



# State Sports Park Trails Plan

## Stage 1: Focus on Foresters Forest

September 2022



**Government of South Australia**  
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing





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This State Sports Park Trails report was prepared by TRC Tourism as the trail component in the development of the SA State Sports Park.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of the lands, waters and communities we work together with. We pay our respects to their cultures; and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



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# Introduction

The State Sports Park is being established as South Australia's home for national, state and community sports and recreation. The 2021 Master Plan for the State Sports Park presents the new vision for an accessible, green, connected sports, recreation and mixed-use Park, committed equally to sporting excellence and grassroots activity.<sup>1</sup>

Within the State Sports Park is the Foresters Forest a 15-hectare site situated on land that was previously used for stock grazing and as holding yards for the now closed Gepps Cross abattoirs. The land was planted as a community arboretum in 1993 to showcase 12 different tree species relevant to Australian life and landscape. It has become important natural open space enjoyed by visitors and the local community.

The vision and guiding principles for the 2021 State Sports Park Master Plan seeks a State Sports Park including the Foresters Forest that is more accessible, more welcoming, more active with people, greener and more integrated.

The development of this State Sports Park Trails Plan Stage 1 has been a joint initiative between the Office of Recreation Sport and Racing and Green Adelaide, in conjunction with Foresters Forest Management Committee and the City of Port Adelaide and Enfield.

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<sup>1</sup> State Sports Park Master Plan, Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing 2021



Native Pine Woodland



# Purpose of the Trail Plan

This trail plan seeks to review existing use of the broader site and identify future trail opportunities and experiences. The plan will provide options to develop sustainable and enjoyable trail concepts that link the planted woodlands to the State Sports Park Precinct and the broader community.

This Stage 1 plan will focus on the Foresters Forest due to the keen interest in these areas by all the contributing entities, its popularity and potential for the community (including Roma Mitchell Secondary College), and its emphasis in the implementation section of the State Sports Park Master Plan



# Current and Future Use

The Foresters Forest is a significant area of open space that with community care and restoration transformed the land from degraded stock paddocks to become part of the State Government's Adelaide second generation of parklands. The land more recently (in 2000) transferred to the City of Port Adelaide Enfield to be included in land for roads and stormwater management.

Stormwater catchment within Foresters Forest is focussed on the embankment situated on the south-western corner of the land.

Today the land provides a valuable natural green corridor where residents and visitors enjoy passive and active recreation contributing to healthy lifestyles in an impressive setting of established trees and shrub.

The State Sports Park Master Plan provides for a criterium track to be partially situated on the northern part of the land. The 1.73km long criterium track provides the opportunity for a range of activity useable by public and multiple user groups. It will complement the Foresters Forest trail experience by providing trail access to hard surfaces suitable for adaptive sport and recreation. The criterium track will provide cycling experiences that will draw people to the Forest.

Current walking, dog walking, trail running and cycling access within the Foresters Forest takes place on maintenance tracks, informal trails, the stormwater embankment and through casual unstructured off trail activity throughout the site. There is evidence of past motor bike riding particularly within the Salmon Gums area on the western side of the land and mountain bike riders have created a small number of jumps and trails particularly near the southern boundary.



*Regenerating Vegetation*



Figure 1. State Sports Park & Foresters Forest Location





# Trail Terrain

The land rises 14 metres from the south-western boundary to the eastern boundary. The sandy clay loam soils have a high clay content and gullying erosion is evident on the northwest, southeast orientated tracks particularly where the tracks follow the shortest route up or down the hill (fall line trails).

Water collects on the flat sections of existing tracks where the track has become compacted and muddy sections have developed. The gently sloping land provides opportunity to develop sustainable new trails across the side slope along the contour and at right angles to the fall line.

