

# Cycling in Queensland national parks policy

## **Purpose**

To define the acceptability of cycling activities (not the style of bikes) in Queensland national parks recognising the cardinal principle for national parks is to conserve nature to the greatest possible extent.

## **Policy Statement**

NPAQ supports road biking and leisure cycling on gazetted roads; and may support leisure cycling including touring and cross country where it can be demonstrated there is no adverse impact on significant park cultural and natural values. Leisure cycling must be limited to specifically designated tracks and approved with conditions in a Park Management Plan. The potential conflict between bicycles and pedestrian traffic needs to be managed through design, construction, operation and management of trails and surrounding areas.

NPAQ does not support mountain biking (i.e. downhill/adventure/thrill seeking) on or off trail given its likely impact on vegetation, soil and wildlife, and conflict with passive users. This style of cycling is inconsistent with the cardinal principle of national parks and requires regular active maintenance to limit impacts. Introducing such activities does not encourage connection to, or appreciation of nature, and this style of mountain biking is therefore an inappropriate use for national parks.

Any cycling in national parks requires additional resources to develop, plan, construct and maintain suitable trails, manage conflict with existing users and ensure enforcement of rules especially the construction and use of illegal trails. NPAQ has concerns that this diverts scarce resources away from core park management activities.

## **Background**

The popularity of cycling has grown substantially in recent decades, accompanied by an increasing diversity in types and capabilities of bicycles. This increase in popularity places higher demand on local and state governments to provide access to natural areas suitable for cycling as a recreational activity.

One category of cycling, 'mountain biking' is typically associated with downhill/adventure/thrill seeking. Four different categories of mountain biking with similarities and overlap have been defined as: cross country, downhill, free and dirt jumping (Davies and Newsome, 2009).

Mountain biking can adversely impact on vegetation; soils (exposure, displacement, loss and compaction); and wildlife (fragmentation of habitat, avoidance behaviour and direct injury and death) based on climate, slope, soil type and other environmental factors e.g. rainfall (Marion and Wimpey, 2007). Impacts occur during construction, maintenance and use, especially during/following rain (Marion and Wimpey, 2007). While most direct impacts are limited to a narrow corridor, impacts on bird physiology, behaviour, abundance and reproductive success can extend considerably further (Rochelle et al, 2011). Even very localized disturbance can harm rare or endangered species (Marion and Wimpey, 2007). Impact on adjacent residents can occur due to dust and noise. The main purpose of national parks in Queensland is the preservation of nature as enshrined in the object of the *Nature Conservation Act 1999* (Qld).

In keeping with legislative requirements, all proposed activities that take place in a national park should be assessed and determined on the principle of maintaining/enhancing conservation values. NPAQ acknowledges that Mountain Biking is currently permitted (e.g. as a grandfathered activity) and provided for in certain national parks (i.e. Nerang National Park for the Commonwealth Games due to its previous designation as a State Forest). However, NPAQ considers mountain biking as fundamentally incompatible with the protection of national park values.

Any cycling proposal should be carefully assessed in terms of potential impact and should only proceed where connection and appreciation of nature is an objective and where impacts are assessed as able to be mitigated.

NPAQ particularly objects to major sporting events in national parks as they can attract concentrated or large numbers of competitors, support staff and spectators, and can have impacts such as erosion over a concentrated period. This is not compatible with the object of national parks.

### Scope

This policy addresses the use of bicycles in Queensland national parks and can provide guidance for all other publicly owned or managed protected areas in Queensland.

### Government Responsibilities

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service within the Department of Environment and Science is responsible for achieving the object of the *Nature Conservation Act 1999* (Qld) through establishing, maintaining and monitoring national parks and assessing, rejecting or approving (with conditions) activities in national parks in a transparent manner.

### Definitions

These definitions apply regardless of the type of bicycle. Road cycling involves use of existing paved (and gravel) roads primarily to gain access. Leisure cycling typically involves use of single, multi-use or management trails at low speed to enjoy nature and scenic views. Mountain biking can involve touring and cross-country riding, but typically involves using the terrain to provide adventure, thrills and challenges with appreciation of the surroundings as a low priority.

### References

Davies, Claire and David Newsome (2009). "[Mountain bike activity in natural areas: impacts, assessment and implications for management: a case study from John Forrest National Park, Western Australia](#)".

Marion, Jeff and Jeremy Wimpey (2007). "[Environmental Impacts of Mountain Biking: Science Review and Best Practices](#)". *International Mountain Bicycling Association*. 15 May 2019.

Rochelle, Steven; Catherine Pickering; and J. Guy Castley (2011). "A review of the impacts of nature based recreation on birds", *Journal of Environmental Management* [Volume 92, Issue 10](#), October 2011, Pages 2287-2294. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479711001411>

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