

## Surf Coast Shire Council

### Annual Progress Report 2019/2020 – Pest Plant & Animal Management Strategy

This annual Progress Report has been prepared in accordance with Council’s Pest Plant & Animal Management Strategy 2020 - 2023. The Report outlines the key actions and outcomes that Council has undertaken in the 2019/20 year to implement the five goals of the Strategy and ensure Council meets its legal obligations under the *Catchment & Land Protection Act 1994*. The Report also outlines Council actions to support community and land management agencies (Goals 4 and 5).

Copies of both the annual Action Plan and Progress Report will be posted on Council’s website [www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au).

<b>Goal 1: Prevent new and emerging pest plant &amp; animal infestations within Surf Coast Shire</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Location/s</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Cape Tulip (one-leaf) - Community mail-out, media release, surveys and treatment work on municipal roadsides and Council owned/managed land	Late winter/early spring	Winchelsea, Buckley, Barrabool Hills, Modewarre, Moriac, Paraparap, and Bellbrae	Completed and ongoing. Reduction in weed numbers observed at some Council owned/managed sites and also on some private land. It is an extremely challenging weed to eradicate as it requires treatment over multiple years. Being highly toxic to both humans and livestock, the extent of infestation on some private properties is a concern and has been discussed with Agriculture Victoria.
Chilean & Texas Needle Grass – survey and treatment on municipal roadsides	Autumn/& early spring	Winchelsea, Gnarwarre, Barrabool Hills, Torquay, Connewarre	Completed in conjunction with Serrated Tussock control program in August 2019 and May 2020.
African Weed Orchid – survey and treatment on municipal roadsides and Council owned/managed land	Spring	Airey’s Inlet, Bellbrae, Bells Beach, Freshwater Creek, Lorne	Completed and ongoing. This is a new and emerging weed to the Shire which can produce vast amounts of microscopic seed. There has been a good reduction in overall numbers at Airey’s Inlet and to our knowledge it has been eradicated at Freshwater Creek. It remains a concern at the other sites and particularly on private land.
Rural roadsides - weed survey on municipal roadsides	Autumn & spring	Across the Shire	Completed in conjunction with grassy and woody weed programs.

Goal 2: Minimise the impact of established pest plants and animals on high value assets owned or managed by Council			
Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<p><b>RABBITS</b></p> <p>Rabbit Management Plans (for hotspot sites on Council owned/managed land):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-works spotlight count &amp; warren mapping &amp; input on RabbitScan – all sites</li> </ul>	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve</li> <li>Mt Moriac Rec Reserve</li> <li>Modewarre Rec Reserve</li> <li>Pettavel &amp; Dickins Road reserves,</li> <li>Loutitt Bay Road/Woodland Road reserves</li> </ul>	Completed. All sites visited and assessed by Council's independent rabbit consultant. Sites ranged from 0 rabbits/warrens through to Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve having 6 rabbits sighted and 24 active warrens. Note: EPA air quality health warnings due to bushfire smoke caused some delays to the rabbit program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Management Plan actions – all sites</li> </ul>	Feb-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve</li> <li>Mt Moriac Rec Reserve</li> <li>Modewarre Rec Reserve</li> <li>Pettavel &amp; Dickins Road reserves,</li> <li>Loutitt Bay Road/Woodland Road reserves</li> </ul>	Completed after delays due to COVID-19 restrictions. Works at sites included fumigation and warren destruction (where possible).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-works spotlight count &amp; site inspection (warren re-openings/new warrens) – all sites</li> </ul>	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve</li> <li>Mt Moriac Rec Reserve</li> <li>Modewarre Rec Reserve</li> <li>Pettavel &amp; Dickins Road reserves</li> <li>Loutitt Bay Road/Woodland Road reserves</li> </ul>	Completed after delays due to COVID-19 restrictions. Rabbit numbers across the sites ranged from 0 through to 35 active warrens at Freshwater Creek*. *Use of this area by the general public has caused some issues but infrastructure modifications have since been undertaken and further fumigation/warren destruction by hand has been carried out. Cultural heritage restrictions limit mechanical warren removal/excavation at this site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual plan review with stakeholders – all sites</li> </ul>	April/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve</li> <li>Mt Moriac Rec Reserve</li> <li>Modewarre Rec Reserve</li> <li>Pettavel &amp; Dickins Road reserves</li> <li>Loutitt Bay Road/Woodland Road reserves</li> </ul>	Results of the post-works spotlight count and site inspection together with planned actions for the coming months were emailed to the individual stakeholders for comment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise Rabbit Management Plan for Winchelsea township sites – See Goal 4</li> </ul>	Feb/March	See Goal 4	Rabbit Management Plan completed and emailed to stakeholders for comment.

