Consultation Report
Isaacs Ridge Mountain Bike Trail Upgrade Project

CANBERRA
TOWN
PLANNING

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Introduction

Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) are developing a Trail Network and Management Plan for the Isaacs Ridge Pines area. This report has been prepared to provide a summary of the community consultation undertaken.

1.1 Project Site and Context

Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve is located in the south east of Canberra as shown in Figure 1, behind the suburbs of Isaacs and O'Malley in South Canberra in the Woden Valley. The site encompasses Block No. 159 Jerrabomberra and Block 6 Section 593 Isaacs. The Isaacs Ridge Long Gully pine plantation is located adjacent to the Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve (see Figure 2).

There are also areas identified as "special purpose reserve" and "urban open space" adjacent to the pine plantation areas in the Territory Plan. The location of these areas are shown in Figure 2. These areas, along with the Nature reserve areas are subject to the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, and activities within these areas need to be managed accordingly.

Isaacs Ridge Long Gully pine plantation is an area containing 23 Hectares of ACT Forestry commercial pine plantation. The commercial pine plantation is managed by ACT Foresters within the Parks and Conservation Service.

The land is managed by the South District, Urban Reserves, Parks and Conservation Service.

Isaacs Ridge Nature reserve includes areas of *Allocasuarina verticillata*, Box-Gum Woodland and high value woodland bird habitat.

Under the National Capital Plan Isaacs Ridge is identified as Designated Land, Inner Hills and as Hills Ridges and Buffers.

Figure 3 provides a plan which depicts the main existing trails in the area.
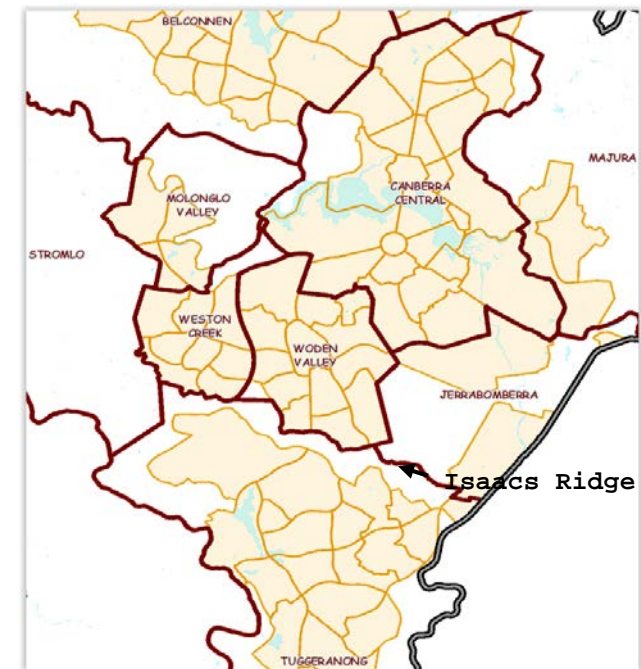

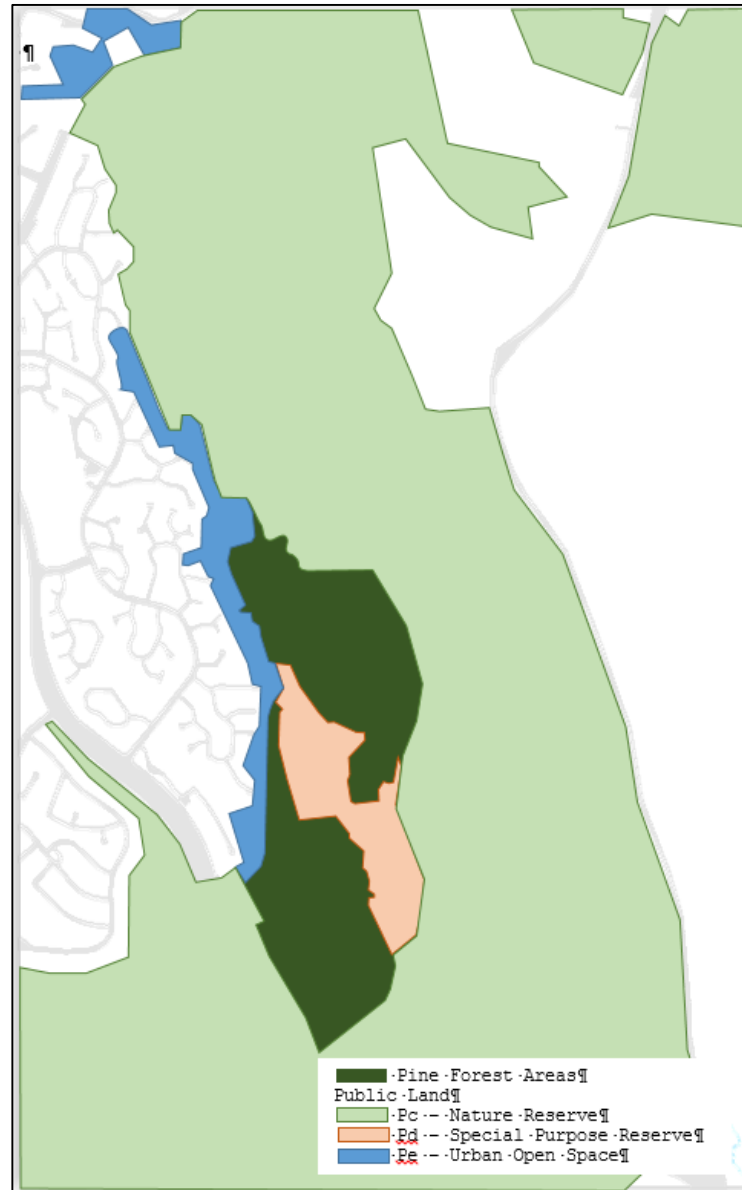Figure 1: Regional Site Location (ACTMAPi, Aug 2015)
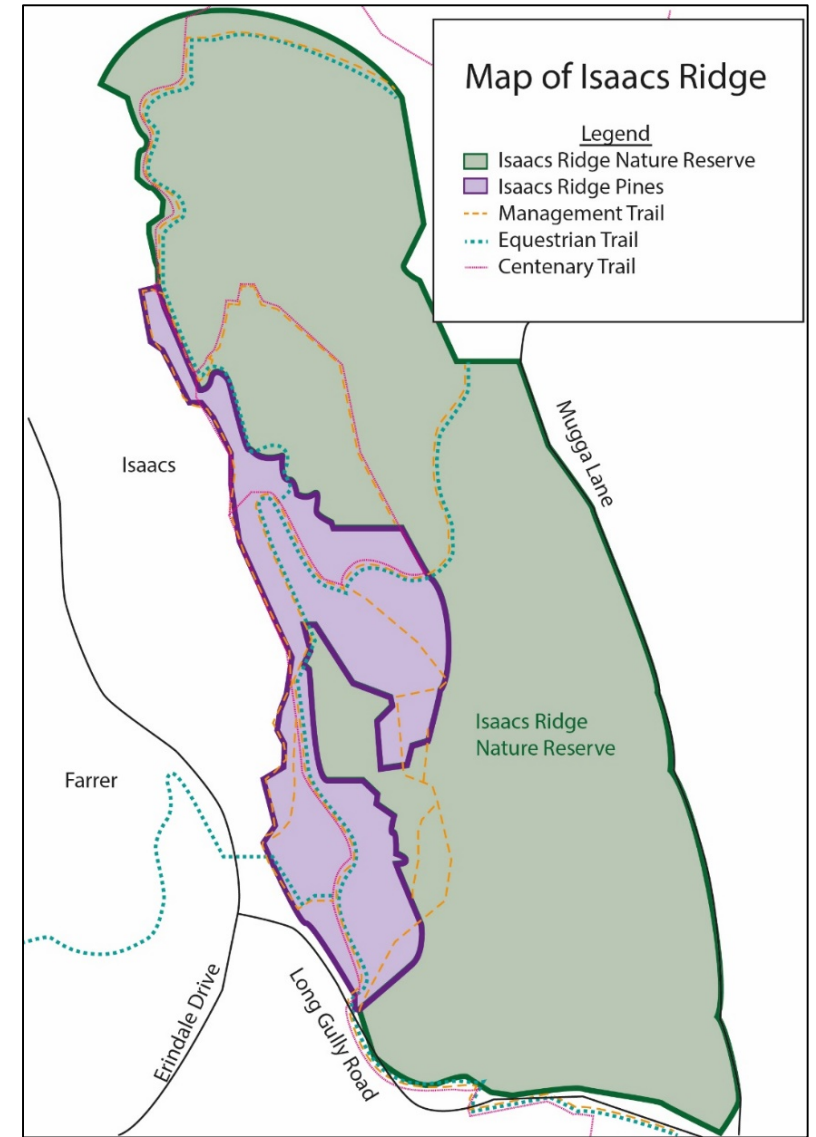
Figure 2: Overlay Boundaries

