

11. Tallarook Plateau



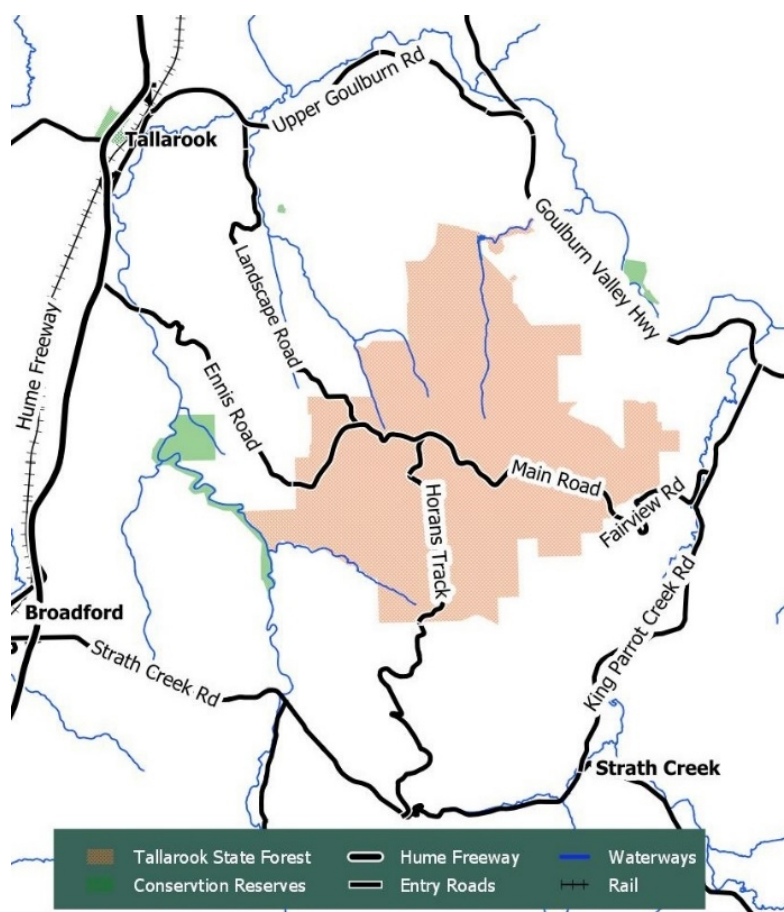
Tallarook Plateau is a high plateau of granite boulders, steep escarpments, deep valleys and moist forests. Most of the plateau is State Forest, with private land mostly on the western side. This is a rich and diverse forest with many walks and picnic/camping areas. Some areas have been affected by past logging and fuel reduction burning but patches of old growth forest remain. Main Road runs through the State Forest from Ennis Road and Fairview Road with side roads leading south to the highest point at Mount Hickey and north to Trawool Reservoir.

The Tallarook Plateau is on the land of the Taungurung People and has many waterways and other sites of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#). We acknowledge their Elders past and present and emerging, and their care of Country over many millennia. We ask that all people respect this ancient heritage and care for the land we now share.

Directions

ENTRY ROADS: Main Road runs east-west through the Forest for 10.2 km. It can be joined from four directions.

From the west: Ennis Road is off the Hume Freeway south of Tallarook. It crosses Dabyminga Creek, climbs across the steep slope of Brown Range, enters the granite country at 3.3km and finally becomes Main Road at the entrance to the State Forest at 7.5 km.



From the east: Fairview Road is off King Parrot Creek Road 2.8 km from the Goulburn Valley Highway. The road climbs a spur onto the plateau, becoming Main Road at the Forest boundary 4.4 km from King Parrot Creek Road.

From the south: Horans Track runs off the Strath Creek Road at Murchison Gap and follows a ridgeline up to the Forest entrance (at 7.4 km). It merges with Mount Hickey Road and this road runs northeast to Main Road 13 km from Murchison Gap. The intersection with Main Road is 4.2 km and 6.0 km from the west and east entrances to the Forest respectively.

From the north: Landscape Road runs off the Upper Goulburn Road

east of Tallarook. It is a steep alternative route onto the plateau. After 9.8 km, Landscape Road meets Main Road 4.2 km from the west and 6.0 km from the east entrances to the Forest.

