



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 14

WEEDS MANAGEMENT

August 2015

1. OBJECTIVE

To provide direction and guidance for the management of weeds on lands and waters managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife (the department).

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to weed management programs undertaken on all department-managed lands and waters, and those lands for which the department has responsibility for the management of weeds (non-metropolitan, non-townsite unallocated Crown land (UCL) and unmanaged reserves (UMR)).

This policy is the responsibility of all departmental staff engaged in planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring or reviewing weed management activities on department-managed lands and waters, including staff employed in specialist branches and divisions. It also applies to contractors and other parties undertaking works on department-managed lands and waters.

3. CONTEXT

The department coordinates and implements weed management for a range of reasons including:

- to protect and maintain key environmental and other assets/values;
- as a good neighbour to adjoining landholders;
- to comply with required legislation and codes;
- to reduce the economic impacts of weeds; and
- to reduce the impact of weeds on opportunities for public use and enjoyment.

Weeds pose a serious threat to natural ecosystems and the native species they support. The presence of weeds may drive the loss of biodiversity through species competition and/or disruption to ecosystem processes. This is particularly relevant where the presence of weeds alters fire periodicity or intensity outside the natural limits of particular species. The presence of weeds may also impact on cultural, social, economic, scientific and aesthetic assets/values.

Management of weeds on department-managed lands, UCL and UMR, focuses on reducing the impacts of existing weed populations on key assets and values, whilst also preventing new incursions and eradicating new infestations (for example, on island reserves free of weeds), as cost-effectively as possible.

There are a number of pathways for weed spread both into and within Western Australia. These include human activities, both planned and unplanned, and by means

such as water, wind, and native and feral animals. Some of these pathways are more amenable to management intervention than others. Management measures may differ for different areas, circumstances and weed species, depending upon the potential impacts and feasibility of controlling introduction and spread. The department will prioritise its management efforts based primarily on species-led and asset-protection-led management programs to maximise effective use of available resources. In addition, priorities may also be determined as a response to community issues and legislative requirements, as appropriate.

This policy is consistent with Western Australia's State Weed Plan and the Australian Weeds Strategy.

Further background information and management principles that inform and support this policy are given in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 defines key terms.

4. LEGISLATION

The department has responsibilities for the conservation and protection of flora and fauna on all State lands and waters under the provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and throughout the State via the functions of the CEO under section 33(1)(d) of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act). For land managed under the CALM Act, these responsibilities are typically integrated into departmental activities through the management objectives of area management plans relating to the purpose(s) of the land (refer to sections 33(3)(a) and 56 of the CALM Act), or in cases where there is no management plan, as a necessary operation under section 33(3)(b) of the CALM Act.

The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) is responsible for administering the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act).

The intent of the BAM Act is to control the entry, establishment, spread and impact of organisms that have or may have an adverse effect on other organisms, human beings, the environment, agricultural activities, fishing or pearling activities, or related commercial activities. Under the BAM Act, the Minister for Agriculture may declare organisms as declared pests.

Plants can be categorised as *declared pests* under section 22 of the BAM Act¹, which binds the Crown and requires consultation between DAFWA and respective departments. The department acknowledges its responsibilities under the BAM Act and seeks to achieve the department's weed management objectives within the available resources. The department also acknowledges that it is unrealistic to expect all weeds to be fully controlled on, or eradicated from, department-managed lands and other lands for which the department has responsibility for the management of weeds.

5. POLICY

Consistent with broader departmental objectives and priorities, and within the resources available to it, the department will:

- 5.1 identify priority weeds for management action;
- 5.2 minimise the impacts of priority weeds on key environmental and other assets/values;

¹ Refer to the Western Australian Organism List maintained by DAFWA

- 5.3 minimise the risk of priority weed spread via high risk pathways, including roads and infrastructure corridors, and seek to identify and protect those areas currently free of priority and alert weeds;
- 5.4 minimise the influence of weeds on bushfire risk and the alteration of fire regimes, through hazard mitigation strategies;
- 5.5 evaluate opportunities to undertake post-fire weed control to facilitate native species regeneration in key areas;
- 5.6 minimise the spread of priority weeds present on department-managed lands to adjacent lands;
- 5.7 build capacity for effective management of priority weeds by integrating and coordinating control activities and develop partnerships with other agencies, landholders and key stakeholders where there are mutual benefits;
- 5.8 monitor, review and continuously improve the effectiveness of weed management programs; and
- 5.9 contribute to raising community and stakeholder awareness of the threat posed by weeds, and appropriate risk management strategies.

6. STANDARDS

This policy will be supported by a range of subsidiary and other documents, to be developed and/or revised, including:

- Management Guidelines;
- Standard Operating Procedures;
- relevant planning checklists;
- Management Plans;
- Threatened Species Recovery Plans; and
- Monitoring Protocols.

Staff will have regard for other departmental policies and Department of Health guidelines when conducting weed management programs.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To implement these policies the department will endeavour to:

7.1 Identify priority weed species and key assets/values at risk

- Develop, review and apply a prioritisation process that identifies and rates weed species based on potential impacts and invasiveness, and that considers legislative obligations, key environmental and other assets/values at risk, including threatened species and recovery programs, and feasibility of achieving eradication or control.
- Develop, maintain and apply surveillance and mapping/recording systems for monitoring priority weed status and management activities.
- Identify, and where possible, monitor other weed species present in Western Australia that have the potential for undesirable impacts (alert and sleeper species).

