



TASMANIAN TRAIL RUNNING
ASSOCIATION

25 June 2020

Attention: Andrew Harvey
Project Manager - TWWHA Tourism Master Plan Project
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
TourismMasterPlan@dpiuwe.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Trail Running Association submission on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Draft Tourism Master Plan

Dear Andrew,

We are the Tasmanian Trail Running Association (TTRA), a newly-established body representing Tasmanian trail runners, and dedicated to promoting the sport throughout our state.

Trail running involves off-road running in the natural environment, often over challenging terrain and long distances. We run on all tracks and trails bushwalkers and mountain bikers use, as well as off-track routes. While people have been trail running in Tasmania for a long time, the number of participants - both recreational and competitive - has grown significantly in recent years, echoing both national and international trends. A recent analysis of megatrends in Australian sport identified that more people will move away from organised sport and towards individualized sport, such as running, in the coming decades (*The Future of Australian Sport. Megatrends shaping the sports sector over coming decades*. CSIRO and the Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

The trail running community includes those who run for recreation, socialising, and fitness. A common thread amongst trail runners is the need and desire to move through the natural environment. Many trail runners also enjoy participating in events to either overcome a personal challenge or to compete at an elite level. Trail running events have become extremely popular in Tasmania, with races frequently selling out, and attracting mainland and international entrants. Tasmanian trail runners have gone onto represent their state and country in elite competitions.

Trail runners are typically ethical people who seek to understand and respect the cultural values of the landscapes we run through. TTRA is committed to supporting Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural values in all forms. TTRA pays our respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples as the traditional owners and custodians on the lands we run in. TTRA will continue to consult with the Tasmanian Aboriginal communities and explore opportunities to support their initiatives whenever possible. TTRA encourages and expects all event and tour organisers to fully consult with local Aboriginal communities to seek endorsement of their activities on the lands of the traditional custodians and explore all avenues for business opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

It is well established that immersion in nature has significant health benefits. Trail running provides significant mental and physical health benefits for individuals, and also builds and benefits the community – eg, Hobart Trail Runners community group runs, also supporting local businesses. Trail Running, its many forms, directly aligns to many Tasmanian Government, destination, and council strategies, including Dept of Health – Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan, T21/Parks21, etc.

TTRA aims to give a voice to parties involved in trail running in order to connect, include, educate and empower the Tasmanian trail running community, ensuring a constructive dialogue between the national, state and local bodies with an interest in the sport. Our objectives include positively advocating and promoting the benefits and opportunities of trail running to government bodies and the wider community.

Once incorporated, the TTRA aims to be recognised as a state sporting organisation by the Department of Communities, Sport and Recreation, and aligned with the International Trail Running Association.

We believe Tasmania can become a trail running mecca. Like mountain biking, the TTRA understands that trail running has the potential to grow into a larger, more mature sport and that Tasmania could be a major destination for trail runners from around the world.

We want to work with you to ensure trail running is acknowledged and considered by your organisation when planning for Tasmania's future. For the sport to continue to flourish, trail runners need support, such as track and trail access and maintenance, access to quality events in natural areas, and opportunities for our elite athletes to compete at their potential. The TTRA would like the opportunity to assist you in this wherever we can.

This submission seeks to address the following:

1. That trail running is an activity undertaken (events, tours & recreation) safely in all zones of the TWWHA and has a different profile/impact compared to bushwalking.
2. That trail running is an emerging growth adventure tourism market globally for which Tasmania has immense opportunity.
3. The opportunity for TTRA members to assist with routine track maintenance.
4. Support for sustainable trail running events and tours is needed.
5. That recreational access is sought for trail running on all permitted walks (via trail running permits).
6. Summarise how TTRA wishes to collaborate with PWS and Tourism bodies to enable safe trail running in the TWWHA and across Tasmania.

Recognition of trail running as an activity that is undertaken (events, tours & recreation) safely in all zones of the TWWHA and has a different profile/impact compared to bushwalking

TTRA understands that it is DPIPWE's view that "Anywhere you can bushwalk in the TWWHA you can trail run" according to the Tourism Master Plan Project Manager. In seeking a recognition of trail running within the TWWHA we bring to your attention the following key points:



