

Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee

Time: 8:30am

Date: 27 June 2024

Location: Conference Room, Office of the Chief Minister, Alice Plaza, Alice Springs

Attendees:

- **Philip Cowan** - Director, Central Australian Parks, Parks and Wildlife Division, Northern Territory Government (NTG) Department Environment Parks and Water Security (DEPWS)
- **Tracey Guest** - Natural & Cultural Resource Manager, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Parks Australia.
- **Roy Chisholm** - Pastoral Land Board
- **Nathaniel Staniford** - Assistant Director Operations, Bushfires NT, DEPWS
- **Garth Forrester** - Ranger Group Coordinator Harts Range, Central Land Council
- **James (Jimmy) Cocking** - Chief Executive Officer, Desert Knowledge Australia
- **Josef (Joe) Schofield** - Regional Operations Manager, Central & South Australia, Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- **Alex Port** - Environment Liaison Officer, Northern Territory (NT) Cattlemen's Association
- **Ross Stanes** - NT Cattlemen's Association, Director Lyndavale Cattle Co
- **Joel Andrew** - Director, Technical Services, Alice Springs Town Council
- **Benjamin (Ben) Kaethner** - Regional Land Management Coordinator, Central Land Council (CLC)

Chairperson: Philip Cowan

Executive Officer: Roni Opden - Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee, Rangelands Division, DEPWS

Guests: Nil

If you require [workplace adjustments](#) to participate in this meeting, please let the meeting organiser know.

Minutes: Tabitha Fudge - Support Officer, Buffel Grass WAC, Rangelands, DEPWS

1. Meeting open and Welcome:

Chairperson:

Welcome.

Acknowledge and pay respects to Arrernte peoples, as the First Nations people of this country and acknowledge their continuing connection to the lands, water and communities.

2. Apologies:

3. Disclosure of interest: real, potential or perceived:

Garth Forrester advised at 12JUN24 WAC meeting that he will be attending Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) ARRWENNGKELTHE event on 29JUN24 as a private citizen.

4. Minutes previous meetings:

12JUN24

Moved:

Seconded:

Approved out of session

That the Minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes:

5.1 Action Items from previous WAC meeting

Actions list			
Action	Who	Due	Status
Investigate availability of approved organic herbicides	Ross Stanes		Completed 14JUN24
WAC members provide response to Agenda Item 9.6 21MAY24 Joe Schofield has provided a response.	All WAC		Ongoing
Investigate potential Federal funding that would be available for the Territory if buffel grass was declared a weed.	Tracey Guest		Ongoing
Respond to ALEC email	Chair		Completed 11JUN24
NR Maps – fire scar, parks – circulate link	Nathaniel Staniford		Completed 12JUN24
Circulate declaration table	Roni Opden		Completed
Source alternate brands of Flupropanate – Tussock, Taskforce	Tracey Guest		
Interpret herbicide labels	Roni Opden Joe Schofield		
Circulate existing Buffel Grass Weed Management Guide for Central Australia	Roni Opden		
Contact Troy Bowman re spray trials	Roni Opden		
South Australia practical management over 5 years, aspirational - APY lands.	Jimmy Cocking		Completed 21JUN24
Fire retardant that acts as a fertiliser - investigate	Nathaniel Staniford		
Assess and build Ranger groups capacity ie equipment	Garth Forrester		

6. Correspondence Out: circulated to WAC out of session

21MAY24 Agenda item 9.6 -

“In your land management program what challenges and opportunities does buffel present?”

“How can we help, what do you need?”

Email inviting the following stakeholders to provide a response to 21MAY24 Agenda item 9.6:

- Alice Springs Landcare
- Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC)
- Department Infrastructure Planning & Logistics

7. Correspondence In: circulated to WAC out of session

In response to 21MAY24 Agenda item 9.6 -

Response received from:

- Alice Springs Landcare
- Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC)
- Buffel Action Network
- Stride Resources

ALEC NT Buffel Grass Position Paper, original and revised.

