



**Conservation Council
of South Australia Inc**

Conservation Council of South Australia

Submission on

**DEH Trails Strategy:
“On Track – A Trail Strategy
for SA’s National Parks”**

2007–2012

27th July 2007

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1 PREAMBLE

The Conservation Council of South Australia inc (CCSA) is South Australia's peak non-government community environment organisation. Formed in 1971, it is an umbrella group for over 50 environment and conservation groups, who altogether, represent over 60,000 individuals. Strictly non-party political, CCSA's mission is to advocate and work towards a healthy environment for South Australia.

CCSA appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Department for Environment & Heritage's draft trails strategy "On Track – A Trail Strategy for SA's National Park 2007–2012 and welcome the commitment to public consultation.

For simplicity's sake, and to make the incorporation of CCSA feedback easier, this submission has commented on, deleted or added text directly over the existing draft trails strategy. Deletions and comments have been relegated to the margin, with additions inserted inline into the text and appearing in a different colour.

2 FOREWORD

Trails provide many benefits to our environment and our community. South Australia's trail network contributes to community health by providing outlets for physical activity, and to the local economy by encouraging visits to regional communities.

Properly constructed and well located trails can help environmental sustainability by reducing soil erosion and minimising damage to natural and cultural heritage by keeping visitors away from environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas.

The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) seeks to provide enjoyable and sustainable trails across South Australia's diverse landscape. As we focus more and more on health and fitness, we must continue to provide opportunities for people from all fitness and age groups to connect with our natural surroundings. Trails have the potential to lead South Australians and visitors alike into a closer connection with our abundant natural and cultural heritage. The Trails Strategy sets out a strategic and consistent approach to future investment in and management of trails within the DEH reserve network. This initiative establishes objectives for a manageable and sustainable trail network which accommodates a range of recreational activities, including walking, cycling, diving, horse riding and canoeing, and which will benefit all DEH reserve visitors.

The *DEH Trails Strategy* will be effective from 2007 to 2012, and will be reviewed at the end of this period.

Comment: The opening statement prompts the following questions: How do trails provide benefits for the environment? How are trail-users involved in conservation of the State's natural heritage?

Deleted: Trails support environmental sustainability by engaging trail users in conservation of the State's natural and cultural heritage but directing visitors away from sensitive areas. ¶

Comment: The word "outstanding" is unnecessary and too subjective

Deleted: outstanding

Comment: Who is meant by "we" – Government, community/ DEH?

Comment: If the emphasis is on health and fitness benefits then this is an unlikely outcome. Research to support your statement should be provided, otherwise this is too subjective a statement

Comment: Delete "realistic criteria" – as none are specified.

Deleted: realistic criteria

Comment: The big thing missing from the forward is a lack of statement that trails do impact on the environment because where they are constructed has in the past, and may well in the future, require the clearance of native vegetation, the further fragmentation of habitats and the likely detrimental disturbance of easily visible fauna such as birds, but also the destruction of small and cryptic native fauna and their habitats. This after all is a DEH policy for trails on our protected area reserve system, which is land set aside for the protection of our natural and cultural heritage, not for trails on some terra nullius lands. Not to recognise and state that the construction and presence of trails in the Parks has, and can have, negative impacts is not giving the full picture.

3 INTRODUCTION

Description of Trails on DEH lands

South Australia's rich and varied reserve landscape is traversed by over 9000 kilometres of trails.

Trails (are)

- footpaths with natural or manufactured surfaces
- multi-use tracks for walking, cycling and horse riding etc. with natural or manufactured surfaces
- trail-based bicycle routes
- fire and maintenance access tracks designated as trails
- waterways and portage routes and defined underwater dive routes.

Some trails are single purpose only; most trails within DEH reserves are single use footpaths. Other trails are intended for a variety of activities; trails within Belair National Park and Brownhill Creek Recreation Park, for example, are designed to accommodate three core activities: hiking/walking, biking and horse riding.

Non-motorised activities are the focus of this strategy, although there are trails where walkers, cyclists and horse riders share the trail with motorised vehicles such as four wheel drives.

Need for a Trail Strategy.

In the past, trails in the landscape, not just on DEH land, have not been part of a co-ordinated strategy across land tenures, with the exception of the following long distance trails, namely, the Heysen Trail (walking), the Mawson Trail (cycling) and the Tom Roberts Trail (horseriding) and more recently, the Yurrebilla walking trail. Consequently it has been difficult for land managers to source reliable, ongoing funding for the construction and particularly, the maintenance of sustainable trails. Nor, until recently, have there been any State or Australia wide recognised trail standards.

A lack of management plans for all DEH reserves has also been a problem. Adequate assessment of community and environmental needs has also not occurred before trails have been put into the landscape. Consequently the number of trails both on and off DEH reserves has proliferated over the last 20 or so(?) years. Many of these have been built by employees and volunteers who have often had insufficient skill and training for this task. Many of these trails are now causing both management and environmental problems for DEH. For some years, there has been increased lobbying by recreational user groups to have more trails in parks. This is causing conflict between DEH's main volunteers, Friends of Parks groups and DEH, since the majority of their volunteers oppose an increase in the types of activities permitted on trails in DEH parks, for both environmental, management and safety reasons. This is an added factor for the need for DEH to develop this trails strategy for SA's Reserve system. DEH has been represented on the SA Trails Co-ordinating committee which was set up by the SA Office of Recreation and Support to bring land managers and user groups together. This resulted in a draft SA Recreational Trails Strategy.

Comment: There should be an additional heading and paragraph that explains why this trail strategy is necessary

In addition to the above issues, DEH is expected to play its part in achieving the objectives and targets set under the SA Strategic Plan. The DEH Corporate Plan, the DEH Biodiversity Strategy, the Commonwealth Biodiversity Protection Act, the State and Regional NRM Plans, the SA Climate Change Act, as well as the NPW Act.

This trails strategy seeks to overcome the problems outlined above, take account of the directions and goals of the various Plans, Acts and strategies outlined above so that a well designed, enjoyable to use, but sustainable trail network, which can be adequately maintained into the future is put in place on DEH reserves

Policy Commitments

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, provides for the establishment and management of reserves for public benefit and enjoyment; to provide for the conservation of wildlife in a natural environment; and for other purposes.

The DEH Corporate Plan aims towards a network of reserves that will conserve biodiversity throughout South Australia, and encourage more visitors to appreciate our national parks and botanic gardens for their heritage, inspiration, presentation and outstanding management.

The development of the DEH Trails Strategy will contribute to meeting key objectives and targets of South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) and the DEH Corporate Plan:

- **SASP Objective 1:** Growing Prosperity
 - **Tourism Industry** (Target T1.14) Increase visitor expenditure in South Australian Tourism industry from \$3.4 billion in 2001 to \$5.0 billion by 2008 by increasing visitor numbers and length of stay and more importantly by increasing tourism spending.