1. Trail runners run everywhere that bushwalkers walk. Mostly on well maintained tracks amongst iconic landscapes, but some hardy experienced runners also go off track through open forest (eg, callidendrous rainforest) or native grass or alpine range traverses (eg, Norfolk Range, peaks surrounding Frenchmans Cap track). For 99% of trail runners, we move gently and (relatively) slowly to immerse in the landscape, rather than 'racing through it'. The heatmap in image below from the exercise tracking app, Strava, clearly showing extensive trail running activity on all the great tracks in the TWWHA and across Tasmania. Note, areas of higher intensity colour (yellows to whites) indicate areas/tracks of higher usage by trail runners.
2. Trail runners are typically very ethical and environmentally conscious, adhering to leave no trace principles. Trail running also has less impact on track/hut infrastructure, the environment and natural values compared to bushwalking, mainly due to overnight stays being very rare in the parks/reserves outside formal accommodation, ie, basically no camping nor hut usage. Hence no discarded food scraps or washing up waste, less water and toilet usage per person, no direct camping impacts on vegetation/erosion, nor exploring/roaming offtrack near camp sites.
3. Organised trail running events have been active in Tasmania for well over 100yrs, eg, the Go-as-you-please race to the pinnacle of kunanyi / Mt Wellington from Hobart City and back in 1903.
4. The current existence of a number of safe and successful national and state class trail running events in the TWWHA or other national parks and reserves, including but not limited to Cradle Mountain Run, Endorfun trail series, Gone Nuts 101, takayna Ultra, Tassie Trail Fest, Triple Top Mountain Run. Some are very long standing such as Cradle run – 40yrs, and some recent additions due to market demand such as takayna – 2yrs.
5. The safe and successful co-existence our sport has with mountain biking (MTB) and bushwalking on the same tracks and trails. Investment in MTB tracks and sometimes limited maintenance of many bushwalking tracks, combined with the general preference of trail runners to run on more “runnable” smoother tracks, has encouraged trail runners to run regularly on MTB trails. Trail runners automatically give way to the less agile and higher momentum MTBers which suits both user groups. Tassie Trail Fest and the Endorfun Blue Tier Run have been held safely and successfully on the MTB trails surrounding Derby/Weldborough for many years. Generally, trail runners run on MTB trails outside of peak MTBing usage times. Almost all Trail Runners also MTB and/or bushwalk.
6. Trail Runners are typically courteous, respectful, and friendly to all other users and land owner/manager staff. Stopping for a chat with anyone who is interested, particularly on the more remote, less frequented tracks, is common place. A wave, smile, and warm verbal greeting is generally minimum.
7. Members from our trail running community who run multi day bushwalking tracks in a day have commented on the following interactions with PWS staff and other track users:
 - a. Almost all bushwalkers are deeply intrigued about the experience of trail running such tracks, the gear taken, and safety measures adopted. Typically, they are very interested to stop and have a good chat.



- b. The occasional “old school” bushwalker can be surprised seeing trail runners on such tracks and are apparently not very interested to interact.
- c. PWS staff and rangers on the whole are pleasant and helpful. However we acknowledge that misunderstandings may exist regarding the suitability of runners on multi day walking tracks. As the sport’s representative organisation in Tasmania, TTRA encourages the harmonious and safe use of such infrastructure and we look forward to discussing further with PWS.

