

Environmental Volunteer Management and Engagement Strategy 2017 (EVMES)



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Introduction from the Mayor
(To be Inserted)

Introduction

The City recognises the close relationship between the natural environment and the community. It is the natural environment that provides the backdrop to Busselton, Vasse, Yallingup and Dunsborough's international recognition as a beautiful place to visit and live. The natural environment and surrounds of the Busselton region have been integral to the economic and industrial development of the towns and localities and for the development and expansion of tourism in the region.

Community volunteers play an integral part in the management and enhancement of the City's natural environment. Volunteer involvement is a two way relationship, providing an opportunity for environmental groups to achieve their goals by involving volunteers in their activities, and for volunteers to make meaningful use of their time and skills, contributing to social, environmental and community outcomes.

While traditional forms of volunteering are still popular, new forms are emerging as a result of wider social, economic and technological changes. The strategic outcomes in this Environmental Volunteer Management and Engagement Strategy consider the changing ways people volunteer, the use of information technology to strengthen volunteer engagement, volunteer training and the recognition of community volunteer contribution to the environment.

Strategy Assumptions

The following assumptions outline the City's commitment to the development and implementation of this Strategy.

The City recognises:

- the value of community environmental volunteers in natural resource management.
- environmental volunteers require resources and support to function effectively.
- there is a need to expand the community capacity expertise to achieve the City's environmental goals and objectives.

The City will continue to consult with the local community; and

- recognises there are a range of people in the community that wish to contribute to best practice environmental management through volunteering,
- acknowledges that environmental volunteers wish to be engaged and to learn new skills, to be provided with new opportunities and to feel valued and respected for their contribution to environmental activities,
- is aware that volunteering and community engagement provides an opportunity for meaningful social participation, strengthens our sense of belonging and creates positive relationships that help build a stronger community.

Strategic Community Plan

The City has an important role to ensure the 'Environment is valued, conserved and enjoyed' through 'visionary, collaborative and accountable Leadership' and this commitment is a key pillar of the Strategic Community Plan and the Community's Vision for the City;

“A vibrant and cohesive community that protects its natural environment, meets the needs of its population and ensures that future development maintains the City’s unique character, lifestyle and community values”.

A key goal towards this vision and guiding this Strategy is that the ‘environment is cared for and enhanced as the City’s key asset’, through the achievement of the following community objectives:

- Our natural environment is cared for and enhanced for the enjoyment of the community and visitors;
- Growth is managed sustainably and our environment is protected and enhanced as we develop; and
- *Council engages broadly and proactively with the community.*

Environment Strategy (2016)

The City’s ‘Environment Strategy’ (2016), identifies actions towards achieving the community’s environmental aspirations and the enhancement of environmental volunteer management and engagement, as follows:

Environmental Strategy Action 3.1 – Support and build capacity of volunteers to undertake bushcare and other biodiversity conservation initiatives. Develop and implement an NRM and Community Engagement Strategy to support community involvement in managing City lands.

Environmental Strategy Action 3.2 – Develop and implement the NRM Community Group Manual to manage new and existing NRM volunteers.

Existing Environmental Volunteer Groups

This Strategy recognises existing groups within the community undertake a range of varied and valued activities to deliver environmental benefits for the community and towards the community vision ‘a great place to be’. A number of existing environmental groups have been established in line with the City’s ‘Friends of Reserves Strategy’ (1999), and are currently actively working in natural resource management including revegetation, weed control, education, dieback management and fire planning. This Strategy continues to support and enhance existing environmental groups.

Principles

The principles underlying this management and engagement of environmental volunteers are:

Community participation: The City recognises that all people have a right to volunteer, and where mutually beneficial and appropriate, will provide opportunities for members of the community to participate as volunteers in a broad range of the City’s environmental programmes and activities.

Inclusiveness: The City welcomes environmental volunteer participation across age groups, abilities and culture.

