

Bushwalking Tracks & Conservation (BTAC) Operational Procedures



Role and Structure of BTAC

Since 2006, Bushwalking Victoria (BWV) has had a standing committee known as the Bushwalking Environment Committee (BEC). In November 2013 the Board decided to rename BEC to Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation (BTAC) to reflect more closely the new and expanded role developed as part of the BWV Strategic review process:

- To provide a more proactive focus on tracks and trails strategy – i.e. to concentrate on looking at opportunities for new or upgraded tracks and trails and to be able to articulate a vision of the bushwalking facilities that we want for the future.
- To increase the focus on engaging with key land-manager decision makers so that we can influence planning as it affects bushwalkers more effectively and at an earlier stage.
- To more actively engage bushwalking club members and individual members of Bushwalking Victoria in track maintenance and conservation activities.

BTAC operates at 4 different levels.

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Committee: is a standing committee of Bushwalking Victoria. Its role is to develop, coordinate, promote and administer all of the above.

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Field Officers: are drawn from the BWV club network and individual members. They are appointed by the BTAC committee and are responsible for a designated geographic area. They liaise and network with local bushwalking clubs and Land Managers and report monthly to the BTAC Committee. They are expected to be long-term appointees and not subject to changes at club committee level.

They should be frequent visitors to their area and build strong relationships with Land Managers.

Duties

- To be responsible to BTAC and Bushwalking Victoria for a designated area.
- To raise issues with the BTAC Committee as necessary.
- To research and investigate issues and actions as requested by the BTAC committee.
- To liaise and network with local clubs.
- To build strong relationships with Land Managers.
- To recommend possible courses of action on issues.
- To present a report monthly to the Field Officer Coordinator who will report to the BTAC committee.
- To conduct or arrange field trips if necessary (to investigate/assess an issue): these would need to be approved by the BTAC Committee if expenses are to be reimbursed.

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Club Contacts: act as a point of contact to receive information about projects and to advise BTAC of track / conservation issues and activities that concern their club.

Duties

- Receive advice and information from the BTAC committee and disseminate to club members.
- Receive and collate advice from their members of issues or problems encountered on tracks when bushwalking and forward to BTAC committee.

- Encourage members to complete and submit “Track Condition Report” or “Illegal Activity in the Bush Report” forms.
- Report the advice from members to the local Park Ranger (if known) or to the relevant BTAC Field Officer.
- Identify track work for which BWV could provide assistance and advise BTAC Project Co-ordinator.
- Advise the BTAC Project Coordinator of any work done by their club and the number of hours worked.

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Volunteers: are individual members of BWV or its affiliated clubs who do the hands-on work on tracks and conservation projects. Work may include clearing vegetation, constructing or repairing steps or rails, fixing netting on boardwalks, installing or replacing signs, clearing water bars, removing noxious weeds or any other work that Parks Victoria or other Land Managers would like us to help with. Volunteers may act as a Project Leader, a Crew Leader or as a Track Worker.

Attending track maintenance and conservation activities/events/projects is voluntary and there is no obligation or expectation that a volunteer will attend every day of every activity. However once volunteers have accepted a place on an activity, particularly when accommodation or other benefit is provided they are expected to work on the agreed days.

Duties:

See guidelines for Project Leaders, Crew Leaders and Track Workers BWV’s Privacy Policy

The Office Manager of BWV maintains a data base of BTAC Field Officers, Club Contacts and Volunteers. The volunteer details will be used to notify members about track and conservation projects via email, “On the Tracks” newsletter or “On the Tracks” bulletin. If a claim is made as a result of participation in a BTAC activity, the volunteer’s details may be sent to an insurance company as part of the insurance company investigating a claim. Members may ask to check their details and request that their details be updated at any time.

Working with Land Managers

BTAC works on public land at the request, or with the co-operation, of the land manager, such as Parks Victoria (PV), the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), local Council or Shire. The Land Managers are the legal managers of the land and they have the final decision on all track maintenance issues.

