

Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Strategy 2025 - 35



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY



VICTORIA
Australia



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and respect the separate and distinct Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the Great Ocean Road’s land, waters, seas and skies and acknowledge their cultural knowledge that has led to sustainable practices and has cared for Country over tens of thousands of years. We honour Elders past and present and express gratitude for their sharing of wisdom that has ensured the continuation of Culture and Traditional practices. We are committed to genuinely partner and meaningfully build relationships that reflect self-determination and enable us to work together with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices, and together deliver on their broader assertions in the 21st century and beyond.

This Strategy is built on valuable insights from Traditional Owners, trail industry specialists, collaboration with local land managers, and feedback from the community, visitors and stakeholders. Their contributions have shaped the vision strategies and actions that are inclusive, practical and impactful.

TRAIL DEFINITION

For this Strategy, the term ‘trails’ encompasses both single use trails (walking, hiking, cycling and mountain biking) and shared use (any combination of walking, hiking, cycling, horse riding and mountain biking). Several of the region’s trails are multiple purpose where horse riders share the trails with walkers and, in some cases, cyclists. The terms ‘tracks’ and ‘trails’ are used interchangeably recognising that they might hold different meanings for different individuals.

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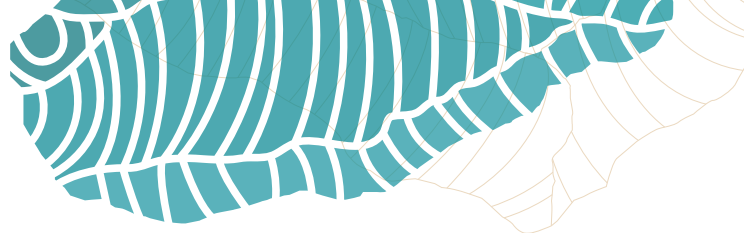


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Acronyms

CoM	Committee of Management
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
EMAC	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
GORCAPA / The Authority	Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
GORRT	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism
GORRTF	Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum
LGA	Local Government Area
MTB	Mountain Bike
PV	Parks Victoria
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation



Executive Summary

The Great Ocean Road region has long been recognised as a standout location for nature based tourism, with its trails serving as a major attraction for visitors and a valued asset for residents. These trails offer opportunities for walking and cycling, providing access to areas of outstanding natural beauty, cultural landscapes and unique recreational experiences. They promote an active, outdoor lifestyle that enhances physical and spiritual well-being, offering spaces for families and friends to connect. The trails contribute significantly to residents' quality of life and the region's economic prosperity by generating income and jobs that sustain vibrant communities year-round.

Maximising the potential of the region's diverse and accessible landscapes, coupled with its extensive network of trails, provide an ideal platform from which to build stronger and more sustainable trails. With sufficient investment to improve the quality of trail experiences and associated products and services, the region has an opportunity to attract visitors, grow regional economies and create jobs, while also delivering social, environmental and cultural benefits for local communities. Trail assets also assist in measures that promote seasonal and geographic visitor dispersal across the region.

The Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Strategy 2025-2035 (the Strategy) provides a framework for co-ordinated planning, management and promotion of trails in the region as shown in Figure 1. The Strategy applies to trails in the area from Torquay in the east to Port Fairy in the west, bound by the coast to the south and Colac and Camperdown to the north.

The trails included in this Strategy are:

- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park)
- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail
- Forrest Mountain Bike Network
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail
- Great Ocean Walk
- Otway Walks and Waterfalls
- Old Beechy Rail Trail
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail
- Surf Coast Walk
- Twelve Apostles Trail
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.

This Strategy recognises the vital role that local trails and short walks play in fostering community health by providing accessible spaces for physical activity, social interaction and connection to nature. They encourage active lifestyles, reduce stress and improve mental well-being, while offering safe and inclusive environments for people of all ages and abilities. By promoting regular outdoor activity, local trails contribute to healthier, happier and more resilient communities.

Accompanying this Strategy are the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, offering guidance on trail planning, design and management for all stakeholders. Together the Strategy and Guidelines aim to support the many organisations and interests involved in the trail network. It presents a shared vision along with the principles, goals and actions required to achieve this vision over the next ten years.

This Strategy has been prepared by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority) in consultation with rightsholders, land managers and key stakeholders. The Authority will lead the implementation of the Strategy in collaboration with all involved agencies.

Our Vision

Our vision is for an outstanding trails region renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate and protect our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community and well-being.



Our Goals

To achieve our vision, this Strategy contains six goals. Each goal has a set of priority actions.

Integrated Governance, Planning and Management

We will adopt a strategic, coordinated approach to trail planning, management and maintenance through stakeholder collaboration, prioritising investment and resource allocation.

Sustainable Funding Model and Investment Framework

We will source sustainable funding for trail development, maintenance and management while providing guidance to organisations seeking investment.

Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships

We will partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples to achieve joint objectives in land management and trail network development.

High Quality and Sustainable Trails

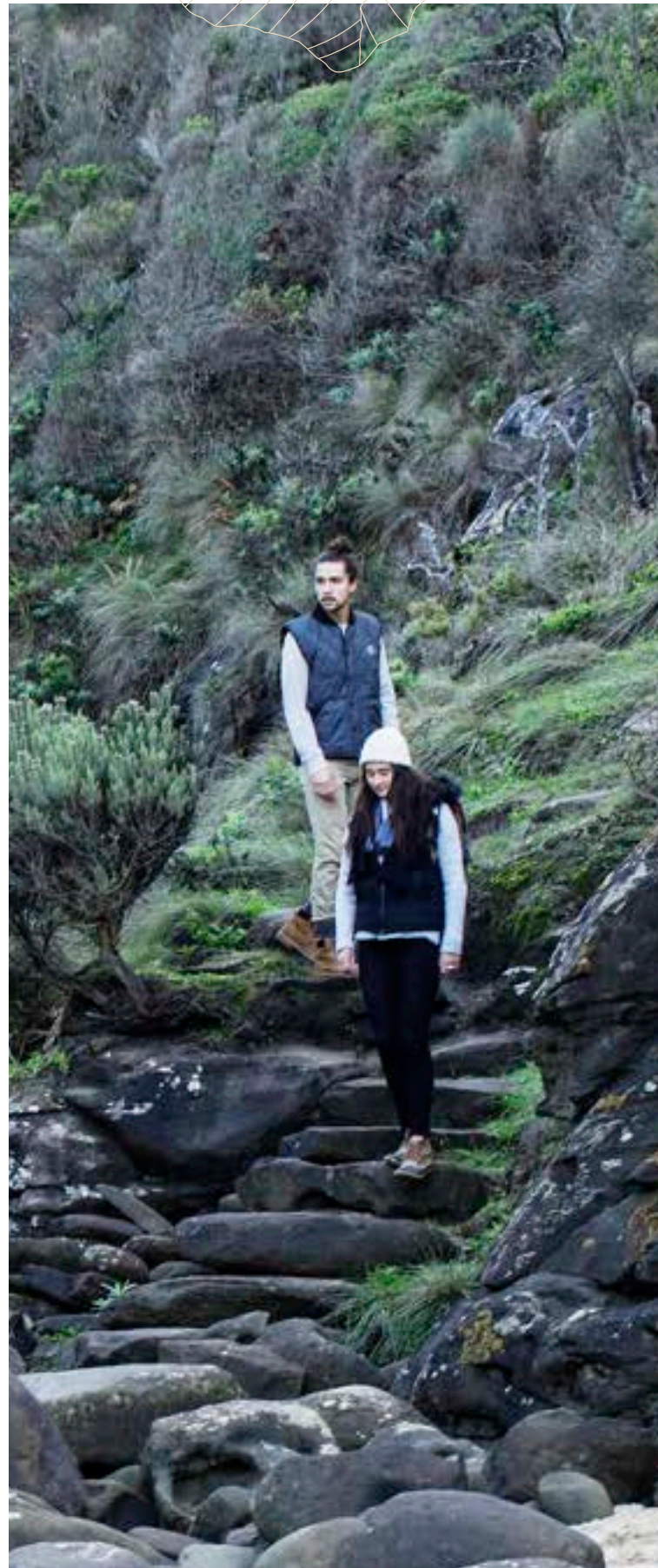
We will provide outstanding trail experiences that protect the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

Information and Marketing

We will offer consistent, reliable trail information to highlight experiences and enable confident exploration.

Accessible and Inclusive Trails

We will ensure trails are inclusive, accessible and support the needs of visitors and communities.



1. Introduction



The Great Ocean Road region's rich and varied landscape is crisscrossed by hundreds of kilometres of trails. Located on the lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples, it is home to some of Australia's finest coastline, forests, national parks and marine sanctuaries. It boasts a network of trails that enable visitors and residents to experience these inspiring landscapes.

For this Strategy, the region is defined as the area from Torquay in the east to Port Fairy in the west, bound by the coast to the south and Colac and Camperdown to the north. This area encompasses those critical trails that contribute to the Great Ocean Road trail network (refer Figure 1).