**Goal 2: Minimise the impact of established pest plants and animals on high value assets owned or managed by Council cont'd**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<b>NATURE RESERVES</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rabbit management</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moonah Woodlands – warren fumigation twice yearly, ongoing warren close out, rabbit activity mapped on Rabbitscan</li> <li>Dans and Rice Nature Reserves – warren fumigation twice yearly, continued harbour removal</li> <li>Greenfields – warren fumigation if required, continued harbour removal</li> <li>Fairylands – warren monitoring and close out as required, continued harbour removal</li> </ul>	<p>Fumigation undertaken at Moonah Woodlands in spring 2019 and winter 2020</p> <p>Dans and Rice Nature Reserves fumigated in spring 2019. Monitoring undertaken in autumn 2019, and fumigation planned for late winter 2020.</p> <p>Fumigation undertaken at Greenfields Reserve in spring 2019. Spot spraying of gorse seedlings and other potential harbour undertaken in summer 2020.</p> <p>Rabbit numbers low at Fairylands. Ongoing work on potential harbour such as blackberry spraying will be conducted in spring 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weed management across all nature reserves in accordance with Council’s Weed Matrix (site &amp; species prioritisation)</li> </ul>		<p>Reserve specific and seasonal weed treatments at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grasstree Park</li> <li>Painkalac Creek</li> <li>Deep Creek</li> <li>Spring Creek</li> <li>Coogoorah Park</li> </ul>	<p>Weed control works were undertaken in the five listed nature reserves on multiple occasions throughout 2019/20. Infestations in the priority reserves have been treated over a number of years but stored seed in the soil means it is necessary for ongoing control works. One exception is the northern part of Painkalac Nature Reserve (towards Old Coach Road), where Blue Periwinkle, Hemlock and Blackberries have been treated for the first time.</p>

**Goal 2: Minimise the impact of established pest plants and animals on high value assets owned or managed by Council cont'd**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weed management at nature reserves includes weed treatment on a reserve specific basis and seasonally triggered weed control eg Wild Watsonia &amp; Serrated Tussock. Actions reported here cover a selection of priority nature reserves in terms of weed control</li> </ul>		All Council nature reserves	Priority weeds were targeted across all 30 plus Council nature reserves. Various skilled contractors worked across different nature reserves and Council supported volunteer weeding activities in selected reserves.
<b>HIGH CONSERVATION MUNICIPAL ROADSIDES</b>			
Weed management – survey and control. Treatment includes both declared noxious weeds and some environmental weeds such as Bluebell Creeper	March	As required	Council partnered with Parks Victoria to control Bluebell Creeper on roadsides in Airey’s Inlet and Gherang. Other weeds controlled included Sweet Pittosporum, Blackberry and Boneseed.

**Goal 3: Ensure that Council meets its legal obligations regarding pest plant & animal management**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<p><b>Catchment &amp; Land Protection Act 1994</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[declared noxious weeds &amp; established pest animals]</li> </ul> <p>[addressed by work under previous goals]</p>			
<p><b>ROADSIDE WEEDS &amp; PESTS PROGRAM</b></p> <p>Deliver approved Roadside Weeds &amp; Pests Control Plan works for 2019/20:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serrated Tussock – herbicide</li> </ul>	Oct & April	Serrated Tussock containment line (north of Winchelsea through to Bellbrae)	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rabbits – warren and/or harbour removal</li> </ul>	March to May	Thompson/Freshwater Creek priority area	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorse and Blackberry – herbicide</li> </ul>	March	Deans Marsh	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cape Tulip – herbicide</li> </ul>	Sept	Winchelsea/Buckley	Completed
<p>Complete acquittal report on 2019/20 program and submit to Local Government Victoria</p>	July 2020		Completed

**Goal 3: Ensure that Council meets its legal obligations regarding pest plant & animal management cont'd**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<b>ROADSIDE WEEDS &amp; PESTS PROGRAM cont'd</b>			
Liaise with Dept of Jobs, Precincts & Regions regarding 2019 – 2020 Control Plan priorities	June – September 2019		Priorities confirmed unchanged: Serrated Tussock containment line (north of Winchelsea through to Bellbrae), rabbits in Thompson/ Freshwater Creek priority area, Gorse and Blackberry in Deans Marsh, and Cape Tulip in Winchelsea/Buckley area.