For all projects on public land BTAC will plan the work to be done with a designated contact person, usually a ranger within PV or DELWP. The PV or DELWP contact Ranger will determine whether a ranger will be present during the work.

The project must be approved by PV or DELWP or the authorised land manager for the volunteers to be covered by State Government Insurance.

The land manager will require volunteers to complete a form to record their participation for insurance purposes. Bushwalking Victoria’s public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance also covers track maintenance activities for members of Bushwalking Victoria where a land manager’s insurance does not apply.

Parks Victoria uses the form:

“Volunteer Activity Form” (Parks Victoria form C-0091)

DELWP and other Land Managers will have similar forms.

BTAC'S Procedures

To minimise the most common risks encountered in track and conservation work BTAC adopts the following procedures and practices to be followed in all cases.

1. Job Safety Analysis

The Land Manager must complete a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) for each activity. (The JSA will identify the requirements for supervision, tools and equipment and accreditation for a particular job. It will also require an assessment of the hazards and risks associated with the task. These steps are an integral part of planning the activity.

To comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) (the Victorian OHS Act) Parks Victoria uses the form:

“Job Safety Analysis Worksheet” (Parks Victoria form C-0130)

DELWP and other Land Managers will have similar forms.

2. Bushfires

- a) Work will not be scheduled during the hottest part of the year.
- b) Events will be cancelled if a Total Fire Ban is declared.
- c) A radio or mobile phone should be carried during the fire season to check fire ban status and warnings. Download CFA fire Ready App on mobile phones.
- d) Any advice from parks Victoria or DEPI staff on matters relating to fire, use of stoves etc must be followed.

3. Powered Equipment

Powered equipment is to be used only by persons with the required qualifications (chain saw licence) and experience (use of brush-cutters, hedge trimmers, drills). Land manager regulations and standards for the use of equipment shall be observed at all times. Persons using powered equipment must not work alone. They should work at a safe distance from others to ensure prompt delivery of aid in case of accident.

4. Hand Tools

Hand tools such as bush saws, mattocks etc should be checked for safety taking into account the tasks, design of equipment and maintenance (properly fitted handles etc).

5. Use of Chemicals

Application of chemicals must be done by or supervised by a person with an Agricultural Chemical User Permit (ACUP).

6. Protective Clothing and Equipment

- a) Personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the task must be worn. Chainsaw operators must wear chaps, steel capped boots, gloves, helmet with visor, eye and ear protection. The land manager will advise operators of brush-cutters and hedge trimmers or those applying herbicides or pesticides of the required PPE for the activity.
- b) All participants should wear sturdy boots, long pants and long sleeved shirts (JSA regulation for some working groups) and additional personal protective safety equipment – hard hats, gloves, eye protection that may be required. The land manager may direct that coloured safety vests must be worn.

7. Extremes of Weather

- a) Activities shall not be conducted in extreme weather conditions, e.g. heat, cold, heavy rain, lightning or high winds.

Participants should take appropriate gear as listed by project leader in the work plan. Leaders should confirm that participants have suitable camp gear, clothing, equipment, food and water to meet all reasonably predictable events. The leader can deny participation in the activity if a person does not bring suitable food or clothing.

8. First aid

Leaders should ensure that persons with suitable training and equipment are available. Volunteers should carry a personal first aid kit at all times.

9. Medical Condition

- a) Any volunteer who has any medical condition should give a sealed envelope to the leader containing details of the condition, any relevant information about medication and how much to administer in case of emergency. Emergency contact information and name of doctor should also be provided.
- b) A second envelope with the same details should be placed inside and on top of pack with details of where the medicine is in the pack.

It is also their obligation to inform the leader of any condition that would affect their ability to do any work or activity asked of them.