The region has long been recognised as an exceptional destination for nature based tourism. The region's trails are a major attraction for visitors and an asset for residents, offering opportunities for walking and cycling, and providing access to areas of outstanding natural beauty, cultural landmarks and unique recreational experiences.

The trails offer residents and visitors opportunities to engage in an active, outdoor lifestyle that promotes physical and spiritual wellbeing. They provide spaces for families and friends to be active together and to connect, enhancing the vibrancy and appeal of the region's communities. These trails contribute to the quality of life for residents and the economic prosperity of the region.

Trails also strengthen the visitor economy, generating income and jobs that sustain our vibrant communities year-round. For more detailed information on the regional context and significance of the region's trails, please refer to Appendix A.

The trails in the region are planned and managed by a combination of state and local government entities, and in some cases, in partnership with the local community management committees. Considerable resources have been invested in strengthening the trail network in recent years.

1.1 THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Strategy provides a framework to guide state and local government agencies in the development of trails in the region. It presents a shared vision along with the principles, goals and actions required to achieve this vision over the next ten years. The Strategy aims to build on previous investments to establish the Great Ocean Road region as one of Australia's premier trail destinations.

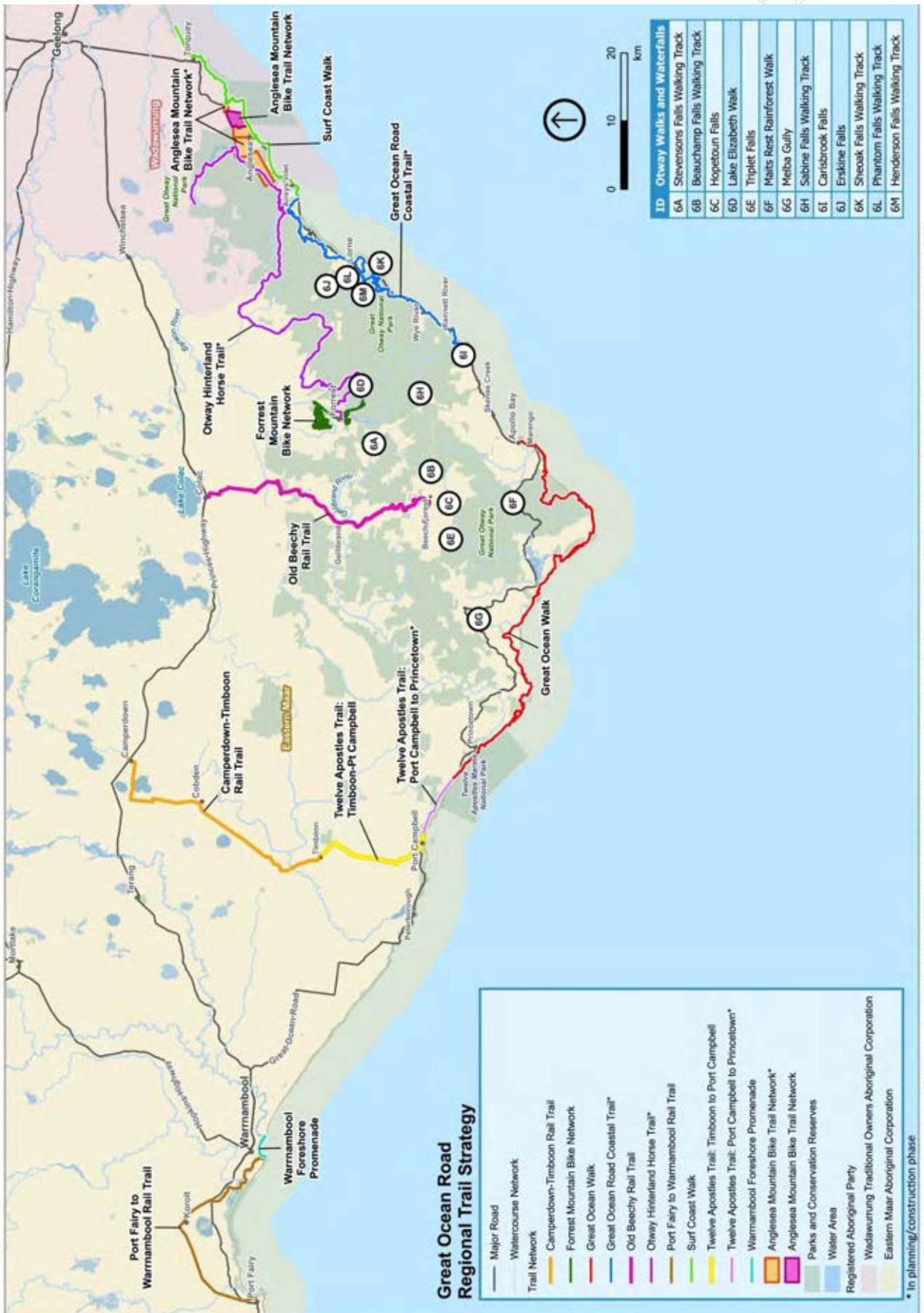
The Strategy sets the strategic direction for planning, developing, maintaining, managing, marketing and utilising an integrated network of trails in the region over the next decade. Accompanying this Strategy are the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, which offer guidance on trail planning, design and management for all stakeholders involved in trails across the region.

Both the Strategy and the Guidelines are designed to unify the diverse range of organisations and interests working independently on individual trails, bringing them together under a shared vision to develop and manage an outstanding network of trails across the region.

This Strategy has been prepared by the Authority in consultation with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the local government areas of Colac Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Moyne Shire, Surf Coast Shire and Warrnambool City, State Government Departments and agencies managing the region's land (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Parks Victoria), and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism.

As the lead agency, the Authority will work in consultation and collaboration with all involved agencies and our communities to realise the Strategy's vision and goals.

Figure 1. Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Strategy – Area of Focus



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Custodians of the lands, waters and skies

The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples are the custodians of the lands, waters and skies encompassed by the Great Ocean Road region and have been for millennia.



131,030 residents

Most residents live in Surf Coast Shire and Warrnambool City.

Victoria's most popular destination outside of Melbourne

In 2023/24:

- Total Nights: 6.6 million.
- Total Day Visitors: 3.0 million.
- Most visitors are from Victoria.

In 2033:

- Total Visitors: 9 million visitors (forecast).

Outstanding Natural and Cultural Landscapes

2 national parks, 170,000 ha of Crown Land, 2 marine parks and 5 marine sanctuaries.

Multiple trails that showcase the region

Short Walks

- Otway Walks & Waterfalls.



Shared Use Trails

- Surf Coast Walk.
- Twelve Apostles Trail.
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.



Long Distance Walks

- Great Ocean Walk.
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (proposed).

Mountain Bike Trails

- Forrest Mountain Bike Network.
- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park).



Rail and Horse Trails

- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail.
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail.
- Old Beechy Rail Trail.
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (proposed).

2. The Existing Trail Network



2.1 THE EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK

The Great Ocean Road region possesses a unique advantage. Our communities are surrounded by extensive public lands containing a network of exceptional trails that are used, valued and cared for by government agencies and local communities.

Across the region, there is growing recognition that the existing trail network present significant opportunities for enhancing the wellbeing of residents and the prosperity of communities.

Trails are integral to the landscape, fostering meaningful connections between people and nature. The region's extensive trail network currently offers:

- A good geographical spread of trails and connections to townships along the Great Ocean Road and its national parks.
- Access to a range of landscape and coastal settings, from urban to natural environments and from the coast through to the hinterland. Beautiful beaches and forests form part of a superb experience.
- A variety of trail types, including walking trails and multi-use trails for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Short Walks

The region has many high-quality short walks. Some occur in 'clusters', including walks in the Great Otway National Park. The walks traverse a range of high-quality natural areas.

Mountain Bike Trails

The region boasts several quality mountain bike trail networks at Forrest and Anglesea. These are generally managed in partnership between the land managers and local clubs affiliated with AusCycling.

Long Distance Walking Trails

The region has several significant long-distance walks, including the Great Ocean Walk and the planned Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail.

Shared Use Trails

Several of the region's trails are multiple purpose with walkers and cyclists sharing the trail. This includes the Surf Coast Walk and the recently constructed Twelve Apostles Trail (stage one).

Rail Trails

Rail trails are a feature of the region and include the Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail, Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail and the Old Beechy Rail Trail.

2.2 TRAILS INCLUDED IN THIS STRATEGY

The trails included in this Strategy are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3 and include:

- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park)*
- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail
- Forrest Mountain Bike Network
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail*
- Great Ocean Walk
- Otway Walks & Waterfalls
- Old Beechy Rail Trail
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail*
- Surf Coast Walk
- Twelve Apostles Trail**
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.

