ALPINE SHIRE COUNCIL

Tree Management Plan 2021

Contents

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REVISION RECORD

MANDATORY – Use 1.0, 2.0 for adopted / approved versions and 1.1, 1.2 for drafts or revisions without change.

Date	Version	Revision description
06/07/2021	0.1	Draft for Public Exhibition
07/09/2021	1.0	Presented to Council for adoption

1. Executive Summary

This Tree Management Plan has been developed in order to:

- document a clear and consistent approach to the way the Alpine Shire Council (Council) manages tree assets; and
- assist Council staff in determining priorities for tree programs and works.

The Tree Management Plan will provide principles and describe processes for addressing:

- tree management;
- risk identification and mitigation;
- tree inspections and assessments;
- tree selection and planting;
- tree removal;
- tree protection;
- infrastructure protection;
- electric line clearance; and
- tree maintenance.

2. Tree Management Approach

Trees are a highly valued asset and significantly contribute to the amenity of the towns across the Alpine Shire. Like any other asset, trees need to be managed effectively to maximise their benefits and minimise adverse effects. As biological assets, trees do not behave uniformly over their life and are prone to influence from many factors outside the control of the tree owner e.g. drought, weather, site conditions and disease. Their life expectancy can vary enormously, is not easy to predict and requires ongoing assessment.

Trees take many years to develop to maturity and provide maximum benefits to the community and the local ecology, and they cannot be quickly replaced. The retention and protection of larger trees in particular is important, especially in an expanding and ever-changing urban environment as they provide the maximum community benefit.

Council is committed to the efficient and effective management of trees within the Alpine Shire. Council is responsible for a significant number of trees, and the inspection and maintenance of the tree network is conducted using a risk-based approach.

Trees are categorised according to the risk they present, and this categorisation is based on consideration of their location, any identifiable defects, the probability of the defects resulting in limb or trunk failure and the likely consequences if failure occurs.

3. Risk Management

The primary reason for tree asset management is to manage the risks to the community. Council's approach to risk management is based on a three-step process:

1. Inspect the asset, either on a scheduled/proactive basis or on a reactive basis triggered by an incident or customer request;
2. Identify any defects which may affect the structural integrity of the tree;
3. Implement the appropriate action within the required Response Time.

The risk associated with trees is a combination of the location and condition of the tree, and the public or asset use in the vicinity of the tree. Management of the risk needs to take these factors into account.

The Australian Standard, (AS/NZS 4360-2004 Risk Management), provides a sound basis for managing risk.

Risk assessment is the overriding factor in determining the priority for works and allocating resources. Inspections and risk assessments are undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced arborists.

3.1 PROACTIVE INSPECTIONS

Proactive inspections are risk-based and scheduled in accordance with the timeframes in Appendix A based on categorisation of the Shire into zones representing different levels of risk to the public.

A qualified arborist will inspect the tree for any defects which may impact on the structural integrity of the tree. Any mitigation works which are logged will be determined with consideration to the location of the tree, the type of defect identified, the likelihood that the defect will result in trunk or branch failure and the likely consequences if failure occurs. Mitigation works will be referred for further action in accordance with the timeframes outlined in Appendix B.

3.2 REACTIVE INSPECTIONS

Reactive inspections are carried out when one of the following occurs in relation to a tree or trees that Council is responsible for managing:

1. An incident has occurred;
2. A member of the community has raised an issue; or
3. A Council employee has identified an issue.

An inspection will be carried out is in accordance with the timeframes documented in Appendix A. Mitigation works will be carried out in accordance with the timeframes documented in Appendix B.

3.3 ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Council maintains information on the trees that it is responsible for managing, which includes the following:

- Details of all incidents;
- Details of all inspections which have been carried out; and
- Information on the works which have been completed on Council's trees.

This information enables the appropriate scheduling of maintenance and programmed works, as well as providing data for the internal auditing of processes.

Fulcrum is the tool which is currently used for recording inspection data, for scheduling both proactive and reactive maintenance tasks, and for recording the completion of all maintenance tasks.

Council does not proactively collect and store data on trees that it is not responsible for managing, except as a result of a requested inspection.