Comment: In this policy commitments section, this trail strategy is much too selective in what it chooses to highlight from all the relevant Acts, Plans, etc. For example, it fails to look at how trails relate to all the objectives under the NPW Act, only one of which talks about providing enjoyment for humans. It is also extremely selective in the Objectives from the SA Strategic Plan that have been chosen. Surely the other Objectives of the SASP are more important for a DEH to make sure that its trail strategy is not detrimentally impacting on?
Especially important and relevant, but ignored in this section are Objective 3. Attaining Sustainability (particularly the new 2007 targets of T3.1, T3.2, T3.3, T3.6 and T3.7) and Objective 5. Volunteering. (particularly the new T5.6 – which no longer talks about increasing the target of volunteer participation but maintaining it). This failure to adequately address those objectives and other responsibilities towards protecting our natural and cultural heritage in this plan has resulted in a strategy, which could cause DEH to fail in what is its primary responsibility to protect our natural heritage.

Comment: Suggest DEH policy statement should additionally emphasise the scientific, educational and awareness-raising function and values of the public reserve system (national parks and botanic gardens) at this early point.

- **SASP Objective 2:** Improving Wellbeing

Healthy weight (Target T2.2 existing - modified) Increase the proportion of South Australians 18 and over with healthy weight by 10 percentage points by 2014.

- o **Sport and recreation** (Target T2.3 existing): Exceed the Australian average for participation in sport and physical activity by 2014.

- **DEH Corporate Plan, Goal 1:** Conserve, value and celebrate South Australia's natural and cultural heritage

Why are good trails important?

Comment: 1) One has to question whether trails in parks are the most efficient and inexpensive way of increasing visitor expenditure in SA, as DEH reserves are often well away from restaurants and retail outlets where visitors might spend comparatively more money.
2) Walking is a much better activity overall for improving fitness as bikes are multi-g geared and can be ridden in a way that reduces fitness benefits. Trail riding on a horse has very low CV fitness benefit. Walking is a weight bearing activity whereas neither horse or bike riding are and are less beneficial in maintaining healthy bone density levels in our ageing population.

Comment: There are more cost effective ways of achieving this target than by increasing trail usage in DEH Reserves, which don't have the downside of impacts on our native plants and animals.

Comment: This goal is not picked up and addressed in this draft trail strategy and should be.

Comment: "Benefits for the community of a well constructed, well maintained, safe trail system" would be a better heading.

Trails play a pivotal role in our wellbeing.

Conserving and appreciating the environment. Trails lead users through the varied landscapes found within the DEH reserves system. They take people to diverse habitats such as gorges, wetlands, and coasts, and to historic places like disused pastoral properties, remote shepherds' huts, pioneer dwellings, and to areas not otherwise able to be reached or appreciated. The chance to experience secluded areas of the Flinders Ranges and Kangaroo Island has major tourism appeal. Users, managers and stakeholders all appreciate the need to preserve these areas.

Comment: NB If all this detail below in this section is thought necessary as part of this document, then an additional section should be devoted to the need to look at the usage of all trails across the landscape in SA as well as development of some agreed criteria to assess what trails are the most beneficial to the community, sustainable in all aspects, particularly including the need to protect all the natural and cultural heritage left in SA.

Unless that happens the proliferation of trails will increase. This extra section also needs to look at where various types of activities are best located across land tenures, as there are already many opportunities for 'non specifically- nature oriented activities' on other land tenures outside parks and any new ones may best be located there.

This is what Yurrebilla sought to achieve. Too many trails, in the wrong places and promoting the wrong activities can have adverse impacts on the health of our natural and cultural heritage. If this isn't done, then CCSA would consider it a too narrowly focussed strategy to have.

It could be logically argued that one of the key criteria in trail decision making is that no further destruction of our native vegetation and habitats should occur. Further clearance has much greater negative implications for our community than benefits, especially with the "ongoing clearance that is permitted under the NVC Act, which when added up, represents a reasonable amount. Improved community fitness and health can perhaps "be achieved predominantly outside the reserve system, without the attendant negative impacts on native flora and fauna and habitats. Enjoyment of Reserves by the community can (and is) being achieved in other ways than on trails.

A list of criteria that need to be met to protect our natural and cultural heritage from the impacts of trails and their use needs to be listed in this strategy somewhere as well.

Comment: There is a contradiction here. How can you have secluded areas but at the same time increase the number of users of a trail?

One way of resolving this contradiction would be to state somewhere in this trails strategy that 'visitor usage will be monitored and limited where necessary to protect natural and cultural heritage and the peaceful ambience'

Trails often cross environmentally sensitive lands. Where possible, trails should avoid the most sensitive areas. Where this is not possible, well designed trails can provide environmental buffers to some degree such as boardwalks, gabions and low-level bridges that protect wetlands, sand dunes and other fragile landscapes, while allowing visitors to experience these unique sites.

Comment: Suggest that since trails also incorporate dive routes, 'Trails often cross environmentally sensitive lands', be amended to reflect this.

Comment: In reality much of the land in our Reserves is environmentally sensitive in one way or another.

Comment: Boardwalks etc can only protect these features to some degree - it doesn't necessarily stop people wantonly damaging the area by going off a trail to get closer to a feature, view, waterway, plant, animal etc nor stop harmful litter being left. There should be a statement recognising that the impacts are just reduced, not fully controlled. In some reserves it has been observed that increased promotion and visitor usage has led to increased vandalism, more rubbish in the vicinity of sensitive waterways and an increase in illegal activities such as bike riding on walking only trails and increased incidence of going out into management only permitted areas (ie off tracks). It is likely that this effect would be widespread because of the lack of sufficient on-ground ranger presence ON TRAILS in peak use times eg after work, at week-ends and school holidays in all parks that have trails. For trails to be sustainable more on trail, ranger presence at peak use times should be mentioned as a priority either in this section or somewhere in this strategy. This leads to the lack of mention in this strategy of compliance issues in relation to trail usage by the Public. More on-ground ranger presence is essential, but they also have to have sufficient "back up" and have the attitude that "deterrence by punishment" of miscreants is necessary and reasonable. Sufficient back-up staff need to be available to ensure that this happens safely for Rangers.

Trails provide opportunities for meaningful and rewarding experiences for many users. Trail information and signage can identify unique features along a trail and enhance appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage. Trails play an important role in supporting environmental education and building public commitment to environmental conservation.

Trails also provide an opportunity for guided nature walks, either with DEH rangers, Friends groups and other environmental organisations as well as appropriately trained eco tour guides."

Better Health. Trails support an active lifestyle that improves health. Physical activity helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, colon cancer and depression, thus saving on health care spending.

