



VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY
Progress Report 2015 – 2016

VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY PROGRESS REPORT 2015-2016

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For more information on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party visit the website at www.serratedtussock.com

VISION

CONTROL THE SPREAD
OF SERRATED TUSSOCK
IN VICTORIA TO REDUCE
THE IMPACTS ON THE
ECONOMY, SOCIETY,
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY COMMITTEE 2015/16

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| John Burgess | (Chair) |
| John Web Ware | (Vice Chair) |
| Virginia Lawrence | (Treasurer) |
| Wendy Bitans | (Community Representative) |
| Peter Lindeman | (Community Representative) |
| Margot Galletly | (Community Representative) |
| Alan Morton | (Community Representative) |
| Elle Fox | (Community Representative) |
| Rob Shea | (Community Representative) |
| Lance Jennison | (Community Representative) |

VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICERS 2015/16

Ivan Carter
Mandy Coulson
Roger MacRaid



CHAIR'S REPORT

On behalf of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, I am pleased to present the 2015 - 2016 progress report. The report outlines the outstanding work performed by the Committee Members, Staff and Extension Officers, over the past twelve months. To achieve best outcomes, the VSTWP continues to work with a wide range of partners to enthusiastically assist in the development of innovative management solutions, through education and by improving the delivery of policy and legislation.

This past year, three Extension Officers have engaged with landowners in the areas of Gisborne, Ballan, and Inverleigh. The project areas cover approximately 30,000 hectares of land. It is pleasing to note that in most cases, the provision of serrated tussock management advice has been readily accepted.

For the first time, the VSTWP conducted a Stakeholders Workshop, which saw further development of relationships with state, local government, road authorities, land care and catchment management authorities. The workshop was a success, and has led to an additional Stakeholders Meeting which will take place in early 2017, with annual meetings planned to continue.

The VSTWP continues to issue a quarterly journal aptly named "Tussock Times", and the web site is receiving many visits. One new feature is a "Serrated Tussock Web App". This application assists in identifying serrated tussock and is gaining many favourable reports. As well, the widespread distribution of serrated tussock educational material by mail and hand out and, at Agricultural Field Days has been very well received. The popular Serrated Tussock Identification Brochure is now available in six languages other than English. The brochure shows landowners how to identify the features of serrated tussock step by step and has many images depicting the identifying features of the plant.

The VSTWP has for many years been an incorporated body operating through its membership of the Farm Tree & Landcare Association Inc. This year the VSTWP adopted its own Constitution and now operates in strict accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012. The Working Party has official By-Laws and an addendum to the By-Laws, which sets out the administrative procedures applicable to its members.

The Working Party remains committed to the delivery of the prescriptions of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012 - 2017 however, a busy twelve months is ahead with the development and launch of the 2018 - 2023 Strategy. The Working Party would like to see an increase in services to the core area of serrated tussock, and to areas with isolated infestations such as the Wimmera, Central Victoria, North Central Victoria, Gippsland, and the North Country.

Finally, I would like to thank Agriculture Victoria (Victorian State Government), VSTWP Members and Staff for their continued commitment to the eradication of serrated tussock. The VSTWP extends its gratitude to the landowners and stakeholders who recognise the importance of stamping out this weed of national significance. The impact of serrated tussock to each community, agricultural industry, and environment throughout Victoria and Australia as a whole is substantial.

Controlling the menace of serrated tussock, represents a continuous battle, where persistence is paramount.

John Burgess

John Burgess, Chair
February 2017



*John Burgess, Chairperson
of the Victorian Serrated
Tussock Working Party*

SERRATED TUSSOCK

Native to South America, serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) is a highly invasive, tussock forming grass that is capable of growing in a range of climates and soil types.

Serrated tussock is a declared noxious weed in Victoria and is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) due to its highly invasive nature, its negative impacts on agricultural production and its threat to biodiversity. Plants readily invade agricultural land, native grasslands and grassy woodlands, and will rapidly infest areas of bare ground. Each mature serrated tussock plant can produce more than 100,000 seeds in a year, which is mostly dispersed by wind; however seeds can also be carried in fodder, vehicles or livestock and transported over vast distances.

The occurrence of serrated tussock in Victoria was first documented in 1954 at a site Melbourne's north. In 1997 the estimated area of serrated tussock in Victoria was 130,000 hectares, but its potential distribution has been predicted to cover 4.6 million hectares in Victoria or one fifth of the state. Serrated tussock is also found in New South Wales and Tasmania.