10. Organisation

- a) Leaders and participants acknowledge that the land manager has overall charge of the activity, and their instructions and advice should be followed.
- b) Participants shall comply with all reasonable requests from the leader and follow safety measures outlined for the tasks.
- c) Leaders and participants shall ensure that their whereabouts are known to others, and that no person should leave the party without notifying the leader.
- d) An emergency procedure for the day should be known to all – i.e. point to proceed to – forward or back, for re- grouping if necessary.
- e) Instructional training in the use and storage of tools or type of work to be performed must be given at the commencement of the activity. This includes instruction on how to safely carry tools.

Project Leaders' Guidelines

Leaders are to:

- Negotiate with the Land Manager the timing of the work and the assistance required: manpower, protective clothing/equipment, finance, tools and equipment
- Develop a project plan which describes the work to be done by BTAC, dates and times, food, clothing, equipment, accommodation / camping, and travelling arrangements.
- Ensure that, when work is first organised, the Land Manager will be providing insurance.
- Ensure that the Ranger has the required paperwork and that the paperwork is actually completed. Identify the specific OH&S requirements for the work.
- Identify the skills and or certificates/qualifications needed by BTAC crew members.

- Recruit BTAC members with the requisite skills (the Office Manager will email all volunteers by email seeking expressions of interest for assistance for specific projects).
- Advise those who respond whether or not their services are needed and, if so, send detailed information about arrangements for the scheduled work and a detailed list of things to bring.
- Assign and liaise with Crew Leaders, if work requires several crews.
- On arrival at the project base ensure that all participants sign the Land Managers forms and a BTAC attendance sheet.
- Brief the volunteers before work commences: provide information on hazards, assign people to work crews, introduce crew leaders and describe communication process.
- Ensure all participants are fit for the work they have been assigned.
- Organise training in safe handling of tools and equipment for new or inexperienced crew members.
- The project leader and crew leaders should monitor safety as the work progresses, keep track of BTAC crew members, and in the absence of a representative of the land manager, assume a full supervisory role.
- Ensure the work is carried out in accordance with the agreement with Land Manager and OH&S requirements.
- With a ranger, if present, conduct a debrief at the end of the activity.
- Check that equipment used is returned to storage in working condition and report any problems.
- Complete documentation and report.
- Forward report to the BTAC Project Coordinator – include before and after photos if available.

Crew Leaders Guidelines

- Consult with the project leader about the project requirements.
- Assign tasks to crew members according to their skills.
- Supervise crew to ensure that work is done in accordance with instructions and safety briefing.
- Check that equipment used is returned to storage in working condition and report any problems.
- Complete necessary paperwork for Project leader.

Volunteer Track Workers Guidelines

Work under the direction of the crew leader and comply with the crew leader's instructions while undertaking one or more of the following activities:

- Walk and work using hand tools (spade, axe, crow bar, fern hook, rake, hoe, bow/pruning saw, hammer, screw driver or herbicide applicator).
- Use powered equipment for which no certificate is required (hedge trimmers, brush cutters, electric drills, slashers).
- Use chain saw (certificate required).
- Apply agricultural chemicals without supervision (Agricultural Chemicals User Permit required).
- Apply agricultural chemicals under supervision (ACUP not required).

Other more specialist tasks for those with relevant skills are:

- Mark Way Points using GPS.
- Communicate by UHF radio or satellite phone.
- Identify weeds or pests for control.

APPENDICES

BTAC Project Leader's Checklist

Before the Activity

- Get contact details of the ranger
- Contact the ranger and get details of what is required
- Assess the work to be done by BTAC
- Estimate assistance required: manpower, financial, equipment.
- Check insurance cover
- Check paper work requirements
- Write project plan
- Identify specific OH&S, skills, certificates/ qualifications/ requirements
- Advertise to volunteers and members of BTAC
- Advise accepted participants of final arrangements
- In the week immediately prior to the task contact the ranger again to verify that everything is still OK and that the JSA checklist has been completed (for Parks Vic / DELWP). Consult if extreme weather seems likely
- Assist people to share transport and advise them to establish cost sharing arrangements with the driver
- Collect BTAC tools, equipment and personal protective equipment/clothing if required