Figure 3: Main Existing Trails

1.2   Project Background and Need

There is a network of mountain bike trails in the Isaacs Ridge Pines (adjacent to the Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve), which has been constructed by members of the public over a number of years. This includes technical downhill mountain biking trails which pose potential risk to mountain bike users and other users.

The purpose of this project is to undertake consultation to investigate community needs and better understand current usage and demands at Isaacs Ridge in the context of Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) management of the area. This information will then be used to develop a trail management plan and an associated trail network plan and then works would be undertaken as detailed in the trail management plan.

PCS has obtained financing within the 2015-16 budget to undertake the upgrade works.

The trail management plan would respond to the community consultation outcomes and PCS concerns with one of the purposes to enable approved club level downhill mountain bike events in the area.

The trail management plan is to interpret the outcomes of the community consultation to make recommendations for the provision of an appropriate trail network and supporting infrastructure at Isaacs Ridge to:

- Improve the standard, condition and safety of the existing downhill mountain bike trails.
- Ensure all trails are built sustainably and with all users considered in accordance with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) trail building guidelines.
- Allow government to approve downhill mountain bike events using these trails and to enable event organisers to access insurance.

- Engage the community in the design and future maintenance of the trail network to ensure the ongoing condition and safety of the trails.
- Improve the trail network and the amenity of the area for a range of users.
- Improve the safety of all users and minimise potential conflict between users.
- Reduce inappropriate recreation within the adjoining nature reserves.

This document provides details of the Consultation phase, another consultancy will be undertaking the development of the trail management and network plan.

1.3   Brief Recreational History

For the mountain biking community, Isaacs Ridge has a long history as a great place to ride, and previously contained a network of both cross country and downhill trails. In particular, Isaacs Pines was renowned by the downhill mountain bike community for being steep, rough and technical, with large jumps crossing the management trails.

Below is an excerpt from an article published on *The Roost Mag* website by Robert Conroy, which gives an insight why the downhill community have enjoyed using this venue in the past for club races.

> …"*but seriously this place had it all technical off camber, jumps to berm, natural features, flat corners, drops and it was steep to boot ! Of course there were B lines but that didn't stop most guys having a go as is the essence of club racing. Whilst there were those bigger name elite guys there were plenty of junior and vets riders all out to shred. Club racing is not about hardcore racing it's about picking up new skills, learning off others, meeting new people to ride with in your downtime and the CORC guys really seem to have that covered. There was a certain second family atmosphere to the whole race.*"

(http://theroostmag.com.au/gone-clubbing-at-isaacs/, 15 August, 2012)

In the past, the pines have hosted club downhill races (most recently in 2012) and dirt-crit races (short course cross country races) on a course set up on the lower slopes of the southern part of the pines area.

In addition to mountain biking events in the past, Isaacs Ridge hosts a number of other regular events such as the Sri Chinmoy Triple triathlon, the Tour de Ridges Mountain Running Race and Orienteering events.

It is also the recreational backyard for many locals who enjoy walking, running, cycling, horse riding, dog walking and generally enjoying the outdoors at Isaacs Ridge.

Plate 1: A section of one of the downhill trails

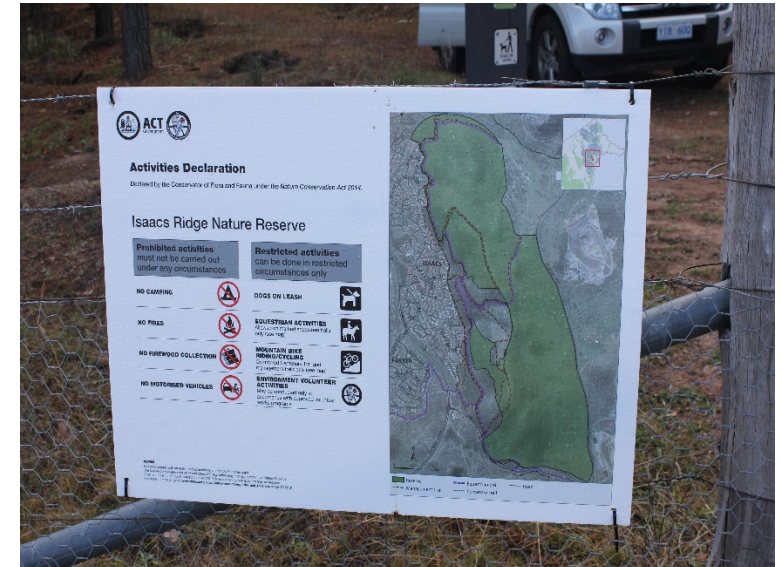Plate 2: View of one of the road gap jumps.

