

North Central Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy 2010–15

Executive Summary



Introduction

Invasive plants and animals (IPA) are a major cause of degradation to North Central Victoria's natural resources - that is, our land, water, biodiversity and farmland assets. IPA management has traditionally represented a significant cost to the Victorian economy. The Victorian Government now recognises that more effective management of IPA is crucial to the environmental, economic and social wellbeing of our region.

In the past, regional weed and rabbit action plans were prepared in Victoria to guide pest planning and management, primarily on private land. However, now it is accepted that all natural resource management practitioners have a duty of care to minimise the negative impact of invasive species on our natural assets. Across Victoria, regional invasive plant and animal strategies are being prepared to reflect the Australian and Victorian biosecurity approach to managing the risk and impact of invasive species across all land tenures.

Biosecurity combines species-led and asset-based approaches to invasive species management to achieve the most beneficial community outcomes from government investment.

The North Central Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy (the Strategy) adopts this biosecurity approach and sets clear goals and actions for invasive species management over the next five years. It has been developed with the input of natural resource management agencies and the community.

The Strategy is a high level document that is used to guide direction for investment and effort. The Strategy lists priority natural assets (see table) and the invasive species that are putting these assets under threat. For the purposes of this

Strategy, natural assets (referred to as assets) are defined as land (including agricultural land), water and biodiversity resources that have environmental, economic and/or social value to the North Central Victorian community.

The Strategy also highlights the importance of coordinated action and community engagement in tackling these issues.

Importantly, the Strategy recognises that there are local or regional-scale invasive species that are not declared Noxious Weeds, but which pose a significant threat in our region. Likewise, the Strategy also recognises that there are certain natural assets in addition to those listed in the priority asset table that are under considerable threat from invasive species. Management of these species and assets has, and should continue to be, an important component of regional invasive species management.

Finally, a regional monitoring and evaluation plan forms part of the Strategy and provides a means for determining the effectiveness of actions over the coming years. This allows for ongoing review and revision of invasive species management priorities as new information emerges.



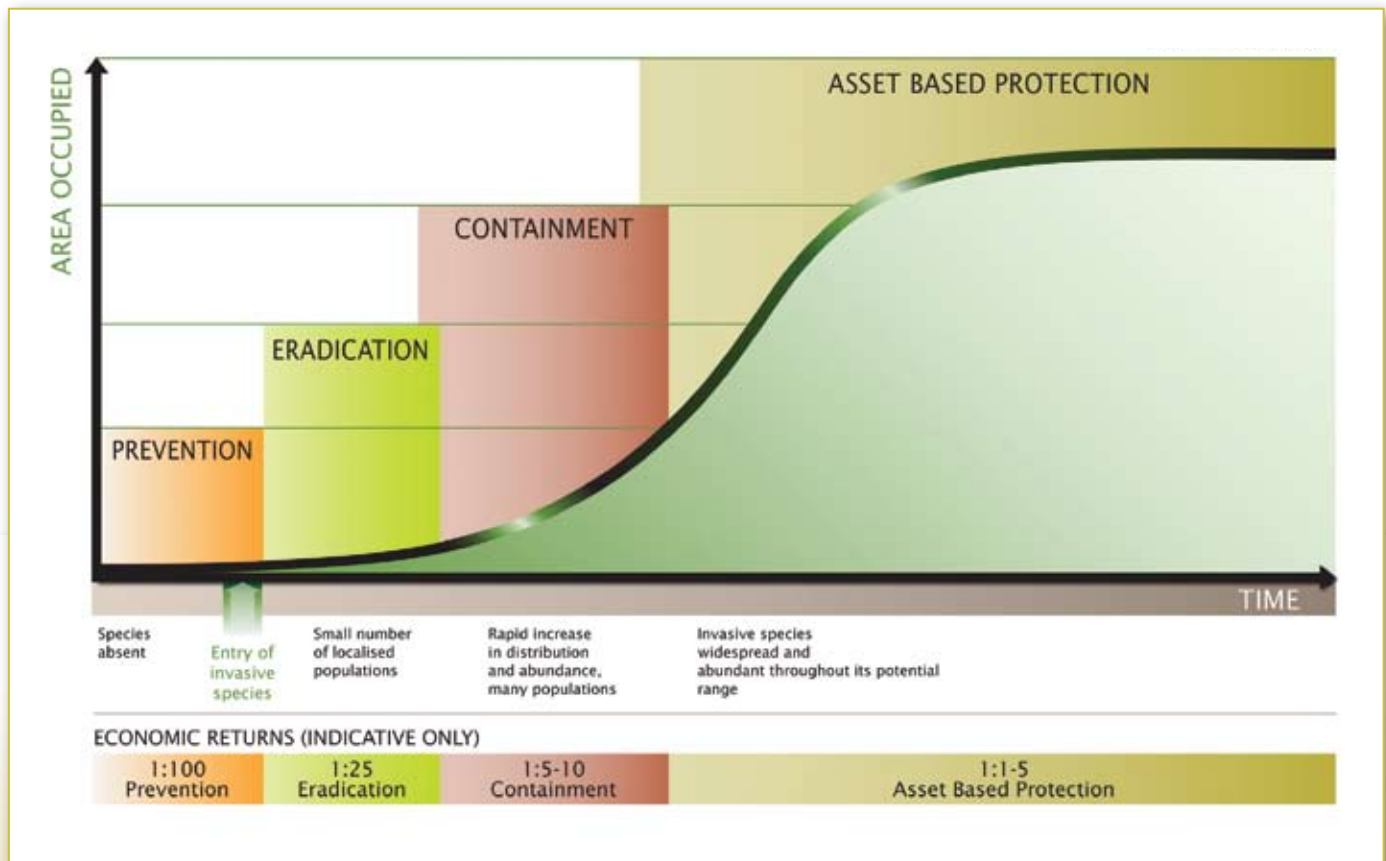
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The strategy