At the Activity

- Rendezvous with the ranger, if that was the arrangement.
- Ensure that all volunteers complete your Record of Volunteer Hours form
- Ensure that the Land Manager's paperwork is completed. Ensure that a safety briefing is given by yourself or a ranger and that new or inexperienced members are shown how to use tools and equipment.
- Advise people that if they have a medical condition they must provide information to Project Leader / Crew Leader
- Assign volunteers to work crews and introduce crew leaders
- Check that all participants are fit for the work they have been assigned and that they have suitable clothing, food, water and equipment
- Ensure that everyone is aware of requirements for lunch and tea breaks (bring them with you or come back to base) and importantly inform the party of the day's communication procedures
- Check that the appropriate safety equipment is being worn, issue tools, inform all participants of the First Aid Kit location and head off
- Monitor progress and monitor safety as the work progresses
- Where possible take before and after photos to record some of the work done
- If no land manager representative present, supervise the work with the crew leaders

After the Activity

- Check that the work is complete – debrief work crews
- Check that equipment used is returned to land manager / BTAC
- Check with the ranger (if present) as to whether the work is satisfactory or if another date needs to be set to complete the work
- Check if the ranger has other tasks that could be the subject of a future working bee
- Ensure that everyone has transport home – count your numbers, making sure that all the party are accounted for
- For BTAC equipment - repair/replace damaged equipment, arrange routine service if due, replace expendables: oil, fuel, gloves.
- Forward BTAC Record of Volunteer Hours form and BTAC Activity Report to the BTAC Project Coordinator
- Encourage participants to forward before and after photos to send to BTAC Project Coordinator

BTAC Project Activity Report

Date of Activity:			
Location:			
Name of Project Leader:			
Name/s of Crew Leader/s:			
Land manager Contact (usually ranger):			
Land Manager Name:			
Land Manager Location: (e.g. Parks Victoria Heyfield)			
Land Manager Contacts:	Phone:		
	Mobile:		
	Email:		
Description of the work (including start time for briefing and final departure time):			
<hr/> <hr/>			
The name of the track/s, the area of the track actually worked on and the type of:			
- clearing e.g. benching, removing fallen timber, install signs, repair infrastructure			
- Types of weeds removed, controlled, slashed, cut and painted, dug out			
- Conservation work – nest boxes, water bars, board walk on fragile area			
Did the Land Manager complete the forms for Insurance?	Yes		No
Is any further work necessary to complete the project? If yes give details:			
<hr/> <hr/>			
Did the land Manager suggest any further work in this area? If yes, give details:			
<hr/> <hr/>			
Any further comments on the work?			
<hr/> <hr/>			

Incident Report Form

To be completed by Project Manager or Crew Leader as soon as practical after the incident. This report should be kept by the BTAC Project Coordinator as a formal activity record.

In the event of any serious injury (an injury requiring medical treatment) copies of the incident report must be forwarded to *Marsh Advantage staff, Marie Saliba, email: marie.saliba@marshadvantage.com with a copy to insurance@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au*

or mail to Bushwalking Victoria, PO Box 1007, Templestowe Vic 3106

Part 1

Report Prepared By:	Date Prepared:
Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Type of Event: <i>Track clearing, install water bars, removing noxious weeds</i>	
Location:	
Type of Incident: <i>Injury, missing person, damage to property, theft, fire, etc.</i>	
Incident Details:	
Action Taken:	

Part 2

External Involvement: *Were authorities or other agencies notified at the time? If so who, by whom, and how? Did they then take a role in managing the incident? If appropriate have the Insurers been notified?*

Final Outcome: *What was the final outcome of the incident? When was it resolved?*

Future Prevention: *Can this incident be prevented at future BTAC activities? If so, how?*

Supplementary Information: *This section can include a list of attachments, such as a map, witness statements etc.*

Privacy Note

The inclusion of the names of individuals and their contact details in this report must be done in accordance with relevant Privacy laws.