic Initiative 3.2.B** Where possible, link tracks with other existing tracks, including those on adjoining state and local government lands.



*We will manage nature based recreation to ensure the protection of our environment. This includes not only undertaking environmental assessments, but monitoring the impacts of nature based recreation activities*

## **Outcome 4: The community is connected to cultural heritage through sustainable nature based recreation.**

### **Objective 4.1**

Build public understanding and a sense of connection to the cultural heritage of the natural areas estate.

**Strategic Initiative 4.1.A** Where reserves have cultural heritage significance, celebrate this heritage by incorporating appropriate cultural heritage information into place names, educational materials and interpretive information, having sought advice from the City's Indigenous Cultural Heritage Liaison Officer and Heritage Planning Team.

**Strategic Initiative 4.1.B** Increase the amount of cultural heritage information and activities in educational and promotional materials, e.g. the Naturally GC program.



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**Strategic Initiative 4.1.C** Protect cultural heritage from the impacts of nature based recreation by conducting cultural heritage assessments with advice from the City's Indigenous Cultural Heritage Liaison Officer and Heritage Planning Team.

**Strategic Initiative 4.1.D** To ensure Indigenous people's rights and aspirations are appropriately considered and sensitively represented, consult the Indigenous community via the local Cultural Heritage Body (Jabree Ltd) regarding the use and delivery of any Indigenous cultural materials or programs

## 4. Key nature based recreation activities

In this plan, nature based recreation has been categorised into the following key activities:

1. Bushwalking
2. Mountain biking
3. Horse riding
4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study
5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing
6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing
7. Ecotourism and commercial use
8. Camping

Whilst some of the following activities can potentially be considered nature based recreation, they are not permitted in City of Gold Coast natural areas due to either their potential impacts on the environment and neighbours, limited land area available to support such activities (which may further exacerbate impacts) inherently high risks and the costs of maintaining the infrastructure to support the activity.

- Off road driving of motor vehicles including four-wheel-drive vehicles, except where permitted by commercial users.
- Riding off-road motorcycles<sup>1</sup> including trail bikes, motocross bikes, enduro bikes, quads and similar motorised vehicles.
- Electric or self-propelled vehicles (except eco-tourism operators).
- Hang Gliding.
- Hunting, archery<sup>1</sup>, shooting.
- Camping (generally only permitted on SSI and the Woonoongoora Walker's Camp).
- Fossicking, collecting.
- Ropes courses, abseiling<sup>1</sup> and rock climbing.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that abseiling, archery and riding off-road vehicles such as trail bikes may be allowed in some Council parks via appropriate lease/licence conditions.

## 4.1 Bushwalking



*Whilst bushwalking trends indicate that people now prefer shorter bushwalks, people are increasingly looking for more natural settings in which to walk.*

Bushwalking trends indicate that there is a growing preference for shorter walks that provide nature experiences without demanding too much time or fitness (EDAW 2000). There was a major decrease in walking activity rates in South East Queensland between 1997 and 2007 (Queensland Government, 2007). Interestingly however, it appears that people are opting for increasingly natural settings in which to walk and despite the decline walking still remains one of the most popular activities. For example, of 1,244 people surveyed at various locations in the Hinterland, the 2002 Hinterland Sustainable Tourism Development Study found that “*about three-quarters of the sample used toilet facilities at the site while short trails were also heavily utilised.*”

The Gold Coast has a range of bushwalking opportunities available, from short neighbourhood walks through to multi-day experiences such as The Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk. There are a number of longer trails and linkages that are accessible to experienced, self-reliant walkers with local knowledge. There are however, fewer shorter, well signed trails suitable for inexperienced walkers.

The City has a number of tracks that require mapping, signage and relatively minor works to allow the public to fully utilise them. The focus will be on improving, mapping and maintaining existing tracks, and providing shorter trails that still offer a genuine nature based recreational experience. Where short lengths of trail can be established and/or improved to link existing trails, these will be prioritised above completely new works.



## Where can I take my dog for a walk?

The City has a number of dog exercise areas where dogs may be exercised off-leash but under effective control. There are some dog prohibited areas including selected high conservation value reserves, all children's playground areas and within 200 metres of all flagged bathing areas. As a general rule, all city parks and nature reserves are dog on-leash areas unless otherwise signed.

You can also walk your dog on most Gold Coast beaches (where signposted) provided your dog is on a leash. Remember that dogs aren't permitted within 200 metres of flagged areas, and you must pick up their droppings. There are also dog off-leash beach areas at The Spit, Tallebudgera Beach and Palm Beach.

For downloadable maps of dog friendly areas and further information, go to : [goldcoast.qld.gov.au/thegoldcoast/dog-exercise-areas-972.html](http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/thegoldcoast/dog-exercise-areas-972.html)

### Activity Specific Initiatives: Bushwalking

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to bushwalking. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 1.1.1** Prioritise walking tracks that provide for a short return walk (e.g. 20-30 minutes) to a specific destination.

## 4.2 Mountain biking

Mountain biking has become a popular nature based recreational activity since its development in the 1980s. There are a number of different styles of mountain biking including cross country, track riding, dirt jumping, 4 X, dual slalom, freeriding, all-mountain and downhill riding. Historically, riding opportunities have been limited in Australia including in Queensland (QPWS, 2010; IMBA 2004), although this is changing with recent legislative and policy changes.

The most common type of mountain biking is cross country (QORF, 2013). Cross country mountain bikers will typically utilise a combination of off road trails including fire trails and 'singletrack' (a narrow, flowing track following natural surface levels). Cross country riders already utilise parts of the City's natural areas estate, although the number of cross country type trails on City land is limited. Given its lower impacts, and the fact that there is a much larger proportion of cross country style riders compared to other genres, the City will make it a priority to provide further cross country type opportunities.

Freeriding and downhill mountain biking are extreme sports that also occur on City managed land. These activities are not always consistent with the definition of nature based recreation, and can have considerable impacts if not located in suitable locations and managed carefully. These genres are limited to riders with advanced skills, but tracks can be designed with 'chicken runs' or 'b-lines' to accommodate a broader cross section of users. Done the right way, these activities can bring people into semi-natural settings where they can connect with nature and engage in physical activity.

Wherever possible, the City will provide multi use trails to allow more than one user group to utilise the area. Shared use trails can be successful provided they are designed appropriately, and the appropriate codes of

conduct and guidelines are adhered to. At locations where demand is high or the activity is not appropriate for a shared use trail, the City will consider dedicated single track for activities such as downhill riding. This must be undertaken in such a way that the environment is protected.

Unauthorised trail building is relatively common in the City's natural areas, and City staff have now established good relationships with a number of local mountain biking groups. Working together with the riding community to cater for demand appears to be reducing the number of unauthorised tracks being constructed.

## The economic value of mountain biking

Cycling is now the fourth most popular physical activity for adult Australians, with 18% of Queenslanders riding a bike each week. Mountain biking is of considerable economic value, for example:

- Western Australia's Munda Biddi Trail consists of 1000 km of multi-use track through 7 towns. An estimated 42,000 users of this trail create annual revenue of \$5 million (Tablelands Integrated Mountain Bike Alliance, 2012).
- 2-3% of tourists in Tasmania participate in off-road cycling, contributing around \$4 million dollars to the economy annually (Tablelands Integrated Mountain Bike Alliance, 2012).
- Total visitor spending in Whistler, Canada attributable to mountain biking exceeded \$34.3 million CAD over the period June 4 to September 17, 2006 supporting an estimated \$39.1 million in new economic activity (Western Canada Mountain Bike Association, 2006).
- Rotorua, New Zealand is a popular mountain bike destination, which has a population of 67,000 and annual visitors numbering 2.5 million. In 2014, Rotorua's Associate Tourism Minister Todd McClay stated "Cycling alone is worth about \$15 million to our local economy."

The City of Gold Coast will continue to work with the local mountain biking community to progress feasibility studies for new tracks in the City's natural areas, particularly where there are sustainable economic benefits to the Gold Coast community.



Photo by Matt Holmes



*A mountain biker gets some air at Old Tambo mountain bike track in Eagle Heights Conservation Area. The City plans to investigate establishing a mountain bike park, designed to cater for riders of varying ages and abilities.*

**Valmont Bike Park** is a 42-acre facility which opened in the city of Boulder, USA in 2011. Bike parks are seen by some as the future of mountain biking, and this park features a network of single track, learners and children's areas, a terrain park, cyclocross and events facilities. In its first year of operation, an estimated 50,000 riders visited the park. The park is designed to have something for everyone, from beginners through to advanced riders – and from cross country riders through to freestylers. The park was funded jointly by the City of Boulder, community fundraising and grants. It is now an international attraction that brings many economic benefits to the city. The City of Gold Coast is planning to investigate the feasibility of a dedicated bike park here on the Gold Coast. It is anticipated that such a park would follow Valmont Bike Park's lead and be located outside of the conservation areas, and in an urban area to increase accessibility.

