

REPORT
of the
LIVING WITH LOVEGRASS
WORKSHOP
22 May 2010

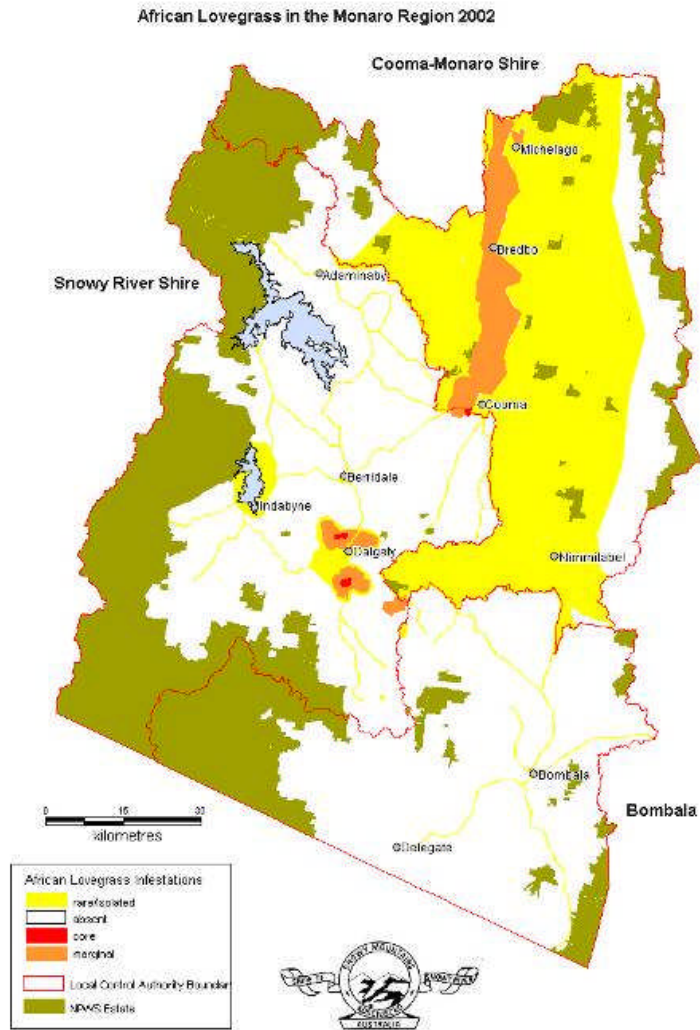
LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER ON HOW TO MANAGE AFRICAN LOVE GRASS



Prepared for
The Southern ACT Catchment Group and the ACT NRM Council
By Lynne Duckham
May 2010

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From the presentation "African Lovegrass in Agriculture" by Luke Pope

1. INTRODUCTION

On May 22, 2010, more than sixty landowners, land managers, government officers, ACT and NSW residents, gathered at the Namadgi Visitors Centre, Tharwa, to discuss the management of African Lovegrass (ALG). See [Attachment C](#) for the list of attendees and registrants.

The Southern ACT Catchment Group hosted the Workshop which was supported by the ACT Natural Resource Management Council and Caring for Our Country, the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee, and ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands.

Background to this Workshop

Thought by some to have originally come to Australia via sailing ships restuffing mattresses in Africa enroute to the colony, African Lovegrass thrived in the dry climate. Weed guideline fact sheets describe it as “a densely tufted, perennial (long-lived) grass growing from 30 to 120 cm high. The leaves are dark green to blue-green, narrow, and 25 to 35 cm long. The flowering stems rise above the tufted leaves and carry a loose fanlike grey-green flower head. Seeds germinate in spring and autumn. Growth slows or ceases in winter and plants re-sprout the following spring as temperatures rise. Flowering begins in early summer and ripe seeds are present from January to March.”