Figure 1 shows where serrated tussock is currently found in Victoria. If left unmanaged it is estimated that serrated tussock has the potential to infest roughly two-thirds of arable and grazing land in Victoria.



SERRATED TUSSOCK DISTRIBUTION

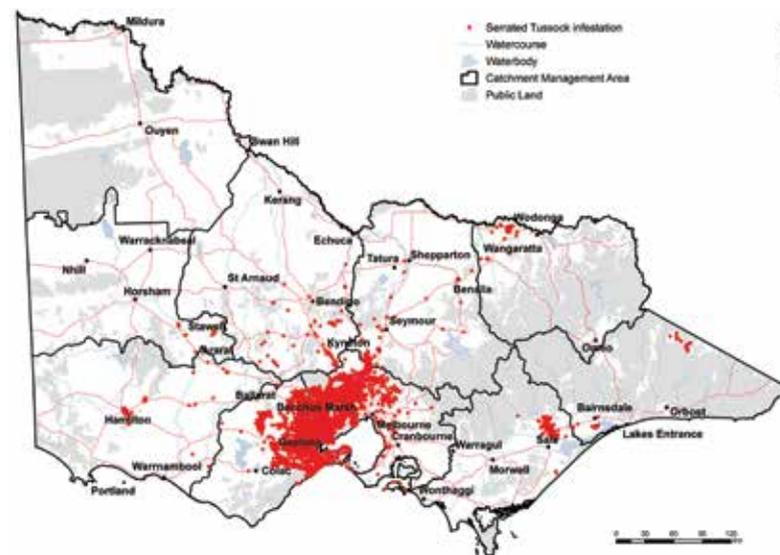


Figure 1: Distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (DEDJTR, 2017)

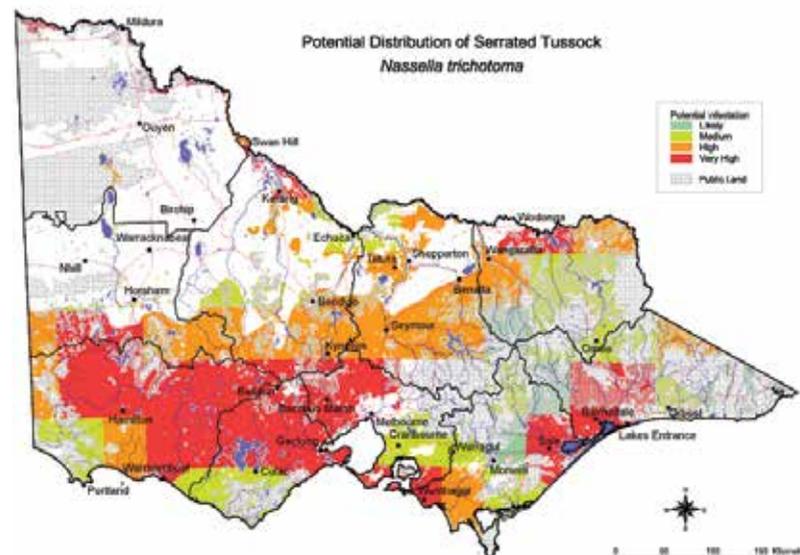


Figure 2: The potential distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (CSIRO, 2012)

THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) is a community driven group focused on serrated tussock management in Victoria, and an incorporated non-profit organisation. It formed in 1995 in response to community concern about serrated tussock, and has successfully contributed to reducing the spread of serrated tussock across Victoria.