Plate 3: Activities Declaration Sign in the reserve

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Consultation Methodology

A range of strategies were employed to undertake consultation for this project, in order to reach a wide community audience. These included:

- A variety of advertising strategies;
- Targeted stakeholder consultation;
- On-line survey;
- Community drop in session; and
- Letter box drop

The project and consultation period was advertised widely by the ACT Government in the form of:

- Signage provided at the main entry points within Isaacs Ridge (refer to Figure 4)
- A media release was issued on 5 August 2015 announcing the public consultation period.
- Information and hardcopy surveys were provided at Woden and Erindale libraries.
- Information and surveys on the TAMS and Time to Talk websites.
- Notice posted on the ACT Community Noticeboard
- Article in Our City Our Community e-newsletter.
- A whole of government email message.
- Letter box drop to all residents of Isaacs.
- Emails to key stakeholders and community groups.
- Social media messages on the ACT Government Facebook page, and TAMS and PCS Twitter feeds.
- Social media messages were sent to CORC and Majura Pines Trail Alliance.

- In addition, various community members and stakeholders also posted links to the survey and details of the community drop in session on websites including rotorburn.com, theberm.com.au, actea.asn.au, the bush capital horse forum, corc.asn.au and pedal power.

Plate 4: Consultation sign in the reserve

2.1 Targeted Stakeholder Consultation

Contact was made with representatives of parties identified as having interests in this project, and interviews were arranged where possible. The majority of these were face to face, though some were undertaken via email or telephone. The stakeholders consulted were:

- Australian Mountain Running Association;
- Orienteering ACT;
- ACT Equestrian Association;
- Canberra Off Road Cyclists;
- Woden Valley Community Council;
- Isaacs Ridge Mt Mugga Mugga Park Care Group;
- Parks and Conservation Service (Forestry, Park Care Support, Ranger/Land Manager, Off-sets manager);
- Sri Chinmoy;
- Adjacent leaseholders; and
- CrownCastle - Telecommunications Infrastructure Managers of the infrastructure at Isaacs Ridge.

The interviews were generally undertaken in the form of an open discussion, focusing on key areas of interest for the target stakeholder. Specific questions were also posed to ensure that key and significant information was obtained. Notes were taken during the meetings and minutes recorded.

Some stakeholders also provided written submissions as part of the consultation process.

2.2   On-Line Community Survey

An on-line survey was prepared by PCS and posted on the ACT Government "Time to Talk" web site (www.timetotalk.act.gov.au). The survey was open from Tuesday 4th August 2015 until Wednesday 2nd September, 2015. Hard copy surveys were also provided at Erindale and Woden Libraries.

The survey asked eleven questions, some of which allowed for free text response. It also provided an opportunity for those surveyed to provide their contact details if they were interested in receiving further information as the project progresses, or if they were interested in being involved in the future maintenance of the trails.

2.3   Community Drop in Session

A community drop in session was help at Woden Hellenic Club on 18 August 2015. This session was aimed at providing the community with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project in an informal manner. A brief presentation about the project was provided and some open discussion followed. People were also given the opportunity to provide hard copy responses to the questions from the on-line survey and these were then incorporated with the on-line data received in the survey.

2.4   Letter box Drop

PCS undertook a letterbox drop of all residents located in the suburb of Isaacs, approximately 874 private dwellings (ABS, 2011).

3 Targeted Stakeholder Responses

The table below provides a summary of the key themes and comments made by targeted stakeholders during the interviews conducted.

Table 1: Targeted Stakeholder Responses

Theme	Comment
Isaacs Ridge Mt Mugga Mugga Park Care Group	
Support for Downhill MTB Trails	Supports the upgrade of downhill mountain bike trails in Isaacs Pines on the understanding that appropriate management will reduce the number of illegal trails in the higher conservation value Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve.
Safety	Concerns that the road crossings are hazardous but can be controlled during official events; consider moving the road jumps.
Type of trails	The existing downhill trails cater mainly for high level riders and it is considered that Isaacs Pines should also be developed for riders with lower or developing skills with a cross country trail that links to the downhill trails.
	A less technical downhill trail was also suggested from the ridge to Long Gully Road.
Location of trails	Main focus of trails should be within pines area.
	The Canberra Centenary Trail passes through the Isaacs pines and Nature Reserve. This could be an important link to other mountain bike areas. The official route has cyclists riding along the lower trail as it was thought that it was too steep to ride to the ridge and too expensive to make new trails suitable for all users. However, it should be noted that many cyclists use the steep sections and the ridge trail. There are two main unofficial mountain bike trails in Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve and it is doubted if they could ever be closed; they could be upgraded for environmental reasons and have occasional use but not be part of links to other mountain bike areas.
Trail maintenance/user group	The proposal is for the setting up of a user group for establishment and maintenance, which is a good idea. This would require removal of woody weeds and other invasive plants such as serrated tussock present in the area. An ongoing planting program should also be considered along with thinning of pines where necessary. Our group is very small so would not be able to provide a high level of assistance.
	Government support for trails needs to be ongoing. We are concerned that funding for long term maintenance is not guaranteed and could be cut, as happens even with legislated responsibilities such as weed management.
	Some of us have had involvement with Friends of Bruce Ridge and CORC, and hope that this will continue through TAMS and ParkCare.

