

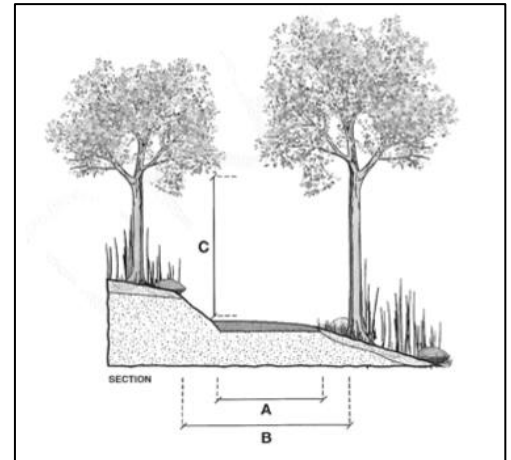
## The Trail Corridor

The concept of the trail corridor is important for maintenance volunteers. Keeping the corridor clear and safe is a key volunteer contribution.

The Bibbulmun Track is mostly one of the following corridor types:

- Constructed trail.
- Forest management track.
- Rail formation.

In concept, there are three elements to a cross-section of the trail (see diagram, right): the **tread (A)**, the total **corridor (B)** and the **ceiling (C)**.



The qualities of a well-maintained corridor are:

1. Free of obstacles and hazards.
2. Appropriate sightlines – for both visibility and a sense of surprise (consider straights, corners, and curves).
3. A stable, well-drained tread.
4. A natural appearance.

The **main purpose of the corridor** is to allow walkers to pass without encumbrance or hazard. Therefore, your goal in clearing/pruning work is to:

- Retain the tread.
- Remove fallen branches which may encumber walkers.
- Remove vegetation which might produce obstruction (of legs and body), trip hazard or visually obscure the tread.
- Prune vegetation with an eye to the future – what can you do now to keep it clearer for longer?

The aim is to enhance the trail experience yet maintain the corridor as narrow and natural in appearance as possible. For the big picture perspective you can refer to the Foundation's **Vision for the Track**, with its keywords of simple, minimalist, unobtrusive, sympathetic, challenging.

The PaWS operational guidelines for the Bibbulmun Track provide standard corridor dimensions for purpose-built sections of the Track. The **tread** should be approximately 80cm wide, the total **corridor** approximately 120cm wide, and the **ceiling** approximately 220cm high).

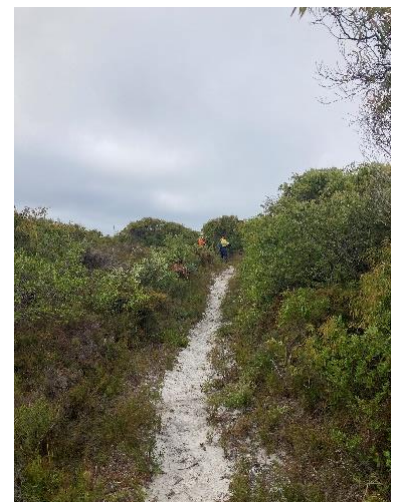
The amount of work required to clear the corridor varies depending on the corridor type, terrain and vegetation type.



In the open jarrah forest, the corridor sides are not likely to need much maintenance work.  
(Photo: The Life of Py)



The corridor is more distinct in the denser karri forest.  
(Photo: The Life of Py)



Corridor maintenance on the south coast involves significant pruning work to cope with dense and rapid regrowth.

The **tread** is a potential landing zone for the feet. There is likely to be a distinct tread maintained by foot traffic – and influenced by walker behaviour (both conscious and unconscious choices). Sometimes this is not much more than 30-40cm wide. The remainder need not be bare ground – but ideally will have no substantial plants or other obstacles to foot placement.

Above the tread, the **corridor** is maintained by clearing/pruning vegetation to achieve the target width and height. Achieving a neat, natural looking corridor might mean pruning main stems beyond the target distances. The corridor either side of the tread need not be cut back completely – herbs and low shrubs will not impede walkers and can enhance the natural look of the trail.

We recommend seeking a sense of the growth habits of vegetation on your section and identifying those which cause overgrowth problems over time. Are there particular plant species which are the source of most overgrowth? Is there a particular part of the section which experiences overgrowth more regularly?

If the section crosses slopes, do you need to put more work into the upslope side of the corridor, which tends to produce greater overgrowth down into the tread? If untended, this can result in gradual shifting of the trail downslope as walkers use the clear space. If downslope is steep and unstable ground, we have a problem!

A similar effect can occur alongside stairs, steps or water bars – attention should be given to these locations.

Are there shrubs which droop into the corridor when wet?

You should try to develop clearing/pruning routines which address the most significant problem areas as early as possible. Plan ahead if regrowth is strongly seasonal. Save yourself work in the long run!

Some pruning strategies and techniques are discussed in the factsheet *Pruning and clearing*.

Maintenance of the **ceiling** is fairly straightforward and obvious; follow similar principles discussed for the corridor.

You're not expected to undertake work beyond what you are physically capable of and have the tools to complete safely. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the requirements of your section, please let us know! We can discuss options to both support you, and make sure the section gets the attention it needs.

- Do you need extra hands on your section to make all this happen? We maintain a waiting list of prospective volunteers and are very keen to mobilise them into active work. Just get in touch and we'll do our best to match you with a new team-mate.
- What have you realised about your section's vegetation in your time as a volunteer? We'd be keen to hear from those who have proactively modified their maintenance routine in response, particularly in problem areas. This might be useful information we can pass on to others!
- We'd like to particularly recognise volunteers for the coastal sections in Frankland and Albany district, who have probably the most intense maintenance workload, often the least easily accessible sections (also the greatest distance to travel, for those not local), and the greatest difficulty acquiring new volunteers! Any prospective volunteer willing to sign up for a section on the south coast will get involved much sooner than those restricted to sections closer to Perth!

#### **"How wide is the Track?"**

It's a good question! And one which was recently asked by a new volunteer, to get an idea of the limits of his responsibilities.

Apart from the specified limits of the corridor explained above, the Track doesn't have a pre-defined width as such.

Of course, most of the Track is located within an unbounded bushland environment, so the corridor merges into the surrounding vegetation.