

## Surf Coast Shire Council

### Annual Progress Report 2021/2022 – 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 2021/22 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).

Goal 1: Prevent new and emerging pest plant & animal infestations within Surf Coast Shire			
Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
Cape Tulip - survey and treatment on municipal roadsides and Council owned/managed land	Late winter/early spring	Winchelsea, Buckley, Barrabool Hills, Modewarre, Moriac, Paraparap, and Bellbrae	Completed and ongoing. A reduction in weed numbers has been observed at some Council owned/managed sites. Being highly toxic to both humans and livestock, the extent of infestation on some private properties remains a concern. Annual treatment across multiple years is required for control.
Chilean & Texas Needle Grass – survey and treatment on municipal roadsides	Autumn/& early spring	Winchelsea, Gnarwarre, Barrabool Hills, Torquay, Connewarre	Completed and ongoing. The work was carried out in conjunction with the Serrated Tussock control program in August 2021 with follow-up in May 2022.
African Weed Orchid – survey and treatment on municipal roadsides and Council owned/managed land	Spring	Airey's Inlet, Bambra, Bells Beach, Bellbrae, Freshwater Creek, Paraparap, Lorne, Winchelsea.	Completed and ongoing. It is listed as a very high risk, and highly invasive species in the Advisory list of environmental weeds in Victoria. Each plant produces tens of thousands of minute dust-like seeds and seeds remain viable for several years. Annual treatment across multiple years is required for control.
Rural roadsides - general surveys for any other new and emerging weeds on municipal roadsides	Autumn & spring	Across the Shire	Completed by all our contractors in conjunction with grassy and woody weed programs. These surveys in previous years have informed our list of the new and emerging weeds requiring control, and their extent eg African Weed Orchid. This year a community member contacted Council after identifying African Lovegrass – a new & emerging Regionally Controlled weed capable of forming thick infestations - on roadsides in Torquay North.

## 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>Continue ongoing implementation of the Rabbit Management Plans for former hotspot sites on Council owned/managed land.</p> <p>Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-works spotlight count &amp; warren mapping &amp; input on RabbitScan;</li> <li>• Rabbit control works as required</li> <li>• Post-works spotlight count &amp; site inspection (warren re-openings/new warrens) – all sites</li> <li>• Review of actions with stakeholders as required.</li> </ul>	January-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>	<p>Completed. All sites were visited and assessed by Council's independent rabbit consultant, who commented generally on the effect of two wet summers in a row sustaining rabbit populations and resulting in increases in both spread and density of rabbits across the region. Rabbit numbers were found to be low at Pettavel Rd, Mt Moriac, and Loutitt Bay/Woodland Rds. There was an increase in rabbit numbers at Modewarre and Dickins (both of which had been zero to low in previous years). Freshwater Creek had 9 rabbits spotlighted. Use of this area by the general public continues to cause some issues with rabbit control, such as the propping open of rabbit-proof gates. Cultural heritage restrictions also limit mechanical warren removal/excavation at this site.</p> <p>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 relevant plan stakeholders for comment. In general, the results post works showed an improvement in rabbit numbers, especially when works had also been undertaken by the surrounding private landowners.</p> <p>Actions undertaken included removal of rabbit harbour at multiple sites, warren destruction using a small excavator, additional netting to repair breaches by rabbits, and fumigation.</p> <p>The installation of some rabbit proof fencing along tree-lines is being investigated for the Modewarre Rec Reserve.</p>

