



## Asset Protection Road Corridors

# **Tamar Valley “Ragwort Raid” 2018 Report**

Prepared by:

Tamar NRM for the Tamar Valley Weeds Working Group.

Weeds cost the community millions of dollars a year in lost production and control costs, and there would also be significant costs for the whole community if Ragwort became heavily established in the Tamar Valley and surrounds. To some degree a Ragwort invasion is contained by a team of dedicated volunteers which “Raid” annually and in so doing reduce the financial burden to everyone..

Now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year, the Ragwort Raids continue to attract community groups, Landcare groups, volunteer fire brigades, landholders and the general public who join together during late January to keep Ragwort at bay. The event is underwritten by City of Launceston, West Tamar and George Town Councils, with specific funds provided again this year by the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania (RACT).

During January 2018, Tamar NRM (TNRM) conducted four Ragwort Raids covering the three partner council areas; 20th January - East Tamar and Launceston; 21st January - West Tamar; 23rd January - Launceston week day event. Over the four days a total of 819 kms of roads were patrolled.

Ragwort, a member of the daisy family (Asteraceae) and native to northern Eurasia, is a serious weed in Tasmania and is poisonous to stock. It has the potential to infest at least 64,600 ha in the three municipalities with potential costs to the grazing industry of over \$2M per annum in lost pasture production alone.

This year, Ragwort Raid coordinator Jayne Shapter and Tamar NRM (TNRM) staff undertook the initial planning for the “Raids” which are organised within each council area. Volunteers travel rural roads within the 3 municipalities (see figure 1 map) at their own expense, pulling the plants before they seed, with all plant material collected securely disposed of courtesy of the municipality waste management facilities. Over nearly 2 decades of “Raiding” the weed prevalence has been greatly reduced, to the point where today, Ragwort collected amounts to utility loads rather than truck loads. The West Tamar and Launceston council areas provided the greatest amount of material collected in 2018.

The Ragwort sightings reported during the patrols, have been documented, and infestation hotspots (including private lands) has been forwarded to the appropriate management bodies for compliance. Follow up removal and spraying has occurred at some sights including Glengarry and Nunamara. Council contractors, community groups and the TNRM Works Team have made a concerted effort over late January and early February to mop up any Ragwort they can gain access to.

There were 19 reported sites in need of further follow up on roadsides where the amount of Ragwort exceeded the volunteer's capacity to remove it. There were 38 reports of properties

needing control and containment of Ragwort. Private land infestations were observed adjacent to roadside hotspots and it is recommended that steps be taken to encourage all landholders, but these landholders in particular, to undertake Ragwort control.

