

Guidelines for the Formation and Management of Volunteer Environmental Groups within the Central Coast Municipal Area

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1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been prepared by the Central Coast Council to assist with the management of new and existing volunteer environmental groups.

The Central Coast Council is privileged to have a number of dedicated groups undertaking beneficial environmental works within its parks and reserves. These guidelines have been developed to help foster a good working relationship between these groups and the Council.

Initially the Council will encourage individuals to join an existing group however if this is not applicable then consideration will be given to the formation of a new group. The Council will provide ongoing support to new and existing groups, through assistance with administration, advice, financial and in-kind support. These groups provide the opportunity for local community members to actively care for a local park or reserve.

Many local people have a wealth of knowledge about the natural and cultural history of an area and by joining a volunteer group this knowledge can be used in a positive way.

These groups are an asset to both the Council and the community and their efforts can have both a positive environmental and social effect.

2. ROLE OF VOLUNTEER ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

A volunteer environmental group (such as a Coastcare, Landcare or Friends of) is a group of people with a shared interest in supporting a particular conservation reserve or species of native flora or fauna through voluntary efforts.

All groups need to be open to new memberships as no particular skills are required to assist with these types of works. Groups can vary in size, activities and structure. Some may have a large membership with both active and nominal members. Others have a small membership of dedicated members. The majority of groups will undertake weekly or monthly activities. Each group must provide details of one or two members to be the lead contacts for the Council (located in Appendix A).

The objectives of each group must include:

- The protection and preservation of the natural environment of the park or reserve.
- Protection and preservation of the indigenous flora and fauna and features (geological, scenic, archaeological, historic or scientific) in the park or reserve.
- Educating and informing the community about the role and values of the park or reserve.
- Fostering community involvement in, and enjoyment of, the park or reserve in accordance with the above objectives.

The Council's support for a group may include providing:

- Administrative support such as with the production and distribution of newsletters or preparation of funding applications.
- Managing project budgets.
- Organising contractors for various projects.
- Venue(s) for meetings.
- In-kind support for various projects.
- Providing advice on various projects.

Volunteers can expect the Council to:

- Engage volunteers in meaningful and worthwhile tasks.
- Respect and acknowledge the contribution of volunteers.
- Collaboratively involve volunteers in identifying, planning and delivering activities and build opportunities for involvement of volunteers in shared decision making.
- Provide an agreed level of supervision, support, resources, instruction and training.
- Maintain effective dialogue and build trustful relationships with volunteers.
- Provide feedback and constructive comment aimed to improve volunteer effectiveness.

The Council will expect volunteers to:

- Demonstrate professional behavior towards Council staff, other volunteers and the public.
- Collaborate with the Council in activity planning and implementation, paying due respect to the Council's management objectives, capacity and responsibilities.
- Follow specific instructions, requirements and guidelines and take reasonable care of themselves and others.
- Take opportunities to improve individual and group skills and capabilities for participation in on-ground works.
- Recognise and not exceed individual physical and skill limits.
- Provide constructive feedback aimed at improving the Council's management of volunteer activities.

3. FORMING A VOLUNTEER ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

The following points are to be used as a guide for the development of a new group.

- Ascertain if there is already a volunteer environmental group working in or near the area in which you are interested. It may be easier or more productive to join with an established group.
- Get clear in your mind your reasons for wanting to start a group and write them down.

- The Central Coast Council's Parks/NRM Officer is available to facilitate the formation of a new group.
- Discuss your idea with your friends or local people to "test the water". You may be lucky enough to locate one or more people who have an interest in starting a group.
- Be sure you and the key people have the time, energy and capacity to lead the group, at least for the first year of operation (or find someone who can and enlist their cooperation).
- Approach the Council and obtain their permission for the formation of the group.
- Organise a meeting.
- Keep minutes or a written record of decisions or agreements made at the meeting.
- Obtain names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, occupations, interests and skills of all people wishing to be members of the group. Try to involve people of all ages and backgrounds. Keep the membership list up-to-date. A membership form is located in Appendix B.