Trails within reserves contribute to the *Healthy Parks Healthy People Strategy 2007–2009*. This aims to improve the quality of life for South Australians by encouraging greater use of parks and healthy environments in order to enhance physical, social, mental and spiritual well-being. Opportunities for peace and quiet to be able to connect better with nature need to be catered for, as well as increased usage of trails in iconic areas." The next sentence seems to switch from talking about DEH trails to all trails in the landscape?? Many South Australian trails are designed for the recreational activities we most enjoy: walking cycling and jogging. They are readily available and inexpensive to use. Trails are found in a variety of attractive settings and offer opportunities for gentle activity through to challenging outdoor adventure. They can provide physical activity for the widest range of visitors including people with disabilities and those who are less active.

Comment: It should also be noted that you can build a trail, but it doesn't mean people will come, (or that those who do will stick to the trail provided).

Comment: This heading seems a bit strange as the following paragraphs don't refer to fit people, just talk about the benefits to the economy. Perhaps a better heading would be "Trails provide Economic Benefits for SA"

Comment: Office for Rec & Sport reference missing in Reference list (Section 6).

Fit people, fit economy. Trails attract tourists to South Australian communities. Tourism creates jobs and puts money back into local economies. Many trail users buy walking boots, equipment, bicycles and other goods. Visitors spend money on local food and produce, accommodation, souvenirs, and entry fees to reserves and other attractions. Increasing tourism numbers and promoting outdoor experiences are integral to growth in regions with key links to trail usage (Office for Recreation and Sport, 2005).

Comment: Section below should be deleted. It really shouldn't be a trails strategy issue – as only a few in the community benefit and possibly at the expense of values for the majority of the community.

Comment: To fit this 'fit people, fit economy' rationale, the trails strategy should be complemented with an excellent public transport system to and from metro parks.

Trails within reserves adjacent to metropolitan Adelaide, such as Morialta, Black Hill and Belair have positive outcomes for local property values and communities, as residents can easily get in touch with nature on a trail close to home.

Strong Communities. Trails contribute to social cohesion. Within South Australia, trails provide a strong focus for volunteers and Friends of Parks Groups who give their time freely and contribute to park management and development. Trails within DEH-managed reserves link to important Regional Trails such as the Heysen and Yurrebilla Trails, and Mawson and Flinders Ranges Cycle Trails. These links strengthen communities, as property owners freely share their properties with trail users, and local people have the opportunity to be involved in trail and reserve management.

Growing interest in trails provides an opportunity for volunteers from more sectors of the community to be involved in trail planning, construction and maintenance, alongside more traditional reserve volunteer groups like Friends of Parks.

Vision

DEH will contribute to a world class network of innovative, ecologically, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable trails that promote South Australia's natural and cultural heritage, and are frequently used and enjoyed by the public.

- **A world class network**
- Key trails will provide a diversity of experiences for a wide range of people, and outstanding design, will invite an appropriate and sustainable level of use by the community and visitors, and will engender pride.

Comment: They can also lead to social conflict between different trail users and conservation volunteers.

Comment: united in efforts to repair damage done???"... volunteers and Friends of Parks Groups who give their time freely and contribute to park management and development" do not generally do this because of trails, per se.

Deleted: such as cycling groups

Comment: This last sentence should be changed. It belies the reality that it will increase rather than reduce conflict to have bikers building bike trails in DEH Reserves as most friends groups, for instance, are opposed to more bike riding in DEH Reserves. Friends members come from a diverse range of backgrounds and occupations and are probably much more representative of the community's views than Mt Bike clubs. Older walkers already avoid using some trails in DEH parks where bike riders are riding (illegally) as they perceive it to be unsafe.

Suggested re-wording. " properly managed and educated these new volunteers may also be encouraged to extend their volunteer contributions to assist with some of DEH's key priorities involving reducing other threats to the park's native flora, fauna and cultural heritage. This will strengthen communities' awareness of the need for more voluntary assistance on other threats to the Reserve's core values"

Deleted: reflect diversity

Comment: Given the *National Parks & Wildlife Act's* dual objectives of conservation and public use, the first dot point under the "Vision" should reflect this duality of purpose more clearly, eg "Key trails will reflect diversity and all trails will be of outstanding, environmentally sound/sustainable/sensitive design, will invite use by the community and visitors, and will engender pride."

- **Sustainable**

Trails will be planned and managed in a manner that ensures protection of our natural and cultural heritage assets and the environment, requires limited investment and asset maintenance resources, and provides value for money.

Deleted: protects and enhances the environment

Comment: Does the phrase "provide value for money" imply that (some) trails will be provided on a user-pays basis?

- **Promoting the appreciation, understanding and protection of South Australia's natural and cultural heritage**

Where considered sustainable, Trails will provide access to South Australia's spectacular landscapes, showcase the work of DEH, present unique promotion opportunities for the State, and boost economic prosperity for communities.

Comment: To acknowledge the significant volunteer effort of Friends of Parks groups in the management of many DEH reserves, it is suggested that this point be reworded as follows: "...showcase the work of DEH and associated Friends of Parks groups..."

- **Frequently used and enjoyed by the public for their natural and cultural values and health benefits.**

Where sustainable, Trails will be planned to reflect the current and future needs of the community. Where sustainable, Key trails will see increased use and trails will contribute to community health.

An environmentally educated and aware public

Trail usage should be directed as a priority towards leading to an increased understanding of our natural and cultural heritage by trail users, including the important ecological processes that reserves provide for our community, increasing appreciation of the need to conserve and protect natural and cultural heritage and the threats that our heritage faces from humans (including inappropriate behaviour in DEH Reserves).

Dominant in the vision, should be the fact that trails need to increase the knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of users of all native flora & fauna (not just the big mammals, like kangaroos and koalas).

This means

DEH will have a sustainable network of excellent and popular peri-urban, regional and remote trails that are in the right place, are well designed and safe while still providing providing enjoyment, appreciation and knowledge of our natural and cultural heritage and are accessible to a range of visitors.

Comment: What makes an 'excellent' trail? What is the 'right place' for a trail? How is this determined? The draft Strategy is not particularly clear about any of these points.

Trail planning and design will reflect reserve management objectives, will not impact on biodiversity, nor our natural and cultural heritage (a priority obligation for DEH under the NPW Act) and will encourage appreciation and responsible use of DEH reserves.

Comment: Providing adventure" is not an appropriate goal for DEH and should be deleted. Instead the phrase, "providing enjoyment, appreciation and knowledge of our natural and cultural heritage is more appropriate.

Investment and maintenance resources will focus on key DEH trails that showcase South Australia's unique and spectacular landscapes. Some trails will not be actively managed or maintained and may be closed. Community consultation with CCSA, DEH's Friends of Parks volunteers, and the community will be undertaken as part of this process to minimise community backlash.