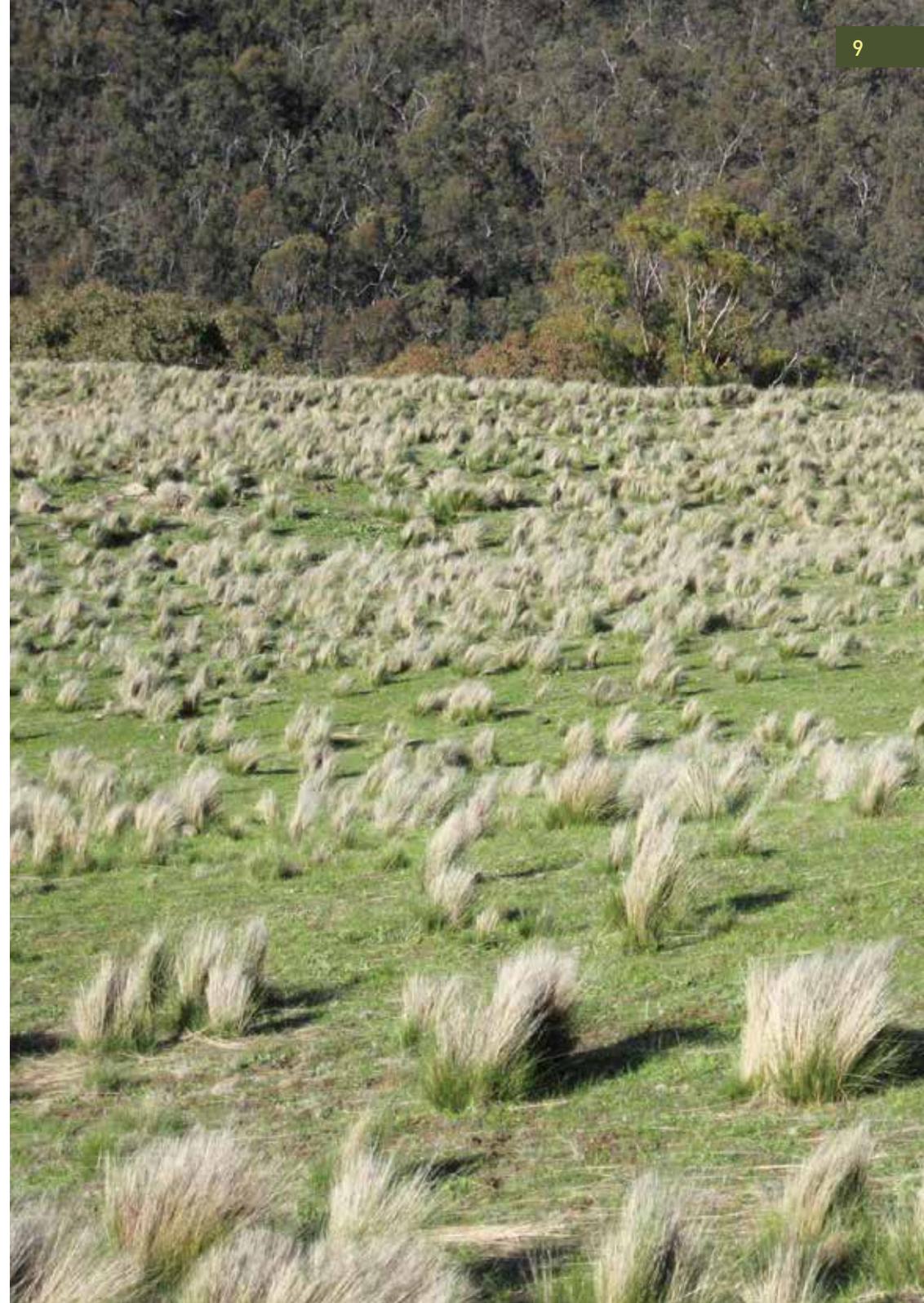
The Victorian Serrated Tussock Program has conducted and/or sponsored a wide range of serrated tussock programs. These include undertaking research into pastures and herbicide technology, production of appropriate extension materials, provision of incentives to land managers and community groups and comprehensive mapping, extension, monitoring and compliance campaigns. A coordinated management program where a combination of control methods is used has shown to be the most effective way of controlling this noxious weed.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Since its formation the VSTWP has been responsible for the development and implementation of a number of management strategies; these documents have not only provided direction but have been fundamental in promoting a coordinated community-led approach to serrated tussock control throughout Victoria.

The VSTWP has strived in partnership with all levels of Government and their agencies, industry, research institutions, Landcare and the wider community to achieve the original recommendations of the strategy. In 2012, the VSTWP released the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012-2017. The Objectives of the strategy are:

- Early detection capabilities are in place and outlying infestations are actively managed.
- Existing infestations are under strategic management.
- Informed and responsible use and management of the pathways of spread reduces the spread of serrated tussock.
- Capability and willingness to manage serrated tussock is increased.





