



TASMANIAN
ABORIGINAL
CENTRE INC.

truwana

WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN





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WARNING:

Community members are warned that this document contains images of our people who have passed away.

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TRUWANA WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

After a long struggle for land rights the Tasmanian Government finally returned truwana to the Aboriginal community on the 10th of May 2005. It is the only parcel of Aboriginal land in Tasmania that has a permanent Aboriginal community presence.





There are some areas on truwana where the natural environment has been significantly altered over the years. Changes in the landscape are largely due to development, increased fire frequency and agriculture.

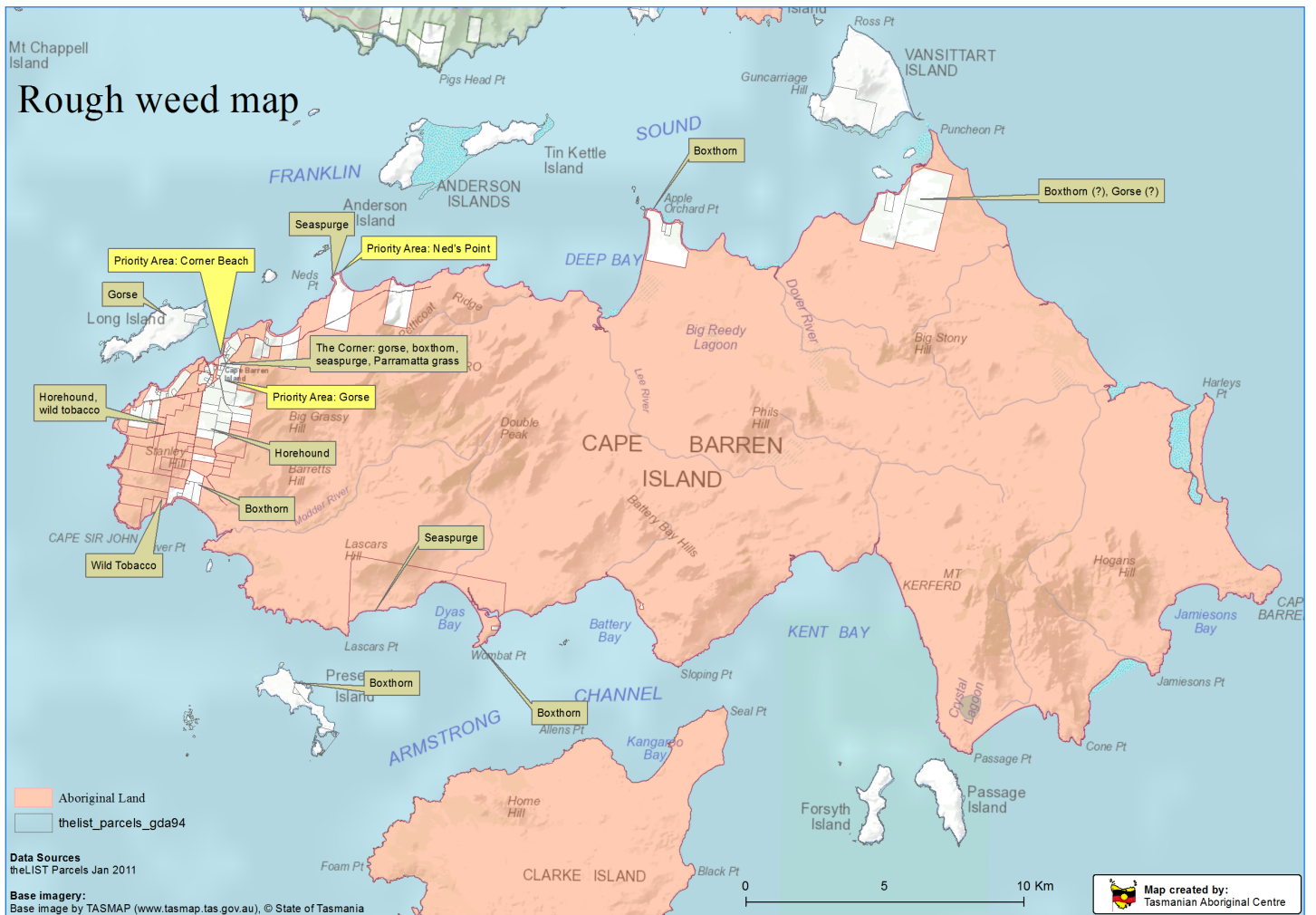
Despite this, there are many environmental values that continue to exist on the island uninterrupted and in good health. Most notable are the heathland, sclerophyll forest and woodland forests. These environments have significant conservation value as they are poorly represented anywhere else in Australia. Currently these environments are at risk of infestation of weeds.

The truwana wetlands are recognised under the Ramsar Convention and are of international significance. The wetlands are currently in excellent health. However, if action is not taken to control weeds on the island, the wetlands could be at risk of infestation. This could undermine their Ramsar listing.



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Rough weed map



SHORT TERM GOALS:

1. Employment in land management for Aboriginal community members who live on truwana.

That removal of weeds provide meaningful and ongoing employment for community members who live on the island.

