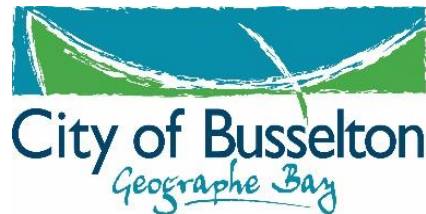


FRIENDS OF RESERVES STRATEGY

FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS
INVOLVED IN LANDCARE
ACTIVITIES ON SHIRE RESERVES

Adopted by Council: 27 January, 1999



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INTRODUCTION

The Shire of Busselton has prepared a Friends of Reserves Strategy aimed at developing mutually beneficial arrangements for volunteers undertaking landcare activities within Shire vested reserves.

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

1. Manage bushland reserves to maintain and/or enhance their conservation and community values.
2. Outline a framework and process for establishment and support of Friends of Reserve groups.
3. Provide a clear management direction for volunteers undertaking landcare activities on Shire reserves.

The Strategy has been prepared through a consultative process between the Shire's Environmental Officer, the Shire's Environment Forum and various community groups.

The level of involvement and activities undertaken by volunteers will largely depend upon the management needs of particular bushland or coastal reserves and the intentions (and capability) of the group. While the strategy is primarily aimed at improving the management of reserves with conservation values it also establishes a framework that is applicable to the development of Friends of Reserves for other reserves.

A framework for landcare activities is attached in Figure 1 and sets out example activities, training needs, level of Shire assistance and group responsibilities. Figure 2 provides a flow chart which identifies the stages associated with the formation of a Friends of Reserves Group and the preparation of a management plan.

The following provides a brief explanation of the various components of the framework. Groups currently undertaking activities on bushland or coastal reserves will be encouraged to adjust to this framework to ensure the activities are supported by technical assistance and undertaken in accord with a management plan. The management needs for each reserve should also be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the reserve conservation objectives.

The Shire of Busselton greatly values the contributions of volunteers undertaking landcare activities on Shire reserves and looks forward to formally recognising these actions and arrangements through the strategy and ensuring volunteer work is undertaken with a consistent objective.

LANDCARE ACTIVITIES

A management plan will need to be prepared in consultation with the Shire's Environmental Officer (to be referred to the Environment Forum) and submitted to Council for approval. All work

undertaken on a reserve will need to be consistent with an approved management plan, or have the specific approval of Council. The plan will include timetables for activities and resources and budgets for the plan implementation. Appendix 1 outlines the basic contents of a management plan. The management plan should follow the guidelines and include information on natural resources (landforms, landscape values, flora, fauna), recreational values and management recommendations (control of feral animals, vegetation protection and planting).

Landcare activities can include basic activities such as rubbish collection, physical weed removal and native tree and shrub planting, to more advanced landcare activities such as seed collection, weed control using herbicides, dieback control, and bushland regeneration based upon recognised methods.

There is no formal requirement for training for basic activities, although it is considered appropriate that at least one person in each group has knowledge of landcare techniques.

More specialised activities that a group may become involved in requires training to ensure members of the group use equipment and undertake tasks in accordance with safety and environmental standards. APACE (A bushland management training organisation based in Fremantle) provide training for volunteers and groups undertaking landcare activities at this level. The Shire of Busselton is currently investigating the establishment of a "Shire based" training program using local experts in various fields to undertake the training of "Friends of Reserves" volunteers. Council does not have available funds to provide paid trainees but will work with groups to establish training programs with grant funds/volunteers.

In addition to training, group and individuals wanting to collect seed from reserves will need to obtain a Seed Collection License from the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Assistance from the Shire for groups undertaking landcare activities will consist primarily of technical advice and coordination in the preparation of the management plan. This will facilitate successful applications for external funding based upon the endorsed management plan and its proposed activities. Provision of seedlings, rubbish removal, feral animal control, fire management and signage, where provided for within Council's budget, may also be made available where consistent with a management plan.

GETTING STARTED

Figure 2 provides an overview of how Friends of Reserves can become established and the necessary steps to gain Shire endorsement for landcare activities. This approach is aimed at ensuring both the groups and the Shire are kept well informed of activities on Shire reserves.

