

## Boise Parks and Recreation Adopt-a-Habitat Program

The City of Boise owns over 5000 acres of natural areas which make up the open space reserve system and include areas along the greenbelt and adjacent to green parks. These spaces provide critical wildlife habitat, migratory corridors, and connectivity for birds including bald eagles and mammals such as mule deer. We manage these properties for ecosystem health and to offer a wide range of sustainable, high-quality recreation and outdoor education experiences for all community members. Open spaces and natural areas contribute to the unique character of Boise and provide future generations with the opportunity to experience clean water, wildlife and native habitat.



Boise Parks and Recreation maintains natural open spaces, park pollinator gardens, and habitats along the river and in the foothills in partnership with the community to encourage stewardship and investment in wildlife habitat. It takes a lot of work to manage these habitats and keep them clean and healthy for both us and our wild neighbors to use, and volunteers play an essential role in helping us do so.

The Adopt-a-Habitat program is a wonderful way for families, groups or businesses to take an active stewardship role in maintaining the health and ecological integrity of our shared open spaces. Program participants adopt a habitat for one year, to monitor the area for trash and invasive plants, actively restore native vegetation, and help with other maintenance needs.

### **ADOPTABLE HABITATS:**

Below is a list of adoptable habitats on City of Boise-owned properties. This list is not comprehensive and subject to change.

- Warm Springs Park - Native plant and Pollinator Garden
- Terry Day - Pollinator Garden
- Mariposa Park - Pollinator Garden
- Senior Center - Pollinator Garden
- Esther Simplot Pond II Natural Area

- Marianne Williams Park - Dallas Harris Path area and Riparian Zone
- Bethine Church Nature Area
- Veterans Memorial Park Pond Area
- Willow Lane Wetland Bank Area
- Kathryn Albertson Park
- City of Boise Open Space Reserves – does not have to include entire reserve.

### **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:**

- Adopting groups must be of adequate size to maintain their stretch of habitat. Maintenance needs vary depending on the volume of use a habitat gets, size and type of habitat, and the condition of vegetation within the habitat zone.
- Adopting groups must agree to a year-long commitment, renewable at the beginning of each calendar year. If a group joins the program during the last four months of the year, they must commit to maintaining their section through the following calendar year to be recognized as the adopting group via signage in their section.
- All volunteers must review the City of Boise Volunteer Handbook.
- Participants must complete a volunteer waiver. This is an on-line process and group leaders can sign off on behalf of their group when they sign up for the program, via the City's volunteer management system.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

Oversight of the Adopt-a-Habitat program is the responsibility of the Boise Parks and Recreation Department. As program manager, the department will:

- Provide appropriate training for participants to safely and successfully care for their adopted habitat. This includes an on-site quarterly orientation to familiarize participants with their habitats and its needs. Habitat management is seasonal in nature and close contact between the adopting group and Parks and Recreation will be necessary.
- Send out periodic and seasonal communication about restoration opportunities, which invasive species to target and when, and other topics of interest.
- Acknowledge adopting groups via signage within their adopted habitat.
- Monitor adopting groups' habitat to ensure that program requirements are being met. If participants are not meeting their commitment, the department

reserves the right to discontinue their adoption and offer their habitat to another group.

- Contact adopting groups at the beginning of each calendar year to ascertain if they are interested in renewing their adoption for another year.
- Assist groups with coordinating work parties and provide staff and tools for projects as needed.

As participants, adopting groups will:

- Patrol their adopted habitat at least once a month to pick up trash, remove dog waste, pull invasive species, and perform seasonal maintenance tasks. The City of Boise will provide bags as needed. Collected litter should be properly disposed of in a trash can or dumpster or be packed out. Assistance with trash disposal can be provided as needed.
- Assess and report on the condition of the restoration plantings and existing vegetation in their adopted habitat. Survey for beaver or insect damage, tree girdling resulting from wire wrapping, problems with plant protectors on new plantings, or other issues. Groups are asked to coordinate a minimum of two service projects a year that will help with 1) planting native shrubs, grasses, or wildflowers (fall timeframe) and 2) maintaining restoration plantings by weeding, mulching, adding plant protectors, ect. as needed (spring timeframe). For pollinator gardens projects may be focused on replacing dead plants, garden expansion, and/or spring and fall pruning.
- Physically remove invasive plants when possible, and report observations of noxious weeds. Some invasive plants can be hand pulled, while others require tools and equipment to remove. Training on invasive plant identification and their removal is required and will be provided.
- Report on excessive volunteer trails, major erosion or other issues that may negatively impact water quality and/or habitat in their section.
- Tread lightly and protect the existing natural habitat. Participants should use sound judgment while maintaining their habitat, taking into consideration impact items such as wildlife habitat and safety.
- Log the dates/times spent working in their adopted section using the City of Boise's Volunteer Management System. Participants may do so via the volunteer account they created when signing up, which can be accessed at [www.myimpactpage.com](http://www.myimpactpage.com).

