

## Our collaboration with DBCA

Although the WA government ‘owns’ the Bibbulmun Track on behalf of the community, the BTF has long had an intrinsic role in the management, maintenance and marketing of the Track through collaborative support by both staff and volunteers.

The value of an organisation which harnessed public enthusiasm to make a productive contribution to the Track was recognised in the early stages of the ‘Building a Better Bibbulmun Track’ project. The ‘Friends of the Bibbulmun Track’ was subsequently established in 1997, becoming the ‘Bibbulmun Track Foundation’ in 2002. You can read about the history of the Foundation, and our relationship with the government management of the Track, at [www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/get-involved/about-the-foundation/how-it-all-got-started/](http://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/get-involved/about-the-foundation/how-it-all-got-started/). My article in Bibbulmun News #83 (page 18) gives an interesting perspective on our role.

The BTF is the primary focal point for community-based support and engagement. Our key roles include raising awareness of the Track so it is well-used, well-loved and acknowledged as an important community asset that needs to be protected.

This diagram outlines the roles of the Department and the BTF:



As most of you will know, the relevant WA government department has had various incarnations over the time the Bibbulmun Track has existed. The Track was first developed in the days of the Forests Department, which was then amalgamated into the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM, 1985-2006). Subsequent rearrangements of departmental structure produced the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC, 2006-2013) and the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW, 2013-2017). Throughout these changes, management at the lower levels of the corporate structure remained comparatively constant. Currently, the Track is managed by sections of the **Parks and Wildlife Service (P&WS)** of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA, 2017-present).

Our work involves relationships with multiple sections of the P&WS, so we have different points of contact depending on the task. In particular, the **Parks and Visitor Services division** includes the **Recreation and Trails Unit (RTU)** and the **Volunteer Coordination Unit**. The **Regional and Fire Management Services division** contains branches including Swan Region (including Perth Hills District), South West Region (including Wellington and Blackwood Districts), Warren Region (including Donnelly and Frankland Districts) and the South Coast Region (including Albany District). However, the District offices may include staff from the other major divisions of P&WS. More complete details of the corporate structure of the DBCA can be found at [www.dbca.wa.gov.au/corporate-structure](http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/corporate-structure). The P&WS have their own website at <https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au>.

The **Recreation and Trails Unit (RTU)** is involved with overall management of the Track. Aspects such as the alignment, signage guidelines, maps, major infrastructure upgrades and maintenance, Track conditions and diversions, visitor risk management and public liability are all primarily the responsibility of the Department. The BTF currently has two key volunteers spending time in the RTU office at Kensington to support the work being done in this regard.

The **Volunteer Coordination Unit** is the conduit for registration, insurance coverage and recognition of all our volunteers. You can find documents relevant to your engagement as a volunteer at [www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/volunteering-with-parks-and-wildlife](http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/volunteering-with-parks-and-wildlife) (scroll to the bottom of the page).

We liaise with contacts in the **District offices** about on-the-ground tasks, as each District has a works crew with the necessary equipment and training. When you report something needing attention in your maintenance inspection report, it is usually forwarded by us to the District contact for actioning (the exceptions are where our Support Volunteer team can address it, or if it's something we think you can handle yourself). The response varies by District, depending on the type and priority of the problem, and other needs of the limited District resources at the time. The District offices have many responsibilities including general land management, fire management and other recreational facilities.

Some of our District contacts are pictured here...



Rebecca Hamilton, Perth Hills District



Nick Evans, Wellington District



John McKenzie, Donnelly District



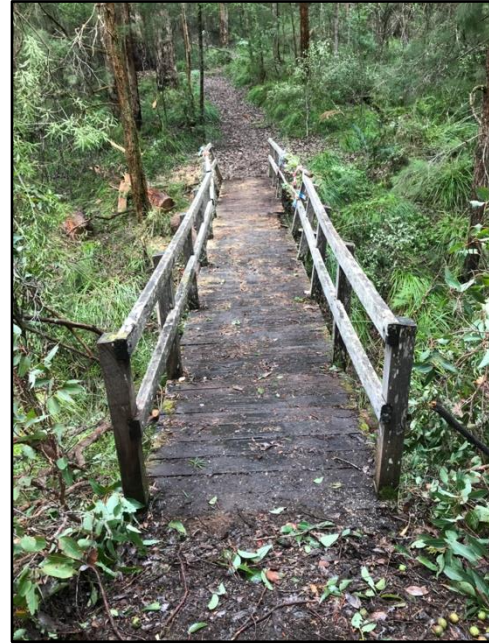
Julie Ewing, Frankland District

At its most efficient, the relationship between BTF reporting systems and action on the ground leaves nothing to be desired. Whether it's fallen trees needing a chainsaw crew, a water tank needing checking, or a full toilet needing pumping, we usually get a satisfactorily prompt response. Other cases are complicated and have no quick and easy fix; we may chafe at departmental limitations and processes, but usually need to accept them.

A recent example of a quick response occurred in Donnelly District. Walkers reported on a Sunday that a tree had fallen across a substantial footbridge just south of Warren campsite. By the Tuesday, the site had been inspected by District officer, John McKenzie. He and his crew cleaned up the tree, inspected the bridge for damage and confirmed it safe, temporarily repaired the broken handrails, and planned the permanent replacement of any damaged timber. The photos show the extent of the barrier to walkers and potential damage; a prompt response when needed.



Before



After

Feedback from the department indicates that the BTF is held in high esteem and is used by them as a model for partnerships with other volunteer-based organisations. The current collaboration is strong but – as with many things – it is always good to identify room for improvement. Already, the contribution of the Support Volunteer team – established several years ago – in basic campsite and Track maintenance (eg. tree clearances, erosion control, marking), campsite upgrades (eg. Swamp Oak, Waalegh), structural preservation (eg. River Road Bridge) and trail stabilisation projects (eg. Conspicuous Cliffs area) has developed our level of support. Current work to evolve and strengthen our maintenance program will further enhance this relationship.