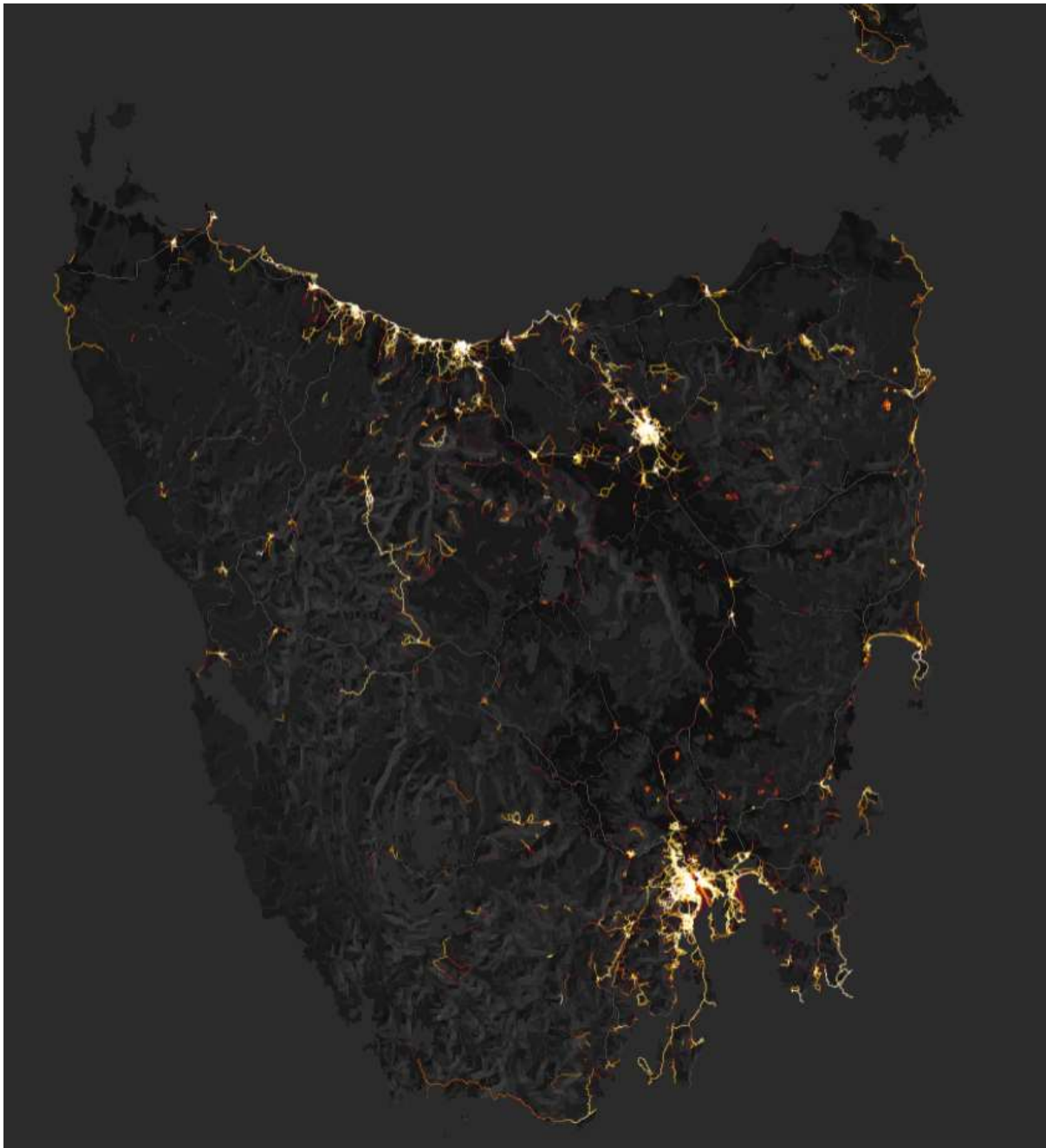


Figure above - Strava heatmap for running in Tasmania – exported June 2020

As an organisation, we would like to assist the PWS in developing guidelines and educational material for runners informing them of access, responsibilities, and adequate safety measures for the tracks they utilise. We also propose that the PWS attends a meeting of the TTRA and would like to invite the organisation's Recreation Liaison Officer. If the PWS could kindly pass on details of the responsible Officer, we will invite them.

Acknowledgement of trail running in Tasmania - an emerging growth adventure tourism market for which Tasmania has immense opportunity

As one of the last wild places on earth we have a unique responsibility to ensure this extraordinary place is preserved and allowed to exist, as it has for millions of years.

Understanding this significance also means accepting that people want to have a connection with this place, to escape and to wonder at its raw beauty. Just as the Tasmanian Aboriginal custodians of this land have done so our organisation acknowledges the need to respect the fragile ecosystem and interact with it in a sustainable and respectful way.

Trail running is a legitimate eco-tourism opportunity and being recognised as such will go a long way in helping to build a viable and sustainable experience. The rise of trail running globally (8%pa) cannot be ignored and Tasmania has a unique opportunity to set a standard of wilderness preservation while capitalising on this popular sport. Some of Tasmania's regional tourism organisations have commented that there is no reason why trail running couldn't also be an Unordinary Adventure as part of Tourism Tasmania's Come Down for Air marketing initiative. Trail running fits well within and assists in achieving the objectives of the Parks 21 strategy.

As trail runners, our footprint is small yet our appetite for the journey is immense. Trail running provides a healthy and efficient means of immersing oneself with nature, but also provides a profound connection with being free. People intently travel to go running and the boom of trail running around the globe is not something that tourism sectors within Tasmania can ignore, including our parks and reserves.

From a survey conducted by TTRA we know the community of Tasmanian trail runners are well educated, typically fall between the ages of 25-65, are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and are willing to travel in their search for connection with natural landscapes.

The increase in participation and number of trail running events in the areas that surround the TWWHA over the last few years proves that the global rise of trail running is right on our doorstep. With the unique opportunities held within the TWWHA, it would be irresponsible if we did not capitalise on the potential of the trail running market. Just like mountain biking 10 years ago, Tasmania stands on the cusp of the new drawcard, and it is a perfect destination so the trail runners will come - ready or not. It is far better to plan and provide than to react.

