

Report to Mined Lands Rehabilitation Trust Fund Committee from West Coast Weed and Fire Management Group

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In 2005 the West Coast Weed and Fire Management Group (WCWFMG) received \$20,000 from the Mined Lands Rehabilitation Trust Fund to extend the implementation of the West Coast Weed and Fire Strategy (WCWFS). These funds were expended on a variety of projects and a range of sites throughout the West Coast municipality. Some of the funds were used to initiate or follow-up weed control on abandoned mine sites. Control of weeds on abandoned mine sites and other isolated infestations forms a component of the strategic based approach to weed control by WCWFMG. Targeting small and/or isolated infestations is a component of “Best Practice” weed management as detailed by the “Bradley Method”.

In the 2005/2006 financial year WCWFMG spent \$38,000 on follow-up gorse control on the Henty Main Road, \$5,500 on meri-crushing of gorse infestations around Zeehan that posed a fire risk to private residences, \$2,200 on a Conservation Volunteers of Australia team to assist community groups with ongoing environmental remediation programs, \$12,500 on weed control in the towns of Tullah and Rosebery, \$12,000 on chemicals, \$3,000 on miscellaneous projects including schools and community groups and \$14,000 on weeds present on abandoned mines and mineral leases and other priority isolated infestations (Table 1). This totals \$84,200, a significant investment and importantly stakeholders have committed to providing ongoing funds to ensure programs continue, weeds are eradicated from sites and thus public money is spent judiciously and efficiently.

WCWFMG is a recognised state leader in cooperative and coordinated weed management. In 2005 the West Coast Council received the LGAT Award for Excellence in Asset and Environmental Management for their involvement in the implementation of WCWFS. Seventeen articles have been published in the Advocate since September 2004 highlighting the efforts and progress of WCWFMG and their partners. Presentations on the programs and efficacy of WCWFMG have been given at the LGAT annual conference, the inaugural Tasmanian Weed Society Conference held in Launceston, and a paper and oral presentation on the gorse control programs of WCWFMG will be given at the 15th Australian Weeds Conference to be held in Adelaide in September 2006.

In addition to the on-ground weed control programs WCWFMG works proactively within the West Coast community and has undertaken and has ongoing projects and programs in place with Strahan Primary School, Rosebery District School, Queenstown Mountain Heights School, Zeehan Primary School and St. Joseph’s School Queenstown. WCWFMG also supports Trial Harbour Progress Association, Zeehan Landcare, Friends of the Wild West Coast, King River Action Group and Rosebery Development Commission in their ongoing weed control and environmental remediation projects.

Through involvement in WCWFMG MRT supports a vibrant, effective and efficient organisation making real inroads into weed incursions throughout the West Coast municipality in a strategic manner that supports regional, state and national weed management objectives. Additional funds are sought from the Mined Lands

Rehabilitation Trust Fund to follow up the works begun in 2005/2006 and to incorporate more sites into the control programs of WCWFMG.

Table 1: Works undertaken by WCWFMG on abandoned mines and mineral leases and priority, isolated infestations.

Site	Priorities	Targets	Time (hrs)
Argent	follow-up, small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears	6
Florence	follow-up, small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears	14.5
Zeehan-Queen	follow-up, small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears	5.5
Argent	mapping	Sprayed areas	2
Oceana	small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, blackberry, Elisha's tears	17.5
Track to Oceana	small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears, thistle, St.Johns Wort, rose	16.5
Austral Smelter	small isolated plants/patches	gorse, broom, blackberry	10.5
Florence & Zeehan-Queen	mapping	Sprayed areas	4.5
Dunkley's tramway	follow-up, small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears, St.Johns wort, thistles	23.5
Site adjacent to golf course	follow-up, small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, Elisha's tears, thistle	3
Grubb's tramway	small isolated plants/patches, boundary spraying	gorse, broom, blackberry, foxglove, fushia	27
Oceana & Austral Smelter	mapping	Sprayed areas	4.5

The following images show some of the results of the work by WCWFMG.



1. Cultural and historic assets are preserved and tourist amenity improved through the killing of weeds that overrun the site.

Dead gorse



2. After spraying gorse plants degrade and grass and other vegetation reclaims the site.

3. Gorse infestations along entrances to sites allow movement of seeds on vehicles. The entrance to the Austral Smelter site and the site itself has now been treated.



4. Similarly boundary spraying of the access track to the Oceana site prevents weed spread, improves amenity for people wishing the climb Mt. Zeehan and allows native vegetation to reclaim the site.



5. After two years of hard work rehabilitation of the Florence site is proceeding well.



6. Extensive infestations of gorse and broom have been treated and desirable vegetation is reclaiming the site.



7. Follow up however is still required.

Gorse plants

Gorse plant

Blackberry



Merri-crusher

The merri-crusher is a machine/attachment (for the tractor). It rips into the ground (to about 7.5-10 cm) with tines on a roller and is very effective at removing standing crops of gorse with little regrowth from the adult plants (seeds of course germinate — however this is good as follow up spraying will be undertaken and we've reduced the seed bank).



Before



After