## The Half Rule - Sustainable Trail Planning

It is important to consider the Half Rule when working with natural surface trails on gentle slopes such as encountered within Foresters Forest and the State Sports Park. If the trail grade is more than half the side slope grade, water will not be able to sheet off the trail and will flow down the trail causing erosion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> IMBA 2007



*Eroded Natural Earth Tracks on Slight Gradient*



# Trail Design, Options and Experiences

## Trail design

Current and future trail users are at the forefront of trail planning. These include walkers, dog walkers, trail runners, cyclists, pram and stroller walkers and users across a range of abilities and ages. The future trail experience will have a strong focus on the natural values of the site and will provide visitors with the best access to the range of current and future tree and shrub plantings.

Trail design will seek to provide shared trail access for the users and activities identified above and will be designed to follow the contours and at right angles to the slope thus reducing the risk of erosion.

The feature trails will match the experiences sought by most trail users through Australian Walking Track Grading System Grade 2 where:

- no bushwalking experience is required
- trails are hardened or have compacted surfaces and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps.

(For full description see Walking Trail Standards and Sharing the Trails below).

Trail design, build and maintenance will consider the visitors overall experience by providing enjoyable, safe and comfortable access which will encourage community interaction and increase use.

It is recognised through Crime-Prevention-Through-Environmental-Design initiatives that appropriate behaviour can be encouraged by reducing the propensity of the physical environment to support criminal and anti-social behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

Trail design and maintenance will consider the need to maximise community safety and provide places that are frequently used, are respected and rarely abused.

The trail alignments, design, trailhead and waymarking signs will connect people with space and encourage:

- communal responsibility for public areas and facilities
- communicate to people where they should/not be and what activities are appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

Safety and enjoyment can be improved by designing wide curvilinear trails placed within open woodland areas and on the edges of woodland areas to ensure long and clear sight lines.

Maintenance and future works should include the removal of overhanging or encroaching vegetation on the trails and prioritising the restoration of the introduced perennial grasses particularly in the native pine woodland.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.police.sa.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/890065/Crime-Prevention-Through-Environmental-Design-CPTED.pdf](http://www.police.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/890065/Crime-Prevention-Through-Environmental-Design-CPTED.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.police.nsw.gov.au/safety\\_and\\_prevention/policing\\_in\\_the\\_community/safer\\_by\\_design#](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/safety_and_prevention/policing_in_the_community/safer_by_design#)



## Feature and informal trails

Two feature trails have been recommended that connect the Foresters Forest Trailhead to Gepps Cross Park (Salmon Gum Trail) and the Roma Mitchell Trailhead (Iron Bark Trail) creating a loop trail that incorporates the attractive woodland plots and keeps trail gradient to a minimum (Figure 3).

Trail users can step on to the two feature trails via three major trailheads that provide information and assure users that the trail best suits their level of fitness and walking or trail experience. The trailheads signs will also provide orientation, trail and forest information and interpretation.

It is recommended these trailhead signs be placed a short way into the forest off Anna Meares Way, at Gepps Cross Park (off Tepko Street) and at the intersection of the current Levels City Bikeway and the future criterium track on the northeast boundary of the Forest.

The trailhead signs will carry advice on how to share the trails (Walking Track Standards and Sharing the Trails, below). The trailhead information will be complimented by standard waymarking signs<sup>5</sup> placed at trail junctions and significant points and bends on the feature trails that will ensure the comfort and safety of users.

Connecting the Roma Mitchell Trailhead to the Foresters Forest Trailhead to complete the trail loop was considered however a leg of the future criterium track will also occupy this space providing both access on the track and on the 3 metre wide run off zone. It is recommended further assessment of trail user requirements should be incorporated into the detailed design phase of the Criterium Track.

If the criterium track provides a suitable Foresters Forest trail connector the existing informal trail should be closed and restored.

The development of the State Sports Park provides a range of activities for locals and visitors who will seek to be involved. The priority for trail development should link communities to the State Sports Park. The Foresters Forest connection between the Gepps Cross Park Trailhead and Roma Mitchell Trailhead (Iron Bark Trail) provides that link. Future trails should be progressively developed to provide access between the suburbs, the State Sports Park and other features including the Pooraka Wetlands, Unity Park and the BMX Park to the north.

