

Roadside Weed and Rabbit Control Plan

Council Details

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Key Contact

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Regional Context of Noxious Weed and Pest Management

West Wimmera Shire Council (the Shire) lies in Western Victoria on the South Australian border, about half way between Melbourne and Adelaide. Major highways are the Western and the Wimmera highways. The total road network incorporates over 3000 kilometers of roads; including approximately 560 km Vic Roads controlled roads and 2,700 km of local roads maintained by the Shire.

The Shire area contains a large variety of natural environments, including the Big Desert Wilderness Park, the Little Desert National Park and about 3,000 wetlands. The Shire covers approximately 9,106 square kilometers. There are essentially three geographic areas, north, south and east of the Little Desert.

Agriculture is the main industry of West Wimmera Shire Council (WWSC) and consequently management of pests and weeds is a Shire wide concern.

The main urban settlements are Edenhope and Kaniva, with approximate populations of 960 each.

Philosophical approach to weed and Pest Management

West Wimmera Shire Council is a local government operating on a small rate payer base and one of the largest geographic local government areas. Consequently WWSC must utilize resources for maximum effect and work strategically with partners to deliver outcomes across many programs. WWSC intends to take this approach to deliver the Victorian Government's Roadside Weeds and Pests Program and will seek to work with partners within and adjacent to the Shire. This approach of pooling funding and effort should ensure the most effective outcome possible with the available resources. The geographic areas will also be reflective of the community collectives, with the overview of stakeholders such as DEPI, WCMA and GHCMA. Also the interim nature of the funding which by necessity needs to build in longer term resilience for the period post the three year funding.

WWSC and partners will aim to increase the rate of return on investment by minimizing the spread of new species while providing the required levels of protection that are needed to safeguard Victoria's highest-value assets from established invasive species. GIS mapping of invasive species and high-value

assets.

The approach will be underpinned by the following assumptions:

Prevention & preparedness

Preventing high-risk invasive species from establishing is the most cost-effective approach to managing the threat they pose. Yet considerable resources and planning are required to maintain prevention of a large number of species. A key element is knowing the geography and the species of what is there now.

'Preparedness' encompasses all the activities and resources necessary to successfully manage new incursions, including developing the understanding of the Shire's current state.

Eradication

Eradication is generally only possible in the early stages of establishment when distribution and abundance of an invasive species is low. It is expected to increase in relative importance within government's overall level of investment.

Containment

'Containment' involves measures to eradicate outlying (satellite) infestations and prevent spread beyond the boundaries of core infestations (those that are too large and well established to eradicate).

Given the large number of potential target species for containment, it is vital that a rigorous risk assessment and feasibility and cost-benefit analyses are applied to select species for containment.

Obtaining a high degree of community support is a prerequisite for any long-term containment program.

Asset-based protection

When an invasive species has become very widespread, an assets-based approach is used to manage the species only where reducing its adverse effects provides the greatest benefits by achieving protection and restoration outcomes for specific, highly valued assets.

Hierarchy

Analyses of biosecurity programs generally show that prevention provides a higher return on investment than eradication, eradication is better than containment and containment is better than managing impacts of widespread invasive species. This general trend will inform government on where to invest, regardless of whether the returns derive from protecting primary production, protecting the environment or a combination of the two.

Current resources and treatment of weed and pest control

Current weed and pest (European rabbit) control within the Shire is largely delivered by Landcare and environmental groups, along with individual landholder efforts. WWSC implements weed control on roadsides under its control concurrent with the Shire's roads program and reactively on community or agency advice of weed infestation. WWSC has no current dedicated weed control budget for roadsides.

Community Consultation

WWSC is a shire with limited network coverage. Many residents have no internet or mobile phone options and consequently local papers, community newsletters and other local medium are still relevant methods of communication for WWSC. Additionally WWSC Councilors have a proud tradition of direct representation of community priorities and feedback.

Using community members as the 'ears and eyes', the regular community based Council meetings will have 'pests and weeds' feedback as a standing agenda item.

For the purposes of ascertaining community priorities for weed and rabbit management, public meetings, and meetings with relevant groups and the recording of correspondence relevant to weeds and pests, will constitute additional knowledge to that above.

Feedback to the community regarding the progress of the program will be through quarterly community newsletters and through the Shire website.

Stakeholder Consultation

Key stakeholders who have been consulted in the development of this plan.

- Wimmera CMA
- Kowree Landcare Group
- Kaniva Landcare Group
- Hindmarsh Shire (north)
- Michael McCarthy, Director Sustainable Futures, Southern Grampians Shire
- South Australian shires and groups (north and south)
- East (Horsham & Yarriambiack)
- Mark Farrer, DEPI Biosecurity Area Manager: Glenelg Hopkins/Wimmera
- Malinda Godino, DEPI Biosecurity Area Leader: Wimmera
- Luke Waters, Landcare Coordinator, Upper Reaches Landcare Network
- Rebecca Green, Catchment Planning Officer, North East Catchment Management Authority
- Vic Roads Frank Carland and Natasha Kennedy
- Surrounding Councils Natural Resource officers

Relevant Local and Regional Policies and Strategies

List policies and strategies relevant to this plan.