ACCESS ROADS: from Main Road, access roads run to scenic locations, camping areas and walks:

Freemans Camp: Camping and picnic area nestling in the forested slopes above the upper reaches of Mill Creek. The turnoff into Freemans Road is 3.0 km from the west and 7.2km from the east entrances to the Forest. The camp is 100m down Freemans Road.

Mount Hickey: Mount Hickey Road heads south 4.2 km from the west and 6.0km from the east entrances to the Forest. At 1.1 km, Horans Track branches left (south) and Mount Hickey Road continues right another 2.3 km to the summit. The road crosses granite slopes then metamorphic

rock along the ridge to the summit. The fire tower is on the highest point of the plateau at 800m. Watch for the granite slabs and rocky outcrop vegetation just past the Horans Track intersection.

Trawool Reservoir: East Falls Road runs north off Main Road and starts 8.1 km from the west and 2.1km from the east entrances to the Forest. After 400m, Falls Creek Road branches left down Falls Creek valley, then crosses Falls Creek into Reservoir Road. This road continues beside Falls Creek to the picnic area with toilets and fishing platforms. These roads may be rough with a surface of ballast rocks.

Alternative routes to the Reservoir are East Falls Road which is rough and rocky from Warragul Rocks down to the Reservoir and West Falls Road that has a steep rough descent down to the Reservoir. They are not recommended for 2WD vehicles.

Note: Gates to the Reservoir on Falls Creek Road (past Falls Link Road intersection), East Falls Road (past Warragul Rocks) and West Falls Road (before the descent to the Reservoir) have gates that may be closed due to track and seasonal conditions.



Warning: The State Forest is popular with 4WD and trailbikes. These may be speeding on narrow tracks and are often in convoys, particularly during weekends.



Warning: Tallarook State Forest has a confusing network of roads that may or may not be passable to vehicles due to fallen trees, boggy conditions or washouts at any time. For more information, see maps and map notes below and check the FFMV website for [Seasonal Forest Road Closures](#).

Walking Tracks

Most roads and tracks are used by 4WDs and motorbikes, but closed roads and some less-used roads are good for exploring the Forest on foot. The Plateau also has a few designated off-road walking tracks.

Falls Creek Track: A walking track from near Trawool Resort on the Goulburn Valley Highway climbs up beside Falls Creek to Goulburn Valley Water (GVW)'s retired Trawool Reservoir. GVW has partnered with Taungurung Land and Waters Council to develop **Gawarn Baring**, a walking track adjacent to Falls Road. Both routes are steep with loose rocks and good footwear is recommended. The distance to and from the Highway is about 5.8 km there and back with a climb of 390m (from [AllTrails](#)) gvwater.vic.gov.au/gawarn-baring

Brockwells Track: a closed road between Falls Creek Road and East Falls Road. This track begins at the bridge over Falls Creek at the junction with Falls Creek Road and Reservoir Road. The track climbs steeply with some deeply eroded sections that are slippery and easier to ascend. At a T intersection, tracks go north to East Falls Road between Trawool Reservoir and Warragul Rocks, and south to East Falls Road south of Tassie Camp. *Brockwells Loop Walk* can begin at the Reservoir back along Reservoir Road to the bridge and up Brockwells Track, turning left at the

T intersection and left again at East Falls Road back to the Reservoir. Total distance 9.3 km. The walk is best done anticlockwise to avoid slipping in erosion areas.

Red Hill Track: Red Hill Track and Bracken Track are closed to vehicles. Red Hill Track starts at a parking area 100m past the Fairview Road entrance to the Forest. It crosses the King Parrot Creek Granodiorite and cleared land that is returning to forest. The track is initially overgrown with fallen logs and Burgan. It runs down to a flowing creek about 700m past the gate. The track then climbs steeply with severe erosion gullies that need to be cautiously navigated. The track eases when it reaches the plateau. It turns right into Bracken Track, passes a ridge of metamorphic rock to the west and ends at the Bracken Track/Main Road intersection after 6.75 km. The car park is another 2.0 km back down Main Road.

Warragul Rocks: a great viewing site from a granite bluff overlooking the Trawool Valley. **Note** that Warragul Rocks is on private land that should be respected. Enter through a gate on East Falls Road 4.3 km from Main Road. The viewing point is 250m from the road.



