

TUSSOCK TIMES

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Serrated Tussock threatens many areas within the proposed WGR.
Source: WMCN mapping team 2012.

VSTWP PROVIDES STRATEGIC TUSSOCK PLAN TO DSE

Mandy Coulson — Serrated Tussock Extension Officer

The Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) has developed a Western Grassland Reserves Serrated Tussock Implementation Plan to provide a strategic management approach for serrated tussock across the proposed Western Grassland Reserves (WGR).

The work has been commissioned by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), who is working on the Victorian Government's plan to reserve 15,000 hectares of land west of Melbourne to protect native grasslands.

The WGR and adjoining buffer zones are prone to serious weed issues and further information on their distribution and management will guide an integrated weed management approach within and surrounding the WGR.

Integrated weed management will help protect natural assets, restrict pathways of spread and contain the abundance of existing serrated tussock infestations within the Western Grassland Reserves and surrounding buffer zones.

Read more about the working party's involvement with the WGR on page 4.



PARTNERSHIPS AID TUSSOCK FIGHT IN WEST GIPPSLAND

Peter Steller — Community Representative
Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party

Several stakeholders are working together in West Gippsland to tackle serrated tussock.

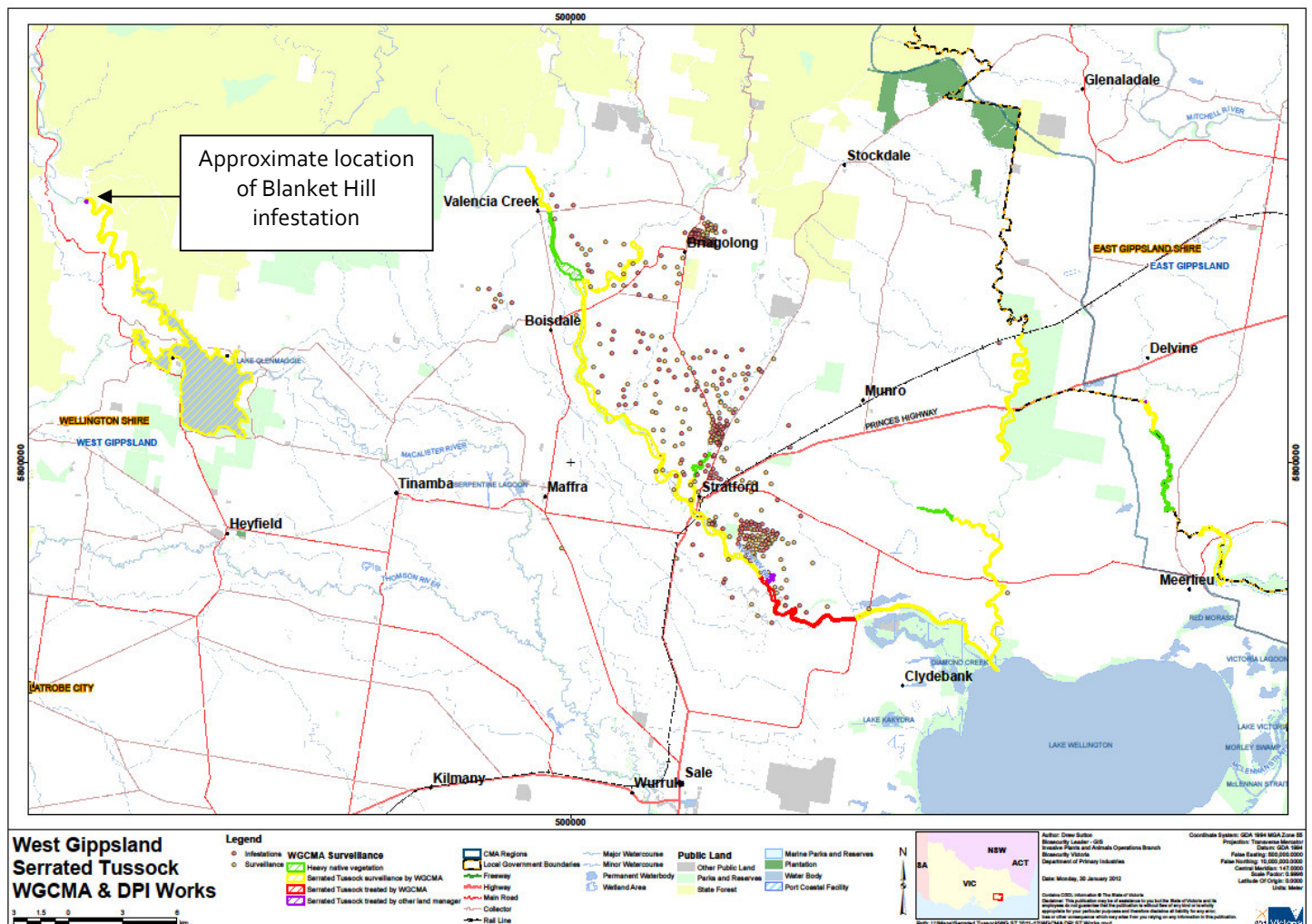
This insidious weed is not as prolific as in other areas of the state but currently affects a number of properties around the Briagolong, Stratford