### **Activity Specific Initiatives: Mountain Biking**

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to mountain biking. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.1** Continue to progress feasibility, planning and design work for a downhill single track with all-mountain or cross country tracks to be incorporated subject to funding availability.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.2** Investigate the feasibility of building a dedicated bike park in the City, designed to cater for a range of riding styles and abilities.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.3** Prioritise tracks and facilities for types of mountain biking for which there is high demand and low environmental impacts.



### 4.3 Horse riding

Horse riding is a popular activity in many of the City's natural areas and surrounding semi-rural areas. Ruffles Road Reserve West/Crystal Creek Reserve, Chesters Road (through Numinbah Conservation Area), Lower Beechmont Conservation Area and Schusters Park offer trails for use by horse riders, and there are many other informal trails and horse riding destinations. There are also other opportunities within South East Queensland, with a large number of trails on State managed land including Nerang Conservation Park, Plunkett Conservation Park, Wickham Conservation Park and many parks in other adjoining Local Government Areas.

A number of horse riding trail improvements have been completed in recent years including the installation and upgrade of many horse step-overs to allow horse riders access to trails. In the coming years, there are a number of proposed and potential upgrades to horse riding trails including Davenport Park, Bally Mountain Conservation Area (Upper Bonogin Section), Wyangan Valley Park, Ruffles Road Reserve East and Gladrose Reserve (See Tables 3, 4 and 5).



*Horse riding is popular in a number of the City's Hinterland reserves.*

#### 4.4 Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study

The Gold Coast's natural areas provide a range of picnicking opportunities from local suburban and rural bushland reserves to the more iconic picnic areas such as Springbrook, Lower Beechmont, Numinbah Valley and the Currumbin and Tallebudgera Valleys. According to *Outdoor Recreation Trends in South East Queensland 2007*, picnicking is the most popular outdoor recreation activity, with 57% of the Gold Coast population having had a picnic in a natural area at least once in the year of the survey.

As the city grows and our beaches and foreshore parks become busier it will be important to provide alternative picnic destinations in the natural areas of our suburbs and hinterland. There are many potential picnic sites at pleasant, creek-side destinations in the lower foothills and valleys of the hinterland that are within 15 to 20 minutes' drive of highly urbanised areas.

**Healthy Waterplay** is a collaborative program supported by the City of Gold Coast and a number of other local councils in South East Queensland. The program manages risks in South East Queensland's recreational waterways.

Remember the Healthy Waterplay tips:

1. Avoid primary contact recreation (i.e. swimming) in waterways during, and at least one day after, heavy rain in open waterways and beaches, and for at least three days within confined bays and estuaries.
2. Avoid primary contact recreation in or near stormwater drains.
3. Look out for pollution indicators before entering waterways including discoloured or strong smelling water, and floating litter, scum or debris.
4. Avoid primary contact recreation with waterways if you have an open wound or infection.
5. Look for posted warning signs and follow the advice on them.

Swimming is a popular activity which is dealt with in a number of other City strategic documents and websites. Swimming at ocean beaches is included in the *Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013-2023* which can be accessed at [goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/ocean-beaches-strategy-2013-2023.pdf](http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/ocean-beaches-strategy-2013-2023.pdf). The City also maintains a number of recreational swimming enclosures, where water quality is monitored to ensure it is at an acceptable level for recreational use. Locations include Southport swimming enclosure, Harley Park swimming lagoon, Paradise Point swimming enclosure, Jacobs Well swimming enclosure, Murlong swimming enclosure, Evandale swimming lagoon and Jabiru Island swimming enclosure. These enclosures are not included in the scope of this plan, but further information can be obtained at [goldcoast.qld.gov.au/thegoldcoast/swimming-enclosures.html](http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/thegoldcoast/swimming-enclosures.html).





*A birdwatcher snaps a couple of the locals at Apple Tree Park picnic ground in Springbrook. This park is a delight for nature appreciation, accessible not only by car but a welcome rest stop on The Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk.*

The Gold Coast is one of Australia's most biodiverse cities and home to a superb variety of native flora and fauna. There are a myriad of **nature appreciation opportunities** in the City's conservation areas. Nature enthusiasts can view wader birds from a purpose built bird hide at Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area; observe wild koalas at Colman Road Reserve; admire endangered blackbutt forest at Tugun Hill Conservation Area, marvel at the basalt cliffs of the Mt Warning Caldera from Bochoy Park and delight at fish and other marine creatures in the mangroves whilst strolling along Beree-Badalla boardwalk. For those who would rather have company, there are many organised nature and environmental groups such as birdwatchers, responsible runners, Landcare and Beachcare who will welcome you along on Arbor day, Bird Week or Threatened species Day for example. If you're a nature lover, the City's conservation estate is brimming with opportunities. This plan will deliver better mapping of tracks and reserves, making it easier for nature enthusiasts to get out and into nature.

*Photo by Fotomedia*



*Picnicking in Eddie Kornhauser Recreational Reserve: a fabulous, family friendly natural area in Elanora/Tallebudgera*

### **Activity Specific Initiatives: Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study**

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to day use. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.4.1** Develop a network of day use areas that will provide alternative destinations to our heavily used foreshore parks as the city continues to grow.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.4.2** Prior to promoting/ marketing sites for primary contact water based recreation, consider water quality and its potential impacts on human health.

## **4.5 Canoeing, kayaking and fishing**

The Gold Coast's Broadwater and many tidal and freshwater waterways provide a variety of opportunities for nature based recreation including canoeing, kayaking, fishing from kayaks ('yak' fishing) and conventional fishing.

A number of Queensland Government agencies manage water-based outdoor recreation and the City is not directly responsible for the regulation of activities such as fishing or boating. The City does however provide a number of fish cleaning facilities and manages many of the access points to waterways from City-owned/ managed boat ramps and natural areas.

The following are popular canoe and kayak routes:

