



Victorian Pest Management

A Framework for Action

Public Land Pest Management Strategy



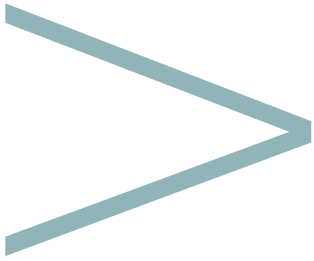
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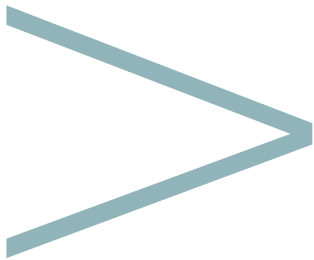
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Public Land Pest Management Strategy

(incorporating the Good Neighbour Program)

Reasons for Government investment in public land pest management

In Victoria, approximately one-third of the State is Crown land (7.8 million hectares). This public land is managed for a variety of uses. Forty-nine percent is managed as parks and reserves, forty five percent is managed as forests and the remaining six percent, incorporating thousands of small parcels, is managed for community, conservation or operational uses. The State Government, statutory authorities and municipalities also manage freehold land to which they have title; this is also considered public land. In addition, lessees and Committees of Management have delegated responsibility to manage specific areas of public land.

Pest management is a major component of the management of public land. It contributes to meeting the strategic priorities and objectives of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) – ecologically sustainable development, enhanced biodiversity, improved natural resource management and effective community involvement in decision making. Public land pest management is also an integral part of the sustainable and integrated management approach of our catchments that includes both public and private land.

The community expects the Government and those with delegated responsibilities to effectively manage public land, including minimising the impact of pests on the biodiversity and other values of the public land, and the agricultural values on adjoining private lands.

Scope of the public land pest management strategy

The approaches described in this Strategy are consistent with the aims and outcomes of the Victorian Pest Management – A Framework for Action (VPMF) and deal with public land pest management in Victoria. This covers responsibility where pest management benefits the land itself or addresses damage caused to the community by pests on public land impacting on adjoining private land.

Goal

Minimise the impact of pests on public land and their establishment on adjacent private land.

Aims

The aims of pest management on public land are to:

1. Minimise the impact of pests on public land management values including:
 - Biodiversity;
 - Forestry; and
 - Recreation and community use.
2. Minimise the impact of pests that have originated on public land and spread onto adjacent private land.

Implementation of the Strategy will effectively coordinate a strategic and sustained public land management approach that:

- Promotes and ensures an integrated, coordinated and cooperative approach to pest management within catchments and across the State, regardless of land tenure, through effective partnerships;
- Contributes to regional pest management priority setting processes;
- Ensures NRE and its contractors are fully aware of the economic, environmental and social impact and threats posed by pests;
- Ensures NRE staff and contractors are skilled to undertake pest management work, ensuring activities do not damage land and water resources, nor those of their neighbours;
- Monitors pest invasions and evaluate the effectiveness of pest management techniques;
- Demonstrates commitment to act early to detect and respond to the emergence of new pests likely to cause serious damage; and
- Aims for significant reduction in the impact of existing pest invasions in line with their actual and potential economic and environmental impacts on both public lands, and on the wider community.

Stakeholders in public land management

Government and community stakeholders in public land management include:

- State Government: NRE, Parks Victoria and other Government agencies eg linear reserve managers;
- Statutory authorities and municipalities that manage freehold land to which they have title;
- CMAs and the Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC);
- Statutory authorities and municipalities that manage public land on behalf of the Government, including Committees of Management.
- Federal Government; Environment Australia and Bureau of Resource Science, (Natural Heritage Trust, National Feral Animal Control Program);
- Vertebrate Pest Committee (the lead committee providing technical and policy advice on matters related to the prevention and management of vertebrate pests to governments throughout Australia and New Zealand);
- Key industry groups such as the Victorian Farmers Federation and Victorian National Parks Association, animal welfare groups and conservation groups;
- Private landholders (including companies, corporations and Landcare groups); and
- Interstate pest management authorities/government institutes.

The roles of the key agencies that are involved in public land management are set out below.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment

NRE is the main State Government department responsible for the administration and management of Victoria's resources and public land and waters. NRE has policy interpretation and legislative responsibility for the animals and weeds listed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and coordinates the implementation of the Government's pest management programs. These programs are delivered through the direct management of public lands and through the provision of behavioural change programs (extension, enforcement and targeted incentives) for private land programs. NRE is also responsible for delivering cost-effective advisory, educational and regulatory services in sustainable land and water management and agricultural industry development.