2. The Corner beach is clear of weeds such as boxthorn, sea spurge and gorse.

The Corner beach is the main beach that families use for recreation and the boxthorn, sea spurge and gorse are impacting on the community's use of the beach.

3. Gorse significantly reduced on the island, particularly around The Corner.

Gorse is invasive and unsightly. If the gorse is not tackled soon it will spread and become increasingly thick around The Corner.

4. Sea spurge removed from Ned's Point community BBQ area

Ned's Point has traditionally been used as a gathering spot on New Year's Day for a big community BBQ and holding annual running races. This has since stopped as the entire point is covered in sea spurge.

Short term goals are goals that the community hope to achieve in two years or less.



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LONG TERM GOALS:

1. truwana clear of boxthorn.

2. Infestations of paramatta grass identified and actively managed.

3. Other weeds such as horehound and wild Tabaco are identified and actively managed.

Long term goals are goals that the community hope to achieve after 2 years:



PRIORITY WEEDS

PROBLEM PLANTS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY



"You know that back paddock, over the back of the corner, that patch where the gorse is really thick, I remember when that used to be just a grassy paddock, but we put a small track through it – the gorse got in there and it just spread. Look at it now, it's so thick, I don't even know if you could still find the track".

BB

GORSE: (ULEX EUROPAEUS)

Gorse is a weed of national significance. It is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness and its potential to spread quickly. Gorse is a weed of national significance. It is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness and its potential to spread quickly.

Gorse is a prickly bush with bright yellow flowers. Gorse grows thick on the ground making it difficult for native vegetation to grow. If gorse is left undisturbed it will grow as high as 3 metres.

Gorse produces a large number of seeds which can remain dormant in the ground for up to 40 years. This means it can be difficult to eradicate. The key to controlling its spread is to prevent flowering or at least reduce its ability to set seed. All control programs require several years of follow-up and many years of vigilance, which may increase the cost several-fold.

It is believed gorse was originally introduced to Australia as an ornamental plant. This was often the way of the white people as they tried to make the Australian landscape appear more European. It is unclear when gorse was introduced to Tasmania, however, the heaviest cover seems to be in the paddocks south of The Corner suggesting it was originally introduced with livestock. The gorse has since established a thick growth in and around The Corner and along the roadways around the island.

Although gorse cover is thick on some parts of the island (both on community and private land) it is very sparse on others. It is believed that with a consistent and well-resourced gorse eradication program the existing gorse growth and the potential for any new spread could be substantially reduced. Once gorse has been removed it is envisaged that those parts of the island will return to natural sheoak forest, heathland or usable pastoral plains.

STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY ERADICATING GORSE FOR GOOD:

1. Protect gorse free areas and prevent further spread (machine hygiene, keeping cattle fenced, killing small seedlings as they appear)

2. Eradicate gorse plants as they are growing (mechanical removal, cut and paste)

3. Kill regrowth from old plants as it occurs (re-checking areas that have been cleared in the past)

4. Follow-up with killing any new seedlings to prevent reinfestation.

****Follow-up is critical –**

As gorse seed can remain in the ground for up to 40 years!



Gorse

"The gorse, it just spreads – especially along the roads. I think there needs to be a buffer created, because once the grader picks up the seeds, they just spread. You can see it all along the roads now- all over the island. There's gorse in a lot of the places where it never used to be at all".

SM



"That boxthorn, once it takes off, it's hard to get rid of. Look at some of the outer islands, they've had crews out there working to get rid of it for years. I never used to see much of it around the coast here, but now, when I walk along the beaches I see seedlings shooting up through the rocks and along the beaches. I try to pull them out when I can, but that's no good; you really need to be cutting and pasting to kill it off completely".

BB

AFRICAN BOXTHORN (LYCIUM FEROCISSIMUM):

African boxthorn is a weed of national significance. It is a spiny shrub that is native to South Africa and was introduced to Australia in the mid-1800s as an ornamental and agricultural hedge plant.

It is unclear when boxthorn was first introduced to truwana. However, it is most likely that boxthorn was introduced by seed through birds, livestock, farm machinery or deliberately introduced as a means to fence livestock in.

Boxthorn is not as heavily established on truwana as it is on some of the outer islands in tayritja like Hummocky and Babel. However, where it is well established – such as Everett's paddocks and Thunder and Lightning Bay - the thickets are dense and are likely to become worse over time if they are not actively managed.

At the moment, boxthorn on truwana is also starting to establish itself along the coastline, the roadsides and the creek. Boxthorn can grow up to 5 meters in height and it produces dense spiny thickets that form impenetrable barriers. This means that once Boxthorn becomes established, it can be very hard to eradicate due to the difficulties faced by those working with it. The spines can become embedded in the skin, which can lead to irritation, rash and sometimes infection. It is important appropriate eye protection and long sleeved work shirts are worn by anybody working to remove boxthorn.