VSTWP EXTENSION PROGRAM

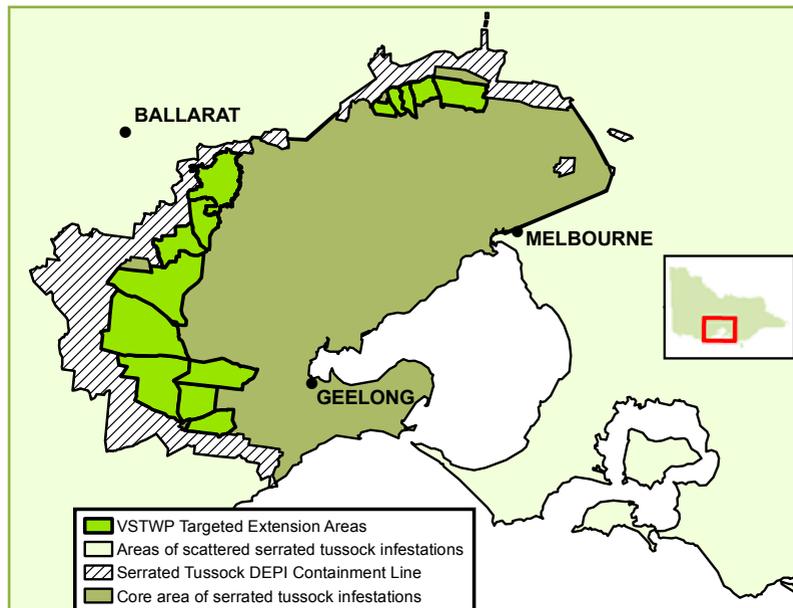


Figure 3: VSTWP Extension Areas 2011-2016. (DEDJTR, 2016)

The VSTWP has found most effective way to reduce the spread of serrated tussock from the core infestation is through its Extension Programs. At the heart of these programs is their community focus, engaging landowners and empowering them to voluntarily achieve high levels of serrated tussock control. Where extension efforts are unsuccessful in convincing landowners of their obligations to control serrated tussock, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport, and Resources (DEDJTR) compliance is then recommended to support the sustained action of the majority of landowners.

Experienced Extension Officers are engaged by the VSTWP to work with landholders within defined project areas, offering tailored serrated tussock identification and management advice. In 2015/16, our Extension Officers delivered targeted extension projects in:

- Inverleigh South Stage 1
- Mt Egerton
- Gisborne South stage 1

Providing expert one-to-one advice is recognised to be most beneficial to landholders and forms the foundation of success; personalised advice provides the landholder with the capacity and confidence to successfully achieve long-term control of serrated tussock on their property. The experience and expertise of our Extension Officers and relationships with communities are what makes our extension projects so effective and successful.

“THIS PROJECT HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER TO ENCOURAGE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LAND MANAGEMENT”

- MANDY COULSON, 2016; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| Number of hectares assessed | 5,282 Ha |
| Number of land managers engaged | 128 |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock | 275 Ha |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock | 139 Ha |

INVERLEIGH SOUTH - STAGE 1

The Inverleigh South – Stage One project area was located 20km west of Geelong, between the townships of Inverleigh and Murgheboluc, and included 30 properties. The area comprises mainly grazing land and smaller lifestyle properties near the townships, with the Barwon River extending along the northern boundary.

The project was a little outside of the usual mould of previous VSTWP extension as it was within the core infestation. Several of these properties had long histories of heavy infestations, and the long road of treatment had taken a considerable toll on the landowners.

Absentee landholders, steep country and small landholdings along the Barwon River and surrounding Inverleigh township were some of the challenges faced by our Extension Officers. However, our Extension Officers were supported by Geelong Landcare Network, Leigh District Landcare Group, Barrabool Hills Landcare, and the Golden Plains Shire who work together to encourage an integrated approach to land management.