Theme	Comment
Vegetation Management	Even though most of the trails would be in the pines which have been developed and cleared, there are also areas of native vegetation and returning native plants such as *Styphelia triflora, Eryngium ovinum* and *Acacia ulicifolia* which are listed as uncommon plants. The Isaacs pines should have similar environmental management plans as those for the nature reserves.
Managing user interactions	Additional or upgraded trails are likely to result an increase in user activity. Most of this will be away from houses but will affect walkers and riders on existing management trails. It is noted that this is addressed in the draft Mountain Bike Strategy: "Mountain bike activities are perceived by some other stakeholders as dangerous or in conflict with other recreational activities or ecological values. This is fuelled by a lack of clear signage and protocols for interaction and by sections of the informal track network that have been constructed with little regard to environmental sensitivities". Some of the management roads on Isaacs Ridge are approved horse trails but horse riders also make use of other trails. In order to minimise conflict horses should be permitted only on those shared trails shown in the relevant Activities Declaration Notice.
Australian Mountain Running Association	
Recreational Uses at Isaacs	Many dog walkers, runners, more proximate to residential areas than somewhere like Majura so more potential for interaction. More people walking around during the day. Pines offer protection from the weather in winter and summer. Walk dogs off lead, few kangaroos.
Safety	Existing MTB trails some are very step and dangerous for other users if they come flying down the hill. Need to address the angle of the track coming onto the fire road so that mountain bikes don't fly into people coming across roads. Design trails so that there is a safe entry to trails.
Timing of works	Concern about timing with respect to an orienteering race event at Easter.
Events and facilities	Parking for events, orienteering, running. Need to identify a suitable area. Runners don't need power or water for events. Just use laptops plugged into an inverter. Hold events like the Tour De Ridges race, which includes Isaacs Ridge.
Location of trails	Prefer mountain bike trails to be located in the southern area, where current downhill trails are found.
Canberra Off Road Cyclists	
Type of Trails	Keen for hand built downhill trails, not machined flow trails, like at Majura. Isaacs has different surface character, they want technical rough, rocky trails for downhill. These sort of trails can be built with volunteers, working with the downhill racers, and then cut a ridable track, and over time they could build up features, berms, rocks etc. They'd like to see 2 or 3 downhill tracks with 1 or 2 start options, then trails that dissect and interlink trails, so they can vary the route. There was also previously a short course, for dirt crits – a 800m to 1km long cross country course down the bottom of the pines area, would be good to see this rebuilt. They push bikes up trail for downhill, no car shuttling.

Theme	Comment
	Downhill tracks don't need machine work, but machines could be used in other areas to build a XC trail that loops around the hill, could get a 9-10km loop.
	Other cyclists don't want just downhill trails. If technical elements have a B line (less technical optional route) then cross country riders can use them too, but CORC are keen to keep Isaacs as something different to the other MTB parks in Canberra.
	Want at least one track that is really hard, then some easier options for other people to try.
	In the past at Isaacs there were lots of natural jumps, rock drops. Build A and B lines, in accord with IMBA rules.
	Need signage about the difficulty of trails.
Trail Safety	Can have tough, difficult trails that are safe, because trees are trimmed and well maintained.
	Minimise fire road crossings to avoid conflicts with other users.
	Jumps can be moved off the fire road and it is possible to provide ways to slow riders down near the roads.
	Provide good sight lines at trail crossings and need for signage at intersections with fire roads, look listen etc.
	Existing road gaps have been there for a while and there haven't really been any major accidents. There is a big road gap down the bottom, would be good to keep one, but could be fenced off if necessary.
Trail design	Would like to review the mapping and have direct input into the final trail design and report.
Access/Parking and Facilities	Usually cars are parked on Long Gully Rd.
	Need to set up an appropriate access point and carpark and provide a trailhead.
	Little lay off road with a few car parks.
Signage	Signage at the bottom and top, stop look listen signs at trail junctions.
Events	Would like to hold about 4 club races per year.
Website	Set up a central website like the Majura Trail Alliance one with links to all the trail maps. Having a combined site with links to different riding spots and maps in the ACT would be great for visitors.
Sri Chinmoy	
Events	The Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team conducts two annual events which include Isaacs Pines: an ultra-endurance running event, the Sri Chinmoy Canberra Trail Ultra (currently 102km) in late September; and a mountain bike leg of the Sri Chinmoy Triple-Triathlon in November.
Support for Trails	Are in support of formalising downhill MTB trails at Isaacs Ridge
Consultation	Consultation approach is excellent – including all users in broad, consultative discussion. Cooperation and mutual respect amongst all users will ensure the ongoing harmonious use of this significant and invaluable asset for all Canberrans.
ACT Orienteering	
Events	Regularly hold events in the area, use the whole area once a year, but other parts at different times, approximately 3 per year.

Theme	Comment
	Have a planned event for Easter 2016, on 26 March 2016. This will be a World ranking event with people from overseas attending with possibly 800 participants.
	Once the course maps for the event have been prepared it is important that no changes are made on the ground.
Access and Parking	Think about the access point and parking on Long Gully road there may be some safety issues.
Works Planning	Best option would be to keep the course for the Easter event away from the area where the potential trails will be built. Area of uncertainty don't want to risk it. Don't want to jeopardise the orienteering event.
	Would like to receive a Draft Plan that they could comment on in order to plan for their event at Easter.
	Any works in the area will need to be programmed around the event in negotiation with Orienteering ACT.
Trail design	Would prefer that trails keep away from more complex areas of rock, and for orienteering purposes would prefer no new trails, but they understand that areas change and sometimes this is for the positive.
Type of trails	XC style trail could be good for junior orienteering, a multi-use trail would also be good for runners.
Parks and Conservation Service – Ranger/Land Manager	
Safety	Need to ensure safety for all users of the reserve.
	Manage trail entry and intersections with management trails carefully. Don't want mountain bikers at high speed crossing the management trails, as there could be trucks using these.
	Could consider removing some of the management trails if no longer required for forestry.
Erosion	Ensure trails are located to minimise erosion, not directly along fall lines.
Location of trails	Concern that people may increase passage through the reserved lands. Need to assess native woodland areas before trails are constructed to avoid any sensitive areas, particularly the area at the top of the pines.
	Carefully consider location of any trails outside the pines area, with respect to sensitive vegetation.
Parking	Provision of parking and concerns with respect to the access and parking area at Long Gully Road needs to be considered.
Parks and Conservation Service - Forestry	
Future of Forestry	There is only a small area in south with potential for logging in approximately 10 years time. However, this area is not really economically viable to log as it is so small (approx. $20,000 net worth as timber). The terrain at Isaacs is also difficult for forestry.
	Potential for forestry to hand over responsibilities at Isaacs ridge to Rangers to manage, they will follow this up with colleagues at PCS.
Succession Planning	Leave some as "pine forest" so that recreational activities can take place in the pines without the nature reserve taking over. Recognising the value that the community places on the mature pine forest environment.

