

UPV Miagao's Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Nature Trails and Camping Sites

Part I. Introduction

The guidelines are divided into four main parts. The first part is about the rationale of having a set of guidelines. The second part pertains to offices in charge of the establishment and management of the sites. The third part refers to the users of the trails and camping grounds. The fourth part is a provision about amendments and the last part refers to the effectivity of the guidelines.

Part II. Background and Rationale

There has been an increasing number of UPV and non-UPV users on our trails, specifically the Nature Trails. These trails have been operating and under the care and maintenance of the OVCPD-Site Development and Reforestation Project (SDRP) Team for several years now. Currently, the use of trails and camping grounds is free of charge because these are intended to support the research, instruction, and public service programs and projects of the university.

Since 2023, the Ecotrails has been developed together with Validus Amicitia Brotherhood, Inc. (VABI) as part of the MOA signed on October 22, 2023. These eco trails had a soft launching with activities limited to research purposes. The operations of the ecotrails are also under OVCPD-SDRP, in coordination with OVCA- Security Service Force (SSF).

In addition, only daytime trekking in designated areas is allowed by requesting permission from OVCPD and in coordination with OVCA-SSF. Going inside the campus trails is done by assigning trail guides who are staff of the OVCPD-SDRP. Activities related to the camping grounds are not yet allowed because water and electricity utilities are absent in the area. Last year, the OVCPD had the schedule of orientation and walks with OVCPD personnel in the trails to ensure safety on the site.

Apart from the various teams of OVCPD (SDRP, CAT, MET), the proposed guidelines have been prepared by the following people and groups who undertook several assessments on-site:

- Members of the Committee for the Creation of the Supplemental Zoning Guidelines
- Former Assistants to the VCPD for SDRP and Ecotrail Lead persons - Prof. Anthony Albaladejo, Prof. Ann Selma Morata, Prof. Diana Paguntalan, Prof. Brian Ventura, and Prof. Pretty Lee Silva.
- Members of the Validus Amicitia Brotherhood, Inc.
- Class of 2024 of the Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning Program who conducted a rapid risk assessment of a section of the nature trails in April 2023.

By having these guidelines, these will ensure a safe, enjoyable, and respectful experience for everyone on the sites. Also, these guidelines aim to protect the natural environment while hiking and camping.

Part III. For Offices that are in charge of the Establishment and Management of the Sites (OVCPD and OVCA)

1. Establishment of the Camping Grounds and Trails (For OVCPD and OVCA-CDMO, OVCA-SWUS)

A Camping Site and Trails Plan shall be formulated to reflect the development of the sites to include: the trails and connections to the camping ground, the camping ground boundaries, the location of structures, access roads, trails, toilets, and sewage facilities within the area. The Plan shall follow relevant applicable laws and the university's guidelines.

The Plan will include the following considerations:

1. Camping grounds shall be located on moderately well or better-drained land.
2. The camping ground shall have all-weather path walks connected to the existing street or road.
3. The boundary of the camping sites shall be defined by the trees that surround it and the stream below it.
4. Existing trees and shrubbery shall be retained.
5. Lighting shall be provided in all pathways, access roads, toilets, and other important facilities within the camping grounds. Electrical service shall be provided to each campsite. Power lines shall be installed underground, if possible.
6. There shall be adequate potable water supply in the camping grounds.
7. The campground shall be provided with a connection to a centralized sewage system.
8. No structures shall be erected on the camping grounds without prior written permission from OVCPD.
9. The wash area and smart-dry toilet area should be in one place. The wash area should have at least 2 to 3 faucets to accommodate a large group of campers. Gender-oriented toilets shall be adjacent to the wash area. The wash and toilet areas are situated away from the water reservoir to avoid water contamination.
10. The OVCPD-SDRP and OVCPD CAT, in coordination with the OVCA-SSF and OVCA-CDMO, and the PE Department shall designate separate tent areas and activity areas in the camping grounds.
11. A cooking area shall be designated following applicable laws and guidelines.

B. Management of Camping Grounds and Trails (For OVCA-CDMO, OVCPD-SDRP, OVCA-SSF, & OVCA-IPO)

1. The OVCPD-SDRP shall determine the ratio of the trail guide to hikers. The recommended ratio of trail guides to hikers is 1:10. Proper coordination between OVCPD and the Users shall be made before the camping and hiking activities for proper assessment of the number of hikers and trail guides.
2. OVCPD-SDRP and OVCA-SSF shall maintain visitors' records on the camping grounds and trails. Reconciling the data shall be made through constant coordination for those who enter and exit the camping and trail sites.
3. The OVCPD-SDRP shall make the schedule for the opening and closing time of the trails with proper coordination with the OVCPD-SSF, Information Publications Office. The trails open at 8:00 AM and close at 3:00 PM. The OVCPD-SDRP shall make changes in the schedule in times of inclement weather with proper coordination with SSF and IPO.
4. Approved trail hikes are conditional and a final advisory will be given depending on the weather conditions.