Trail access by walkers and cyclists to the State Sports Park and beyond would benefit from incorporating trails within revegetation and restoration areas. The best alignment for a future natural corridor trail would be from the Roma Mitchell Trailhead northeast along the existing tree lined route between the Croatian Centre and State Centre for Soccer to link with Unity Park, the Pooraka Wetlands and the BMX Club (Figure 2 below).

The Foresters Forest includes a perimeter maintenance track required for slashing of grass and other access near to the boundary of the land. This track is subject to erosion on the sloping sections and water lies on the flat sections particularly against the levee bank. It is recommended that sections be capped with crushed rock or rock armouring and on slopes grade reversals be incorporated into the maintenance track repair to move running water off the track.

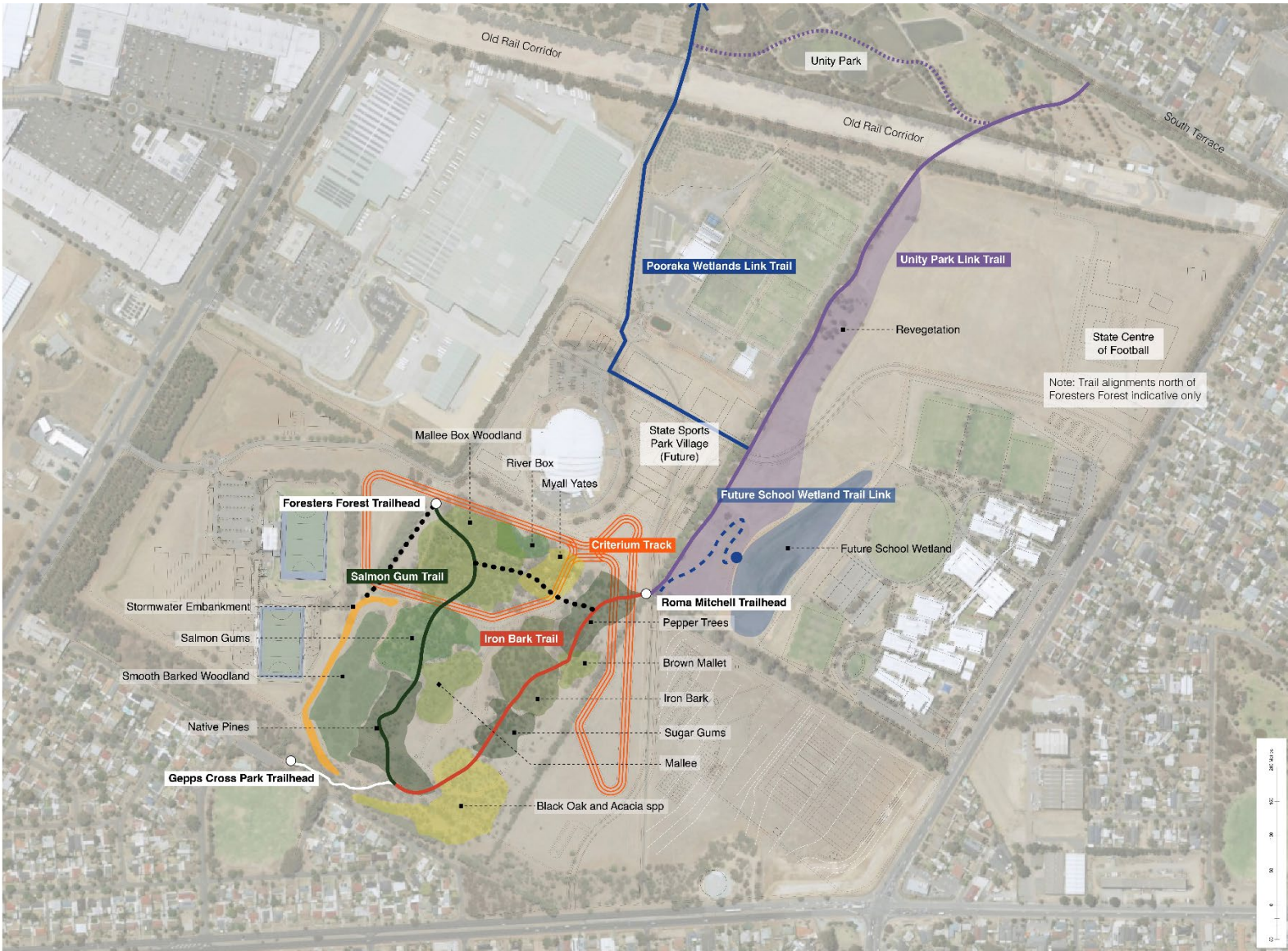
The maintenance track and other informal trails provide pleasant unstructured and self-exploration experiences complementing the feature trails.