Theme	Comment
	One option for the future would be Special purpose reserve for forestry or park, but managed for recreation, rather than an addition to the nature reserve.
Vegetation Management	Consider a proper vegetation management plan, succession planning for the site, keep some for pines, some natives, etc. as part of this project.
	Thinning work and pruning work needs to be done to manage pines with respect to safety. These works could be undertaken as part of bushfire management operations.
	This could be arranged to be undertaken prior to any new trail construction/upgrade.
	Ongoing dialogue is going to be necessary to further consider appropriate management of the land and the vegetation.
ACT Equestrian Association	
General Issues	Equestrian community is disappointed by the way this project was proposed as an 'upgrade' to the mountain bike tracks at Isaacs, and by implication, downhill bike riders have already been given priority over other users of the Ridge (prior to any consultation).
	In general the equestrian community feels it has lost access to many areas of public pine forest, and is forced to share dwindling open space with all other recreational users and feel they are being designed out of another important riding destination at Isaacs.
	The Equestrian Association is concerned about the reserve by reserve process that is being undertaken with respect to reserves and recreational spaces. Horse riders cannot transfer their activities easily by car so displacement to another area has significant implications.
	Equestrians do not believe that the needs of all the present recreational users of Isaacs Ridge will be met in a balanced fashion if the existing downhill track are 'upgraded'.
	The Isaacs Pines area is too small and has too few usable fire trails to cope with incompatible recreational uses.
	They suggest that managing the downhill tracks does not require the attraction of massively increased numbers of cyclists.
	Managing the downhill tracks does not require them to be 'upgraded' simply formalised and contained off the fire trails.
Access to Isaacs Ridge for equestrians	Isaacs Ridge is the main destination for riders agisting their horses at Rose Cottage, Hume, Gilmore and Macarthur horses paddocks to the south, via the underpass on Long Gully Road, and the private agistment properties on the western side of the Ridge via dedicated horse trails in the Nature Reserve. There are no other legal access routes.
Safety	At its southern end, the equestrian trail is crossed by several downhill tracks, concerns that it is dangerous when downhill riders use these tracks. Unsafe for riders to enter the Reserve but it is also impossible to divert to the alternative horse trail that travels west through Farrer Ridge.
	Concerns that upgrades of trails will mean the Ridge will attract more experienced cyclists, more frequently than presently happens. All this will make it dangerous for equestrians to even try to enter the pine forest.
Types of trails	Downhill mountain bike trails are not suitable for the limited area immediately adjacent to a suburb.

Theme	Comment
Location of trails	Horse riders can currently only bypass the downhill tracks by heading for the top of the Ridge. However the fire trails are too steep for horses, and cyclists coming down them have little control over their bikes on the rocky slippery surface.
	Riders take their horses to the top of the ridge underneath the neighbouring power line which enables them to zig-zag their way up on grass. This route is outside the Pines. For safety reasons horse riders need an alternative route home – not one that runs the gamut of downhill tracks and speeding cyclists.
	The many users of the Isaacs Pines can share the space with some compromise if the downhill track is maintained as a low entry-level recreational facility which is kept off the management trails.
	ACTEA would like to see downhill tracks moved further north along the face of the Ridge where there is more room to fit longer tracks on the same contour lines while avoiding the equestrian trail.
	Do not want to be moved from existing trails that they can currently use.
	At present safe loops for equestrians in the pines are limited and will be more so if there is increased mountain bike presence.

Woden Valley Community Council	
	Information regarding the project was provided to the WVCC meeting on 5th August 2015, people were invited to complete the on-line consultation survey.

Parks and Conservation Service – Park Care Support	
Location of trails	If the extent of the trails go beyond the pines and into the reserve area there could be conflicts with environmental outcomes (ParkCare).
	Access to the pines may see increased passage through the reserved lands - users may form new trails in the reserves to get to the pines. This has occurred on Mt Majura as a result of the Majura Pines Upgrade.
Type of trails	Majura Pines have a jumps section. I would not support this happening again in other areas for the following reasons: it requires specialty skills and understandings to build and maintain; it is not sustainable due to its reliance on individuals with this knowledge; the maintenance level is high; it has a limited user group; potentially has the highest risk of injuries and use by non-experienced riders; has the highest probability of being not maintained to the correct standard, hence increasing the risks.
Land management	The pines have a lot of weeds such as serrated tussock in them. With increased users moving through the pines and reserve there could be a transfer of weeds into the reserve.
Establishing a trail management/maintenance group	PCS does not have the resources to patrol/assess or maintain trail/networks. If there is not a committed volunteer group dedicated to the network maintenance, the project will fail.
	From the onset of public consultation, expressions of interest should be sought for a volunteer trail maintenance group. Establish a few key people to consult with through the design process and beyond.
	Depending on budgets the group can or may have to build a non-technical section of the trail. It assist with a sense of ownership and establishes the bonding of the group.
	Design is key to sustainability. Signage is key for user compliance and respect of a formal network (deters informal trail building)

Theme	Comment
	Initial set up for volunteer group cost about $2000 for tools, etc. This need to be accounted for in the budget.
	The group needs to be separate from the Park Care group but could do joint works with his group if the opportunity arises. This group has a recreation focus. The group's primary priority is trail maintenance/management; secondary priority is weeds and land management.
	The group should have overt recreational user branding. Similar to the Majura Pines group, called Majura Pines Trails Alliance.
Ensuring long term on-going maintenance of trails	To ensure long term ongoing maintenance of trails a couple of strong leaders are required who can share the load; preferably with good networking skills and a strong association/involvement with CORC/Pedal Power. With all the trail networks coming on board the groups need to have some sort of unity and cooperative strategies. It would be ideal to have a group that floats around all networks and assists at work parties.
	PCS would need to close the network if it became a safety issue.
	PCS do not have the resources to maintain the trails directly.
	The group that forms may be members of CORC but CORC as an entity would not be acknowledged as being the group. The group forms independently from CORC under our volunteer policy and are part of our volunteer system. They are registered PCS volunteer members who are part of a specific group(s). For instance an individual PCS volunteer could be part of several groups such as Isaacs Pines, Bruce Ridge, Majura Pines, etc.
	CORC as such would not have ownership over the land or trail network.
CrownCastle – Telecommunications Infrastructure Managers	
	Need to maintain access to the telecommunications towers during any upgrade works.
Rural Leaseholders	
	Contact with the main rural leaseholder indicated they had no concerns with the project.
Parks and Conservation – Offsets Manager	
	No recreation activities should be undertaken in the offsets area. Have had issues with horses there in the past.

Plate 5: Steep section of fire road which horse
riders find difficult.

4 Community Responses

4.1 On-line Survey Responses

292 people responded to the on-line survey. In addition 9 people completed the survey in hard copy at the consultation session and 6 surveys were completed in hard copy at ACT libraries. Surveys completed in hard copy were manually inserted into the electronic data base. The sections below provide a summary of the responses to each of the questions.

Word clouds have been used to assist in visualising the responses to some of the free text questions. In the word cloud, the larger the word, the more often it appeared in the text.

