

Track Maintenance Know-How

A seasonal approach to Track maintenance

Once you are familiar with your section – not just the route and prominent waypoints, but the typical natural changes and issues through the year – you can begin to apply a seasonal strategy to your maintenance visits.



Volunteers are advised to aim for at least 3-4 sectional visits per year.

Traditionally, the stated expectation has been for at least four visits (i.e. every 3 months, on average).

However, longer, hotter summers across the southwest are pushing the commencement of safe and comfortable conditions out into the autumn months. Between the first visit of the year (in autumn) and the last (in late spring/early summer), it may not be easy to make time for more than one further visit, resulting in a reasonable minimum goal of three per year.

If there is the need and/or you have the capacity, a greater number of annual visits may be feasible for some sections (especially for regrowth management, as described below).

To ensure regularity of inspection and reporting, visits should be roughly evenly spaced through the year, as much as possible; the exact schedule is up to you.

In that context, being clever about which elements/typical issues you plan to address on each visit can pay dividends in reducing the overall effort required to maintain your section.

Here are some suggestions...

Erosion control

The period just after the first significant rainfall is an ideal time to attend to erosion control. If you can time it right – and you don't have DRA restrictions! – observe water movement on your section (i.e. during a rain event). This will help you to evaluate the behaviour of water flow on the tread and identify the performance of existing erosion control structures.



For maintenance of water bars (also rolling grade dips and knicks), it's easier and more effective to work with the soil after it has started to soften and loosen with moisture. It will compact down and cohere well.

Maintenance carried out before winter sets in will also ensure that erosion control structures function optimally when it counts.

The factsheet ***Erosion control*** contains background information, and valuable details on the purpose, form, function and maintenance of erosion control structures.



Trackpad

Sections on the south coast may have stretches of trackpad. This is installed to stabilise the tread for walkers and stabilise sections of dune which are subject to erosion. Trackpad is durable – some stretches were installed on the Track over seven years ago – and can even survive natural and prescribed burns, providing it is kept topped up with sand.

A visit in spring – before fire season – is the best time to prioritise the refilling of any stretches of trackpad becoming exposed by the natural movement of sand.

Alternatively, report any exposed areas, so we can inspect them and determine if action is required. Please ensure you include GPS locations and photos clearly demonstrating the extent of exposure.

Regrowth

Vigorous regrowth can be an issue throughout the growing season; left unattended, it results in a significantly overgrown trail corridor.



You may have certain parts of your section which are especially troublesome – where 20% of the section takes 80% of the effort! Reactive tip-pruning, while momentarily easier, usually results in a hedging effect which quickly grows back into the tread zone. Better to be proactive – plan one or more visits to explicitly focus your time and energy on the most intrusive regrowth. This will hopefully reduce your effort during subsequent visits – and make controlling ongoing regrowth in these sections more manageable.

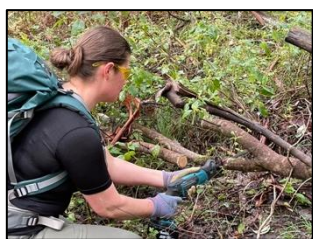
This strategy will require that you preplan the tools you may require. The most appropriate tools will vary by vegetation type; refer to our information about vegetation management applicable to your section.



Some volunteers find an alternative visit schedule is best suited to keeping on top of regrowth on their section. A substantial number of volunteers with sections on the south coast are based locally, increasing the convenience of getting to the Track. This allows them to pick the necessary window of opportunity in the weather and make more frequent visits during optimal conditions. Each visit may only focus on the vigorous regrowth in a selected short stretch; it's hard work and more than a few hours is more than enough for both the bodies and the power-tool batteries!

Fallen trees and branches

Strong weather systems passing through in winter and early spring are likely to bring down debris and trees in forest areas – especially in the karri, where a viable walkaround is sometimes limited.



Volunteers with sections in these areas should carry out an inspection around this time of year.

Prompt reporting of significant blowdowns will minimise delay in clearance by PWS, in time for spring peak walker numbers. Clearing smaller blowdowns yourself – when within your capacity – immediately reopens the trail corridor.

Track marking

As highlighted in the factsheet **Track marking**, your role includes the general monitoring, replacement and maintenance of Track markers (waugals).

Taking into account all the other seasonal tasks described above, we suggest focusing on your Track markers in your last visit of the year.

Make it an audit – evaluate whether a marker could be repositioned or will soon need replacing. Refer to 'Ongoing maintenance' within the marking factsheet for more tips.



If you do that, and you have not brought sufficient markers/tools for any particular problem encountered, you have the opportunity of the first visit in the new year to implement a solution... in time for the autumn walking season. The BTF office reopens at the end of January, so a request for a supply of more markers is likely to be actioned in good time.

Did we miss anything? Do you have other tasks on your section which you think have a seasonal element? Let us know so they can be added.

Similar considerations for campsite maintenance will be considered in a distinct factsheet (currently in preparation).