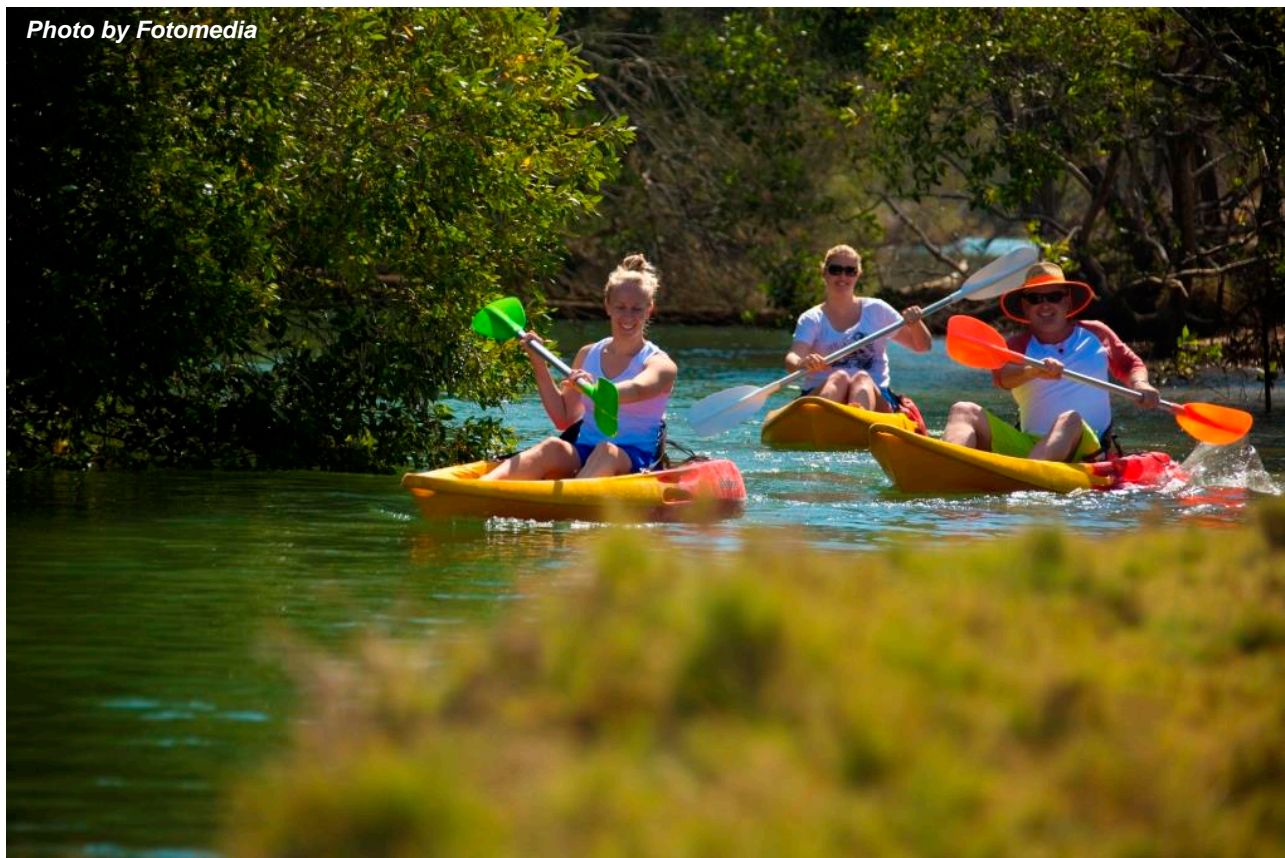


- Tallebudgera Beach (Palm Beach/ Tallebudgera) to David Fleay Wildlife Park (West Burleigh) to Schusters Park sandy beach (Tallebudgera) via Tallebudgera Creek.
- Currumbin Creek Estuary (Currumbin) upstream to Coastal Meadows Park (Currumbin Valley) adjacent to the weir beneath Currumbin Creek Road.
- Cecil Zipf Park (Woongoolba) south from the Logan River mouth past Cabbage Tree Point and Jacobs Well then south via the Pimpama River to Colman Road Reserve (Coomera).
- Colman Road Reserve (Coomera) to Jumpinpin Point (South Stradbroke Island) via the Broadwater.
- Jabiru Island Park (Paradise Point) to River Downs Park (Helensvale) via Saltwater Creek.
- Colman Road Reserve (Coomera) east along the Pimpama River then south along the Broadwater into the Coomera River then upstream to Coomera River Causeway Parkland (Oxenford).
- Jabiru Island Park (Paradise Point) upstream along Coombabah Creek to Coombabah Lake (return trip).
- Jacobs Well Conservation Area/Lions Park (Jacobs Well) via Logan River to South Stradbroke Island – Pimpama or Colman Road Reserve (Coomera) via the Broadwater, Pimpama River.



*Participants in one of the City's "Naturally GC" workshops learn about mangroves at Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area. A key objective of this plan is to build a sense of connection to the natural areas estate*

Photo by Fotomedia



*The Gold Coast's Broadwater and many tidal and freshwater waterways provide a superb variety of opportunities for kayaking.*

### **Activity Specific Initiatives: Canoeing, kayaking and fishing**

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to canoeing, kayaking and fishing. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.5.1** Provide sustainable access (including kayak/ canoe friendly launch points) to creeks and water bodies where there is sufficient demand for water based recreation.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.5.2** Provide fishing platforms at a number of natural areas and support the increasing popularity of yak (or kayak) fishing.

## **4.6 Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing**

Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing all occur on a small scale throughout the City's parks and natural areas estate. Orienteering is generally undertaken through clubs and groups, and geocaching is undertaken by small groups or individuals. Trail running is undertaken on an individual basis, as well as through a small number of organised events. Various forms of adventure racing and endurance challenges take place in the reserves, although these are usually organised events such as the Kokoda Challenge.

There are some constraints in accommodating these kinds of activities in natural areas. This is due not only to the difficulty in managing the impacts of activities that may involve off-track use but also to the relatively small size and steepness of our natural areas, which makes them susceptible to overuse. It is recognised, however that these activities are growing in popularity and that they may also present future tourism opportunities. It is important that uses are consistent with the environmental values of the specific site, and that high impact activities are kept away from sensitive environmental areas. With a well-coordinated



management approach, impacts can be minimised. The City will work together with the relevant organisations to cater for appropriate activities.



*The City is committed to working together with the various orienteering, geocaching, adventure racing and trail running groups to ensure that sustainable opportunities are provided for these activities in the City's natural areas.*

### **Activity Specific Initiatives: Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing**

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.6.1** Develop guidelines to coordinate, support and manage group and club activities and events to ensure successful, sustainable outcomes.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.6.2** Where the level of use is sufficient, develop agreements with the various peak organisations for nature based recreational activities.

## 4.7 Ecotourism and commercial use

Ecotourism is an important growth sector for local, domestic and international visitors to the Gold Coast. One of the Gold Coast 2020 key programs is to *'capitalise on emerging trends in the tourism market by driving the development of active and eco-tourism experiences in the hinterland and other natural areas'*.



*Coomababah Lakelands Conservation Area offers wildlife viewing opportunities (including koalas and kangaroos) just minutes from Surfers Paradise. Natural areas like this represent superb locations for ecotourism and commercial use.*

Some of the City's natural areas in Springbrook, Numinbah and Austinville neighbour the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area. This listing includes *'the most extensive areas of subtropical rainforest in the world... and nearly all of the Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest'* (Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2008). Natural areas in the southern section of the City are part of Australia's Green Cauldron. The Green Cauldron is a 'National Landscape', as is The Great Barrier Reef, The Wet Tropics and Australia's Red Centre (*Tourism Australia and Australian Government Director of National Parks, 2008*). Gold Coast tourists can also explore the Moreton Bay Marine Park, which has its numerous islands and internationally significant RAMSAR wetlands.

The relatively small size of some City reserves does limit opportunities somewhat; however there are many larger reserves that can support ecotourism. For example, Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area provides many wildlife viewing opportunities just minutes from the heart of Surfers Paradise. Four wheel drive tours and a small number of guided walking tour operators already utilise this, and other reserves.



The City is amenable to expanding ecotourism and commercial nature based recreation activities where they are occurring in appropriate locations, and in a sustainable manner. The Gold Coast's tourism industry generates more than \$4.5 billion in visitor expenditure annually (City of Gold Coast, 2013), and an important part of this industry is **nature tourism**. In 2009, international nature tourists spent \$19.5 billion on their trips, whilst domestic tourists spent approximately \$13.8 billion. Visiting national parks/state parks was the most popular activity for international nature tourists, whilst bushwalking/rainforest walks was the most popular activity for domestic people (Tourism Research Australia, 2010).

The natural environment is a key motivator for international visitors to travel to Queensland, with 73% of international visitors participating in nature based activities (Tourism and Transport Forum, 2014). For example, in 2003, 23% of international visitors and 12% of domestic overnight visitors staying on the Gold Coast made a daytrip visit to national parks or natural bushland in the Gold Coast Hinterland (Gold Coast City Council, 2003).

The Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2013-2020 aims to make Queensland the number one ecotourism destination in Australia, and acknowledges that 'world-leading ecotourism is wholly dependent upon the conservation of Queensland's rich biodiversity and environmental and cultural resources'. Similarly, the City must protect the natural areas it manages in order to ensure residents and visitors the best possible settings for nature based recreation.

### **Activity Specific Initiatives: Ecotourism and commercial use**

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to ecotourism and commercial use. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiatives apply:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.1** Continue to progress and monitor trials of existing commercial operators in natural areas.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.2** Support appropriate, sustainable ecotourism and commercial nature based recreational and cultural events in the Gold Coast Natural Areas estate.

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.3** Investigate the demand for additional sustainable commercial activities in natural areas, e.g. abseiling, adventure sports, mountain bike tours, etc.

## 4.8 Camping

Gold Coast residents and visitors have access to a number of camp grounds in Gold Coast National Parks (including Springbrook and Lamington), City managed tourist parks and also on privately owned land. South Currigee, North Currigee and Tipplers camp grounds are managed by the City, and located in natural areas on South Stradbroke Island

One of the campgrounds on the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk: the Woonoongoora walker's camp is located in the City's Numinbah Conservation Area and is a good example of our successful partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). This campground is a 'walk in' only campground, and is used by walkers hiking between The Settlement campground in Springbrook National Park and a private campground in Binna Burra. The Woonoongoora walker's camp is located in a City managed reserve, but must be booked via the QPWS website.

Permanent camp grounds in natural areas are expensive to build, operate and maintain and the City heavily subsidises the existing South Stradbroke Island campgrounds. The City does not plan to build any further camp ground facilities.

The City does allow for camping to be carried out on land that is leased by a number of different private organisations. For example, there are several City owned properties leased to Scouts Australia and Girl Guides Australia where camping is permitted within the lease agreement.

The City also permits 'one off' low impact camping opportunities for nature based recreation clubs and other organisations at a few limited locations in the natural areas estate. These arrangements are negotiated directly with the City, and this practice will continue.



*The Woonoongoora walker's camp is located in Numinbah Conservation Area, on the route of the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk.*

### Activity Specific Initiatives: Camping

See Appendix A for the Strategic Initiatives that apply to camping. In addition, the following Activity Specific Initiative applies:

**Activity Specific Initiative 4.8.1** Continue to allow for 'one off' low impact camping opportunities for nature based recreation clubs and other organisations as negotiated on a case by case basis with the City.



