

Environmental Education and Information Criteria

11.3.20 Working Group Notes

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Notes

The purpose of criteria working group meetings are to go over the specific criteria in detail with the goal of identifying questions to take back to the international organization; identifying criteria which need to further strengthening; identifying areas for improvement; and identifying areas which may be problematic to implement. To facilitate note taking on these goals we will look at each criterion and assess:

- A. No change
- B. Yes this specific change
- C. Yes need more discussion/question to international org
- D. Add criteria, is this a guideline or imperative criteria?

Criterion 1. Information about the Blue Flag Program must be displayed.

- A. No Change

Criterion 2. Environmental education activities must be offered and promoted to beach users.

B. Yes, include specific wording to address sponsorship of activities and whether or not donations are allowed.

Many programs are run in conjunction with or by other partners. It should be made clear to the applicant whether programs which are financially sponsored by an outside source or are free but ask for contributions to continue programs count.

Criterion 3. Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.

C. Yes, follow-up with international organization about digital display of water quality data in addition to or instead of physical posting; and only posting when water quality is below the Blue Flag requirement (or some other more stringent, locally determined, threshold).

Since we will be requiring beaches test for Entero once a week (as opposed to the international criteria of once a month), and many beaches test more frequently than that, physically updating water quality reports on a display board may strain staff capacity. Testers, health department or community organization staff are often not the ones who would be updating these boards. For communities that test multiple times a week, the requirement to physically update a board would disincentive frequent testing. And if the requirement was to only post to a board occasionally, it would give users the false impression that testing wasn't happening as regularly as it was.

Proposed change: testing information will be publicly available online and the display will include a QR codes link) directing visitors to water quality websites. When water quality is below the Blue Flag requirement (or some other more stringent, locally determined, threshold) the beach operator will immediately post to the board.

National Operator staff will engage in a conversation on this topic with the international Blue Flag staff and bring recommendations back to the working group.

Criterion 4. Information relating to local ecosystems, environmental elements, and cultural sites must be displayed.

A. No Change

Should we define or list for applicants what sites fall into each category?

No, leaving language vague allows for different communities to present their own unique sites and allows for a greater variety of site types.

Should this criterion have a number associated with it like the activities?

No, every beach is different which makes this harder to control for than activities.

Criterion 5. A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.

A. No Change, but would like to know if the map can be digital.

At least one physical map should be included on the Blue Flag Information Board (see appendix A for examples). Other maps can be in brochure or digital format.

Criterion 6. A code of conduct that reflects appropriate laws and or regulations governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas must be displayed.

A. No Change

Next Steps

Notes will be sent out via email and made available on the Blue Flag in the US website. Written comments on the above notes will be accepted through November 20.

National Operator staff will circulate proposed criteria changes by December 4 for working group review. If necessary, another meeting will be held for review and acceptance of the criteria by the working group at a time convenient to most stakeholders.

Appendix A: Blue Flag Information Board Examples



Welcome to [Insert Name of Beach]

Proud to Fly the Blue Flag

Blue Flag

[Insert Beach Name] is proud to fly the Blue Flag, an internationally recognized and respected award for beaches that meet strict criteria under four categories:

- 1 Water quality
- 2 Safety and services
- 3 Environmental management
- 4 Environmental education

The Blue Flag is awarded on a yearly basis, and is only valid as long as standards are maintained. If you see a Blue Flag flying you know the beach is clean, managed sustainably, meets safety and accessibility requirements and has excellent water quality. Please help maintain Blue Flag standards by participating in activities to protect the shoreline and keep the beach clean.

The international Blue Flag program is run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a non-governmental organization based in Denmark. Canada's Blue Flag Program is coordinated by Environmental Defence, a national environmental charity. The first Blue Flag in Canada was raised in 2005.

Enjoy your visit to [Insert Beach Name] and help us keep the Blue Flag flying:

- Respect the environment
- Keep your pets off the beach
- Obey the beach rules and by-laws
- Be courteous and considerate to other park visitors
- Do not feed the birds – their poop is bad for water quality!
- Never bury waste in the sand, including cigarette butts
- Place waste and recyclables in proper bins
- Whenever possible, walk, cycle, carpool or take public transit to the beach
- Enjoy the beach and its surroundings but please treat nature with respect

Insert Beach Map
(28.25" wide x 20.75" tall)

Information on [Insert Beach Name]

[Insert Name of Beach] is on the shore of beautiful Lake Simcoe. Aside from the Great Lakes, Lake Simcoe is the largest lake in Southern Ontario. The Lake Simcoe watershed covers an area of over 10,000 square kilometers, home to 52 municipalities and First Nations communities. Lake Simcoe is an important source of drinking water, a favourite spot for recreation and tourism, and supports a large agriculture industry. It also provides important habitat for many native flora and fauna. We need to work together to keep Lake Simcoe healthy.

[Headline 2]

[Insert Name of Beach] is on the shore of beautiful Lake Simcoe. Aside from the Great Lakes, Lake Simcoe is the largest lake in Southern Ontario. The Lake Simcoe watershed covers an area of over 10,000 square kilometers, home to 52 municipalities and First Nations communities.