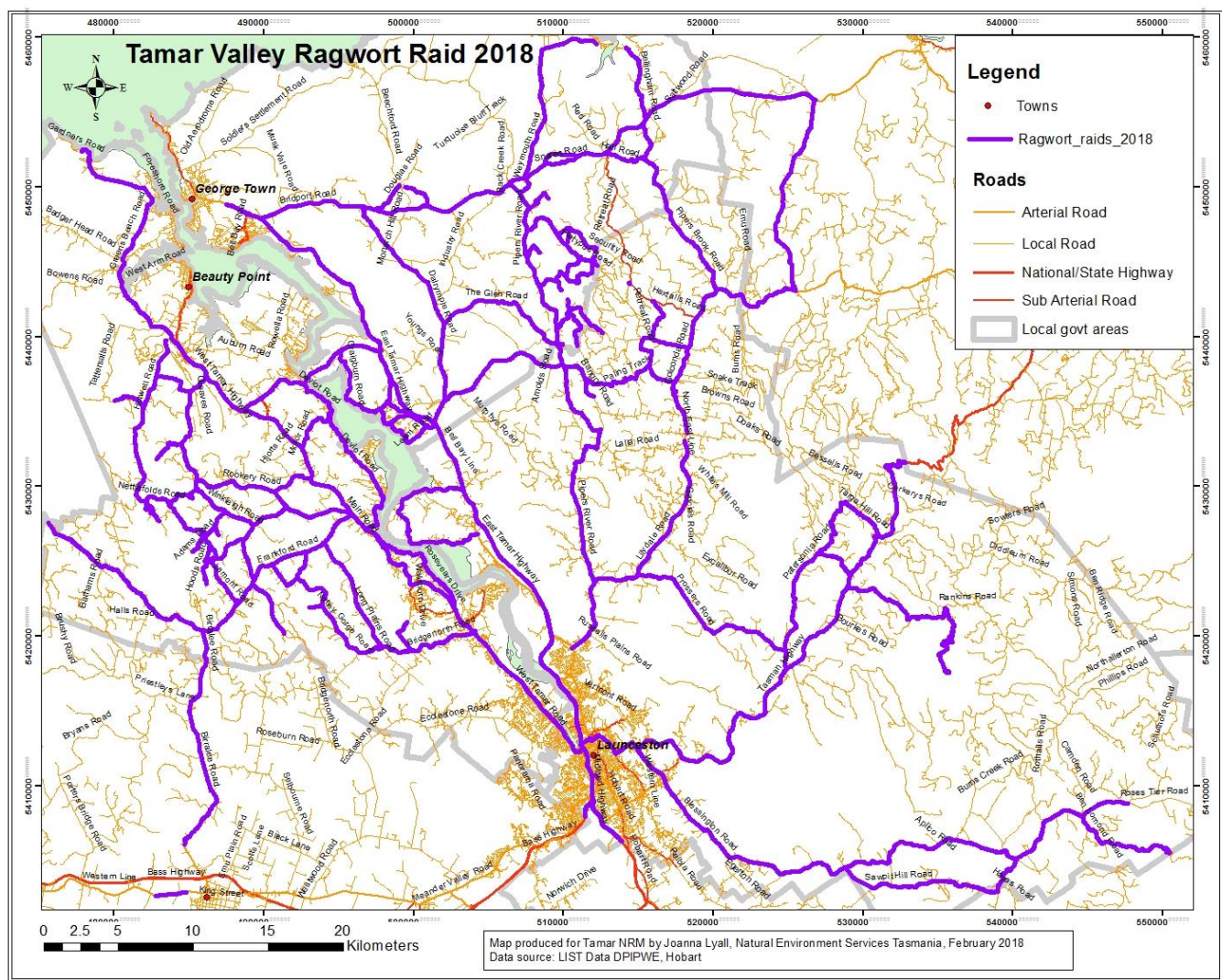


Figure 1: Map showing the significant roads patrolled for Ragwort, other minor roads also patrolled, but not marked.

**Costs and Potential Impacts:**

The annual “Raids” are a key enabler for preventing the wide scale invasion of ragwort particularly the rural areas of the Tamar Valley. Collectively, compliance measures, public education, biocontrols and the Ragwort Raids combine to be an effective combination of actions.

Over four days of "Raids" a total of 819 kms of roads were patrolled. Council roads travelled totalled 421.1 km; State Growth (DIER) roads 376.5 km; and other land tenures 21.4 km.

The table below clearly indicates the volunteer effort that went into the 2018 "Raid".

Table 1: Ragwort Raid Statistics

Municipal Area	Patrol Base Location	Number Volunteers	Labour Hours Donated	Length of Significant Roads Patrolled	Land Under Invasion Threat (Ha)	Production Losses Prevented (\$ per year)
Georgetown (21 <sup>st</sup> January)	Pipers River Fire Station	13	104	222.6 km	17000	\$533,000
West Tamar (22 <sup>nd</sup> January)	Winkleigh Hall	22	176	237.5 km	15600	\$488,000
Launceston (28 <sup>th</sup> January)	Waverley Lakes	5	40	315.2 km	32000	\$1,001,900
Bordering Councils of Dorset, Meander valley, Northern Midlands				43.7 km		
<b>Totals for all councils</b>		40	320	819 km	64600	\$2,022,900

## Maintaining the Momentum:

### TNRM Actions:

- Continue the Ragwort Raid activity on an annual basis, co-ordinating volunteers and obtaining permits/approvals and finding funding.
- Prepare mapping, hot spots table and report on control of Ragwort in the Tamar Valley.
- Facilitate the introduction of biological control agents to heavy inaccessible areas where traditional control methods are impractical.
- TNRM to remain active in other weed management activities such as Boneseed, Blackberry and Gorse.

Tamar NRM continues to facilitate the Tamar Valley Weeds Working Group comprising the 3 councils - City of Launceston; George Town; West Tamar; TNRM; NRM North; DPIPWE; DIER (Dept. State Growth); TFGA; Parks and Wildlife; TasTAFE, community and industry representatives.

The group aims to coordinate the efforts of organisations managing weed issues within the Tamar Region. As such they are interested in furthering the conversation on areas of shared responsibility to maximise effort and minimise the use of resources for all, with particular emphasis on cooperation across land tenures.