*When logging reports, the total hours the group spends cleaning its section should be entered (i.e. Six people clean-up for two hours = 12 total hours spent picking up trash).*

## **FOOTHILLS AND GREENBELT SAFETY**

The number one priority of all Adopt-a-Habitat participants is safety. The river and surrounding foothills are full of amazing places, but there are inherent risks associated with being outside and it's important that everyone be familiar with what those are.

Prior to performing any work, team leaders should conduct a safety awareness briefing with their team which addresses the following:

- Wear heavy gloves, long pants, and leather shoes or boots. Riparian areas can be dense with vegetation which can scratch up legs. Also, long pants will protect you if exposed to things such as poison ivy.
- Wear a hat, long sleeves, and sunscreen to prevent sun burn.
- Only work in daylight and fair weather.
- Avoid overexertion. Take breaks and drink plenty of water.
- Be alert for snakes, stinging insects, noxious weeds, poison ivy, stinging nettles, etc.
- Be alert to riverbanks and steep inclines. Remember not to go beyond the water's edge. Be aware of uneven ground and badger mounds in the foothills. Watch your step.
- Be mindful of animal habitat and give the wildlife their space.
- Be aware of homeless camps. If a camp is found and looks to be abandoned, it can be cleaned up. If a camp is actively being used, leave it alone and relay the camp's location to Boise Parks and Recreation.
- Avoid areas where herbicides have been recently applied. Look for signs with dates.
- Ensure that one (1) adult supervisor is available for every ten (10) youth that are participating.
- Park vehicles only in authorized parking areas.
- Do not work alone. At a minimum always work in pairs.
- Do not pick up materials that appear to be hazardous.



Poison Ivy

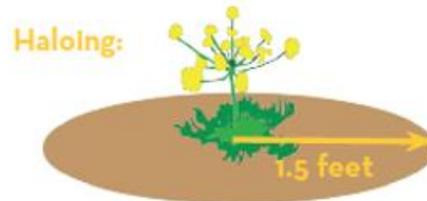
- Do not pick up dead animals, fallen trees, etc. Please notify Boise Parks and Recreation of any issues that require staff attention at (208) 608-7600.
- Do not pick up discarded needles. Handle all sharp objects with extreme caution. Should you discover any needles or other possible drug paraphernalia leave them alone and call **POLICE DISPATCH at (208) 377-6790**.
- Do not attempt to compact trash bags to make room for more trash. Injuries from broken or jagged objects often result from this practice.

## SEASONAL MAINTENANCE TASKS

Habitat management is seasonal, and maintenance tasks will shift as the seasons do. General work duties are outlined below by the season in which they should be performed, and there are tasks like tree wrapping which can be performed any time of the year. Guidance will be provided by Boise Parks and Recreation Staff.

### Spring

Weeding around restoration plantings and other desirable natives can help habitats flourish. Weeds steal valuable water and soil resources from native plants and can overshadow them. "Haloing" is a technique where a 1.5' radius is cleared around a native plant to help protect it from resource competition. In the spring, restoration plantings will be "halo-ed" around and then subsequently mulched.



Mulching around seedlings helps maintain and sustain soil moisture as temperatures begin to rise in the spring. Mulch also helps keep weeds, such as cheatgrass, down around desirable plants for longer than just weeding alone.

Mulch and "halo-ing" will occur within the habitat area in spring as part of a larger service event. Mulch will be supplied by Boise Parks and Recreation Staff.

### Summer

Restoration plantings often need a little help in the first 18-months of their lives. Watering seedlings throughout hot, dry summer months will greatly enhance survival of plantings. Plan to water in early morning hours to beat the heat of the day. Water will be given to plants via backpacks with water bladders or with 5-gallon buckets that can be refilled by a tank located on site. Watering projects will be habitat-specific and require coordination with Boise Parks and Recreation.

### Fall

Restoration plantings have the best chance of survival if installed in the fall. Plants are guaranteed water through winter precipitation and hopefully again in the spring.

pending seasonal weather conditions. Restoration plantings will be planned in coordination with Boise Parks and Recreation staff. Plants, plant protectors, and other supplies will be procured by various means depending on available funding. Restoration plantings may not occur every year and will be contingent on available funds, plant materials, ect.