NATURE RESERVES			
<p>Ongoing <b>rabbit management work</b> across key sites, including survey and monitoring of rabbit activity (mapped on RabbitScan); removal of rabbit harbour; warren destruction (where possible); and fumigation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moonah Woodlands</li> <li>• Dans and Rice Nature Reserves</li> <li>• Greenfields</li> <li>• Fairylands</li> </ul>	<p>Contractor treated rabbits at Moonah Woodlands Nature Reserves twice, in consultation with GORCAPA, who also did fumigation, and The Sands, with their baiting program. Second contractor treated rabbit harbour including seedlings of Italian Buckthorn and African Boxthorn.</p> <p>Rabbit numbers are low at Dans and Rice Nature Reserves. Contractor fumigated both areas once and the small number of burrow re-openings were closed down by contractors.</p> <p>At Fairylands, rabbits continue to be present mainly around the Bowls Club area. Contractors closed down solitary small openings. Rabbit harbour is primarily on adjoining private land or the camp ground under cabins.</p> <p>At Greenfields Reserve, contractors continued treatment of rabbit harbour ie new Gorse seedlings and Phalaris clumps. Very few burrows found within the reserve, and any found were closed down.</p>
<p><b>Weed management</b> across all nature reserves in accordance with the Pest Plant &amp; Animal Strategy Weed Matrix (site &amp; species prioritisation)</p> <p>Note: Weed management at nature reserves includes weed treatment on a reserve specific basis and seasonally triggered weed control e.g. Wild Watsonia &amp; Serrated Tussock. Actions reported here cover a selection of priority nature reserves in terms of weed control.</p>		<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>• Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve</li> </ul>	<p>At Grasstree Park the last stand of Coast Tea-tree in the south eastern corner was treated using a mulcher and then burnt with the assistance of the CFA in autumn 2022. Contractors continue treating regrowth weeds in burnt areas and also within unburnt conservation sections.</p> <p>At Painkalac Creek Nature Reserve, Blackberry and thistles on the eastern side between Old Coach Road and Butlers Bend were sprayed and revegetation along the creek banks continues. In the main reserve on the western side, contractors treated African Weed Orchid, Blackberries, woody weeds and herbaceous weeds. Deep Creek Nature Reserve continues to have regular contractor visits for weed control. Chipping of larger Pittosporum and Pines was undertaken at the north- western end, and smaller weeds were spot-sprayed.</p>

<p><b>Weed management cont'd</b></p>			<p>Contractors worked at Spring Creek Nature Reserve treating problematic herbaceous weeds including Bridal Creeper, Blackberry, Serrated Tussock and exotic grasses. Smaller woody weeds were spot-sprayed or treated by cutting and painting. Planet Day with Rip Curl volunteers targeted Italian Buckthorn and Polygala on the north- eastern side.</p> <p>Weed contractors continued making regular visits to Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve. Woody weeds on the cliff tops around the main car park were targeted, along with other species throughout the reserve including African Weed Orchid, Chilean Needle Grass, Wild Watsonia, Polygala and Coast Tea-tree.</p> <p>Contractors completed weed control works in all remaining Council nature reserves.</p>
<p><b>HIGH CONSERVATION MUNICIPAL ROADSIDES</b> Weed management – survey and control.</p> <p>Note: Treatment includes both declared noxious weeds and some environmental weeds, such as Bluebell Creeper &amp; Sweet Pittosporum, when treatment coordinated in partnership with other land management agencies</p>		<p>As required, including Bellbrae, Bells Beach, Paraparap, Gherang, Aireys Inlet and Bamba</p>	<p>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.</p>

Goal 3: Ensure that Council meets its legal obligations regarding pest plant & animal management			
Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<b>Catchment &amp; Land Protection Act 1994</b> Declared noxious weeds & established pest animals - addressed by work under previous goals			Completed
<b>ROADSIDE WEEDS &amp; PESTS PROGRAM</b>			
Liaise with Dept of Jobs, Precincts & Regions (DJPR) regarding 2021 – 2022 Control Plan priorities	June – September 2021		Completed. DJPR confirmed the priorities as 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.
Deliver approved Roadside Weeds & Pests Control Plan works for 2021/22:			
<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 2021/22 program and submit to Local Government Victoria	July 2022		Completed