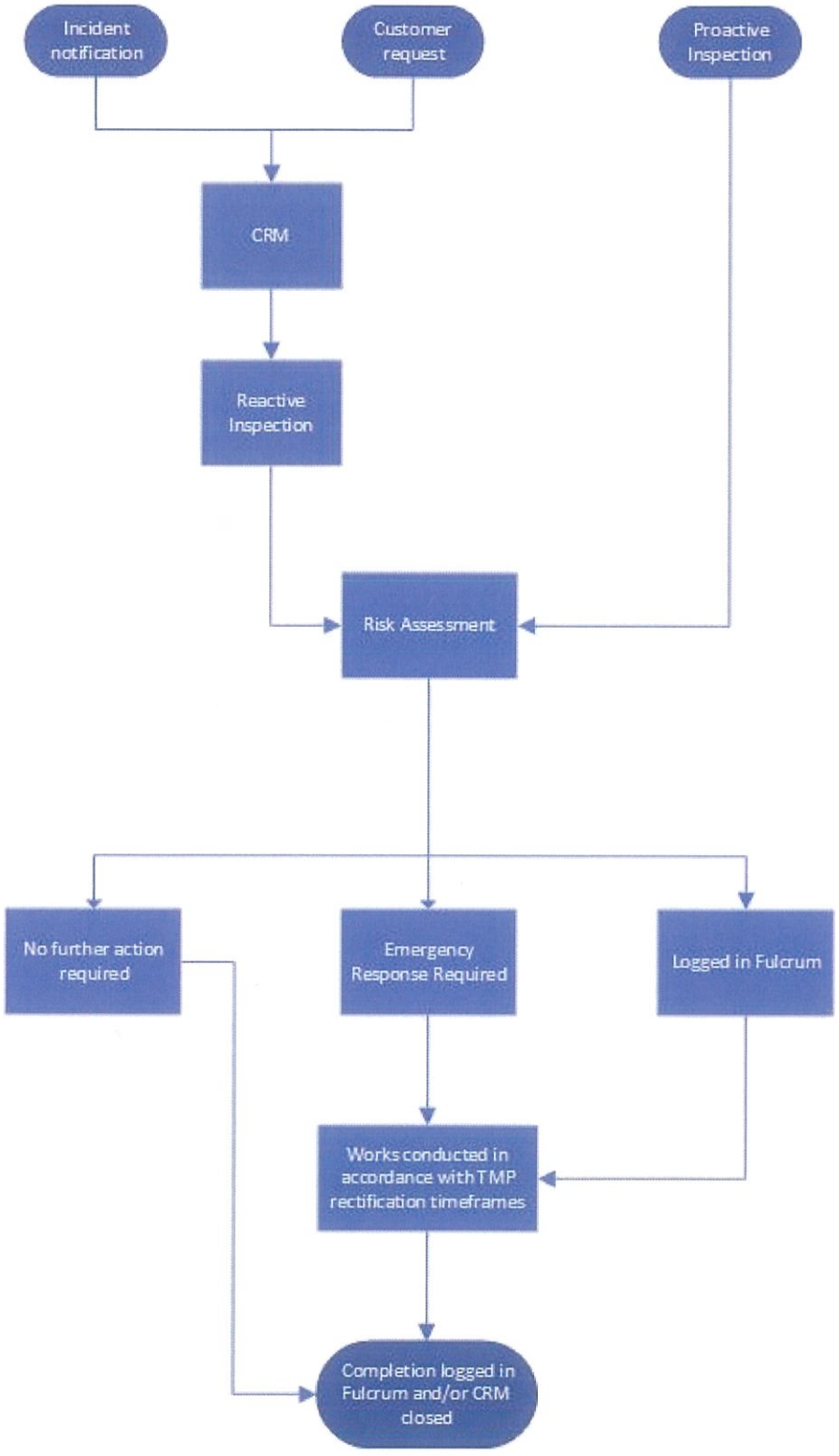
3.4 CUSTOMER REQUEST MANAGEMENT

Council uses a Customer Request Management (CRM) system to track customer requests from initiation/receipt through to completion. This system is used by Council staff to record issues which require investigation and follow-up.