5. The OVCPD-SDRP personnel shall orient all campers and users before entering the sites.
6. The OVCPD-SDRP, in coordination with the OVCA-SSF, shall ensure that restricted areas (identified for research activities or due to risks in the area) in the camping grounds and trails are not modified.
7. OVCPD shall regulate the digging of trenches or the hanging of hammocks by campers.
8. The OVCPD-SDRP shall recommend putting up clear and visible signs and markers in designated areas for the safety of visitors. The OVCA-CDMO and other recognized university organizations may assist in the setting up of these signs and markers.
9. The OVCPD-SDRP and OVCA-SSF shall be responsible for monitoring and regulating campfire-related activities to ensure safety in the area. These campfire safeguards include:
 - a. Provision of a fire escape exit plan which shall be made visible in different locations throughout the camping grounds.
 - b. Fire restrictions will be strictly followed in extreme drought conditions where the risk of a wildfire is high.
 - c. Open fires are prohibited unless supervised by designated personnel to contain the flames and reduce wildfire risk.
 - d. There shall be a designated cooking area.
 - e. Guests will be restricted from bringing their firewood to avoid the introduction of foreign species that may contaminate and spread diseases and pests threatening the fruit-bearing trees and undermining all vegetation and crops around the campsite.
10. The OVCPD-SDRP and OVCA-CDMO shall be responsible for monitoring and regulating campfire-related activities to ensure proper waste management in the area:
 - a. The trails shall be kept clean from any waste brought by the hikers. Hikers shall bring their waste with them as they leave the trails.
 - b. The camping grounds shall be cleaned and maintained regularly.
 - c. There will be designated garbage areas and scheduled garbage pick-up.
 - d. Orientation will emphasize the "bring your own trash" policy.
11. The OVCPD, in coordination with other offices, shall review proposals for the opening of new trails and camping sites. Proposals can come from other offices or organizations. The results of the assessment shall be sent to the UPV Campus Infrastructure Committee for further assessment. The Chancellor approves the endorsed proposal.

Part IV. Guidelines for the Campers, Trail Runners, and Hikers

A. Before the Activity

1. All campers and hikers must write a letter addressed to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development to request access to the nature trails and camping grounds.
2. All campers and hikers must undergo a short orientation administered by the trail guide, and fill up the registration form before entering the premises.
3. There will be one (1) trail guide for every ten (10) hikers. The SDRP staff will serve as trail guides.
4. Campers and hikers are advised to follow the designated paths/trails for personal safety and the protection of the animals and plants in the surroundings.

5. A signed waiver form must be submitted to the OVCPD. The form is the same as the form used for field trips outside classroom activities.
6. For camping in groups and family members, the rule of two is the fundamental rule. Regardless of their direction, campers should do so with a partner so that they can call for help in case one gets hurt or is in danger.
7. All hikers are expected to bring their water containers. Bringing bottled water is strictly prohibited inside the camping grounds and trails.
8. Firearms and other deadly weapons are strictly prohibited.
9. Allowed Activities:
 - a. Card and Board Games
 - b. Star gazing
 - c. Charades or Catchphrase
 - d. Trivia Games
 - f. Acoustic Jamming
 - g. Rope course (plan for an additional rope course area)
 - h. Picnicking

B. During the Activity

1. Camp Fire Safety:
 - a. Cooking activities and the method of cooking shall be declared to the staff during registration.
 - b. Cooking must be done in designated areas only.
2. Noise Control.

When camping, be aware of activities that do not contribute to noise in the area. These include scavenger hunts, board and card games, star gazing, and storytelling are some examples.

3. Practice eco-friendliness by getting firewood at the camp ranger station only. Do not seek firewood from standing trees nor should you break branches for roasting sticks. You are prohibited from bringing your firewood to avoid contamination and the spread of diseases and pests in the vegetation and crops at the campsite.
4. Picking and eating wildflowers or fruits are restricted as this may be dangerous to one's health.
5. Refrain from carving names into trees, in the name of leaving a mark. This ruins the aura of the place and destroys the tree.
6. Wild animal or bird hunting is strictly prohibited. In the same manner, do not attempt feeding or touching farm animals without supervision.
7. Making Campfires
 - 7.1. Have only one Camp Fire Ring for the bonfire activity, when permitted. Refrain from attempting to make new fire rings. Just take advantage of the existing ones to keep the fire contained. Campfires should be small and supervised all the time.
 - 7.2. For low impact on the ground, use a Camping Fire Mat or Pan for the bonfire. It is one big round iron sheet/plate elevated from the ground using stone as its base.
 - 7.3. Do not use the fire pit as a garbage can. Burning trash in the campfire is not advised as plastic bags and foil emit toxic smoke into the air, land, and water leading to pollution of the environment.

Part V. Amendments

These guidelines are subject to revision and approval following proper consultation and procedure of the university.

Part VI. Effectivity

These guidelines shall take effect immediately.

References:

Department of Health, Environmental Health Service. (1998). *Implementing Rules and Regulations of Chapter X "Camps and Picnic Grounds" of the Sanitation Code of the Philippines*, Presidential Degree 856. Environmental Health Service, Department of Health.

An act providing for the conservation and protection of wildlife resources and their habitats, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes, Republic Act No. 9147 (2001). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9147_2001.html

KOA. *Camping Safety Tips*. (12, August 2022). <https://koa.com/blog/camping-safety-tips/>

New Zealand Legislation. (n.d.). *Camping-Grounds Regulations*. Retrieved May 24, 2023, from <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/1985/0261/latest/whole.html#DLM103360>

Windfarm Nature Escape. *Camp Rules and Guidelines*. (n.d.). <https://www.windfarmph.com/camp-rules-and-guidelines.html>