## 5. Key nature based recreation locations on City managed land

Table 2: Existing Key Nature Based Recreation Locations (see Figure 2 for a map)

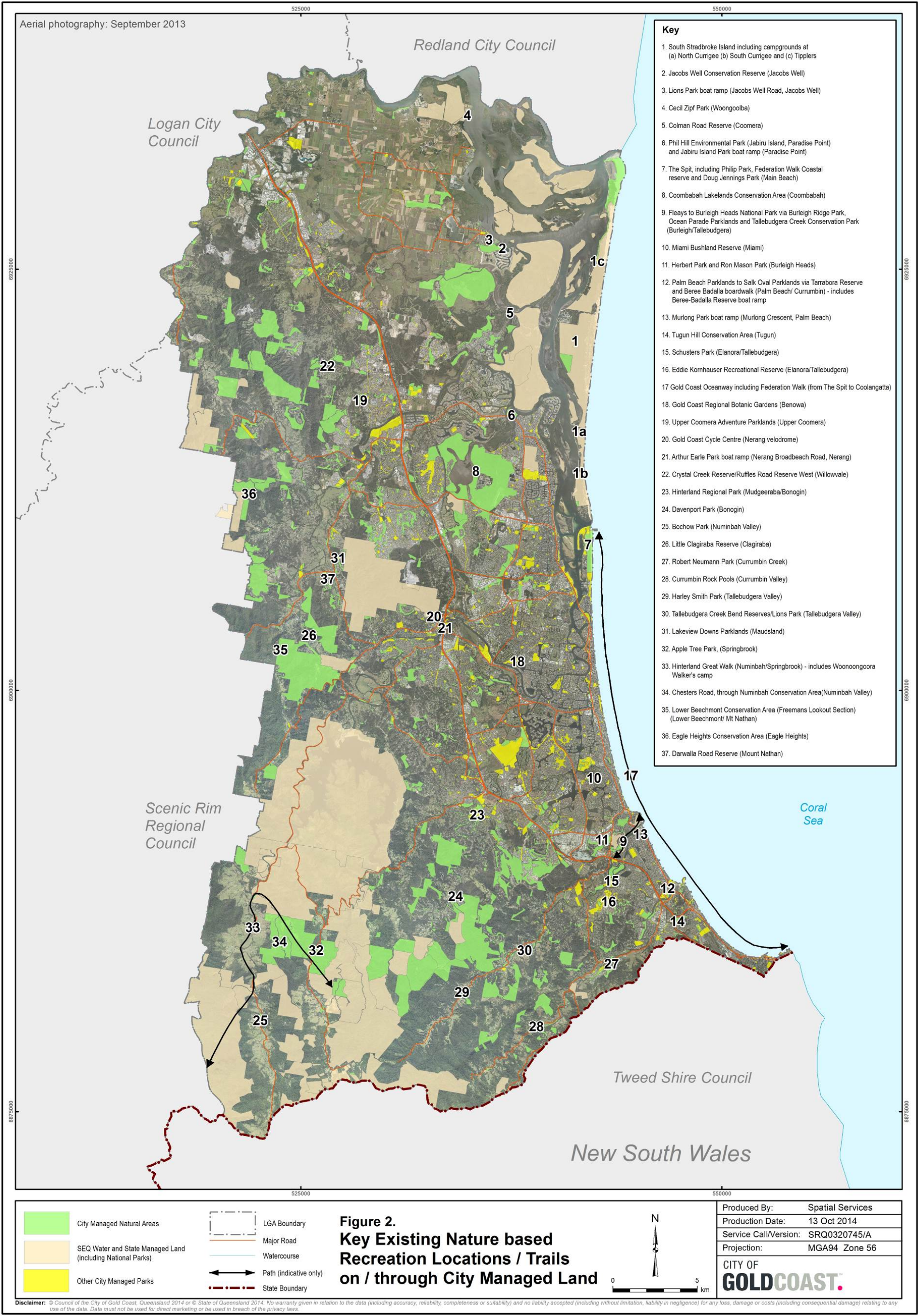
Cane-lands, Broadwater and South Stradbroke Island	Coast and Suburbs	Hinterland Valleys	Hinterland Mountains
<p>1. South Stradbroke Island campgrounds at (a) North Currigee (b) South Currigee; and (c) Tipplers <b>Popular for: camping, day use, nature study</b></p> <p>2. Jacobs Well Conservation Reserve (Jacobs Well) <b>Popular for: day use, informal kayak/canoe waterway access</b></p> <p>3. Lions Park boat ramp (Jacobs Well Road, Jacobs Well) <b>Popular for: boat ramp access, day use, swimming (in enclosure)</b></p> <p>4. Cecil Zipf Park (Woongoolba) <b>Popular for: day use, informal kayak/ canoe waterway access</b></p> <p>5. Colman Road Reserve (Coomera) <b>Popular for: boat ramp access, informal kayak/ canoe waterway access, koala spotting</b></p> <p>6. Phil Hill Environmental Park (Jabiru Island, Paradise Point) and Jabiru Island Park boat ramp (Paradise Point) <b>Popular for: boardwalk and short walking paths, boat ramp access, kayak/ canoe waterway access, day use</b></p> <p>7. The Spit, including Philip Park, Federation Walk Coastal reserve and Doug Jennings Park (Main Beach). <b>Popular for: coast walks and beach access, day use, boat ramp access, kayak/ canoe waterway access</b></p>	<p>8. Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area, including (i) Myola Court Boardwalk (ii) Melaleuca Boardwalk (iii) Birdhide Boardwalk (iii) Arundel Section Boardwalk <b>Popular for: boardwalks and bushwalking, family friendly mountain biking, nature study</b></p> <p>9. Burleigh Ridge Park and Ocean Parade Parklands (links with State Government managed Burleigh Heads National Park and Tallebudgera Creek Conservation Park) <b>Popular for: bushwalking, nature study</b></p> <p>10. Miami Bushland Reserve (Miami) <b>Popular for: bushwalking, nature study</b></p> <p>11. Herbert Park and Ron Mason Park (Burleigh Heads) <b>Popular for: bushwalking (both parks), cross country mountain biking (Ron Mason Park only)</b></p> <p>12. Palm Beach Parklands/ Tarraborra Reserve/ Beree Badalla/ Salk Oval Parklands (Palm Beach/ Currumbin) <b>Popular for: Boardwalks and bushwalking, swimming, day use, nature study, Thrower Drive boat ramp, kayak/ canoe waterway access</b></p> <p>13. Murlong Park boat ramp (Murlong Crescent, Palm Beach) <b>Popular for: boat ramp access, kayak/ canoe waterway access, day use, swimming (in enclosure)</b></p> <p>14. Tugun Hill Conservation Area (Tugun) <b>Popular for: bushwalking, mountain biking on firetrails, nature study</b></p> <p>15. Schusters Park (Elanora/Tallebudgera) <b>Popular for: day use, walking, horse riding, kayak/ canoe waterway access</b></p> <p>16. Eddie Kornhauser Recreational Reserve (Elanora/ Tallebudgera) <b>Popular for: day use, walking, family friendly push biking/ mountain biking</b></p> <p>17. Gold Coast Oceanway including Federation Walk (from The Spit to Coolangatta) <b>Popular for: coast walks, push biking, beach access, day use</b></p> <p>18. Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens (Benowa) <b>Popular for: day use, walking, boardwalks, nature study</b></p> <p>19. Upper Coomera Adventure Parklands (Upper Coomera) <b>Popular for: cross country mountain bike riding, BMX</b></p> <p>20. Gold Coast Cycle Centre (Nerang velodrome) <b>Popular for: mountain bike trail head for Nerang National Park</b></p> <p>21. Arthur Earle Park boat ramp (Nerang Broadbeach Road, Nerang) <b>Popular for: day use, boat ramp access, skate ramp</b></p>	<p>22. Crystal Creek Reserve/ Ruffles Road Reserve West (Willowvale) <b>Popular for: horse riding, bushwalking</b></p> <p>23. Hinterland Regional Park (Mudgeeraba/ Bonogin) <b>Popular for: bushwalking, horse riding, cycling, day use, nature study, bird watching</b></p> <p>24. Davenport Park (Bonogin) <b>Popular for: day use, walking</b></p> <p>25. Bochow Park (Numinbah Valley) <b>Popular for: day use, creek access</b></p> <p>26. Little Clagiraba Reserve (Clagiraba) <b>Popular for: day use, short walks, creek access</b></p> <p>27. Robert Neumann Park (Currumbin Creek) <b>Popular for: day use, short walking path, boat ramp (access to small area above weir only)</b></p> <p>28. Currumbin Rock Pools (Currumbin Valley) <b>Popular for: day use, rock pool access</b></p> <p>29. Harley Smith Park (Tallebudgera Valley) <b>Popular for: day use, creek access, nature study</b></p> <p>30. Tallebudgera Creek Bend Reserves (currently signed as Lions Park), Tallebudgera Valley <b>Popular for: day use, creek access, nature study</b></p> <p>31. Lakeview Downs Parklands (Maudsland) <b>Popular for: day use, short walk</b></p>	<p>32. Apple Tree Park, (Springbrook) <b>Popular for: day use, nature study</b></p> <p>33. Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk (Numinbah/ Springbrook – passes through City land as well as National Park) <b>Popular for: multi-day walk with walk-in camp ground</b></p> <p>34. Chesters Road, through Numinbah Conservation Area (Numinbah Valley) <b>Popular for: horse riding</b></p> <p>35. Lower Beechmont Conservation Area (Freemans Lookout Section) (Lower Beechmont/ Mt Nathan) <b>Popular for: day use, nature study</b></p> <p>36. Eagle Heights Conservation Area (Eagle Heights) <b>Popular for: downhill mountain biking, horse riding</b></p> <p>37. Darwalla Road Reserve (Mount Nathan) <b>Popular for: day use, horse riding</b></p>





