



SA  
RECREATIONAL  
TRAILS 10  
YEAR MASTER  
PLAN

2015—25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRAILS — A PATHWAY FOR PEOPLE TO EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD, TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES TOGETHER WITH PLACE AND TO ENHANCE PEOPLES' LIVES THROUGH NEW PERSPECTIVES GAINED AS WE BRING HUMANITY OUT-OF-DOORS. TRAILS PROVIDE PATHWAYS TO BEAUTIFUL NATURAL EXPERIENCES AS THEY IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE AS THEY BENEFIT SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE THROUGH SHARED POSITIVE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES.

WHO DID THE PROJECT?

The project was awarded to Over the Edge Destination Development an internationally recognised company comprising a team of world renowned trail designers, master planners and recreational tourism experts.

WHAT THEY DID?

The project brief was to develop a State-wide Trails Master Plan that will serve as the strategic frame of reference to guide the development and promotion of the trail sector for the next 10 years. The Plan provides tools and a framework, guiding the direction of trail development from policy level through to building community level trails. It outlines a planned, staged approach over the next 10 years which should encourage the securing of funds, developing the domestic trail user markets and opening the doors to international trail based tourism.

WHY A STATE-WIDE TRAILS MASTER PLAN?

Following the delivery of the “Directions for Recreational Trails in South Australia” review undertaken by Horse SA in 2013, on behalf of trail industry members, a key direction of that review was the proposal to shift the South Australian Trails Coordinating Committee to being an industry led forum. As such, Recreation SA, on behalf of the Trails Sub-group, was funded to manage the delivery of this State-wide Trails Master Plan. The Directions for Recreational Trails in South Australia document was a valuable plan and many of the recommended actions have either been achieved, are still ongoing or have been captured as priorities in this Master Plan.

- Recreational trails are drivers for economic development, increased tourism and improved public health
- South Australia needs to maximise the use of significant trails networks for broader community benefits



Government of South Australia

Office for Recreation and Sport



Working To Develop Recreational SCUBA Diving In South Australia



## OUTCOMES OF THE REPORT

The Master Plan will achieve two major outcomes;

1. TO PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PHYSICAL TRAILS DESKTOP, AND
2. SERVE AS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TRAIL SYSTEMS AND THE ACTUAL VISITOR EXPERIENCE.

This is done by the identification of gaps/opportunities and the respective offering of recommendations/suggestions in order to provide support evidence for facilitating and describing the steps which can lead the state of South Australia towards its goals in trails-based recreation environments. The Master Plan is a tool to unify efforts on the basis of creating a consistent experience via trails system diversity and visitor infrastructure.

This report is split into two parts — the main body of the report and a number of detailed toolkits. The main body of the report looks at the background to the report and explores recommendations as to how South Australia can become a leader in trails-based recreation. It outlines the aims and objective of the reports, explores the differing types of recreational trails, and makes recommendations on how to achieve the aims and objectives.

The second aspect of the report features a number of Toolkits and international trail examples developed as valuable resources for both trail users and trail developers.

## CONSULTATION FEEDBACK — KEY FINDINGS

**A** The extensive consultation process involving key stakeholders identified a number of priorities and issues that need to be addressed when implementing the Master Plan including:

- Priority areas for trail development
- Issues of access with certain trails
- Existing trail provision and quality standards
- Protocols for trail development and design
- Access to funding for trail development
- Tourism infrastructure
- Economic benefit of trails

**B** During the trails audit process and observation visits it was very evident there is a huge variance across the state in the following:

- Standards of trail provision
- Trail provision for differing train users
- Access to relevant information
- Trail systems and models
- Quality of and access to Visitor facilities
- Trail users and cohorts
- Promotion, marketing and branding of trails

**C** There are many different types of trails, with varying users and trail models. It is important to understand who trails are being developed for and why. Most important is to know what the needs and expectations of each group and segment are and be able to design targeted, exceptional trail experiences. Addressing and catering to the needs and requirements of trail users is essential in ensuring the long-term sustainable usage of trails.

**D** SA trail users can be categorised into broad groups and the master plan explores the need for implementing certain policies/frameworks in order to provide truly sustainable trails across the state of SA and takes into consideration trails, either existing, planned or trail development opportunities, relating to the following user groups:

- Walkers
- Off-road cyclists
- Horse riders
- Canoeists/kayakers
- Aquatic users

**E** The greatest concentration of trail opportunities are in the areas of highest population density i.e. Adelaide and the surrounding hills, the Barossa Valley and in some cases around other regional population centres.