The biosecurity approach assesses the level of risk imposed by a species and uses the 'generalised invasion curve' (Figure 1) to illustrate the four different IPA management principles: prevention, eradication, containment, and asset protection. As shown, the economic returns or community benefit from investing in prevention and eradication far outweigh the return from adopting an asset protection approach. The complexity and cost of each approach increases as you move from prevention to asset protection.

Figure 1: Generalised invasion curve showing the biosecurity approach applied at each stage (DPI 2010)



Program Goals

Goal 1 – Prevention and eradication

Prevent the introduction of new high-risk invasive plants and animals or eradicate those already present (declared or otherwise) in North Central Victoria.

High-risk species suitable for prevention and eradication activities include State Prohibited Weeds and other regionally significant undeclared species that present an unacceptable threat to the region. This goal also includes invasive animal species identified under the Invasive Animal Prevention and Eradication Program, such as the Red-eared Slider Turtle. While the responsibility for actions relating to prevention and eradication of most high-risk species across Victoria lies with the Department of Primary Industries, all land owners have a duty of care to support these actions at a local or regional level.

Goal 2 – Containment

Contain established invasive plants and animals to identified core infestations in North Central Victoria.

Species targeted for statewide containment will typically have a clearly definable core infestation, as well as satellite infestations. A containment approach means that satellite infestations are targeted for eradication, while work on the core infestations focuses on preventing any further spread beyond a defined boundary.

There are significant efforts being made to contain Serrated Tussock on a statewide basis, including activities within North Central Victoria to eradicate all known satellite infestation sites. Other invasive plant species will be progressively investigated for their suitability as targets for statewide containment. The process of declaring a species as a target for containment is being developed by the Department of Primary Industries Biosecurity Victoria.

Goal 3 – Protect assets

Protect priority regional natural assets by reducing the impacts of invasive plants and animals in North Central Victoria.

Once an invasive plant or animal becomes so widespread that containment is no longer possible, the focus of the management effort should change to protection of the region's priority assets (often described as an "asset-based approach").

The asset-based approach involves implementing management actions for a number of threats, including invasive species, to protect identified priority assets.