Comment: Suggest that trails that are not to be actively managed should be closed and rehabilitated by DEH. Not to do so would be irresponsible (see below)

DEH will particularly consider the needs of its managers and volunteers for the need for particular trails for the management of the Parks. It will also ensure that it has adequate information about all its trails usage on which to base its decisions, which will be available to the community. It will take into account the presence of

adequate alternative trails in the nearby landscape and/or the possibility of providing new trail experiences nearby to replace any trails closed. **Closed trails will be rehabilitated, actively where necessary, to a sustainable level.**

Key trails will encourage increased use by South Australians and visitors and trail-based tourism will boost economic growth to the regions and the South Australian community.

As a priority DEH will promote the safe and sustainable use of trails on its reserves, including appropriate trail and Park visitor behaviour, eg cleaning shoes etc, staying on the trail, taking all rubbish away with you, allowing other trail users to enjoy the serenity and natural and cultural values of the of the area etc

"DEH will use trails to educate and increase the appreciation of trail users of the landscape, but more importantly the ecology of the habitats and knowledge about the flora and fauna and the threats to them"

DEH will promote trails and trail use to encourage active lifestyles and make strong links between trails and the Healthy Parks Healthy People Program.

Challenges

Issues affecting trails in DEH reserves

DEH and trail stakeholders have identified important challenges for trail development in DEH reserves.

- **Environmental impacts.** Pressure is growing on natural and cultural heritage features adjacent to certain trails, particularly in areas of high use. With increasing demand for access to reserve lands for a variety of recreational pursuits, DEH and trail stakeholders need to understand the impacts of trail-based activities on cultural heritage, "native flora and fauna, the ecology of an area," biodiversity, soil health and environmental sustainability.
- **Sustainability and future investment.** There are over 9000 km of trails in the DEH trail network. It is increasingly difficult to maintain trails to an acceptable standard within existing and projected resources. We need innovative strategies to ensure we have fewer trails overall, but a range of exceptional trails – in the right places for the right reasons and to provide maximum benefit to the majority of the community.

Deleted: DEH will actively engage with stakeholders and other trail management agencies to develop trail experiences that reflect changing recreational trends and desires.

Deleted: this last sentence should be deleted. This isn't specifically required under the NPW Act and we don't agree with DEH's attitude that it is their responsibility to satisfy all the recreational desires of the community. DEH is fulfilling its responsibilities in that sphere already with the provision of some trails other than walking trails and an overabundance of walking trails, which bikers and horseriders etc can use on foot like everyone else. The community has and is making other land available for trail activities that are further removed from nature than walking, such as speeding around on a bicycle or riding a feral animal, whose droppings are large, smelly and likely to introduce and spread weeds into parks. Other land includes rail trails, a large amount of ForestrySA land, private land, unmade road reserves and road verges etc.]]

Comment: Strongly agree with Point 2, p6, 'Sustainability and future investment': it would be irresponsible of DEH to consider creating new trails without an associated ability to actively and adequately manage and maintain these, and existing trails in DEH reserves.

- **Health benefits.** South Australians need to be more active to ensure a fit and healthy community. The community and Government want to increase active and enjoyable pursuits through trail use for all sections of the community with an emphasis on people who are less active.

Economic benefits. Targeted publicity and collaboration with SATC and other agencies will be required, in order to promote the economic benefits of trails – through increasing visitor numbers to parks and reserves, and bringing tourist dollars into regional communities.

- **Relevance and information.** DEH recognises that DEH Reserves stand alone in being able to provide for the specific need of people to “maintain contact with nature, enjoy a wide variety of landscapes in a quiet peaceful environment. DEH’s role in fulfilling this need will be through the provision of a variety of walking trails in particular, of varying lengths, ease of access and difficulty. There is greater demand, too, for quality pre-visit and on-site information and interpretation of the natural and cultural features accessed by trails.

- **Public education.** Trails must be recognised as a critical factor in educating the public about environmental and conservation values and stewardship. DEH leadership is central to meeting the challenge to connect trail users with the environment.

- **Trail design.** The trail community is looking for trail alignments that are sustainable and also safe and enjoyable to use and provide them with knowledge and understanding of the area and give access to features of great interest.

Comment: This is a discriminatory statement to single out certain sections of the community, particularly because the population in SA is ageing and, in the short to medium term to keep that ageing population fit and healthy will do the most to reduce the increasing cost pressures and demands on our health system. So, if you were going to be specific about a cohort then you need to talk about this ageing population as a target. This paragraph also doesn't explain how this is a challenge or an issue? – presumably what is meant is that there will be pressure on DEH to spend more on trails which will leave it less to spend on its core obligation of protecting our natural and cultural heritage. DEH is already saying it can't protect or restore and maintain all its cultural heritage assets eg all of Althorpe islands cottages, its jetty etc. Nor does it have sufficient money to spend on protecting our natural heritage from the threats such as urban encroachment and the impacts of feral plants and animals on our flora and fauna.

Deleted: attracting children, youth and

Comment: It isn't explained why this is necessary. Is it in order to get community pressure on government for more money for trails versus competing recreational and sporting activities eg capital investments on new grandstands, better facilities for major sports such as AFL and Cricket??

Comment: It is not DEH's core responsibility to cater for all different demands interests

Deleted: Parks will need to provide trails and support facilities that attract and encourage sustainable use and provide enriching experiences for current and future users with different abilities. It is not DEH's core responsibility to cater for all different demands interests etc

Comment: it is disappointing in this regard to see the virtual demise of Nature Conservation Society of SA's respected 'Walks With Nature' program due to failure of State to adequately address associated insurance issues.

Comment: 'Fun' is not a word that is used in the NPW Act and therefore isn't appropriate to be included in a DEH strategy nor are the goals of challenge and reward appropriate since they detract from an understanding of the primary purpose of the Reserve system and can lead to undesirable impacts on the enjoyment of other park users.

Deleted: fun

Deleted: that provide challenges and rewards in their own right, appeal to a variety of user groups, and

- **Skills development.** Future trails need to be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. The challenge here is to develop a high standard of technical ability among DEH staff, volunteers and contractors who construct and maintain trails and a high level of knowledge about the native flora, fauna ecosystems, habitats and cultural sites in order to decide what trails should be improved, closed or re-routed and how rehabilitation of closed trails will occur with the least impact on them.

Comment: Strongly agree with the need for 'Skills development'

Deleted: to be challenging but also

- **Coordination of trail groups and resources.** Trails have in the past been developed independently. Trail organisations are beginning to recognise that they must work together and use their resources more effectively to create an efficient and accessible community trail network.

Deleted: now

Comment: They still have a long way to go with this CCSA knows from being members of the Trails Alliance of SA. Plus mention should be made here, of the need for trail groups to communicate better with and understand the issues being raised by other stakeholders who are involved in the protection of our natural and cultural heritage and to co-operate more fully with them to ensure that conflict doesn't increase.

Access to reserve tracks and trails. DEH will be involved in statewide trail network planning initiatives in order to help to ensure that there continue to be appropriate trail opportunities on its Reserves, but that activities other than walking will generally be encouraged on areas outside its Reserves in a way that does not damage its Reserves' natural and cultural values" or natural heritage outside its Reserves. Mention of better planning is needed with future housing planning and development incorporating more vehicle free trails so that people can more safely use trails to commute to work, school, the shops, sporting facilities etc.