State

- Invasive Plants and Animal Policy Framework

- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
- The 'Bailey' Report which recommends the State retains responsibility for State prohibited weeds and exotic animal and plant biosecurity threats.

Regional

- Wimmera Invasive Plant and Animal Management Strategy

Local

- West Wimmera Shire Council Roadside Management Plan

Objectives of the Plan

For the next two to three years, WWSC's plan is to:

1. Appoint a Project Manager 1 day per week to ensure coordination of the internal and external roadside pests and weeds activities.
2. Achieve mapping of location of priority weed and rabbit infestations within the Shire and coordination of mapping for surrounding shires' location of priority weed and rabbit infestations on West Wimmera Shire Council boundaries of those Shires.
 - a. This will include developing the Target Species
 - b. Developing the Control Measures and Target Roadsides (see attachments 1 & 2)
3. Identify other parties including Landcare and the Wimmera CMA, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Vic Roads and DEPI who have previously conducted treatments.
4. Map those treatments
5. Seek partnerships to share resources, information and to develop a coordinated plan for ongoing treatments.
6. Conduct Treatment on:
 - a) Priority species of declared noxious weeds for control
 - Regionally Prohibited Weeds
 - Regionally Controlled Weeds (DEPI Priority Species)
 - Regionally Controlled Weeds (Other Species).
 - b) Pests
 - European rabbits are a priority for control.

Method of treatment

European rabbits will largely be dealt with through a coordinated and targeted series of programs incorporating warren destruction (ripping), harbor manipulation/removal, and/or warren fumigation based at a landscape scale. This will not be Shire-wide, but rather where infestations are identified to impact on environmental and economic assets, and where willing partners also exist to affect coordinated and cooperative effort which includes DEPI programs.

Weeds will be treated through a variety of prescribed methods depending on the species and identified relevant and effective treatment regimes. As with European rabbits, consideration of where infestations

are and where there are willing partners and the possibility of coordinated, cooperative effort will be a significant factor for priority in addition to the species relative declaration status. Principles of strategic biosecurity and the consequences of not taking action will also be factors for prioritizing effort.

WWSC's program will be built on current and available partnerships for regional management (such as Vic Roads) and may also consider partnerships across the South Australian border should coordination be of dividend value to the WWSC's programs.

Geographic areas

WWSC has essentially three main geographic subregions within the Shire, north and south of Little Desert, and the east in the Kadnook/Goroke area.

Mapping pests* and weeds

WWSC does not have a database of pests or weeds in the Shire.

Whether in partnership or WWSC independently, initial GIS mapping would establish the location of known infestation of pests and weeds and this knowledge would be further built upon through the delivery of the program. The aim would be to share the data with partners and to provide evidence of the success of various strategies and activities.

Ideally the data would be compatible with the Shire's current mapping system, MapInfo, and also would be spatially available for inspections and activities on site through remote and mobile systems.

Mapping expertise in the region could be provided by the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority. WWSC has sought a quote for Spring 2013 assessment by Tim D'Ombra of Biodiversity Services who conducted the weeds mapping on behalf of Southern Grampians Shire Council.

European rabbit control will be prioritized to:

- (1) Geographical areas targeted by DEPI compliance program/s.
- (2) Areas in support of sustained and coordinated community led effort
- (3) WWSC high priority asset areas identified as being under direct threat from European rabbits.

European rabbit control is also less able to be a sustainable program without ongoing funding. The aim will be to work with others while focusing on roadsides but in collaboration with adjoining landowners. Best practice rabbit control involves a coordinated approach with adjoining landowners and public land managers.

Stakeholder engagement with fellow shires, Vic Roads, WCMA, GHCMA, landcare groups and DEPI will assist in mapping locations of regionally prohibited weeds, regionally controlled weeds and rabbit infestations.

*only covers European rabbits, NOT invertebrates/e.g. locusts

Treatment priority order:

Regionally Prohibited Weeds

Invasive plants that pose a serious threat at a regional level but can't be eradicated from the State. However, as they are not widely distributed it is reasonable to expect that they can be eradicated from a particular region. Very few Regionally Prohibited Weed species are found on WWSC managed roadsides, with the exception of Spiny Burr Grass within the Glenelg-Hopkins catchment region; and Noogoora burr & Cape tulip (two-leaf) within the Wimmera catchment region.

Regionally Controlled Weeds

Widespread invasive plants that pose risks for a particular region. To prevent their spread, continuing control measures are required to contain them. These weeds represent most of the operational cost of roadside weed control.

European Rabbit Control Plan

Each location plan would identify, within the constraints of available resources provided by the State Government, WWSC and the location partners (including landholders, DEPI and Landcare), the location of rabbit warrens that would be subject to control activity within the municipality during a designated period of time.