*This is one of the City's lesser known bushwalking tracks close to Apple Tree Park in Springbrook. As a first stage, the City will focus on mapping and signposting such tracks to consolidate recreation opportunities prior to spending money on building new tracks and facilities.*







## 6. Key nature based recreation locations potentially to be developed in the next five years

**Table 3. Key nature based recreation locations potentially to be developed in the next five years (See Figure 3 for a map of Tables 3 and 4)**

Coast and Suburbs	Hinterland Valleys	Hinterland Mountains
<p>38. Schusters Park (Elanora/Tallebudgera) <b>Proposal: walking track repairs and signage</b></p> <p>39. A park in the Mudgeeraba/ Reedy Creek/ Bonogin area e.g. Tourmaline Reserve or Glossy Black Reserve <b>Proposal: mountain bike track</b></p> <p>40. Linkages between Tugun Hill Conservation Area and other parks in the area including, Toolona Park, Littleford Family Park, Alex Griffiths Park and Len Wort Park <b>Proposal: signage and trails to form linkages for walking and cycling</b></p> <p>41. Elanora Wetlands Reserve (Elanora) <b>Proposal: walking track signage</b></p> <p>42. Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area <b>Proposal: a walking/ push bike track between Mildura Drive and Helensvale Road</b></p> <p>43. Adjacent to David Fleay Wildlife Park in Tallebudgera Creek (West Burleigh) <b>Proposal: kayak/canoe/fishing friendly launch point</b></p> <p>44. Burleigh Heads National Park to David Fleay Wildlife Park walking track. <b>Proposal: footbridge over Oyster Creek to extend the walking track</b></p> <p>45. Green Heart Reserve (Robina/ Merrimac) <b>Proposal: Bridges and recreation tracks</b></p>	<p>46. Numinbah Conservation Area (Numinbah Valley) <b>Proposal: directional and interpretive signage on multi-purpose tracks</b></p> <p>47. Bally Mountain Conservation Area (Rosegum Section) <b>Proposal: walking track signage on closed section of Bonogin Road</b></p> <p>48. Davenport Park (Bonogin) <b>Proposal: horse riding trail improvement</b></p> <p>49. Wallaby Drive Reserve (Mudgeeraba) <b>Proposal: repairs to trail between Adios Court and Hardys Road</b></p> <p>50. Bochow Park (Numinbah Valley) <b>Proposal: interpretive signage and carpark upgrade</b></p> <p>51. Oval Drive Parklands to Mt Nathan Reserve (Mt Nathan) <b>Proposal: directional signage and access filter (horses/pedestrians)</b></p>	<p>52. Lower Beechmont Conservation Area (Freemans Lookout Section) (Lower Beechmont) <b>Proposal: interpretive and directional signage on walking track</b></p> <p>53. Apple Tree Park (Springbrook) – <b>Proposal: directional walking track signage</b></p>

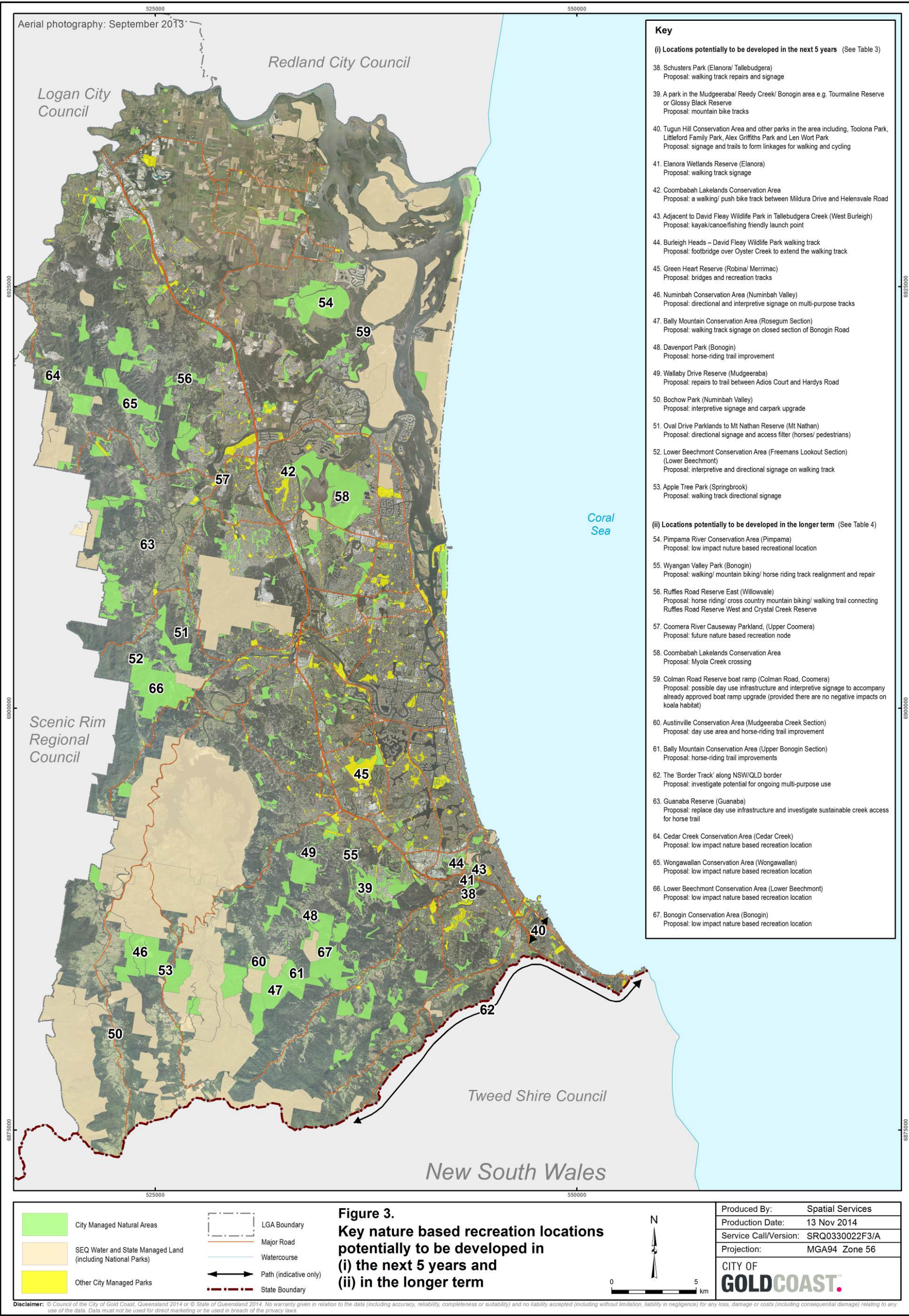


## 7. Key nature based recreation locations potentially to be developed in the longer term

*Table 4. Key nature based recreation locations potentially to be developed in the longer term (See Figure 3 for a map of Tables 3 and 4)*

Cane-lands, Broadwater and South Stradbroke Island	Coast and Suburbs	Hinterland Valleys	Hinterland Mountains
<p>54. Pimpama River Conservation Area <b>Proposal: Low impact nature based recreation location</b></p>	<p>55. Wyangan Valley Park (Bonogin) <b>Proposal: walking/ mountain biking/ horse riding track realignment and repair</b></p> <p>56. Ruffles Road Reserve East <b>Proposal: horse riding/ cross country mountain biking/ walking trail connecting to Ruffles Road Reserve West and Crystal Creek Reserve (Willowvale)</b></p> <p>57. Coomera River Causeway Parkland, (Upper Coomera) <b>Proposal: future Nature Based Recreation Node</b></p> <p>58. Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area <b>Proposal: Myola Creek crossing</b></p> <p>59. Colman Road Reserve (Colman Road, Coomera) <b>Proposal: possible day use infrastructure/ interpretive signage to accompany already approved boat ramp upgrade (provided there are no negative impacts on koala habitat)</b></p>	<p>60. Austinville Conservation Area (Mudgeeraba Creek Section) <b>Proposal: day use area and horse riding trail improvement</b></p> <p>61. Bally Mountain Conservation Area (Upper Bonogin Section) <b>Proposal: horse riding trail improvements</b></p> <p>62. The 'Border Track' along NSW/QLD border <b>Proposal: investigate potential for ongoing multi-purpose use</b></p> <p>63. Guanaba Reserve (Guanaba) <b>Proposal: replace day use infrastructure and investigate sustainable creek access for horse trail</b></p>	<p>64. Cedar Creek Conservation Area: <b>Proposal: low impact nature based recreation location</b></p> <p>65. Wongawallan Conservation Area (Wongawallan): <b>Proposal: low impact nature based recreation location</b></p> <p>66. Lower Beechmont Conservation Area (Lower Beechmont): <b>Proposal: low impact nature based recreation location</b></p> <p>67. Bonogin Conservation Area (Bonogin) <b>Proposal: low impact nature based recreation location</b></p>