**In planning/construction phase*

***includes the Twelve Apostles Trail Stage 2 (Port Campbell to Princetown via Twelve Apostles Visitor Centre).*

For a comprehensive overview and assessment of the existing trail network and an assessment of each individual trail including recommended actions, please refer to Appendix B.

These trails have been selected because they:

- Are of a regional geographic scale and link the settlements, activities and environments along the Great Ocean Road corridor.
- Offer diverse user experiences capturing the region's unique character and features of the region (natural, cultural, heritage and landscape values).
- Serve the whole of the community, including visitors and regional residents.
- Support the economic and social development of communities and support a prosperous and liveable region.
- Are environmentally and culturally sustainable.
- Are accessible from several points along their length and particularly to key parts of the trail where there is associated trailhead infrastructure.
- Offer a cluster of short-walk experiences that are located within proximity to one another, showcase the values of the region, promote visitor dispersal and are collectively regarded as a 'walking attraction'.

This Strategy recognises the vital role that local trails and short walks play in fostering community health by providing accessible spaces for physical activity, social interaction and connection to nature. They encourage active lifestyles, reduce stress and improve mental well-being, while offering safe and inclusive environments for people of all ages and abilities. By promoting regular outdoor activity, local trails contribute to healthier, happier and more resilient communities. These local trails and short walks will be maintained in accordance with each land manager's maintenance guidelines.

2.3 TRAIL MANAGEMENT

More than 14 public entities are responsible for trail development, infrastructure delivery, asset maintenance, emergency management, destination promotion, and the management of biocultural landscapes across the region. Appendix B provides a summary of the land managers responsible for each trail.

Each entity must comply with the State's legislative and policy framework, as well as strategic planning guidelines. Appendix A provides a summary of the legislation, plans and strategies relevant to the development of trails across the region.

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

The Authority is an independent statutory authority established on 1 December 2020 to enhance the protection and management of Victoria's iconic Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

In partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the Authority's purpose is to care for, protect and manage the coast and parks along the Great Ocean Road, ensuring they can be enjoyed by all, now and for generations to come. The Authority's ambition is for the Great Ocean Road to thrive environmentally, economically, socially and culturally as one integrated living entity.

Before the Authority's establishment, thirty organisations held responsibilities along the Great Ocean Road. This fragmented management model created barriers to coordinated future planning and delivery, a key challenge identified by stakeholders.

The role of the Authority is to streamline the fragmented and conflicting management of public land within the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, and to deliver on a shared vision for the region's future.

This includes:

- Guiding sustainable tourism, supporting local employment, and enhancing the visitor experience.
 - Strengthening the protection of land and seascapes from the impacts of climate change.
- Improving economic development to create a prosperous and liveable region.

Management responsibility for an estimated 150,000 hectares of parks and public land within the Great Ocean Road region is being progressively transferred to the Authority, with completion expected by 1 November 2025. This area of land, referred to in this Strategy as the Authority's service area, may include some of the trails covered by this Strategy. Appendix B lists the respective land managers for each trail and identifies those that might be transferred to us.

The transfer of land will not alter the existing management tenure or conservation objectives of the land under our control. The land management objectives and obligations are defined by the reservation purpose under the Crown (Land) Reserves Act and other statutory requirements, such as land management plans approved by the Minister for Environment and State policies. These objectives and obligations will remain unchanged.

The Authority is required to reinvest all revenue generated from the land it manages back into the protection and enhancement of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, ensuring their enjoyment and appreciation by current and future generations. This includes improvements in environmental education, conservation, visitor services, and the management and maintenance of the trail network.

Other Agencies

Several trails are located outside of the Authority's service area (Figure 1). These trails are managed by stakeholders involved in the development of this Strategy, including Parks Victoria, DEECA, and the five local governments. Some stakeholders, such as Parks Victoria, have documents (standards, guidelines, etc.) that guide the management of their trail networks. The vision, principles, and actions identified in this Strategy, along with the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, are designed to align with each agency's guidelines and standards. Together, these documents will provide trail managers, organisations, and other interest groups with readily available, current and relevant guidance for trail development and management.

Committees of Management and Clubs

Several Committees of Management have been established to manage assets on behalf of the relevant local Council, including assets owned by the Council or Crown Land for which the Council is the Committee of Management. These committees consist of volunteers who contribute significantly to trail management, construction and use. Examples of volunteer groups involved in the trail network include the Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail Committee Inc. and the Surf Coast Mountain Bike Club.

The Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung Peoples

There are two recognised Registered Aboriginal Parties within the region this Strategy encompasses, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). Figures 2 and 3 show the boundary of each Registered Aboriginal Party.

The Eastern Maar are the Traditional Owners of south-western Victoria. Through their Country Plan, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation asserts to be the public land manager for trails on their country.

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that run from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the coast in the

south, from Werribee River in the east to along the Surf Coast.

Through their Country Plan, the Wadawurrung would like co-management to be a pathway to full management for areas identified by Wadawurrung.

The intended aim is to ensure that First Nations people and their representative bodies are engaged in all elements of trail management and will have co-design and co-management principles applied to their partnership with land managers.

Trail Related Businesses

Business groups with an interest in trails and trail management extend throughout the region. These groups include bike servicing, repair and rental businesses, event management and ownership groups, accommodation providers, transport services, and food businesses linked to trail use. Many of these businesses are connected to the trail network through clubs, chambers of commerce, and peak bodies representing industry and business regionally.

The Authority is committed to working in consultation, collaboration and partnership with all agencies involved in the development of this Strategy to realise the vision.

This Strategy is intended to serve as the hub of a wheel, connecting the broad range of organisations and initiatives that have historically worked independently. By drawing them together under a shared vision, the Strategy aims to establish the region as an outstanding trails destination.



