



Asset Protection Road Corridors

“Ragwort Raids” 2016

During January and February TNRM (Tamar Natural resource management) conducted three Ragwort Raids covering the three partner council areas.

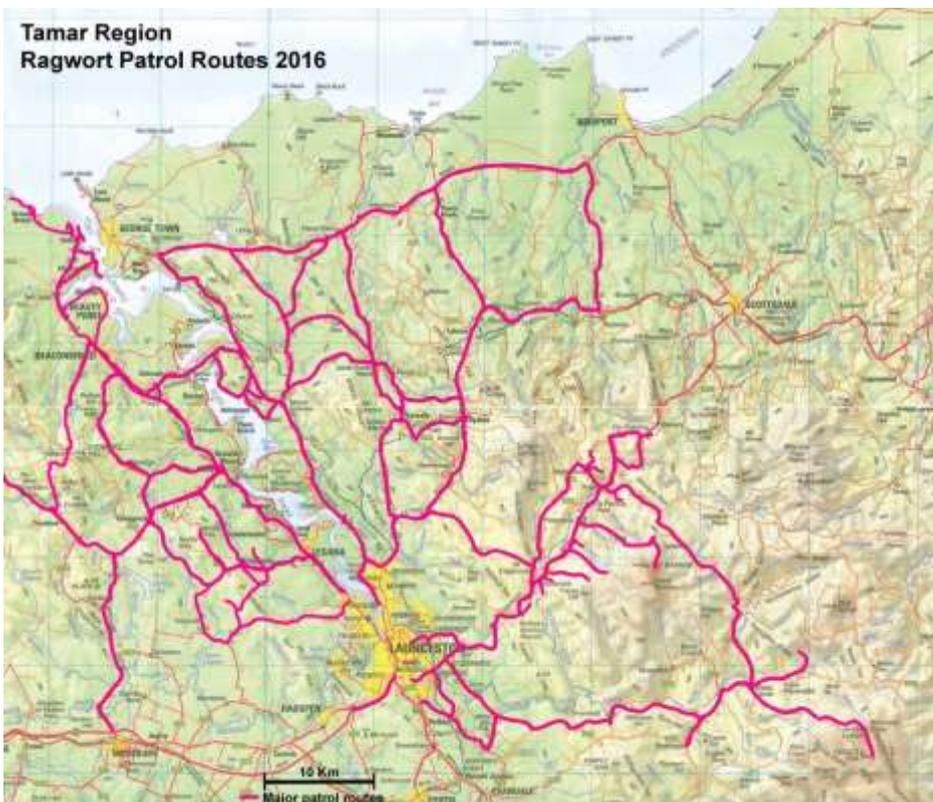
Ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, is a serious weed in Tasmania and is poisonous to stock. It has the potential to infest at least 64,600 ha in the municipalities with potential costs to the grazing industry of over \$2M per annum in lost pasture production alone. There would also be significant control costs 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 17 year project has been underwritten by the Launceston, West Tamar and George Town Councils with specific funds provided this year by the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania.



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 17 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 showing significant roads patrolled for ragwort, minor roads also patrolled, but not highlighted.

Four hotspots were identified (see table) where the amount of ragwort exceeded the volunteers capacity to remove it. Consequently Land Management North was engaged to spray the infestations which was undertaken on Friday 19 March, with any mature seed heads being hand harvested for secure disposal.

More extensive infestations were observed on private land adjacent to the hotspots and steps are being taken to encourage land owners to control the weed.

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	14	100	220 km	7000	\$533,000
West Tamar	Winkleigh Hall	21	95	208 km	5600	\$488,000
Launceston	Myrtle Park	7	110	189 km	32000	\$1,001,900
Total for all councils		47	305	617 km	14600	\$2,022,900

Fire Impact

Severe forest fires occurred at the same time as the Raids were scheduled and this reduced the support available from the fire brigades and caused the rescheduling of Nunamara – Patersonia activities so that the Raid did not hamper the firefighting effort.

TNRM 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 hot spot 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.

Severe roadside infestations should be sprayed in December when plants are easily seen, with clopyralid (Lontrel™), see Hot Spot table below.

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

This was good for the West and East Tamar, but the attendance of one local landholder from the Nunamara area is of concern and highlights the need to improve community engagement in that area. It is recognised that bush fires in the area impacted our volunteer base.

Communication

There were two Examiner, one Tas Country two newsletter articles, one City Park radio interview backed by two web sites promoting the activity.

The report will be distributed to RACT, TFGA, ABC (press release), three councils, TNRM stakeholder group and relevant government departments. It will also feature as an article in the TNRM newsletter. The key headline for this activity is that it saves \$2m in lost income through agriculture in the Tamar Region.

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 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".

Acknowledgement

The Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania made a grant of \$700 which enabled the project to support volunteers.

Table of Hotspot locations where herbicide control would be beneficial.

District	Location	Comment
Nunamara	Hunting Ground Road	Ragwort (all stages of growth) on both sides of road from Tasman Highway junction to Red Banks Rd junction. No evidence of spread to adjacent paddocks.
Nunamara	20 Bingham's Rd	Power easement, extending along drain and into bush above
Targa	Tasman Highway, St Patrick's River bridge "start of Sidling".	Extensive ragwort on northern verge of highway extending for 500m. Significant infestations on

		adjoining property along river edge and flats,
Blessington	Deddington Rd (C420) approximately 1 km S from Blessington Main Rd junction	Follows a water course from above road to below along a line of willows. Property name on gate "Esk View"

Report prepared by: John Thorp and Jayne Shapter for the TNRM Weeds Working Group .



East Tamar: Ragwort Raiders: Ian Farquhar, Roger Tyshing, Brian Baxter, Jenny Baxter, Jayne Shapter, Tim Harris, Chris Hinds, Jacob Hinds, Brad Taylor, Gill Basnett



West Tamar Ragwort Raiders: Greg Lundstrom, Nat Tyshing-Baker, Norma Purton, Megan Rodger, Peter Rodger, Jo-Ann Woollacott, Jayne Shapter, Michael Poole, David Armstrong, Maree Taberner, Peter Broad, Helen Eastburn, Ross Eastburn, Jo Voller, Bruce Jackson, Peter Voller, Martin Price and Roger Tyshing (taking photo)



Brian Baxter pulling the whole plant with more to do on the east Tamar Raid

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.