Question 1 - On average, how often do you visit Isaacs Ridge pines?
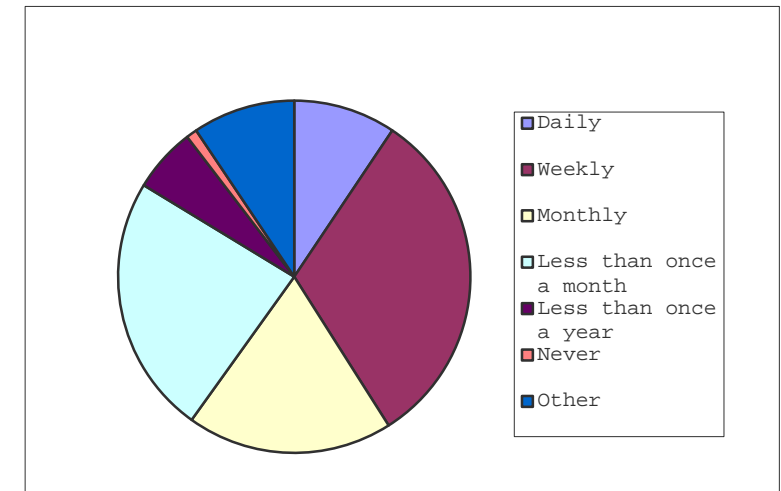
32% of people visit weekly and 24% visit less than once a month. In the 'other' section a number of people indicated they would go there more regularly if there were better trails. Given the patterns of use indicated below, this suggests that the pines are being used frequently by repeat visitors.

Question 2 - What travel method do you use to get to Isaacs Ridge pines?
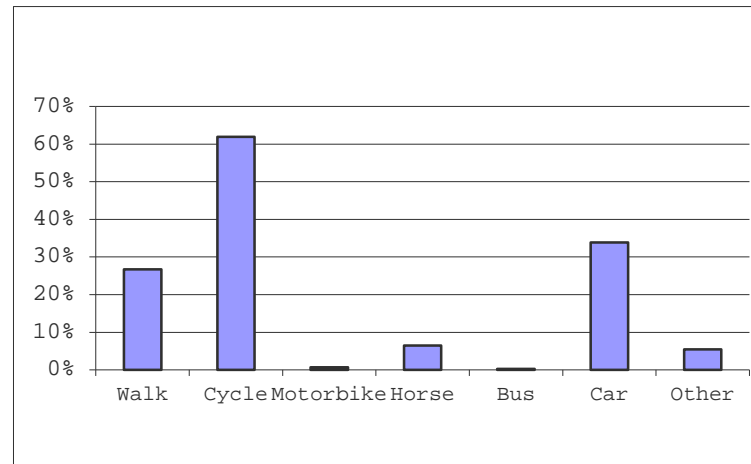
In this question people were asked to tick all that apply, so there were 416 different responses.

62% of respondents indicated they travel by bicycle, 34% by car, 27% walk, 6.5% by horse. In the 'other' category responses were mainly people running.

This suggests that the majority of people who completed the survey (those walking and cycling) are from the local area.

It is important to note that the survey was voluntary and participants were self-selected. While the opportunity to complete the survey was given to everyone in Canberra, particular interest groups may influence the results though greater participation in the survey.

Question 3 - How do you currently use Isaacs Ridge pines?
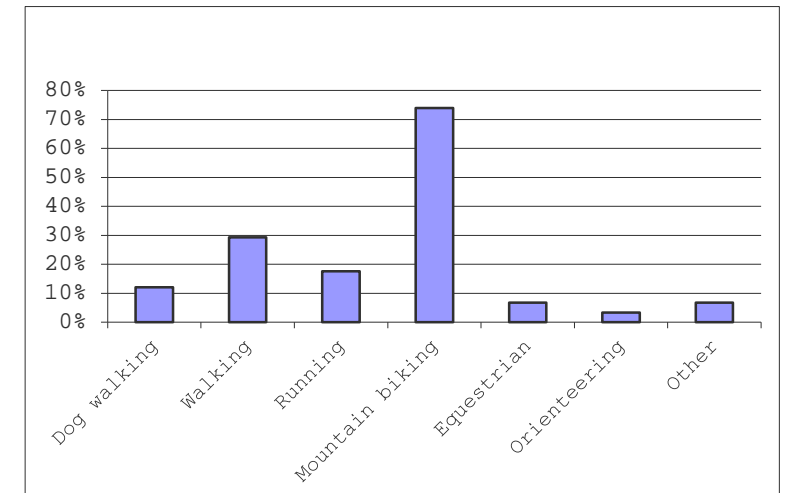
In this question people were also asked to tick all categories that applied, so there were 460 responses. 74% use the area for mountain biking, 29% for walking, 18% for running.

The responses to this question indicate that the majority of people who completed the survey use the area for mountain biking (227 respondents), well above any of the other categories.

Responses in the 'other' category included:

- Environment and conservation;
- General bike riding (as opposed to "Mountain biking";
- Picnicking;
- Exploring; and
- Commuting.

Many users are multi-disciplinary, and mountain biking appears to be a very popular activity for many people, including by those who undertake other activities in the area. The figure below (not to scale) indicates the percentage of people who use the area for other activities, but also use the area for mountain biking (mountain biking, being the focus of this project).
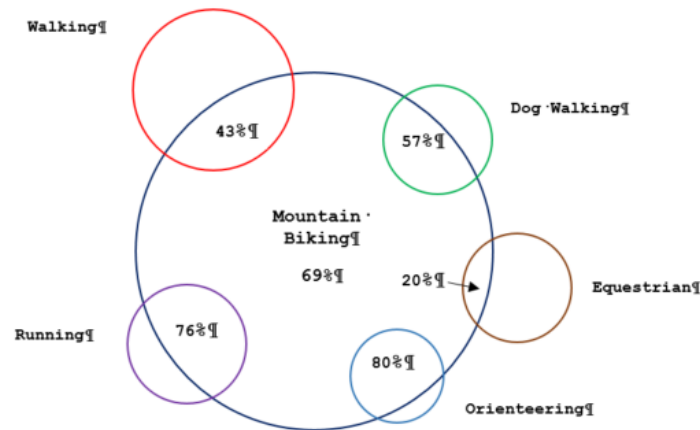
The figure shows that 69% of people who use the area for mountain biking, use it for mountain biking solely. The equestrian users had the lowest percentage of mountain bike use, at 20%; but 80% of people who orienteer, and 76% percent of runners, also mountain bike at Isaacs Ridge.

Additionally, some of the users may also use the area for more than two activities, they might walk the dog, run and mountain bike, for example.

Question 4 - What changes would you like to see to the trail network at Isaacs Ridge pines?

This was a free text question which asked about the changes people would like to see to the trail network at Isaacs Pines.

