



Asset Protection Road Corridors

“Ragwort Raids” 2015

During January and February Tamar Natural Resource Management (Tamar NRM) conducted three Ragwort Raids covering the three partner council areas.

Ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, is a serious weed in Tasmania and is poisonous to stock. It has the potential to infest at least 64,600 ha in the municipalities with potential costs to the grazing industry of over \$2M per annum in lost pasture production alone. There would also be significant control costs for the whole community if ragwort became heavily established. In the Tamar Valley and surrounds its invasion is contained by a team of dedicated volunteers which “Raid” every year. Details about the species are in Appendix 1.

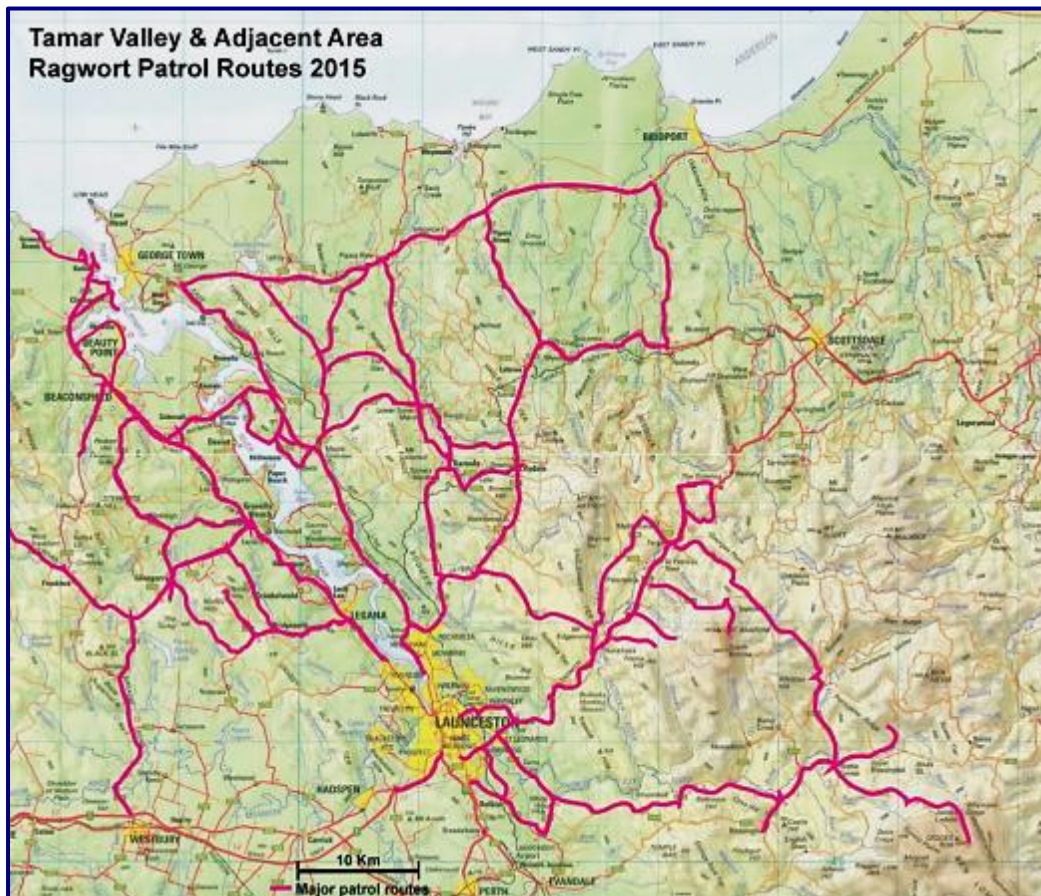
Funding over the 16 year project has been underwritten by the Launceston, West Tamar and George Town Councils with specific funds provided by BHP Billiton/TEMCO and Australian Government Caring for Our Country



Flowering ragwort

Jayne Shapter coordinates the three “Raids” which are organized within each council area. Volunteers travel the vast majority of rural roads within the 3 municipalities (see map) pulling the plants before

they seed, with all plant material collected and securely disposed of. These “Raids” (patrols) have been running for 16 years and over that time the weed prevalence has been greatly reduced, to the point where today, all material collected amounts to a small utility load for each of the 3 areas. The “Raids” suppressing this weed are responsible for preventing the wide scale invasion of all rural areas



Map of significant roads patrolled for ragwort, surveyed minor roads not highlighted.

Costs and Potential Impacts

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	Pipers River Fire Station	16	100	220 km	17000	\$533,000
West Tamar	Winkleigh Hall	15	95	208 km	15600	\$488,000
Launceston	Myrtle Park	16	110	154 km	32000	\$1,001,900
Total for all councils		47	305	582 km	64600	\$2,022,900

Tamar Natural Resource Management Actions:

Continue the Ragwort Raid activity on an annual basis.

To map and facilitate the introduction of biological control agents to heavy inaccessible areas where traditional control methods are impractical.

Council Actions

Councils continue to facilitate the "Raids" with in-kind support.

Roadside mowing/vegetation management be scheduled so as not to compromise "Ragwort Raids" and other management actions.

That Council Weed Inspectors follow up on identified property infestations as appropriate under the Weed Management Act 1999 (all municipalities classified as zone A) with a view to imposing penalties on recalcitrant land owners.

Road making and maintenance activities should specify soil which does not entail the introduction of a new species to an area, with a 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.

Conclusion

"There are a surprisingly large number of residents from our municipalities who clean roadside areas of Ragwort. These people have often started as "Ragwort Raid" participants. They have learnt the skills and then keep a roadside area clear on their own initiative, even when not involved in a "Raid".

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

"Tamar NRM is also active in other weed management activities. Boneseed is one target as is some work on the spread of rice grass at the top (northern) end of the Tamar estuary".

Report prepared by: John Thorp and Jayne Shapter for Tamar Natural Resource Management's Weeds Working Group [Ph. John on 6344 9657].



West Tamar volunteers Peter Voller, John Broomby, Jodi Broomby, William Bragg, Norma Cormican, Megan Rodger, Megan's niece (will see if I can find name), Gilly Zacks, Jo Voller, Shayne McLinden (WTC), Peter Rodger



Jayne Schapter and Roger Tyshing bagging ragwort for secure disposal



Hillwood fire brigade brings in a load of plants, Ben Jones, Iain Nixon, Bert Barber, Elaine Burns, Bill Birch



The team at Myrtle Park with all collected in that area (from left to right): Mick Statham, Craig Loosemore, Helen Statham, Craig von Stieglitz, Anne Booth, Jayne Shapter [Ragwort Raid Co-ordinator - with sign], Laura Wordsworth, Nick Wordsworth & Anna Povey

Appendix 1

Ragwort Profile

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

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 kilometer 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 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.
- See the 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.