Comment: 'Access to reserve tracks and trails' must be strongly linked with Point 1 'Environmental impacts': some more active forms of recreational use have the potential for high and adverse impacts on inherent natural values. Demand is not sufficient rationale to put inherent ecological values in environmentally sensitive areas at risk.

- **Climate change and fuel prices.** Over the next 20 years climate change is likely to lead to higher temperatures, less annual rainfall and more flash flooding. Excellent trail design, construction and location is imperative to reduce the cost of repairs. 'Peak Oil' and predicted limitations on travel mean that additional visitor attention will probably need to be focused on trails close to Adelaide and population centres and/or with good public transport access. Climate change is likely to put pressure on the survival of native plant and animal species and built heritage sites both within and outside DEH Reserves. It needs to be recognised that more visitation to its Reserves may escalate the pressures on these areas.

Comment: •This section should be deleted because it is really just stating what these lobby groups want, not what is desirable for the whole community, nor what is reasonable. Many recreational groups are expected by our society to provide their own land, facilities etc for their own pleasures, with at times a certain amount of public land being allocated to that activity eg golf courses. With the exception of Belair, none of this happens or is expected to occur in DEH Reserves, rather privately owned land and facilities have been developed by these recreational groups to satisfy increased demand for such facilities. Already there is some access to DEH land for both these activities and much public land on ForestrySA land, including many kilometres of management trails and specially built tracks. Plus over a million dollars has been spent on the State MT Bike Park – with taxpayers money.

Deleted: Development of cycle trails across the landscape has not kept pace with demand; horse riders also seek new trail opportunities. Other community sectors want greater sustainable access to selected tracks within reserves.

Deleted: opportunitites

Deleted: activites

4 FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Strategic directions

The *DEH Trails Strategy* provides a coordinated approach, through goals, strategies and actions, to the challenges facing DEH as trails manager.

DEH will play a leadership role within the community in delivering this strategy and the related investment priorities, and will invite and encourage the active involvement of stakeholders.

Deleted: broader trail

Deleted: Delete those words because all the community should be involved not just user lobby groups, which hasn't happened in the development of this strategy

This would be a good spot to have a reference to a list of who DEH considers stakeholders in an appendix so that stakeholders left off can ask to be included if they are interested. It should, of course, include Friends groups and the Friends of Parks Inc Board , CCSA, NCSA etc)

Core trail values

In collaboration with (so far this has only been a limited number of user group) stakeholders, DEH has identified shared core trail values that will guide future trails investment:

- protecting, conserving and promoting an appreciation of ecosystem functions and natural and cultural heritage features
- respecting, conserving and appreciating Aboriginal culture and heritage
- providing ecologically sustainable trails that reflect and present the exceptional South Australian landscape
- employing rigour and excellence in planning and design of the network and individual trails
- providing a variety of trail opportunities that will most effectively and sustainably cater for the diverse South Australian community
- valuing input to trail management, location, development and trail rehabilitation from all stakeholders (delete, as if start specifying favourites, then we would ask that friends of parks groups and CCSA be specified as well)
- recognising trails as one method for guiding, advising and communicating with the public.

Deleted: reflect

Deleted: and the trail community

Deleted: a setting

5 GOALS

The *DEH Trails Strategy* has six goals :

1. Promote the enjoyment, understanding of and appreciation of South Australia's natural and cultural heritage through trail experiences
2. Enhance the quality of trails within DEH reserves and close unsustainable trails
3. Create excellent sustainable trail experiences, within the framework of the Reserve core values . Trails will avoid environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas and areas of high biodiversity.
4. Improve consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders and the community.
5. Encourage sustainable use by a diversity of people.
6. Increase the support base to manage the DEH trail network.

Goal 1 - Promote the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of South Australia's natural and cultural heritage through trail experiences.

Trails provide access to South Australia's spectacular landscapes and present unique promotion opportunities for the State to boost economic prosperity for communities. Trails help attract tourists to South Australia, increasing spending in the communities near trails.

Trails take visitors through a variety of landscapes within the South Australian reserve system, enabling users to experience habitats from wetlands to coasts, and to discover historic places significant to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. They provide a rare opportunity for visitors to be encouraged to learn about and appreciate the wide diversity of our natural habitats and cultural sites.

Increased trail-based tourism will require identification and promotion of specific trail opportunities. Coordinating partnerships between DEH, SATC (regionally and Statewide) and other recreation agencies will ensure promotion of DEH trail experiences is strategically linked with promotion of South Australian experiences.

Promote access to South Australia's spectacular features and experiences through trails

STRATEGY 1

Promote sustainable trails within DEH reserves, which provide a major focus for visitors and that access South Australia's spectacular and unique landscapes, natural and cultural features while maintaining protection for those features as a priority,

ACTIONS

- 1.1 Identify existing or future exceptional trail opportunities that promote South Australia's unique landscapes through regional, district and reserve trail planning in co-ordination with other land owners and managers and which are compatible with all relevant conservation and NRM legislation
- 1.2 Develop partnerships with the South Australian Tourism Commission and other organisations to promote the health benefits and tourism opportunities of DEH trails, without negatively impacting on the core values of DEH Reserves
- 1.3 Seek opportunities to link with the South Australian Tourism Commission's 'Brilliant Blend Experiences' and other promotions.
- 1.4 Promote trails to increase sustainable use of Reserves?

Provide valuable information and interpretation

STRATEGY 2

Encourage trail use by ensuring that users on priority trails have access to trail information and interpretation that incorporates the core trail values and encourages sustainable, safe, and harmonious usage and trail stewardship.

ACTIONS

Comment: It is unclear where this statement and the others like this that suddenly appear in this Goals section fits into the trail strategy framework. It's not the goal and not the strategies, which follow. Suggest it be deleted as it is confusing

Deleted: and are a major focus for visitors.

Comment: 'regional' and 'district' trail planning implies that links need to be made with other public land (eg Council-managed road reserves) and private land owners/managers. This should be identified in associated actions.

Comment: It is unclear what is meant by this statement and it is suggested that it be re-worded. Do you mean promote usage of trails where this is sustainable? And/or should it state "promote the concept of people staying on trails to avoid damaging the reserve's core values?"

Comment: Increasing use does not necessarily mean that level of use is sustainable. Use/carrying capacity targets for each reserve/reserve trail should be determined and set (much like DSE or similar).

Comment: As per comments earlier: Where does this come from?

Deleted: enhances

Deleted: concepts of

Comment: Consider that promoting (even enforcing) environmentally responsible use of trails should be a key action under this Strategy – eg inclusion of *Phytophthora* awareness and hygiene kits, etc. (possibly captured under Action 2.3).

