

# **Orienteering Australia Environmental Code of Practice**

## **1. Introduction**

Orienteering is an outdoor sporting and recreational activity involving navigating cross country with the aid of a map and compass. As the sport is based primarily on the use of natural landscapes, those who participate generally have a high level of environmental awareness and a desire to cooperate with land owners in meeting their particular requirements.

The sport is highly dependent on access to both private and public land to conduct events and the full cooperation of land owners and managers is vital for its ongoing growth. This Environmental Code of Practice has been developed to clearly demonstrate what is expected of both organisers and competitors.

## **2. Purpose**

This Code of Practice is primarily intended to serve as a guide to organisers and competitors to ensure that our activities have minimal impact on both natural and constructed features of our competition areas.

Secondly, it will provide a means by which both private and public land owners and managers can be informed of the steps that we take to avoid adverse impacts resulting from our sport.

## **3. Statement of intent**

Orienteering Australia and its member associations are committed to ensuring that the sport of orienteering is conducted in a manner that is environmentally sound and in accordance with landowner requirements. Furthermore Orienteering Australia will ensure that organisers and competitors are made aware of this policy and the means by which it will be implemented.

## **4. Orienteering Australia responsibilities**

- 4.1 Orienteering Australia will include this code of practice in the Competition Rules governing the conduct of the sport of Orienteering within Australia.
- 4.2 Orienteering Australia will ensure the regular review and updating of the code. From time to time and in conjunction with the State Associations specific impacts will be monitored to ensure best practice is followed. The Federation and its State Associations will work with landowners to ensure the sport is conducted in an environmentally acceptable manner.
- 4.3 Orienteering Australia will encourage research, collate and disseminate information on the environmental impacts of orienteering.
- 4.4 The Orienteering Australia Director, Technical will be responsible for coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the code.

## **5. State Association responsibilities**

- 5.1 State Associations and clubs must be conscious of the need to collect data on the impact of orienteering and to pass on any substantial or significant reports to Orienteering Australia. Studies

may be commissioned by the State Associations or clubs using the skills of professional consultants.

5.2 Requests by land owners for studies to be undertaken should be welcomed and, providing funding is made available, every cooperation should be given to researchers to help them carry out valid independent studies.

5.3 Map files should be maintained and updated with copies of courses to assist with monitoring impacts over a period of time and to provide a reference for course setters to avoid overuse of control sites.

## **6. Event organisers' and controllers' responsibilities**

### **6.1 Area selection**

In selecting areas for orienteering the following points should be considered:

- Whether an area is capable of sustaining the scale of the proposed event without excessive impacts on the physical environment or conflicts with other users.
- Where seasonal sensitivities exist, for example, due to wildlife breeding, lambing or other rural operations or climatic extremes, schedule events in those areas to avoid sensitive periods.
- Once an area has been selected, regular liaison must occur with the relevant owner or manager to ensure their requirements are incorporated into planning for the event at an early stage. When necessary, relevant permits must be obtained and organisers must ensure that everyone associated with the event is aware of the conditions that may apply.

### **6.2 Access and parking**

- Consult with owners and managers on selection of parking and assembly areas.
- Check that roads and tracks are adequately formed for the number of vehicles expected. Adverse weather conditions must be considered.
- Clearly define prescribed routes across open areas and provide attendants to direct and control parking.
- Vehicles should not be parked in areas of long dry grass if there is a risk of fire caused by hot exhausts.
- Manage gate closure by signs or attendants.
- Ensure that stock are not adversely affected by the movement of vehicles or people.
- Car pooling should be encouraged.

