

Roadside Weeds and Pests Program Control Plan 2023-2026

1: Council Name: Macedon Ranges Shire Council

2: Contact Details:

Name: Joshua Gomez

Position: Roadside Conservation Officer

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3: Regional context of noxious weed and pest animal management:

Outline the regional perspective by briefly provide a summary of noxious weed and pest animal management on council managed roadsides in your municipality.

The Macedon Ranges is approximately one hour north of Melbourne. Private rural land covers around 132,500ha or 75% of the Macedon Ranges Shire and the Farming Zone covers 85,000 hectares or 49% of the Shire. Macedon Ranges' rural areas are attracting increasing visitor numbers, and people seeking a rural lifestyle. Low density settlements surround the rural townships of Romsey, Lancefield, Macedon and Mount Macedon and urban settlements in the major regional centres of Kyneton, Woodend and Gisborne. Agricultural enterprises are a mix of wineries, graziers and specialised gourmet food production.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is responsible for the management of approximately 1700km of local road network. Council is dedicated to managing weed infestations on council managed land and is committed to the early prevention and control of weed species newly identified in the area.

The highest priority is given to significant landscapes, biodiversity, the environment and water catchments and protecting life and property from bushfire. Our priorities for weed control may change as woody weed loads decrease across the shire as a result of effective management. Last year we were able to treat approximately 231 roadsides as part the annual roadside weed program. With funding from RWPP, approximately 47 roadsides were allocated for treatment across about 20 townships of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Noxious weeds including Gorse, Blackberry and Broom were treated predominantly as part of a woody weeds program. This year our weed treatments also treated environmental weeds; Wild Watsonia, Blue Bell Creeper and Pine saplings. Additionally, 78 known populations of Chilean Needle Grass and populations of Serrated Tussock infestations were monitored for re-infestation. Our program also treats Texas Needle Grass as we have identified infestations in Malmsbury.

We continue to work closely with the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and are currently working to assist in a survey program in conjunction with Mitchell Shire.

We have been working with a software development company (Angularis PTY LTD) to help develop a weed management application called OpenRoads. OpenRoads is a comprehensive land management tool that simplifies the process of managing land assets. With OpenRoad, Council will be able to organize and assess their land assets, group them by asset type, and conduct audits of vegetation, pests, and assets. Council is in the trial period of the development of the application and results so far are successful.

With this tool we hope to utilise efficient collection of data, management of contractors and accurate weed mapping, for more effective roadside weed management.

Council's roadside pest animal program focuses on removing pest harbour and community education for landholders, especially those adjacent to high conservation roadsides.

4: Community Consultation:

Briefly describe how council stays informed of community priorities for weed and rabbit management. Examples may include public meetings, feedback/comment via council website, meetings with relevant groups, recording of correspondence.

It is expected that prior to drafting the plan, council will have notified the community that a plan is to be prepared and views are invited on what the plan should address. Views from the community should be considered.

The Macedon Ranges Shire Council Roadside Conservation Officer remains in close contact with the local community through various modes of engagement, including phone calls, emails and Council's Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS). Throughout the year, Council conducts workshops, events and online forums to inform and educate community members on best practice of pest animal and weed management. Council's environment webpage also helps to inform response to community concerns via received feedback and comments.

As part of our pest weed and animal program, we also held two rabbit control community workshops with VRAN to address the issues of invasive pest rabbits and learn more about methods of control and integrated pest management. Over 80 attendees came to our events, with community members from the Macedon Ranges Shire and people from the Bendigo shire.

Council engages community groups in local roadside restoration projects and support revegetation initiatives by land owners and community groups on low conservation roadsides reserves through an Environmental activity on roadsides approval process.

Council's annual Landcare and Friends grant program includes an opportunity for groups to nominate roadsides for treatment.

The development of the plan is the result of consultation prior to the adoption of the Roadside Conservation Management Plan in November 2021. The Plan aims to protect important ecological values found within the road reserve whilst ensuring appropriate fire risk mitigation and maintenance of road safety.

Some of the actions as a result of the consultation included;

- implement vehicle hygiene to minimise the spread of weed seed
- undertake weed audits or an 'inventory' with the assistance of Landcare groups, engage community to treat their property when roadside weed spraying occurs
- Development of a new roadside ecological and cultural burn program
- Expansion of the strategic weed program.

5: Stakeholder Consultation:

List key stakeholders who have been consulted in the development of this plan.

The Roadside Conservation Officer consults with stakeholders on a regular basis through in-person and online meetings, via phone and emails correspondence to gain feedback, advice and information to address areas of concern and build relationships for better outcomes in effective weed and pest animal management.

The list of stakeholders include:

- CFA
- VicRoads
- VicTrack
- Powercor
- Parks Vic
- Landcare and friends groups

- Weed and pest animal contractors
- Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party
- Victorian Rabbit Action Network
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council staff
- Adjoining LGA's
- Angularis Pty Ltd

6: Relevant Policies, Strategies and Submissions:

List policies, strategies, and submissions relevant to this plan (State, regional, and local).

- Weed and Pest Animal Strategy 2014;
- Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2021;
- Biodiversity Strategy 2018 & Environment Strategy.
- Road Management Act 2004
- Catchment and Land Protection Act (1994)

7: Objectives of the Plan:

Provide a general overview of council's objectives, activities, outputs and expected outcomes, ensuring that investment of RWPP funds will be aligned to:

- **treating 'regionally prohibited weeds' on municipal rural roadsides;**
- **controlling and preventing the spread of 'regionally controlled weeds' and the control of rabbits on municipal rural roadsides that align with DJPR compliance project areas and/or support community-led weed and pest control activities;**
- **follow-up treatment works for projects funded in councils' previous roadside weeds and pest control plans;**
- **control activities for 'regionally controlled weeds' and rabbits on municipal rural roadsides that support other investment for integrated landscape protection projects or address community concerns.**
- **control activities for 'restricted weeds' on municipal rural roadsides where there has been demonstrated widespread community concern;**
- **undertaking planning, mapping, and community consultation for the control of 'regionally prohibited weeds', 'regionally controlled weeds' and 'restricted weeds'**

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is responsible for conducting pest animal and weed control across approximately 3000 ha of Council managed roadsides across the shire. Council also works with landowners and the community with the aim of achieving integrated, landscape scale outcomes.

Council meets its legal obligations for pest animal and plant management as specified under the CaLP Act, while maximising resource efficiency. All the named weeds in this funding agreement are either listed as Regionally Controlled or Restricted in at least one of the catchments found in the shire.

Any new sites identified by Council staff or the community are mapped and assessed for the weed species present, current weed coverage and the recommended treatment required. Prioritised roadsides containing these weeds are treated with herbicide which contains active ingredient Triclopyr by contractors using a quick spray unit. Many roadsides within the shire are identified as having high quality native vegetation. This information is fed into our prioritisation process which assists us in determining the sites that will receive the funding.

Chilean needle grass is also considered a priority given the threat this weed poses to conservation and agricultural land. Our Nassella Program actively treats Council managed roadsides and reserves with the aim of minimising any further spread of serrated tussock and Chilean needle grass throughout the shire. This is done in conjunction with our roadside slashing program.

The roadsides weeds and pest program funding allows Macedon Ranges Shire Council to reduce the threat of weeds and pest animals with;

- Treatment of roadsides for regionally controlled and prohibited woody weeds (Blackberry, Gorse, Broom, Briar Rose)
- A dedicated Nassella program to control invasive Nassella species on roadsides (Serrated Tussock, Chilean Needle Grass, Texas Needle Grass);
- Environmental weeds which threaten the biodiversity of high and medium conservation value roadsides
- Protecting areas with significant or threatened flora and fauna;
- Addressing other roadside declared noxious weed infestations to address concern from local community
- Meeting our legal obligations
- Contributing to fire hazard reduction efforts
- Supporting community-led projects and responding to community priorities;
- Protecting adjoining sites of high conservation value;
- Minimising harbour for pest animals;
- Minimise the spread of pest animals to high value agricultural or environmental assets;
- Support community and stakeholder actions to manage non-declared pests.

Extreme weather and climate change has played a significant role in the presence and spread of new and emerging weeds that can threaten native biodiversity.

The threat of new and emerging weeds is an ever-growing concern in the Macedon Ranges and a strategic approach to eradicate or contain invasive weeds needs to be taken. Tailored strategies, including community involvement, early detection and monitoring aligns with the principles of environmental conservation and sustainable land management.

After internal consultation and consultation with neighbouring council shire, Council has identified the following invasive weeds that could require increased management in the next few years. While these weeds are not included in the target species list in section 10, it is expected that council resources may be required to ensure these new and emerging weeds are controlled.

Common Name	Scientific name
Texas Needle Grass	<i>Nassella leucotricha</i>
Espartillo – Broad Kernel	<i>Amelichloa caudata</i>
Jointed rush	<i>Juncus articulatus</i>
Sheep sorrel	<i>Acetosella vulgaris</i> Fourr
Wild teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>
Arum lily	<i>Zantedeschia aethiopica</i>
Japanese honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>
Drain Flat-sedge	<i>Cyperus eragrostis</i>
Athel pine	<i>Tamarix aphylla</i>
Pampas grass	<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>
Common Thorn apple	<i>Datura stramonium</i>
Narrow leaf cotton bush	<i>Gomphocarpus fruticosus</i>
Narrow Leaved Water Plantain	<i>Alisma lanceolatum</i>
Ovens wattle	<i>Acacia pravissima</i>
Sallow wattle	<i>Acacia longifolia</i>

Cootamundra wattle	<i>Acacia baileyana</i>
South African weed orchid	<i>Disa bracteata</i>
Giant Willow herb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>

8: Term of the Plan:

The plan will run for a maximum three year period to 30 June 2026.

9: Full time equivalent (FTE) resourcing:

Provide an estimate of the full time equivalent (FTE) number of staff and contractors who will be working on achieving control plan outcomes. Include both office and field based staff and contractors.

Roadside Conservation Officer – 1 FTE

10: Target Species:

List the species that will be targeted during the duration of this control plan; eg.

Serrated tussock *Nassella trichotoma* Regionally Prohibited Weed 1 To support Agriculture Victoria compliance programs

Common Name	Scientific Name	CaLP Act Classification	Priority Rating 1 highest - 4 lowest	Reason for Management
Serrated Tussock	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>	Prohibited, Controlled	1	Declared noxious weed
Chilean Needle Grass	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>	Restricted	2	Declared noxious weed
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i> L.	Controlled	1	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> L. agg.	Controlled	1	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy
Cape Broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>	Restricted, Controlled	2	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy
English Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i> (L.)	Restricted, Controlled	2	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy

Sweet Briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Regionally Controlled, Controlled Weed	2	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium Vulgare</i>	Regionally Controlled	2	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy
Wild Watsonia	<i>Watsonia meriana</i> var. <i>bulbilifera</i>	Restricted, Controlled	2	Declared noxious weed, threat to the environment and economy

11: Control Measures and Target Roadsides:

List the control measures and target roadsides; eg.

Serrated tussock *Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label* *Smith Road, Smithville* *5km* *Feb – Oct*

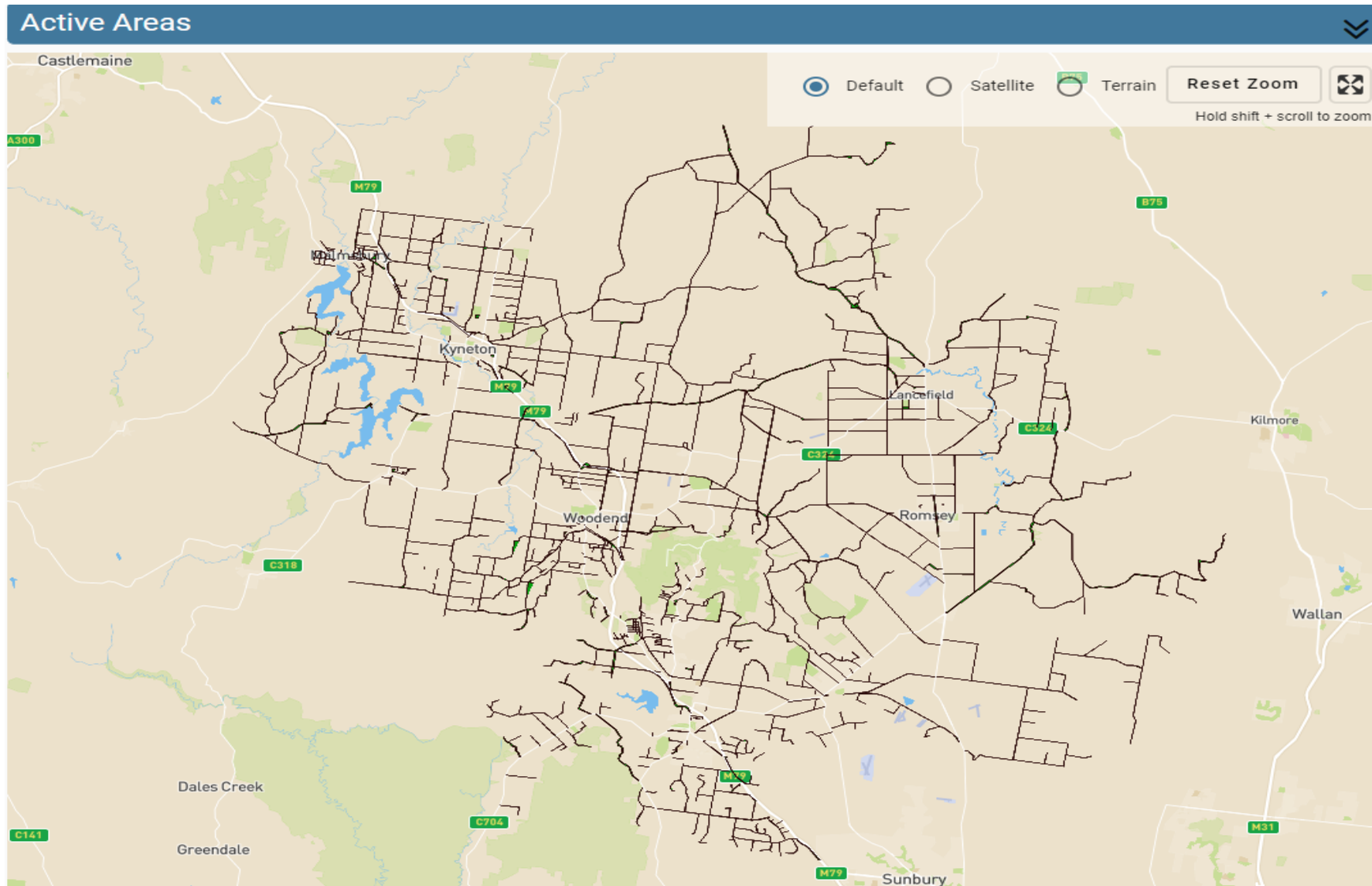
Common Name	Control Measures	Location of Proposed Works	Estimated Length of Roadside to be Treated Annually	Approximate Annual Timing of Treatment
	To be based on accepted best practice management of the target species	Location of proposed works should be specified, and a map where possible should accompany the plan	Km = length of road along which both sides are treated. Where only one side is treated halve the figure	
Serrated Tussock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Manual removal of isolated plants 	Refer to map	5 kms	October - December
Chilean Needle Grass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Manual removal of isolated plants 	Refer to map	10 kms	October - December
Broom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label 	Refer to map	100 kms	November -March

Gorse	- Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label	Refer to map	100 kms	November -March
Blackberry	- Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label	Refer to map	100 kms	November -March
Texas Needle Grass	- Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label Manual removal of isolated plants	Refer to map	2 kms	October-December
Sweet Briar	- Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label	Refer to map	10 kms	November -March
Wild Watsonia	- Spot spray application of a registered herbicide in accordance with the product label. Manual removal of isolated plants	Refer to map	5 kms	October-December

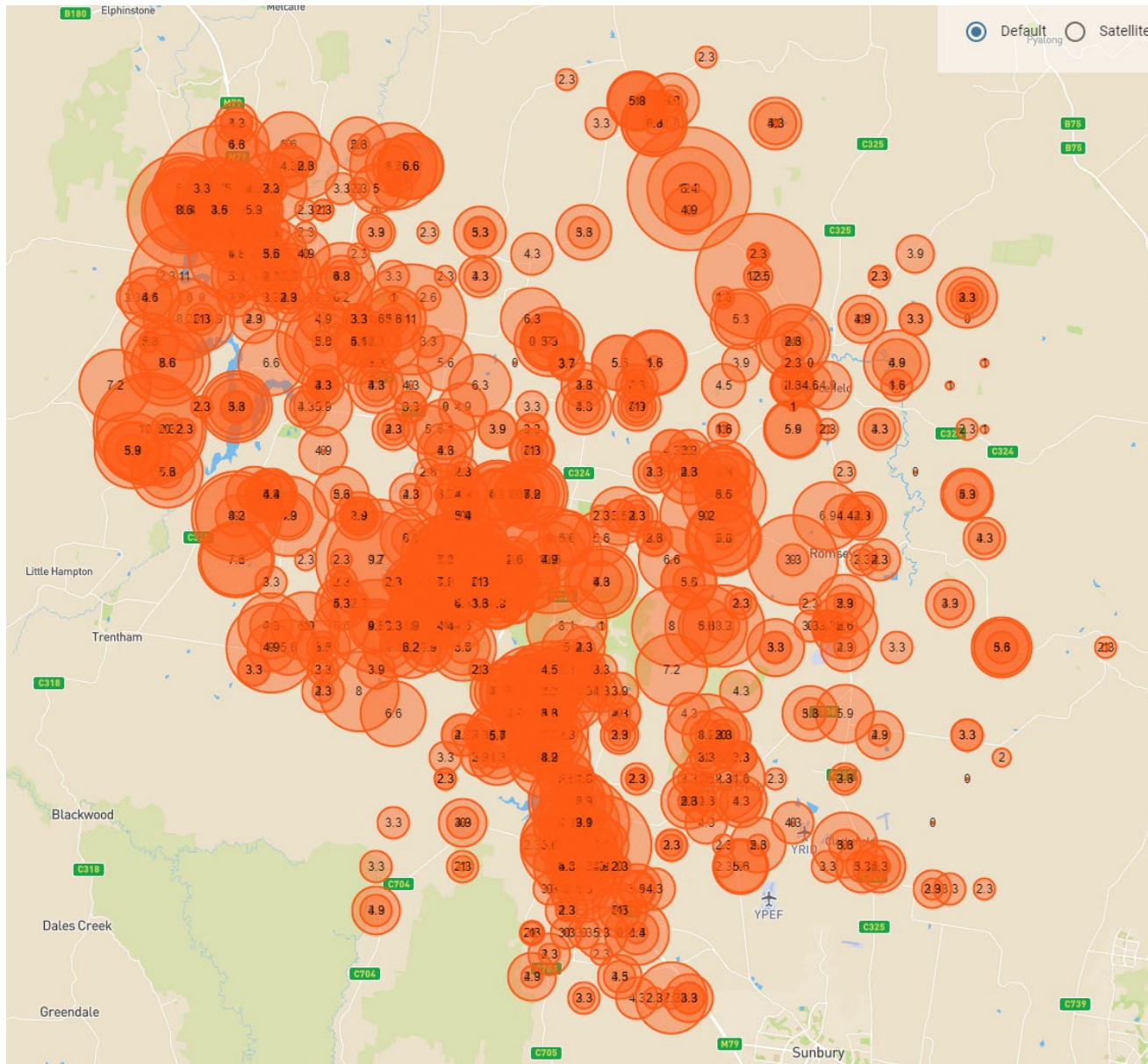
12: Maps:

Provide the following maps to support the control plan information:

- **Map 1 Proposed location of control works.**
- **Map 2 Known infestations of Regionally Prohibited Weeds, Regionally Controlled Weeds, established pest animals and Restricted Weeds.**

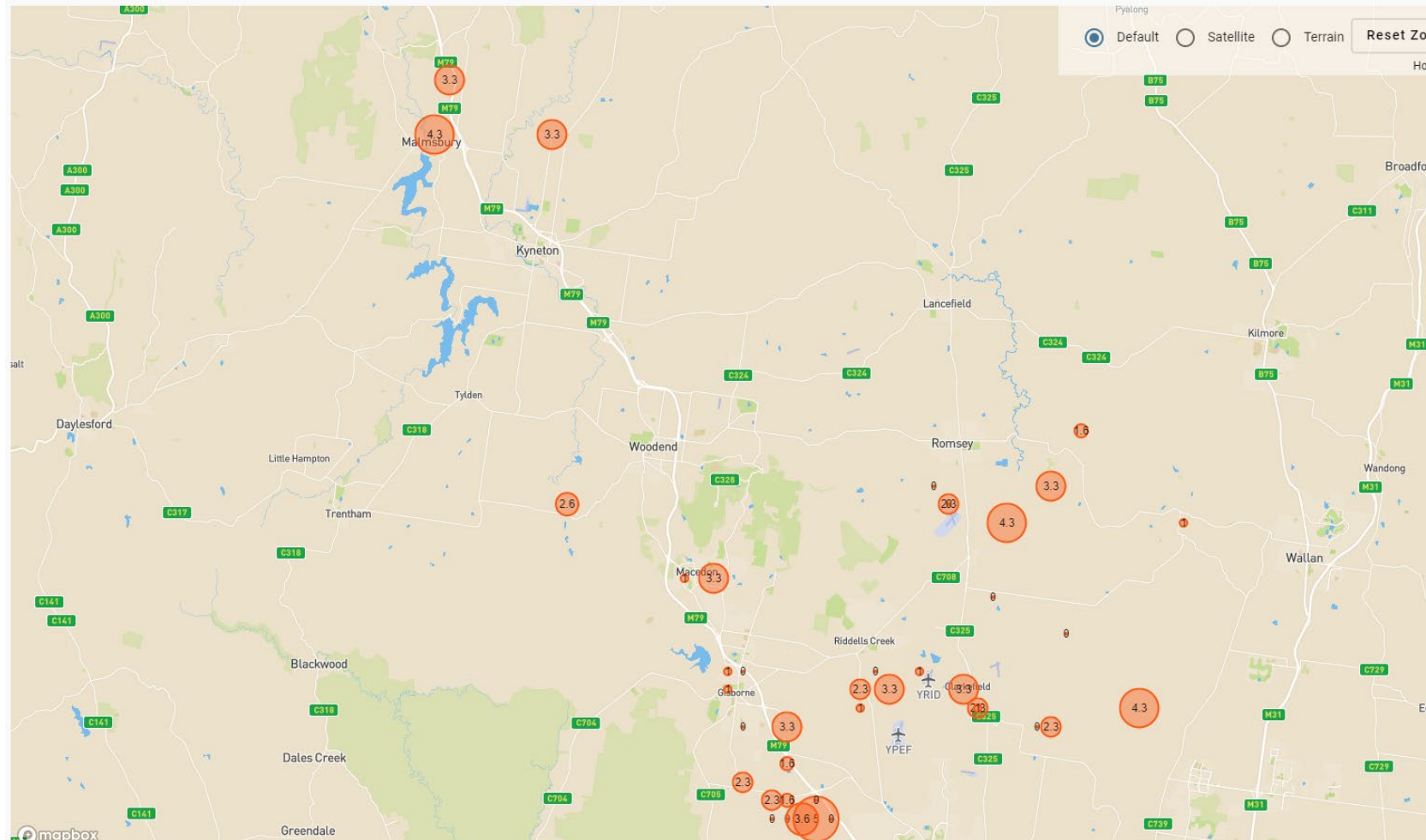


MRSC Weed Program Sites from Open Roads app.



Mapped areas on woody weed infestations of Gorse - Flora Coverage Report from Open Roads app

Showing Flora Groups: Grassy Weeds



Nassella Species Mapped Areas - Flora Coverage Report from Open Roads app

13: Declarations:

Council will:

- Publish this approved plan (or approved variation to this plan if relevant) on its website within 28 days of approval and ensure copies are available for public inspection at Council's office(s). Any personal information contained in the control plan should be redacted prior to publishing. The signatures on the approved control plan may also be redacted prior to publishing.
- Coordinate the implementation of this plan on council managed roadsides in accordance with the investment principles stated in this plan and the control measures specified.
- Implement best practice weed hygiene principles and protocols.
- Maintain accurate records sufficient to provide evidence that the plan has been carried out and provide these on request.
- Obtain approval from Agriculture Victoria before substantially modifying or varying the plan.
- Carefully consider any proposals from Agriculture Victoria to modify or vary the plan in response to changed circumstances.

Council Declaration

I declare that I am an authorised representative and the information given on this form is complete and correct

Key Council Contact Name: Martin Roberts

Date: 31/01/24

Signature:



Council CEO Name: Bernie O'Sullivan

Date: 04-02-2024

Signature:

DocuSigned by:

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Agriculture Victoria Endorsement

I declare that I am an authorised representative and that this plan has been reviewed and aligns with eligible activities.

Agriculture Victoria Regional Biosecurity Manager – Plants, Chemicals and Invasives

Name: Ben Perry

Date: 31/01/2024

Signature: 