and Seaspray areas.

A new infestation has recently been located at Blanket Hill, situated between Heyfield and Licola.

This small, recently discovered Blanket Hill infestation is an outlier as it situated 33 kilometres to the east of existing serrated tussock sites. Although cattle can access the steep hill side, the bushland area is not a place where stock have been unloaded or fed. This shows you can never be too sure where this invasive weed will show up next.

Continued page 3.



A map developed combining serrated tussock data from Department of Primary Industries and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. The dots indicate infestations and surveillance, yellow lines indicate serrated tussock surveillance by WGCMCA, thick red lines indicate serrated tussock treated by WGCMCA, and green lines indicate heavy native vegetation.

Source: DPI and WGCMCA

PARTNERSHIPS AID TUSSOCK FIGHT IN WEST GIPPSLAND

Continued

The weed was first detected in West Gippsland in the late 1960's, possibly transported by stock brought in to the area at an earlier time.

Although classed regionally controlled on the Victorian declared noxious weed list, this invasive plant is a high priority for the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in West Gippsland. The DPI is working successfully with landowners through its "Eye Spy" program to encourage landowners with serrated tussock on their property to increase their efforts in eradicating the weed.

The WGCMA has also secured three years of Regional Base Level Funding from Caring For Our Country (CFOC) to target serrated tussock. The three year project, worth \$120,000 per year, has a multi-pronged approach.



A young Gippslander helping in the fight against serrated tussock.

Combined with the DPI compliance program, the WGCMA is identifying and mapping riparian infestations of serrated tussock on several waterways. The Avon River, Tom's Creek, Blackall Creek, Freestone Creek, and Perry River are all being targeted. The WGCMA is then treating any serrated tussock infestations along these waterways. The authority advises neighbours of any riparian treatment and is also assisting landowners by running a series of trials, on private property, aimed at clarifying control methods and explaining best practice integrated management.

DPI FINDS SIGNIFICANT SERRATED TUSSOCK INFESTATION IN REDESDALE AREA

Surveillance efforts by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in the North Central catchment has located a large serrated tussock infestation.

The scattered satellite infestation over 80 hectares in the Redesdale area is a significant find by DPI staff.

Serrated tussock is not widespread throughout the North Central catchment and the department is already actively managing two further properties with significant infestations in the area of this new infestation as well as five smaller infestations on roadsides and private property.

The department is encouraging landowners in the Redesdale area to be vigilant and report any suspected infestations of this declared noxious weed.

The department will continue to work with the landowners in this area to ensure serrated tussock is controlled. Further surveillance efforts are planned for the properties surrounding the newly detected infestation.