Warning: Warragul Rocks curves downwards to a steep cliff and there are no barriers. Stay well back on the gentle slope.

Army Road bushwalks: Army Road branches off Main Road with a parking space 450m down, opposite Georges Road. This area is old growth forest. Several unmarked tracks loop from the parking area down towards the headwaters of Falls Creek. These tracks are rough and indistinct and require navigational skills.

More tracks are planned, including a route along Mill Creek and up to Pulpit Rock Scenic Reserve in the northwest of the plateau overlooking the Goulburn Valley.



No tracks in the Forest are suitable for all abilities.



Picnic tables and shelters are at Freemans Camp and Trawool Reservoir



Camping is available with all facilities at Freemans Camp and Trawool Reservoir and bush camping with no facilities at Tassie Camp on East Falls Road. Fires can be lit at camp sites subject to [Fire Restrictions and Regulations](#).



Toilets are available at Freemans Camp and Trawool Reservoir.

Landform and Geology

Most of the land of Mitchell Shire began as deep sediments laid down in the sea more than 360 million years ago, then uplifted to create dry land. The Trawool Plateau began around 380 million years ago as an intrusion of molten rock into these older sediments. The intrusion crystallised as a thick layer of *Strathbogrie Granite* 1-3 km beneath the surface of the land, with a smaller batholith of King Parrot Creek Granodiorite in the southeast. The heat of the molten rock slowly baked the surrounding sediments into a metamorphic aureole of hornfels (= hard rock). Over hundreds of millennia, the surface eroded leaving the hard granite and hornfels as a high plateau. The Goulburn River has cut through the granite, separating the Tallarook and Strathbogrie Ranges.

The west and south faces of the plateau are mostly steep slopes of the metamorphic aureole. This includes Brown Range and Mount Hickey facing west to south. Mt Hickey is 800m above sea level, the highest point in the plateau. On the east side, King Parrot Creek has worn down most of the aureole so that the upper slopes are granite with a spur of metamorphic rock jutting into the Goulburn River valley at Kerrisdale.

Across the north, the Goulburn River has cut through the aureole leaving relatively narrow gaps at the Kerrisdale and Trawool ends of the Trawool Valley and wider river flats with river meanders through the granite country (such as Horseshoe Lagoon). The river has exposed some spectacular granite slopes and bluffs (such as Warragul Rocks). The river emerges from the Trawool Valley, then weaves back through the metamorphic aureole and out again, leaving some isolated hills of metamorphic rock such as Camp Hill before heading north to Seymour.



On the plateau, the county is more undulating with streams mostly running north across the plateau from the high southern ridgeline formed by the metamorphic aureole. Ferris Creek from Mount Hickey joins Mill Creek at a spectacular series of granite cascades near Landscape Road and Pulpit Rock northeast of the State Forest. Falls Creek also runs north through the Forest in a deepening valley to the Trawool Reservoir then cascades down to the Goulburn River.

The southern edge of the plateau off the metamorphic aureole is steep. A series of short streams and cascades run into larger streams running east from Horans Track to King Parrot Creek and west along Stony Creek to Dabyminga Creek near Davis Road (at the upstream end of Dabyminga Creek Bushland Reserve).

Vegetation

Most of the plateau is mapped as Herb-rich Foothill Forest but this can vary widely and is interspersed with patches of other ecological vegetation communities. [Herb-rich Foothill Forest](#) covers most of the granite hills and slopes of the plateau, with tall trees over a rich shrub and ground layer. The forest is dominated by Messmate on the higher and drier slopes and Blue Gums and Manna Gums in the damper lower slopes.



Many places in the Forest still have old growth forest, with many very large old trees and several generations of younger trees, a dense and diverse shrub layer including Musk Daisy Bush and Prickly Currant-bush, and a grassy herb-rich ground layer with Weeping Grass and wildflowers, and fungi in autumn. Good old growth sites include the headwaters of Mill Creek along Freemans Rd / Wheelers Track and Falls Creek near Army Road.

