

## Surf Coast Shire Council

### Annual Progress Report 2020/2021 – 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 2020/21 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 2020 with follow-up in May 2021.
African Weed Orchid – survey and treatment on municipal roadsides and Council owned/managed land	Spring	Airey’s Inlet, Bellbrae, Bells Beach, Freshwater Creek, Paraparap, 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 sites which have received treatments over multiple years but it remains a concern particularly in bushland where it can be difficult to see.
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. Cultural heritage restrictions limit mechanical warren removal/excavation at this reserve.
<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 <b>Freshwater Creek*</b> . *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>	May/June	<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 both the pre- and post-works spotlight count and site inspection together with planned actions for the coming months were emailed to the individual 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the Rabbit Management Plan Actions for Winchelsea township sites</li> </ul>	Feb-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bennett Reserve</li> <li>Napthine Reserve</li> <li>Barwon River Reserve</li> <li>Beal-Trebeck Reserve</li> <li>Mathison Reserve</li> <li>Platypus Reserve</li> <li>Richmond/Lauder Lane continuation</li> </ul>	Completed after delays due to COVID-19 restrictions. Works at sites included fumigation and warren destruction (where possible). Some harbour removal of woody weeds.
<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>Rice and Dans 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 at <b>Moonah Woodlands</b> has continued to be undertaken regularly, in consultation with GORCAPA. Spotlight counts indicate rabbit numbers have fallen since spotlight counts of 4 to 5 years ago, but a consistent number continue to be recorded. The netting fence between the reserve and The Sands golf course continues to have regular maintenance to reduce incursions.</p> <p><b>Rice and Dans Nature Reserves</b> have continued to have twice-yearly fumigation. Contractors are reporting very few burrow entrances at each visit.</p> <p>The focus at <b>Greenfields Reserve</b> has been the management of harbour. Contractors have regularly sprayed exotic species that provide rabbit harbour such as thistles and phalaris.</p> <p><b>Fairylands</b> - while rabbits are seen in the reserve regularly, contractors only ever find a small number of warren entrances indicating rabbits are primarily residing on adjoining properties (mainly holiday homes). Weed works continue to keep exotic harbour low such as regular blackberry spraying.</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 across all nature reserves in accordance with Council's Weed Matrix (site &amp; species prioritisation)</li> </ul>		Reserve specific and seasonal weed treatments at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grasstree Park</li> <li>Painkalac Creek</li> <li>Deep Creek</li> </ul>	<p>At <b>Grasstree Park</b> there has been a renewed focus on the Coast Tea-tree, dominant in the south eastern corner. A mulcher was used to knock down some of this block, with further knockdown work planned for 2021/22. The aim is to burn this block to aid return to native heathland species, following on from previous ecological burns at the reserve. Contractors have also treated weeds in other parts of the reserve.</p> <p>At <b>Painkalac Creek Nature Reserve</b>, works along the linear portion of the reserve south of Old Coach Road have continued with a large effort on Periwinkle and Sweet Pittosporum. These works complement ANGAIR working bees on a nearby property. Within the main reserve, regular weed control works on priority species have continued e.g. treatment of African Weed Orchid, Boneseed, Red-hot Pokers and Blackberry.</p> <p><b>Deep Creek</b> has had extensive weed works on both sides of the Surf Coast Highway. On the western side, contractors have focused on woody weeds in the gully and Serrated Tussock in the grassy areas. On the east side, contractors did their standard weed walk-through targeting a suite of weeds. Then close to the Highway, one contractor worked for several days chipping woody weeds in an area where locals had raised fire danger concerns.</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 across all nature reserves in accordance with Council's Weed Matrix (site &amp; species prioritisation)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spring Creek</li> <li>Coogoorah Park</li> </ul>	<p>Works at <b>Spring Creek</b> have continued to target priority species such as Serrated Tussock, Bridal Creeper, Boneseed and Polygala. Several weed-sweeps were undertaken by contractors on both sides of the creek.</p> <p>Contractors have continued with woody weed removal and spot-spraying of herbaceous weeds at <b>Coogoorah Park Nature Reserve</b>. Most plants are immature so are not seeding but they are extensive due to bird droppings and soil-stored seed. This means that while the reserve is in great condition, the weed removal workload remains high.</p>
<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, Sweet Pittosporum, African Weed Orchid, Agapanthus.	March - June	As required	Included roadsides in Bellbrae, Freshwater Creek and Winchelsea (Cressy Rd). Work has continued to support our partnership with Parks Victoria to control Bluebell Creeper on roadsides in Airey's Inlet and Gherang.

<b>Goal 3: Ensure that Council meets its legal obligations regarding pest plant &amp; animal management</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Location/s</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Catchment &amp; Land Protection Act 1994</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[declared noxious weeds &amp; established pest animals]</li> </ul> <b>[addressed by work under previous goals]</b>			Completed
<b>ROADSIDE WEEDS &amp; PESTS PROGRAM</b> Deliver approved Roadside Weeds & Pests Control Plan works for 2020/21:			
<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
Complete acquittal report on 2020/21 program and submit to Local Government Victoria	December 2021		Completed
Liaise with Dept of Jobs, Precincts & Regions regarding 2020 – 2021 Control Plan priorities	June – September 2021		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.

<b>Goal 4: Coordinate and collaborate with community groups and land management agencies on pest plant and animal management</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Location/s</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>RABBITS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to collaborate with GORCAPA, The Sands &amp; Parks Victoria and coordinate rabbit management work for Moonah Woodlands /The Sands/Whites Beach and Karaaf wetlands</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>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> </ul>
<b>RABBITS</b> Implement Rabbit Management Plan for Council owned/managed land within Winchelsea township in collaboration with the Upper Barwon Landcare Network & Winchelsea Land & River Care and local residents.	Feb-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bennett Reserve, Napthine Reserve, Barwon River Reserve, Mathison Reserve, Platypus Reserve, Richmond/Lauder Lane, and Beal-Trebeck Reserve</li> </ul>	Sites were surveyed for rabbit warrens and fumigation works undertaken as required across all sites.
<b>RABBITS</b> 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 & share any such clarification with Landcare partners and other relevant land management agencies.			Council officers will continue to identify opportunities to partner with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation regarding rabbit management in areas of high cultural heritage significance.
<b>OTHER</b> (To be updated during the year as opportunities arise)		Best practice rabbit management resources including brochure and film-clip	Council helped support Landcare networks SCIPN and UBLN to produce resources for peri-urban environment rabbit control.

<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>
<b>RABBITS</b> Coordinate Community Baiting program mail-outs for: <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.	COVID-19 restrictions prevented mail-outs in January 2021.
<b>NATURE RESERVES</b> <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>	COVID-19 restrictions prevented group planting days. Instead Contractors completed the planting of the pre-ordered nursery stock at the various sites. Due to fortunate timing, Council staff were able to celebrate National Tree Day at Rice Reserve in between COVID lockdowns.
<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 2021 onwards have been undertaken by contractors due to COVID-19.
<b>EVENT/PROJECT SPONSORSHIP</b>			Deakin University Powerful Owl Research Program PhD project. This exciting project is collecting the movement data of Powerful Owls in the Great Otway National Park to help identify more effective and targeted ways to conserve this threatened species.
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b> (To be updated during the year as opportunities arise e.g. landholder outreach, expert speakers etc)			No requests for community capacity building events were received in 2020/21 due to COVID-19 restrictions.