

National Wetland Trust: Wetland Trails

“The appreciation of wetlands and their values by all New Zealanders, and the enhancement and restoration of wetlands throughout New Zealand”

Developing a Wetland Trail

The National Wetland Trust (NWT) was established in 1999 to increase the appreciation of wetlands and their values by all New Zealanders and the enhancement and restoration of wetlands throughout New Zealand. Our first major task is to build a wetland interpretation centre for people to learn more about wetlands and experience their special qualities.

Other Trust aims are to:

- Increase public knowledge and appreciation of wetland values
- Increase understanding of wetland functions and processes
- Ensure landowners and government agencies commit to wetland protection, enhancement and restoration

One of the Trust activities is enhancing access to wetlands via development and publication of wetland trails.

These could be walking or driving trails and are supported by a paper wetland trail guide, an electronic version on the NWT website, and signs to and around the trail route.

This document contains ideas and suggestions for developing a wetland trail.

If you wish to develop a wetland trail guide endorsed by the National Wetland Trust please contact us via www.wetlandtrust.org.nz

View our first wetland trail guide:
www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/publications.html

www.wetlandtrust.org.nz



Why wetland trails?

The National Wetland Trust is a voluntary non-profit organisation that aims to bring together wetland enthusiasts to protect wetlands through greater understanding and appreciation by the general public.

Most New Zealanders have an appreciation of the value of tall native forest and many opportunities all over the country to access and enjoy them.

Wetlands are difficult to access, with few developed walking trails, and consequently suffer a general lack of appreciation.

Driving and walking trails that take people to and through publicly and easily accessible wetlands will help increase wetland appreciation and protection.



Most wetlands are difficult to access!

Why involve the NWT?

- **Efficiency and Recognition**

The Trust hopes by working together with local groups and agencies we can develop a series of wetland trails across New Zealand that, given a similar level of quality, style and branding will become a recognisable product. As such, each trail will pique public interest in the others, with visitors seeking out trails for their destination. In addition, we have access to road signage that will also increase recognition of and provide an expectation of a quality experience among users.

- **Assistance**

We've developed the first Wetland Trail Guide, so we've done the hard yards. The Trust can provide advice, guidelines, editing, branding, assistance with promotion and distribution, and make your trail guide available on our website as part of a national network.

- **Funding**

The Trust has a level of recognition and a legal status as an incorporated society in New Zealand. Use of our branding and logo will encourage funding for production and printing of wetland trail guides from a range of potential corporate or government sources.

- **Infrastructure**

The NWT has an agreement with Transit NZ to erect signage to direct users to and around wetland trails. These signs have been designed to fulfill a range of needs (e.g. large highway signs promoting the trail, smaller directional signs around the route).



Criteria for a National Wetland Trust Trail Guide

A Wetland Trail bearing the National Wetland Trust logo must meet the following criteria.

- The route should showcase wetlands with cultural, recreational, scientific, educational, scenic, and/or wildlife values and be of such quality, size, variety or significance that the visitor has a pleasant, informative, intriguing and/or enlightening experience to engage the visitor in wetlands and wetland values.
- The route should be safe for visitors and contain safety warnings where appropriate.
- The route should not compromise the ecological integrity of a sensitive area or disturb sensitive fauna, e.g. nesting or moulting sites.
- The route should not require crossing or entering private land unless long-term arrangements have been made with the landowner (e.g. via covenant or legal riparian access rights).
- The route may showcase any wetland type or combination of wetland types, including lakes, bogs, estuaries, rivers, swamps, geothermal or other wetlands.
- The route should not replicate an existing NWT wetland trail, but may expand, enhance, or update one (if necessary).
- The guide must be approved by the NWT Trails Committee and the NWT Communication Committee.



Wetland Trail Guidelines

If you are developing a wetland trail, please take the following into account.

1. Interest

Seek a route that will take visitors somewhat 'off the beaten path' but safely and easily to / around a wetland that is attractive, interesting, informative, tranquil, or of some other general interest.

The aim is to provide a pleasant outdoor experience that can be enjoyed by the majority of people without any specialist equipment or special permission from landowners.

Aim to surprise, delight and engage the user.

Look for;

- high view points
- bird viewing locations
- existing boardwalks
- picnic areas
- areas of interesting plants
- areas of open water



Provide a pleasant outdoor experience

Avoid areas of such high value and sensitivity that increasing visitation would threaten their existence.

2. Information/ content

Include the following information:

- Trail location – some users will be from overseas and may not be familiar with local names, provide distance and direction from nearest major centre, include New Zealand in your location.
- Length of trail – hours and kilometers.
- For driving trails, remind drivers to zero their odometers.
- Distances between points of interest (include distances to clear landmarks to help navigators get back on track if they become disorientated).
- Clear but concise directional instructions – perhaps in bold or a different colour or placement to make it easy for the navigator to quickly read. The driver may try to read the instructions, advise them to pull over to read the directions safely.