Goal 4 – Engage the community and stakeholders

Engage the North Central Victorian community in IPA management and develop community awareness and support for the vision and goals of the Strategy.

Effective IPA management in North Central Victoria relies on the involvement of the regional community.

It is important that all stakeholders:

- understand the significance of invasive species in the region
- are aware of their responsibilities in managing them
- have opportunities to participate as partners in all aspects of invasive species management.

The goals of this Strategy will be communicated to stakeholders - particularly those with responsibilities for IPA management. Partners will be engaged in monitoring, evaluation and review processes.

Goal 5 – Manage IPA holistically

Integrate invasive plant and animal management with other NRM programs, plans and partners in North Central Victoria.

IPA does not recognise boundaries or land tenure. In addition, IPA will often be one of many threats to an asset. Without a coordinated approach, management of a single threat like an invasive species may be a wasted effort. Therefore, management should be a holistic, rather than standalone, approach integrated with existing plans and projects. Developing partnerships is integral to creating awareness of opportunities for integrated natural resource management, and has other benefits such as reducing management costs.

Goal 6 Monitor, evaluate and report on outcomes.

Provide a means to measure the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation and to adjust actions accordingly.

Prioritisation

As part of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy renewal, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has adopted the Investment Framework for Environmental Resources (INFFER) process to identify a list of regional assets. The process of identifying assets threatened by IPA resulted in a list of more than 80 assets. To meet the requirements of the biosecurity asset protection approach, the assets were prioritised by the following two criteria: significance of the asset within the North Central CMA region (based on a number of factors such as scale, rarity and environmental status); and the level of IPA threat to the value of the asset. The North Central IPA Working Group, North Central CMA staff and others with natural resource management expertise were involved in the assessment of significance and threat rankings. Where possible, assessments were based on current strategies and databases that could provide information to inform this process.

Assets, significance and threat

Nine priority asset groups have been identified in the Strategy and are summarised in the table below. These priority asset groups will form the basis for seeking investment in asset-based invasive species management after undergoing more comprehensive assessments using INFFER. The INFFER process will assess other threats to assets, existing management strategies, project feasibility, community benefit and likely adoption as part of an integrated natural resource management plan.

Priority asset group	Significant assets	Significance	IPA threat
Gunbower Ramsar site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gunbower Forest / National Park ○ Gunbower Creek Reach 38 ○ Gunbower Creek Reach 39 	Exceptional	High
Threatened grassland remnants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avoca Plains Grasslands ○ Patho Plains ○ Plains Grassland on Victorian Volcanic Plain 	Exceptional	High
Ground-inhabiting animal species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Malleefowl ○ Plains-wanderer ○ Bush Stone-curlew ○ Brolga ○ Carpet Python ○ Grey-crowned Babbler 	Very high	Very high
Threatened plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Threatened orchids ○ Southern Shepherd's Purse ○ Swainson-pea species ○ Broad-lip Diuris 	Very high	High
Valuable roadside vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roadsides assessed as high conservation value across the North Central CMA region 	Very high	High
Large public land reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mt Alexander Regional Park ○ Terrick Terrick National Park ○ Kamarooka section of Greater Bendigo National Park ○ Kooyoora State Park ○ Mount Bolangum Nature Conservation Reserve ○ Hepburn Regional Park ○ Creswick Regional Park 	Very high	High
Murray River riparian area		Very high	Medium
Kerang natural wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First, Second and Third Marsh ○ Lake Bael Bael ○ Wandella Forest ○ Tragowel Swamp 	Very high	Medium
Upper catchment river reaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coliban River headwaters ○ Loddon River Reach 10 ○ Kangaroo Creek Reach 49 (Loddon Basin) ○ Kangaroo Creek Reach 21 (Campaspe Basin) 	Very high	Medium

Implementation

The North Central CMA will coordinate an annual Invasive Plants and Animals forum to regularly review the Strategy's progress towards achieving its goals. The forum will also be used to provide an update to the North Central Victorian community on progress in IPA management, as well as provide research findings and any policy developments.