Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) for
Safe Use of Hand Tools: Hand Saws, Hand pruning shears, Hand axes, and Pocket knives

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this SOP is to outline steps to be followed for the safe use of hand tools in the field.

2. SCOPE. Includes procedures for field operations.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES.

   a. Natural Resource Management Supervisors: Review procedures with Natural Resource Staff to ensure understanding and compliance at safety briefings.

   b. Natural Resource Staff: Execute use of hand tool in accordance with SOP.

   c. Failure to comply with this SOP may result in disciplinary action.

4. PROCEDURES. Read all instructions carefully before using a hand pruning saw. All users of hand pruning saws should observe the following safety precautions:
### Required PPE
- Safety Footwear

### Suggested PPE
- Eye protection
- Protective Gloves

### Required Training

a. Do not use hand tools, axes and saws when you are fatigued.

b. Do not use a hand tool that is damaged, or is not completely and securely assembled. Carefully inspect tools and sheaths before and after each use.

   a. For hand saws insure the saw blade is securely locked in the open position before and during use. Blade teeth and surfaces should be free of rust, tree gum, and chips. Ensure handle and blade is secure on long bladed tree pruners.
   b. For hand pruners insure that the hinge, spring and lock are correctly functioning.
   c. For hand axes ensure there are no deformities or cracks blade or shaft and that grip is in good condition. Blade must also be sharp and even.
   d. For pocket knives insure all hinges are operational and that locks are functioning.

c. With hand saws and axes do not start cutting until you have a clear work area, secure footing, and a planned retreat path from the cut material. Long bladed tree pruning saws can be just as effective as a chainsaw and should be treated with the same precautions when felling and pruning.

d. Keep the handles and gloves dry and clean.

e. When using the hand pruning saw and axe, do not overreach and do not cut above shoulder height.

f. With all tools hold them firmly, and focus on the task to ensure avoidance of careless mistakes.

g. With hand saws start cutting carefully and slowly to avoid jumping of the blade. Saws cut in the pulling motion rather than a pushing motion. Tips break easily when saws are forced into cuts.

h. With hand saws, when cutting a limb that is under tension, be alert for spring-back so that you will not be struck when the tension in the wood fibers is released.

i. With hand saws, be alert to slash and other material that may be resting on the branch or tree being cut that may fall uncontrollably after tension is released.

j. Be aware of where the slash will fall when cutting with hand pruning saw. Ensure that all other personnel are clear of the fall area including adjacent snags. Do not place yourself directly below material being cut and be alert to sudden movement and swinging debris particularly when cutting rotted wood.
k. Prune branches appropriately and cut stumps close to the ground to prevent hazards to hikers.

l. Close or sheath hand tools when not in use.

m. Do not use hand tools near any electrical conductors (wires) to prevent electrical shock.

n. Use wire core lanyards when using saws during tree climbing or other rope operations.

o. Mark hand tools with flagging or other method to prevent injuries and tool loss.