

Healthy Parks Healthy People *Global*

HEALTHY NATURE HEALTHY PEOPLE
AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND:

AN E-TOOLKIT FOR LAND AND SEA MANAGERS



AUGUST

2016

WHAT IS HEALTHY NATURE HEALTHY PEOPLE?

Evidence is mounting that nature plays an important role in our physical, spiritual, mental and social health and wellbeing. At the same time, our increasingly urbanised lifestyles, coupled with digital distractions, means that we are spending less time outdoors. Healthy Nature Healthy People aims to reconnect people to the outdoors and unlock the value of nature for health and wellbeing whilst conserving biodiversity.

By pursuing Healthy Nature Healthy People approaches, we can continue to build the evidence-base required to improve both health and environment policies and management approaches. A global community of organisations taking practical action to improve health and wellbeing through reconnecting people with nature also offers significant opportunities for attracting resources and leveraging new partnerships.

Healthy Nature Healthy People emerged from the work of a range of individuals and organisations that have sought to reconnect people and nature, including the pioneer work undertaken by Parks Victoria in developing and promoting Healthy Parks Healthy People. Healthy Nature Healthy People has also drawn inspiration from Indigenous land, water and sea management in both Australia and New Zealand.

Today, Healthy Nature Healthy People-style approaches are applied under a range of names including Healthy Parks Healthy People, Healthy Wetlands Healthy People and Healthy Planet Healthy People and has been the subject of a number of international conferences including the Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress 2010 and the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014.

A wide range of countries in Europe, Asia, North and South America, Oceania and Africa are implementing variations of Healthy Nature Healthy People—including under the banner of the Eco-health, One-health and #NatureForAll movements.

Dr William Jackson is a Director of Healthy Parks Healthy People Global
Adapted from the outcomes of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014

WHO IS THE E-TOOLKIT FOR?

This e-toolkit is written for managers of land and sea. While it focuses on the land and sea management arrangements in Australia and New Zealand, the principles and approaches could be used by managers around the world.

WHAT IS IN THE E-TOOLKIT?

The e-toolkit:

- Contains practical tips and stories from land, water and sea managers who have usefully applied the Healthy Nature Healthy People approach
- Provides digital links to:
 - research and published materials
 - videos and presentation materials.

The e-toolkit is underpinned by an understanding that:

- Access to healthy ecosystems can support the health and wellbeing of people; increasing their physical activity, supporting their mental and spiritual health and fostering community and social interactions
- Engaging people in outdoor activities can build support for conserving and managing nature in an ecologically sustainable manner.

It is based on the successful Healthy Parks Healthy People movement and has been expanded to include all land, inland water and sea that is accessible to the public.

HOW TO USE THE E-TOOLKIT?

The e-toolkit provides an overview of how to apply Healthy Nature Healthy People principles to the management of publicly accessible land and sea.

The concepts and examples in the e-toolkit will need to be adapted to suit the particular context in which Healthy Nature Healthy People is to be used. The e-toolkit contains links to a range of digital resources.

MEETING HEALTH AND CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

In line with global trends towards a more urban world, the populations of Australia and New Zealand are highly urbanised with 89% of Australian and 86% of New Zealanders living in towns or cities. Whilst urban living brings many advantages, our increasingly sedentary lifestyles have contributed to a recent increase in non-communicable diseases, including Type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

Both Australia and New Zealand have seen an increase in mental health conditions including anxiety, stress and depression. There is strong evidence that spending time in natural settings can benefit our physical, spiritual and mental health (see for example, [Healthy Parks Healthy People: The state of the evidence 2015](#)). We also know that experiencing nature can lead to life-long appreciation and actions in support of land and sea.

Australia and New Zealand have extensive areas of publicly accessible land, water and sea. Healthy Nature Healthy People provides a different way of thinking, planning and working that can be used to enable and encourage the connections between public health and nature and to integrate public health and ecosystem management concepts in policies, plans and operations. Linking nature and health is nothing new for Indigenous people, who consider both outcomes as co-dependent.

Healthy Nature Healthy People builds on the current experience in delivering multiple outcomes from the management of land and sea. It differs, however, from conventional approaches in that it firmly positions health and wellbeing outcomes as core business of land and sea management, and equally positions the outdoors as core business of health and wellbeing providers, not as add-ons or 'nice to do activities'.



APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY NATURE HEALTHY PEOPLE

Healthy Nature Healthy People is based on the principles that:

- Vibrant and healthy societies depend on healthy ecosystems
- The conservation and sustainable management of land, inland water and sea nurtures healthy ecosystems; and
- Contact with nature is essential for improving our emotional, physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing.

BUILDING AN ENABLING, CROSS-SECTORAL AND MULTI-LEVEL POLICY FRAMEWORK

In most cases, neither policies that guide land and sea management, nor preventative health policies make clear reference to the role of nature in health and wellbeing.

Without a policy framework that recognises the links between nature and health and wellbeing, efforts to promote Healthy Nature Healthy People are likely to be ad-hoc and short-lived.

Cross-sectoral approaches (for example, between health providers, land and sea managers and private industry) can provide attractive options for government. In particular, linking levels of governance from national to local and pursuing complementary outcomes across different sectors can deliver significant benefits in terms of efficiencies and productivity. An effective policy framework is necessary for lasting cross-sectoral partnerships and for securing adequate political commitment and resources.

Working across sectors and levels of governance and with community and Indigenous people can help provide the evidence and support needed for policy reform.

For example, the [Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015 – 2018](#) includes nature in its strategic directions for 'active living' and 'improving mental health' and incorporates the principles of the Healthy Parks Healthy People approach as a successful demonstration of 'Health in All Policies.'

Another example of an integrated policy framework is provided by South Australia with their '[Health in All Policies](#)' approach (see Box).

A young boy in a red shirt is playing a video game at a park. He is standing in front of a red fence. The background shows a playground with a slide and trees. The image is partially obscured by a white text box.

Integrating health and environment in South Australia

In 2015, the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) was officially named as a Public Health Partner Authority under the South Australian Public Health Act 2011. A Memorandum of Understanding between the agency and the Department for Health and Ageing commits both to working in collaboration to improve environmental and population health outcomes, and provides a vehicle for inter-sectoral policy delivery between the two sectors in South Australia. The key focus of the partnership is to build the public value of parks and, in doing so, improve population health and wellbeing through a combination of policies, programs and targeted initiatives.

A Healthy Parks Healthy People South Australia framework “ Making Contact with Nature Second Nature” outlines an approach that enables park and health authorities to work more closely together, and focus resources towards implementing innovative approaches to health and wellbeing. It envisages many sectors- environment, health, primary industries, Indigenous affairs, social inclusion, education and urban planning- working together to maximise the untapped resources nature provides, including the benefits of nature-based public health interventions. The framework focuses on:

- Promoting physical activity in nature
- Mental health benefits of contact with nature
- Promoting the cultural value of Country for Indigenous health and wellbeing
- Community health and wellbeing in a changing climate
- Childhood development and nature
- Green infrastructure in urban settings
- Biodiversity, conservation and human health.



GENERATING AND SHARING THE EVIDENCE

Evidence for the role of nature in human health and wellbeing is well summarised in both the 2015 report jointly published by the World Health Organization and Convention on Biological Diversity – Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, a State of Knowledge Review and in the Parks Victoria/Deakin University report Healthy Parks Healthy People: The state of the evidence 2015.

Despite the strong body of evidence that already exists, there remains opportunities to further build proof of the benefits of nature for health and wellbeing and to produce more site specific information.

There are a variety of approaches for building evidence for nature and health links, each with costs and benefits:

- Citizen science is being used increasingly to build extensive knowledge
- Technology is enabling the collection, analysis and use of 'big data' sets and involvement of new audiences
- Increasingly, Indigenous knowledge is being recognized and used by land, water and sea managers
- Scientific research, including medical research, continues to generate extensive new knowledge
- Multi-disciplinary research is providing valuable new insights into the role of nature in health.

Identifying information needs and matching these needs with the most appropriate way to gather, analyse and report evidence presents opportunities to build cross-disciplinary partnerships and to engage health and natural resources research communities, local communities, Indigenous people, the private sector and on-ground managers.

It also opens up the prospect of building new and innovative links with sectors and actors that may have an interest in knowledge generation and sharing, for example the insurance industry and digital communication solutions companies.