Some areas, such as the lower north slopes of Mount Hickey have a grassier ground layer merging up the slope into Grassy Dry Forest. Sprawling Mountain Flat-pea covers large patches of ground on these slopes, as do Spiny-headed Mat-rush and Bracken in some areas. South-eastern parts of the forest on metamorphic ridges are very dry with scattered shrubs and a ground covered with litter but few plants. Other areas that have been more disturbed by fire or logging have a more even-aged or even sparse tree layer and often an understorey dominated by bracken or Sweet Vernal Grass. In a few burnt areas, particularly below Mount Hickey, there is a dense regeneration of Blue Gums. Overall, Herb-rich Foothill Forest is a very variable ecological vegetation community.

[Grassy Dry Forest](#) occurs on the dry north and west facing slopes (notably on the metamorphic rocks on Brown Range and Mount Hickey and on the dry sedimentary ridges lower down Horans Track. This community has Red Stringybarks, Red Box and Long-leafed Box with Yellow Box in



some sheltered areas. Coming up Ennis Road, there is quite an abrupt change from Grassy Dry Forest on metamorphic slopes to the Blue Gums of Herb-rich Foothill Forest on the granite plateau. The trees on this west-facing slope suffered a lot of dieback during the hot dry 2018/19 Spring and Summer but most have recovered.

[Granitic Hills Woodland](#) also occur in places with rocky shallower granitic soils, often associated with the fascinating [Rocky Outcrop Shrubland/](#)

[Herbland Mosaics](#). The Mosaics have shallow soils of humus that hold moisture running off the granite slabs. Good examples are on the granite slabs on the north side of the Mount Hickey Road and up the slope from Falls East Road opposite Tassie Camp. The Mosaics have dense patches of low shrubs such as Large-leaf Bush-pea and low ground cover with mosses, Rock-ferns, Pelargoniums and many tiny annuals that can grow without grassy competition in Spring. In some areas, trees and shrubs in the surrounding woodland have died back, possibly due to the impact of recent hot dry Springs and Summers on areas with shallow soils.

Damp Forest occurs in the deeper narrow shaded valleys, particularly those on the southern slopes. These forests have a similar mix of eucalypts to the surrounding forests but with Manna Gums more abundant. Silver Wattles and Blackwoods form layers over a diversity understorey species including Austral King-ferns and Rough and Slender Tree-ferns. These deep valleys open out into broader flood-plains of [Riparian Forest](#) with Manna Gums and often a dense understorey of Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra*), visible along Reservoir Road.

As would be expected, the Tallarook Plateau has a rich diversity of plant species for anyone interested in native plants. State databases have listed 286 plant species including two threatened species, but recent surveys initiated by BEAM Mitchell Environment Group has identified another 86 species including the tree ferns and another four threatened species. There are more areas to be surveyed and more species to be found. Plant lists are in preparation.

Wildlife

The Tallarook Plateau is home to a diversity of species that are typical of the tall moist forests. This includes several threatened species. [Greater Gliders](#) (Endangered) have been shown to be widespread in the forest, along with several other possums and gliders. [Gang Gangs](#) (Endangered) are also a feature occasionally moving down to the lower country and townships. [Powerful Owls](#) (Vulnerable) have very large home ranges to provide their needs for large nest hollows and many food species such as possums and gliders that also need the tree hollows in forests.

Species list is in preparation.

Aboriginal history

The Tallarook Plateau is on the land of the Taungurung People. It includes many waterways and other sites of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#).

The Tallarooks are Yawang (Stone Country), and link through to the Strathbogies. From Yawang, views open out across vast areas of Taungurung Biik (Country). From here you can see where Waring (the Goulburn River) passes through the range. During times of gathering, the progress of camp fires would mark who was travelling across Country and when they might be expected to arrive. Yawang is rich in expressions of culture: archaeological material, cultur-

ally modified trees, quarries and grinding grooves all characterise this landscape. (from the Taungurung Nation Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle, 2023, p. 16)

History after colonisation

Hume and Hovell crossed the south of the Plateau in December 1824, over the divide between Strath Creek and Dabyminga Creeks after giving up on a Mount Disappointment route. They returned on the western side of the plateau to their Goulburn River Crossing near Camp Hill. From 1837, the best agricultural land was taken by squatters with large mobs of sheep and cattle. The Settlement Acts from the 1860s offered settlers land within defined agricultural areas.

The Tallarook Plateau was opened for settlement in the 1870s. Much of the land was cleared and trees removed for timber and firewood, but significant areas were left as forest. Following the 1939 and 1943 fires, the government resumed some of the land as Crown Land and State Forest with logging continuing until recently.