Requests received through the CRM system are assigned to Council's Tree Crew Team Leader for assessing. The Tree Crew Team Leader will determine the appropriate action to take in accordance with the timeframes outlined in appendices A and B.

3.5 WORKFLOW

3.5 Workflow



4. Plan Improvement and Monitoring

The Tree Management Plan is an evolving document to be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis. A review of the plan is to be conducted as a minimum every four years.

4.1 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance against the plan will be assessed against the following key performance indicators:

- Proactive inspections are carried out within the prescribed timeframe;
- Reactive inspections are carried out within the prescribed timeframe;
- Identified maintenance actions are completed within the prescribed timeframe; and
- Documented evidence is being effectively maintained of inspections carried out, issues raised and incidents occurring, and maintenance tasks carried out.

5. Applicability

This Tree Management Plan is applicable to the following:

- Street trees planted by Council or for which Council has assumed responsibility;
- Trees planted by Council or for which Council has assumed responsibility located in Council managed parks and reserves; and
- Trees located on other Council owned or managed properties.

Excluded from the scope of this Tree Management Plan are the following:

- Trees located on private land; and
- Roadside trees pursuant to Section 107 of the *Road Management Act 2004*[1].

6. Tree Selection and Planting

6.1 TREE SELECTION

When selecting species for tree planting the following factors must be considered:

- Preferred "Landscape Character";
- Adopted masterplans, strategies and development plans;
- The significance of previous history of tree planting;
- Drought tolerance/low water usage;
- Longevity;
- Growth habit, size and structural integrity;

[1] Whilst Council has no Statutory or Common Law duty to inspect roadside trees, inspections and mitigation works are conducted when resources allow for such works or in the event of a reactive inspection.

- Tolerance to harsh urban environments;
- Soil type and structure;
- Root growth characteristics and tolerances;
- Pruning requirements;
- Amount and type of debris shed;
- Proximity and form of surrounding existing and future below ground and above ground infrastructure;
- Proximity to powerline assets;
- Solar radiation/orientation;
- Pest and disease susceptibility;
- Existing and future use of the surrounding area;
- Habitat value;
- Suitability to a public environment i.e. allergens or pathogens ;
- Weed potential; and
- Existing and likely future adjacent land use.

6.2 TREE PLANTING

Tree planting will be carried out in a programmed and sustainable manner.

Due to lead times associated with the production of tree stock it is essential to forward plan to determine what tree stock will be needed and to be assured of obtaining the right species, acceptable quality of stock and availability at the right time.

An approach which results in balanced diversity of tree ages and sizes across the Shire will be followed to achieve long term stability of the tree population and landscape character.

The right mix of species and age diversity are vital components of a sustainable tree population. A generally accepted rule for achieving this is for a single genus to not make up any more than ten percent of the whole tree population. The age of trees should also be spread evenly in any location, with variation between young and old trees to lessen the impact of, or need, to remove large areas of trees.

Priority for tree planting by Council will be given to:

- areas with an existing lack of trees;
- areas where residents or community groups have requested trees;
- high profile and high use areas;
- areas where there are a high percentages of old aged trees, low species diversity and/or trees in poor condition; and
- sites where trees have been removed.

Council must be consulted and give approval for any tree planting within streets, open spaces and reserve it manages or will take control of, as Council will ultimately become responsible for their maintenance and any problems that may arise.

6.3 TREE ESTABLISHMENT

Effective after-care tree management can greatly increase the success of the planting. Trees will be planted in line with best practice and an after-care maintenance program implemented for a minimum period of three years in order to target a tree establishment success rate of greater than 80%.

7. Tree Removal

Trees can take many years to develop fully and once removed cannot be quickly replaced.

Urban trees are living organisms with a finite life span; they often grow in non-ideal environments; they can be subject to numerous forms of physical damage; and can become a potential risk. Removal of trees will therefore be a regular and necessary process of Council's tree management program. Tree removal decisions must be undertaken systematically and with due consideration of all factors.