ADAPTING EXISTING APPROACHES TO PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT FOR HEALTH AND NATURE

Most land and sea managers are familiar with adaptive management approaches. Many of the Australian and New Zealand organisations responsible for public land and sea management already use variations of the adaptive management framework promoted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Adaptive management is based on the following principles:

- Objectives must be clearly defined
- Management actions must be measured against those objectives
- Management actions should be adjusted to incorporate evaluation and feedback.

The five stages of the adaptive management framework provide a useful basis for integrating Healthy Nature Healthy People into organisational policies, plans and actions. These stages are:

Understand the operating context:

Build an understanding of:

- The policy and governance environment that will enable or disable Healthy Nature Healthy People
- The health profile and needs of the community (e.g. community health assessments and health priorities developed by partners)
- Potential and existing partners and stakeholders
- The resources available:
 - human resources (staff, partners, volunteers, neighbours and other stakeholders), sometimes referred to as Human Capital
 - financial resources
 - knowledge and skills, sometimes referred to as Intellectual Capital
 - social license to operate (Social Capital). What support is there in the community for the approach?
 - the condition and trend of built infrastructure (buildings, roads, trails, car parks, boat launching sites, jetties, etc.) and its suitability for health and wellbeing related activities (Manufactured Capital)

- digital communications. How effective are your digital communications (website, emails, apps) for promoting health and nature links? (Manufactured Capital)
- the condition and trend of land, inland water or sea (Natural Capital), including an understanding of the pressures that may threaten the Natural Capital (overuse, invasive species, pollution etc.)
- The flow of benefits (ecosystem services) from land, inland water and sea to the community and individuals

Plan – use the knowledge gained from context setting to:

- Encourage policy makers to integrate health with land, water and sea management policies
- Revise your organisational policies and strategies to incorporate Healthy Nature Healthy People principles and concepts
- Identify and negotiate arrangements with partners and the community. Taking into consideration target groups for Healthy Nature Healthy People activities, the changes that partners and the community want and how cooperation and collaboration will be achieved
- Set measurable and time-bound objectives (or outcomes) to provide clear direction for resourcing and delivering strategies that integrate nature with health and wellbeing. In particular, this requires identifying:
 - specific health outcomes for target groups
 - specific partners and community groups that will help deliver the outcomes
 - clear land and sea management priorities (e.g. for infrastructure, programs, communications, community engagement) that enable both health and nature outcomes.
- Implement and monitor programs.

This will likely require establishing a new suite of indicators that can provide information on health-nature links
- Evaluate

Analyse the information collected during monitoring, preferably in consultation with partners and the community, and use the results to adapt management. This includes understanding the values of nature for health and wellbeing and the costs and benefits that result from management actions aimed at unlocking the value of nature for health and wellbeing whilst conserving biodiversity
- Communicate

Share lessons learned and good practice and widely promote the values and benefits of conservation of land and sea.

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL HEALTHY NATURE HEALTHY PEOPLE

The following section is adapted from the [US National Park Service](#).
Healthy Nature Healthy People efforts:

- **Embrace Experiments and Adapt.** Land and sea managers and health providers that successfully implement Healthy Nature Healthy People embrace experimental ideas and approaches and use lessons learned to adapt management.
- **Listen to the Community.** In many ways, Healthy Nature Healthy People programs are a new way of doing things for land and sea managers, although many Indigenous land and sea managers have used similar approaches for many generations. Learning from the community and the health professionals what would make nature more welcoming for a new audience of health users is important.
- **Seek out partners.** Partners are essential for elevating the role of nature as places for health and wellness and for generating support for maintaining land and sea in a healthy condition for current and future generations. Partners can work both on-site and off-site in communities to build awareness about nature, to complement and support nature-based activities that support health and wellbeing, and to bring resources to health promotion work.
- **Provide Safe Access to Nature.** Designing and building infrastructure and awareness that enables use and safe access is critical to attracting users. This is particularly important for people with disability and for those that are unfamiliar with the outdoors.
- **Provide Information to Empower Visitors.** Fear of the unknown is a common barrier for communities not familiar with nature or comfortable in the outdoors. The information provided to users and how it is delivered (electronically, via apps, face to face etc.) can be adapted to encourage people to be more active in nature, safely.
- **Help People Get into Nature to Get Their Healthy Activities Going.** Transportation matters. For many people, just getting to a natural setting is a huge barrier to overcome. Partner with local organisations to bring people to nature.
- **Build capacity.** The ability of people to engage effectively and over a sustained period in health and nature efforts depends on resources, skills and capabilities and a willingness to work together. Build capacity of health and environment sector staff, partners, indigenous people and other community stakeholders

HEALTHY NATURE HEALTHY PEOPLE IN PRACTICE

This section provides links to approaches that have been applied successfully.