Deleted: efficiency and

Deleted: while promoting and encouraging trail use and stewardship.

- 2.1 Enhance and upgrade web site trail information to ensure trail information is up to date, and to encourage external linkages to trail networks.
- 2.2 Develop consistent trailhead signage for priority trails that reflects core trail values and enables the user to easily understand the level of difficulty of the trail.
- 2.3 Develop on-trail interpretation for priority trails to enhance the visitor's trail experience and contribute to visitor's knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the importance of the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Deleted: challenge anticipated

Deleted: on

Goal 2 - Enhance the quality of trails within DEH reserves and close unsustainable trails.

DEH cannot effectively maintain all the existing trails within the reserve system. The decline in ability to maintain trails is happening at a time of increasing interest in trail use.

Comment: Applaud upfront statement flagging the need for increased resources to maintain and increase use of DEH trails.

Trails in reserves have been developed over time for a variety of reasons, and by a variety of people with varying levels of expertise in sustainable trail construction. As a consequence trails have not always been located in the best place in order to protect natural and cultural heritage and soils and waterways. Many, also have used alignments created for other purposes such as fire access tracks, maintenance tracks or access to trig points. The latter do not always deal effectively with physical factors, as they often climb steep slopes or pass through fragile sites; this results in sustainability issues and compromised visitor trail experience.

Deleted: Some are specifically designed to be an outstanding recreational trail

Deleted: however,

To ensure sustainability of the trail network and to direct future investment, DEH will review the existing trail system and identify a network of exceptional trails that reflect core trail values. Trails that do not reflect the values or are deemed unsustainable will be decommissioned. The DEH Level of Services Program (LOS) will help to guide the rationalisation of the DEH network. (NB it shouldn't be the only factor)

Comment: Surely there is a place for a 2 tier system of walking trails – depending on the amount of visitor usage and nearby population and other factors such as the Park Management Plan objectives. The second tier trails could not be "promoted".

Comment: Again, applaud plan to 'rationalise' trails, but decommissioned trails must be rehabilitated and clearly closed off to the public.

Deleted: The rationalisation of the DEH trail network will be closely linked to t

A sustainable trail should have little impact on the environment, should resist wind and water erosion, and should interrelate with its surrounds without damaging the core values of the Reserve. If trails are not well designed and maintained, both trails and the surrounding environment will deteriorate over time, requiring costly upkeep, compromising safety, damaging our natural and cultural heritage and diminishing visitors' experience.

Comment: Statement below should be deleted because it can't be achieved – any exposed surface will be affected by wind and soil erosion etc over time. Reference. Pers comm. Brian DuBois, from experiments done by Dept of Agriculture officers on erosion

Deleted: A sustainable trail should, in fact, improve with age.

International best practice has improved standards of trail construction technology and maintenance. Work in SA by the Walking Trails Support Group reflects the worldwide trend in design and construction of exceptional trails.

Comment: . Some people find walking on these type of trails "boring" and hard on the back and hips. They also usually end up being a lot longer and therefore cause more fragmentation of an area and usually more clearance of native vegetation and disturbance of fauna and habitat. These issues need to be recognised!! It shouldn't just be about technical trail standards!

Australian Standard AS 2156.1&2 – 2001 contains guidance for walking track classification and signage in order to provide consistency of information to users. This aims to minimise risk, preserve natural features, and enhance recreational opportunities.

Comment: need to fully reference Australian Standard in reference list.

In the planning, construction and maintenance of all footpaths, cycle trails and shared use trails DEH will follow international principles and design standards (See bibliography). The promotion of excellence in trail design and management as well as the protection of reserve's core values will be fundamental to this strategy, with training and development a key factor.

Comment: It does provide consistency but it doesn't necessarily improve clarity over previous signage

Comment: Delete heading below – it doesn't add to the strategy and just confuses.

STRATEGY 3

Undertake trail rationalisation and develop networks of exceptional sustainable reserve trails that reflect the South Australian Landscape.

ACTIONS

- 3.1 Develop plans on a regional, district and reserve basis that take into account wider landscape trail and conservation issues, (it may be only possible to have most of a trail outside a DEH Reserve in order to protect that Reserves' core values – Yurrebilla concept) Through evaluation and consultation, identify priority trails and networks that have the potential to become exceptional trails and meet the diverse desires and needs of South Australians and visitors, while protecting the Reserve's core purpose and values and SA's natural and cultural heritage. (NB Some undeveloped Road Reserves etc have significant flora remaining which may not be well represented elsewhere and these need to be protected)
- 3.2 Link priority trails and trail network development with the Levels of Service Program to provide the main focus for future investment priority.
- 3.3 Decommission and rehabilitate trails that, after consultation, do not reflect the core trail values and where their presence is likely to impact on the conservation values of the Reserve.

Deleted: Trail rationalisation

Comment: Establish robust process for determining 'core trail values' in consultation with the community – eg like setting 'Environmental Values' under Natural Resources Management (NRM) Act.

STRATEGY 4

Develop networks of sustainable trails that, through good design and appropriate location, provide quality visitor experiences, are low in maintenance, work in harmony with the environment and protect core reserve values.

ACTIONS

- 4.1 Develop a rapid assessment process that will enable managers to quickly evaluate trails based on user perception and physical forces, tread texture and tread watershed to predict future trends and recommendations for improvement, feral plant and animal invasion issues, and damage to Reserve core values eg natural and cultural heritage.
- 4.2 Evaluate priority trails and, where required, redesign and upgrade trails to improve sustainability, protection of the Reserve's core values, effectiveness of maintenance, and the visitor's trail experience.
- 4.3 Develop design, construction and maintenance standards, including control of feral plants and animals and other detrimental impacts on the reserve's core natural values.

Deleted: Trail sustainability

STRATEGY 5

Ensure trail practitioners, volunteers, contractors and stakeholders have a well-developed understanding of internationally recognised sustainable trail design and construction techniques and a detailed knowledge of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Comment: Strongly support Strategy 5 in general.

Deleted: Training and development

ACTIONS

5.1 Develop training and development packages for key DEH staff and volunteers to ensure sufficient knowledge of the reserve's core values and internationally recognised practice in design and sustainability is applied and reflected in future DEH reserve trail investment.

5.2 Engage appropriate expertise in trails management and native flora and fauna specialists to guide, mentor and develop DEH staff and volunteers in sustainable trails management.

7. **Goal 3** – Create excellent sustainable trail experiences within the framework of the core values. Trails will avoid environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas and areas of high biodiversity.

Comment: This goal needs to be clearly underpinned by the *National Parks & Wildlife Act's* dual objectives of conservation and public use. This is not apparent enough in the statements under this goal.

Comment: Words like adventure and challenge are inappropriate concepts to be linked with DEH Reserves as they are incompatible with reserve's core values and the NPW Act.

Deleted: the appropriate levels of adventure and challenge"

Comment: Once again, not an appropriate adjective to be using "but also harmony".

