

7. KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK

7.1 Description¹⁵

Location, size

Kosciusko National Park is located in the Snowy Mountains region of New South Wales. It covers 690 km².

Major natural features

The park incorporates the headwaters of major river systems. It includes Australia's highest mountain and some of the relatively small area of Australia which is alpine environment and snow covered during winter.

History

The National Park was reserved in 1944.

Management arrangements

Park planning and management and day-to-day management is undertaken by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. A Management Plan was published in 1988, with draft amendments proposed in 1991.

Management funding

In 1992-93, around \$7 million was raised from entry fees, commercial leases and other commercial activities in Kosciusko National Park. Around half the revenue came from Park entry fees. These funds were directed to the general budget of the NSW NPWS. In addition, around \$3.85 million was raised on a fee for service basis from users (including the equivalent of municipal rates for services provided to the resort settlements) and this revenue went to Special Purpose Accounts to be spent on specific services. A total of \$10.85 million was therefore generated from the Park.

Funds spent in the Park included the \$3.85 million from the Special Purpose Accounts, plus \$5 million in capital works and \$2.6 million in salaries and general operations funded directly from the budget of the NSW NPWS. A total of \$11.45 million was spent in the Park.

Management objectives

The management objectives identified in the 1988 Plan of Management are as follows:

- to preserve and protect the outstanding scenery and natural features
- to protect the mountain catchments
- to conserve wildlife
- to protect the natural features, landmarks and special scientific sites
- to maintain the natural environmental processes as far as possible
- to preserve and protect Aboriginal sites and historic features
- to protect recreational opportunities and wilderness values
- to encourage scientific and educational enquiry into environmental features and processes, prehistoric and historic features and Park-use patterns
- to encourage appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the natural and cultural features and recreational opportunities by the public
- to provide the broadest possible range of opportunities for appropriate use and experience of the Park, consistent with other objectives
- to protect the Park against the damaging effects of fire, erosion, environmental pollution and other disturbances
- to seek the most efficient provision of facilities and allocation of management resources possible
- to co-operate with communities, local government councils and other organisations in the Park region to co-ordinate environmental planning and resource management.

¹⁵ Information was compiled from *Kosciusko National Park Plan of Management Second Edition*, NSW NPWS, 1988, and personal communication from NSW NPWS staff.

Major uses

The protection of water catchments was a major impetus for reservation of the Park in 1944. Subsequent construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme resulted in aqueducts and reservoirs within the Park. As noted in appendix 2, the values of water catchment services are likely to be significant. No information on the financial or economic values of water catchment services has been included in this report. While water catchment protection remains important, the primary use of the Park today is nature conservation and conservation of cultural features.

Tourism and recreation is the major direct use of the Park, see 7.2 below.

Grazing has been phased out, though three stock routes are maintained. Other uses prohibited are timber harvesting, mining, agriculture and apiary. Limited quarrying is allowed.

7.2 Kosciusko National Park tourism and recreation

Kosciusko National Park includes the only snowfields in New South Wales and a significant ski industry has developed. The Park is also increasingly a focus for summer activities of walking, camping, horse riding and resort sports including golf and tennis.

The Park is currently estimated to receive 3 million visits per year; that is, people through the gates, whether they are day visitors or people staying for longer periods using accommodation within the park. It is thought that visits are becoming more evenly distributed across the seasons with 50 per cent of visitors in winter and 50 per cent in summer. Until recently, the distribution was thought to be 60 per cent in winter and 40 per cent in summer.¹⁶

A strategy for monitoring visits to Kosciusko National Park is currently being designed and when implemented should lead to better visitor information in the future.

Kosciusko National Park differs from many other National Parks and protected areas as it includes substantial built accommodation and tourist infrastructure within the Park. There are four resort areas; Thredbo, Perisher-Smiggin, Charlotte Pass and Mt Selwyn. In 1989, total accommodation capacity was 7614 beds. There are ski facilities (lifts, hire shops, retail shops, food outlets, ski schools) at most of these resorts and also at Guthega and Mt Blue Cow. The Skitube runs from Bullocks Flat to Mt Blue Cow. These resort areas also cater for summer visitors and the Skitube and some lifts provide transport for walkers and sightseers. Commercial cross country ski tours operate in the park. There is limited private snow camping. In summer, private camping is a popular activity.