Figure 2. Great Ocean Road East

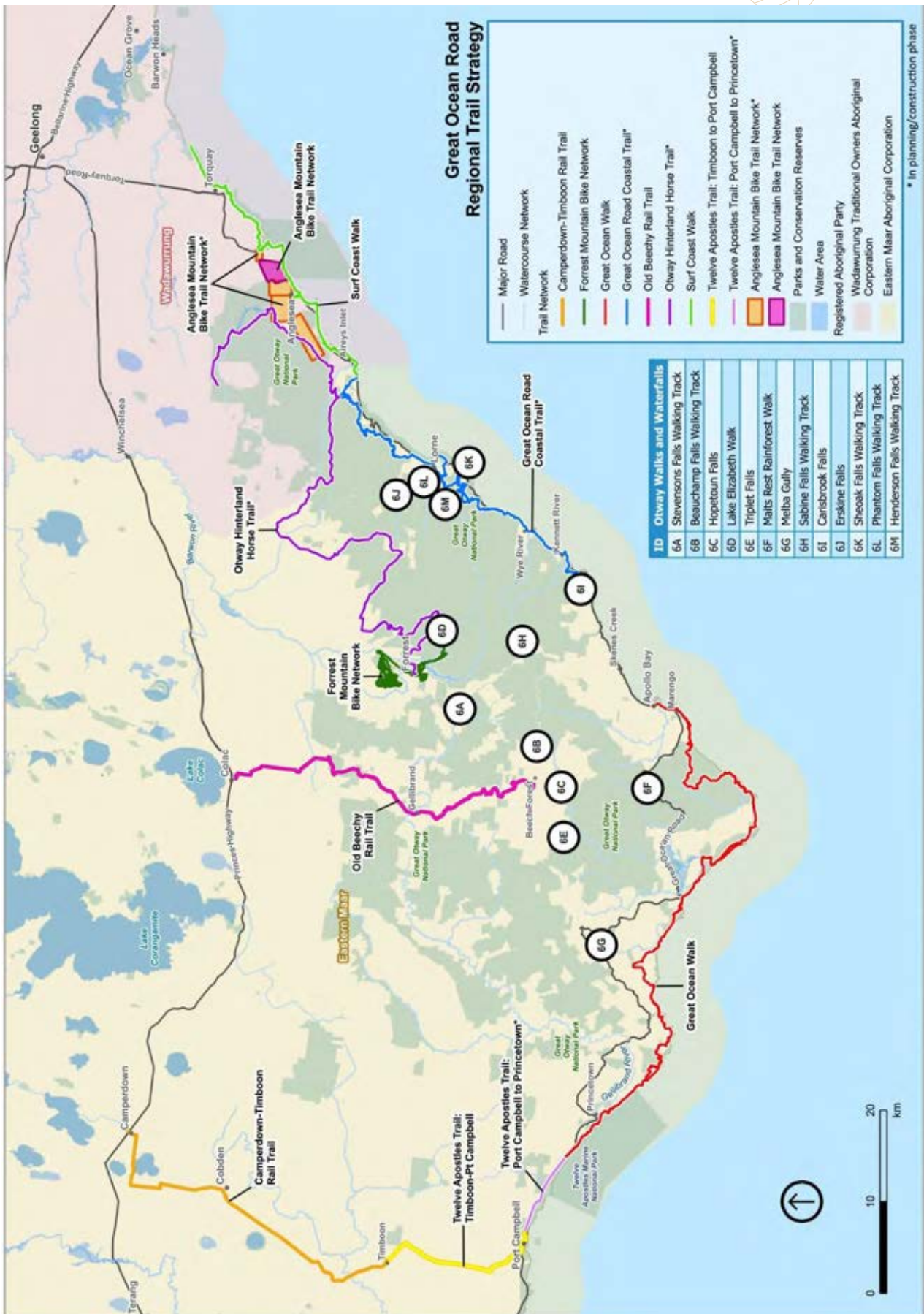
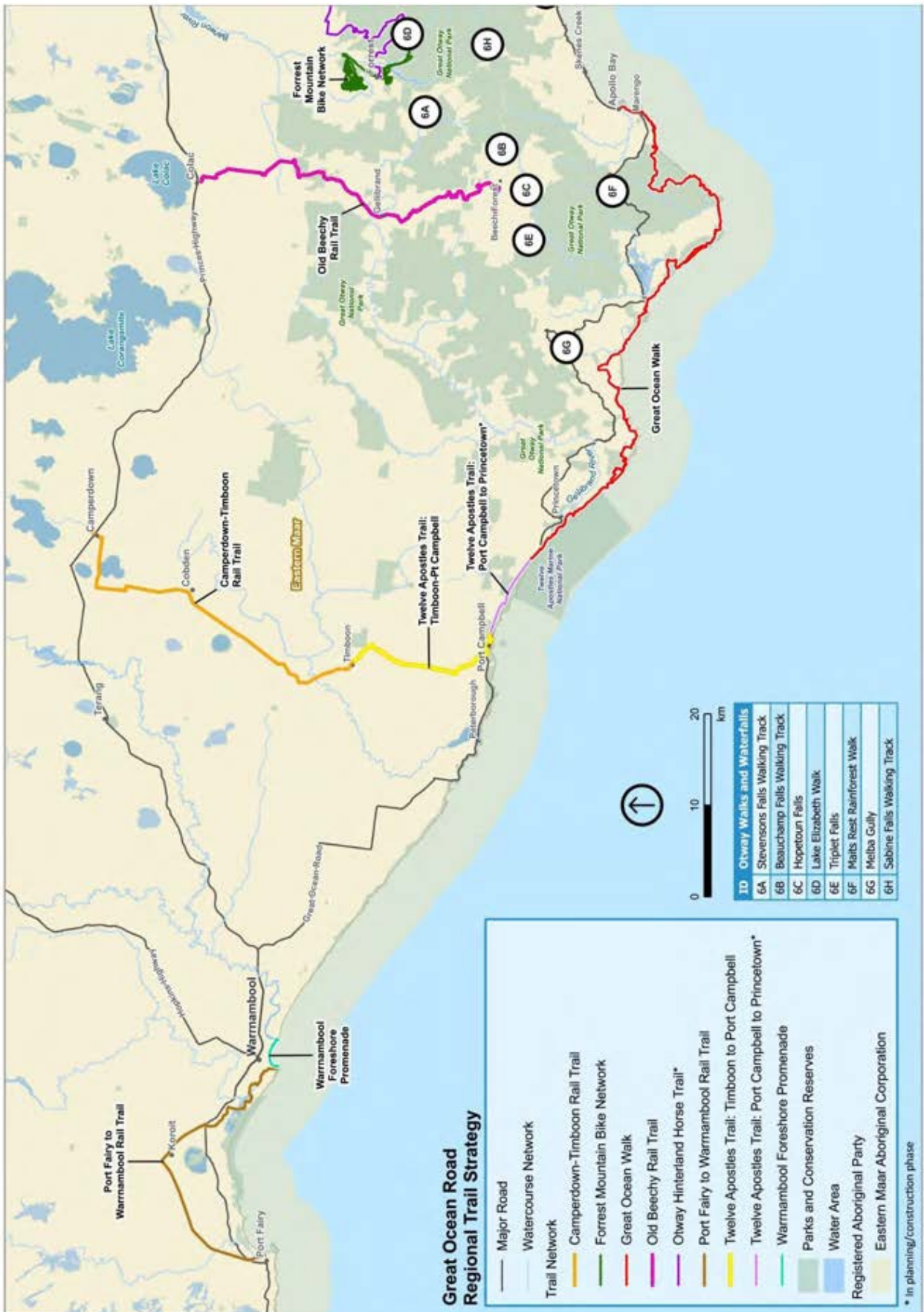


Figure 3. Great Ocean Road West



3. Characteristics of Outstanding Trail Destinations



3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTSTANDING TRAIL DESTINATIONS

An outstanding trail destination features a series of exceptional trails designed to showcase the natural and cultural landscapes of the area that are accessible to a wide range of users. It also offers a range of trail-related services to enhance the user experience for both residents and visitors.

The following factors characterise outstanding trail destinations:

Diversity of Trail Types

A diversity of trails can be achieved in several ways, catering to various trail markets such as walking, hiking, multi-use, cycling and mountain biking. In addition to offering different types of trails, they should accommodate people with varying fitness levels, skill and ability levels, and equipment needs. This diversity may include:

Degree of Difficulty: Trails with varying levels of challenge to suit beginners, intermediate and advanced users.

Trail Length: Options ranging from short, easy walks to longer, more demanding hikes or rides.

Rest Points: Multiple locations along the trails where users can stop to rest.

Technical Features: Trails designed with specific technical challenges for those with advanced equipment or skills, such as mountain biking trails with jumps and obstacles.

By offering a variety of trails, the region can ensure an inclusive and enjoyable experience for all visitors.

Concentration of Trail Opportunities

Transport between trails can be a barrier for visitors seeking a multi-day trail experience in a region. Ideally, trails should be close to a trailhead or an area that provides accommodation and a service hub.

Short loop trails near townships boost community health and well-being while supporting local economies by promoting higher-yield slow tourism and longer visitor stays.

In cases where trails are not in proximity, good transport connections are essential to enable visitors to enjoy the area without having to travel long distances to begin their experiences. Ideally, trails should lead from a well-designed trailhead, ensuring convenience and accessibility for all users.

High Quality Design and Infrastructure

Trails and their infrastructure should be designed and managed to ensure safety for all proposed uses, including shared-use trails. There should be clear, accessible information on orientation and wayfinding, trail standards, difficulty ratings, appropriate user behaviour, and journey length, available on physical signs as well as online.

High-quality design also includes consideration of Universal Design Principles, gender impact and accessibility requirements. Additionally, it should accommodate residents and visitors for whom English is a second language. This ensures that trails are inclusive and accessible to a diverse range of users.

Modern trail construction methods and new trail-building guidelines emphasise good design, environmentally sustainable material selection and user experience. High quality and sustainable trails that are planned, designed, constructed and maintained to best practice provide a sense of place. They complement and showcase their surrounds, they are photogenic, they create a connection to their natural and cultural environment, they appeal to all age groups and are built to last. Accordingly, trail design and infrastructure should be fit for purpose and climate resilient.

Supporting infrastructure includes trailheads, toilets, information boards, car parks and other amenities. For example, hinterland trails may require significantly less infrastructure compared to high-volume short walking tracks in coastal areas.

Suitable Access

Trails need to provide appropriate access to their relevant target market. For instance, constructing a high-quality day walk trail is of little use if there is no access for day users. Transport and access must align with the markets using the trail.

Key considerations include:

- **Suitable Road Access:** where possible locate trailheads convenient to road access points.
- **Public Transport:** where possible locate trailheads convenient to public transport options

All-Ability Access: Designing trails and infrastructure to be accessible to people of all abilities where possible, encouraging use across all sectors of the community.

By aligning transport and access with the needs of trail users, we can ensure that trails are utilised and enjoyed by a diverse range of people.

Respect for Cultural Landscapes

Trails often traverse cultural landscapes and sites of cultural significance. Outstanding trail destinations respect and preserve cultural values, offering high-quality interpretation and storytelling that provide trail users with meaningful insights into the cultural landscapes they traverse. This helps build understanding of their significance and underscores the need for their protection.

Outstanding Natural Landscapes

The setting in which a trail is located is crucial for attracting visitors. Outstanding trail destinations leverage the natural landscape, showcasing breathtaking views and key features, while providing quality interpretation along the trail. Trails are designed and constructed to minimise negative environmental impacts from both construction and ongoing use.

Quality Pre-trip Information

Increasingly, visitors independently research their trips based on online content, which can be formally curated by responsible organisations (such as tourism boards, land managers or councils) or user-generated content found on mapping and outdoor

activity portals, online media, blogs and social media. Some of this content may lack quality control for accuracy and appropriateness of pre-trip information.

Quality pre-trip information, including accurate trail maps, is essential to provide prospective visitors with the details they need to choose their trail destinations. A "one-stop shop" website would be ideal, allowing visitors to research accommodation, transport, maps, digital navigation files and more. Other sites can then be used for verification.