A Friends of Reserves can be evolved from either interested volunteers getting together and then approaching the Shire or the Shire could advertise for interested volunteers to "adopt" a specific bushland or coastal reserve either before or after preparation of a management plan.

The Friends of Reserves through liaison with the Shire Environmental Officer will identify management objectives and strategies for the relevant reserve, ensuring that sustainable balance is achieved between both the environmental and recreational characteristics of the reserve consistent with Council's overall objectives. These will then form the basis for the development of the management plan.

It is acknowledged that many reserves may be managed primarily for their recreational values, consisting of minimal environmental value, but still benefiting greatly from community volunteers and the framework outlined in the strategy.

SUBMISSION OF MANAGEMENT PLANS

The preparation of a management plan is essential for all Friends of Reserves, not only ensuring that consistent objectives are achieved, but also providing an important tool that can facilitate successful funding applications both internal and external.

Management plans will need to take into consideration the timetables for funding approvals and the time required to gain Council endorsement of the plan. It is also likely that some management plans will be subject to public review and adequate time to respond to public submissions will also need to be built in to the management plan process.

Funding for implementation of endorsed management plans as required to assist the works undertaken by volunteers will primarily come from Council's existing budget allocation for the reserve. For a majority of conservation reserves the implementation of a management plan is likely to reduce the ongoing expenditure requirements as the level of intervention will be reduced.

For the implementation of significant works such as fencing, walk trails and interpretative facilities the management plan will be of significant assistance in obtaining grant funding and development for support of any budget commitments sought from Council is the Four Year Plan process.

SAFETY

The main safety requirements necessary for the protection of all volunteers engaged in landcare activities on Shire vested reserves are related to the use of herbicide, electrical/mechanical equipment and the supervision of children.

The developed management plans for various reserves will require differing levels of mechanical/electrical equipment to be used in their implementation. A majority of management plans are unlikely to require volunteers to use such equipment in their implementation. Where such equipment is required to be used for the implementation of a management plan than the safety and insurance arrangements will need to be set out in the plan including any training requirements to be satisfied by the volunteers. The management plan will also need to set out arrangements to ensure the safety of the general public during works to be undertaken on the reserve by the Friends of Reserves Volunteers, and Council notification requirements.

Only Roundup Biactive is to be used for weed spraying and it is important that group members read the material safety data sheet provided with the product and spray strictly according to the manufacturer's directions. Warning signs must be erected (there are a limited number of "Weed Spraying in Progress" signs available for loan from the Shire Depot) advising any members of the public that weed spraying is being undertaken.

INSURANCE AND PUBLIC LIABILITY

The Shire is not responsible for injury or liability that may arise on reserves not vested in the Shire. The Shire is responsible for works undertaken on reserves vested in it and therefore reserves the right to alter or remove anything placed on a reserve at any time.

The Volunteer (Protection from Liability) Act 2002 provides some protection for volunteers for personal legal liability to others for work done on a Shire reserve on a purely volunteer basis (i.e. no payment or reward). The Shire however, does not provide personal injury insurance for volunteers in relation to any injury they may suffer in doing this type of work.

TRAINING

The training courses recommended for Friends of Reserves will be based upon the types of landcare activities they are involved in. For example, groups involved in regeneration would benefit greatly from participating in seed collection workshops.

Currently various volunteer training programs are available through external organisations and government agencies.

In the future, it may be feasible for the Shire in conjunction with Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre to coordinate landcare training programs with the assistance of external funding such as Gordon Reid Foundation. This would enable groups to undertake a training program, specific to the region using local knowledge and recognised experts from this field.

SHIRE CONTACTS

Issues relating to the management of bushland and coastal reserves vested in the Shire of Busselton are dealt with by a variety of Shire staff such as the Environmental Officer, Senior Parks and Depot Supervisor and Rangers. Table 1 below identifies the area of assistance provided by the respective officers.