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Standard™ Walking tracks Part 1: Classification and signage

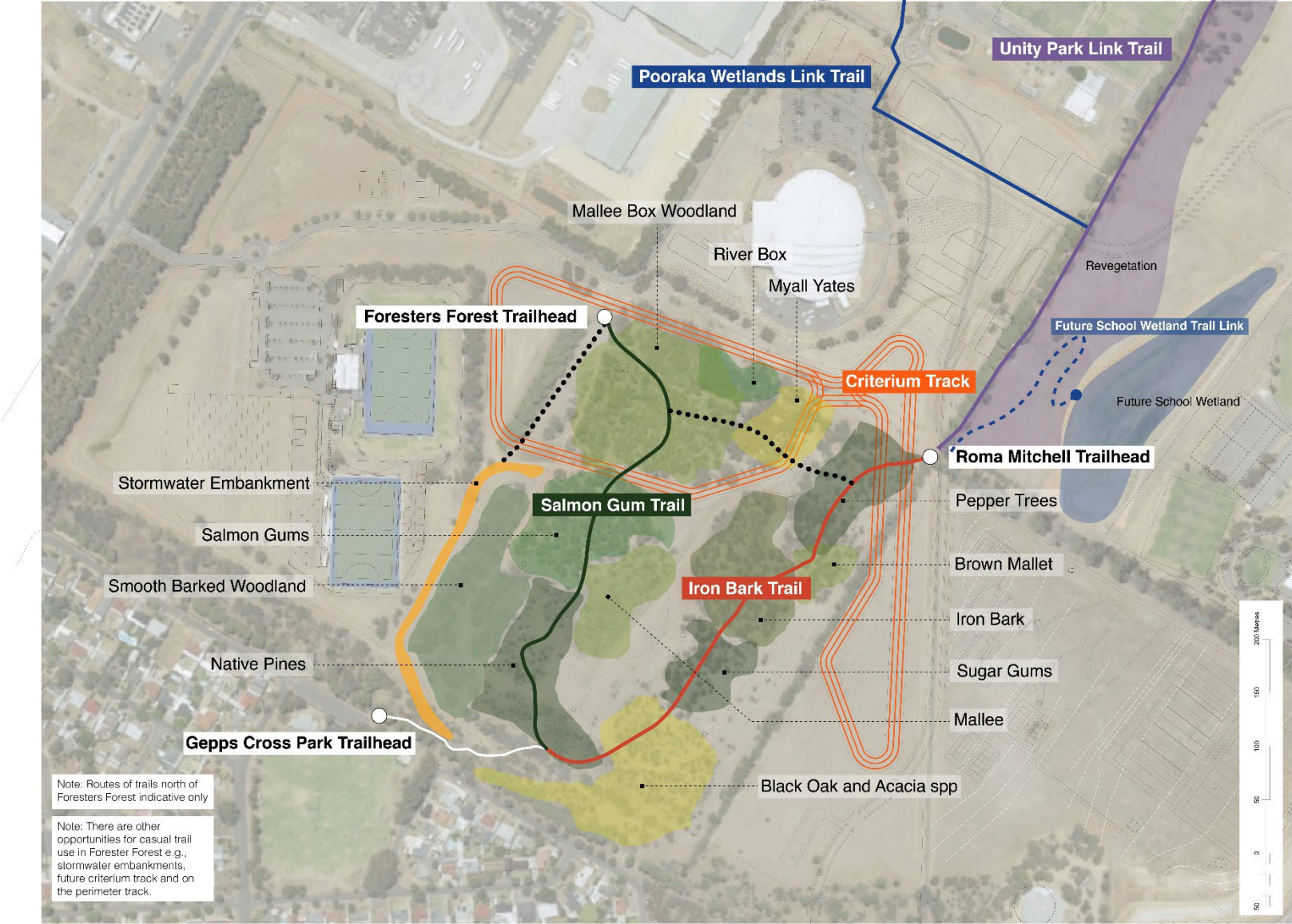


Figure 2. Proposed State Sports Park Trails





**Figure 3.** Stage 1 Foresters Forest Trails - Feature and Informal Trails







*Adelaide Super Drome*



# Trail Specifications

Two feature trails are proposed (Iron Bark and Salmon Gum Trails) that will connect the north and south communities and pass through the best forest landscapes. The trails will be designed for shared use including walking (Walking Trail Grade 2), running and low speed cycling (commuting or higher speed cycling will be accommodated on the Levels City Bikeway and future criterium track).

Due to the clay content of the soils, the anticipated use and for sustainability it is recommended the trails be capped with compacted 100 mm crushed rock. To accommodate shared use, they should be an average of 2 metres wide and to avoid tree damage trails may be narrowed for short sections. With the number of asphalt trails within the area we don't believe asphalt capping of the trail is warranted but may be incorporated in the future.

Attention will be needed to protect trees, shrubs and regenerating vegetation during construction including impact on tree roots. Where the trail tread cannot be placed beyond the drip line attention to digging will be required avoiding tree roots greater than 50mm.

On the Foresters Forest feature trails there is no identified need for low level water crossings. Wet areas may however be encountered on the feature trails, informal trails and maintenance tracks. These wet sections and the gully near Gepps Cross Park can be addressed through rock armoring creating natural rock crossings.

Integrating revegetation and restoration with trail construction is recommended time including with native grasses through innovative controlled burning and seeding.



*Iron Bark Woodland*



# Walking Trail Standards and Sharing the Trails

National Parks and Wildlife Service SA, TrailsSA, WalkingSA, RecreationSA and most State and Territories have adopted the Australian Walking Track Grading System.

South Australia features a diverse range of trails allowing visitors to experience nature and explore the different landscapes across our state. Trails vary in length, surface, gradient and remoteness so it's important that trail users can choose a walk that best suits their level of fitness and walking experience.