Range of Quality Support Services

Successful trail destinations provide a range of services that meet the needs of diverse trail users, ensuring they can access and enjoy the trails seamlessly. These services handle the logistics of accessing trails, transporting people and equipment, and finding accommodation, recognising the special needs of trail visitors.

Many trail destinations now provide walker or bike-friendly schemes where service and accommodation providers offer products and packages tailored to trail users. This includes secure bike and equipment storage, clothes and equipment washing, packed lunches, and convenient opening hours.

Typical trail destination support services include:

- **Transport Services:** Providing transport for people, equipment and luggage to and from trailheads and accommodation.
- **Guided and Self-Guided Tours:** Offering a range of tour options for trail users.
- **Equipment Services:** Offering bike hire, repair, and retail services for hiking and other needs.
- **Car Rental Services:** Facilitating the transport of equipment and bikes.
- **Long-Stay Parking:** Providing long-stay car parking at or near trailheads.
- **Trail-Friendly Accommodation:** Offering accommodations that cater specifically to walkers and riders.

By providing these support services, the region can enhance the overall experience for visitors, making it

easier and more enjoyable for them to explore and appreciate the trails.

Strong positioning and marketing

Strong marketing is essential for a trails destination to stand out in an increasingly crowded marketplace. Each destination must effectively position itself by aligning its core strengths and experiences with the market and promoting them accordingly.

Consistent application of a brand across the destination and among all partners involved is critical to avoid mixed signals and inconsistent messaging. This ensures a unified and clear identity that resonates with the target audience.

Strong planning and collaboration between partners, land managers, businesses, and the broader tourism industry are vital to successful marketing and positioning. By working together, these stakeholders can create and deliver compelling marketing strategies that highlight the unique attributes of the trail destination.

Strong Governance and Sustainable Funding

Good governance is crucial for making well-informed, evidence-based decisions in a collaborative manner, all aligned with a strong vision and long-term planning. An effective governance structure and mechanism tailored to each destination is essential. Key elements of a good governance model include:

- **Clear Vision:** Partners and operators share a clear vision for the destination.
- **Defined Roles and Accountabilities:** Partners understand their roles and responsibilities and work collaboratively within this framework.
- **Skilled Teams:** Teams possess the right skills and experience to drive desired outcomes.
- **Resource Access:** Ensuring there is adequate financial, human and support resources allocated for destination development.

Many trail destinations in Australia face challenges in securing ongoing maintenance funding. This is partly because many trails are on land managed by National Park and/or Forest Authorities, whose business models typically do not include service fees that directly contribute to trail maintenance.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Engaging with local communities about plans, issues, and opportunities is critical to ensure that the destination's trail experiences are effectively delivered by land managers, businesses and the community together. Community engagement also ensures that local needs are considered in trail management, development and planning.

A Vibrant Events Calendar

A robust events calendar can invigorate a trail destination, generate significant economic benefits, and raise marketplace awareness, particularly during shoulder and off-seasons. Events attract time-specific visitors during the event period and encourage extended visits as attendees often return to the region after being exposed to it through the event or its coverage. This, in turn, boosts trail-related businesses and provides income stability within the region. Additionally, events positively impact the local community by stimulating activity, promoting health and wellbeing, enhancing lifestyle quality, and improving overall regional liveability.

This Strategy recognises the vital role of volunteers and community members, whose dedication ensures the success of many events that would not exist without their contributions in the Great Ocean Road region.

3.2 REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

Appendix B includes an assessment of the region's trail network against the characteristics of outstanding trail destinations. The main issues and opportunities are summarised below.

Issues

Lack of Consistent Standards and Limited Resources:

Absence of uniform standards and adequate resources hampers the development and maintenance of a high-quality trail network. There is minimal revenue return from use of the trail network.

Trail Maintenance: Many existing trails suffer from inadequate maintenance due to rising costs, an increase in extreme weather events and limited human and financial resources.

Complex Regulatory Framework and Multiple Entities Involved in Management: The involvement of numerous entities and a complex regulatory framework complicates efficient trail management and development.

Insufficient Data on Trail Use: Limited data collection leads to underestimation of the trails' values, threats and usage, impacting decision-making and resource allocation.

Inadequate Trail and Transport Connections: Poor connections between trails and transport networks, particularly for bikes, limit the seamless trail experience.

Unmapped Existing Trails: Numerous trails are not properly mapped, making them difficult for users to navigate and enjoy.

Lack of a Single Information Source: The absence of a centralised information hub creates confusion for users seeking trail-related information.

Opportunities

Governance: The establishment of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority has created an opportunity for regional governance and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders involved in trail management.

Partner with Traditional Owners: Collaborate with EMAC and WTOAC to incorporate their knowledge, cultures, and values into trail management, and create economic opportunities for Traditional Owners.

Develop Sustainable Funding Models: Explore funding mechanisms, grants, sponsorship and partnerships to ensure consistent financial support for trail development and maintenance.

Implement a Climate Adaptation Strategy for Trails: Develop and apply strategies to enhance the resilience of trails against climate change impacts, ensuring long-term sustainability and usability.

Focus Investment on Improving the Standard of Existing Trails: Prioritise improving the quality and appeal of all trails and elevate the commercial opportunities for a select number of key trails.

Foster a Collaborative Trail Community for Resource Coordination: Unite trail managers, users and stakeholders to share resources and knowledge, enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of trail management.

Enhance Capacity Building and Resource Support for Volunteers: Provide training, tools and resources to support and empower volunteers, ensuring their efforts are sustainable and impactful.

Improve Linkages Between Existing Products, Infrastructure, and Trails: Strengthen connections within the trail network and related amenities, promoting a cohesive and integrated experience for users with connections to public transport throughout the region.

Quantify the Economic Benefit of Trails: To assist in understanding the value of the trail system to local regions and communities.

4. Vision, Principles and Goals





OUR VISION

To be an outstanding trails region renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate and protect our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community health and well-being.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Intrinsic Connection to Country

A Connected Trail Network

Regional Collaboration

Resilient, High Quality
and Diverse Trails

Protect and Respect for Nature
and Culture

A Thriving Trail Economy

OUR GOALS

Integrated Governance,
Planning and Management

Sustainable Funding and
Investment Framework

Eastern Maar and
Wadawurrung Partnerships

High Quality
and Sustainable Trails

Information and Marketing

Accessible
and Inclusive Trails

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL WHEN

The region is recognised nationally as an outstanding trails region with high quality, well maintained and diverse trails.

Quality trail experiences are enhancing the wellbeing and economic prosperity of our communities.

EMAC and WTOAC are involved in trail planning and management across the region.

Trail users respect and care for our natural and cultural landscapes.

Agencies, organisations and community groups are working collaboratively to achieve our shared vision.

4.1 OUR VISION

To be an outstanding trails region renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate and protect our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community health and well-being

Our vision is based upon a foundation of sustainability that aligns with the Authority's founding principles - General and Economic, Aboriginal Inclusion, Environmental and Social Benefits. This means:

- **Inclusive Trail Management:** The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples are involved in all aspects of trail management.
- **Community Vibrancy and Prosperity:** Trails are contributing to the vibrancy, prosperity and connectivity of communities.
- **Economic Prosperity:** Quality trail experiences are enhancing the regional economy.
- **Sustainable and Valued Trail Network:** The network of trails is varied, valued and sustainable over the long term.
- **Knowledge and Appreciation of Natural and Cultural Values:** Trails are advancing knowledge, appreciation, and care of the region's natural and cultural values.
- **Aligned and Collaborative Trail Community:** Agencies, organisations and community groups involved with trails are more aligned with their vision and support knowledge sharing and collaboration.



4.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles are intrinsic to achieving this vision. They will guide decision-making for trail planning, development and management, and help authorities take a collective and consistent approach to future investment in trails across the region. A commitment to them by all agencies and organisations involved in trails will facilitate progress toward an outstanding trails destination.



Intrinsic Connection to Country

The intrinsic connection of EMAC and WTOAC to Country is acknowledged through partnerships and involvement in planning, construction and management of the trail network.



Resilient, High Quality and Diverse Trails

Our trails and associated infrastructure support a range of users and abilities in a safe and risk-managed environment. The design and construction of the trail network will be consistent with Australian standards for walking tracks and mountain bike trails and aim to be low impact, low maintenance and resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.



A Connected Trail Network

Our trail network connects people and places to support active dispersal and increase yield and length of stay throughout the region. We provide outstanding experiences by immersing people in the natural and cultural landscape.



Protect and Respect for Nature and Culture

Our trail network presents opportunities to build greater awareness and understanding of our natural and cultural landscapes, leading towards advocacy, protection and respect.



Regional Collaboration

By developing regional partnerships through an effective governance model, we can maximise access to resources, increase efficiency and scale our efforts to provide our vision of outstanding trail opportunities. This regional collaboration and partnerships extend to local communities and volunteers who play an important role in the operation and maintenance of our trails.