**Goal 4: Coordinate and collaborate with community groups and land management agencies on pest plant and animal management**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<p><b>RABBITS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collaborate with GORCC, The Sands &amp; Parks Victoria and coordinate rabbit management work for Moonah Woodlands /The Sands/Whites Beach and Karaaf wetlands</li> <li>In developing Council's Rabbit Management Plan for Moonah Woodlands, explore opportunities to capture coordinated works in Council's Plan.</li> </ul>	Mar-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whites Beach area, Moonah Woodlands, The Sands &amp; Karaaf Wetlands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have continued to work in collaboration with adjoining land managers and coordinate rabbit management work.</li> <li>Areas with rabbit proof fencing checked for breaches. Weeds forming surface harbour removed. Warrens surveyed and fumigated after some delays due to COVID-19 restrictions.</li> <li>Council's Rabbit Management Plan for Moonah Woodlands will be developed in 2020/21.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RABBITS</b></p> <p>Finalise Rabbit Management Plan for Council owned/managed land within Winchelsea township in collaboration with the Upper Barwon Landcare Network &amp; Winchelsea Land &amp; River Care and local residents.</p>	Feb-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bennett Reserve, Napthine Reserve, Barwon River Reserve, Mathison Reserve, Platypus Reserve, Richmond/Lauder Lane, Beal-Trebeck Reserve &amp; Willis Reserve</li> </ul>	<p>Rabbit Management Plan was distributed to stakeholders for review and comment.</p> <p>Sites were surveyed for rabbit warrens and fumigation works undertaken as required across all sites except for the Beal-Trebeck Reserve and Willis Reserve. These new sites will be included in the 2020/21 works program.</p>
<p><b>RABBITS</b></p> <p>Continue to seek clarification from the Registered Aboriginal Party, the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation, regarding rabbit management in areas of high cultural heritage significance such as the Freshwater Creek Rec Reserve &amp; share any such clarification with Landcare partners and other relevant land management agencies.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Guide for Landcare was released in January 2020 by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and was distributed by Council to the relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>Council officers will continue to identify opportunities to partner with the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners regarding rabbit management in areas of high cultural heritage significance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OTHER</b> (To be updated during the year as opportunities arise)</p>			

<b>Goal 5: Support Landcare and community pest plant and animal management initiatives and capacity building</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Location/s</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<p><b>RABBITS</b></p> <p>Coordinate Community Baiting program mail-outs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barrabool Hills Landcare Group</li> <li>• Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network (SCRAN)</li> <li>• Surf Coast &amp; Inland Plains Network (SCIPN)</li> </ul>	Mid Jan	Mail-outs include Barrabool Hills/ Gnarwarre/Buckley North, and the Thompson Creek valley area from Moriac to Connewarre with focus on Freshwater Creek. Torquay/Bellbrae.	Completed
<p><b>NATURE RESERVES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Community weeding &amp; planting events on Council owned/managed land (To be updated as opportunities arise during the year)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiksilver Foundation Day – Spring Creek</li> <li>• Rip Curl Planet Day – various reserves including Bells Beach</li> <li>• RACV day Jan Juc Creek</li> <li>• Staff – National Tree Day</li> </ul>	Events scheduled during July 2019 to early-March 2020 were successfully held. All other events were postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase &amp; supply of locally indigenous plants to community groups for revegetation works on Council owned/managed land</li> </ul>			Completed. Revegetation works from early-March 2020 onwards have been undertaken by contractors due to COVID-19.
<p><b>EVENT/PROJECT SPONSORSHIP</b></p> <p>(To be updated during the year as opportunities arise – e.g. field days, publications etc)</p>			No requests for community event/project sponsorship were received in 2019/20, likely due to COVID-19 restrictions.



**Goal 5: Support Landcare and community pest plant and animal management initiatives and capacity building cont'd**

Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<p><b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>                      (To be updated during the year as opportunities arise e.g. landholder outreach, expert speakers etc)</p>			<p>No requests for community capacity building events were received in 2019/20, likely due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p>