



TRAIL CHECK
ACTION PLANNER
— A CHECKLIST
FOR COMMUNITY
VOLUNTEERS
PRIOR TO
DEVELOPING
LOCAL SHARED
USE TRAILS



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Cover photo courtesy Michael Mullan

INTRODUCTION

An experience on a recreational trail means different things to different people . For some it is a weekend leisurely walk, for others a regular fitness track, a horse ride or a mountain bike trek .

This checklist will aid volunteers when preparing a Trail Management Plan . The plan will need to include notes on assessing locations when planning lower maintenance trails and consideration of how future use can be managed . Once opportunities and constraints are identified, this will inform the promotion of safe use, social interaction to ensure the trail delivers a good outdoor experience while taking into consideration aspects such as neighbours, a range of users and natural resources .

Once opportunities and constraints are identified, you can then begin working towards designing the trail to promote safe use, social interaction and greater appreciation of the environment .



Photo courtesy Michael Mullan

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Although all reasonable care has been taken in preparing this information, neither Horse SA nor its officers accept any liability resulting from the interpretation or use of this information. This information is subject to change without notice.

HOW TO USE THIS ACTION PLANNER

STEP ONE

Work through each section of this tool and for each topic select the statement that best reflects the current trail situation and/or management practices:

- Ideal
- Nearly there
- Just beginning
- Haven't thought about it / didn't know it could be a problem.

STEP TWO

After each topic is completed, collate your answers on the Summary of Results checklist on page 10 .

STEP THREE

The topics that you rated the lowest (i.e. haven't thought about it) may need to be your highest priority for planning improvements in the near future .

STEP FOUR

Once you have identified your highest priority areas, the next step is to develop a Trail Management Plan .

NOTES

Short term improvements:

- can be planned and implemented within one year
- help your trail comply with (regulatory) requirements
- is financially feasible to implement
- fits in with staff, volunteer and organisational times.

LONG TERM ACTIONS:

- can be planned and conducted over a longer time period (1-5 years)
- requires additional resources currently not available in your budget
- enhances the overall aesthetics and trail experience.

WHOLE OF TRAIL MANAGEMENT

1. PREPARE A TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A Trail Management Plan reflects the vision for the trail, including overall goals, promotion, risk assessment and maintenance.

A Trail Management Plan has management and continuous improvement tasks built into the ongoing maintenance and annual budgets. The plan may call for the regular collection of information relating to the overall trail functionality and patterns of use.

- A written Trail Management Plan is prepared and reviewed regularly.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

2. PATTERNS OF TRAIL USE

The more users on a natural surface trail, the higher the input (time, money and facilities) that may be required to provide a good trail experience and manage the environment.

Management decisions are informed by land capabilities (slope, soil type, rainfall) and the core users, for example, horse riders, mountain bikes, dog sleds, walkers.

Estimated peak use times, access to public transport and the make-up of the nearby population base will assist in how to best manage the trail to ensure sustainability.

- The planning and management considerations have been determined by the natural resource capabilities and patterns of trail use.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

3. OBTAIN APPROVALS

In council areas or on state or federal government managed land you will need agency approvals in writing to establish, close, route or access the land for management purposes.

Trail management tasks include vegetation removal or trimming, installation of a ford or large roadside signage. The land manager will be able to advise what approvals are needed.

- Approvals are in place for trail establishment and maintenance.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

4. SITING OF TRAILS AND TRAILHEADS

Riding on trails on a horse or bike or walking may be your favourite pastime and your passion. It may not, however, always be accepted by residents adjoining a trail corridor.

There are many factors to consider when choosing a site for new trails, or upgrading or managing existing sites. These include techniques to reduce dust, mud and storm water runoff. Land managers will have requirements for access for fire and emergency vehicles.

Trailheads are high impact areas where activity is concentrated, and will require extra facilities, for example signage, toilets and firm surface for parking vehicles.

- Trails and trailheads are sited and managed for potential environmental impacts, through open communication with all stakeholders.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

5. PROTECT HABITAT FOR NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS

A Trail Management Plan takes a holistic view to preserving habitat for native animals, birds and fish.

Seek advice on any present remnant vegetation (forest, woodlands, grasslands) and watercourses or feral animal control.

A trail provides an opportunity to plant local native species, enhancing an existing wildlife corridor.

- Trail Management Plans take a holistic view to protecting native plants, animals, birds and fish.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

6. MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACT LABOUR

Trail managers should be aware of the relevant legislation and insurance requirements related to the engagement of contractors and volunteers to work on trail projects.

Organisations operating as a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) must be familiar with requirements under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) which includes volunteers.

- Volunteers and contractors are managed according to training, skills and capabilities.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

7. TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND CHEMICALS

When tools are used, careful attention should be paid to how sites will be accessed to ensure that the integrity of the surrounding environment is preserved and that trail users remain safe. This may mean that access to some areas during wet seasons or peak visitor times restricts work.

When using chemicals, emergency procedures and equipment (for example, spill kit) are available. Tools

and equipment are suitable for the task, well serviced and action is taken to prevent fire, fuel spillage or other potential accidents.

- Tools, equipment and chemicals are carried, used and stored according to manufacturers' instructions.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

8. TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND CHEMICALS

By promoting good quality native vegetation through re-vegetation and management of existing vegetation, weeds will find it difficult to compete and will not flourish.

Good trail design will encourage users to stay to the centre of the trail tread and refrain from disturbing soil on the trail edges (berm). It is good practice to clean soil and seeds from boots, tyres of cars/bikes and horses' hooves prior to entering and leaving a trail. This will manage such diseases as Phytophthora.

