

Resources Notes – Setting up Friends Groups

Note: the following material has been compiled from a range of separate sources and is consolidated here. It has not been edited for style or length etc.

Topics to think about....

Setting Up a Friends Group

- Aims and Objects
- Incorporation
- Effective Meetings
- Taking Minutes
- Writing an Agenda

Protecting Bushland

- Planning Info Sheet
- Campaigning

Managing Bushland

- Bush Regeneration Principles
- Controlling Weeds
- Seed Collection and Processing
- Managing Fires
- Flora Surveys

WORK SCHEDULE FOR NEW GROUPS

INITIAL MEETING

Determine

- The aims and objectives of the group.
- The amount of time the members have available to commit to the reserve.
- Structure and meeting format of the group.
- Reserve History.
- Reserve boundaries and size.
- Reserve vesting and ownership.
- Groups major concerns.

DISCOVER YOUR BUSH

Walk through the reserve to determine

- What the major environmental issues are
- What the major social issues are
- What are the major broadscale plant communities present

ASSESS THE CONDITION OF YOUR BUSH

Walking mapping exercise

- Map the vegetation condition of the reserve
- Map the presence and level of dominance of individual weed species within the reserve.

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- Mark the major environmental issues on a map
- What are your soils.
- Mark any notable natural features ie. Creeks, granite outcrops.

DETERMINE AN ACTION PLAN FOR FUTURE WORKS

Informal workshop where the

- Environmental issues are prioritised
- A work schedule is prepared for the calendar year of activities
- Determine the amount and sources of funding requirements

ACQUIRE FUNDING FOR WORK SCHEDULE

- Investigate the most appropriate funding sources and put in applications
- Source monies for the development of a formal Management Plan

UNDERTAKE SCHEDULED WORKDAYS

Undertake workdays according to the Action Plan ie.

- Monthly weeding mornings
- Flora Survey
- Weed Herbarium
- Fauna Survey
- Planting days in rehabilitation sites

Workdays

After formation of each new Friends Group, the following workdays could be conducted:

1. Getting to Know Your Bush

Complete an information sheet with essential information about the location, zoning/reservation, landforms, soil, flora and fauna (general). Mapping your Bushland

Using an aerial map and transparency overlay, map vegetation type and condition, weeds, soils and major environmental issues.

2. Preparing an Action Plan

Prepare a plan for 12 months outlining the activities to be carried out and dates.

3. Implementing the Action Plan

Individual Workdays such as clean-ups, planting, weeding

Methods for setting up a Friends Group that have worked for me.

(from Friends of Wireless Hill) Haakon Nielszen

- *Call a public meeting.* The aim is to get as many interested people together as possible.
I call it a public meeting and nature walk. The crucial point of this meeting is to get people on a mailing list so make sure you pass a clipboard around. People turn up and they get a talk about the special nature of the reserve. (Interesting stuff about the geology, natural history, plants, animals and human history) Then a talk about the importance of Friends Groups (over 200 in Perth, communicate with council, planning, education) Then a talk about what the Friends of Wireless Hill can do. (Prepare a action plan based on the group's capacity, prepare a work and meeting calendar, apply for grants, get support from the City of Melville, socialise with neighbours).
Then go on a nature walk for anyone who is keen. This is an opportunity for informal talk and planning. During the nature walk you point out plants, birds, insects etc. (Whatever you know. The people who turn up to these meetings are interested in that stuff).
 - *Flyers:* I have done about 1000 delivered to the houses closest to the reserve. These people tend to be the most committed Friends. As Wireless Hill has streets on all sides you might think about a larger number of flyers (2000?).
 - *Public notices:* To be stuck up at the park where walkers will see them. This is the same sign as the flyer. One notice per A4 sheet.
 - *Press release:* Community papers are always interested in environmental stories. They often want a face to photograph. A local is good. I don't know if it any good but it got an article in the paper. I like to use a management plan to get a few interesting and impressive facts about the reserve.
 - *The night meeting.* This sorts out the meeting people from the workday people. Both types are needed in a Friends Group. With luck you will elect a Convenor and a Secretary at this meeting.
 - *The Friends of Manning Park in Cockburn* reported that they got a good community response from a display in Phoenix shopping centre.
 - *And there you have a "Friends of Wireless Hill" type organisation.* You will need to direct them a bit after this but they should take over the show eventually. Make sure that they are working towards a planning document so that they can refer back to it if they start losing their way.
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Starting a New Community Group

Organising a Meeting

What for?

