

Care groups

A guide to getting started



**BAY OF PLENTY
REGIONAL COUNCIL
TOI MOANA**



Across the region, there are many groups of dedicated people working voluntarily for the protection or restoration of the natural environment, in a place of significance to them.

Whether it's coastal dune restoration, wetland and estuary protection, stream / lake margin management, catchment management, and/or control of pest plants and animals, the commitment and hard work of these Care Groups and their work are highly valued by Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana and we aim to support them as much as possible with technical advice, support and funding.

This guide is intended as a handy reference for anyone considering setting up a Care Group by outlining the assistance that council can provide and some tips for getting started.

How does it all work?

Types of projects we may help with:

- Fencing stream banks.
- Restoration of harbour margins.
- Monitoring of birds, including bird counts and bird census.
- Native plant nursery.
- Native vegetation planting, maintenance and monitoring.
- Pest (animal and plant) control and monitoring.
- Training, such as the safe use of sprays and tools.
- Community education and advocacy.
- Restoration or protection of bush, wetlands and other natural environments.

Some things to consider:

- Can the work be completed primarily through voluntary effort?
- Are you clear about what you want to do and where?
- Do you have realistic timeframes and achievable outcomes?
- Do you have volunteers with the right skills to do the planned work?
- Has the landowner (possibly DOC or a council) been approached?
- Is someone prepared to lead the group?
- Are you happy to produce an annual plan and report for Council (with the help of Council staff)?
- Can you manage your health and safety responsibilities?
- Are you able to give feedback about the project to the community?

What we can help with:

- Project coordination and planning.
- Technical advice.
- Training.
- Funding.
- Materials and other resources.

Your contribution:

- Volunteer time.
- Your own expertise.
- Local knowledge.
- Local connections.
- Passion.

Our relationship with you

From the outset we will take the view that your project is your group's not the council's.

Our role is to support your group and help you access the advice and resources that you need from us, and in a timely manner.

Ideally you will only need to deal with a single council staff member and similarly we would prefer to work principally with just one or two people from your group.



Getting set up

Step 1: Hold a meeting

- Hold an informal meeting and invite everyone you think may be interested.
- Discuss the issues and the place that you're concerned about and develop some idea of how you might go about solving those issues.
- Don't be too ambitious to start with and instead, think 'small, realistic and achievable'.
- Keep a record of the discussion, the attendees and their contact details.
- Find out what sort of work the various people in the group would like to do. For example, some may not like trapping rats but may be happy to take care of some planting.
- Keep all interested people/parties informed to ensure everyone feels included.

Step two: Get in touch with us

- Call 0800 884 880 or email caregroups@boprc.govt.nz and ask to speak to a Land Management Officer in your area and run your ideas past them to see what support we can offer. One of our land management officers will work alongside you through the next steps.

Step three: Make a plan

- Identify landowners and other people relevant to the project and gain their permission and cooperation.
- With the land management officer's help, develop a project plan and identify what will happen, when, who will do what and what resources are required. We try to keep this process as straightforward as possible.
- These plans are re-visited every year to make sure they are up to date and include a budget for the coming year.

Step four: Get into action

- Once landowner permissions are in place, the plan is approved, and the resources are in place, the group can get stuck in to the 'hands on' stuff.
- Try to keep good records of your work and achievements. It's useful to take plenty of pictures before and during the project to record progress. It's helpful for us and the group to have this information compiled into a brief report of the group's work each year
- The health and safety of volunteers is paramount for us so between us we'll need to make sure that there are some health and safety guidelines in place – it can't be assumed volunteers know how to keep themselves safe when undertaking new tasks.
- Most people find their time spent working in such groups an enjoyable social experience, so don't forget to set aside a bit of time for a good morning tea from time to time!

Step five: Review and revise the plan

- As the group gets more involved, the project plan needs to be re-evaluated. Plans can evolve and may become less or more ambitious.
- Group dynamics change over time, including members leaving. Replenishment of the group's volunteers is important and promoting the project locally can help attract new members.
- We try to keep paperwork requirements to a minimum but there is always a little to keep on top of. Ask us if templates or other support is available for various tasks – templates can be a huge time saver.
- Share tasks around and work to the strengths and interests of individual group members.



Looking to the future

As long as your group continues to do effective environmental work, we will make every effort to support you long term.

However, in order to ensure your sustainability, you should not rely solely on Bay of Plenty Regional Council for funding and support. The most successful care groups build a network of funders, supporters, volunteers and information providers.



For more information visit
www.boprc.govt.nz or
call 0800 884 880

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