The Council recommends that new groups developing use the Coastcare *New Group Starter Kit* Guide. The Council can provide a copy or the guide can be downloaded at http://www.coastcare.com.au/WMS/Upload/Resources/NEW_GROUP_STARTER_KIT_COASTCARE.pdf.

4. UNDERTAKING WORKS

Volunteer environmental groups undertake many and varied on-ground projects in parks and reserves, promote community awareness and provide learning and social opportunities.

Works can include research and survey work, seed collecting and plant propagation, litter control, nature rambles and guided walks and environmental weeding and revegetation.

It is important to remember that a volunteer environmental group is a support group and not the management authority. The group whilst being autonomous and independent should operate in partnership with the Council.

The Council holds a recreational licence from Crown Land Services that essentially covers the coastal foreshore area from the western side of the Forth River to Blythe Heads. The foreshore areas can also be adjacent to private property, road and rail reservations and it is important not to encroach on these boundaries without the appropriate approval from relevant land owners.

The group must agree to abide by the following points:

- All proposed works to be undertaken must be developed in close consultation with Council.
- Approval for all works must be obtained from the Council prior to commencement.
- Works should be satisfying to participants and must be of benefit to the park or reserve and in accordance with any new or existing management plan developed by the Council for the site.
- Projects should not include any work which would otherwise have been included in the Council's planned annual works program.
- All works must be carried out in accordance with acceptable Occupational Health and Safety standards and section 6 of these guidelines.

A plan will be developed for the working area of each group located in Appendix C.

National events that groups are encouraged to participate in are identified in Table 1.

Table 1: National Events

Event	Month
Clean Up Australia Day	March
National Tree Day	July
Coastcare Week	December

5. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

Promoting the great work that volunteer community groups do and fostering protection of the park or reserve at the same time is an important role of the groups. The most common method is through newsletters and publications. Newsletters can be released at time intervals desired to keep members and the public informed of past and future activities. They are a useful way to keep a record of the many achievements and to entice new members to get involved.

All correspondence to be distributed to the Community must be sighted and approved by the Council prior to release.

6. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is essential that all volunteers adhere to the following:

- All volunteers are obliged to take care and avoid risks to their own and others safety.
- Volunteers should be matched to tasks that suit their physical abilities, fitness and experience, and be encouraged to recognise and not exceed their individual physical or skill limits.
- All volunteers under the age of 18 must be supervised by an adult when undertaking works.
- All on-ground volunteer activities require a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) to be completed by the group prior to the project commencing (located in Appendix D). The form should be submitted to the Council for approval and will identify the levels of supervision, equipment and accreditation requirements for the activity and assess the potential risk of activities. The Council will provide some examples of a completed JSA and the Parks/NRM Officer can provide assistance.
- Groups must comply with any relevant safety instructions and requirements as advised by the Council.
- To operate plant and equipment volunteers must have the appropriate licences, competencies, or accreditations required by Workplace Standards Tasmania.
- Where required, the essential personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used.
- Ensure all volunteers complete the details on the Working Bee Registration Form prior to commencement of on-ground activities (located in Appendix E).
- Groups must have a first aid kit available during all on-ground activities.
- Groups must encourage all volunteers to take the “5 steps to SunSmart” once the UV forecast is for levels three and above (the “5 steps to SunSmart” are located in Appendix F).
- Ensure that there is an adequate supply of water available to eliminate the risks associated with dehydration. This can occur even on cool days depending on the level of physical activities.
- Ensure enclosed footwear is worn during all on-ground activities.

It is important that when a volunteer carries out certain tasks that they have the necessary qualifications. These include:

Chainsaws and plant

Any volunteer, or contractor employed by the Central Coast Council, using a chainsaw or other mechanised equipment must be able to demonstrate their competency to operate this equipment. This may include a certificate of competency, a licence or other qualification/experience for use of the equipment.

Spraying

At least one volunteer in each group must have a Chemcert certificate and be available to supervise others that do not have the necessary qualification when undertaking spraying however, it is not compulsory for any group to undertake spraying activities. The Council has approved that groups will use only the chemicals listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Approved Chemicals

Chemical	Use
Roundup Bioactive	Control of annual and perennial weeds
Brush Off (Associate)	Woody Weeds
Pulse	Penetrant
Textile Dye	Spray Dye to identify areas sprayed

All chemicals and additives need to be used as specified by the manufacturer. For chemicals not listed in the above table, prior approval from the Council is required before use.