**F** The distribution of trails opportunities appears to be decided by a number of factors such as local demand, the need to manage impacts and also taking advantage of natural resources to develop recreation assets.

## KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A key component of any Master Plan is the analysis of the challenges and opportunities. We have highlighted below some of the key issues.

- There does not seem to have been any particularly strategic approach to the development of trails in the past evidenced by the lack of trail opportunities in some of the regions.
- Developing a hierarchy of trail provision and development has become clear with all of the trails audited sitting somewhere within the hierarchy outlined by this master plan.
- The distribution of trails opportunities is decided by a number of factors such as local demand, the need to manage impacts and also taking advantage of natural resources to develop recreation assets.
- The development of key tourism resources is also a factor in where some trails have been developed and it would seem that this is often done as a response to local landscape and other resources, for example river systems, dive sites etc.
- Creating more accessible opportunities for the less able across the state is possible on some trail systems, but prescribed provision is very limited.
- Access for horse riders is very restricted and prescribed trail accessible opportunities are limited but there is a growing movement towards the development of shared access trails.
- There could be more equality of provision for certain users which requires a strategic approach to trail planning and design and a clear understanding of the needs and aspirations of all trail users.

In addressing these challenges, we are proposing a number of opportunities that need to be considered as outlined below.

- Utilize and incorporate the development of existing trails with an intentionally designed Trail System and the plan of trails to be built in the near future
- Create exceptional trail-user experiences
- Formalize the accessibility to the high quality Murray river system
- Enhance existing networks by using the strategic framework
- Implement prescribed models centred on a single trailhead
- Increase awareness of local community trail systems
- Create equal opportunities for variety of trail users and cohorts
- Open up unprecedented land access to National Parks, State lands and Private Land Access for trails





### KEY PARTNERS IN MOVING THIS MASTER PLAN FORWARD

The SA Trails Master Plan is designed to guide the development of a World Class Trails System in SA and to see all opportunities to support this vision of a state united by trails and a common vision of encouraging people toward human-powered outdoor recreation. The plan is meant to encourage an enthusiasm to bring together a state-wide community of leadership who can help focus this vision, identify its key components and communicate it enthusiastically.

The aim of this Master Plan is to be adopted as a whole of government approach, to unify trail development across the state, thereby maximizing the potential of this Trails Plan to the benefit of the land, the people of South Australia and the economic success of this state-wide trails system.

### PRIORITY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

The intention of this plan is to set South Australia on a path to developing a World Class Recreation Trail System in one of the great landscapes of the world through creation of the following shared goals that will benefit South Australia:

- developing World Class Destination Trail Centers within South Australia for an intentionally targeted range of recreational users
- developing thoughtful and sustainable community, regional and state level Trail Systems that uphold world class trail standards
- connecting Communities, Trail Systems and Regions through access to long distance multi use recreational trails
- enabling and empowering communities to lead the design, development and maintenance of these Trail Systems
- uniting everyone around the “World Class Trails in SA” premise; where the *quality of the experience* is “its own” economic driver
- realising the full value and potential of public land by developing access for a thoughtfully intentional and sustainable range of recreational use
- building South Australia’s reputation as a World Class Trail Destination for a variety of beautifully designed recreational experiences
- creating and disseminating Trail Information in cutting edge creative approaches that are simple, effective and easily interpreted by all

In order to take the development of trail opportunities in SA forward a number of key steps need to be identified as the highest priority action items. This work should lead to the development of a strategically prioritised programme of works to bring all regional and state trail systems/products to a uniform level of quality and effectiveness within 10 years.