Deleted: but also

Deleted: playfulness and

Deleted: harmony.

Comment: This paragraph is unclear about what is or isn't be quoted from these 'international authors' and what is interpretation about what they've said. Only one reference is listed below, yet the paragraph refers to "more than one" international author. It is unwise and unnecessary for DEH to get carried away with the use of words like challenge, playfulness etc when they are trying to encourage trail users to observe and relate to the native flora and fauna, not just 'the landscape' features.

Comment: The deleted section below focuses unwisely on the trail itself, whereas it should focus on ways to make the trails sustainable and safe for both humans and the natural and cultural heritage surrounding trails. This section should also be exploring how the trail information, signage and location encourage people to look around them and enjoy, marvel at and appreciate this natural and cultural heritage.

Deleted: Safe design permits a level of adventure within acceptable boundaries: a balance between the user's comfort zone and their wish to challenge themselves. 'Efficient' trails persuade the user that remaining on the tread is more efficient than leaving it; however, long uninteresting sections can make a trail feel tiring and unrewarding. ¶
'Playfulness' balances efficiency and safety. Natural shapes, anchors, edges, and gateways contribute to the playfulness of a trail and can greatly enhance enjoyment.

Deleted: playfulness and

Stakeholder workshops identified criteria to guide the development of exceptional trails. Stakeholders agree the "perfect trail should reflect the natural environment, focus on landscape and views, cover a range of topography, provide diverse experiences, be peaceful, have good information and interpretation, be sustainable and provide varying levels of difficulty.

International authors emphasise the importance of aesthetic experiences to enjoying trails. Good trail design builds in safety and efficiency. It enables the user to encounter natural shapes as the trail crosses the landscape and to feel an emotional connection with them. Our relationship with the landscape, which can be influenced by the trail designer, affects our perception of trails and sites².

Harmony results from the trail being appropriate to the site. A harmonious trail increases appreciation and respect for the site and can be affected by trail width, materials used, and how well it blends with the site.

DEH will strive to find the correct balance in trail design, construction and maintenance, and protection of the Reserve's core values, to reflect the spirit of both trail and landscape, display the site to its full capacity, and maximise the trail user's enjoyment.

Trail information and interpretation can enhance enjoyment of the trail when the level of signage is consistent with the level of development appropriate for the trail. Trail signage should not detract from users' sense of appreciation of the trail and should only be used where signage can contribute to the core concepts of safety, efficiency, harmony and protection and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage.

² Parker, T.S., *Natural Surface Trails by Design* (2004).

STRATEGY 6

Provide a range of trails that provide diversity for the user, provide enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage, are safe and efficient, are in harmony with the site and reflect and protect the unique landscapes of South Australia.

ACTIONS

7.1 Evaluate priority trails and, where required, upgrade the alignment and relationship between trail and site to maximise the visitor experience, while protecting the landscape and natural and cultural heritage surrounding the trail.

Comment: Superfluous phrase

Deleted: Reflect natural environment and landscape

Deleted: challenge

Deleted: a high level of

Deleted: enhance

Deleted: reflect the landscape and

Goal 4- Improve consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders and the community.

As manager of more than 9000 km of trails DEH plays a significant leadership role in developing exceptional and sustainable trails. DEH must also work closely with Forestry SA, Office for Recreation and Sport, local government, other agencies, volunteer groups and users to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to trail policy and management. This includes more effective networking of trails, locating trails to protect natural and cultural heritage, adherence to appropriate standards, enhancement of trail experiences, and efficient delivery of trail information.

Active engagement of stakeholders enables DEH to monitor some users' perceptions of existing trails, to be informed about changing recreational trends, and receive advice on developing new and improved trail experiences.

DEH respects the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands trails traverse and acknowledges the deep feelings of attachment and the relationships of Aboriginal peoples to country. Respecting, conserving and appreciating Aboriginal culture and heritage are fundamental to this strategy. Planning for rationalisation or development of new trails will respect the views of Aboriginal communities and DEH will seek collaborative opportunities to promote and interpret Indigenous culture, while at the same time protecting Reserves' core values.

A major focus of this strategy is to initiate regional, district and reserve level trail planning to rationalise the existing trail network. Engagement of all stakeholders, including the wider community, will be fundamental to making good decisions about future trails.

Comment: To claim that DEH can easily engage stakeholders belies the reality. So far, the only stakeholders DEH appears to have engaged with is a select few of the user groups. Since the majority of walkers and cyclists using trails do not belong to these organisations then how representative they are is highly questionable. To pretend otherwise is misleading.

Deleted: users

Comment: Again, suggest reiterating that strong relationships need to be made with other public land (eg Council-managed road reserves) and private land owners/managers in regards to future trails. This should be clearly identified in associated actions.

Volunteers have planned, constructed and maintained many of the State's reserve trails. DEH will provide both the leadership in trail construction and maintenance, and the opportunity for future volunteer and community input into reserve management, trail plans and strategic directions.

STRATEGY 7

Improve collaboration with trail and Reserve stakeholders to contribute to excellence in trail planning, design and construction, while ensuring core reserve values are protected.

Deleted: *Active engagement of stakeholders*

Deleted: and users

ACTIONS

7.1 Engage with Aboriginal communities in the planning of future trail alignments and through collaboration seek opportunities to promote Indigenous heritage and culture.

Comment: Strongly support Action 7.1

7.2 Engage all stakeholders in the regional, district and reserve trail planning process.

Deleted: trail users and

7.3 Engage stakeholders and volunteers in training and development programs to improve skills and develop understanding and excellence in trail management and natural and cultural heritage protection.

7.4 Encourage collaboration and coordination of trail management across agencies to ensure DEH trails meet the diverse needs of South Australians and visitors.

Deleted: Provide leadership and e

7.5 Coordinate volunteer resources to focus limited resources on priority works.

Comment: Action 7.5 implies that 'Friends of' groups will be charged with the management of trails. What happens in the case where a 'Friends of' group objects to the development/ placement of a trail? Will they be kicked out of the Park if they refuse to cooperate?

Goal 5 - Encourage sustainable use by a diversity of people.

DEH reserves can encourage greater use of parks, with the consequent health benefits detailed in the *Healthy Parks and Healthy People Strategy 2007–2009*.

Comment: Reserves can encourage greater use of themselves!

The varied landscapes and trails in parks offer many opportunities for traditional uses such as bushwalking. A variety of distances, trail design and steepness already cater for a wide range of people and varying ability levels. More information about the trails and landscapes and heritage that surround them should help to increase usage. In the general community there is a perception by particular interest groups that the provision of trails in the landscape for new recreational pursuits such as cycling has not kept pace with the growth in demand, according to those interest groups. Horse riders seek new trail opportunities, and dog walking is a popular and active pastime. Other sectors of the community have expressed a desire for increased access to selected tracks within reserves. Illegal usage of DEH Reserves by some of these users is currently causing environmental damage, damage to trails and destruction of natural heritage.