Local flora/
fauna image 1

Local flora/
fauna image 2

CAPTION 1

CAPTION 2

[Headline 3]

[Insert Name of Beach] is on the shore of beautiful Lake Simcoe. Aside from the Great Lakes, Lake Simcoe is the largest lake in Southern Ontario. The Lake Simcoe watershed covers an area of over 10,000 square kilometers, home to 52 municipalities and First Nations communities.

Legend

YOU ARE HERE	Bus Stop	Potable Water	Emergency Services	Golf Course	Recycling Station
Parking	Restroom	Electric and Power	Water Tower	Water Tower	Waste Bin
Information	Accessible Entrance	First Aid	Recycling Bin	Water Tower	Waste Bin
Blue Flag Information	Shower	Police	Recycling Bin	Water Tower	Waste Bin

Code of Conduct

- No Camping
- No Cars
- No Dogs
- No Fires



Your comments are important! Contact Environmental Defence at BlueFlag.ca or call 1-877-399-2333 ext.238

Emergency: 911

[Beach/Park Name] Information:

District Office: 905-123-4567

Ontario Provincial Parks: ontarioparks.ca

Blue Flag: BlueFlag.ca/[BeachorParkName]



Municipality logo

Figure 1 Canadian BF Board Front



Welcome to [Insert Name of Beach]

Proud to Fly the Blue Flag

Environmental Education

The Blue Flag program contributes to public awareness of the Lake Simcoe shoreline and watershed. Please see below for upcoming environmental education activities in the community.

[Attach Cork Board Here.
Max size: 16 x 21"]



Environmental Management

A Blue Flag Beach is a clean beach! XXXX cleans XXXX Beach on a regular basis, so please do your part by properly disposing of your waste.

The beach is a living ecosystem, and natural items like vegetation and driftwood should be left where they are – they stabilize the shoreline and provide habitat for wildlife like shorebirds.

Dogs are not permitted on Blue Flag beaches – please keep your pets off the main beach or take them to dog friendly zones.

Water Quality

Water quality at [Insert Name of Beach] is monitored regularly by [insert local public health agency]. Canada's Blue Flag standards require that at least 80 per cent of the water quality tests each year meet the provincial guidelines of 100 cfu/100 ml of water. The most recent results are posted here and at [insert municipal/public health website or Blue Flag web page/QR code].

You should not swim during and after storms, floods, or heavy rainfall. Cloudy water can be an indicator of high levels of bacteria that may pose a risk to human health. Before heading to the beach, check the local weather forecast and [insert website]. Please see the [Insert Name of Beach] water quality results for this season in the table below, or visit [blueflag.ca](#).

[Attach White Board Here.
Max size: 16.5 x 2.5"]

Safety & Services

Enjoy the beach and stay safe:

- Always swim with a buddy
- Children are your responsibility – keep them at arm's reach
- This is a natural watershed – beware of waves and uneven bottom conditions
- Always swim in the designated swimming areas.
- Report problems immediately to the lifeguards.
- In an emergency call 9-1-1
- First Aid can be found at [insert location here]



Lifeguards

Lifeguards are on duty every day from the first week of June until Labour Day, 11:00 am – 6:00 pm. Lifeguards are equipped with first aid equipment.

Accessibility

[Insert Name of Beach] meets accessibility requirements by providing wheelchair parking, facilities and access to the beach. [Insert additional information about what other features are available (wheelchair path on the beach, amphibious wheelchairs etc.)]



Your comments are important! Contact Environmental Defence at BlueFlag.ca or call 1-877-399-2333 ext.238

Emergency: 911

[Beach/Park Name] Information:

District Office: 905-123-4567

Ontario Provincial Parks: ontarioparks.ca

Blue Flag: BlueFlag.ca/[BeachorParkName]



Municipality logo

Figure 2 Canadian BF Board Back

Appendix B – NWF Comments

“Each beach must have at least one Blue Flag information and education board in place, containing all the information required by the criteria listed below. For long beaches it is recommended that more than one Blue Flag information and education boards are installed (approximately one every 500 metres). “

I just highlight this because this is a great place to educate people about issues as well as opportunities and events – may be that this is already the case but if designated as such it would put front of mind.

“Blue Flag beaches could promote the Green Key Programme as another eco-label run by FEE ...”

Here in the United States we run two other FEE programs – [Eco-Schools USA](#) and Learning About Forests or LEAF (as a pathway of Eco-Schools). Since we don’t run Green Key – maybe we could highlight Eco-Schools?

“Such activities must also be publicized on the Blue Flag information board, but could also be publicized in other areas in the beach area, in local centers, in newspapers and other media.”

Social media is key here. Many communities now have local Neighborhood platforms. Schools are also a great way to get information out.

Information relating to local eco-systems, environmental elements, and cultural sites must be displayed.

Add endangered wildlife to this criterion along with local ecosystems and sensitive areas.