A copy of the relevant Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) must be on site with any chemicals used. The Council will provide MSDSs and undertake an annual review to ensure that they remain current. The correct PPE must be worn (as advised in the MSDS) and signage indicating “Weed Spraying in Progress” (supplied by the Council) must be erected around the spray zone.

The Council can organise the necessary person or contractor to undertake certain works if there is not a qualified volunteer in the group, provided the works fit within the project description and there is sufficient budget.

First Aid

The Council recommends that one or more members undertake or update their first aid certificates. Groups should ensure that at least one qualified first aider is available for all on-ground activities. Each group must have an up to date first aid kit available for all on-ground activities.

Training

The Council will advise groups if any training opportunities become available for volunteers to attend and obtain the relevant competency. Funding from the Council for training courses will be assessed on a “case by case” basis.

7. INSURANCE

Personal accident and public liability insurance is required for every group working in a park or reserve managed by the Council. If the group does not have the appropriate insurance then no on-ground works can commence. Groups must have the standard of \$10 million public liability cover. A copy of the group’s certificate of currency for insurance must be provided to the Council after each renewal.

8. FUNDING

Groups should actively seek funding to support their proposed works. The Council will assist a group to obtain funding from an external source such as the Cradle Coast NRM Small Grants Program, the Federal Government’s Caring for our Country and the Tasmanian Landcare Association’s Landcaring Grants from the Bush to the Beach.

All projects submitted for funding opportunities must be approved by the Council and be compatible with the objectives for the area.

In all applications for grants the Council will act as the project sponsor to the group and will receive the funds on behalf of the group.

Currently the Tasmanian Landcare Association provides the Landcare Assistance Grant to obtain funding to pay for personal accident and public liability insurance, general supplies and on-ground works. Landcare membership is required to be eligible for the grant. Membership covers a financial year and the Council can assist a group financially to pay for the Landcare membership.

9. CONTACTS

For further information please contact the following:

Haylee Alderson
Parks/NRM Officer
Central Coast Council
(03) 6429 8972

Anna Wind
Facilitator Team Leader
Cradle Coast NRM
(03) 6431 6285
0429 804 449

10. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following is a list of additional resources that groups may access for further information.

Books

Community Coastcare Handbook by Veronica Thorp

Living with Plants by Jim McLeod and Sue Gray

Websites

<http://www.taslandcare.org.au>

<http://www.nrmtas.org/regions/cradle/vision.shtml>

<http://www.coastcare.com.au>

<http://www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au>

Pamphlets (copies can be obtained through Council)

Grow Local – second edition

50 Ways to Care for Our Coast

Dogs and Leashes – Birds and Beaches

Are you growing invaders?

Creeping Backyards

11. DOCUMENT REVIEW

This document will be reviewed every three years.

12. REFERENCES

Thorp, V. (2005). *Community Coastcare Handbook*. Tasmania: Tasmanian Environment Centre Inc. trading as Sustainable Living Tasmania.

The Victorian Environment Friends Network (2009). *Volunteer and Friends Information Kit*.

Victoria: Victorian National Parks Association.

http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/resources/14_2364.pdf

Appendix A: Group Details

Group Name: _____

ABN: _____

GST Registered: _____

Incorporated: _____

Contact Person: _____

Role in Group: _____

Contact Postal Address: _____

Contact Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Second Contact Person: _____

Role in Group: _____

Contact Postal Address: _____

Contact Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix B: Membership Form

Membership Form

Coastcare Group: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Occupation: _____

In Case of Emergency

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

Times available for working bees and meetings:

Any skills (ie weed identification, Chemcert, current first aid):

Level of Fitness: _____

Interests: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Appendix C: Example of Location Plan



	By	Date	Checked	Reviewed
DESIGN	T.P.P	June-10		
DRAWING	T.P.P	June-10		
APPROVED	Director Engineering Services			