The potential requirement for tree removal can be triggered by a Council officer as a result of an inspection, or from a member of the public via Council's customer request system.
Any decision to remove a tree will be based on a range of considerations in order to determine the best long-term outcome in the location.

Tree removal considerations include:

- Hazards which cannot be addressed to an acceptable level by pruning or other maintenance works;
- Interference with nearby trees;
- Aesthetic value;
- Tree health and estimated remaining useful life;
- Degree of public nuisance because of its species, size, location or condition. The nuisance could be caused by excessive fruit or seed drop, suckering, harbouring of insects or excessive twig or limb breakage;
- Impact of required infrastructure works in proximity to the tree which are assessed as being likely to kill or render the tree a hazard or significantly impact on the trees condition and useful life expectancy. Careful consideration must be given to alternative construction and/or intelligent design principles to reduce the impact.
- Damage or nuisance to public or private property where no other viable means are available to rectify the situation;
- Infection with an epidemic insect or disease where the recommended control is not applicable, and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission; and
- The tree or group of trees is a recognised woody weed species.

Wherever possible prior to tree removal, the following engagement will be carried out as a minimum in order to inform immediately impacted residents and businesses:

- A sign advising 'tree removal planned' will be placed in a visible location on the tree;

- Letters will be delivered to nearby residents and businesses;
- Council officers will 'door knock' the nearby residents and businesses.

Exceptions to the notification process are when there is an immediate "high risk" to the public or property. In these cases, tree removal will occur as a priority to ensure public safety is protected, and the minimum notification requirements may not be achieved.

All State and local planning requirements controlling the removal of trees must be met.

7.1 TREE REMOVAL COSTS

Where Council determines that tree removal is required, removal costs shall be borne by Council.

If a Council managed tree or group of trees is removed by any person or authority without Council authorisation, that person or authority may be subjected to enforcement action under the relevant Council local law. That person or authority shall also meet the full cost of reinstatement, which includes purchase of an advanced tree, tree planting and a minimum three-year tree establishment period for the tree.

7.2 HAZARDOUS TREES

All Council trees reported as being unsafe or hazardous by the public or identified as being of concern by staff will be inspected by an appropriately qualified and experienced arborist. Options will be considered to minimise and or reduce the immediate risk which may include emergency tree removal.

A tree must only be removed as emergency work if it is considered to be hazardous or structurally unsound, has an unacceptable risk of failure in the near future, and there is a potential target.

A record of trees removed under the emergency work provisions will be maintained to ensure replanting occurs, where replanting is appropriate.

8. Tree Protection

Trees on Council-managed land are to be protected with the objective of reducing the potential negative impacts of development, construction and temporary works.

Typical negative impacts that may occur during construction include:

- mechanical injury to roots, trunk or branches;
- compaction of soil, which degrades the functioning roots and inhibits the development of new roots by reducing the availability of oxygen and water;
- changes in existing grade which can cut or suffocate roots;
- alteration of the water table - either raising or lowering;
- microclimate change, exposing sheltered trees to sun or wind;
- sterile soil conditions, associated with stripping off topsoil; and
- chemical damage due to leaking or spilling of fuels, lubricants, hydraulic oils or other toxic substances.

No damage, pruning or removal of any tree will be permitted without the prior written approval of Council. The contractor, relevant responsible authority or property owner shall be responsible for the protection of trees on Council managed land that are likely to be affected by development, construction and temporary works.

All trees on Council managed land shall be protected in accordance with AS 4970 - 2009 Protection of trees on development sites. Council maintains a Tree Protection Guideline which is based on this Australian Standard and is available through the Alpine Shire Council website.

9. Electric Line Clearance

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is responsible authority for ensuring electrical safety of the power distribution system in Victoria.

Council has a statutory obligation under the Electricity Safety Act (1998) for maintaining clearance of public trees from overhead power lines within the "Declared Area". Refer to Council's "Electric Line Clearance Management Plan" for details on how this obligation is managed, and for a map of the "Declared Area". A copy of the Electric Line Clearance Management Plan is available through the Alpine Shire Council website.

Myrtleford is a "Declared Area" and the only area of Council responsibility with respect to Electric Line Clearance. Maintaining overhead electric line clearances for all trees outside of the declared area is the responsibility of the local distribution company which is Ausnet Services.