Similarly, animal diseases which can affect both farming and native animals can be spread by careless management of our own pets and horses. Horses should not touch noses with other horses or stock over fences, or share drinking troughs. Unhealthy horses should not be out on the trail. Trails are considered a road in a biosecurity threat (plant or animal disease) and may be closed.

- Management practices minimise plant and animal diseases.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

9. MANAGING PEST ANIMALS AND PEST PLANTS

Trail managers work with land managers to identify pest animals and plants in the trail corridor and work to include reduction techniques in the management plan.

- Pest plants and pest animals are identified, and control programs for trail corridors are considered.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

10. TRAIL USER EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Trail user education programs ensure a good trail experience for users and raise awareness about protecting the environment.

Education includes workshops and training courses. Information includes signage, brochures, a Code of Practice, inserts into club newsletters, workshops and media articles.

- Trail user education programs are included in the Trail Management Plan.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

11. ROAD SAFETY

Selecting a route which will give trail users a quality experience often consists of linking unmade road reserves and parks along carriageways utilised by cars. Trail planners can utilise traffic counts and traffic engineering advice to assist with decision making. Crossing roads has a different set of criteria, including good sight lines.

Local councils can provide advice about who manages the road that the trail will align with or cross over. Road Safety education forms part of the trail user education program.

- Trails alongside or crossing over roads consider safety aspects, road managers consulted and trail user education includes road safety.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT



Photo courtesy Michael Mullan

TRAIL TREAD MANAGEMENT

1. TRAIL TREAD

A sustainable trail tread prevents erosion and acts to manage water runoff, assisted by well designed discreet drains where needed. Adjacent groundcover acts as a filter strip for any nutrient overloads. Trail tread is also important where wind is a factor. A sound trail tread also provides safety for the trail user and a better overall trail experience .

- Trail tread exists stabilising ground cover either side and providing appropriate drainage.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

2. SEASONAL WET AREAS, WET SEEPS AND DRAINAGE LINES

To preserve the trail tread quality, prevent development of erosion areas and maintain water quality, planning should incorporate specialist trail design techniques (for example, boardwalks) or restrict trail use when seasonal wet areas, wet seeps and drainage lines are soft due to being wet.

Skid marks, pot holes and bare ground caused by trail use are evidence that the trail tread or design (for example, elevation) is not suitable.

Another indicator is pugging, which is when feet, tyres or hooves sink deep into the tread surface or soil and leave holes, which damages vegetation roots, compacts the soil, pools water and greatly slows down the ability of the area to recover.

- Specialist trail design features or trail restrictions are applied in seasonal wet (waterlogged) areas, wet seeps (boggy areas) and drainage lines.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

3. STEEP SLOPES

Trails planned for steep slopes should be designed along the contour line and should make use of switchbacks where possible. Full bench cut trails are the most common trail design feature likely to be selected for steep slopes.

- Additional planning and management techniques are adopted for trails on steep slopes.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

4. TRAIL PLAINTING AND ROUTE DEVIATION

Trail plaiting occurs where trail users leave the original route and create a secondary track before returning back to the original route as users move around pot holes or a fallen tree. Trail users will also cut corners or deviate if the trail is poorly designed in the terms of scenic interest or is too difficult to negotiate.

In some cases trails will need to be closed and rehabilitated conducted in consultation with land managers and user groups.

- Action trail maintenance to avoid trail plaiting and route deviation.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

5. SHADE, SHELTER AND WATER

Consideration will need to be given to the provision of resting points, shade, shelter and water. Any trail to be used by horses will need to have watering points.

- Shade, shelter and watering points are provided.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

6. WATERCOURSES

Trails are often located along rivers or creeks and around dams or lakes (all called watercourses) as this is one of the great trail experiences.

Well designed trails keep users on route, keep campers in designated sites and provide opportunity for riparian zone rehabilitation projects which is a great way to engage users in watercourse management.

- Trails near watercourses are designed to minimise direct watercourse access.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT



Photo by Julie Fiedler

7. CAMPSITE AREAS

Intensive use or high impact areas related to a trail include campsites, narrow constraint points, for example horse step-overs, shelters, car and float parking areas, picnic and toilet facilities.

Intensive use areas related to trails need to be well designed to have safe access. This includes a naturally hardened surface which will minimise dust and mud and allow water to naturally disperse.

- A trail management plan with include scheduling regular maintenance of campsite areas, including checking signage, collection of rubbish and cleaning toilets.

<input type="radio"/>	IDEAL
<input type="radio"/>	NEARLY THERE
<input type="radio"/>	JUST BEGINNING
<input type="radio"/>	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT

ACTION PLANNER FOR SHARED USE TRAILS – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

	IDEAL	NEARLY THERE	JUST BEGINNING	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT	N/A
TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN					
1. Prepare a Trail Management Plan					
2. Patterns of Trail Use					
3. Obtain Approvals					
4. Siting of Trails and Trailheads					
5. Protect Habitat for Native Plants and Animals					
6. Management of Volunteers and Contract Labour					
7. Tools, Equipment and Chemicals					
8 . Animal and Plant Disease					
9 . Managing Pest Animals and Plants					
10 . Trail User Education and Information					
11 . Road Safety					
TRAIL TREAD MANAGEMENT					
1. Trail Tread					
2. Seasonal Wet Areas, Wet Seeps, Drainage Lines					
3. Steep Slopes					
4. Trail Plaiting and Route Deviation					
5. Shade, Shelter, Water					
6. Watercourses					
7. Campsite Access					

1. In the table above, record the rating you selected for each topic.

2. The topics which are rated the lowest are ones which potentially should receive early attention.

3. Set a date to review the action.



TRAILS SUB COMMITTEE OF RECREATION SA

HORSE SA

For more information
www.horsesa.asn.au

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HORSE SA

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FEDERATION OF SA