Previously, trails in South Australia have been classified under subjective descriptors such as Easy Walk, Moderate Hike, Hard Hike and Trek. Trail organisations and the National Parks and Wildlife Service now adopts the Australian Walking Track Grading System which is based on the technical specifications of the Australian Standard Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage (AS2156.1-2001).

Under the system, walking trails are graded on a difficulty scale from grades one to five. These grades appear on trailhead signs and trail webpages and should be included on future State Sports Park and Forester s Forest trailheads.

A trail is graded according to its most difficult components of the classification criteria. Trail walkers may find that a trail will often have components which are easier than the trail's final classification.<sup>6</sup>

## Shared Trails - Trail Users Code of Practice

To protect the surrounding environment and to ensure the safety, enjoyment and comfort of all riders and shared trail users a Trail Users Code of Practice has been developed and included in shared use trailheads and information. Important points to remember include:






- plan your ride
- comply with all signs
- ride only on formed tracks/trails
- share the trail - obey give way rules
- avoid riding in wet, muddy conditions
- ride lightly and leave no trace or rubbish
- control your bike within your limits
- clean your bike to avoid the spread of weeds or plant diseases
- carry sufficient food and drinking water
- respect the rights of others
- tell others about the code<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/walking>

<sup>7</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia



Australian walking track grading system	
	<b>Grade 1</b> No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5 km.
	<b>Grade 2</b> No bushwalking experience required. The track is a hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10 km.
	<b>Grade 3</b> Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Tracks may have short steep hill sections, a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20 km.
	<b>Grade 4</b> Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.
	<b>Grade 5</b> Recommended for very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20 km.