Active volunteer management: Volunteers will be managed in a professional, consistent and organised manner, where volunteer involvement is planned and designed to contribute towards the City’s vision for the benefit of the community.

Partnerships: The City will strive to promote partnerships between government agencies, community groups, and business and with individuals to support environmental volunteers

Sustainability: The City will strive to sustain the environmental volunteer community by providing access to appropriate resources, support, advice, information and training.

Recognition: The City commits to recognise the efforts and successes of environmental volunteers and those who support environmental volunteers.

Strategic Outcomes

1.0 Volunteer management systems - *to attract and retain environmental volunteers and to support and enhance volunteer programmes and activities*

Key Actions

- 1.1. Ensure that environmental volunteer programs and projects align with both the City's local and regional plans.
- 1.2. Provide resources to support environmental volunteer programmes and activities.
- 1.3. Develop the knowledge and skills of environmental volunteers and volunteer group leaders.
- 1.4. Provide technical support to guide volunteer activities.
- 1.5. Provide a dedicated environmental volunteer coordinator.
- 1.6. Identify external funding sources and support environmental groups with applications for external funding for environmental projects and activities.
- 1.7. Develop and implement an environmental volunteer recruitment programme and actively market the benefits of environmental volunteerism.
- 1.8. Develop and implement environmental education and awareness to the community and local educational institutions.
- 1.9. Facilitate training for Friends of Reserves group leaders on effective volunteer management practises.
- 1.10. Prepare an Environmental Volunteer Manual with detailed procedures/protocol to guide the City's approach to the management of environmental volunteers.
- 1.11. Define and document policy and procedures for volunteer involvement and ensure that these are understood, implemented and maintained.
- 1.12. Develop support tools to assist the implementation and use of established standards and best practice for the management of volunteers and for volunteer programmes and activities.
- 1.13. Develop and maintain a volunteer web based volunteer registration system.

2.0 Building Environmental Volunteer Connections - *to increase engagement and collaboration amongst volunteers.*

Key Actions

- 2.1. Develop and implement a forum for the promotion of environmental volunteer communication on environmental issues and collaboration on environmental volunteer projects and activities.
- 2.2. Provide and promote a web portal for information on volunteering, existing environmental group programmes and activities.
- 2.3. Develop communication and information processes between the City, stakeholder agencies and environmental volunteer groups.
- 2.4. Develop communication plans for volunteer programmes.

- 2.5 Develop an environmental events calendar to assist volunteer resource sharing and to improve volunteer collaboration and networking opportunities.
- 2.6 Explore the use of social technology to enhance volunteer engagement, particularly younger volunteers.
- 2.7 Develop communication tools for environmental volunteer group coordinators/leaders and individual volunteers.

3.0 Environmental Volunteer Recognition – to recognise and value environmental volunteers

Key actions

- 3.1 Develop and implement a variety of techniques to recognise the environmental volunteer contribution to the environment including regular dissemination of environmental volunteer news, media release and volunteer acknowledgments.
- 3.2 Effectively capture volunteer contributions including hours and travel.

4.0 Safe Systems and Practises for Environmental Volunteers – to provide a safe work place

Key actions

- 4.1 Promote safe work, health and practises to volunteers.
- 4.2 Develop and implement volunteer safety programs.
- 4.3 Provide volunteer workshops to facilitate skills development and training programs.
- 4.4 Implement a worksite induction process for volunteers.
- 4.5 Develop safe operating procedures to guide volunteer activities.
- 4.6 Develop operational risk management procedures for volunteers.

Implementation and Review

This Strategy provides a framework for engagement and building the capacity of the community to respond effectively and positively to environmental challenges. The Strategy and the effectiveness of the identified strategic outcomes will be reviewed in 2020.

This Strategy will be supported by an Environmental Volunteer Manual, containing detailed practises, procedures and protocol to guide the management of environmental volunteers. This manual will be made available to environmental volunteers through the City's website and will be regularly reviewed and amended as required to ensure the information in the manual is current.