Many visitors to the Park find accommodation in Jindabyne, Cooma and smaller adjacent towns, and visit the Park as day visitors.

Financial values

Expenditure by tourists to Kosciusko National Park is estimated at \$640 million for 1991-92. This estimate is based on data from Alpine Resorts in Victoria and for this reason is an order-of-magnitude estimate only.

Calculating financial values

The gross financial value of tourism and recreation in Kosciusko National Park is the expenditure by visitors associated with their visits. This information is currently not available for Kosciusko National Park. A study to estimate direct expenditure and multiplier effects is currently underway and results should be available 1994.

A minimum estimate of expenditure can be derived from NSW Tourism Commission statistics for Local Government Areas. The Snowy Rivers Shire incorporates the Kosciusko resorts plus Jindabyne (but not

¹⁶ Personal communication NSW NPWS.

Cooma). In 1991-92, the number of visitors who stayed overnight was 330 000 and they spent 1.3 million visitor nights in the shire. Their expenditure in the shire was \$94 million.¹⁷

Information from a 1991 study of the Alpine Resorts in Victoria (Buckby et al. 1993) may be used to give a ballpark estimate of financial values of tourism and recreation in Kosciusko National Park. The Victorian Alpine Resorts attracted 807 000 visits in the winter of 1991. There were an additional 200 000 non winter visits to the Victorian High Country. The total number of visitor days was 1.64 million.

Gross expenditure by winter visitors was estimated at \$230 million (an average of \$285 per visit) with an additional \$39 million spent by non winter visitors (an average of \$195 per visit). The total expenditure for about 1 million visits was \$269 million. This figure includes travel to the Alpine Region. Travel costs were relatively low as 85 per cent of visitors were from Victoria and used buses or private cars for transport. The total travel costs were around \$20 million; an average of \$20 per visit.

It is possible, but not necessarily accurate, to make a direct extrapolation from the data for Victoria to Kosciusko National Park on the basis of estimates of the number of visits to both sites. It is not clear that the basis for defining and measuring 'visits' is directly comparable (for Kosciusko, this is clearly an estimate made in the absence of comprehensive system for recording visits). Further, the average length of stay in resorts or adjacent accommodation will influence the total expenditure as will the proportion of visitors who stay in resorts or the generally less expensive off-snow accommodation.

A direct extrapolation from Victoria to Kosciusko National Park, has been made, based on average winter and non winter expenditure per visit in Victoria and 3 million visits to Kosciusko split evenly between winter and summer. This gives a figure of the order of \$700 million gross expenditure associated with visits to Kosciusko National Park including travel to the Park. Excluding travel at \$20 per visit, which is likely to be an underestimate for Kosciusko, the gross expenditure is estimated at \$640 million. This should be treated as a ballpark estimate only. The results of the above mentioned study, due at the end of 1993 should give a much more accurate estimate.

It is interesting to note some of the other results of the Buckby et al. (1993) study. This study measured economic impacts using input output analysis. The authors calculated the net economic impact of the Victorian alpine resorts region to the state of Victoria by including the expenditure of all visitors to Victoria plus expenditure by only those Victorian residents who would have taken a holiday outside the state but were enticed to remain in Victoria by the attractions of the alpine resorts. The net economic impact was calculated at \$200 million (contribution to Gross State Product), with 5700 associated jobs. It is not relevant to extrapolate these results to Kosciusko as they are based on characteristics of the Victorian economy.

¹⁷ Personal communication NSW Tourism Commission.

TABLE 7.1 KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK

<i>USES</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<i>GROSS FINANCIAL VALUES</i>	<i>ECONOMIC VALUES</i>
PRIMARY USES			
Nature conservation	690 km ² of relatively undisturbed natural environment.	Nil, however these attributes provide the resource base for potentially sustainable direct uses which generate financial values	These attributes provide the resource base for economic values of potentially sustainable direct uses plus the economic values of non-market indirect uses
Conservation of cultural features	Historical sites.		Economic values of non-market indirect uses have not been measured for Kosciusko National Park.
COMPATIBLE DIRECT USES			
Tourism and recreation	Approximately 3 million visits per year	Direct: of the order of \$640 million (1991) Direct plus travel: of the order of \$700 million (1991)	not known
Highways and roads	not described	not known	not known
Telecommunications	not described	not known	not known
Water catchment services	not described	not known	not known
Research	not described	not known	not known