TABLE 1 CONTACT PERSONNEL FOR FRIENDS OF RESERVES GROUPS

OFFICER	AREA OF ASSISTANCE
ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER	Vegetation protection. Assistance with preparation of management plan. Environmental/technical advice. Maintenance of Friends of Reserves Register. Assistance with external funding applications. Advice on involvement with other groups. Training arrangements, education and encouragement of community involvement in landcare activities. Liaison with government agencies. Feral animal control.
SENIOR PARKS & DEPOT SUPERVISOR	Request for rubbish removal. Provision of signage. Provision of seedlings. Provision of advice and supervision of works.
RANGERS	Advice on firebreaks & fire management. Loan of cat traps.
SECRETARY FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION	Advice on insurance issues and arrangements.

CONCLUSION

This Friends of Reserves Strategy is aimed at providing direction for the pursuance of consistent objectives and a mutually beneficial arrangement between the Shire of Busselton and volunteers undertaking landcare activities.

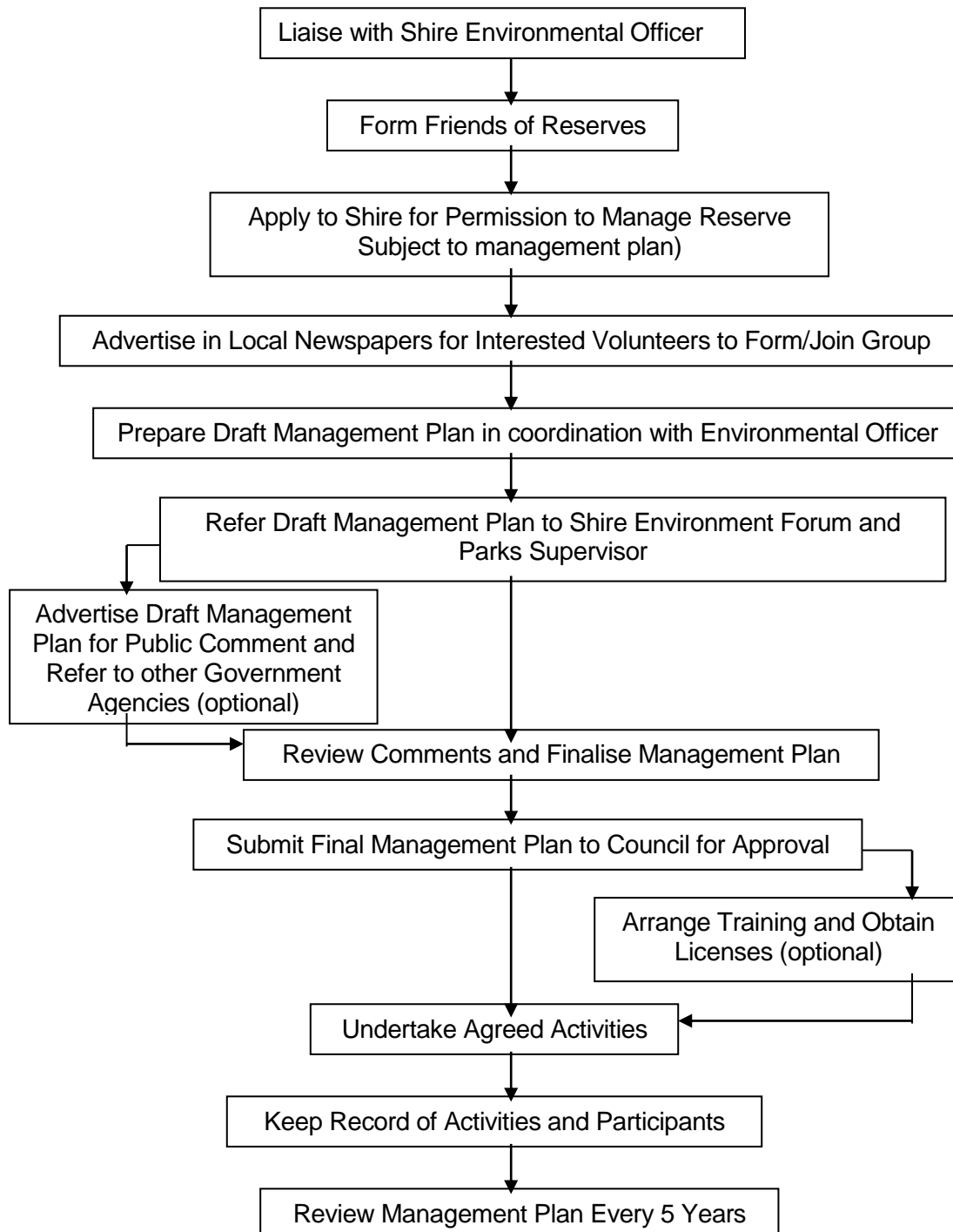
It is essential that groups currently undertaking landcare activities, and groups proposing to undertake landcare activities, follow the step by step process identified in Figures 1 & 2.