In Summary

West Wimmera Shire Council's overall roadside weed and pest management objective is the effective and proactive management of invasive species on Council managed roadsides across the Shire. Investment of funds will be aligned to:

1. Documenting current treatments
2. Promoting partnerships and stakeholder engagement to deliver treatments in the most effective way possible with the limited resources available
3. Treatment programs:
 - Treatment for the localized eradication of Regionally Prohibited Weed infestations.
 - Treatment for the containment and/or reduction in occupation area of infestations of Regionally Controlled Weeds and/or European rabbits – aligned to DEPI weed and European rabbit compliance project area/s.
 - Supporting community group investment in weed and pest control projects.
 - Contributing to other previous investment in the control of Regionally Controlled and Regionally Prohibited Weeds and pests (European rabbits).
4. Protect identified assets such as significant roadside vegetation under threat from weed invasion.
5. Addressing other roadside regionally controlled weed infestations of concern to the Shire's community

Timeframe

The life of the plan.
The WWSC plan will run from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015.

Table 1: Target Species

Outline the target species and reasoning for management.

Common Name	Scientific Name	CaLP classification	PRIORITY RATING (1 highest – 3 lowest)	Reasons for Management
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Established Pest Animal	2 1	- To support community led action - To support DEPI compliance program/s
Cape Tulip (2-Leaf)	<i>Moraea miniata</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Noogoora Burr	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i> (incl. <i>X. occidentale</i> & <i>X. orientale</i>)	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Spiny burr grass	<i>Cenchrus longispinus</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (GHCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Serrated tussock*	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA & GHCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
African daisy*	<i>Senecio pterophorus</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
African feathergrass*	<i>Pennisetum macrourum</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Buffalo burr*	<i>Solanum rostratum</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Spiny Emex*	<i>Emex australis</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Prairie Ground Cherry*	<i>Physalis hederifolia</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Dodder*	<i>Cuscuta</i> spp.	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
English broom*	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (WCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
St Barnaby's thistle*	<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (GHCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Hardheads / Russian knapweed*	<i>Rhaponticum repens</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (GHCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Silverleaf nightshade*	<i>Solanum elaeagnifolium</i>	Regionally Prohibited Weed (GHCMA)	1	- To support DEPI compliance programs
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> (agg.)	Regionally Controlled Weed	1 2	- To support DEPI compliance program/s - To support community led action
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Regionally Controlled Weed	1 2	- To support DEPI compliance program/s - To support community led action
Bathurst Burr	<i>Xanthium spinosum</i>	Regionally Controlled Weed	3	- In response to ratepayer requests
Boneseed	<i>Chrysanthemoides monilifera</i>	Regionally Controlled Weed	3	- To support previous investment by Council
Horehound	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	Regionally Controlled Weed	3	-In response to frequent ratepayer requests

- There are no known infestations of these regionally prohibited weeds in the WWSC, but active surveillance will occur while undertaking works or mapping other weeds in the shire

Table 2: Control Measures and Target Roadsides

Outline control techniques and additional details.

Common Name*	Control Measures (to be based on accepted best practice management of the target species)	Location of where works will be done	Estimate of length of roadside to be treated annually over 3 years (Km = length of road along which both sides are treated. Where only one side is treated halve the figure)	Approximate Annual Timing of Treatment	Estimated Cost
Rabbit	Mechanical ripping of warrens Fumigation of warrens where mechanical ripping deemed inappropriate Manipulation and/or removal of harbour	Roadsides within the Telopea Downs region as part of the DEPI SA Border Rabbit Control Project – includes follow up treatment in following years Roadsides throughout the shire, where targeted DEPI and/or landcare group programs occur	50 km	Sept - April	\$10,000
Cape tulip (2-leaf)	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label	Miram North & Sandsmere Hall Road, Miram	15 km	July – October	\$2,000
Noogoora Burr	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Manual removal of isolated plants	Lillimur-Yearlinga Road	10 km	Dec - March	\$1000
Spiny burr grass	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Manual removal of isolated plants	Penola-Dorodong, Dorodong-Comaum & Waterloo Roads, Dorodong	15 km	Dec - Apr	\$2000
Blackberry	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Mechanical removal where herbicide application is inappropriate	To be determined by GIS mapping	? km	Nov - Feb	Not available as yet
Gorse	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Mechanical removal where herbicide application is inappropriate	To be determined by GIS mapping	? km	Aug - Jan	Not available as yet
Boneseed	Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Cut-stump herbicide application Manual removal of seedlings	To be determined by GIS mapping	? km	Jun – Oct All year	Not available as yet

*Where multiple noxious weeds are to be treated simultaneously in the same locations, only the most common weed species needs to be listed.

Statement of Responsibilities

Council will:

- Coordinate the implementation of this plan on Council managed roadsides in accordance with the investment principles stated in this plan and the control measures specified in Table 2.
- Implement best practice weed hygiene principles and protocols.
- Maintain accurate records sufficient to provide evidence that the plan has been carried out and provide these to DEPI on request.
- Obtain approval from DEPI before substantially modifying or varying the plan.
- Carefully consider any proposals from DEPI to modify or vary the plan in response to changed circumstances.
- Establish networks with other Government organizations

Declaration

I declare that I am an authorized representative and the information given on this form is complete and correct.

Key contact

Name: Adrian Schmidt

Date: 25 June 2013

Signature:

Council CEO

Name: Mark Crouch

Date: 25 June 2013

Signature:

Endorsement

DEPI Representative

Name:

Date:

Signature: