



CHIEF WEEDS OFFICER'S REPORT

For the Period March 2022 – May 2022

Submitted to the Illawarra District Weeds Authority Meeting

Friday 17th June 2022

At Wollongong City Council

From 9.30am to 12.30pm

To Secretary:

1. Property Inspections / Spraying Program

The season to date has proven to be of the most difficult and frustrating times for the Illawarra District Weeds Authority, as it tries to schedule its planned operational program for autumn. Consistent rainfall, albeit heavy at times, has led to periodic flooding and a saturated ground, which has restricted access to numerous sites, even on fine days. With rainfall over the last 3 months having exceeded the regions total average annual rainfall, and above average rainfall expected to persist until mid-winter, conditions are not looking good for the near future. As is to be expected the excess rainfall has also created good growing conditions for most priority weeds, particularly aquatics that are being dispersed by the frequent flood events, further hindering the Authority's ability to maintain effective control programs this season.

Roadside and Reserve control programs have had to be adjusted considerably over the last three months with some limited control work undertaken on Blackberry and the aquatic weeds Salvina, Water Hyacinth and Alligator Weed. Most of this work was undertaken prior to the onset of the wet weather in early March. Unfortunately, in a first for the Authority no control has been undertaken on Giant Parramatta Grass (GPG). Conditions have just been too wet and with the chemical Fluproponate being used results would not have been effective.

To offset the inability to undertake normal operational programs on most of our autumn growing priority weeds, IDWA staff have shifted control emphasis to targeting some of our winter growing weeds located in well drained locations and where non spray techniques can be used. To this effect Groundsel bush, Pampas grass and Bitou bush have been targeted in council reserves and along roads where practical. Private property inspection programs have largely mirrored the adjusted operational programs.

A limited number of property inspections for Blackberry and GPG were completed in early March along with the second reinspections of all priority aquatic weed sites. High Risk Site (HRS) inspections and urban surveys have been given increased emphasis with select suburbs targeted for control. Weeds identified as part of the urban inspection program include Pampas grass, Rhus tree and Cats Claw creeper.

The Parthenium weed incursion continues to require monthly inspections and control. .

A total of 520 parcels of land were inspected over the last three months. Of these parcels, 91 recorded the presence of one or more priority weed. 420 parcels recorded nil infestation. 9 properties involved extension work. Of the 91 properties inspected and recorded with a priority weed, 61 were primary inspections and 10 reinspections. 20 involved control work on public reserves or council controlled roads.

No Section 123 Individual Biosecurity Directions have been issued. No entries have been undertaken.

Inspection and control of High Risk Pathways has continued.

[Attachment 1](#) (Figure1) provides a breakdown of IDWA weed activity data for the period March 2022 to May 2022 as reported under BIS.

Inspection and treatment programs for the winter growing weeds noted above is expected to continue through to July to be followed by inspection/control for Boneseed in August.

Chief Weeds Officer (CWO) - David Pomery

Month of March 2022

- Week 1 – Staff Training- Implement TCP
 - Resident complaints – K/S/W
 - Prohibited Matter inspections - Frogbit
- Week 2 – General administration duties
 - IDWA Annual and quarterly reports
- Week 3 – General administration duties
 - Parthenium weed inspection & control
- Week 4 – NSW Weeds Conference- Albury
- Week 5 – General administration duties

Month of April 2022

- Week 1 – LLS small grants program – site inspections and applications.
- Week 2 – High risk pathway inspections- K/S/W
 - Parthenium weed inspection & control
- Week 3 – Annual leave
- Week 4 – Annual leave

Month of May 2022

- Week 1 – Drone spraying - Bass Point
 - General administration duties
- Week 2 – CRIFP inspections + Coomaditchy Lagoon assessment
 - General administration duties
- Week 3 – RWC meeting – Batemans Bay- review RSWMP
 - CRIFP applications
- Week 4 – Parthenium weed inspection & control
 - CRIFP applications
 - General administration duties

Other time spent on property inspection office time, report writing and general correspondence. Time was also spent supervising staff and contractors and organising work programs.

Inspector - Tony Martin

Month of March 2022

- Week 1 – Staff Training- Implement TCP
 - High Risk Site (HRS) inspections – Kiama
- Week 2 – High Risk Site (HRS) inspections – Shellharbour
- Week 3 – High Risk Site (HRS) inspections – Wollongong
- Week 4 – NSW Weeds Conference 2022- Albury
- Week 5 –Property inspections- Office.
 - Resident complaints- K/S/W

Month of April 2022

Week 1 – 3rd Reinspections – (various) – W/S/K

Week 2 – Annual leave

Week 3 – Annual leave

Week 4 – Aquatic weed reinspections – Wollongong

Month of May 2022

Week 1 – Drone spraying – Bass Point

Aquatic weed reinspections – Wollongong

Week 2 – Aquatic weed reinspections – Kiama / Shellharbour

Week 3 – Regional eradicate weeds inspection program - Helensburgh - Wollongong

Week 4 – Regional eradicate weeds inspection program – Fairy Meadow to Corrimal - Wollongong

Operator – Mathew DeFaveri

Month of March 2022

Week 1 – Staff Training- Implement TCP

Week 2 – Inclement weather

Week 3 – Parthenium weed control

Week 4 – NSW Weeds Conference 2022- Albury

Week 5 – Ludwigia control – W/S/K

Month of April 2022

Week 1 – Ludwigia control – W/S/K

Week 2 – Reserve spraying – Bitou bush – Kiama

Week 3 – Private works + reserve spraying – Bitou bush -Shellharbour

Week 4 – Inclement weather

Month of May 2022

Week 1 – Drone spraying – Bass Point

Private works

Week 2 – Inclement weather

Week 3 – Private works + reserve treatment – Groundsel Bush – Wollongong

Week 4 – Reserve treatment- Groundsel Bush – Wollongong

Casual staff

Month of March 2022

Week 1 – Inclement weather

Week 2 – Inclement weather

Week 3 – Reserve spraying- Blackberry- Kiama

Week 4 - Private works + reserve spraying- Blackberry- Kiama

_Week 5 – Inclement weather

Month of April 2022

Week 1 – Reserve spraying- Blackberry- Shellharbour

Week 2 – Reserve spraying – Bitou bush- Shellharbour

Week 3 – Reserve spraying – Bitou bush- Shellharbour

Week 4 - Private works + reserve spraying- Bitou bush- Shellharbour

Month of May 2021

Week 1 – Private works

Week 2 – Inclement weather

Week 3 - Private works + regional eradicate weed control program- Helensburgh – Wollongong

Week 4 – Reserve spraying- aquatics - K/S/W

Casual staff employed up to 5 days per week (weather permitting).

2. Bitou bush drone spraying program – Winter 2022.

Following the review into aerial spraying of Bitou bush, investigations into alternate technologies were undertaken with a trial of drone technology at Bass Point recently completed.

Hunter Precision Agriculture P/L were contracted to undertake the trial which was completed on the 3rd and 4th May.

Although results are still too early to ascertain, the entire foreshore area on the southern side of Bass Point reserve from Maloney's Bay to Bushrangers Bay was treated. Approximately 3.5 ha was treated using only 65 litres of chemical mix.

Notification was as per the Pesticides Notification Plan 2022- 2026 and the program was carried out according to recommendations contained in the *Best Practice Guidelines for Aerial Spraying of Bitou Bush in New South Wales* published by the Department of Environment and Conservation.

This matter is open for discussion.





3. 21st NSW Weeds Conference- Albury - March 21-24.

[Attachment 2](#) provides a written summary of the NSW Weeds Conference held in Albury and attended by IDWA staff. .

. This matter is open for discussion.

4. LLS Weed Control Grants

The IDWA has been successful in applying for a number of small grants that became available through South East Local Land Services during the current reporting period. The grants were open to any Local Control Authority in the SE LLS region and were to be used to fund priority weed projects that supported activities and outcomes being undertaken as part of the SE Weeds Action Program and aligned with the objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan

The CWO applied for four projects and was successful in getting all projects accepted. A total of \$44,000.00 was received. Projects funded included:

SE Local Land Services weed control program

- \$44,000.00 was received to undertake 4 projects addressing the highest priority weeds in the Illawarra.

1. **Bitou bush containment program** - Scarborough - \$27,000.00

A reasonably significant but isolated infestation of Bitou bush is found along a cliff line location at Scarborough, northern Wollongong. Access is extremely difficult and requires a combination of rope access and on ground control involving splatter gun / cut paint. The use of drone technology will be used to target outlier plants not accessible by foot or rope. This funding will be used for the primary control of Bitou bush plants at the target site with the objective to fully control this infestation such that future operations will only require ongoing maintenance for regrowth/missed plants.

2. **Giant Parramatta grass (GPG) roadside boom spraying** - \$5,000.00

The IDWA implements an annual roadside spraying program to control the regional priority weed GPG along its priority and high risk pathways, so as to protect priority assets such as dairy farms from the invasion of this weed. Most of the work carried out involves spot spraying of infestations each autumn. A number of council managed roads in the Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama LGAs have seen a marked increase in density of this weed such that they now require boom spraying to control. To support the annual spot spraying program and continue to protect priority assets which adjoin these roads, funding of \$5,000.00 has been secured to target identified roads using contractors equipped with boom spray apparatus. It is envisaged the boom spraying program will significantly reduce infestation levels such that future works will once again be incorporated into the annual spot spraying program.

3. **Regional eradicate weeds program**- \$5,000.00

In an effort to eradicate some of the highest risk weeds in the SE region, as detailed in the SE RSWMP, the IDWA sought funding of \$5,000.00 to undertake a thorough roadside and reserve spray control program to target known infestations of Groundsel bush, Ming asparagus, Pink Pampas grass, *Ludwigia peruviana* and *Ludwigia longifolia*. All plants are listed as regional priority weeds for eradication in the South East RSWMP and hence are of the highest priority to control. All plants are emerging weeds in the Illawarra and if not managed effectively could easily spread throughout the Illawarra and other parts of the SE where these weeds have not yet established. All plants are found to varying extent in the Illawarra and are normally targeted for control over the autumn months when actively growing and most visible. Funding was sought to deliver and fast track the eradication objective for these weeds.

4. **Water hyacinth control program** - \$7,000.00

Water hyacinth is listed as a State priority weed for containment under a Biosecurity Zone. In support of the containment approach at the State level, the IDWA has implemented its own containment/eradication strategy at the local level to prevent the weeds spread throughout the SE LLS region. By developing a strategic approach to management aimed at fully and continuously suppressing and destroying all infestations, aiming at local eradication where possible, it is hoped that prevention of spread of Water hyacinth will be achieved. In this respect funding was sought to help manage and /or eradicate two infestations of Water hyacinth found at Coomaditchy Lagoon and Jerarra dam, both listed EECs and high priority sites for weed control.

Both infestations of Water hyacinth are found in two large water bodies covering a total of 14 ha (Jerrara dam -9ha + Coomditchie Lagoon- 5 ha). Water hyacinth has been contained at Jerrara dam through an annual ongoing program of chemical control and physical removal where appropriate, however, being such a large water body access to outlier infestations has been difficult. The Coomaditchy Lagoon infestation is a new incursion and requires additional funding to effectively manage.

To ensure both infestations are effectively controlled a combination of boat access and on ground control involving high volume spraying is required. Due to limited funding control via boat access has not been possible and hence full control of both these sites has been constrained. Additional funding was sought to undertake a boat spraying program that would see full control of remaining difficult to access plants with the objective of fully controlling both infestations so that future operations will only require ongoing maintenance for regrowth.

This matter is open for discussion.

5. Parthenium Weed New Incursion Funding

The IDWA has been successful in securing an additional \$4,407.00 from SE LLS to undertake further surveillance activities on Parthenium weed at Broughton Village for the 2022/23 year. The funds come on top of the \$10,000.00 received off Local Land Services in February 2021 to contain the initial breakout and \$22,000.00 received in 2021/22 from NSW DPI to continue the program over the last 12 months. The \$4,407.00 will be used next growing season to utilise the dog detection unit as a clearance activity in areas where Parthenium weed has not been found for several months.

An additional \$7,000.00 has been requested off NSW DPI for the 2022/23 year to continue staff surveillance activities throughout the 22/23 season. Notification has just been received of the success of this application.

6. Advancing Pest Animal and Weed Control Solutions Competitive Grant Round

Weed managers guide to Remote Detection: Understanding opportunities and limitations of multi-resolution and multi-modal technologies for remote detection of weeds in heterogeneous landscapes.

As previously advised \$600,000.00 over 3 years will be provided to Charles Sturt University through the [Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation](#) to develop a Weed Managers guide to remote detection to assist in understanding the limitations and opportunities of multi-resolution and multi-modal technologies for remote detection of weeds in complex landscapes. The project to which the IDWA is a partner aims to better use the technologies to rapidly detect weeds in mixed landscapes, such as native grasslands and woodlands, coastal dunes, alpine areas, and other diverse natural systems.

Remote detection is a 'game changer' for weed management but current high-tech systems are expensive and inaccessible for most land managers. This project will use nationally-significant 'model' weed systems to test the limitations of high-resolution colour, multispectral and hyperspectral technologies across various airborne platforms (drone, satellite) using multi-modal machine learning to detect weeds in vegetative stages within heterogeneous landscapes.

This research will inform development of an information portal for weed managers to understand opportunities and limitations of remote detection technologies in complex landscapes. Decision support will enable targeted investment and optimal usage of aerial technology and image analysis. A Community of Practice will enhance research to end-user interactions facilitate improvements and application of technologies. Guidelines will educate and empower land managers to use remote detection technology for a range of weeds and invaded landscapes, dramatically improving the mapping and management of weeds in heterogeneous environmental and agricultural landscapes.