## **Winter**

Invasive trees, like Russian olives, are best removed in late fall/early winter when plants are preparing for dormancy. Winter tasks may include removal of invasive trees, tree wrapping, trash clean-up, dog waste pick up, and other duties as needed.

### **TREE WRAPPING – Riparian areas only**

The purpose of wrapping trees is to protect them from beaver damage. This is especially important for trees along the Greenbelt and in parks that border the Boise River and contain ponds.

Trees are wrapped with a light gauge chicken wire, which helps prevent beavers from chewing on them. Over the years, many of the trees have been wrapped, but tree wrapping is a never-ending job as trees outgrow their wire and new trees come in.

#### **Tree Wrapping Procedure**

When wrapping trees, there are two things to look for; trees that have not been wrapped and trees that have outgrown their wire or have had their wire damaged. It is also important to wrap trees representing a wide age range if possible.

Equipment and tools needed include leather gloves, chicken wire, light gauge wire cutters/snips, pliers, hand pruner, lopper, and small hand saw. Boise Parks and Recreation provides the chicken wire and tools can be checked out from the department.



1. Prune small twigs/branches that may impede you from wrapping the wire around the tree.
  - a. Only prune as high as the top of the chicken wire. Do not prune anything above that. Leave the clippings on the ground.
  - b. Large branches should be left alone, and the wire should be wrapped around the branch.
2. Measure the distance around the tree to be wrapped by:

Wrapping the wire around the tree and overlapping it 2 to 3 inches past the starting point so there is enough material to tie it together. There should be 3 to 4 inches of space between the tree and wire, to allow room for the tree to grow.

- a. Using a string or small diameter rope on the ground 3-4 inches away from trunk:
  - i. Arrange the string/rope so that it makes a circle around the tree trunk (keeping the 3 to 4-inch distance).
  - ii. Allow the string/rope to extend past the starting point by 2 to 3 inches.
  - iii. Pick up the string/rope where it ended and lay it on the ground. Roll out the chicken wire to the measured length of rope, mark and cut the wire.
1. Wrap the chicken wire around the tree and overlap the ends by 2-3 inches.
2. Starting from the top of the chicken wire and moving down, tie the chicken wire to itself by twisting the ends together in 5 – 6 locations.
3. Clean up the area around the tree of excess material and return unused wire and borrowed tools back to the department.

For trees that have already been wrapped and have outgrown their wire, loosen up the wire and retie together. If there's not enough material, remove the wire and replace it with a new wrap. If the removed wire is in good condition, try to reuse it on a smaller unwrapped tree in the area. If it can't be reused, bring the wire to the department where it will be recycled.

## **INVASIVE PLANTS**

Invasive and noxious plants are common along the Boise River and in the Foothills. These invaders threaten wildlife habitat, watershed health, agricultural commodities, recreational opportunities and increase the risk of wildfire to our communities. A plant is designated noxious in Idaho when it is injurious to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property. Information about noxious weeds and various control methods can be found at Ada County Weed Control

(<https://adacounty.id.gov/weedpestmosquito/weed-control/>). Additional information about invasive plants that are not noxious in Idaho but still problematic, can be found at the Invasive Species of Idaho website (<http://invasivespecies.idaho.gov/plants>).

Invasive species infestations and management will vary depending on the habitat. Training for identification of invasive species and removal techniques will be provided by Parks and Recreation Staff. Habitat adoptees will also receive periodic notifications about what weeds to look for during specific times of the year and how to properly remove and dispose of them.

## **OTHER PROJECTS**

Depending on the habitat, other projects may be available for adopting groups to tackle. Whether that's closing social trails, maintaining existing trails, or removing specific types of invasive species, Boise Parks and Recreation staff will communicate these types of projects when meeting with adopting groups for orientation.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECTS**

Boise Parks and Recreation frequently receives requests for service projects, from volunteers who want to help care for the Boise River, Greenbelt, and Foothills but don't want the ongoing commitment. These projects are important to our collective effort to maintain our shared open spaces and may involve any of the tasks that are outlined above. Boise Parks and Recreation will communicate these projects to adopting groups, and work with them to ensure that we're maximizing our efforts.

### **PROGRAM CONTACT**

Thank you for your interest in the Adopt-a-Habitat program. If you have any questions, please contact:

Martha Brabec, Foothills Restoration Specialist  
Boise Parks and Recreation  
(208) 493-2535

[mbrabec@cityofboise.org](mailto:mbrabec@cityofboise.org)

Kristin Gnojewski  
Boise Parks and Recreation  
(208) 608-7609

[Kgnojewski@cityofboise.org](mailto:Kgnojewski@cityofboise.org)