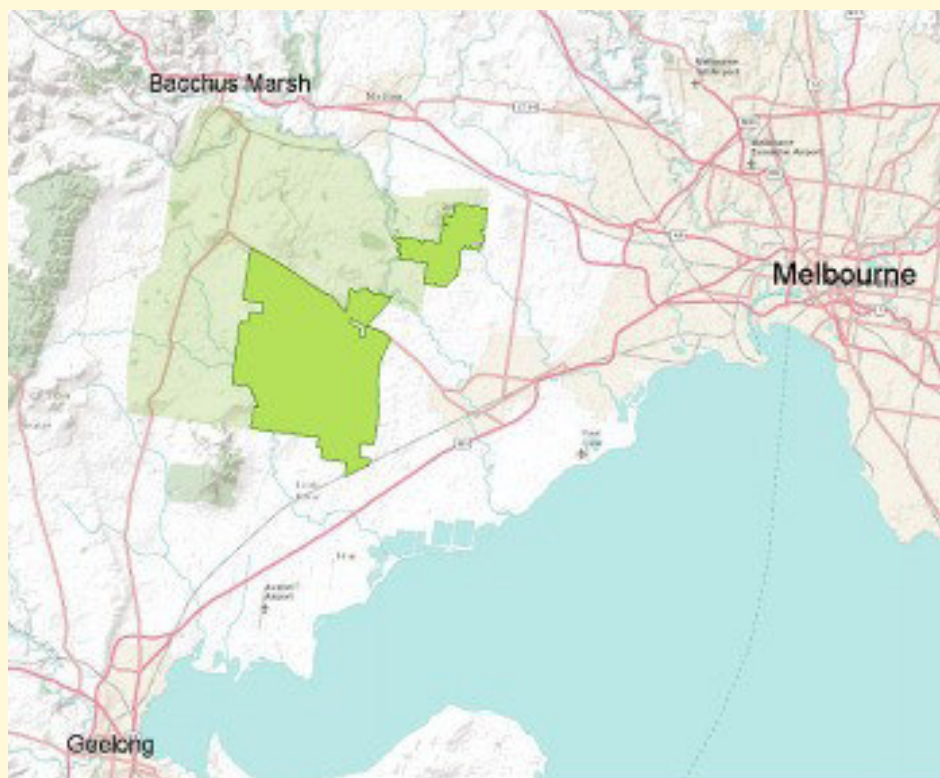
A new serrated tussock infestation has been found in the Redesdale area. Source: DPI

VSTWP PROVIDES STRATEGIC SERRATED TUSSOCK DIRECTION TO DSE

Continued

The VSTWP worked in partnership with the Western Melbourne Catchments Network to survey and collect data from the WGR and the adjoining buffer zones. Field survey data showed that serrated tussock is a significant issue within several management zones.

The data also showed that where an absence or reduction of serrated tussock exists, a strong presence of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) and Cane Needle Grass (*Nassella hyalina*) can be found. All three *Nassella* weed species pose significant threat to lowland grassland and grassy woodland areas within the WGR.



The proposed Western Grassland Reserves highlighted in solid green and the surrounding buffer zone (shaded green).

Source: VSTWP

The implementation plan involved the WGR and surrounding buffer zones being categorised into eight defined management zones based on current land use, density and distribution of serrated tussock, identified threats and potential risk.

The project also involves the facilitation of on ground works in 2012. Based on survey results, the initial phase of on-ground works targeted the western edge of the proposed WGR and immediate western buffer zone.

On-ground treatment works aim to protect high conservation value native grasslands and waterways whilst establishing relationships with landowners. The initial serrated tussock treatment applies a biosecurity approach by targeting areas of significant native grassland with low serrated tussock density to produce a higher return on investment.

The WGR will connect the You Yangs to the Werribee River across the Volcanic Plains. The reserves will cover two large areas: around Mt Cottrell, south east of Melton, and north of Little River, west of Werribee. They will cover a range of other habitat types including ephemeral wetlands, waterways, Red Gum swamps, rocky knolls and open grassy woodlands (fact sheet, DSE).

With the completed Serrated Tussock Implementation Plan for the proposed Western Grassland Reserves and buffer zone to be presented to DSE in January, the working party aims to liaise closely with DSE and continue to provide strategic direction for the management of serrated tussock over the coming years. Future integrated management and staged planning will be necessary to protect native grasslands in Melbourne's west.

COMMUNITY GROUPS TACKLE SERRATED TUSSOCK EDUCATION THANKS TO GRANTS

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Community Grants have closed and four community groups have been awarded funding towards serrated tussock focused projects.

The grants were open to community groups in the Corangamite and Port Phillip and Westernport catchments to deliver localised extension programs with the vision to increase voluntary management of serrated tussock on private land.

Rowsley Landcare Group, Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network, Lismore Land Protection Group, and the Geelong Landcare Network have all successfully been allocated funding for projects.

Projects range from one-on-one extension support to foster community led action, community information events, an educational field trip highlighting serrated tussock best practice management, and the production of a video to engage landowners who may not be able to attend other events.

We wish the groups involved the best of luck in delivering their projects and look forward to seeing the positive effect that these projects will bring to the effort of managing serrated tussock in their communities.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Community Grants were made possible through the support of Caring For Our Country Community Action Grants.

LANDCARE TARGETS TUSSOCK IN THE ROWSLEY VALLEY

By Roger MacRaid — Serrated Tussock Extension Officer

The Rowsley Landcare Group recently coordinated a helicopter aerial spray for the Rowsley Valley covering almost 400 hectares across 11 properties.

Several of these were smaller holdings under new ownership, and it is credit to these new landowners who recognise the importance of managing serrated tussock.

Work will continue in the new year and see this significant effort built on and reinforced.

The project will also be enhanced through coordination with Grow West Biolinks projects being run by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.



Aerial spraying of serrated tussock was recently completed in the Rowsley Valley.

Source: Roger MacRaid



EXTENSION OFFICER ROGER MACRAILD ON BOARD

Roger may look familiar to some as a previous Executive Officer of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP). He has continued his association with the VSTWP by supporting the working party's efforts towards community led action against serrated tussock as a Serrated Tussock Extension Officer. Roger is currently working in the Bamganie area to assist landowners manage serrated tussock. Read below to see the progress being made in this area.

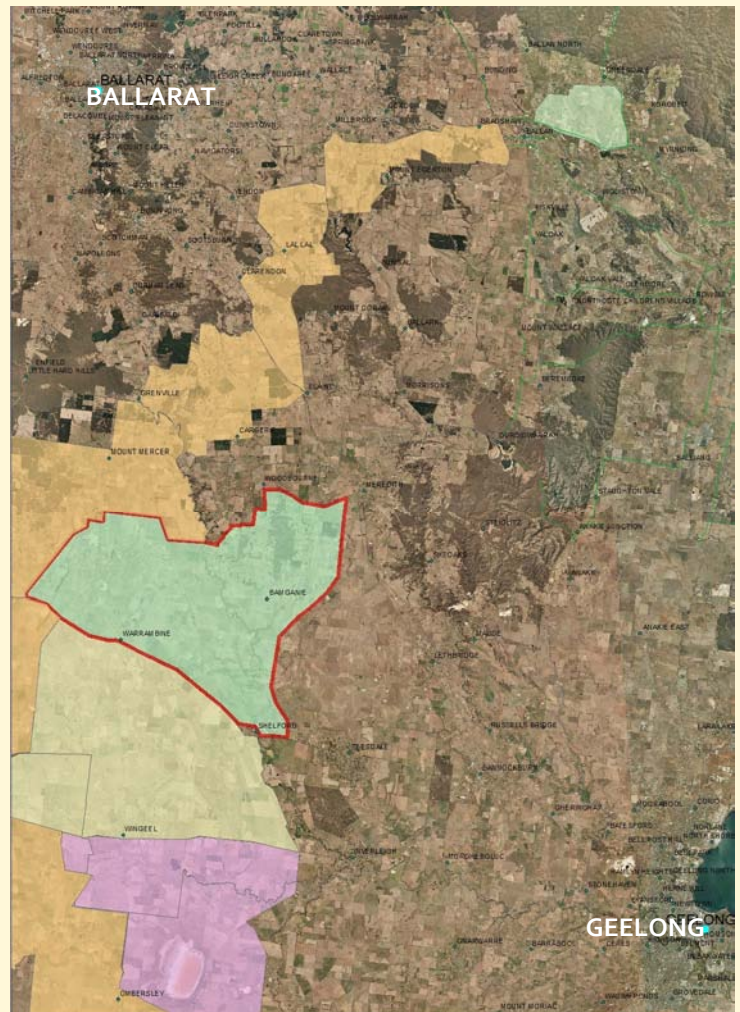
VSTWP FOCUSING ASSISTANCE IN BAMGANIE

It's crunch time for landowners in the Bamganie, Warrambine and Shelford areas, where infestation levels are low and a little effort can prevent a much bigger problem.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party is currently focussing extension activities in the area as it builds on previous extension work in the Wingeel and Barunah Plains areas and aligns with the DPI serrated tussock containment line.

Scattered serrated tussock plants are being found by extension officer Roger MacRaid as he visits properties. Many of these plants are already in full flower, so now is the last chance to get them before seed is set. Flowering heads appear at first to be the same as the seed heads, but closer inspection can show the flowering parts and no firm middle to the seed. So there is still time to stop a plant's seed impacting the rest of the property it is on, and the neighbours.

Roger is getting a good response from a community keen to protect its natural and agricultural assets. He has covered more than half the target area, with less than half of this infested and at very low levels.



The Bamganie Project area (green area within red outline) is the target of current VSTWP extension work. It follows on from previous extension work in Wingeel (pink) and Barunah Plains (yellow) areas. It aligns well with the DPI serrated tussock containment line (orange).
Source: VSTWP.

SUMMER SURVEILLANCE REAPS REWARDS FOR THE ALERT LANDOWNER

Summer is the critical time for serrated tussock seedling establishment and long term survival. Ensuring there is limited bare ground and strong competition for water and nutrients will result in the small, slow growing serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) plants having difficulty surviving past the seedling stage during these key summer and autumn periods.

Preventing seedling survival by minimising bare ground and increasing the level of desirable vegetation is an essential part of an integrated management plan for serrated tussock. Strong competition from desirable plant species is essential in inhibiting the initial establishment of new serrated tussock plants.

During summer, many grass species brown off, but serrated tussock remains green enabling them to be identified easier throughout the warmer months. Juvenile plants are generally a brighter green compared to adult plants, so looking out for these and removing them while young will prevent costly established infestations.

Good grazing management is necessary to maintain pasture cover and density to ensure effective competition against serrated tussock.

The density of the pasture is key. Ideally maintaining a ground cover of at least 90-100 per cent and a pasture density of 1200 kilograms dry matter per hectare (around 4 centimetres high) will help to reduce the establishment of serrated tussock from the soil seed bank and minimise the chance of new infestations developing from windblown seed.

Remember, serrated tussock management is an all-year-around effort and preventing the establishment of new plants is an important step in your serrated tussock integrated weed management plan.

Further information grazing management can be sought from an agronomist. Further information on serrated tussock control can be found in the National Best Practice Management Manual for Serrated Tussock. This can be downloaded from www.serratedtussock.com or by contacting Alison Head, Serrated Tussock Community Engagement Officer at alison.head@dpi.vic.gov.au



Serrated tussock seedlings are vulnerable to competition during the key summer and autumn months.

Source: Michael Micheltore

SERRATED TUSSOCK ESCAPES LOCK-UP

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has moved quickly to stop serrated tussock being sold to the public under a misleading label.

Twenty serrated tussock plants were seized from a community centre in metropolitan Melbourne being sold under the name *Carex*.

Further investigation by the DPI found that the plants were sourced from a Melbourne prison that was propagating the plants as part of a horticultural education program. The plants were donated to the community centre to sell. The department moved quickly to remove all the plants from trade prior to any being sold.

All parties involved in the propagation and sale of the serrated tussock have been cooperative and there was no evidence of any deliberate wrong doing. The prison, the community centre, and the educational institute providing the training have all worked with DPI to better understand their responsibilities under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

These organisations have also put in place positive measures to improve their programs to ensure a similar incident does not occur. The prison has ceased propagating its own plants and has developed a register of plants grown at the prison and where they are subsequently distributed. The prison has also expressed interest in developing a code of conduct for their operations.

The prison's community development program and the community centre have educated themselves on noxious weeds with assistance from DPI and all organisations will receive future contact and support from DPI.

For sightings of noxious weeds for sale, call DPI on 136 186.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party welcomes your contributions and feedback at any time.

For contributions, feedback or to be added to or removed from the mailing list, please contact:

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In our efforts to reduce the number of newsletters being printed if you currently receive a hardcopy of this newsletter but have access to email please send your email address to Alison .

More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website: www.serratedtussock.com or at DPI online: www.dpi.vic.gov.au or by contacting DPI on 136 186.

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