### Council Actions:

- Continue to assist the "Raids" with in-kind support.
- Schedule roadside mowing/vegetation management so as not to compromise Ragwort Raids and other management actions.
- Follow up on hot spot property infestations as appropriate under the Weed Management Act 1999. Updated Hot Spot records available from Tamar NRM.

- Spray severe roadside infestations of Ragwort in December when plants are easily seen, with clopyralid (Lontrel™).
- Road making and maintenance activities should specify soil which does not introduce new species to an area, with the liability on the supplier to eradicate introduced species.
- Tender and contractor specifications should require the use of clean machines and vehicles at the commencement of every job.

#### **State Growth (DIER) Actions:**

- Issue permits for roadside collection of Ragwort.
- Provide roadside mowing schedule.
- Provide advice and support for Ragwort control and follow up.
- Spray severe roadside infestations of Ragwort in December when plants are easily seen, with clopyralid (Lontrel™).
- Road making and maintenance activities should specify soil which does not introduce new species to an area, with the liability on the supplier to eradicate introduced species.
- Tender and contractor specifications should require the use of clean machines and vehicles at the commencement of every job.

#### **Volunteer Support:**

During this year's "Raid" volunteer support was strong for the West Tamar (23) and East Tamar (13), but small numbers of people attended the two Launceston "Raids" (3 and 2).

*Table 2: Community Groups supporting the "Raids" in 2018:*

West Tamar Landcare Group	Friends of Punchbowl Reserve
East Tamar Landcare Group	Piper's Brook Fire Brigade
Lilydale Landcare Group	Piper's River Fire Brigade
TNRM Green Army Works Team	Hillwood Fire Brigade

Volunteers travel the roads in their own vehicles at their own expense, including pre "Raid" event scouting and follow up raiding. Volunteers were still pulling Ragwort in February near Ben Lomond and at Brady's lookout travelling considerable distances to deal with infestations. Greater understanding of the potential for Ragwort to become a serious issue for the region, motivates Landcare groups, Friends groups and landholders to target the weed as and when they see it.

In February a letter of thanks was received from Jill Jones, Environment Extension Officer, Environment Development Approvals, State Roads. In the letter Jill said:

***"The longevity of the "Raid" really is a great example of community commitment and direct action which benefits the wider community."***

It was pleasing to see West Tamar Councillors Richard Ireland and Peter Kearney attending the West Tamar "Raid". Our Weeds Working Group chairman John Thorp attended most raids as a volunteer and contributed a great deal of local knowledge about Ragwort biology and past infestation locations.

There are a surprisingly large number of residents from our municipalities who target Ragwort. These people have often started as Ragwort Raid participants or inspired through our public weeds education program. We acknowledge the contribution of community groups and landholders who control Ragwort on an ongoing basis and are either unknown to us.

### **Communication:**

A media release was issued in early January and promotion through websites, Facebook and through TNRM and local Landcare Group's email distribution list. It was picked up by various print and electronic media including The Examiner on 10<sup>th</sup> January.

Key messages for the "Raids" are the potential for \$2m in lost income to agriculture should ragwort establish in the Tamar Region and that the annual activity is successfully demonstrating the value of community driven regional weed management.

This 2018 final report was distributed to RACT, State Growth (DIER), Tasmanian Fire Service, DPIPW, TFGA, NRM North, our three partner councils, and TNRM stakeholder group. It will also feature as an article in the TNRM newsletter "Naturally Yours" in March and be on the Tamar NRM website for all to read ([www.tamarnrm.com.au](http://www.tamarnrm.com.au))

### **Work Health and Safety:**

In 2018, each volunteer was required to register and complete an induction for "Working On or Near Roadsides". A risk assessment was conducted and a checklist given to all volunteers before commencing work removing the weed from roadsides.

The volunteers were given written instructions for parking on roadsides, timeframes for roadside works, working on slopes in wet weather conditions, the need to sign off after completion of works and the appointment of spotters. Snake bite first aid kits and vehicle warning devices were provided to each vehicle.

TNRM staff member, Greg Lundstrom and Ragwort Raid Coordinator Jayne Shapter conducted the inductions and there was a process undertaken to observe compliance of teams working on roadsides. It formed part of the Ragwort 2018 WHS Report and demonstrated WHS compliance as listed in the induction sheet provided to participants prior to works. In particular the following operations were audited in the field:

- Flashing light in operation
- Spotter in place
- Vehicle parked in appropriate safe location

Sites that were identified by event participants as areas that were too large to be weeded within the required timeframes, as required in the WHS guidelines, were noted for later follow up.

### **Biological Controls:**

The release of biological control agents in Tasmania includes the ragwort flea beetle, the stem and crown boring moth, and the Ragwort plume moth. While no formal survey of presence/absence is undertaken, we note any reports of biological control agents found during the raids. They are another tool in taking an integrated approach to ragwort control. They are particularly useful in



hard to access sites, and play their part in our common goal of ragwort control and localised eradication.

For more information on biological control programs in Tasmania contact the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research.

### **Hotspot locations:**

There were 19 roadsides sites reported in need of further follow up, most of these sites were identified as too large an infestation to be hand weeded in the time allowed and where herbicide control would be beneficial. During the "Raids" there were 38 properties observed to have ragwort present. These have been documented and sent on to the compliance authorities for action. Public education is of ongoing importance to the project as some landholders may be unaware that they have a declared weed on their property.

*Table 3: 2018 Private Property infestations of ragwort:*

Launceston Council Area	West Tamar Council Area	George Town Council Area
12 properties	22 properties	6 properties

The main areas of private property infestations were noted at Lebrina, Golconda Road, Turners Marsh, Nunamara, Distillery Creek, Prossers Forest Rd, Frankford Road at Glengarry, Upper Blessington Rd, Diddleum Road, Deddington Rd, and Ben Lomond Road at Blessington. These locations have been forwarded to councils and DPIPWE for actioning with visual confirmation of the sites recommended before compliance notices are issued.

### **Conclusion:**

2018 once again demonstrated the benefit of a community driven weed control program. The overall abundance of Ragwort has been reduced in the region, and the prevalence of observed Ragwort was down on the 2017 year.

Follow up spraying has occurred at a number of sites and sites such as Hunting Ground Road are showing positive signs of ragwort rosette reduction due to spraying in 2017 and again this year.

Collectively, compliance measures, working with agencies, public education, biocontrols and the Ragwort Raids combine to be an effective model that other regions could pick up and implement.

The necessary follow up and attention by agencies/councils of landholder compliance on private lands, remains an issue and needs to be better coordinated and policed.

With 40+ volunteers willing to provide their own time to attend the "Raids" Tamar NRM will continue to facilitate this annual signature event.

This work is a community partnership which builds capacity and awareness. It also builds community confidence that we can manage weeds at a local level, "something can be done!"

### **Acknowledgements:**



Our appreciation goes to the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania who made a grant of \$2,000 available, which enabled the project to support volunteers in their efforts.

Appreciation also goes to:

- Jayne Shapter (Ragwort Raid Coordinator)
- Joanne Lyell for mapping products.
- Participating Community Groups (see Table 2).
- And a big thanks to all volunteers.



**Above: Ragwort Raid Coordinator Jayne Shapter and President of Tamar NRM Roger Tyshing**

**Left: Roger with a large ragwort plant**



**The Tamar NRM Works Team Van gets some weekend work too!**



**Program Coordinator Tamar NRM Greg Lundstrom pulling Ragwort near Blessington**

## Appendix 1

### Ragwort Profile

(*Jacobaea vulgaris*, syn. *Senecio jacobaea*)

#### Description

The plant is biennial or short-lived perennial herb to 0.8 (rarely to 1.8) m high. Stems often branched towards apex. Basal leaves mostly 5–20 cm long and 4–6 cm wide, in a rosette, withering in flowering plants; stem leaves with upper surface dark green, underneath lighter in colour. The 300 mm flower head is golden yellow, made up of small flowers.



Flowering Ragwort

#### Spread of ragwort

- Spread of Ragwort is by seed. The majority of seeds are deposited within 20 m of the parent plant but may be dispersed up to a kilometre or more by strong winds.
- Seeds can also be spread along road corridors, on the coats of animals, on farm machinery, logging equipment, trucks and other vehicles, in contaminated hay and along water courses.

#### Avoid the introduction of ragwort

- Preventing the introduction of Ragwort to Ragwort free areas is the best means of control. Good hygiene practices are vital.
- Farm machinery, logging equipment, trucks and other vehicles can carry Ragwort seeds. Thorough cleaning of cultivation, harvesting, slashing and road-grading machinery which has been working in infested areas will greatly reduce the risk of spread into other areas.
- Hay and crop seeds can contain Ragwort seed if they have been sourced from infested paddocks.
- Obtain Wash-down Guidelines for Weed and Disease Control for detailed information on how to wash-down equipment and personnel to reduce the chance of spreading Ragwort.



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