## PRIORITY PROJECTS

PRIORITY LEVEL	ACTION	LEAD ROLE	TIME FRAME	ESTIMATED COST
<b>ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING</b>				
<b>HIGH</b>	Establish a full time role with administration support within Recreation SA to deal with Trail Development and Advocacy	Recreation SA and Trails Committee	<b>2015 – 2016</b>	\$80,000 – \$100,000 per annum
<b>MARKETING AND PROMOTION</b>				
<b>HIGH</b>	Develop a web based tool	Recreation SA	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$90,000 plus annual management fee
<b>HIGH</b>	Develop a database of trail planning, design, construction and maintenance	Recreation SA	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	To be included in cost per annum of full time role within Recreation SA
<b>TRAIL PLANNING</b>				
<b>HIGH</b>	Development of local level projects where opportunities for partnership arise	Recreation SA in partnership with peak bodies, land owners and stakeholders	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	Please see note below table
<b>TRAIL MANAGEMENT AND DESIGN RESOURCES</b>				
<b>HIGH</b>	Develop Trail Classification and Grading Systems for all trail types and trail information guidance using the current horse riding and mountain biking classification systems as a starting point	Trails Consultant (following award of contract by Recreation SA)	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$30,000 – \$40,000
<b>HIGH</b>	Develop state wide guidance related to the provision of trail information	Recreation SA	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$15,000 – \$25,000
<b>HIGH</b>	Commission the review of current trail construction guidelines (standards for the construction of each element of trail construction) and to upgrade these to create a robust system, which can be used by anyone involved in trail development	Trails Consultant (following award of contract by Recreation SA)	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$30,000 – \$40,000
<b>HIGH</b>	Commission a review of the interface between recreational trails and operational forestry, in collaboration with Forestry SA dealing with trail development, provision and management, linking into their existing systems and standards	Recreation SA	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	To be included in cost per annum of full time role within Recreation SA
<b>HIGH</b>	Undertake a full and thorough audit of all trail systems and products of state and regional significance	Trails Consultant (following award of contract by Recreation SA)	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$60,000 – \$80,000
<b>EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>				
<b>HIGH</b>	Develop state wide guidance related to the provision of trail information	Recreation SA	<b>2015 – 2017</b>	\$15,000 – \$25,000
<b>SA TRAIL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE</b>				
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Develop or improve a state/international prescribed trail product for each cohort	State Peak bodies to lead a team of Trail Designers and Contractors	<b>2015 – 2020</b>	Please see note below table
<b>LOW</b>	Develop or improve regional level trails for each cohort of trail users	Recreation SA to lead a team of Trail Designers and Contractors	<b>BY 2025</b>	Please see note below table

**Note:** it is not possible at this stage to provide estimated costs for the development of trails/trail systems/centres as recommended above. These costs will have to be established on a case by case basis.

### VALUE AND USE OF TOOLKITS

A key feature of the Master plan report involves the development of toolkits which are the tools required by Recreation SA and other organisations wishing to develop trails. Previous tools which are available on [www.southaustraliantrails.com](http://www.southaustraliantrails.com) (i.e. the 'Sustainable Trail Guide', 'Recreational Trails Strategy for South Australia 2005 - 2010' and 'Directions for Recreational Trails in South Australia') describe similar recommendations to some of those made in this Master Plan. This Master Plan can be considered a more robust and detailed update to these tools.

The toolkits give a detailed insight into the sustainability framework, differing trail systems and models, differing trail users and cohorts, examples of international best practise, the trail planning, design and development protocols and trail development hierarchies. These toolkits have been designed to provide a valuable resource for both the trail users and the trail developers.

Sustainable trail development and provision centres on a number of key issues that affect how trails are developed, provided and managed regardless of the users, trail system, model or type. The extensive range of toolkits informs users and developers about trail planning, design and provision protocols creating an effective way of building sustainability into trail development and provision.

The range of topics covered in the Toolkits includes:

- Sustainability Framework
  - Trail Systems and Models
  - Trail Users and Cohorts
  - Trail Development Protocol
  - SA Trail Development Hierarchy
  - Examples of Relevant International Best Practice
  - Disseminating a Master Plan
  - **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW?**
1. Present the vision and scope of the Master Plan through its dissemination to relevant stakeholders and communities directly involved and those that stand to be collaterally affected by the Plan
  2. Initiate a whole of government approach to identify the Master Plan priorities as a means of unifying trail development across the state
  3. Implement and action the priorities to ensure actualisation of the state-wide trails vision
  4. Build South Australia's reputation as a World Class Trail Destination



### SUMMARY

THE PATH TO SUCCESS IN THIS VISION FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TRAILS REQUIRES SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THESE EFFORTS TO EMPOWER THIS VISION AND REALISE THE POTENTIAL IN A TIMELY MANNER. IT INVOLVES UNITING THE VOICES IN PLANNING AND BUILDING A STATE-WIDE COLLABORATION OF GOVERNMENTS, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.



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