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## VSTWP welcomes new members

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) has welcomed its new members following their Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 29 July 2008.

The AGM gave landowners and key stakeholders the opportunity to learn of the key achievements of the VSTWP since its last AGM and to meet the Working Party members.

Key achievements of the VSTWP highlighted in the meeting were the success in allocating all available funds to the control of isolated infestations of serrated tussock in Victoria made available through the *Defeating the Weed Menace* Program, the installation of 19 serrated tussock signs in Victoria and the establishment of a

partnerships officer position which works with key stakeholders and undertakes extension activities.

The VSTWP also supports research into herbicide resistance and the development of the Serrated Tussock Best Practice Management Manual due to be released in September this year.

The VSTWP received many new nominations for community representatives and nominations from key stakeholders including the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA and Corangamite CMA.



The new VSTWP members. Back row (from left): Wendy Bitans, Graham Simpson, Peter Lindeman, Jim Seager, John Webb Ware, David Boyle, Justin Cook, Byron Crowe, Tim Knight. Bottom row (from left): Kate O'Bryan, Veronica Burgess, Chelsea Wardrope, Peter Bufton.

The Working Party welcomes its new members and congratulates Jim Seager on his appointment as Chair. Jim has been a member of the VSTWP for the past three years while operating his own agricultural consultancy business. He is a keen member of the East Moorabool Landcare Group, Moorabool Gorge Recovery Project and the National Serrated Tussock Management Group.

Jim says the new working party will continue to build partnerships with community groups and key stakeholders and drive community action in controlling the damage caused by serrated tussock within Victoria.

The VSTWP thanks its departing members for their contributions in the serrated tussock control program. Their input into the strategy “Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005 – 2010” was immensely appreciated and the working party wishes them well in their future endeavours.

To view detailed descriptions of the members of the VSTWP please visit [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com).

## VSTWP nominated for landcare award

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party was nominated to receive the ‘community group caring for private land’ award by the Department of Primary Industries.

The award ceremony was held at Zinc in Federation Square, Melbourne on Saturday the 6th September 2008 where successful nominees were presented with a certificate and \$400 to contribute towards achieving their objectives. Each successful nominee automatically qualifies as a nomination into the 2009 Victorian Landcare Awards.

The ceremony hosted by the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) featured Ian Hunter, A Wurundjeri Elder; Kerry Armstrong, Actress and Master of Ceremony; and Aaron Wood, 2007 Prime Ministers Environmentalist of the Year award winner. The VSTWP congratulates the other nominees for their valuable contributions to the environment and community.

## Agricultural consultant takes the serrated tussock Chair



*Jim Seager standing among native trees planted on non-arable land on a property in Moorabool, once densely infested with serrated tussock. The native trees were planted as a part of the Moorabool Gorge Recovery Project which reduces serrated tussock infestations.*

Moorabool agricultural consultant Jim Seager has recently been elected as Chair of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, the incorporated group responsible for overseeing serrated tussock control in Victoria.

A community representative since 2005, Mr Seager was elected at the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party’s 2008 Annual General Meeting and will play a key role in driving community action to control the damage caused by serrated tussock within Victoria.

Serrated tussock is an invasive plant threatening environmental and agricultural values. It is estimated that serrated tussock costs the Australian economy \$4 billion in lost production each year.

In Victoria, serrated tussock has infested over 82,000 hectares, and has the potential to spread further, with each plant producing 100,000 seeds per year between October and January.

Mr Seager admits that he did not know what serrated tussock was when he moved to Moorabool in 1991. Originally from Kangaroo Island in South Australia, he moved to Victoria in 1983, completing his Associate Diploma in Farm Management in 1985 at Marcus Oldham College in Geelong.

Mr Seager has since seen his fair share of serrated tussock, managing the 1700 acre “Emly Park” property in Moorabool from 1991 to 2007, where he significantly reduced the property’s serrated tussock infestation.

He said they were successful at containing serrated tussock on the property’s arable and non-arable

land using integrated control techniques of boom spraying and revegetation with perennial pastures on the arable land, and aerial spraying and revegetation with trees on the non-arable land.

“Moorabool Shire landholders have been engaged in a constant battle to control serrated tussock,” Mr Seager said.

“The region’s steep non-arable terrain creates a wind tunnel for serrated tussock seed spread. However, landholders should not despair. It is not impossible to control serrated tussock on non-arable land.

“Effective long-term control involves neighbours working together. This is the only way to effectively minimise seed spread.

“Long-term management plans that incorporate integrated control techniques are the most effective. Landholders who have used native trees and perennial pastures to out-compete serrated tussock have been the most successful in achieving long-term serrated tussock control.” Mr Seager has demonstrated his commitment to improving the condition of land and waterways in the Moorabool Shire over the past 17 years.