Forest management is under Forest Fire Management Victoria, and a big part of that management is fuel reduction burning. The effect of this burning is particularly obvious in the high (and drier) southern parts of the plateau around Mount Hickey.

Following recognition of the large Greater Glider population in the forest, an 893 ha Special Protection Zone was created in 2022 north of Main Road between Freemans Road and East Falls Road. Then, in 2023, the State Government decided to cease logging in native forests. This heralds a change of the way the forest will be used and managed. Watch out for the next stages to protect the biodiversity of these forests.

Management

Tallarook State Forest is Crown land managed by Forest Fire Management Victoria (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action). Trawool Reservoir and surrounds are managed by Goulburn Valley Water. Parks Victoria is responsible for the nearby Pulpit Rock Scenic Reserve, Dabyminga Creek Bushland Reserve. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change is probably responsible for some of the crown waterways running through the private land.

The Crown land is included in the [Land Use Activity Agreement](#), a part of the [Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement](#).

Further information

Forest Fire Management Victoria:

Forest Notes: Tallarook State Forest Recreation and Camping Guide

https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/26392/FS0059-Tallarook-State-Forest-Recreation-and-Camping-Guide.pdf

Road closures: <https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/permits-and-regulations/closures-of-parks-and-forests>

Neil Phillips and John Clemens (2017). Geology of the Tallarook Plateau. Outdoor Recreation Australia, Central Park, Australia.

Taungurung Land and Water Council at <https://taungurung.com.au/>

Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement at <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/native-title/taungurung-recognition-and-settlement-agreement>.

Taungurung Nation Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle, M. Hansby, L. Riches and M. Nurse. *Rapid Biocultural Expressions Assessment of the State Forests within the Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement (CHRFA) area occurring on Taungurung Country*. Taungurung Land and Waters Council. December 2023.

https://taungurung.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/RapidBioculturalAssessment_CHRFA_Final_20240319.pdf.

AllTrails at <https://www.alltrails.com/parks/australia/victoria/tallarook-state-forest>. Some of the many alternative walking routes over the plateau have been mapped with AllTrails.

Goulburn Broken CMA Revegetation Guide: information on different ecological vegetation communities, plant communities and plants in the Ranges zone at <https://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/revegetation/zones/ranges>

Acknowledgements

This Reserve Note was prepared by BEAM Mitchell Environment Group. Thanks to Mitchell Shire Council for their assistance and support. Information on tracks was provided by Forest Fire Management Victoria staff in Broadford.