A Thriving Trail Economy

Our trail network is a significant regional asset that supports a prosperous visitor economy, contributes to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of our communities, provides direct opportunities for Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples and for investment by the private sector.

4.3 OUR GOALS

This Strategy is based on six goals. Each goal has several actions to ensure the growth and success of the trail network.

Integrated Governance, Planning and Management

We will adopt a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning, management and maintenance through stakeholder collaboration with prioritised investment and appropriate allocation of resources across the region. We will continue to strengthen partnerships with local communities for trail development and maintenance.

Sustainable Funding Model and Investment Framework

We will source sustainable funding for the development, maintenance and management of the region's trails and provide guidance and support to organisations, community groups and volunteers to seek investment in existing and future trails.

Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships

We will partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples and prioritise resources to achieving joint objectives that enable their assertions about land management and the trail network.

High Quality and Sustainable Trails

Together we will provide outstanding trail experiences that ensure the safety of trail users and the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

Information and Marketing

We will work together to provide consistent and reliable trail information that highlights the outstanding experiences on offer and enable users to confidently explore the region.

Accessible and Inclusive Trails

We will strive to ensure our trails are inclusive and accessible and support the needs of our visitors and communities.

4.4 GOALS AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

Each goal has several recommended actions which have been defined by their priority as follows:

- **High Foundational**

Definition: Actions that are critical to the success of the strategy and must be implemented as a priority to establish a strong base for future initiatives.

Characteristics:

- Essential for long-term sustainability.
- Forms the core framework for conservation and tourism initiatives.
- Without these actions, other strategies may fail or be significantly less effective.

- **High**

Definition: Actions that have a significant impact on achieving the objectives and should be implemented in the short to medium term.

Characteristics:

- Contributes to core strategic goals.
- Strongly supports conservation, visitor experience, or operational success.
- Requires substantial resources and coordination.

- **Medium**

Definition: Actions that are important but can be phased in over time and do not require immediate implementation.

Characteristics:

- Supports overall strategy but not urgent.
- Can be implemented after foundational and high-priority actions.
- May require additional resources, partnerships, or research before execution.

- **Ongoing**

Definition: May be considered business as usual but is important enough to be listed in this Strategy.

This Strategy will be used to guide and coordinate action across the region, with the delivery of some actions subject to grants and external funding. Trails located outside the Authority's service area and their associated actions are the responsibility of respective land managers.





Goal: Integrated Governance, Planning and Management

OUR AIM

We will adopt a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning, management and maintenance through stakeholder and community collaboration with prioritised investment and appropriate allocation of resources across the region.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

To harness the immense potential for trails and related tourism products, the region requires an agreed framework to guide a whole-of-government approach to trail planning, development and management. This is particularly important considering:

- The Great Ocean Road region is subject to land transitions between us and other stakeholders, which may include some of the trails within this Strategy. Multi agency coordination to deliver the vision and goals of the Strategy is needed given the large number of stakeholders in the Great Ocean Road region.
- The EMAC and WTOAC have assertions involving all aspect of trail management.
- Other stakeholders with an interest in the trail network include the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board (GORRT), community groups, first responder emergency services, transport agencies and volunteers.
- The Great Ocean Road Visitor Economy Master Plan¹ identifies nature based and trail tourism as a key pillar of the region's tourism offering. It recognises that the trail network is a competitive advantage when compared to other Victorian and interstate regions.
- There are currently low levels of coordination across the region between the key stakeholders including community groups and volunteers with an interest in the trail network and those responsible for their management.
- Considering the competitive pressure from other regions within Victoria, across Australia, and from our international neighbours like New Zealand, it is essential to enhance trail coordination (governance) from a regional perspective.
- A sustainable trail network requires coordinated government action at the state and local level to direct investment to priority areas so that the region can sustainably manage growth and benefit from it.
- There is a shortage of data and information on trail usage, which is crucial for guiding investment and decision-making, as well as for measuring the satisfaction of residents and tourists.
- A region wide trail monitoring system that generates reliable, standardised and pertinent information on trail use is critical to sustainable trail planning and management.

¹ <https://greateoceanroadtourism.org.au/strategies/visitor-economy-master-plan/>

A REGIONAL TRAILS FORUM

The aim of establishing the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF) is to provide a coordinated response to many of the actions contained in this Strategy and to collectively advocate for resources to advance the regional trails network. The focus of the regional coordinating structure, will be on the national and regional trails identified in the Strategy.

The following set of principles are recommended for inclusion in the terms of reference for the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum:

- Provide advice and assistance in obtaining funds and investment for national and regional trail development and centralised management of funds for these priority trails.
- Improve maintenance of all trails across the region through the implementation and alignment of the Regional Trail Guidelines with each stakeholder and their respective trail management guidelines, where applicable.
- Provide advice and assistance in building the capacity of trail stakeholders and partners to implement trail and experience improvements.
- Work with GORRT on the development and implementation of a Regional Trails Marketing Strategy (as recommended in this Strategy).
- Respect the role and accountabilities under legislation and policy of land managers and trail managers.
- Respect the democratic functions, in local and State Government, that impact resource allocation and decisions.
- Encourage communication, information sharing, learnings and trail intelligence, in addition to collectively engage with industry, community groups, GORRT and other trail partners as necessary.

Other amendments and monitoring the implementation of this Strategy would also fall into the terms of reference.



TABLE 1: ACTIONS FOR INTERGRATED GOVERNANCE, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
<p>Action 1.1</p>	<p>Coordinating Body: Formalise the structure of the Regional Trails Forum and include regional representation as well as community organisations that support the trails sector across the region.</p> <p>Establish the Terms of Reference and embed the implementation of the Regional Trails Strategy as the key role of the GORRTF under the leadership of the Authority.</p>	<p>High Foundational</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with EMAC, WTOAC, LGAs, Trail and Land Managers and GORRT</p>
<p>Action 1.2</p>	<p>Strategy Implementation: Establish and implement regular reporting of progress in the implementation of the Strategy and provide feedback to stakeholder organisations at agreed times.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF</p>
<p>Action 1.3</p>	<p>Trail Stewardship: Host, on an as-needs base, a regional trails forum that includes industry and community groups to discuss and enable implementation of elements of the Strategy.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF</p>
<p>Action 1.4</p>	<p>Trail Capacity: To enable coordinated implementation of the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, develop and present trail design, construction, visitor risk management and maintenance workshops to trail management organisations and user groups across the different types of trails and uses.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF</p>
<p>Action 1.5</p>	<p>Integrated Planning: Embed the vision and goals of the Strategy into broader regional planning and budget processes (e.g. tourism plans/destination management plans, strategic plans, development plans, open space plans, transport plans).</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF</p>
<p>Action 1.6</p>	<p>Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish a region wide monitoring and evaluation system to measure the success of the trails network through usage monitoring (i.e. observations, trail counters), user experience surveys and assessment of the achievement of trail management objectives.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF</p>



Goal: Sustainable Funding Model and Investment Framework

OUR AIM

We will source and create sustainable funding models for the development, maintenance and management of the region's trails and provide guidance and support to organisations to seek investment in existing and future trails.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Resourcing and funding for planning, development and maintenance of trails is a major impediment to the management of existing trails within the region. To create sustainable trails, better models of funding and cost recovery must be employed.

Most of the current funding for trail development comes from state and local government budgets or grants awarded on a project-by-project basis.

However, funding programs are a finite resource with many competing applicants. Additionally, once trails are developed there are often limited ongoing resources for trails maintenance and organisational support. Trails management organisations in other destinations have been able to diversify funding sources and utilise partnerships to obtain resources for development and management of high-quality trails.

To ensure the development of high-quality trails it is important that the region has an agreed framework for prioritising trail investment and maintenance. This framework recognises the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of each trail to locals and visitors alike. A consistent approach to the assessment of trail developments will be achieved through the:

- Classification of trails and trail networks according to their significance at national, regional and local level as presented in Table 2. This classification is subject to review and modification, pending changes to investment in individual trails and other variables.
- Application of criteria to assess the feasibility of trail developments (for existing and proposed trails) and prioritise them for investment.

An investment framework will also facilitate:

- The self-determination assertions of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples.
- Advocacy for resources by the public and private sectors at a regional level. Noting that at times trail managers are competing for the same resources to develop new or improve existing trails.
- The opportunity to promote the economic benefits of the regional trail network making investment decisions easier.
- Improved understanding of the economic benefits of the trail network to encourage engagement and investment in trails by the public and private sectors.
- Strategic planning for necessary resources to address climate change impacts on the trail network and likely increases in maintenance costs, trail closures and longer recovery periods.
- Investment in high quality trails that can compete with other national and international trail-based tourism destinations.
- Improved understanding of the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits of the trail network to encourage greater engagement and investment in trails by both the public and private sectors.
- The opportunity to promote the economic, social (health and wellbeing), cultural and environmental benefits of the regional trail network, making investment decisions easier.