A3 Scale
1:10000

Group Areas
East Ulverstone

Environmental

1666.02

Environment.doc

Appendix D: Job Safety Analysis Form

Name of Group:	
Activity Organiser:	
Activity:	
Date & Time of Activity:	
Location:	
Equipment required:	
Participants:	
JSA completed by:	
JSA completed on:	

Risk Matrix

Consequence		Minor	Substantial	Serious	Very Serious	Disaster
Likelihood		A	B	C	D	E
1	Almost certain - many times a year	Moderate	High	High	Very High	Very High
2	Likely - once a year or so	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Very High
3	Possible - once every 10 yrs or so	Low	Moderate	High	High	High
4	Unlikely - once every 50 yrs or so	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
5	Rare - once every 100 yrs or so	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High

Central Coast Council – Volunteer Environmental Group
Job Safety Analysis

Step No.	Tasks/activities (List steps in logical sequence)	What are the hazards and current controls	Current Rating	Proposed additional controls	Final Rating	Who is responsible for actions
1.	Example: Road (Turners Beach Esplanade)–	A participant may walk/run into the path of a car. This road carries minimal traffic and any traffic should be traveling under 40km an hour therefore should pose very little risk.	Mod	Include in briefing that children must be supervised at all times by an adult and that participants are not work within close proximity to the road.	Low	Group members
2.	Example: Sharp objects–	Being a public area there may be sharps (needles/ glass) located on site.	High	Group members to check site prior to commencement of activity. Brief participants to wear gloves and if sharps are found carefully place them in the sharps container provided.	Mod	Group members
3.	Example: Sea Spurge (toxic latex)–	Sea spurge (<i>Euphorbia paralias</i>) carries a Public health warning issued by Nature Conservation Branch of DPIW “Broken stems and leaves ooze a toxic, milky latex that burns exposed skin and may cause damage to eyes. Always wear rubber or plastic coated gloves and protective clothing when handling (long sleeves and trousers).	High	Include risks associated with this plant in briefing and inform participants of PPE which must be worn. If participants do come in to contact with the milky latex, wash immediately. Make sure activity is held near a tap or have water available on site for the activity.	Mod	Group members
1.						

Central Coast Council – Volunteer Environmental Group
Job Safety Analysis

Step No.	Tasks/activities (List steps in logical sequence)	What are the hazards and current controls	Current Rating	Proposed additional controls	Final Rating	Who is responsible for actions
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

Working Bee Registration Form

Coastcare Group: _____

Date & Time: _____

Location: _____

Activity Description: _____

Volunteer Details			In Case of Emergency	
Name	Address	Contact Number	Name	Contact Number

Appendix F: 5 steps to SunSmart

The infographic is set against a gradient orange background. On the left, under the heading 'UV Index', there are five pairs of rounded rectangular buttons. Each pair consists of a button with a numerical range and a button with a descriptive level. From top to bottom: a purple button with '11+' and a purple button with 'Extreme'; a red button with '8,9,10' and a red button with 'Very High'; an orange button with '6,7' and an orange button with 'High'; a yellow button with '3,4,5' and a yellow button with 'Moderate'; and a green button with '1,2' and a green button with 'Low'. On the right, under the heading 'Protect Yourself in 5 Ways', there are five circular icons, each followed by a bolded verb and a description. From top to bottom: a white long-sleeved shirt icon followed by 'Slip on sun-protective clothing'; a sunscreen bottle icon with '30+' on the label followed by 'Slop on SPF30+ sunscreen. Reapply every two hours'; a white wide-brimmed hat icon followed by 'Slap on a broad-brimmed hat'; a tree icon with a shadow followed by 'Seek shade'; and a pair of sunglasses icon followed by 'Slide on wrap-around sunglasses'. At the bottom right, a white text box contains the sentence: 'Sun protection is generally not needed unless outside for extended periods'.

UV Index

11+ Extreme

8,9,10 Very High

6,7 High

3,4,5 Moderate

1,2 Low

Protect Yourself in 5 Ways

- Slip** on sun-protective clothing
- Slop** on SPF30+ sunscreen. Reapply every two hours
- Slap** on a broad-brimmed hat
- Seek** shade
- Slide** on wrap-around sunglasses

Sun protection is generally not needed unless outside for extended periods