He has excelled in land management practices achieving the Weekly Times farm business award for Beef Producer of the Year in 2005. Currently member of the steering committee for the Moorabool Gorge Recovery Project, chair of the Moorabool Landcare Advisory Committee, a member of the National Serrated Tussock Management Group, recent Chair of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and starting his own business, Jim Seager Agricultural Consultant, in February this year.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party works in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver the outcomes of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy “Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005 – 2010.”

Mr Seager said he will ensure the VSTWP continues to build strong partnerships with community groups and key stakeholders.

“This is essential to bring about serrated tussock control in Victoria.”

For more information on serrated tussock please visit [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) or contact Chelsea Wardrope from the Department of Primary Industries on (03) 5226 4680.

Jim Seager standing among native trees planted on non-arable land on a property in Moorabool, once densely infested with serrated tussock. The native trees were planted as a part of the Moorabool Gorge Recovery Project which reduces serrated tussock infestations.

## High risk weed found

By Brendan Roughead

Two retailers have been confirmed as selling the State Prohibited Weed Mexican feather grass in Victoria.

Mexican feather grass, was first discovered by an alert DPI Weed Officer in a Big W outlet earlier this year. Plants suspected of being Mexican feather grass, also known as Texas tussock, were also located in a number of Bunnings outlets across Victoria.



*State Prohibited Weed, Mexican Feather Grass was sold in pots at some of Victorias largest retailers.*

An Incident Management Team was set up in Bacchus Marsh to manage the weed incursion. As of September 180 wholesale and retail plant traders had been inspected with 2,208 plants seized from 31 different traders. All suspect plants seized as a result of plant trader inspections are being securely stored and maintained to ensure they reach maturity and flower so that they can be positively identified.

There was an immediate withdrawal of suspect plants from shelves and an in depth investigation followed as feather grass plant specimens needed to grow on to the flowering stage before positive identification could be confirmed.

As positive identification of ornamental grass species can be difficult. DPI is also actively investigating the use of DNA analysis to assist in the expedient identification of suspect plants seized from plant traders.

Mexican feather grass is closely related to serrated tussock, one of Australia’s worst agricultural weeds, but is less palatable and has the potential to infest a larger range across Australia than the widespread established weed.

Anyone who has purchased from Bunnings one of the plants in individual pots labelled ‘Regal



Sensations. STIPA CAPILATTA' or a grass sold as part of a group of plants in an ornamental display in a ceramic tea cup and saucer or an imitation terracotta pot return it to a Bunnings store for a full refund or call DPI on 136 186.

For more information contact Sarah Partington, DPI Bacchus Marsh on (03) 5366 0034.

## Serrated tussock has been reclassified in Corangamite

Serrated tussock has been reclassified from a Regionally Prohibited Weed to a Regionally Controlled Weed in the Corangamite Catchment following an extensive review under the Noxious Weed Review process.

The DPI prioritises its response to invasive plants applying a biosecurity approach consistent with the Australian Weeds Strategy. This approach aims to prevent the introduction of new high risk weeds into Victoria and to eradicate the most serious incursions. Underpinning this approach is the Noxious Weeds Review process that scientifically reviews evidence to objectively rank species based on their risk to Victoria.

The Noxious Weed Review was driven by Catchment Management Authorities and included a community engagement phase to allow community and local government participation in the process.

The State Government is committed to providing support to enable local government's to meet their responsibility to manage roadside weeds. The Victorian Government has allocated \$20 million to land and water management which applies to roadsides, through its \$205 million Future Farming Strategy.

The decision to reclassify serrated tussock was supported with evidence that it was no longer suitable to be classed as a Regionally Prohibited Weed which states: "Declared noxious weeds that are not widely distributed across Victoria, but are capable of spreading further, it is reasonable to expect that they can be eradicated from region, Private landholders are responsible for control on private land."

Serrated tussock is widely distributed throughout the Corangamite Catchment. The term 'control'

rather than 'eradicate' is a more suitable because of the characteristics of the plant's durability. Its seeds stay viable in the soil for up to 10 years. It has therefore been reclassified as a Regionally Controlled Weed. A Regionally Controlled Weed is: "widespread and established in a region, landholders have the responsibility to take all reasonable steps to control and prevent the spread of these weeds on their land."

With respect to Regionally Prohibited and Regionally Controlled Weeds, the responsibility of serrated tussock roadside management in Corangamite resides with the local government authorities which are currently responsible for the management of these roads.

The DPI emphasises that the reclassification of serrated tussock does not affect its importance or the serrated tussock program in Victoria but rather classifies it into a more relevant category where it can be more appropriately managed.

Serrated tussock as a Regionally Controlled Weed in Corangamite joins fellow catchments, Port Phillip and Westernport and West Gippsland. Serrated tussock remains a Regionally Prohibited Weed in the Mallee, North Central, Goulburn Broken, North East, Glenelg Hopkins and East Gippsland catchments.

## Surf Coast field day left neighbours talking

A serrated tussock field day on a private property in the Surf Coast Shire on Sunday the 20 July 2008 left neighbours talking about how to prevent serrated tussock from entering their property.

The day provided landowners with valuable advice that will ensure the invasive plant does not invade their property and reduce productivity.

DPI Serrated Tussock Partnerships Officer Chelsea Wardrope said the day was very successful.

"We were able to teach landowners valuable identification skills and provide information on prevention and control techniques for serrated tussock," Chelsea said.

"The field day also brought neighbours together, some of which had never met one another, to discuss serrated tussock control in their area.

"The roll test proved to be a popular method



*The Surf Coast field day developed land owners skills in identification of serrated tussock and gave information on prevention and control techniques.*

of identification among the Surf Coast landowners. When serrated tussock is rolled between the thumb and index finger it rolls smoothly like a needle, when the similar looking native tussock, *Poa labillardieri*, is rolled it feels as though it has flat edges.”

Surf Coast landowners will now be able to incorporate serrated tussock control into their long term management plans and minimise the number of flowering plants before they set seed from October through to January. Each mature plant will produce over 100,000 seeds annually.

The support of presenters Greg John from the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network, Craig Clutterbuck and Chelsea Wardrope from the DPI and the VSTWP made the day possible.

To organise a free field day in your area please contact Chelsea Wardrope on (03) 5226 4680 or email [Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au)

The Surf Coast field day developed land owners skills in identification of serrated tussock and gave information on prevention and control techniques.

## 2007 progress report highlights VSTWP success in serrated tussock management

The 2007 Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) Progress Report highlights the working party’s success in serrated tussock management in Victoria.

The progress report describes the key achievements of the VSTWP in 2006/2007, including the isolated infestation grants made available through the Defeating the Weeds

Menace Program, Local and State Government Programs by catchment, the Mobile Compliance Taskforce, the Moorabool Gorge Recovery Project, Grow West Program, the establishment of a partnerships officer position and current research supported by the working party.

The progress report is available on the VSTWP website: [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com).

## National Serrated Tussock Management Group takes a trip to Tassie

The National Serrated Tussock Management Group (NSTMG) met in Hobart, Tasmania on the 15 and 16 July 2008 to discuss national serrated tussock management.

The two-day meeting invited representatives from Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, where serrated tussock occurs, to discuss current serrated issues in the three states and share information on management practices, research, the importance of developing partnerships and approaches to community engagement.

Byron Crowe, Victorian Serrated Tussock Project Coordinator from the DPI says the three states have varying degrees of serrated tussock infestations.

“The national meeting was a valuable opportunity to share management practices and discuss our programs,” Byron said.

“The Victorian program has a Partnerships Officer, Chelsea Wardrope, who attended the national meeting to present the effective partnerships that have developed in Victoria as an example of what could be done on a national scale.”

The National Serrated Tussock Management Group will meet again in the coming months to continue to improve serrated tussock management nationally.

## Corangamite compliance operation inspected 75 properties

In early August eight DPI staff inspected 75 properties in the Corangamite and Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment over four busy days.

DPI staff inspected properties in Little River, Balliang, Maude, Meredith, Steiglitz, Stonehaven and Inverleigh

Of the 75 properties inspected, 32 were issued with Directions Notices and one with a Land Management Notice. Follow-up inspections will be completed on the properties involved in the operation in early October. Any properties failing to comply with the Direction Notices will be interviewed and penalties applied.

It was found during these recent inspections that farmers close to the core infestation area have a higher awareness of serrated tussock and the issues related to it. With continued programs and compliance by landowners serrated tussock can be controlled.

Many thanks go to the officers from the two catchments for their assistance in the operation.

Corangamite officers joined forces with the Port Phillip team on the 1st of September to assist with final inspections for the serrated tussock compliance operation in the shires of Melton, Wyndham and Hume. This operation involved four teams of two which inspected approximately 60 properties under notice to control serrated tussock.

## New serrated tussock rural extension officer

Tim Stuckey of Geelong has joined the serrated tussock team in the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment as the new serrated tussock rural extension officer.

Tim has recently completed a Bachelor of Environmental Science at Deakin University in Warrnambool and is looking forward to working with local government and landowners of the Port Phillip Catchment to raise awareness and promote the control of serrated tussock.

Tim has replaced Roger MacRaild who will remain working for the DPI at the Bacchus Marsh office as a Weed Alert Contact Officer. The VSTWP thanks Roger for his efforts in raising awareness of serrated tussock and wishes him well in his future endeavours.

Tim can be contacted on (03) 5366 0022 or email [tim.stuckey@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:tim.stuckey@dpi.vic.gov.au).

## NASTI group strengthen their attack on serrated tussock

The Northern Alliance Serrated Tussock Initiative (NASTI) group met for the third time on the 26 August 2008 to discuss serrated tussock control in the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment and the installation of new serrated tussock signs.

The NASTI formed in April 2008, with environmental officers from Hume, Nillumbik, Macedon, Mitchell, and Whittlesea municipalities, DPI staff and a representative from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

Chelsea Wardrope from the DPI says the partnerships formed through the group, and the results they have produced, demonstrate how working together strengthens our attack on serrated tussock.

“There may be value in mimicking this model in other areas across the state,,” Chelsea said.

The NASTI group meet bi-monthly to discuss serrated tussock extension activities and opportunities to raise awareness in the community. They are currently in the initial stages of installing new serrated tussock signs in the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment.

For more information please contact Chelsea Wardrope on (03) 5226 4680 or email [chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au)

## High uptake of Isolated Infestation grants have meant an early closure

The Serrated Tussock Isolated Infestation grants made possible through the *Defeating the Weed Menace* Program has finished earlier than expected due to an increase in landowners applying for funds.

The aim of the program is to achieve rapid and long-term control of isolated serrated tussock infestations in Victoria and replace it with appropriate local vegetation. The funds provided an opportunity for community groups such as Landcare and private landowners with isolated infestations of serrated tussock to implement long-term management plans using



native species as a replacement strategy.

The DPI in partnership with the VSTWP secured a \$365,000 federal grant through the Defeating the Weed Menace Program to be delivered over three years. All funds have now been distributed throughout nine catchments in Victoria.

The funds were made available through the Defeating the Weed Menace Program, a \$44.4 million federal government initiative over four years, which identifies Australia's most threatening weeds and implements management measures which include on ground control works and research.

The isolated infestation grants have enabled the VSTWP to deliver the key outcomes of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy, 'Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005 – 2010.'

## Serrated Tussock Isolated Infestation Grants have proved to be a success

A landowner in the East Gippsland Catchment secured almost \$34,000 funding through the Defeating the Weed Menace Program to implement long-term management plans for serrated tussock on their Forge Creek property.

Brett and Jackie have been battling serrated tussock on their 103 hectare property, 15 kilometres from Bairnsdale. The \$34,000 has contributed to dividing their property into 10 hectare paddocks which they are planning to cultivate, then sow down two annual pastures, before sowing a perennial pasture to manage serrated tussock.

Brett and Jackie said: "Cultivation works for us because it ensures 100 per cent kill and is relatively cost effective. We spot spray some areas which are unable to be cultivated regularly."

The funding enabled Brett and Jackie to bring forward some of their long-term cultivation works which otherwise would not have happened so quickly. They recognise the benefit in cultivation to eradicate serrated tussock to increase productivity, improve soil structure and increase the value of their land.

Brett and Jackie along with other landowners involved in the Isolated Infestation Program are

grateful for the opportunity to improve their land by reducing serrated tussock infestations.



*Pierrepoint Hill: A site of wind blown tussock to other properties in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment.*



*A property in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment that was once almost 100 per cent covered in serrated tussock. Now only a few plants remain.*



*A Wimmera property that was once densely infested with serrated tussock. The area was fenced and work was completed with the help of an Ararat prison crew. The area is now completely tussock free.*



*An old quarry site in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment treated for serrated tussock. This quarry is thought to have been where the initial source of serrated tussock came from in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment.*

## Funding opportunities

### Melbourne Water and the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA community grants

Melbourne Water and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA) have three community grants available to incorporated community groups and organisations that are implementing actions to address priority issues of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and the Regional River Health Strategy (RRHS) on both private and public land.

The three types of grants being offered are:

- Group Support Grants – a \$300 grant is available to provide general administrative assistance to community groups engaged in delivering the RCS and/or RRHS.
- Group Promotion and Development Grants – up to \$500 is available to support community groups to increase participation, raise public awareness, undertake training and/or educate the community about their programs.
- Project grants – up to \$20,000 is available to Landcare groups, community groups, public land managers and other organisations to support the implementation of projects that address natural resource management issues.

Applications close at 5pm on Monday 6 October 2008.

For further information please visit <http://grants.melbournewater.com.au>

For assistance with grant applications please contact Chelsea Wardrope, Serrated Tussock Partnerships Officer on (03) 5226 4680.

## Contributions and feedback

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

Contributions to this newsletter or any feedback are welcome to:

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More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) or [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)

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