Public land managers within NRE – Forests Division, Parks Flora and Fauna Division, through Parks Victoria, and Land Victoria - are the NRE Divisions responsible for the management of most public land in Victoria. Public land management is carried out in accordance with the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy, which is a whole-of-government document for the Victorian community with NRE being the lead agency for its implementation. The Biodiversity Strategy details how to achieve the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* objectives of biodiversity conservation as well as encouraging community involvement and includes key directions for the managements of pests.

Victorian Catchment Management Council

The VCMC was established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act*. Its role is to advise the Minister for Environment and Conservation on natural resource management issues and report on the quality of land and water resources.

Catchment Management Authorities

The major role of Victoria's CMAs is to ensure the sustainable development of natural resource-based industries; the maintenance, and where possible, improvement of land and water resources; and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. CMAs have a responsibility to implement their regional Catchment and Action Plans and inform their regional communities about the agreed programs, priorities and funding for pest management. CMAs guide the implementation of catchment priorities through advice to the State Government and Regional Assessment Panels on regional priorities for funding.

VicRoads

VicRoads (or local government acting as its agent) manages roads declared under the *Transport Act* (Freeways, Highways, Main Roads, Forest Roads and Tourist Roads) and is responsible for the implementation of pest management as defined under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* on these roads. VicRoads, in partnership with other stakeholders, implements strategies to ensure sustainable roadside biodiversity.

Water Managers

Waterway managers have an important role to play in reducing the impact of pests through appropriate channel or river frontage management works. Public waterway managers include Rural Water Authorities who are responsible for irrigation and drainage channels, CMAs who act as inland water managers, including unlicensed river frontages and Urban Water Authorities who are responsible for specific water catchment areas.

Local government

Local government has an important role to play in natural resource management as it has relatively broad powers in relation to environmental control, protection and conservation, as well as being a land manager. Local government, through the local planning scheme, determines the appropriate use and development of land. As part of the scheme, they must have regard to relevant aspects of regional catchment strategies and any associated implementation plan or strategy approved under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act*. Statutory planning provides an essential framework for future sustainable regional development. Local government (when acting as an agent for VicRoads) also has responsibilities for pest management on roadsides under its management.

Delegated managers

Lessees and Committees of Management have a delegated role in managing public land with their responsibilities detailed either through a lease or other such formal written agreement.

Public land pest management

Forest Management Plans and Park Management Plans are the principle strategic documents for forest land and land managed by Parks Victoria, and incorporate pest management as a component of the Plans. Regional Services and Parks Victoria staff work with the respective Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to implement these plans. Priority pest management in the plans will be primarily directed to the protection of significant natural values of land being managed and to meet community 'good neighbour' expectations

The community has high expectations for Government management of public land. Strong interest is regularly expressed for both minimising the impact of pests on the conservation values of the public land and in preventing pests from invading adjoining private land.

General principles for pest management on public lands:

1. Like all land managers, public land managers have responsibilities under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act* to manage pests on their land. This responsibility is acknowledged and accepted. This is also the responsibility of delegated managers of public land such as lessees and Committees of Management.
2. Where pest management on public land primarily benefits the land itself, such as the biodiversity conservation and the protection of the natural resource base, management is the core responsibility of the relevant public land manager.
3. Each land manager will develop programs based on the strategic directions detailed in the VPMF, in particular, Chapter 3 – Pest Management Principles and Chapter 7 - Public Land Management. Funding for these programs will be allocated from the land manager's annual budget and regional programs included in the whole of catchment coordinated reporting process to be undertaken by CMAs.
4. Where pests on public land managed by NRE impact on adjoining private land, pest management will be the responsibility of the relevant public land manager and met through the Good Neighbour Program (GNP). Priorities will be determined by CMAs and be in accord with priorities detailed in CMA Action Plans.

The Good Neighbour Program

The GNP is an essential element in the Government's approach to pest management on public land. The GNP is managed by NRE to address damage caused to the community by pests that originate on public land managed by NRE and disperse onto adjacent private land. The GNP provides the mechanism for a coordinated and prioritised approach to treating pest problems on the public land/private land boundaries according to the Regional Catchment Strategies and Action Plans.

Participating NRE businesses are:

- Parks, Flora and Fauna Division who ensure pest management in National and State Parks and on flora and fauna reserves through Parks Victoria; and
- Regional Services who control state managed forest reserves, tenured and unreserved Crown land, Crown land reserves and Crown water frontages, and cooperative roadside projects and landowner facilitation of projects on private lands to complement adjoining public land pest management programs.

The GNP seeks to:

- Make real gains in the management of priority pest plants and proclaimed pest animal infestations within defined project areas of public land frontages;
- Enhance the productivity of primary production enterprises through the management of pest plants and animals on adjoining public land;
- Promote the Government as a 'good neighbour' when it comes to pest management on public land;
- Ensure that pest management on public land takes account of community priorities and actions;
- Complement other public land natural resource management objectives through appropriate pest plant and animal management on public land frontages; and
- Integrate pest management with other natural resource management objectives, including:
 - Revegetation;
 - Protection of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna;
 - Conservation of native plant communities;
 - Forests production;
 - Soil conservation; and
 - Salinity management.

Victorian Legislation

The principal legislation relating to the management of declared pest animals and weeds in Victoria is the *Catchment and Land Protection Act*, which is administered by NRE. Under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act*, pest animals such as rabbits, feral pigs and feral goats, wild dogs and foxes are declared as established pest animals and specific pest plants are declared as noxious weeds. All land managers have the responsibility to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate pest animals, and to control and prevent the spread of noxious weeds, from their land.

Other Victorian legislation that is relevant to public land pest management includes the *National Parks Act 1975*, *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, *Conservation, Forest and Lands Act 1987* and the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, *Forests Act 1958*, *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Numerous other Victorian Acts also relate to public land weed management in Victoria. For example, at least nine Acts make provision for the management of weeds along roadsides including the *Transport Act 1983* and the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*.

Roadside pest management

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act* adopts a shared approach to managing weeds and rabbits on roadsides. It recognises management responsibilities of those managing the land, the responsibilities of those causing the problem, and identifies those who benefit from action taken.

The responsibility for eradicating and controlling the spread of weeds and rabbits on roadsides depends on both the category of the weed and the class of road. Currently on behalf of the State Government, NRE attempts to eradicate State Prohibited Weeds on all land and Regionally Prohibited Weeds from roadsides, and VicRoads (or local governments acting as its agent) has responsibility for managing all noxious weeds (except State Prohibited Weeds) and rabbits on the

declared road network which includes highways, freeways, main roads and tourist roads. Landowners, both public and private, are responsible for the control of Regionally Controlled Weeds and rabbits on the adjoining "local" road.

Strategic approach for public land pest management in Victoria

Strategic public land pest management planning in Victoria, including monitoring and review of the VPMF and ongoing research, will be coordinated at an NRE corporate level.

Strategy 1 Improving the process of setting priorities and decision making

NRE will allocate appropriate levels of funding to pest management to meet their responsibilities as effective stewards of public lands, including their responsibility as a neighbour. Given that funding for pest management will never be sufficient to eliminate the problem completely, the key is maximising the benefits of the funds available by prioritising activities.

Biodiversity protection/threat abatement planning

Pest management on public land is designed to contribute to meeting the strategic priorities of ecologically sustainable development, enhanced biodiversity values, improved natural resource management and effective community engagement in decision making. Pest management is a major component of effective stewardship of public land and is an integral part of the sustainable and integrated land management in Victoria's catchments.

Pests are a major ongoing threat to biodiversity. Biodiversity protection will therefore be implemented across public land in Victoria according to the risk posed by pests to biodiversity, and the severity of that threat, consistent with the priorities of the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy. In accordance with the Biodiversity Strategy this approach will be based on the results of Bioregional Network Analyses and decision support tools that have been used to prioritise risk and appropriate responses.

A bioregion is an area defined primarily by biological and geographic criteria and is big enough to take into account the complex relationships between species and landscapes, as the basis for maintaining the integrity of plant and animal communities, yet small enough to group issues together and concentrate on achievable tasks. Bioregional Networks provide the framework for bioregional planning and reporting and consist of clusters of neighbouring bioregions across Victoria that involve all major biodiversity asset managers (Parks Victoria, NRE, CMAs, local government) with their role being to share detailed information on the conservation of biodiversity assets.

Agricultural protection

Government investment will also focus on fulfilling the responsibility of public land managers to act as 'good neighbours' in addressing the Regional Catchment Strategies and Action Plans of the CMAs. Where such programs can benefit biodiversity outcomes on private land, a higher level of Government investment may be warranted.

Objective 1 – Ensure the effective prioritisation of NRE’s public land effort

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
1. Two highest priorities for NRE public land pest management activities will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i biodiversity conservation through minimising the impact of pests on public land; and ii agricultural protection through reducing the impact of pests on public land neighbours. 	NRE	Parks Victoria	June 2002 and ongoing
2. A detailed report, including projects and outcomes on all pest management projects on public lands will form part of the annual CMA “whole of catchment” report.	CMA’s	Parks Victoria, NRE	June 2004 and ongoing

Strategy 2 Strategic public land pest management programs

The management of public lands is dealt with under various strategic documents. These include the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy, National Park Management Plans, Forest Management Plans, Roadside Management Plans and plans developed by Committees of Management. In addition, plans that have been developed under the regional catchment planning process such as Regional Catchment Strategies and Action Plans all have linkages with public land management. The management of existing as well as new and emerging pests needs to be a component in these plans. In addition to existing pests, effective responses to emerging disease outbreaks require emergency disease planning at a national, state and territory and district level and the involvement of both animal and health authorities and emergency management organisations. The basis for this planning is contained in the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN). Given that the most likely vectors of rabies (foxes) and foot and mouth disease (feral pigs) are found on public land significant activity would be required to contain and eliminate the disease outbreaks. Specific technical response plans for Rabies and Foot-and mouth are included under the AUSVETPLAN.

Objective 2 – Improve the process of making decisions in pest management

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
3. Public land pest management will form part of a priority setting model that will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i developed that considers economic, environmental and social impact of pests, particularly rabbits, foxes and weeds, recommendations under the regional planning process and of Action Statements under threat abatement planning; and ii applied at a state and regional level, to determine priorities for action on both public and private lands. 	NRE	VCMC, Parks Victoria, CMA’s, municipalities, landowners, Landcare, industry and community groups, delegated managers	Draft Process June 2003 and ongoing
	NRE	Parks Victoria, CMA’s municipalities, landowners, Landcare, industry and community groups, delegated managers	December 2003 and ongoing

Strategy 3 Continue and enhance the Good Neighbour Program

The GNP will continue as an essential element in the Government’s approach to pest management focusing on pest problems that originate on public land managed by NRE and impact on adjacent private land.

Objective 3 – Ensure strategic planning

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
4. Ensure pest management is a component of all public land plans.	Public land managers	Landowners, Landcare, industry and community groups, delegated managers	Ongoing
5. Maintain linkages to the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN)	NRE	Parks Victoria, CMAs	Ongoing

Strategy 4 Build partnerships to ensure effective statewide and regional coordination

Effective pest management programs cannot be delivered by Government alone. Partnerships between all levels of Government, the wider community and key conservation industry and farming groups are a key element in the successful implementation of this Strategy. Community involvement in pest management is often limited to those in the community who have an appreciation of and commitment to the issues involved. Typically, farmers and Landcare groups are involved with economic pests, and conservationists are involved with environmental pests. NRE has successfully established partnerships in pest management with State and local government agencies, industry groups, CMAs and the community in general. However, the management of pests at a State and regional level requires a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure a clear strategic focus for public land pest management and to widen community involvement and understanding of public land pest management through the CMAs. To ensure this occurs, coordination and reporting relationships will be established across Government, NRE and catchments.

In addition, some aspects of pest management on public land, particularly ripping of rabbit warrens, have the potential to adversely impact on Aboriginal cultural sites. Effective engagement is therefore required between Aboriginal communities and NRE and Parks Victoria to explore and discuss Aboriginal culture as well as the practicalities of managing pests in known or other likely sites of cultural significance.

Objective 4– Ensure the effective continuance of the Good Neighbour Program

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
6. The Good Neighbour Program will:			
i be accepted by NRE public land managers as the principal means of demonstrating the Government's 'duty of care' to the wider community on pest problems that originate on public land and impact on adjacent private land;	NRE	Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
ii have common objectives consistent with the integrated catchment management and pest management objectives of the relevant Catchment Management Authorities ; and	NRE	CMAs, Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
iii focus on projects to address the economic and social threats to the community from pest problems on public lands that impact on adjoining private land.	NRE, CMAs	Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing

Strategy 5 Best practice pest management

Management techniques will be adaptive based upon the appropriate application of research findings, monitoring and review. All techniques used will be effective, safe, humane and appropriate to minimising the impacts on the economic and natural resource base. There will be a shift of vertebrate pest management emphasis from pests killed to damage limitation. In addition, management programs will take into consideration methods that do not have adverse on-site and off-site impacts.