# Implementation and Maintenance

## Project priorities

The implementation of the State Sports Park Trails Plan is linked to the priorities of the 2021 Master Plan for the State Sports Park.

Stage 1 will see the focus on Foresters Forest Trails with the Iron Bark Trail the first trail to be developed.

Future stages will be linked to revegetated trail connections to Unity Park, the Pooraka Wetlands and potentially to Roma Mitchell Secondary College and wetlands.

It is not the purpose of this trails plan to define the role out of a program of works. The Foresters Forest Working Group will provide an implementation plan based on priorities, balance between vegetation management, visitor and people management and available funds.

Trail planning has identified the standards, specifications and priority trails with the best trail corridors proposed. Trail building will where possible be within the planned corridors however the actual built trail alignment will be a combination of final flagging of the trail route and the trail builder's skills in building sustainable and fun trails.

The State Sports Park Trails Plan Stage 1 has recommended a number of priorities focused on Foresters Forest:

- Develop the priority Iron Bark Trail as a north south community link through the Foresters Forest between the Gepps Cross Park Trailhead and Roma Mitchell Trailhead.
- Develop the Salmon Gum Trail between Gepps Cross Park Trailhead and Roma Mitchell Trailhead.
- Associated with the Iron Bark and Salmon Gum Trails design and establish three gates suitable for pedestrians, bicycles, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams and scooters. These gates will be separate from secure maintenance access gates.
- Develop three trailheads associated with the Iron Bark and Salmon Gum Trails incorporating information to enable users to explore the Foresters Forest in a way that best suits their level of fitness, experience and interest. The trailhead information will be linked to development of standard waymarking markers on the trails.
- Establish secure maintenance vehicle access via existing and new gates positioned at logical access points relating to future development such as the criterium track.
- Ensure perimeter fencing around Foresters Forest is maintained for security and to limit anti-social activities such as rubbish dumping. As the State Sports Park develops plan for staged removal of internal fencing to encourage a contiguous, planned and welcoming approach to visitor access.
- Repair and restore erosion on informal trails and maintenance access tracks, repair and restore areas damaged from previous vehicle use and prevent future erosion through effective water management.



- Encourage appropriate behaviour through good trail design, providing enjoyable experiences and restoring and maintaining the site to encourage community participation and ownership.
- Undertake revegetation on the Salmon Gum Trail and through the native pine woodland to reduce the thick understory of perennial introduced grasses to improve sight lines, reduce cover for anti-social activity including rubbish dumping and reduce the fire hazard.
- Undertake planned and targeted vegetation restoration programs that enrich biodiversity and enhance the Foresters Forest trail experience including the introduction of native grasses and ground covers that contribute to the open nature of the site and contribute to the feeling of safety and comfort.

### **Maintenance**

Managers will need to maintain the trails, vegetation and infrastructure to a high standard and to the satisfaction and comfort of the targeted users.

The trails will need regular programmed monitoring and where possible utilising technology (e.g., Trail Audit Apps) to ensure the comfort, safety and satisfaction of the users.

Specific programmed maintenance will include but not limited to:

- The regrowth of vegetation within the Foresters Forest and greater State Sports Park area will require ongoing maintenance for fire, visitor comfort and safety and to ensure the integrity of the vegetated areas.
- Construct feature trails to a high standard incorporating contemporary erosion management techniques.
- Undertake regular inspections and audits of feature trails and undertake maintenance and repair.
- Undertake vegetation management on the feature trail corridor and throughout the site including regular auditing and monitoring to clear fallen branches off the trail and to ensure sight lines are open for visitor comfort and safety.
- Weed control and restoration work will be required to ensure the integrity of the highly valued Foresters Forest and to ensure the forest trail experience is enjoyable and valued by the community.





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