

B3. Controlling Unauthorised Access and Incompatible Use of Natural Areas

Unauthorised vehicle access, formation of informal trails, BMX track creation and trail-bike activity can cause severe degradation of natural areas. Soil is often disturbed, encouraging weed growth and vegetation may be destroyed causing areas to become denuded and subsequently eroded. There is also risk of dieback spread and harm to fauna as they, or their habitats, are disturbed or destroyed.

The introduction of weed species and pathogens to bushland via dumping of garden waste, soil and rubbish is also a major threat. Other impacts may include illegal collection of flora/fauna, arson, and harm to fauna by domestic animals.

There are various measures which can be undertaken to manage the impacts to natural areas via human use. Actions could include the provision of:

- infrastructure to keep people from trampling native flora, fauna and fungi such as designated paths and fencing or alternative barriers;
- conservation signage to encourage visitors to use the reserve appropriately;
- community education about the natural values and acceptable use of reserves;
- awareness-raising activities;
- monitoring and evaluation of visitor use; and
- introduction of a 'community watch' program.

The PBP's Local Nature Spot (LNS) or Behaviour Change for Natural Diversity project aimed to change behaviour that is detrimental to conservation of bushland reserves in the Perth Metropolitan Region. The project used community-based social marketing principles to communicate messages that enable this change.

Management of human use works best if motivation for human use and the patterns of use of the area are known. People who visit bushland will commonly have favourite places or use convenient routes that pass through the reserve. Patterns of use, once known, can help in the effective management of associated conservation measures.

The design and selection of actions that address impacts of human use within targeted communities have been found to be very important. To assist bushland managers in human impact management; the following recommendations arising from the **PBP's Behaviour Change for Natural Diversity (LNS Project)** are listed here:

- When addressing management issues, adopt principles of community based social marketing to provide effective methods to influence human behaviour in natural areas (see text box – p24);

Management strategies proposed at each LNS site, incorporated principles of community-based social marketing (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999). These principles include the following tools of behaviour change:

- Identify and remove external barriers to positive behaviour
 - Seek commitment for the preferred positive behaviour
 - Set and promote norms of acceptable behaviour using a variety of communication tools
 - Provide self-explanatory prompts in close proximity to where positive behaviours need to be encouraged
 - Provision of information does not necessarily lead to behaviour change so;
 - Use a variety of communication methods, using captivating information and easy to remember messages
 - Incentives should provide meaningful benefits to targeted individuals and groups to encourage the positive behaviour
 - Use personal contact to reinforce behaviour norms and provide feedback
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- Identify local residents' attitudes and perceptions of an area. Demonstrate an interest in local residents' concerns and offer solutions;
 - Develop a communication strategy including opportunities for personal contact, signage and information material. Use a range of media to promote project activities such as community newsletters, interest group networks and schools to supplement community newspaper releases. Give clear instructions about the desired behaviour;
 - Provide opportunities for personal contact: Employ an environmental education officer within a local government or share an officer based within another organisation to focus community engagement work towards long term behaviour change and raising awareness about local bushland reserves;
 - Ensure public consultation prior to installation of infrastructure that will significantly affect the historical use of a reserve such as fencing or track rationalisation in a reserve within an established urban setting;
 - Be responsive to community requests to deal with on-ground management issues where possible i.e. collect dumped materials or clean graffiti straight away and provide feedback to the community on activities undertaken by the land manager in a reserve;
 - Encourage residents to use bushland reserves for compatible activities to encourage attachment to nature reserves. Use positive messages in your signage and promotional material and avoid threatening messages;
 - Use annual, well promoted events such as clean-up and planting days to engage the community. Provide ongoing support to established community groups interested in bushcare;

- Promote local government support and incentives for bushcare volunteering using various media and events. Provide an opportunity for social interaction and non-monetary incentives;
- Help people to identify themselves as being responsible and caring in relation to their local bushland reserve and use prompts in places where you want to encourage positive behaviour;
- Use community engagement activities that take advantage of peoples' personal interests such as local gardening workshops; and
- Conduct further research into message development and delivery that raises awareness and understanding of the consequences of threats to bushland reserves such as weeds, feral animals and human activities (PBP, 2008).