Figure 4: Inverleigh South - Stage 1 Extension Area. [DEDJTR, 2016]



“IT WAS GREAT TO BE ABLE TO HELP CONNECT MORE PEOPLE WITH AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY OF LANDCARE, AND HELP THE COMMUNITY LEAD THE WAY”

– ROGER MACRAILD, 2016; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Number of hectares assessed | 12,818 Ha |
| Number of land managers engaged | 114 |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock | 751 Ha |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock | 600 Ha |

MOUNT EGERTON

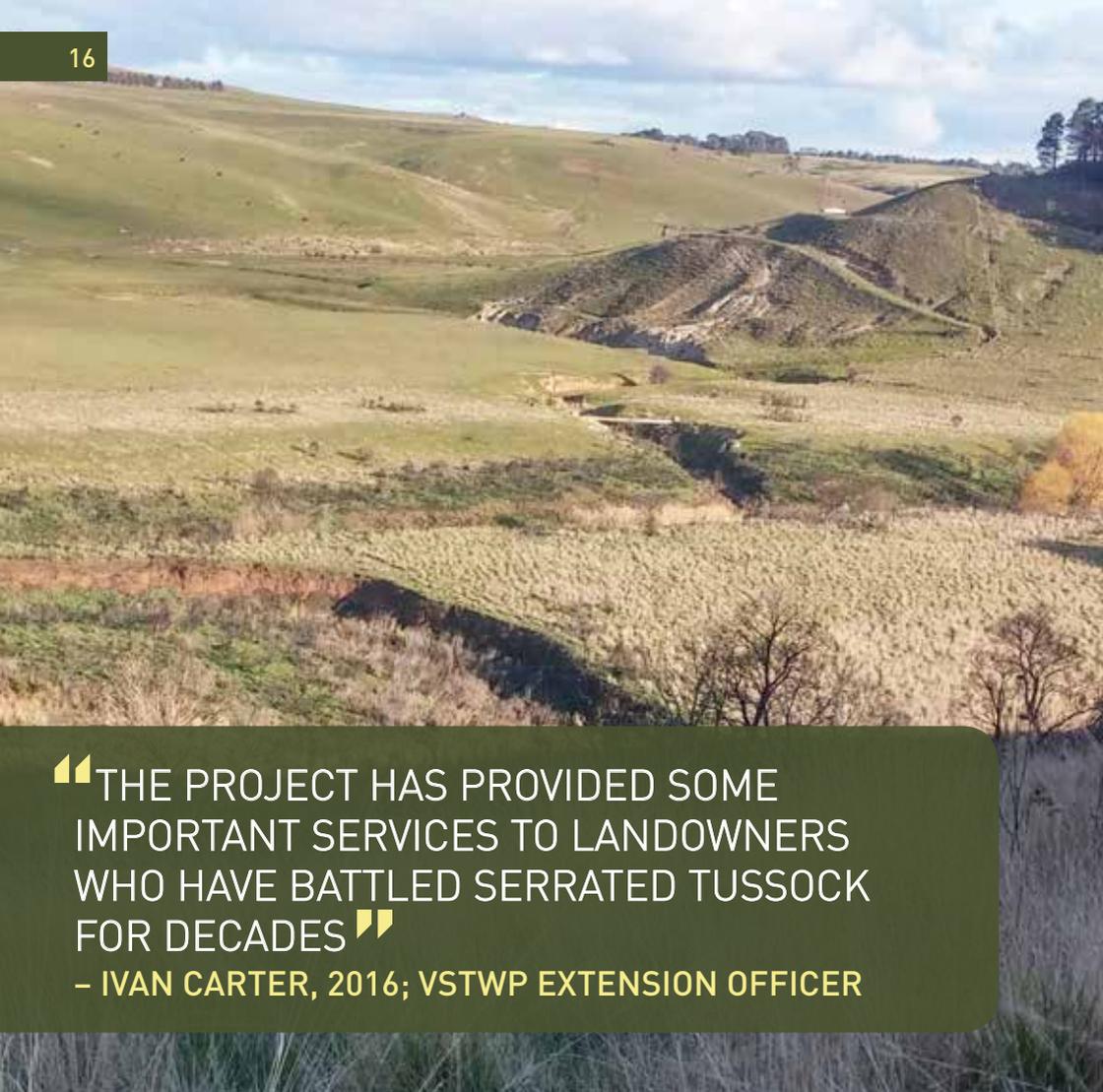
Located south east of Ballarat the project area included the reaches of the East Moorabool River, West Moorabool River and the Bungal Creek. The area was mostly grazed with some cropping on the larger properties, along with significant treed areas on public land. The Mt Doran and Mt Egerton areas were dominated by life style blocks with many having absentee landowners. Pine plantations also feature in the Bungal area.

Generally the infestations were found to follow the waterways. There were also sizable infestations on private land, in pine plantations and surrounding the Bungal Dam. Several of the infestations were extensive enough to have received aerial spraying within the previous 12 months. Public land was inspected first to help set the standard for the community. As no contacts were received from the introduction letters, knocking on doors was the most effective part of the program.