Killalea State Park has been selected as a trial site for the project using Bitou bush as the target weed. Trial work is expected to commence the week beginning 20th June. A copy of the latest newsletter is attached ([Attachment 3](#)) for members information.

This matter is open for discussion.

7. Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program – 2022/23

Grants totalling \$53,150.00 were submitted for Bitou Bush control on Crown Land at three sites, Perkins Beach, Bass Point and Bevan's Island.

Commaditchy Lagoon and East Corrimal beach were not applied for in this round as Coomaditchy Lagoon has now been transferred to the Local Aboriginal Lands Council and is no longer Vacant Crown Land and is therefore ineligible for further funding. East Corrimal beach has secured additional funding over the next five years from another source and was considered sufficiently funded to continue the CRIFP started in 2021/22

Perkins Beach - \$21,000
Bevans Island \$10,650.00
Bass Point \$21,500.00

Should funding prove successful \$53,150.00 (ex GST) will be distributed directly to member councils Wollongong and Shellharbour with the IDWA coordinating operational activities. Notification is not expected to be received in relation to the applications until at least November. .

8. Coomaditchy Lagoon – Water hyacinth

A new infestation of Water Hyacinth on Coomaditchy lagoon at Kemblawarra has attracted some public and media attention recently as it continues to spread over the lagoon. A combination of ongoing inclement weather and the fact that the site is a culturally and environmentally significant area, has to date limited the IDWA from actively controlling the outbreak. The infestation first reported in February has only had some limited ground spraying undertaken to date with persistent wet weather preventing access to the site. Being a culturally and environmentally significant site, a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) also needed to be undertaken before any operational activities could be implemented. With the REF now complete the IDWA is just waiting for a break in the weather to schedule further control works utilising boat based equipment.

[Attachment 4](#) is an article published by the Illawarra Mercury 7 May 2022 detailing the Water hyacinth situation.

This matter is open for discussion.

9. Budget Summary of Expenses Incurred and Accrued to 1 June 2022

	Budget 2021-2022	Actual to 1 June 2022	Draft Budget 2022-23
Income			
WAP Program			
Council contributions	68,200	68,200	75,972
State government Grant	100,000	101,472	103,500
Sub- Total	168,200	169,672	179,472
Other Programs			
			-
<u>VCL Program</u>			
Council contributions	14,100	14,100	10,400
Grant	112,000	112,093	53,150
<u>Widespread Weed control program</u>			
Council contributions	75,000	75,000	78,900
<u>IDWA General administration</u>			
Council contributions	4,947	4,947	5,000
<u>NSW WAP New Incursion Program</u>			
Council contributions	8,750	8,750	2,500
Grant	22,000	22,000	11,407
<u>LLS Weed Control Grants</u>			
Council contributions	-	-	-
Grant	44,000	44,000	-
<u>LLS Small Grants</u>			
Council contributions	-	-	2,500
Grant	-	-	12,240
<u>Bald Hill Boneseed program</u>			
Grant	6,000	6,000	4,000
Sub Total	286,797	286,797	180,097
Biosecurity inspection fees	-	-	-
Sundry income (interest)		263	1,000
Leaseback	9,000	7,680	9,000
Private Works	70,000	40,093	70,000
Sub Total	79,000	48,036	80,000
TOTAL	533,997	504,505	439,569

	Budget 2021-2022	Actual to 1 June 2022	Draft Budget 2022-23
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Expenditure			
WAP Program			
Management of high risk sites	8,000	10,927	9,000
Management of high risk pathways	7,000	8,565	8,000
Property inspections	90,000	101,281	98,500
Urban inspections	9,000	3,800	10,000
Reinspections (compliance)	31,000	22,561	29,000
Inspection & control of priority sites	13,000	12,560	13,472
Community awareness and participation (staff publicity)	3,000	2,365	5,500
Skilled workforce (staff training)	5,200	11,700	4,000
Reporting/administration (regional coordination).	2,000	4,543	2,000
Sub- Total	168,200	178,302	179,472
Other Programs			
IDWA General Administration	4,947	4,989	5,000
Widespread Weed Control Program	75,000	93,187	78,900
VCL Program	126,100	15,433	63,550
NSW WAP New incursion Program	30,750	10,681	13,907
LLS Weed Control Grants	44,000	2,446	-
Bald Hill Boneseed Program	6,000	6,000	4,000
LLS Small Grants	-	-	14,740
SUB -Total	286,797	132,736	180,097
Private Works	30,000	32,157	32,000
Sub Total	30,000	32,157	32,000
TOTAL	484,997	343,195	391,569
Credit (Debit)	49,000	161,310	48,000

Attachment 1:

Figure 1.