Goal 4: Coordinate and collaborate with community groups and land management agencies on pest plant and animal management			
Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<b>RABBITS - Torquay</b> Continue to collaborate with GORCAPA, The Sands & Parks Victoria and coordinate rabbit management work for Moonah Woodlands /The Sands/Whites Beach and Karaaf wetlands	Mar-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whites Beach area, Moonah Woodlands, The Sands &amp; Karaaf Wetlands</li> </ul>	Two rounds of fumigation were undertaken on Council owned land in the Moonah Woodlands Nature Reserve and Esplanade areas. The timing was linked to GORCAPA fumigation works. Works to prevent rabbit harbour re-forming continued, with spraying of Italian Buckthorn.
<b>RABBITS - Winchelsea</b> Implement the Rabbit Management Plan for Council owned/managed land within Winchelsea Township	Feb-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reserves including: Bennett, Naphthine, Barwon River, Mathison, Platypus, Beal-Trebeck</li> <li>Richmond/Lauder Lane continuation</li> </ul>	Sites were surveyed for rabbit warrens and fumigation works were undertaken as required across all sites. Council contractors successfully destroyed long-established rabbit warrens using a small excavator in the Beal-Trebeck Reserve. Previous investment in warren destruction and rabbit harbour removal by Council, combined with the work of Winchelsea Land & Rivercare encouraging private landholders to do rabbit control works has led to improved results in reducing rabbit numbers.
<b>RABBITS – Cultural Heritage</b> Continue to seek clarification from the relevant Registered Aboriginal Party as required, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the Eastern Maar 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 (WTOAC) regarding rabbit management in areas of high cultural heritage significance.  Officers have discussed with WTOAC's relatively new Gobata Dja (Taking Care of Country) team what interest they might have in undertaking rabbit management work on sites with cultural heritage significance. They've advised they don't have capacity as a new team to undertake rabbit management work at this time, but may into the future.
<b>OTHER</b> (To be updated during the year as opportunities arise)		Best practice rabbit management resources including printed brochure and film-clip	Council helped to support Landcare networks Surf Coast & Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) and Upper Barwon Landcare Network (UBLN) to produce resources for peri-urban environment rabbit control.

Goal 5: Support Landcare and community pest plant and animal management initiatives and capacity building			
Action	Timing	Location/s	Outcome
<b>RABBITS</b> Support the promotion of Landcare community rabbit control programs	Mid Jan	Barrabool Hills and Freshwater Creek	COVID-19 restrictions limited the size of mail-outs in January 2022. Officers have been encouraging relevant Landcare groups to capture email addresses for participants in their community baiting programs and reduce their reliance on hard copy mail-outs.
<b>NATURE RESERVES</b> Support Community weeding & planting events on Council owned/managed land (To be updated as opportunities arise during the year, subject to COVID-19 restrictions)		Quiksilver Foundation Day – Spring Creek Rip Curl Planet Day – various reserves including Bells Beach RACV day Jan Juc Creek Staff – National Tree Day	While COVID-19 resulted in some cancellations, later in 2021 and early in 2022, Council was able to stage several plantings with community groups including multiple plantings at Jan Juc Creek, two plantings at Spring Creek and one at Bells Beach, which involved Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment (SANE) and surfers competing in the Rip Curl Pro. Staff and several councillors participated in a staff tree planting day at Rice Reserve in July 2021.
Purchase & supply of locally indigenous plants to community groups for revegetation works on Council owned/managed land			Council supplied plants for the community planting days mentioned above. Additionally, where COVID prevented community plantings from occurring, Council supplied the plants and engaged contractors to plant out the seedlings eg at Freshwater Creek and Spring Creek.
<b>EVENT/PROJECT SPONSORSHIP</b>		Event sponsorship  Powerful Owl Project	No requests for event sponsorship were received in 2021/22, with groups being less active due to COVID-19.  Deakin University Powerful Owl Research Program PhD project. This very important 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>		Capacity building	No requests for community capacity building events were received in 2021/22, mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions.



## CASE STUDY - Council's Partnership Project with the Surf Coast Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) and adjoining landholders on Kurzmans Road, Bellbrae

SCIPN and a small group of participating landholders on Kurzmans Road have been removing the environmental weeds, Sweet Pittosporum and Bluebell Creeper, from their properties, with funding received through the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's Community Environment Program.



*Bluebell Creeper*

These highly invasive weeds are a major threat to the local biodiversity including the remnant vegetation found along Kurzmans Road.



*Sweet Pittosporum*

D22/134369

To support this work, Council contractors have removed the roadside weeds, taking great care to protect the remnant native vegetation.



*Remnant vegetation after weed removal works*

Other weeds were removed, including Sallow Wattle, Giant Honey-myrtle, Coast Tea-tree, Pine, Boneseed, Sweet Briar and Agapanthus.

The investment in weed removal on this roadside will be protected under an ongoing annual weed program focused on removing any emerging seedlings.



*Seedlings of Sweet Pittosporum and Boneseed*