Comment: Suggest replacing 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' trail use with 'passive' and 'active' trail use, respectively, throughout the document.

Deleted: However,

Increased legal and sustainable opportunities in the landscape for these activities may reduce the currently damaging impacts caused by illegal activities. Access for non-traditional trail users may cause conflict with existing users and stakeholders and have a negative impact on Reserves' core values. DEH will collaborate with all stakeholders, including other land managers to try to provide adequate trail opportunities for non-traditional trail use in the landscape. On the one hand, the increasing interest in non-traditional trail use provides the opportunity for input by volunteers from other sectors, such as cycling groups. Synergies could provide positive outcomes and foster better understanding of different recreational users. On the other hand, it could lead to less usage by traditional trail users, more environmental damage and much less input from current longstanding, proven DEH volunteers. To provide enriching experiences for all we need a sound understanding of the needs, interests and abilities of various user groups, together with a clear

Deleted: provide challenges for trail design

understanding not only of emerging trends but also of related, relative impacts of different forms of trail use.

DEH encourages diverse use of trails where participation complements the core trail values and where natural and cultural heritage assets are protected. Planning and risk assessment will provide the tools and direction for decision making about new trail initiatives and trail use within reserves.

Comment: This statement does not provide adequate assurance that DEH will have adequate and preferential regard for the *first* of the dual objectives of the *National Parks & Wildlife Act*, conservation, and the "risk assessment" processes should be expanded on (perhaps in another document).

Deleted: changes to

It is essential that DEH will need to monitor trail usage to ensure that only sustainable levels of use will occur.

Comment: Disturbance and monitoring impacts

In the spirit of increasing understanding of 'why good trails are important' ('These synergies have positive outcomes, reducing conflict between different groups of trail users and improving understanding of others' recreational activities', p5) it is felt that the Strategy needs to be more explicit about the risks poorly planned and ad hoc trails pose to ecological health and the maintenance of biodiversity in our reserves. For example:

Disturbance

Weed invasion

Disturbance, eg creation of bare ground, is often a precursor to weed invasion – 'nature abhors a vacuum', and gaps will be filled, usually with undesirable, invasive ('early succession') spp. This will require the commitment of considerable DEH resources for follow-up weed control.

Increased predation levels, and disease risk

Similarly more tracks will increase opportunities for predation of native species – eg by Red Foxes (refer Commonwealth Threat Abatement Plan), and increase *Phytophthora* risk in sensitive species and areas. The draft Strategy does not adequately address assessment and management of *Phytophthora* risk posed by trails.

Erosion

Likewise erosion is also a big issue for poorly planned trails. This is particularly so in areas with steep terrain (eg areas "... areas not otherwise able to be reached or appreciated"). In these cases, proposed trails should be mapped and overlaid by contours, and the need for a new track clearly demonstrated and weighed against foreseeable impacts.

Managing and monitoring impacts

Finally, the creation of trails in conservation reserves – any trails, really – increases fragmentation. The cumulative impacts of all the above threats will result in the 'death by thousand cuts' of our precious natural heritage, unless extreme precaution is exercised in the planning, development, use and maintenance of trails in DEH reserves.

Resources for **managing and monitoring impacts of trails** need to be factored in to any plans to rationalise &/or create new trails in DEH reserves. It is suggested that this would be appropriately highlighted and actioned under Goal 5.

STRATEGY 8

Encourage South Australians and visitors to embrace an active and healthy lifestyle through utilisation of trail opportunities.

Deleted: *Increase participation in trail use and promoting healthy lifestyles*

ACTIONS

8.1 Promote the health benefits of using DEH reserve trails through the *Healthy Parks Healthy People 2007–2009 Strategy* while developing an understanding and appreciation of the reserve's core values.

8.2 Explore opportunities for increasing the diversity of people using trails in a sustainable manner, through regional, district and reserve trail planning and risk assessment and by ensuring there are trails for people's different capabilities.

Deleted: diversifying

Deleted: trail use,

8.3 Explore opportunities for increased involvement in voluntary trail management from more sectors of the community.

Comment: Action 8.3; care needs to be taken here to be clear that 'emerging and evolving recreational sectors' do not see a mandate to create their own trails.

Deleted: emerging and evolving recreational sectors

Goal 6 - Increase the support base to manage the DEH trail network.

Future funding resources for development and maintenance of trails are limited. We need to explore innovative funding opportunities particularly where a network of priority trails has been identified. Such opportunities could include involvement and recognition of major sponsors to the trail network., while ensuring no detracting from an appreciation and understanding by visitors of the core Reserve values

Trails will be planned and used in a manner that protects the environment, natural and cultural heritage, safeguards valuable investment and asset maintenance resources and gives value for money.

Comment: This statement implies that a decision has already been made that DEH/Treasury will not fund further development and maintenance of trails. If a perceived demand and broader SASP targets are to be met, the ability of DEH to actively and adequately manage and maintain new and existing trails in DEH reserves must be recognised and funded.

Deleted: and enhances

Deleted: Innovative funding opportunities

STRATEGY 9

Identify key trails with strategic economic and recreational value and invite investment and community support for them.

ACTIONS

9.1 Through good planning identify a State-wide network of priority trails that reflect exceptional qualities and invite a range of investment opportunities., ensuring that there is no impact on the Reserves' core values and that visitor appreciation and enjoyment of the natural values are not compromised.

9.1 Seek alternative sources of funding, including sponsorship, for trail development, promotion and maintenance ensuring that there is no impact on the Reserves' core values and that visitor appreciation and enjoyment of the natural values are not compromised.

Strategy 10.

Encourage more visitors using the DEH trail network to become involved in volunteer trail maintenance and protection of the Reserves' core values.

Actions.

10.1 Recruit new volunteers during maximum use time of Reserves by visitors eg week-ends and school holidays

10.2 Target regular trail users as potential volunteers using ranger staff and current volunteers

10.3 Target 'early retirees' – both local, interstate and from overseas – to help out during their visits.

REFERENCES

International Mountain Bicycling Association, *Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to building sweet single track*, IMBA, USA [2004].

Parker, Troy Scott, *Natural Surface Trails by Design*, Natureshape, USA [2004].

Marshall, Rob, *Walking Track Handbook*, Walking Track Support Group, Friends of Parks Inc., South Australia [2006].

Walking Track Management Manual, Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania, Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, Hobart [2003].

US Department of Health and Human Services Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health promotion, 1996. *Physical Activity Health, Report of the US Surgeon General*, Atlanta, Georgia USA [1996].

Healthy Parks Healthy People Strategy, Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia 2007

Comment: Where are all the other references that should be here and should have been referred to throughout this strategy, ie those relating to the protection of natural and culture heritage, biodiversity protection, NRM protection, threatened species protection, etc??