### **6.3 Area management**

- Signs must never be nailed to trees because of the danger to felling and milling operations and also the risk of introducing disease into the tree.
- Secure permission to use pit toilets and agree siting. Portable toilets may be required in water catchment areas, areas of high public use, environmentally sensitive areas and on land where the management authority or owner does not permit pit toilets.
- Check whether fire restrictions apply and inform competitors of such restriction and of any precautions that are necessary. As a general principle, the lighting of fires at events should not be allowed and smoking should be discouraged.
- Assembly areas must be planned to ensure minimum impact on vegetation. Areas of concentrated activity such as adjacent to start, finish, results and food sales must be carefully located.
- Particular care should be taken when selecting the route to remote start points to avoid creating tracks through sensitive areas or areas which would take some time to recover.
- The finish chute area should be located away from steep, erodible slopes or areas of sensitive vegetation.

- All rubbish must be removed from the area. Competitors should always be encouraged to take out their own waste but adequate rubbish collection facilities must be provided. A thorough inspection of the area must be undertaken after the last competitors have left the area. All tapes to mark control sites or specific routes must be removed. The area surrounding water points on courses must also be carefully checked and cleaned if disposable cups or bottles are provided.
- Respect the rights of other users of an area when an orienteering event is in progress by sharing or, if practical, avoiding public areas and other facilities.
- If public announcement systems are used, design and locate these to minimise the spread of noise outside the assembly area.

## 6.4 Course setting

- When setting courses in sensitive areas thought must be given to numbers of competitors passing or visiting a specific point. Control sites are an obvious example where care must be taken to minimise impacts but other areas to be considered may include obvious crossing points at fences or creeks, open marshes, mossy surface rock and soft earth embankments.
- In some cases, after consultation with land managers, it may be necessary to declare areas as 'out of bounds' because of management, security or privacy factors. An area may be undergoing regeneration or seasonal factors may dictate that the area should be avoided to prevent any risk of damage. Such restrictions need to be clearly communicated to competitors.
- On property containing stock or crops, owners must be consulted to determine what, if any, measures must be taken to avoid disturbance. Appropriate measures must be clearly communicated to competitor's if courses pass close to such areas. Out of bounds areas must be clearly shown on each competitor's map.
- If the area contains known sites of natural or cultural significance which may be disturbed by the movement of orienteers, avoid placing controls on or near these sites or setting legs which would concentrate the movement of orienteers through them. (It may be counter-productive to mark such areas as out of bounds as this can attract undue attention to the sites).
- The property owner's requirements in regard to fence crossing must be communicated to competitors. In some cases it may be necessary to create and identify specific crossing points.
- If the area contains animals which flee rather than hide when disturbed (kangaroos, wallabies, sheep, wild pigs), endeavour to plan courses with a view to reducing continual disturbance to these animals. This may be done by having all courses follow the same general direction or by leaving parts of the area free of controls or obvious route choices.
- Some areas may contain sensitive surface rock that would be subject to damage by spiked shoes. If required by the relevant land managers, pre-event advice must be given to competitors that such shoes cannot be used.

## 6.5 Competitors' responsibilities

- Read and adhere to organisers instructions.
- Pets and firearms must not be taken to events because of the restrictions that generally apply.
- Fire restrictions must be observed.
- Gates must always be closed unless there is a specific instruction otherwise.
- Report any damage to property to the organisers.
- Avoid spreading seeds and mud when cleaning your shoes and clothing. This can be done by cleaning them at the event site, provided that this does not spread material from an infested area on the course to a 'clean' assembly area. If cleaning at home, dispose of the material so that it is not spread elsewhere. Do not leave the cleaning until you arrive at the next event

site.

- Avoid fauna and stock as much as possible. Cattle trapped at fence corners or in a confined area can stampede and should always be given a wide berth.
- Try to avoid disturbing wildlife. Keep a distance whenever possible to avoid stressing any animal.
- Remove your own rubbish. Do not leave it for the organisers to collect and take away. Drive and park as directed by the organiser. The organiser is responsible to ensure you do not cause damage by becoming bogged or by trampling sensitive vegetation or pasture.
- Wherever possible avoid damage to sensitive areas such as wetlands, marshes and soft earth embankments. Mossy rock surfaces should be avoided to prevent damage and also because they could be slippery and dangerous.
- Respect the rights of other users of the area such as walkers, picnickers, and of course resident land owners. Do not approach farm residences.