TRAIL CATEGORISATION – GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION

Trail Category	Attributes	Recommended Trails
State and Nationally Significant Trails	<p>A trail that is of sufficient quality, showcasing the natural and cultural landscapes of Victoria with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to Victoria. Criteria includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplars of the competitive strengths of Victoria and Australia as a trail destination. • Uniquely representative of Victoria's natural and cultural landscape values. • High priority government support at the State level for trail development and management and listed as a priority within State plans and strategies. • Support viable high yield trail-based accommodation and associated products and services. • Directly and indirectly provide economic benefits to the region and the State. 	<p>Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail</p> <p>Great Ocean Walk</p>
Regionally Significant Trails	<p>A major trail or trail network that services a population centre or large regional community, with facilities and services of a standard and appeal that could attract visitors from outside the region. Criteria includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of the region's natural and cultural landscapes. • Government support at a regional level within regional plans and strategies. • Support viable trail-based and associated regional tourism products, services, and events. • Directly or indirectly provide economic benefits to the region. 	<p>Forrest MTB Trails</p> <p>Otway Waterfall Walks</p> <p>Surf Coast Walk</p> <p>Anglesea MTB Trail Network (proposed)</p> <p>Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail</p> <p>Old Beechy Rail Trail</p> <p>Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail</p> <p>Twelve Apostles Trail</p>
Locally Significant Trails	<p>A trail that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use. Some local trail may have potential for development to regional status. Criteria includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many are located within proximity to residential areas and are often connected to community services and open space areas. • Representative of the region's natural and cultural landscapes. • Provide access to a diversity of trails of varying difficulty, length, and type. • Provide opportunities for different trail-user groups for active recreation, health and wellbeing. • Recognised by residents as a popular trail and/or trail network and frequented by people from the surrounding region. 	<p>Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade</p> <p>Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (proposed)</p>

TABLE 2: ACTIONS TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL AND INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 2.1	<p>Funding Model: Establish a funding model that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the many benefits of trails and their role in advancing the objectives and priorities of government. • Provides dedicated sources of funding, allocating them based on clear criteria that are consistent with the goals of the Strategy. • Ongoing management including maintenance, long term sustainability and the promotion of trails. • Responds to the need for large infrastructure projects. 	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.2	<p>Cost/Benefit Analysis: Undertake a cost benefit analysis of trails to further develop advocacy material for the reinvestment of funds trail development and maintenance.</p>	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.3	<p>Advocacy Platform: From the analysis produce an advocacy document that succinctly and powerfully, informs decision makers of the evidence-based case for public support of trails development and maintenance. It should describe the economic, environmental, community, health and cultural benefits of supporting a varied and quality trails network.</p>	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.4	<p>Prioritisation of Investment: Implement the region wide trail categorisation system for trails to define their relative state and regional significance and broad developmental needs.</p>	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.5	<p>Investment Partnerships: Assist trails organisations and managers to identify appropriate partnerships for trail development, experiences, maintenance and management. Investigate philanthropic opportunities.</p>	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.6	<p>Investment Support: Provide trails organisations with access to a centralised pool of research and information to assist in the assessment of trails development needs, the preparation of funding applications and seeking investment partners.</p>	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.7	<p>Trail Categorisation Review: Ensure that the Regional Trails Strategy recognises and integrates new trails and GORRTF revises the trail categorisation as required.</p>	Ongoing	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.8	<p>Volunteer Programs: Develop and support programs for community and user group involvement in trail development, maintenance and management.</p>	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with the GORRTF



Goal: Traditional Owner Partnerships

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation partnership

OUR AIM

We will partner with the Eastern Maar Peoples and prioritise resources to achieving joint objectives that enable their assertions about land management and the trail network.

Eastern Maar

The Eastern Maar are the Traditional Owners of south-western Victoria. The Eastern Maar People have looked after these places for tens of thousands of years. Eastern Maar First Nations people are represented by the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC).

Through their Country Plan, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation has assertions to be the public land manager for trails.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation are the custodians of the lands and waters encompassed by the Great Ocean Road region and have been for millennia. Both EMAC and WTOAC have assertions outlined in Wadawurrung's Healthy Country Plan (Paleert Tjaara Dja) and Eastern Maar's Country Plan (Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeey).

These assertions relate to the management of the cultural landscape which includes the trail network, and the development of tourism businesses that generate revenue and employment, respect and healing for Country.

Improving our understanding of the threats to Country in the context of the trail network and the opportunity to partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung people will help to strengthen the health of country, people and cultures.

Together with land managers, EMAC and WTOAC can implement strategies to protect and conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage across the trail network.

The trail network presents an opportunity to promote Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung cultures to visitors through interpretation and storytelling across the cultural landscape.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation partnership

OUR AIM

We will partner with the Wadawurrung Peoples and prioritise resources to achieving joint objectives that enable their assertions about land management and the trail network.

Wadawurrung

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that run from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the coast in the south, from Werribee River in the east to along the Surf Coast. The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the area. They have statutory authority for the management of Aboriginal heritage values and culture, under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

TABLE 3: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE EASTERN MAAR AND WADAWURRUNG PARTNERSHIP

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC)			
Action 3.1	GORRTF: Ensure EMAC are a partner in the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF).	High Foundational	EMAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.2	Tourism Operations: Seek to work with EMAC on the development of tourism operations according to their assertions.	Medium Foundational	EMAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.3	Storytelling: Establish EMAC priorities for helping visitors understand Country through interpretation and storytelling.	High Foundational	EMAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.4	Cultural Sensitivity: Build a joint understanding of where trails may be impacting Country or places of significance for EMAC and remove the threats wherever possible.	High Foundational	EMAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.5	Direct Involvement and Capacity Building: Seek opportunities for involving EMAC in all aspects of trail planning and management and build capacity together.	High Foundational	EMAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Wadawarrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)			
Action 3.6	GORRTF: Ensure WTOAC are a partner in the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF).	High Foundational	WTOAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.7	Tourism Operations: Work with WTOAC on the development of tourism operations according to their assertions.	Medium	WTOAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.8	Storytelling: Establish WTOAC priorities for helping visitors understand Country through interpretation and storytelling.	High Foundational	WTOAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.9	Cultural Sensitivity: Build a joint understanding of where trails may be impacting Country or places of significance for WTOAC and remove the threats wherever possible.	High Foundational	WTOAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF
Action 3.10	Direct Involvement and Capacity Building: Seek opportunities for involving WTOAC in all aspects of trail planning and management and build capacity together.	High Foundational	WTOAC supported by GORCAPA and GORRTF



Goal: High Quality and Sustainable Trails

OUR AIM

Together we will provide outstanding trail experiences that ensure the safety of trail users and the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A fundamental aspect of a sustainable trail system is to ensure that trails are constructed and maintained to national and international standards. This includes avoiding, minimising and/or mitigating adverse impacts to sensitive ecosystems, species at risk, soils, water, wildlife and native vegetation.

An ongoing issue and critical risk is the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* which causes dieback in susceptible native plants. The pathogen and the disease it causes are recognised as one of the key threatening processes to Australia's biodiversity and is one of the highest environmental risks for trails in the region. The potential to spread the pathogen to other uninfested areas locally, and in Victoria from trail use and construction is high.

Providing information to trail users on ways to protect the natural and cultural values of the trails is critical. A focus on sustainable, low impact ecotourism should influence marketing approaches and guide the development of supporting services for trail users. Trails events should also be used as an opportunity to communicate with event organisers and participants about minimal impact trail use.

High-quality, sustainable trails are complemented by low-impact, thoughtfully designed infrastructure that enhances the visitor experience. This includes well-maintained amenities, watering points, transport and parking facilities, diverse accommodation options (from camping to cabins and eco-lodges), support services, scenic lookouts and rest areas, equipment hire, and clear wayfinding and interpretive signage. Appropriate and sustainable trail maintenance and monitoring is

required to ensure continued environmental and social sustainability of the trail network. This includes designing and maintaining all trails to ensure the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes and supporting community involvement and the work of volunteer trail groups in maintaining these standards. It involves:

- Enabling a regional approach to implementing Australian Standards for Walking Tracks (Standards Australia AS 2156) and the Mountain Bike Technical Difficulty Rating System and Australian Mountain Bike Guidelines through implementation of the *Great Ocean Road Region Guidelines for Trail Planning, Design and Management*.
- Educational efforts focusing on responsible trail development and use, supported by compliance and enforcement programs, assist in ensuring unapproved trail construction is reduced.
- Assisting trail organisations and groups to build their capacity to plan and maintain trails. Such support will create longevity and sustainability in trail organisations, empower community and volunteer groups and encourage better resourcing around trails management.
- Reducing the impact of emergencies and number of incidents for trail users by designing and managing trails in accordance with the trail standards and regional guidelines.