8. Business Arising from Correspondence:

Executive officer Roni Opden advises Buffel Grass WAC, that with the Chair' authorisation, she has accepted ALEC's invitation to sit on the panel at the ARRWENNGKELTHE event on Saturday, 29JUN24 at Olive Pink Botanic Garden Alice Springs.

9. General Business:

9.1 Members are kindly reminded to uphold impartiality and objectivity in all discussions and decisions, noting that the Minister has appointed each member for their technical expertise and experience; to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister by 30 June 2024.

The Minister formed the WAC specifically to **develop a Buffel Grass Strategy for Central Australia that prioritises areas and methods where direct management actions will be most valuable and effective.**

The Strategy will inform the development of a Buffel Grass Draft Weed Management Plan.

Should the WAC determine buffel grass be a declared weed, classification may or may not follow. Classification is not a mandatory next step of declaration.

Classification according to the Weeds Act, is outside of the WAC's Terms of Reference (ToR).

NT Government announced in Budget 2024, \$750K for program management, planning and technical services to implement buffel grass management in Central Australia.

Transparency has been prioritised, with information being provided to the public online and via media.

9.2 Executive officer Roni Opden – Presentation and Discussion: Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia – Final Draft and Approval

At Meeting #3 (12 June 2024) the WAC considered the structure and content of a Buffel Grass Strategy, and then further workshopped the details of content for the Strategy.

Specifically, the WAC built on the outcomes of Meeting #2 with the following workshops:

- Management Objectives (based on land use purposes; Meeting #2); and
- Reasonable Actions (based on management objectives; Meeting #2)

The WAC also opted to include 2 further sections in the Strategy:

- Mapping and Monitoring
- Control Techniques (previously referred to as ‘management options’)

The completed tables from the workshop sessions #3 were circulated to the WAC (18 June), with final input requested by 21 June. Feedback received has been incorporated into a **Draft Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia**, circulated prior to Meeting #4.

The draft Strategy incorporates an Introduction (containing background, purpose and priorities), followed by the Management Objectives and Reasonable Management Actions. New sections for Mapping & Monitoring, and Control Techniques have been drafted into the Strategy.

A glossary and references have been included.

9.2.1 Maps

Map 1: Map updated to show priority areas - Sites of Conservation Significance, Indigenous Protected Areas, parks and reserves.

Map 2: Map updated to show key Land use purposes - Tenure types applicable to registered and un-registered land in Central Australia

9.2.2 Tables

Table 1: Objectives for managing buffel; amendments made:

- Rearranged order of objectives (outcome of Meeting #3)
- Adapted objectives under Pastoral tenure (outcome of review phase)

Table 2: Reasonable actions; amendments made:

- Rearranged Objectives per table 1 (outcome of Meeting #3)
- Control line distance between adjoining priority areas/tenures (outcome of review phase)

9.2.3 Final review

The draft Strategy has been circulated prior to Meeting #4 (scheduled 27 June), with the intent of finalising and approving the Strategy at this meeting. Any unresolved amendments agreed by the WAC will be actioned during the week beginning 1 July.

9.3 Executive officer Roni Opden – Discussion Procedure/Next steps

9.3.1 Finalise Strategy

- Workshop outcomes circulated to WAC for comment (18 June)
- Draft Strategy circulated to WAC prior to Meeting #4 (24 June)
- Meeting #4 – endorse* Strategy (27 June)
 - *final edits by 1 July
- Present Strategy to Minister (5 July)
- Communications – media/socials/web/briefings etc

9.3.2 If declaration recommended:

- Minister Environment to consult with Minister for Parks
- Prepare statutory instrument to be legally 'settled'
- Prepare Gazette notice for publication
- Communications – media/socials/web/briefings etc

9.3.3 If Weed Management Plan recommended:

- Review Strategy against requirements of a weed management plan (& optional extras)
- Release draft weed plan for public comment (minimum 4 weeks)
- Communications – media/socials/web/briefings etc
- Finalise weed plan for Minister's approval
- Communications – media/socials/web/briefings etc
- (Compliance Strategy developed)

BREAK: Morning tea 10:30am

RECONVENE: 11:00am**9.4 Executive officer Roni Opden – Presentation & Discussion****The Weeds Management Act 2001****9.4.1 Weeds Act overview/recap**

- Purpose/objectives
- Declared weeds (section 7)
 - Minister must consult with Minister of *Territory Parks & Wildlife Cons. Act*
 - Declared by Gazette
- Classifications: may classify, if necessary to:
 - Eradicate (7.4.a)
 - Prevent growing and spreading (7.4.b)
 - Prevent introduction into NT or part of NT (7.4.c)
 - Prevent spread by the actions of persons (7.4.d)
- Weed Management Plans – see Discussion topic 9.4.2
- Permits
 - Bring a weed into NT
 - Propagate, scatter, store, grow or use
 - Sell, offer to sell or provide/ purchase or offer to purchase
 - Hire, offer for hire, request to hire contaminated equipment/device/thing
 - Transport or carry (unless for identification or authorised disposal)

9.4.2 Weed Management Plans (Division 2)

- Contents (10(2))
- Additional extras that may be included (not compulsory) (10(3)):
 - Procedures to inspect, rehabilitate
 - Use under permit
 - Education programs; Criteria for assistance
 - Restriction of substances/methods
 - Adoption of published codes, standards, methods or publications
- Consultation
 - Public notice (media and socials)
 - Minimum 4 weeks comment period (NTG Have Your Say online; WAC)
- Approval
 - Gazette (10(1))
 - Up to 10 years
- Enforcement (Division 3)

BREAK: Lunch 12:30pm**RECONVENE 1:30pm**

9.5 Executive officer Roni Opden – [Workshop](#) Declaration Recommendation: Options & Process

Decision on whether buffel management actions become enforceable under Weeds Act.

If declaration 'Not supported':

- Strategy is approved by WAC, and becomes a voluntary guide to manage buffel. Declaration can be further workshopped/consulted/clarified in future.

If declaration 'supported':

- Strategy is approved by WAC and released, to inform buffel management approaches.
- Minister declares as a weed, with or without a classification.
- Declaration may reference the proposed schedule.
- The Strategy guides reasonable actions to meet the general duties for a declared weed.
- The Strategy could be upgraded to a 'weed management plan' which clarifies how the Weeds Act will apply to a particular species/purpose.
- A draft weed management plan goes for public consultation for a minimum of 4 weeks.
- Once approved, a weed management plan must be complied with.

Hypothetical timeframe examples for various WAC recommendation options (re declaration)

	Not Declare	Declare (Per Schedule)
July	Release Strategy	Release Strategy Declare per schedule
August	<i>Caretaker period - no Ministerial decisions</i>	
September		
October		Upgrade to draft Weed Plan
November		Consult
December		Consult
2025	Review Strategy	Final Weed Plan approval

Schedule:

Requirement	Control Area	Section*
Entry of buffel grass into NT is prohibited	All of NT	9(E)(2)(a)
Sale or purchase of buffel grass (including seeds) is prohibited	All of NT	9(E)(2)(c)(d)
Hire of equipment containing buffel grass is prohibited	All land in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions	9(E)(2)(e) and (f)
Transport of uncovered buffel grass on public roads is prohibited	All land in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions	9(E)(2)(h)
Land owners and occupiers must prevent buffel grass on the land spreading to other land	All land in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions	9(K)(1)(b)
Land owners and occupiers must prevent buffel grass spread on the land	Land not zoned for Pastoral Use; or declared Erosion Hazard Area; or declared Restricted Use Area	9(K)(1)(a)
Propagation and growth of buffel grass is prohibited	Land not zoned for Pastoral Use; or declared Area of Erosion Hazard; or declared Restricted Use Area	9(E)(2)(b) and (g)
Land owners and occupiers must notify an officer of the presence of new buffel grass on the land within 14 days of becoming aware	Indigenous Protected Areas; National and Territory parks and reserves.	9(K)(1)(c)

*Weeds Management Act 2001

MEETING CONCLUDES: 4:30pm