Think carefully about what you want the meeting to achieve. What are your aims – to start a new group, discuss issues, present concerns, find out information from another party, start a campaign? Prepare an Agenda (p. ##)

Why?

Although you may have clearly defined aims you need to consider whether holding a meeting is the best course of action

Who?

You need to consider the sort of people you want to attend the meeting – local residents? Interested people? Councillors? Politicians?

When?

Time is an important factor. Look for a time which is likely to be the most convenient for your target group. If you are meeting with politicians or bureaucrats some time during working hours might be the best option while weekends and evenings may suit community people more. Check to make sure that it does not clash with any major events otherwise you are likely to have a small turnout.

Where?

In deciding on a venue, you need to consider the number of people you expect to attend along and the resources that you will need such as whiteboards, video players. For community meetings some Councils will provide Council rooms for free or minimal cost. Other cheap venues include Community Centres and schools.

How?

Organising a meeting can be a big task so start small and share the tasks around. You will need to do the following:

- **Prepare a flyer/poster/letter and distribute.**
Check with your Council and local politicians about photocopying and distribution.
- **Book the venue.**
Check that the resources you need are available at that time. Provide some tea and nibbles. You can ask for a donation if you have no funds to draw on.
- **Get to the meeting early**
Open the room and do any setting up so that the meeting can start on time and you are relaxed as possible.

Role of a Committee

- To organise workdays, walks and other events
- To make press statements
- To keep the membership informed
- To receive and handle correspondence
- To administer finances and set up an account
- To prepare grant applications

Members

- Attend workdays
- Attend and vote at General Meetings

Formal Structure

If your group wants to become incorporated it must set up a formal structure, adopt a set of Rules and apply for incorporation. Formal committees usually consist of:

- President – run meetings, main spokesperson
- Vice President – assist president, spokesperson
- Secretary – handle correspondence, prepare agenda, take minutes
- Treasurer – administer finances eg accept, record and deposit membership fees
- Committee Members – assist main office bearers

Some Suggestions

- Many groups, especially in the early stages before becoming incorporated, have much more informal structures such as just a President/Convenor/Spokesperson and committee members.
- Incorporation is a time-consuming process. It is recommended that groups only consider taking on this option if the group has become large and is handling significant amounts of money whereupon there is a need to formalise the structure and develop more formal rules for the group. Incorporation is required by some grant authorities although Councils may be able to help you get around this.
- The Urban Bushland Council is also able to act as sponsor for grants for its Member Groups
- Facilitation of meetings and taking of minutes can be shared around which provides all members with a chance to develop their facilitation skills.
- Minutes can be written by people at the meeting by preparing agendas with space to write outcomes/decisions.
- It is good to keep things as simple as possible financially. You don't need to charge membership fees. Try to access free or cheap resources eg ask your local Council for administrative support and assistance with grants, seek local sponsors, apply for Bushcare Days, attend free SCC/Ecoplan Workshops (to receive monthly SCC infosheet, email saicc@wrc.wa.gov.au)
- Events could be organised as a group or individuals or subcommittees could take on a particular event eg. One individual/group could organise a CleanUp Day, another could organise a planting day.
- Share phone numbers and email addresses. Email can be a very effective way to share ideas and notify people of meetings etc

Facilitating Meetings Effectively

- **Agenda** – the agenda should be formulated before the meeting but at the start of the meeting it is a good idea to quickly add any other items and agree on times and presenters where appropriate. If you have not got an agenda, prepare one before you start the meeting. Beware of long agendas – be realistic. Long agendas can be so daunting that people feel rushed and overwhelmed.
- **Reasonable timeframe** – meetings should not be too long that people end up tired and feeling like time has been wasted but also long enough so that issues are aired sufficiently. Very short meetings where people feel rushed and so do not speak up can lead to frustration and conflict later on.
- **Participation** – the facilitator should try to involve everyone by encouraging people to take responsibility for one item and going around the group to get input.