Key themes were:

- Creation of Formalised, well maintained Mountain bike trails of different types (XC, downhill, gravity endure) for a variety of levels. Keep challenging natural, rocky features.
- More flow style like Majura/Stromlo.
- Providing signage and maps with loops/level of difficulty for mountain bike trails
- On-line maps.
- Dedicated walking trails and horse trails, separate trails for different users.
- Signage; dogs on-leash signage, trail/usage protocols to ensure respectful use of the area, signage at trail intersections.
- More regular grading and maintenance of fire trails for all users.
- Provide linkages to Centenary trail.
- Permanent orienteering course.
- Erosion control/drainage.
- Access to red hill/Garran via pedestrian/cycle bridge over Hindmarsh.
- Places to sit.
- Parking.
- Drinking water tap.
- No change – leave it as it is.

The majority of responses to this section were with respect to developing purpose built mountain bike trails (of a variety of types and skill levels) and associated signage.

Figure 4: Word Cloud for responses to question 4.

Question 5 - Do you support the creation of formal downhill mountain bike trails at Isaacs Ridge pines?

As we saw from the response to question 3, the majority of those surveyed use Isaacs Ridge pines for mountain biking, and therefore there was a large amount of support for the creation of formal downhill mountain bike trails.

However, more detailed assessment of the data, when broken down by user group (ie. walking, dog walking, running etc.) showed that within other user groups, people were also in support of mountain biking. The group with the least support was the equestrian users, 38% of whom answered no to this question, and 19% were unsure, although 43% of equestrian users were also in support.

Walkers, dog walkers and people orienteering showed relatively strong support for the upgrade of mountain bike trails with only 25%, 27% and 30% respectively responding no to this question.

Overall, only 11% of people said no and 9% were unsure, if people responded with no to this question they were asked why, and the key responses here were:

- Also want XC or other types of trails not just downhill.
- It will disrupt the peace/natural environment/ impact wildlife.
- Impact the ability of horse riders to safely access and use equestrian trails.
- Issues with respect to trail conduct/people experiencing rude mountain bikers.
- Safety issues.
- Noise.
- Erosion.
- Consider that there are already enough formal trails for mountain biking at other locations.

Question 6 - Would you like to see organised events at Isaacs Ridge Pines?
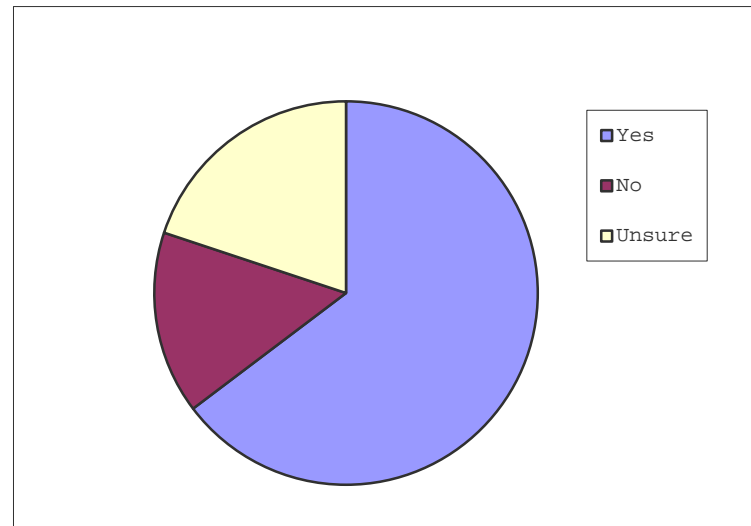

In response to the question about organised events, the majority said yes, the type of events mentioned included:

- Mountain biking (all styles – XC, gravity, downhill, enduro)
- Orienteering
- Walking
- Running
- Learn to ride
- Women's events
- Club Races
- Training
- Social/family/dog walks
- Trail building days
- Dog sleds;
- Equestrian endurance events

The majority of responses related to mountain biking events.

Question 7 - Would you be interested in volunteering to help manage and maintain the recreational facilities within Isaacs Ridge pines?
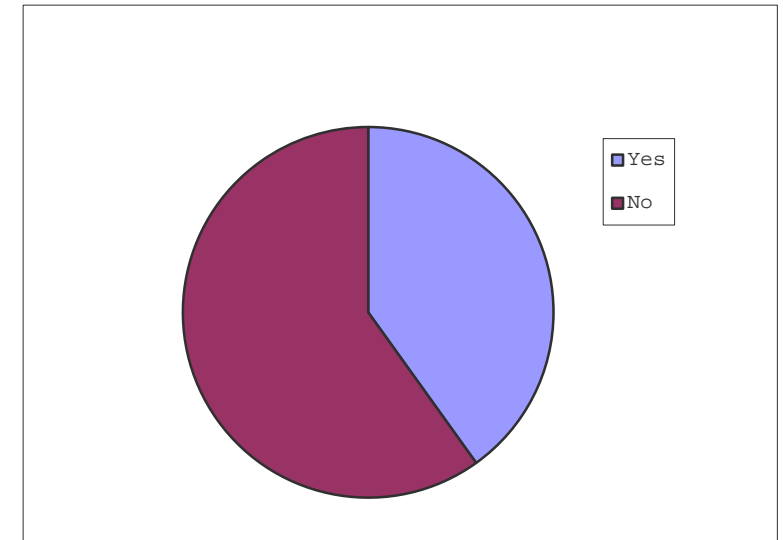
People were asked to register if they were interested in volunteering to help manage and maintain the recreational facilities within Isaacs Ridge Pines, 40% of respondents (118 people) said yes. If interested, people provided their email addresses or contact details in order to be involved in the development of trail alignments, trail construction and maintenance.

While there is a big difference between saying yes to this question in the survey and actually participating in a volunteer group, the number of positive responses suggests that there is enough interest to establish a group.

Question 8 - Please provide any further feedback or comments you have about Isaacs Ridge pines and the reserve more broadly:

This question asked for feedback or comments about Isaacs Ridge Pines and the reserve more broadly, 150 people responded to this question, a variety of responses were received.

Many responses indicated their enjoyment of Isaacs Ridge as an enjoyable place to visit and undertake recreational activities.

Parking as an issue was raised a number of times in these responses. The word cloud shows the words that were used most prominently; "trail", "ride", "great" "bike", "use".

Question 9 - In which suburb do you live?

Of those surveyed, 55 people were from Isaacs and 20 from Farrer, with others from various suburbs.

Are you satisfied with the opportunity to provide feedback on this project?

Most respondents were satisfied with the consultation with 49% very satisfied, 48% satisfied and 3% dissatisfied.

Please provide your email address if you would like to be updated on the Isaacs Ridge trail network upgrade

204 people provided their email addresses in response to this question.

4.2   Consultation Session

The consultation session provided the opportunity for the consultants and the ACT Government to engage with the community directly regarding the project. Twenty-five people attended this session which included attendees from the following groups:

-   Isaacs residents;
-   Farrer residents;
-   ACTEA;
-   CORC;
-   IRMMM Park Care;
-   Pedal Power.