Without an endorsed management plan and no knowledge of proposed activities and an understanding of the groups capability the Shire cannot provide assistance or endorse the activity of informal groups or individuals that may undertake work on reserves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Shire of Busselton acknowledges the use of the Shire of Mundaring's Friends Group Manual in providing a basis for this strategy.

FIGURE 2
STEP BY STEP PROCESS FOR FRIENDS OF RESERVES



**SHIRE OF BUSSELTON – FRIENDS OF RESERVES STRATEGY
“FRAMEWORK FOR BUSHLAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES”**

<p>Actions & Types of Activities</p>	<p>Rubbish collection Weed control (physical) Tree and shrub planting Development of a management plan Seed collection Weed control (herbicide) Revegetation Bushland regeneration Slashing Dieback control (stem injection) Construction works (trails, shelters) Feral animal control</p>
<p>Training & Competency for Friends of Reserves</p>	<p>Landcare training Seed collection licence (CALM)</p>
<p>Shire Assistance</p>	<p>Technical advice and site inspections Rubbish removal Provision of seedlings Controlled burns Assistance with training</p>
<p>Friends of Reserves Responsibilities</p> <p>Annual Confirmation in Writing of Acceptance of Shire conditions for landcare activities is required</p>	<p>Keep diary of events Register participants in landcare events. Submission and approval of management plan Undertaking works consistent with management plan including safety and insurance requirements.</p>

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

Usually a fairly detailed report which includes Friends of Reserves information (name of group, reserves of interest, membership, management aims etc), background information (history, vegetation, soils, fauna), explanation of key threats to the reserves (fire, feral animals, dieback, weeds, uncontrolled uses etc), strategies to address the threats (control programs, education, specific management measures) and an action plan with timetables and responsibilities (what needs to be done, by when, by who).

An example table of contents is shown below.

TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR A MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Management Plan Mission Statement
- 1.3 Location of Reserve
- 1.4 Vesting and Purpose
- 1.5 Catchment and Land Use Considerations
- 1.6 History

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- 2.1 Topography
- 2.2 Landform and Soils
- 2.3 Vegetation and Flora
- 2.4 Fauna
- 2.5 Beneficial Fungi
- 2.6 Dieback Disease
- 2.7 Fire History
- 2.8 Feral Animals

3.0 HUMAN USE ATTRIBUTES

- 3.1 Passive Recreation
- 3.2 Educational Uses
- 3.3 Significant Heritage Sites
- 3.4 Other Uses

4.0 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Conservation
- 4.2 Recreation
- 4.3 Education
- 4.4 Fire Management

5.0 MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Conservation
 - 5.1.1 Dieback Disease
 - 5.1.2 Vegetation Management
 - 5.1.3 Feral Animals
 - 5.1.4 Weed Control
 - 5.1.5 Fauna Survey
 - 5.1.6 Firewood Collection
 - 5.1.7 Wildflower Picking
- 5.2 Recreation and Education
 - 5.2.1 Public Usage
 - 5.2.2 Pathways and Trails
- 5.3 Fire Control
 - 5.3.1 Fire Risk and Management
- 5.4 Community Involvement
 - 5.4.1 "Friends of" Group

6.0 PROPOSED FUNDING/RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 Community Involvement
- 6.2 External Funding Opportunities
- 6.3 Shire Assistance

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 Life of Plan
- 7.2 Reporting and Review