



**NATURE PROTECTION**  
**VEGETATION**  
GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZERS



## INTRODUCTION

# CHECKLISTS AND GUIDELINES

## - for the organisation of sustainable orienteering events

*The survey “Orienteering and the Environment” carried out in 2022 among IOF Member Federations highlighted the need for practical guidelines for the organisation of sustainable orienteering events.*

*The Environment and Sustainability Commission of the IOF (IOF-ESC) undertook this initiative and provided a draft for consultation to the network of contact persons that had been indicated by the National Federations. All the comments received were considered with great attention and most of were incorporated in the current version of the Checklists and Guidelines (C&G). We hope that the reason why not all were accepted will be clarified by this introduction.*

*The focus of the C&G is the sustainability of orienteering events in all three facets of the concept: environmental, social and economic. A possibly minor emphasis was placed on the economic aspects of events, as circumstances are so varied that generalisations are hardly possible. However, the social aspects, and particularly the relationships with stakeholders, received a notable attention as the context in which orienteering events are organised involve a broad spectrum of interactions with other interest groups that are often “invisible” to the participants but essential for the organisers.*

*The C&G are not a handbook or a set of rules to be followed verbatim, but rather a list of points that should be considered by organisers and adapted to the local context. Some may be relevant in which case the Guidelines may represent a useful reference; some may not and may then be skipped. For example, relationships with native communities may be relevant in the US, Canada, Australia,*

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*New Zealand but not in most of Europe (except the far North); hunting is very important as an activity in Northern Europe, less so in Australia.*

*The C&G are meant to be an agile and practical tool; we have therefore omitted references to sources of information as would be done in a scientific paper; some considerations are mainly the outcome of long-term experience and not necessarily derived from authoritative sources. Scientific papers on environmental aspects of orienteering are indeed very scarce; most of what was published (e.g. on the now discontinued Scientific Journal of Orienteering) is mainly the outcome of empirical observations; they are very useful and reliable but lack the methodological rigour that would be required for a scientific publication in a modern peer-reviewed journal.*

*Another point to be considered is that the size of orienteering events varies a lot: from local events with less than a hundred participants to events with a huge number of runners (such as O-Ringen or the big relays, like Tiomila and Jukola). It is up to the organisers to decide which of the C&G is relevant in each case.*

*The document is organised in a hierarchical mode, with Areas, Sectors, Initiatives and Description. The Checklist corresponds to the “Initiatives” and the Guidelines to their “Description”.*

*The organisation of an event implies different roles and therefore different responsibilities, but whereas some aspects are clearly pertinent to specific roles (e.g. the placement of controls is the responsibility of the course setter) in many cases people fill multiple roles or, on the other hand, especially with big events, a sector of activity is split into different areas with different persons in charge.*

*We therefore suggest using the Checklist as a support to the subdi-*



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*vision of tasks in the organisation and the Guidelines as a reference for the persons responsible for each task.*

*The Checklists and Guidelines will be periodically revised based on new data and on proposals that will come from the users. Your comments and suggestions are therefore most welcome (mail to: [chair-esc@orienteering.sport](mailto:chair-esc@orienteering.sport)).*

# NATURE PROTECTION VEGETATION



## CONSIDER NATURE FOR EVENT SCHEDULING

*When choosing the schedules for holding the events, the critical stages in the development of protected plants should be avoided, if they occur in the competition area. If an Environmental Authority is present, that should be the appropriate contact; in case it isn't, environmental NGOs or grassroots naturalistic groups should be approached. The highest concern should be on habitats where plants and animals featured on the IUCN Red list are present.*



## IDENTIFY AND MARK FRAGILE HABITATS

*Rare and/or more fragile plant communities and populations occurring in the competition area must be identified to avoid the passage of athletes through sensitive course setting and possibly through their delimitation on the ground and/or on the map if agreed with the management authority.*



## AVOID CONTROLS IN FRAGILE HABITATS

*Avoid habitats like moss communities, waterlogged areas (in otherwise dry land), lichen, incipient dunes, and foredunes. Try to avoid the flowering periods of protected flora.*



## AVOID CONTROLS ON MOIST GROUND

*Avoid springs, streams, ditches with damp ground if suitable alternatives are available; in any case avoid the use of such features for frequently visited controls; footprints create holes that are difficult to heal in a short time.*



## **AVOID CONTROLS ON STEEP TERRAIN**

*Steep terrain enhances erosion by runners' shoes; the damage is concentrated and may become significant in the vicinity of controls.*



## **BE AWARE OF START, FINISH AND FREQUENTLY VISITED CONTROLS**

*Control points in greater concentration spots like start and finish must be in areas with lower impact on vegetation. The frequently visited controls should be located on hard soil.*



## **AIM FOR ARENA AND PARKING ON HARD SOIL**

*The arena and parking lot should be in areas where the impacts are of less magnitude and significance, preferably on hard soil or other areas with higher carrying capacity.*



## **AVOID FALLEN, ROTTING TREES**

*Fallen trees left on the terrain become diverse habitats for insects and fungi that gradually decompose wood into other organic substances that enrich the terrain with humus. Control positions and expected navigation routes should be conceived in order to avoid damage.*



## **AVOID NAILS IN TREES**

*Avoid driving nails into the trunks of living trees. Apart from the possible entrance of wood decay fungi, nails may damage sawing or veneer peeling equipment after harvest.*



## AVOID FELLING TREES

*Avoid the destruction of woody vegetation, namely the cutting of trees or the removal of shrubs.*



## AVOID UNINTENDED INTRODUCTION OF INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES AND PLANT PESTS AND DISEASES

*Invasive species, alien to the ecosystem, are likely to cause environmental harm or harm to human health or economic losses. Invasive plants usually produce large quantities of seed, thrive in a broad range of environments, their root systems may outcompete native species for moisture, nutrients and space and drive them to extinction. Seeds of invasive species may be inadvertently transferred with mud sticking to shoes used in an orienteering event or directly with clothes.*

*By the same way, plant pathogens (fungi, bacteria, viruses) that would pose a threat to spontaneous and cultivated plants may travel long distances. It is therefore a recommended practice to clean (possibly wash) shoes and to wash orienteering clothes thoroughly after a race or a training session, especially when the next use of them would be in a distant location. It would be a good practice to advertise such measures in race bulletins.*



## COLLECT EVIDENCE ON ACTUAL IMPACT

*Register all the event's negative effects on vegetation. If sound scientific surveys are not feasible, it would be important to record images of specific spots (especially frequently visited controls) before and after the event, to be compared with the progress of recovery over the following months. Possible restoration initiatives should be discussed with Environmental Authorities.*



# CHECKLIST

*A quick list for crossing off guidelines and actions.*

## ***For event directors and managers***

- ☐ Consider event area and timing in context of fragile and protected plants and areas
- ☐ Identify and mark fragile and protected plants and areas
- ☐ Inform course setters and arena planners in order to avoid identified areas
- ☐ Collect evidence on actual impact

## ***For coursesetters and controllers***

- ☐ Avoid controls by fragile biotopes
- ☐ Avoid controls on moist ground
- ☐ Avoid controls on steep terrain
- ☐ Avoid fallen, rotting trees for controls and navigation
- ☐ Be aware of start, finish and frequently visited controls to secure less impact

## ***For arena planners and controllers***

- ☐ Aim for arena and parking on hard soil
- ☐ Avoid nails in trees
- ☐ Avoid felling trees