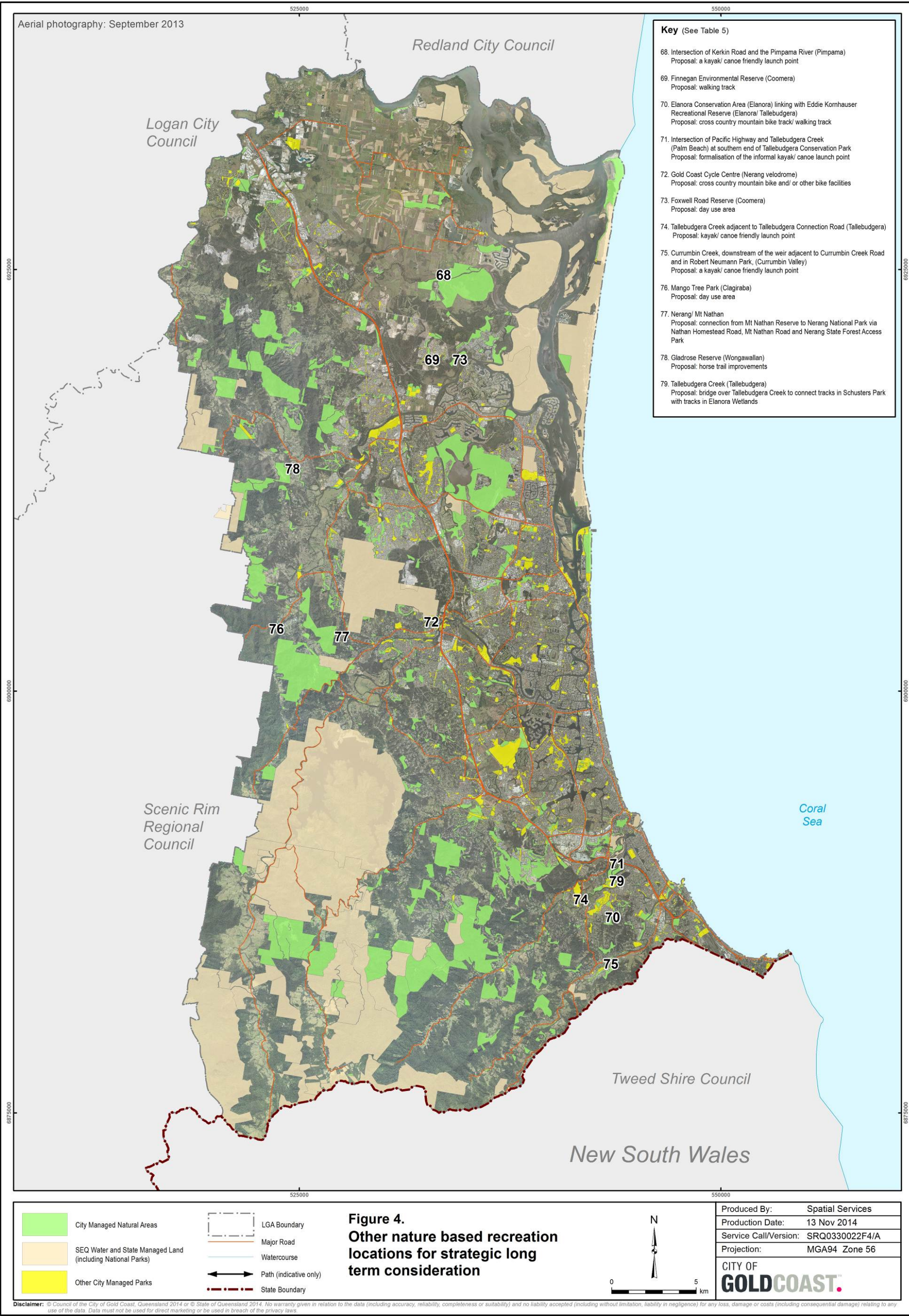


## 8. Other nature based recreation locations for strategic long term consideration

*Table 5. Other nature based recreation locations for strategic long term consideration (See Figure 4 for a map of Tables 5)*

Cane-lands, Broadwater and South Stradbroke Island	Coast and Suburbs	Hinterland Valleys	Hinterland Mountains
<p>68. Intersection of Kerkin Road and the Pimpama River (Pimpama) <b>Proposal: a kayak/ canoe friendly launch point</b></p>	<p>69. Finnegan Environmental Reserve (Coomera) <b>Proposal: walking track</b></p> <p>70. Elanora Conservation Area (Elanora) linking with Eddie Kornhauser Recreational Reserve (Elanora/Tallebudgera) <b>Proposal: cross country mountain bike track/ walking track</b></p> <p>71. Intersection of Pacific Highway and Tallebudgera Creek (Palm Beach) at southern end of Tallebudgera Conservation Park <b>Proposal: formalisation of the informal kayak/ canoe launch point</b></p> <p>72. Gold Coast Cycle Centre (Nerang velodrome) <b>Proposal: cross country mountain bike and/ or other bike facilities</b></p> <p>73. Foxwell Road Reserve (Coomera) <b>Proposal: day use area</b></p>	<p>74. Tallebudgera Creek adjacent to Tallebudgera Connection Road (Tallebudgera) <b>Proposal: kayak/ canoe friendly launch point</b></p> <p>75. Currumbin Creek, downstream of the weir adjacent to Currumbin Creek Road and in Robert Neumann Park, (Currumbin Valley) <b>Proposal: a kayak/ canoe friendly launch point</b></p> <p>76. Mango Tree Park (Clagiraba) <b>Proposal: day use area</b></p> <p>77. Nerang/Mt Nathan <b>Proposal: connection from Mt Nathan Reserve to Nerang National Park via Nathan Homestead Road, Mt Nathan Road and Nerang State Forest Access Park.</b></p>	<p>78. Gladrose Reserve (Wongawallan) <b>Proposal: horse trail improvements</b></p> <p>79. Tallebudgera Creek (Tallebudgera) <b>Proposal: bridge over Tallebudgera Creek to connect tracks in Schusters Park with tracks in Elanora Wetlands</b></p>







## 9. Sustainable management: putting the plan into action

This plan will provide for a diverse range of nature based recreation activities across the Gold Coast. This includes not only traditional activities like bushwalking, but newer activities like mountain biking and trail running. A balance between managing the growing demand for nature based recreation and protecting the environmental values of our natural areas is key in the implementation of this plan.

The City's Conservation Reserve Management Plans have been developed over many years and with extensive community consultation. The plans are available at <http://gcparks.com.au/parks.aspx?page=97>.

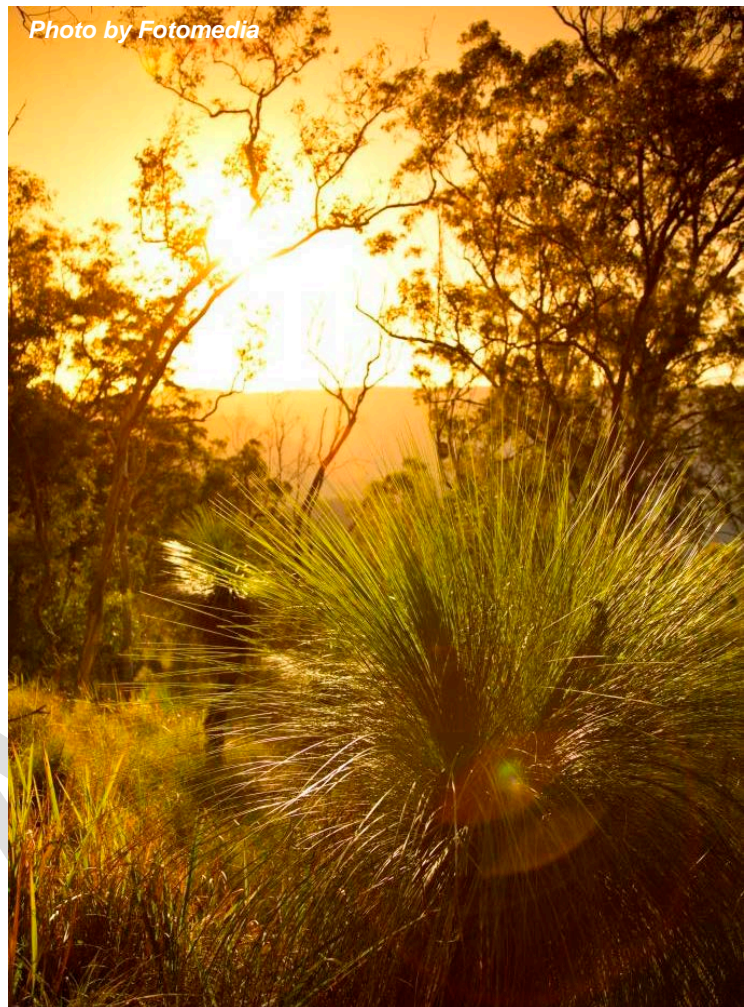
Not only do these plans outline how the natural values of the reserves will be conserved and managed, they also identify appropriate nature based recreation opportunities across the City's natural areas. All such recreational opportunities have been assessed and prioritised using a City wide network analysis. This has formed the foundation of the Draft Nature Based Recreation Plan and was used to set down the key recreational proposals in the next 5 years (Table 3); in the longer term (Table 4), and beyond (Table 5). This ensures that nature based recreation takes place in the right place, at the right time, and that opportunities in the City's natural area estate are sustainable and complement those on State and private land.