7.2 Weed management

- Develop and maintain plans, guidelines, standard operating procedures and protocols, informed by operational and research knowledge, to guide staff in prioritising the allocation of available resources.
- As appropriate, place conditions on approvals for planned disturbance operations to i) minimise the impacts of existing weed populations on key assets and values, ii) minimise the risk of introduction and spread of weeds, and if required, to iii) undertake weed management activities.
- Develop and review information on priority weeds including the identification, distribution, preventative hygiene and control methods, and as appropriate, make this available to relevant staff, contractors and stakeholders.

7.3 Training and certification

- Ensure relevant staff, contractors and partner organisations have the necessary knowledge, skills and certification to develop plans and undertake safe, effective and coordinated management of priority weeds.

7.4 Expertise and research

- Undertake and promote research into the identification, distribution, biology, ecology, impact and control of priority weeds.

7.5 Capacity building and consultation

- Build capacity for effective management of priority weeds by integrating and coordinating planning and control activities where landholders are most active and where combined efforts will have the greatest public benefit, and continue to develop partnerships in this regard.
- Cooperate with other relevant agencies to ensure requirements for notification of weed species are met, and as appropriate, participate in biosecurity and containment efforts.
- Liaise with relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate knowledge transfer, awareness raising and capacity building, for managing the spread of priority weeds.
- As appropriate, represent Western Australian weed issues to Commonwealth Government bodies such as the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee.

7.6 Improving performance

- Monitor, review and continuously improve the effectiveness and applicability of weed management techniques and strategies and implement adaptive management as required.

8. CUSTODIAN

The Director Forest and Ecosystem Management is accountable for the recording, storage, review and dissemination of this policy statement.

Responsibility for priority weed awareness-raising, training and the preparation of manuals and guidance notes rests with the Director Forest and Ecosystem Management, with assistance from Corporate Services and Regional and Fire Management Services Divisions.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy across the department's regional operations rests with the Director Regional and Fire Management Services.

The Director Forest and Ecosystem Management may establish groups involving representatives from relevant departmental divisions and others as required, to coordinate related activities, including implementation and review of this policy and related guidelines.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Weed, prioritisation, management, control, declared.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than 30 June 2019.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Jim Sharp
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 20 August 2015

POLICY BACKGROUND

1. BACKGROUND

The Department of Parks and Wildlife has statutory responsibilities that include managing weeds in the State's national parks and other reserves, which cover a total area of more than 27 million hectares. The department is also responsible for the management of weeds on a further 89.5 million hectares of non-metropolitan, non-townsite unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves.

The number of known weeds in Western Australia has been steadily increasing since European settlement, with over 1230 weed taxa (1210 species) currently recorded. Without active management of known spread pathways, this list may continue to grow and if key assets/values are not protected from priority weed threats, there is an increased risk of species extinction, disruption to ecosystem processes and adverse impacts on the unique character of many places treasured by the community.

2. MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In managing the threat of weeds to the State's biodiversity and other key assets/values on lands and waters it manages, the department considers the following principles:

- Weed management should be considered as an integral part of all land management.
- Prevention, early detection and eradication of new weeds are the most efficient and cost-effective means of minimising their impacts.
- Investment in weed control should be prioritised on key assets/values at risk, and consider the degree to which management can positively alter the condition of an asset/value and be successful in the longer-term, given the likely cost and techniques/resources available.
- Priorities for control rely on the provision of a clear definition of the problem and outcomes sought, i.e. specific impacts need to be identified so that the purpose of weed control is clear, and it is possible to judge success.
- The application of integrated weed management (where more than one control technique is used) may improve overall cost-effectiveness, and the likelihood that management will be successful.
- Decision making should be informed by operational and scientific knowledge, and control programs should be based on an adaptive management approach to ensure continuous development and improvement, based on a framework incorporating monitoring, evaluation, feedback and, as appropriate, change.
- Successful weed management typically requires a sustained, long-term commitment.
- Coordination between government agencies, industries and landholders is necessary to establish the requisite research, educational and legislative framework, and typically, cooperative arrangements for cross-tenure control programs are required for successful weed management.

GLOSSARY

In this policy:

Alert species means: a weed species that potentially has significant impacts and is:

- not found in Western Australia; or
- not found in a region of the department but is known to exist in an adjacent region; or
- found in the region but not on lands or waters managed by the department.

Asset means: an item of environmental, social, cultural or economic value to the community. Examples include:

- Environmental – flora, fauna, ecological communities;
- Social/Cultural – cultural heritage, recreational use of bushland, aesthetic beauty; and
- Economic – agricultural, horticultural and forest products.

Priority weed species means: weeds considered by the department to have the greatest impact on key assets/values, where management is feasible.

Sleeper species means: plants that have currently established only small localised populations, but have the potential to spread widely and affect agricultural or natural environments. Environmental damage and control costs can be minimised if these species are eradicated, where feasible, or contained before they become widespread or established.

Weeds are plants (not necessarily non-native) that grow in sites where they are not wanted and which have undesirable environmental or economic impacts, or both. Weeds can reduce biodiversity, or adversely affect the integrity, conservation value and processes of ecosystems. They do this by, among other things:

- successfully out-competing native species for available nutrients, water, space and sunlight;
- replacing the native plants that animals use for shelter, food and nesting;
- impacting on native plants or animals due to toxins or excluding animals from usual habitats because of thorns or other adverse habit;
- providing habitat for introduced animal pests; and
- altering fire regimes, potentially making fires more intense, and possibly altering their seasonality and frequency.