TABLE 4: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE HIGH QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAILS

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 4.1	Implement Priority Actions: For individual trails (Appendix B) as resources allow.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.2	Trail Audits: Conduct regular trail audits to determine the physical condition and maintenance issues across the regional trail network.	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.3	Regional Trail Guidelines: Implement the Great Ocean Road Trail Management Guidelines and the Wild Otways guidelines for Phytophthora Management for trail design, construction management and maintenance of trails across the region (where existing guidelines do not apply).	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.4	Capacity Building: Ensure that information and training on the regional guidelines and best practice sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance is available to current and potential trail developers, managers and organisations.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.5	Maintenance and management program: Identify funding opportunities for ongoing maintenance budget allocations and advocate where required.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.6	Trail Maintenance Sub Committee: Establish a Trails Maintenance subcommittee from the GORRTF to address and trail maintenance actions and issues.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.7	Trail Condition Reporting: Investigate and, as appropriate, implement trail user/community social media 'app' or mechanism (such as snap send solve) for reporting trail conditions and issues (risks).	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.8	Trail Safety and Risk Management: Ensure that safety signage is installed at hazardous locations along recreational trails and that trail infrastructure aligns with AS2156.2	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.9	Safey Information: Engage trail users and the community through regular trail 'bulletins' and media informing people of planned actions, risks, issues and opportunities for volunteerism.	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.10	Emergency Planning: Seek to better utilise the existing Emergency Management Planning Committees at a Regional and Municipal level for planning for emergency response, including trigger level standardisation.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF



ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 4.11	Trigger Points: Through the existing emergency planning forums, coordinate and standardise trigger points for public land closures and trail-use restrictions across all LGAs and public land managers.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.12	MTB Safety: Continue to improve MTB safety through skills development in skills parks, and by good trail design, including trail filters near the beginning of trails.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.13	Unplanned Trails: Reduce the number of unplanned trails and work with MTB groups to stop the development of, and to decommission, unplanned MTB trails.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.14	Compliance and Enforcement: Develop a compliance approach to stop illegal trail creation in protected areas including National Parks.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.15	Visitor Safety: Provide visitor information on trail routes, conditions and emergency access points in a way that is accessible to all trail users including non-English speaking visitors. Ensure trail markers are well placed and easily identified. Reduce interactions between trail users and vehicles or bikes where necessary.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.16	Trail connectivity: Investigate options to link hinterland and coastal trails at key locations including Lorne, Apollo Bay and Forrest.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.17	Ensure supporting infrastructure is thoughtfully designed, well-constructed, and regularly maintained to prioritise user safety and enhance the visitor experience. This includes well-maintained bridges, steps, amenities, watering points, rest areas, lookouts, transport and parking facilities.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF

Goal: Information and Marketing

OUR AIM

We will work together to provide consistent and reliable trail information that highlights the outstanding experiences on offer and enable users to confidently explore the region.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Marketing of trails requires targeting different markets, use of content and messages appropriate to markets, multiple communication methods and the cooperation of the different agencies and trail partners. Effective marketing requires a more consistent and collaborative approach.

As a focus of visitor activity, trails provide opportunities to develop knowledge and respect for both the trail itself and the natural and cultural environments through which it passes.

This can be done using information messages, interpretation and community education programs. A focus on sustainable, low impact ecotourism should influence marketing approaches and guide the development of supporting services for trail users. Trails events are also an opportunity to communicate with trail users.

Improving access, signage, trailhead facilities and ways of telling the stories of the places and people through which trails pass will provide a more appealing experience for existing users and to attract new users.

This will involve:

- Positioning the region as a quality trails destination with a sustainable tourism offering.
- Developing a single point of information that visitors and residents can use to understand, find and access the trail network and ensure they are doing their part to protect it.
- Encouraging greater use of trails in the shoulder seasons to maximise the benefits and reduce crowding.
- Providing quality interpretation and storytelling about the region's natural and cultural landscapes.
- Supporting ongoing development of the region's trail economy and associated businesses.



TABLE 5: ACTIONS FOR INFORMATION AND MARKETING

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 5.1	Regional marketing: Include regional trails as part of the region’s tourism offering and include in regional marketing initiatives.	High Foundational	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.2	Consumer Website: Include as part of the existing consumer website information about trail opportunities across the region. Consideration to be given to the development of well-designed and consistent downloadable resources and interactive mapping and access via mobile apps.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.3	Digital Maps/Information: Develop and maintain a contemporary trail resource which details the trail network in line with the region’s branding. Include clearly articulated trail information (including maps and safety advice).	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.4	Third-party Information Platforms: Where possible work with third-party information platforms (e.g. Strava, Trailforks, Maps, Google Maps) to ensure consistent information on the current status of all trails. Regularly assess relevance and reliability of information provided by users and engage with new and emerging platforms as appropriate.	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.5	Trail Related Businesses: Develop a ‘trail friendly business program’ with industry, including presentation of commercial opportunities around the continued development of trails-related businesses.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.6	Trail Related Programs and Events: Support service providers and the community to consistently manage the range of trail-related programs and events offered across the region (e.g. parkrun, charity events, fun runs, programs promoting walking/cycling/trail running etc.).	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.7	Foster business opportunities, including travel packages, ecotourism, low-impact services, and shuttle bus operations, through collaboration with local tour operators.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.8	EMAC Business Enablement: Support and partner where appropriate the EMAC in developing tourism offerings on and around the trail network.	High	EMAC in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.9	WTOAC Business Enablement: Support and partner where appropriate the WTOAC in developing tourism offerings on and around the trail network.	High	WTOAC in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.10	Education and Awareness: Develop information on respecting wildlife, reducing litter & protecting the natural environment.	Medium	GORRTF in collaboration with GORRT



Goal: Accessible and Inclusive Trails

OUR AIM

Ensure our trails are inclusive and accessible, designed to cater to the diverse needs, abilities and aspirations of all visitors and communities

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Everyone deserves the opportunity to enjoy our natural environment, regardless of physical, cognitive, or sensory differences. Guided by the social model of disability, we recognise that exclusion is often the result of physical barriers and discriminatory attitudes. At the Authority, we are deeply committed to breaking down these barriers, empowering people with disabilities, older adults, and those with chronic illnesses to fully access and experience our trails.

The current level of knowledge about what accessibility issues and opportunities may be present on the region's trails is limited, as many of the existing trails are legacy trails that have not been developed or managed with contemporary accessibility and inclusivity or Universal Design.

The Whole of Victorian Government Universal Design Policy was recently released and mandates Universal Design Principles across all government initiatives. The policy has been developed to support Victorian Government departments, agencies and delivery partners to incorporate Universal Design Principles consistently across infrastructure projects.

The current information available on accessibility to trails and outdoor activities is limited within the region, and there is limited ability for people to easily report opportunities for improvement on trails (i.e., no consistent web or app based approach).

THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED THROUGH:

- Improving the physical accessibility of trails, including surfacing, gradient and adequate seating.
- Designing and managing trails in accordance with the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks and Adaptive Guidelines (Mountain Biking), with all elements utilising Universal Design Principles. Provide comprehensive pre-trip information and inclusive trail signage that empowers people to make informed decisions, giving them greater choice and control over their trail experiences.
- Ensure alternative formats for websites and social media channels are accessible to people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups and CALD backgrounds.
- Conducting accessibility training, and accessibility audits of trails, providing reports and implementing opportunities and improvements.
- Seeking feedback about the trail network from people with disabilities to improve inclusion for people with diverse physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health and neurodivergent needs.

TABLE 6: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GREATER ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 6.1	Trail Classification: Ensure that all trail information sources classify the correct Trail Classification System (i.e. Australian Walking Track Grading System) to allow prospective users to make an informed decision to enter the trail with knowledge about the trail’s level of difficulty and risks.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.2	Provide trailheads and associated facilities: that are easy to locate and ideally serviced by public transport, are welcoming, safe, maintained to accessibility standards, provide relevant information and utilise digital applications and are relevant to, and accommodating for, a diversity of users from different backgrounds and with differing abilities.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.3	Conduct an accessibility audit of all trails, facilities, and services: to identify any opportunities to access and inclusion for people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.4	Based on the findings of the accessibility audit, implement prioritised improvements to make trails, facilities, and services more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups, and CALD backgrounds.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.5	Provide accessibility training: for all staff and volunteers to ensure that they are aware of accessibility and inclusion issues and how to provide inclusive services to visitors with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population and CALD backgrounds.	High Foundational	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.6	Provide trail communication information and pre-trip planning information materials that are accessible and inclusive: ensuring that adequate information is provided so people with disability can have choice and control over their trail experience. Ensure alternative formats for websites and social media channels are accessible to people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups, and CALD backgrounds.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.7	Utilise an Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Group: on an as needs/project basis. Actively seek feedback from visitors with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups and CALD backgrounds to identify areas for improvement, ensure that accessibility remains a priority, and ensure that any issues or concerns are addressed promptly.	High	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.8	Investigate opportunities to improve the public transport system: that services trails in the Great Ocean Road region.	Medium	GORCAPA in collaboration with GORRTF