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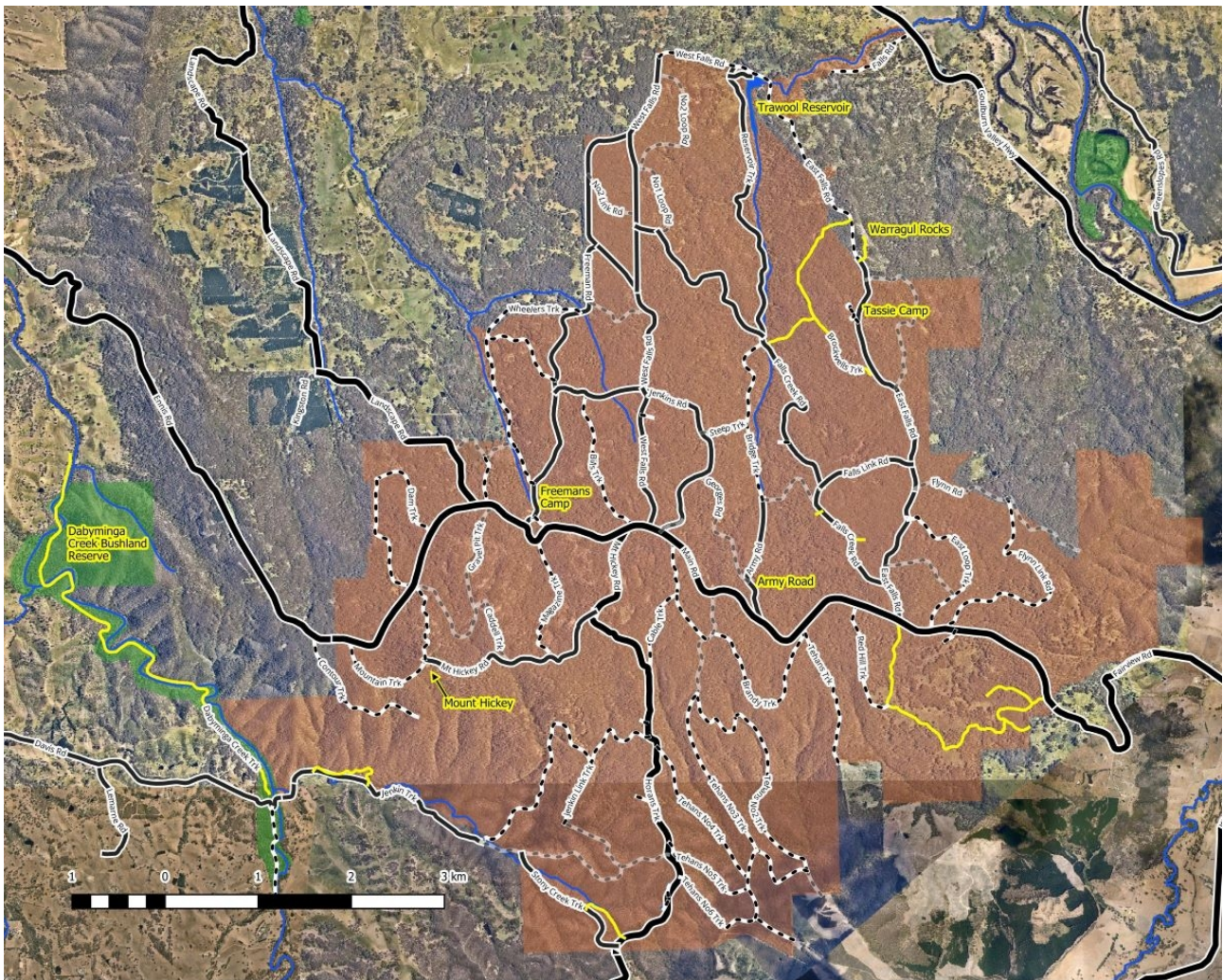
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These notes are a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of the Tallarook Plateau, please contact us at

<https://www.beam.org.au/contact>



Tallarook Plateau



	Tallarook State Forest and Waterfront Reserves		All weather roads generally suitable for 2WD vehicles but subject to change
	Other reserves (Parks Victoria)		Vehicle tracks, may be steep or rough or impassable due to bogs, logs, washouts and erosion
	Waterways		Vehicle roads and tracks not yet assessed, use with caution
	Gates		Walking tracks, including closed and unmaintained vehicle tracks
	Campsites		

Notes on roads and tracks

Tallarook State Forest has many roads and tracks that may or may not be passable due to seasonal conditions, damage after fire or floods, or lack of maintenance particularly after severe damage. Road and track conditions can vary at any time and maps cannot be relied on to indicate track conditions. Caution is needed at all times.

Roads are marked and named as “Roads” on maps and signposts. Roads are generally single lane but passable for 2WD and 4WD vehicles, subject to changes in condition...

Tracks are also marked on the map and many are named as “Tracks” on maps and signposts. Some tracks are not named. Tracks are single lane, rough, often steep, and unsuitable for 2WD vehicles. They are also more likely to be unsuitable for 4WD vehicles because road conditions such as bogs, steep slopes, erosion gullies and fallen trees.

Closed roads and tracks:

- Some roads and tracks have been closed permanently with barriers. Most are identified on the map but more may be closed in the future. They are proposed – and marked – as walking tracks on the map.
- Some roads and tracks are closed seasonally to prevent damage or when tracks are already damaged and needing repairs. Access to Trawool Reservoir is seasonally closed along West Falls Road, Falls Creek Road and East Falls Road. Check the FFMV website for [Seasonal Forest Road Closures](#).
- Some tracks have been designated “Road Ummaintained” on online maps. Most are being allowed to become overgrown and disappear into the forest, although a few are still in active use. Many older tracks have already disappeared and are no longer on maps. Some but not all are shown on the maps, mostly as walking tracks.

There are more detailed maps on the following pages.