Trails runners have the unique ability to traverse vast stretches of environment with efficiency so setting appropriate practices and sustainable management of visitation in the TWWHA will allow for safe and purposeful use. The TTRA are very keen to help drive this standard of behaviour.

With the TWWHA covering almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of Tasmania there are many regional communities that play a part in its existence. Trail running requires little infrastructure expenditure but has the potential to yield returns for the local economy. Most trail runners typically don't camp overnight, but rather utilise accommodation nearby the trails in gateway towns or other immersive experience type accommodation.

If we take the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and what trail running has done for its communities, we can see that the future can be bright. Trail running in the Blue Mountains has become an international drawcard and we can pinpoint this to the evolution of the Ultra Trail Australia Endurance Race and Expo.

REMPPLAN produced a report on the economy of trail running over the course of the 4-day Ultra Trail Australia event (2018) and you can see what is economically possible.

In the last 10 years (2008-2018) the UTA Trail Running event has grown from 170 entrants to well over 7000. In 2018 alone the event generated a total estimated impact of over \$12.5 million and 58 long term jobs for the local economy including supply-chain and consumption effects and attracted close to 1000 international visitors.

Our submission for the Tourism Master Plan certainly does not direct that the TWWHA should play host to a similar scale event to the UTA, as this is best situated closer to metropolitan areas, but we cannot ignore the amazing opportunities and management requirements that the next 10 years potentially holds.

The opportunity for TTRA members to assist with routine track maintenance

We understand that to protect the natural values of the TWWHA, access by road, cycling, air and boat and walking track management are regulated through various provisions in the Management Plan.

We acknowledge the importance of regular maintenance and stabilising of walking tracks, ensuring visitor safety and maximising the recreational benefits of the track system, whilst protecting the environmental, cultural and wilderness values of the state's national parks and reserves (DPIPWE: Walking Track Management Strategy for Tasmania's National Parks and Reserves 2011 - 2020). We understand from our interactions with all levels of PWS staff and PWS documents that whilst some iconic tracks are in great condition, many tracks are in a substandard condition compared to the prescribed track standards, and this is causing safety and environmental issues, and is impacting user experiences.

TTRA has a network of experienced and competent wilderness trail runners across the state keen to contribute to track maintenance in a volunteer capacity and many are already working

with Wildcare groups. Small groups of trail runners can reach much further into the side and back country to undertake reconnaissance for track conditions, possibly working with more typical Wildcare groups to carry out works. We are keen to discuss with PWS how this currently untapped capacity can be harnessed efficiently – perhaps as a volunteer partner organisation in our own right.

TTRA's members can also actively contribute to Action SG9 – data collection of track conditions including safety and environmental degradation issues. Some of our members already pass on information to PWS field centres.

As a user group, Hobart Trail Runners recently gathered a large group of volunteers ready to undertake track maintenance with Friends of Wellington Park on some of the more remote, sub-alpine and alpine areas, like Thark Ridge. Unfortunately, due to COVID this collaboration has not yet eventuated, but Hobart Trail Runners are ready to contribute once COVID restrictions are lifted.

Support for unique and sustainable trail running events and tours

TTRA seeks DPIPWE and PWS acknowledgement of both commercial and non-commercial trail running events and tours in the TWWHA, as they fit well within, and directly support all of the TMPs strategic principles. This should occur through any recreation plans that flow from the TWWHA TMP having to plan for trail running as an emerging recreation group as part of the spectrum of recreational opportunities within the TWWHA.

Presentation of the TWWHA through trail running experiences is not new with the following selection selling out within days or weeks of release:

- events such as the Cradle Mountain Run now celebrating 40yrs, Triple Top Mountain Run, or Endorfun trail run series (Mt Field, Dove Lake, Freycinet, etc)
- Find Your Feet multi day tours – Overland track, Walls of Jerusalem, Freycinet, etc

As demonstrated above, Tasmania has a significant opportunity to become a world class trail running destination – as is recognised in the draft TMP as “an important tourism opportunity” and events “offer substantial local economic benefits”. To realise the opportunity Tasmania has, the global trail running community expects world class sustainable and ethical events and tours, as well as maintained tracks to allow Tasmanian and visiting trail runners to experience the natural landscapes in a safe manner.

TTRA understands that PWS has much to consider regarding potential impacts to natural and cultural values from mass events with potentially higher participant numbers above the very low participant limits currently permitted. The current participant limits do not allow events of a world class scale to be financially viable or self-sustaining, even when operated by volunteer committees.

Trail running events and tours are inherently short duration (typically 1-2 days in any one location) and are unique and sustainable by nature. They only utilise existing infrastructure on a

non-exclusive basis, or temporary minimal impact event infrastructure, do not require any additional infrastructure to be built. Existing tracks and trails are utilised and are required to be in a safe and maintained condition. TTRA supports events requiring the participants to volunteer their time on track maintenance/clean-up activities and a registration requirement.