In the past, considerable effort has been made to remove boxthorn on Modder River Station and around The Corner. However, today the seedlings are spreading over the island and smaller plants can be found sprouting around the coastline and roadways with greater frequency. Given that it takes two years for a boxthorn seedling to flower, it is imperative that these smaller plants be eradicated quickly to prevent the weed spreading further.

STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY ERADICATE BOXTHORN FOR GOOD:



Boxthorn

1. Protect boxthorn-free areas and prevent further spread (machine hygiene, keeping cattle fenced, kill seedlings as they occur, etc.).

2. Cut and paste mature plants. Cut and paste has been the most successful method for eradicating boxthorn on other islands.

3. Stack and burn dead wood.

4. Follow up seedlings and/or reshooting stumps.

****Regular follow-up is critical, as boxthorn seeds can germinate all year round.**



"It's important to me that the foreshore be cleared of sea spurge, especially in the areas that the community use the most, because the kids they pick the sea spurge, or even sometimes just touch it and then they touch their face and their eyes and end up in a lot of pain. It's terrible stuff" -

DG

SEA SPURGE (EUPHORBIA PARALIAS)

Sea spurge is a weed that occurs close to the ocean. It originated from Europe and was introduced to Australia in the ballast water of visiting ships over 70 years ago. The plant has spread prolifically since it first appeared and is now found along most of the coastline of south-eastern Australia, including the coastline of truwana.

Sea spurge is small leafy perennial, with aqua green foliage. When the plant is damaged it exudes a sticky, milky sap. This sap can irritate the skin causing a rash. It is also extremely painful if it comes into contact with the eyes. It is important that anybody working to remove sea spurge, especially if they are hand-pulling, wear suitable protective clothing, such as gloves, a long sleeve work shirt and eye protection.

In the past 10 years, sea spurge has heavily colonised beaches around truwana, most notably The Corner and around Ned's Point. This has affected the community's use of these areas a great deal.

Ned's Point was traditionally used for New Year's Day celebrations on the island, including a big community BBQ and annual running races. However, the community now avoid this area because of fear that children will get the poisonous sap from the sea spurge on their skin or in their eyes.

Sea spurge is also slowly drowning out the coastline around The Corner with many community members concerned that it will take over and make that stretch of coast as unusable as it has at Ned's Point.

STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY ERADICATING SEA SPURGE FOR GOOD:

1. Protect sea spurge free coastline and prevent further spread by ensuring boats and equipment used on infested beaches are given a proper clean before leaving. Avoid driving through sea spurge affected areas, as the seeds can be carried by vehicles from one place to another.

2. The most successful methods for eradicating sea spurge are either spraying or hand pulling, depending on the size of the infestation. If hand pulling, it is important to make sure appropriate protective gear is worn.

3. Tiny seedlings can be yanked to dislodge them from the sand. If the plant is non-seeding it can be left where it is.

4. Plants bearing seeds or flowers should be bagged and burnt at an appropriate location.



Sea spurge

"Around at Ned's Point the sea spurge is getting worse and worse. It's come up over the foreshore and is creeping inland. It's a real shame, because as a community we used to use that place a lot for BBQs and community gatherings, but it's overrun with weeds now" -

****Regular follow up is critical in order to keep cleared areas free from sea spurge, but it is important to be mindful between October and February where coastal birds such as oystercatchers, plovers, dotterels and lapwings will be nesting in the sand.**

DG



"It's important to have people who have a long connection with the island working in land management, because they know the island better than anyone else".

FM

"This is the only island in the Bass Strait owned by Aboriginal people that has a permanent Aboriginal community presence, and yet it's the only island without a permanent land management team. It doesn't make sense"

DG

Other weeds on the island include:

HOREHOUND (Marrubium vulgare)

TABACO WEED (Elephantopus mollis)

THISTLE (Onopordum acanthium)

PARRAMATTA GRASS (Sporobolus africanus)



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COMMUNITY LAND AND PRIVATE LAND

For any weed eradication plan to be successful on truwunna, a multi-tenure approach is required. This means that both community land and private land will need to be tackled simultaneously.

“It’s important for our community that the works done are done by people from the island, and not from outsiders being brought in”.

BB

COMMUNITY WORKS

truwana is the only parcel of Aboriginal land in Tasmania that sustains a permanent Aboriginal community and yet it is one of the only parcels of Aboriginal land that does not receive funding for an on-going Aboriginal land management team.

Land management and environmental protection are really important to the community on truwana, equally important, is that such projects be undertaken by local community people.

Up-skilling and providing employment for local people provides a number of flow-on benefits to the community. The most notable being that Aboriginal people can continue to live on Aboriginal land while making a decent living for themselves and providing a good life for their family.

For weed management on truwana to be successful, an on-ground action plan will need to be developed. This action plan should be developed in consultation with the work crew on truwana, and should outline details on how to achieve the goals set out in this plan.

“It would be silly to bring someone in from off the island to do the work. We have so many skilled men here – right on this island – with years of experience. It would be great if they could work on looking after the land here, they could teach their skills to the young ones too”.

FM

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