Regardless of the technique used, any program needs to be evaluated to ensure it meets appropriate best practice pest management, i.e. every pest management program should be appropriately planned and coordinated using the most effective, safe and humane methods available and which are aimed at long-term management.

In addition, pest management programs in either geographical or species isolation is rarely effective. Successful pest management programs require integrated action so that they are part of the holistic management of land and water at the state, regional and local level. Integration of pest management programs is also required between pest species eg. fox and rabbit, so a reduction in one pest species does not lead to an increase in another, or adversely impact on native species.

Objective 5 – Ensure effective statewide and regional coordination

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
7. Provide a coordinated and strategic public land focus across:			
i whole of government and NRE who will ensure that it is part of a consistent and agreed statewide pest management focus;	NRE	VCMC, other Government agencies and Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
ii the Good Neighbour Program by:			
• using the existing CMA Regional Assessment Panel to consider proposed projects for funding on the private/public land boundary; and	CMA	NRE, Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
• ensuring that projects are evaluated as part of a statewide process to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the Program.	NRE, CMA	Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
iii each CMA - who will provide effective communication and a 'whole- of-catchment' reporting process that ensures that public land management is reported as part of a coordinated pest management program for the region.	CMA	NRE, Parks Victoria, Other state and local government agencies, Committees of Management landowners, Landcare, industry and community groups	June 2004 and ongoing
8. Develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities to ensure an effective process for dealing with public land pest management activities including reporting and developing regional and local working relationships.	NRE, Parks Victoria	Aboriginal communities	December 2003 and ongoing

Strategy 6 Targeted research for best practice management

Research is a key for building the capacity for land and water managers to effect change. The knowledge and understanding that comes from pest research allows managers to develop appropriate management responses. Pest research in general must be able to adapt to new or changed circumstances arising from the constantly evolving natural systems, the impacts of management and the progressive expansion of human activities. Research will play a critical role in developing best practice pest management that is targeted, readily applied to the field and made available to the community. This includes analysing existing management techniques and practices as well as developing new and/or improved management options.

Research to assist in the protection of biodiversity threatened by pests will be coordinated across public and private lands.

Objective 6 – Ensure best practice pest management

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
9. Focus all pest management techniques on the overall objective of limiting damage to biodiversity on public lands and agricultural production on the public and private land boundary.	NRE, Parks Victoria	Other state and local government agencies, delegated managers	June 2003
10. Best practice pest management will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i through appropriately planned and coordinated programs using the most effective safe and humane methods available; ii aimed at maximising protection to biodiversity and productivity values; iii conducted at a scale sufficient to achieve ongoing and sustainable results; iv integrated at state, regional and local level; and v sufficiently resourced to apply the adaptive management approach; and vi communicated to public and private land managers. 	NRE, Parks Victoria	Other state and local government agencies, delegated managers	Ongoing

Strategy 7 Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Monitoring and reporting activities on public land to protect biodiversity will occur within the guidelines provided by established processes such as bioregional planning, the Environmental Information System (EIS) process of Parks Victoria and the Statewide Forest Resource Inventory. NRE will develop a common system to be used by all public land managers, for evaluating threats posed by pests. This system will be developed in conjunction with NRE and the CMAs and will enable a more comprehensive assessment of the threats posed by pests, and the effectiveness of programs in reducing the impact of pests on environmental, economic and social values.

Objective 7 – Ensure effective research provides for best practice pest management

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
11. Coordinate public land research activities to protect biodiversity on both public and private lands threatened by pests.	NRE	Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing
12. Make the results of the completed research available to the community.	NRE	Parks Victoria	June 2003 and ongoing

Objective 8 – Ensure effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Strategic Action	Key Responsibility	Partners	Timeframes
13. Develop an effective system to evaluate the threats posed by pests.	NRE	Parks Victoria, CMAs	Draft Process December 2003 and ongoing
14. Evaluate the results of the Good Neighbour Program annually.	NRE	Parks Victoria, CMAs	June 2003 and ongoing

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators will be under the following three main headings.

1. Sustaining and/or improving public land values.
2. Acceptable community and stakeholder perception of public land managers as good stewards/managers.
3. Minimising off-site economic and social effects of management of public land.
4. Relevant information recorded on appropriate monitoring systems.