- **Minutes** – keep minutes short. Mainly a record of the issue and the decisions or what is going to be done by who and by when. A good way to keep everyone focussed and avoid the need for a single minute-taker is to prepare agendas with extra space for people to record the outcomes and decisions made for each item.
- **Outcomes/Decisions** - Check at the end of the meeting that everyone is clear about what they have to do.
- Confirm the next meeting

Writing an Agenda

Outlines the topics to be discussed in order. May also include times.

Why do you need one?

To facilitate the smooth flow of the meeting.

When should it be prepared?

If an agenda is prepared and distributed before the meeting, then people have time to get hold of information.

Otherwise the agenda should be prepared at the start before the meeting proceeds.

Time allocations can be useful to determine whether the agenda is realistic and to prioritise.

What should an Agenda include?

Apologies

Previous Minutes

Items

Other Business

Taking Minutes

What are minutes?

A record of the items discussed and the decisions made and who is going to do what.

Why do you need them?

To track of decisions made and remind people of what was agreed to be done.

How should they be prepared?

Type up during meeting on a laptop computer

Take minutes in meeting, type up and distribute by mail/email Print agendas in the format given

SAMPLE MINUTES

Minutes of _____ / __/00

Apologies:

Present:

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Item	Decision/Action
Formation of Friends Group Motion put forward that "Friends of XXX be formed"	Moved: Seconded:
Vision & Objects	Formulated and put on agenda of next meeting for finalisation.
Structure	
Get to Know Your Bush	Time (before next meeting)
Meetings	Time, venue
Next Meeting	

Objects

Issues to Consider

Meetings

Do you want to meet regularly? Yes / No

When? _____

Date of Next Meeting: _____

Activities Your Group Would Like to Do

How many group workdays would your group like to do (approx.)?
1-2 / 3 - 6 / monthly / weekly

Objectives

The objectives of the Friends of _____ are:

- To contribute to the effective management of _____ by developing an action plan and conducting management activities in conjunction with the local Council.
- To raise community awareness, understanding and appreciation of the value of _____ in particular and urban bushland in general.
- To network with other Friends groups and groups working in the bush regeneration field.

Staying Motivated

- Set achievable goals
- Support each other
- Be constructive
- Share the workload
- Alternate roles
- Keep it fun
- Vary your tasks and activities
- Network with other groups
- Praise and encourage each other
- Put effort into attracting new people
- Take advantage of training opportunities
- Get support – grants, local Councils etc

Site Information Sheet

Name of Site:	
Local Authority	
Bush Forever Site No.	
Area (ha)	
Zoning/Reservation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPS 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lot / Reserve Numbers 	
History	
Values	
Landform and Soils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major landform element 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape features 	
Vegetation and flora	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant flora 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation Complex 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of native species 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of introduced species 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation Condition 	

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Fauna		
TYPE	Number of species	Comments
Invertebrates		
Amphibians		
Reptiles		
Birds		
Mammals		
Introduced		

Major Issues:

Clearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weed Invasion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncontrolled Access	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rubbish Dumping	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Dieback	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feral Animals	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>	Groundwater Fluctuations	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Completed by: _____ Date: __/__/__

Appendix:

Major Landform Elements

- | | |
|---|--|
| Foothills | Spearwood Dunes |
| Pinjarra Plain | Wetlands |
| Bassendean Dunes | Quindalup Dunes |
| Combinations of Bassendean Dunes/
Pinjarra Plain | Marine (Estuarine and Lagoonal) Deposits |
| | Dandaragan Plateau/Scarp |

Vegetation Complexes

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Forrestfield Complex | Karrakatta Complex; North Transition |
| Coonambidgee Complex | Karrakatta Complex; |
| Guildford Complex | Central & South Cottesloe Complex; North |
| Swan Complex | Cottesloe Complex; |
| Dardanup Complex | Central & South Herdsman Complex |
| Serpentine River Complex | Pinjar Complex |
| Beermullah Complex | Quindalup Complex |
| Yanga Complex | Yoongarillup Complex |
| Cannington Complex | Vasse Complex |
| Southern River Complex | Mogumber Complex – South |
| Karrakatta Complex; North | Reagan Complex |