Nine hard copy surveys were filled out at the session, and many of the attendees indicated that they had already completed the on-line survey.

Many mountain bikers attended this session indicating their support for the project, not only for downhill mountain bike trails, but also for cross country trails/loops and technical uphill trails.

A discussion between some of the attendees provided a good opportunity for different members of the community to understand the needs of different recreational users, for example the downhill mountain biking community indicated that they would be amenable to removing large jumps over the fire roads, which are a safety issue.

5 Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Outcomes and Summary

The consultation process reached a broad audience, and was able to engage with the key stakeholders and a large number of community members. The consultation process in particular reached, and received responses from a proportionately large number of the mountain biking community. This was evidenced in the large number of respondents who used the area for mountain biking and were keen to support the upgrade of mountain biking trails, maintenance of trails and to see events

A summary of the outcomes of the consultation process is detailed in the sections below.

General

There is general support for mountain biking, provided there is consideration of the varied users and the amenity of the area, being proximate to residents and popular for walking/ dog walking etc. and provided the area does not become a big mountain bike park similar to Majura or Stromlo.

People enjoy the amenity the area provides, and in particular the mature pine trees, which provide shade and shelter. The community want the pine trees to stay.

The Forestry representatives at PCS may be willing to relinquish their activities at Isaacs as it is only a small area that could be potentially harvested and it is not really economically viable. This would allow the pine trees to be managed for amenity rather than harvest value.

Maintenance and protection of native vegetation within the Nature reserve needs to be ensured.

Location of Trails

The preference would generally be to keep mountain bike trails within the pines area.

Park Care has indicated support for the possibility of link trails in other areas. This would be subject to detailed analysis of any proposed link but was generally discussed in the context of a link between the two main pine areas.

The preferred location for downhill trails is generally in the area where they have been in the past. This area provides for the best slopes and most options for construction. It also focusses the majority of this activity within the pine forest.

The preference would be to keep a buffer between residences and the mountain biking trails.

Type of Trails

With respect to downhill trails, the mountain biking community are keen to have some natural, technical, rough and rocky trails, that are of a hand built nature, with some difficult features (drop offs etc.)

They do not want machine built flow type trials for the downhill trails, like what have been built at Majura. This is likely to make the trails appeal to a narrower band of users, which would be appropriate given the general desire to avoid turning Isaacs into a mountain bike specific location.

User interactions

Intersections between downhill trails and maintenance roads need to be carefully managed to minimise conflicts between users.

There remain concerns about the interaction with bikes and horses. A risk management approach may be required to address this.

There is a big orienteering event booked for next Easter. The project will need to work closely with the event timeframes to avoid disruption to their mapping and course setting.

Developing appropriate signage for the area would be a key aspect of this project as it will help to manage the expectations of the users and to educate them on appropriate use of the area. This would include:

- User protocols, warning signs at intersections;
- Trail signage for all types of trails; and
- Trail maps on the ground and on-line.

Trail Maintenance Group

A large number of people (118) responded yes to the question in the survey about whether they'd be willing to help with trail maintenance. This indicates a good base from which a Trail Management Group could be formed. The survey process has provided contact details for these people.

5.2   Recommendations

Based upon the feedback from the community, we make the following recommendations to inform the development of the Isaacs Ridge trails masterplan:

There is wide support for the ongoing use of Isaacs pines for a variety of recreational activities including informal use and organised events. The trails masterplan needs to acknowledge all of these forms of recreation and seek to avoid conflicts wherever possible.

Specifically, the master plan needs to acknowledge walkers, runners, equestrians and people on bikes.

From the outset, the project was described as a 'mountain bike trails upgrade' there is sufficient support among the community to pursue the upgrade of downhill trails to a level that allows them to be sanctioned for events. There is also sufficient support for the construction of a limited amount of cross country style trail, but not a full mountain bike park. The master plan should reflect this.

There is no clear plan for the pine forest area. It is currently being managed as a productive forest but it is of marginal value for harvest. The community enjoys the amenity it provides and a change in the forest management to focus on amenity should be formalised.

The ongoing management of the pine trees by Forestry within PCS should be considered. If the trees are taken out of production then the apparent role of Forestry will be diminished, however management of the estate by Forestry makes a clear distinction between the areas that are available for higher intensity recreation and those being managed for conservation outcomes.

Irrespective of the management responsibilities, a vegetation management plan and succession planning for the site should be undertaken. Some of the highest amenity pine areas will reach the end of their safe lifespan over the next 20 years. Replacement planting needs to be considered relatively soon to retain this amenity.

Consider removing the jumps over the management trails as one of the first pieces of work. This would remove the focal point for many of the safety concerns. As an alternative, they could be fenced off only for use during races or special events. CORC have indicated that significant trail features could be constructed within the pine forest, so there is no specific need for them to be at the management trails.

Consider pruning and thinning work in the pines prior to any trail construction works to avoid subsequent disturbance of the trails.

The most significant risk of user conflict will occur where downhill mountain bike trails cross the management trails. To reduce the risk of conflict it is suggested that up to four crossing points are agreed and that in those locations the trails are carefully designed and constructed to ensure a slow approach speed (using tight corners or technical trail features) and generous site lines.

Once the crossing points are agreed, the trail maintenance group could be given relatively generous licence to construct trail within the pine forest areas, subject to sustainable trail design codes etc.

CORC have expressed a desire to review trail alignments and the trail management report prior to finalisation. It is recommended that all stakeholders be given this review opportunity.

Planning for equestrian uses on a broader scale should be undertaken to ensure the equestrian community's needs are met with respect to adequate trail loops. Ongoing liaison with the equestrian community will be needed to review the proposed master plan and the proposed arrangement for trail crossing points.

The Equestrian community would like routes made available so that riders from agistment areas either to the north or south of Isaacs Ridge can undertake a loop during a ride. This might mean continuity of the equestrian trail around the private agistment property in the north east part of the reserve, and providing a loop route in the southern part of the reserve.

None of the stakeholders identified any significant needs for infrastructure to support the hosting of events. The primary area for improvement is the need for car parking and ensuring car parking entry onto Long Gully road is safe as this is an 80km/hour zone. This access point should be reviewed by Roads ACT or a consultant engineer.

Liaise with and provide proposed trail routes to ACT orienteering so they can plan for their event at Easter 2016.

Numerous individuals and CORC are keen to be
involved in trail construction and maintenance
works. There is an opportunity to run a trail
building workshop as part of these works as an
opportunity to teach people how to build safe,
sustainable trails and choose suitable alignments.
This may also help in minimising unauthorised trail
building.