Management of nature based recreation will be adaptive. A monitoring program will be established specifically to measure the impacts of nature based recreation activities on the natural areas estate. The results of this program will be used to continually adapt and improve the management of nature based recreation to ensure the environment is protected.

The implementation of the Nature Based Recreation Plan will require the development of capital and operational expenditure programs including budget estimates to maintain existing nature based recreation opportunities and to progress the provision of sustainable new facilities. This implementation will primarily be led by the City's Parks and Recreational Services Branch. In order for the plan to be successful however, various sections of the City will need to work together including the Natural Areas Management Unit, Catchment Management Unit, Pest Management Unit, Animal Management Unit, City Planning Branch (Environmental Planning team), City Development Branch, Economic Development & Major Projects Directorate, Engineering Services Directorate, Gold Coast Water, and other sections as appropriate.

To ensure a triple bottom line approach, this plan will be implemented in accordance with the Corporate Plan, the City's Nature Conservation Strategy 2009 - 2019, the City's various Catchment Management Plans and Conservation Reserve Management Plans and the very latest industry information as it becomes available.

This plan has a ten year lifespan, and it is intended that it will be reviewed at the five year mark.



## 10. Measures

Measure	2020 Target	2025 Target
Number of key nature based recreation locations with directional signage and online maps of locations and tracks.	The City's key existing and some future nature based recreation locations (see Tables 2 and 3) have been audited, mapped, and directional signage installed. Corresponding maps to be available online and to include any tracks present.	20% increase in the number of key nature based recreation locations that have directional signage and online maps. The increase should include at least some locations listed in Table 3.
Promotion of nature based recreation by the City	An 10% increase in the promotion of nature based recreation	A further 10% increase in the promotion of nature based recreation
Monitoring of impacts of recreation on the natural areas estate.	Monitoring program has been established.	Monitoring program has been implemented.
Growth in the number of participants in the Naturally GC program.	Growth in the number of participants from 700 people per year in 2013 to 5000 per year.	Growth in the number of participants to 6500 per year.
Number of active nature based recreation activities offered in the Naturally GC program.	50% increase in the number of active nature based recreation activities offered in the Naturally GC program.	A further 50% increase in the number of active nature based recreation activities offered in the Naturally GC program.
Number of cultural heritage activities offered under the Naturally GC program	10% increase in the number of cultural heritage activities offered in the Naturally GC program.	A further 10% increase in the number of cultural heritage activities offered in the Naturally GC program.
Increased number of park bookings for nature based recreation activities and events, e.g. orienteering, trail running, bushwalking.	10% increase in the number of park bookings for nature based recreational activities and events.	A further 10% increase in the number of park bookings for nature based recreational activities and events.
An increase in the number of formal agreements between the City and local nature based recreation organisations.	50% increase in the number of formal agreements between the City and local nature based recreation organisations.	A further 50% increase in the number of formal agreements between the City and local nature based recreation organisations.
Number of unique page hits on the Bushwalking and Recreation pages of the GC Parks website.	10% increase in the number of unique page hits to the Bushwalking and Recreation pages of the GC Parks website.	A further 10% increase in the number of unique page hits to the Bushwalking and Recreation pages of the GC Parks website.
Number of commercial nature based recreation/ ecotour operators utilising the reserves.	10% increase in the number of commercial nature based recreation/ ecotour operators utilising the reserves.	A further 10% increase in the number of commercial nature based recreation/ ecotour operators utilising the reserves.
Commercial use/ permitting system for natural areas.	Commercial use/ permitting system for sustainable use of natural areas has been developed.	All commercial operators utilising the natural areas estate have permits.
Recreational track classification system.	Recreational track classification system has been developed or an existing system has been adopted.	All new recreational tracks are classified according to the recreational track classification system.



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## Definitions

**Bushwalking:** Includes walking on and off track in natural settings. The term 'bushwalking' is appropriately applied to long (multi-day) as well as short (an hour or two) walks.

**Canoeing:** Canoeing involves single-blade paddling of water craft (typically open craft) in flat or open water environments. In contrast, kayaking involves double-blade paddling of water craft (typically closed craft) in flat, open or white water environments.

**Cycling:** Includes riding of bicycles for touring and/or riding of mountain bikes for touring and cross country riding.

**Fishing:** Only includes line fishing.

**Geocaching:** A handheld GPS receiver unit is used to find a hidden container (or "cache"). Once found, participants log their visit in an included logbook. There are many variations on the theme of geocaching.

**Kayaking:** See canoeing.

**Mountain bike riding:** Generally involves riding on unsealed surfaces such as gravel roads, fire trails, single track, or open or rocky ground, and can involve manoeuvring through or around obstacles such as fallen or narrowly spaced trees, creeks, mud, rocks, built structures and other technical trail features. There are many different types of mountain bike riding including cross country, downhill riding, freeriding, all mountain, and 4 X, dual slalom. All vary in speed, the type of terrain, type of equipment needed and rider demographic. Whilst freeriding and other extreme genres may not always be consistent with the definition of nature based recreation, they can bring people into semi-natural settings where they can still connect with nature and engage in physical activity.

**Natural areas:** Land managed by the City's natural areas management unit, and mapped by the City as the 'conservation estate'. This is approximately 13 000 hectares of land managed for biodiversity conservation as well as sustainable recreation.

**Nature based recreation:** Sustainable outdoor activities for which the natural environment is critical to participants, and which foster an appreciation of natural resources and do not require substantial modification of the natural environment.

**Nature study:** Studying elements of nature in a natural setting.

**Orienteering:** A sport in which competitors use a compass and map navigate across unfamiliar terrain to locate a series of checkpoints.

**Picnicking:** The act of eating a meal outdoors, generally in a pleasant natural or semi natural setting.

**RAMSAR:** The RAMSAR convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The treaty was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and the Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet.

**Sustainable:** Able to be carried out without damaging consequences in the long term.

**World Heritage listed:** To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten (natural and cultural) selection criteria.

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## Appendix A. Summary of nature based recreation activities and corresponding strategic initiatives

Strategic Initiatives (See Appendix B for Activity Specific Initiatives)	1. Bushwalking	2. Mountain biking	3. Horse riding	4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study	5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing	6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing	7. Ecotourism and commercial use	8. Camping
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.1.A</b> Prioritise and implement the key nature based recreation actions from adopted Conservation Reserve Management Plans.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.1.B</b> Audit existing and potential recreational trails and kayak routes for signage requirements, infrastructure repairs, current usage level, mapping requirements, and waterway access requirements.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.1.C</b> Consolidate nature based recreation opportunities by repairing, signing and mapping existing tracks and recreational locations prior to expanding into new areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.1.D</b> Develop and implement a recreational track classification system for the city, keeping this consistent with existing classification systems if appropriate.	✓	✓	✓			✓		
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.2.A</b> Liaise and develop formal agreements with clubs, recreation groups, environmental groups, residents and tourists to ensure this plan is providing desired opportunities for our community.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.2.B</b> Utilise track counters and other data capture methods to determine the level of use of a variety of nature based recreation locations across the city, especially where usage levels are unknown.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.2.C</b> Review the needs of the Gold Coast community to	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		