10. Existing Tree Controls and Regulations

There are existing laws and regulations that control the removal and pruning of both native and exotic vegetation on private and public land. The policies and procedures in this Plan are in support of those laws and regulations and need to be viewed as being in addition to those laws and regulations.

It is the responsibility of all persons to ensure they do not do anything that is in contravention of any existing laws and regulations.

11. Tree Avenue Replacement

A number of significant tree avenues exist across the Alpine Shire and these make a large contribution to the character of the Alpine Shire and its towns.

The trees which make up these avenues are typically single species and all planted at the same time. The risk is acknowledged that these tree avenues will reach maturity and approach the end of their useful life within similar timeframes. If left unmanaged, this will likely result in whole avenues requiring removal and replacement over a relatively short period, with a significant impact on the character of these locations.

Council will develop a Tree Avenue Management and Replacement Plan. The purpose of this Plan will be to ensure that avenue trees are managed effectively through their remaining useful life and replaced at a suitable time in order to achieve maximum benefit for the community from trees both individually and when considered collectively as part of an established avenue. The Tree Avenue Management and Replacement Plan will be finalised before 30 June 2023 and made available through the Alpine Shire Council website.

12. Pests and Diseases

Trees are subject to a range of pests and diseases. Eradication is not practical in most cases and harm minimisation is the adopted approach.

A significant number of elms grow within the Alpine Shire, and these are mostly free from major diseases. Elm Leaf Beetle has the potential to cause significant damage to the elm tree population in Alpine Shire. Repeated defoliation over successive seasons can weaken elms, increasing their susceptibility to other stresses and potentially contributing to their early death. The control of Elm Leaf Beetle is an ongoing program undertaken to manage the risk to the health of these valued trees.

13. Exceptional Circumstances

Trees are a living organism and the environment in which they live can change quickly. Council will endeavour to meet all aspects of its Tree Management Plan. However, in the event of natural disasters and other emergency events, including but not limited to storms, fires, floods, or droughts, Council reserves the right to suspend compliance with its Tree Management Plan.

14. Appendix A – Inspection Frequencies and Timeframes

Category	Minimum Frequency of Proactive Inspections	Timeframe for Completing Reactive Inspections
Very high risk zones, including: • Children's centres and kindergartens • Caravan parks • High profile parks, open spaces and reserves • Playgrounds	Every 12 months	Within 2 working days of notification
High risk zones, including: • High use parks and sports grounds that contain picnic tables and/or BBQs • Main school entrances and exits, including school crossings, bus stops and carpark entrances. • Major retail areas	Every 3 years	Within 5 working days of notification
Medium risk zones, including: • General parks and street trees, not included in either of the above categories.	Every 5 years	Within 10 working days of notification
Low risk zones, including: • Low use parks and reserves • Easements, drainage reserves, and riparian zones.	Reactive inspections only	Within 30 working days of notification

15. Appendix B – Minimum Response Times

Inspected Risk	Risk Category Zone			
	Very High Risk	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
Extreme	A	A	B	C
High	B	C	D	E
Moderate	C	D	E	F
Low	E	E	F	F

Response Category	Notification Source	Notification To Tree Crew	Rectification Response Time
A	Staff	Immediate notification via telephone +Fulcrum entry	Immediately
	Public	As soon as practicable via telephone + CRM entry	
B	Staff	Same day notification + Fulcrum entry	7 working days
	Public	CRM entry	
C	Staff	CRM or Fulcrum entry	1 month
	Public		
D	Staff	CRM or Fulcrum entry	2 months
	Public		
E	Staff	CRM or Fulcrum entry	3 months
	Public		
F	Staff	CRM or Fulcrum entry	6 months
	Public		

16. Approval

THE COMMON SEAL OF THE
ALPINE SHIRE COUNCIL was
hereunto affixed this 7 day of September
2021 in the presence of:

Charlie Vincent
COUNCILLOR

SIGNATURE

SARAH NICHOLAS
COUNCILLOR

SIGNATURE

CHARLIE BIRD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SIGNATURE