New Zealand Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai:

- The Healthy Nature Healthy People program aims to encourage people to use New Zealand's natural spaces to maintain and improve their health and wellbeing. These spaces include land and water from our urban parks and beaches to our national parks, seas, lakes and wild rivers.

Parks Victoria

- Green referrals – individuals with chronic illness are referred by General Practitioners to structured outdoor activities supported by qualified instructors
- Bush activity groups – Children's playgroups or kindergartens are encouraged to use natural settings for all or some of their play and learning
- Youth Ambassadors Program – secondary students who are at risk of mental illness or disengaging from school undertake outdoor adventure activities
- Newly-arrived Citizens Program – Community organisations are supported to use parks as settings for program delivery
- Camp host programs where volunteer campground hosts provide park information and interpretation to visitors and ensure that the campsite is a safe place for all
- Disability access facilities and programs
- Social script resources (story book) for people with autism
- Accessible tourism partnerships
- Facilities for fun - Petanque courts, chess boards, table tennis tables, etc.
- Fun runs, long distance walks, bike races – using as community education opportunities for improving the health of parks and people
- Park planning – ensuring community and health providers are embedded in the governance and planning of new parks and upgraded facilities
- Social media campaigns
- Arts in parks and artist in residence programs
- Seniors festival events / nature play week / parks weeks

South Australia

Healthy Parks Healthy People South Australia is a nature-based approach for population health. It is guided by a vision to ensure that all South Australians are connected to nature and recognise it as an integral component to their health and wellbeing. The seven focus areas for action are:

- Promoting physical activity in nature
- Mental health benefits of contact with nature
- Promoting the cultural value of Country for Aboriginal health and wellbeing
- Community health and wellbeing in a changing climate
- Childhood development and nature
- Green infrastructure in urban settings
- Biodiversity, conservation and human health.

Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

- The Get Outside with Community program helps recent immigrants and refugees with supported access to parks and reserves for social activities and recreation; leadership development to enable community leaders to lead their community into reserves and National parks; volunteering with Wildcare Inc – as community guides, or park work; and employment as bilingual Discover Rangers and Visitor Reception officers
- Aboriginal Pathways to Success – run in partnership with the University of Tasmania – works with Elders and uses walks on Country to run outdoor career sessions for Aboriginal students
- Summer Discovery Program includes a health and wellbeing theme – yoga, Tai Chi, walks, dance, meditation
- Volunteering

New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service

- WilderQuest is a children's program designed to nurture a love of nature. Children can experience nature by visiting the WilderQuest website, playing the award-winning educational app or going to a WilderQuest event in NSW national parks during the school holidays. Uses social media (Facebook) to keep people up-to-date with the things happening at WilderQuest and to encourage children to share their adventures.

FURTHER RESOURCES

In addition to the links in this guide, there are a range of digital resources available. A sample of these are provided below:
[HPHPCentral](#) - is a place to access and share the latest international research, innovations and programs that focus on the health benefits of human contact with the natural world.

[The Lancet](#)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature – [IUCN](#)

[The nature of cities](#)

[Co-operation on health and biodiversity](#)

[The Convention on Biological Diversity](#)



HOW THIS TOOLKIT WAS PREPARED

The idea for this toolkit emerged from a meeting of staff from a cross-section of Australian and New Zealand park agencies and health agencies in early 2016. The toolkit was prepared by Dr William Jackson on behalf of Healthy Parks Healthy People Global with the generous support of Parks Victoria and contributions from Kathryn Campbell, Tony Varcoe, Rachel Pfitzner and Helen Gillespie.

GET INVOLVED

[Healthy Parks Healthy People Global](#)

[Department of Conservation New Zealand](#)

[Parks Australia](#)

[New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service](#)

[Parks Victoria](#)

[Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources](#)

[Queenstand Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing](#)

[Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory](#)

[Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania](#)

[ACT Parks and Reserves](#)

[Western Australia Department of Parks and Wildlife](#)