The program was aided by several prominent landowners who were very engaged and active. The Moorabool Shire assisted by treating roadsides early and to a very high standard. An incentives program run by the Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group was very useful to modify the attitude of disengaged landowners. The Landcare Group also showed a willingness to think outside the box and adopt best practice.



Figure 5: Mount Egerton Extension Area. (DEDJTR, 2016)



“THE PROJECT HAS PROVIDED SOME IMPORTANT SERVICES TO LANDOWNERS WHO HAVE BATTLED SERRATED TUSOCK FOR DECADES”

– IVAN CARTER, 2016; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| Number of hectares assessed | 1,436 Ha |
| Number of land managers engaged | 170 |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock | 37 Ha |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock | 29 Ha |

GISBORNE SOUTH - STAGE 1

This project area was situated to the north west of Melbourne within the Upper Jacksons Catchment. The area is known for its natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains and high ecological values, and included reaches of Jackson Creek. The land systems contain a mix of mostly cleared land and some excellent grasslands that have been used for agricultural production and hobby farm purposes.

Serrated tussock was found scattered throughout most of project area, with higher densities of core infestations along waterways and steep escarpments. Many landowners were found to be actively managing serrated tussock and claimed it had been much worse a decade ago.

There were some issues contacting absentee landowners and situations where landowners were not able, or willing, to support community action. Despite these limitations, the project has provided some important services to landowners who have battled serrated tussock for decades. The Field Day was very well attended and resulted in many pre-inspection bookings. Many landowners were converted from using glyphosate only, to using selective herbicides, which resulted in better retention of important grasslands and pasture species.



Figure 6: Gisborne South – Stage 1 Extension Area. (DEDJTR, 2016)

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2015 – 2016

- Over 19,500 hectares assessed for serrated tussock and 412 landholders provided with educational services.
- 768 hectares treated for serrated tussock throughout the three extension projects.
- Production and distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, each edition being delivered to over 320 subscribers.
- Over 1,800 pieces of extension material distributed through field days, events, community engagement, enquires and extension projects.
- Nine community events and field days attended, including the National Landcare Conference.
- Seven Community Radio Station Interviews and Community Service Announcements, promoting the VSTWP and our achievements.
- Major Radio Network Advertising on the 3AW Network for two weeks, highlighting the services offered by the VSTWP.
- The first VSTWP TV Commercial produced and aired on the Regional TV Networks over 2 weeks.
- Youtube channel updated, featuring seven videos attaining over 1500 views
- Serrate Tussock ID App in creation, nearing completion.
- The production of three new case studies highlighting successful serrated tussock management.
- Translation of the most popular VSTWP Extension Note, The Serrated Tussock Identification Brochure, into six languages other than English, and distributed to relevant stakeholders and local governments.
- The production and installation of nine roadside signs in previous target areas, across six local government areas, reminding landowners to be persistent in the treatment of serrated tussock.
- Successful uptake of the VSTWP Field Day Grants Scheme across the State.
- A Stakeholder Forum bringing together stakeholders from the core area to collaborate and share ideas for better management of serrated tussock, resulting in agreed strategic actions.
- The Publication of serrated tussock media articles in ten local government newsletters across the state, promoting services the VSTWP provide to landowners.
- Ongoing improvements to the website www.serratedtussock.com including:
 - Google translation services installed into website, to translate into any language.
 - Creation of a Video Gallery for all videos and the latest TV Commercial.
 - An increase in the number of high quality images housed in the websites Image Gallery
 - Updates to the VSTWP target area maps and achievements.
 - Subscription to the Tussock Times button added.

THANK YOU

The VSTWP Committee would like to thank the following groups and organisations for their ongoing support:

The large number of Landcare groups who have contributed to the success of our projects.

The following local councils, where our extension projects were run:

- Brimbank City
- Golden Plains Shire
- Macedon Ranges Shire
- Moorabool Shire
- Surf Coast Shire
- Hume City Council

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Without you, our serrated tussock projects would not be as effective as they are today. We greatly appreciate the time, dedication and interest that has been put towards controlling serrated tussock.

VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSOCK WORKING PARTY

For more information please visit:
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AGRICULTURE  VICTORIA

 Victorian
Serrated Tussock
Working Party