We understand the complexity of the potential impacts and can draw from the extensive best practice trail running event management experience globally, and within Australia and Tasmania, to work with PWS to establish an agreed management framework for inclusion in the Events Policy proposed in *Action SG2* on p60 of the draft TMP. The framework would include the typical potential impacts, and general management measures to be adapted specifically to the event, code of conduct and behaviours expectations, heritage awareness and protection, environmental guidelines, and other pertinent aspects. Most TTRA members are also bushwalkers and/or mountain bikers, and some TTRA executive committee members have extensive trail running event management experience organising safe and successful events in Tasmania with recognised minimal impacts.

TTRA requests that short duration mass participation events be allowed in all zones except the wilderness zone. TTRA also requests the same tour access as for bushwalking tour operators, i.e., all zones without exception. TTRA expects trail running tours to follow the same guide to client ratios as for bushwalking.

Recreational access is sought for trail runners on all permitted walks (via trail running permits)

As previously mentioned, as trail runners our footprint is small, yet our appetite for the journey is immense. As a recreational user group, we create minimal impact as we plan for big days rather than overnight camping which means no food or washing up waste and limited toileting. The main zones being utilised by trail runners currently are Recreation Zones and Self-Reliant Recreation Zones, with a small minority of trail runners accessing Wilderness Zones.

Currently, the Overland Track (seasonally) require walkers to purchase permits to access the track and 5 nights in PWS supplied and maintained huts or camping platforms. We would like to propose the consideration of a runners permit for these areas and any other walking tracks of which the management is regulated through various provisions in the Management Plan. We propose this permit be at a reduced cost of the walkers permit due to the reduced physical impact and shorter time spent in the area – typically only one day and no use of huts/platforms. TTRA would be happy to work with PWS in a consultation role to support education around what is considered to be the minimum gear / safety requirements for trips into each zone and perhaps as a requirement to gain the runners permit. As stakeholders who hold a genuine passion for and connection with the TWWHA, TTRA want to support the growth of the sport in a recreational and commercial sense and introduce local, interstate and international visitors to this island of which we are lucky enough to call home.

TTRA wishes to work with PWS on *Action SG1* (p60 of the draft TMP) in the review of the Recreation Standards Framework in the TWWHA to articulate trail running user demand, and identify gaps in the visitor experience and hence opportunities to explore.

Holistic inclusion of trail running as a user group alongside bushwalking within PWS and Tourism policy and management framework

As a group we would like to work towards the presentation of trail running activities at activity nodes and gateway towns. We would seek to build resources utilising Visitor Journey mapping through both Journey based experiences, and remote experiences.

Proposed actions for TTRA to work collaboratively with PWS

- TTRA kindly requests the opportunity to work with PWS to establish an agreed trail running mass participation event management framework for inclusion in the Events Policy proposed in Action SG2 on p60 of the draft TMP
- TTRA wishes to work with PWS on *Action SG1* (p60 of the draft TMP) in the review of the Recreation Standards Framework in the TWWHA to articulate trail running user demand, and identify gaps in the visitor experience and hence opportunities to explore
- TTRA members can contribute to *Action SG9* – data collection of track conditions including safety and environmental degradation issues
- TTRA can potentially establish as a volunteer partner organisation for track maintenance
- TTRA can work with PWS on a suitable expected trail running gear and skills list for inclusion on communications to users as for bushwalking.
- Assist building resources utilising visitor journey mapping through both journey based experiences, and remote experiences.

Closure

The wilderness within the TWWHA has existed since the beginning of time; it is resilient but also vulnerable to our pursuits as humans. Setting a framework now that allows for recognition of what trail running can do for communities will ensure that a sustainable future is paved. To protect something, we first must understand it. Allowing the ever-growing community of trail runners easier access to our wilderness areas can only better educate users on the OUV within the TWWHA. And when correctly managed the increase in the economy can only help shape further improvements to maintain this.

Please don't hesitate to contact TTRA on tastrailrunners@gmail.com to discuss any aspect further.

On behalf of the authors and the TTRA interim executive committee,



Lincoln Quilliam

Interim Vice-President
Tasmanian Trail Running Association
tastrailrunners@gmail.com

Authors: Lincoln Quilliam, Chris Price, Kate Hiney, Daniel Nunan, Bree Hunter, Nick Campbell.

TTRA interim executive committee: John Claridge – President, Lincoln Quilliam – Vice President, Leanne Evans – Treasurer, Nick Campbell – Secretary