- Location of amenities - public toilets, service stations, food, accommodation, picnic areas.
- Safety notices – warn of hazards such as fast traffic, flood potential etc.
- Interesting facts – historical information, flora, fauna, cultural features, etc.
- Photos and/or pictures to interest potential visitors.
- Where to find further information on wetlands in the area.
- The National Wetland Trust website address.

3. Maps

Ensure maps are of large enough size to be readable and clear enough to be discernable.

Orient them with north to the top.

Provide a scale bar (not just a numeric scale, they are hard to interpret).

Mark the route clearly, including points of interest that relate to the text.

Check that you are not breaching any copyright with the map you intend to use – do not scan or photocopy a commercial map without permission.



Map from Whangamarino and Lake Waikare Trail Guide

4. Safety

When designing the route try to avoid having trail users:

- crossing or pulling into fast traffic
- parking across a busy road from a point of interest
- stopping on corners, highways or other unsafe sites
- crossing unstable or unsafe ground (e.g. in boggy or geothermal areas)
- crossing waterways that may rise rapidly and unexpectedly
- crossing private land
- approaching hazards such as beehives, dangerous stock

If these are unavoidable, clearly mark these as hazards on the trail guide. Remember that it is illegal to stop on a State Highway/ motorway except in emergency.

Remind drivers not to try to read the instructions and drive. If they have no navigator, remind them to pull over to read the directions.



For walking trails, indicate level of fitness needed, remind users to take adequate water, food, sun/rain protection, map, and, if necessary other safety and navigation equipment and to leave their intentions with reliable friends/ relatives etc.

5. Testing

Ensure your instructions are clear and comprehensive by having a novice test your route.

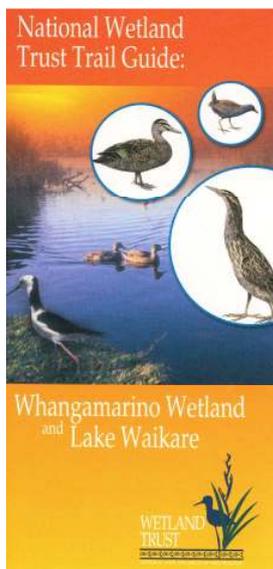
You can ask a friend or work colleague, but they should not have had any involvement in the development of the route, and should have no instruction from you other than a request to try to follow the instructions on the draft trail guide.

Unless there are safety concerns regarding them getting lost (particularly on a walking trail), don't travel with them as you may inadvertently give them directional signals. Instead, ensure they have a cell phone, good road map and your cell phone number and be in the vicinity (e.g. following in your car).

Ask your testers to note which instructions, if any, they found difficult to understand.

You may need to follow this step a couple of times, after each amendment of the draft, using new testers each time.

6. Branding



Consistent branding is important to build familiarity with the wetland trail guide series. See the example of the first official NWT trail guide.

To bear the NWT logo, the following should be adhered to.

NWT Logo – prominently located on the front cover, contact the NWT for a quality logo

Colour – the Trust's brightly coloured orange / yellow combination

Format – DLE format fits into information brochure stands and are easy to carry

Partners/ logos of supporters etc on the back page

NWT web address – prominently displayed on the back page

Contact the National Wetland Trust for specifications.

7. Funding

Consider the following for potential funding for developing/ printing/ distributing the trail guide:

- Local / regional council or Department of Conservation
- Local business (particularly those located along the route and those related to wetlands)
- Pub charity / Lotto/ Local charitable trust



8. Signage



The National Wetland Trust has designs and prototypes for promotional and directional signs.

These have been approved by Transit NZ for use on State Highways.

Contact the NWT
www.nationalwetlandtrust.org.nz
for more information.

9. Printing/distributing

Launch

Consider a public launch of your trail guide, perhaps as a World Wetland Day event. You could enhance the experience by creating a car rally or 'treasure' hunt, having groups/teams seek clues along the route and answer wetland-related questions, with novelty or wetland-themed prize-giving at a bbq afterwards.

Distribution

Place the printed guides in nearby information centres, environment centres, cafes, libraries, tourist offices. Send us an electronic version to go on the NWT website.

Publicity

Promote your guide through local networks, the National Wetland Trust newsletter, in the local papers, in outdoor magazines.

10. Maintenance

Check your route and infrastructure (e.g. signs) regularly to ensure the information is still relevant, the route is still safe, and your signs are in good condition. Also check your distribution outlets to ensure the brochures are in good supply.

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