Strategic Initiatives (See Appendix B for Activity Specific Initiatives)	1. Bushwalking	2. Mountain biking	3. Horse riding	4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study	5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing	6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing	7. Ecotourism and commercial use	8. Camping
determine the gaps in nature based recreation activities and locations.								
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.2.D</b> Where there is significant demand, ensure that newly emerging nature based recreation opportunities are maximised, especially at a local neighbourhood level.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.3.A</b> Update nature based recreation opportunities on the Gold Coast Access website ( <a href="http://goldcoast.qld.gov.au/community/gold-coast-access-2978.html">goldcoast.qld.gov.au/community/gold-coast-access-2978.html</a> ).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.3.B</b> Deliver nature based recreation opportunities that comply with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and equal access specifications wherever possible.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.4.A</b> Develop a commercial use/ ecotourism permitting system for the natural areas estate.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 1.4.B</b> Where external providers such as ecotourism operators and cultural tourism operators can increase the range of sustainable nature based recreation activities available, work collaboratively to deliver on such opportunities, e.g. guided cycling tours, ecotours, bush food tours, trail running, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 2.1.A</b> Use digital technology (e.g. online track maps, phone apps, and QR (Quick Reference) codes) to show the locations of nature based recreation opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 2.1.B</b> Develop a promotion and communication plan that considers signage, maps, digital media, etc as ways to promote the best existing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Initiatives (See Appendix B for Activity Specific Initiatives)	1. Bushwalking	2. Mountain biking	3. Horse riding	4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study	5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing	6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing	7. Ecotourism and commercial use	8. Camping
locations for bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding and other nature based recreation opportunities before promoting newly emerging locations.								
<b>Strategic Initiative 2.2.A</b> Promote nature conservation and sustainable visitation through improved interpretative signage, park events, online information and other forms of community engagement.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 2.2.B</b> Use digital media such as photographs, maps and video footage to showcase the values of the Gold Coast natural areas estate and to encourage people to connect with these places as nature based recreation destinations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 2.2.C</b> Continue to expand the Naturally GC program, incorporating activities not only for environmental education, but also for nature based recreation as a way to stay active and healthy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Strategic Initiative 3.1.A</b> With assistance from the City's environmental planning officers, undertake environmental assessments to minimise environmental impacts and inform planning for nature based recreation activities across the network.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 3.1.B</b> Protect sensitive natural areas from the impacts of nature based recreation activities, ensuring that any high impact activities are only located in areas that are able to sustain such activities without a loss of environmental values.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 3.1.C</b> Monitor the impacts of nature based recreation to continually adapt and improve management practices.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



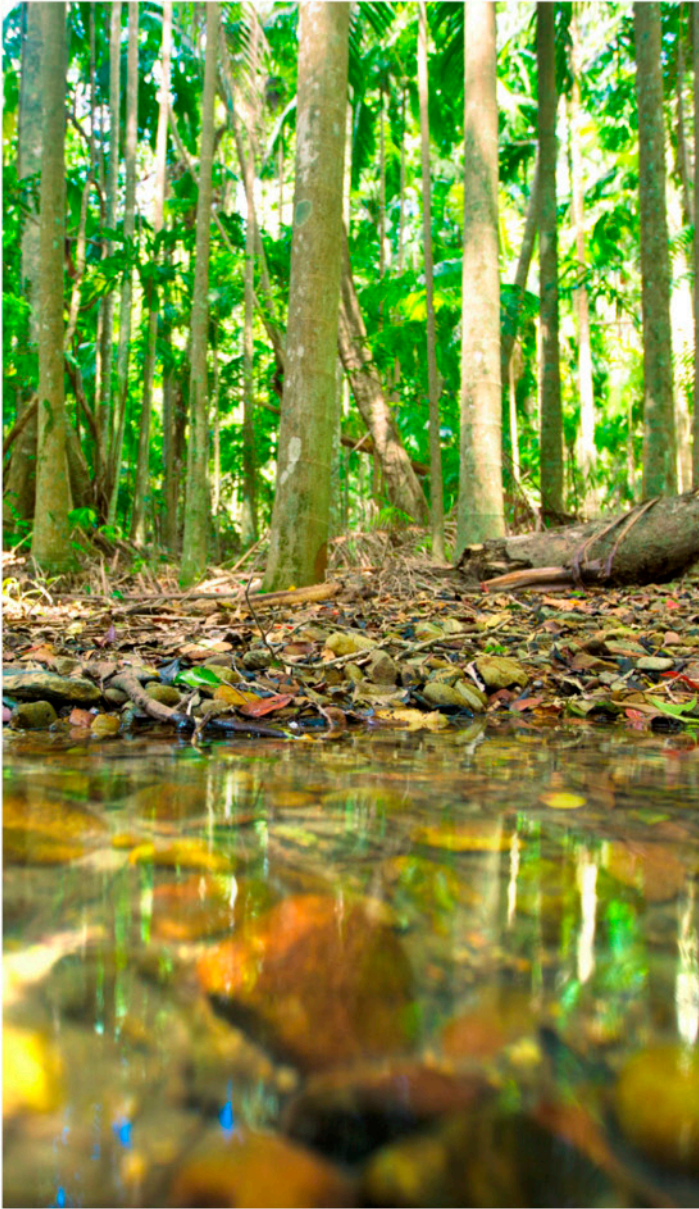
Strategic Initiatives (See Appendix B for Activity Specific Initiatives)	1. Bushwalking	2. Mountain biking	3. Horse riding	4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study	5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing	6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing	7. Ecotourism and commercial use	8. Camping
<b>Strategic Initiative 3.2.A</b> Plan for nature based recreation on a regional scale by working with regional nature based recreation partners including other local governments, the State Government and non-government organisations, e.g. Queensland Outdoor Recreation Foundation (QORF).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 3.2.B</b> Where possible, link tracks with other existing tracks, including those on adjoining state and local government lands.	✓	✓	✓					
<b>Strategic Initiative 4.1.A</b> Where reserves have cultural heritage significance, celebrate this heritage by incorporating appropriate cultural heritage information into place names, educational materials and interpretive information, having sought advice from the City's Indigenous Cultural Heritage Liaison Officer and Heritage Planning Team.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 4.1.B</b> Increase the amount of cultural heritage information and activities in educational and promotional materials, e.g. the Naturally GC program.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 4.1.C</b> Protect cultural heritage from the impacts of nature based recreation by conducting cultural heritage assessments with advice from the City's Indigenous Cultural Heritage Liaison Officer and Heritage Planning Team.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strategic Initiative 4.1.D</b> To ensure Indigenous people's rights and aspirations are appropriately considered and sensitively represented, consult the Indigenous community via the local Cultural Heritage Body (Jabree Ltd) regarding the use and delivery of any Indigenous cultural materials or programs.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Appendix B. Summary of Activity Specific Initiatives for key nature based recreation activities

Key nature based recreation activity	Activity Specific Initiatives (see Appendix 1 for Strategic Initiatives)
1. Bushwalking	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 1.1.1</b> Prioritise walking tracks that provide for a short return walk (e.g. 20-30 minutes) to a specific destination.
2. Mountain biking	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.1</b> Continue to progress feasibility, planning and design work for a downhill single track with all mountain or cross country tracks to be incorporated subject to funding availability.
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.2</b> Investigate the feasibility of building a dedicated bike park in the City, designed to cater for a range of riding styles and abilities.
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.2.3</b> Prioritise tracks and facilities for types of mountain biking for which there is high demand and low environmental impacts.
3. Horse riding	Nil
4. Day use including picnicking, swimming and nature study	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.4.1</b> Develop a network of day use areas that will provide alternative destinations to our heavily used foreshore parks as the city continues to grow.
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.4.2</b> Prior to promoting/ marketing sites for primary contact water based recreation, consider water quality and its potential impacts on human health.
5. Canoeing, kayaking and fishing	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.5.1</b> Provide sustainable access (including kayak/ canoe friendly launch points) to creeks and water bodies where there is sufficient demand for water based recreation.
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.5.2</b> Provide fishing platforms at a number of natural areas and support the increasing popularity of yak (or kayak) fishing.
6. Orienteering, geocaching, trail running and adventure racing	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.6.1</b> Develop guidelines to coordinate, support and manage group and club activities and events to ensure successful, sustainable outcomes
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.6.2</b> Where the level of use is sufficient, develop agreements with the various peak organisations for nature based recreational activities.
7. Ecotourism and commercial use	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.1</b> Continue to progress and monitor trials of existing commercial operators in natural areas.



Key nature based recreation activity	Activity Specific Initiatives (see Appendix 1 for Strategic Initiatives)
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.2</b> Support appropriate, sustainable ecotourism and commercial nature based recreational and cultural events in the Gold Coast Natural Areas estate.
	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.7.3</b> Investigate the demand for additional sustainable commercial activities in natural areas, e.g. abseiling, adventure sports, mountain bike tours, etc.
8. Camping	<b>Activity Specific Initiative 4.8.1</b> Continue to allow for 'one off' low impact camping opportunities for nature based recreation clubs and other organisations as negotiated on a case by case basis with the City.



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