African Lovegrass (ALG) has been increasingly encroaching upon farmland, bushland, and roadsides throughout southern NSW and ACT over the past three decades. There have been various studies and meetings to discuss the problem. ALG is included in the Territory’s Environmental Weed Control Operations Plan, but it continues to spread. One workshop was conducted by the Kosciusko 2 Coast Project Partners to consider the extent of the spread of ALG and to advise upon possible ways of dealing with the problem. That report is still available and a copy can be found on the K2C website: http://www.k2c.org.au/ALG_Info.htm

The “Living with Lovegrass” Workshop was designed as an opportunity for rural and urban landholders, community members, land carers, park carers, researchers and government officers, to gather together to share information and consider forward strategies to deal with this weed infestation.

The objectives were identified on the program and invitation provided in advance, and on the day to all participants. The objectives were identified as:

- share information, research, monitoring & data collection on lowland native grasslands with other stakeholders;
- enhance coordination of management, education and awareness between stakeholders and across sites; and
- Identify priorities for further action to progress conservation of lowland native grasslands.

2. PROCEEDINGS AND OUTCOMES

Steve Welch, Coordinator of the Southern ACT Catchment Group Inc (SACTCG), welcomed all participants and provided an overview of the days' program. He then introduced the Facilitators for the day from the ACT NRM Council: Esther Duffy, the ACT Landcare Coordinator, and Anna van Dugteren, the ACT NRM Regional Facilitator.

Esther Duffy outlined the rules of the morning session, and reiterated that the purpose of the workshop was to bring together a variety of people affected by African Lovegrass, to develop actions for possible ways of managing its spread and impact. [Attachment A](#) provides the Invitation and Program.

The program was divided into two key components:

1. **Provision of Information:** Presentations made by experts on African Lovegrass
 - a. It's history in the region and addressing why it is a regional land management problem;
 - b. Local experiences in tackling the problem;
 - c. Perceptions of lovegrass.
2. **Exchange of Information:** Small group discussions; feedback; general discussion; and recommendations on priority areas needed to form a strategy for managing African Lovegrass.

2.1. Presentations

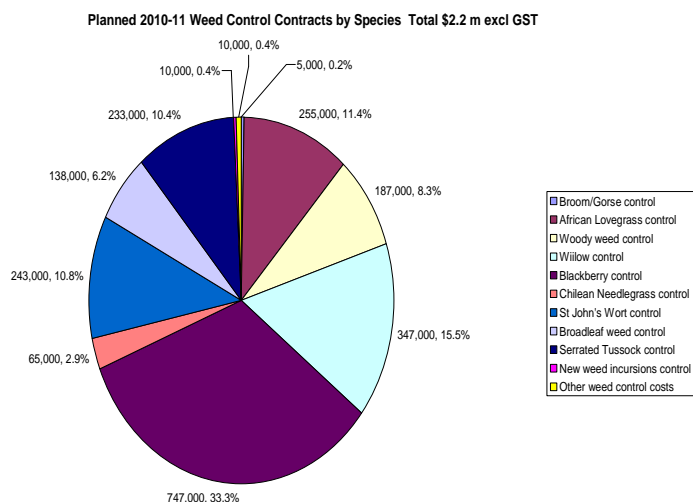
[Attachment B](#) provides background information on the ten presenters who shared their expertise and experiences. PowerPoint presentations will be available on the SACTCG website: www.sactcg.org.au

a. **What is African Lovegrass and why is it a regional land management problem?**

The first of the ten-minute presenters, **Sarah Sharp**, provided a brief overview of the physiology of the plant and its locations and distribution, crediting the 2008 Scottsdale Conference for providing much of the research information. She pointed out that there are various cultivars and it is difficult to discriminate

between them, and nor will they all act in the same way. ALG is also in direct competition with Kangaroo Grass, which is also a C4 - summer growing native grass. ALG is very tolerant of a range of soils and pH levels. The key issue with ALG is its long root systems, its invasiveness, and ability to thrive in drought conditions.

Steve Taylor, Ranger in Charge of Environmental Weed Coordination across ACT public land, informed attendees of the ACT Government's weed program and some of the challenges of dealing with ALG on public lands. Mr Taylor explained the government prioritised controls, focusing upon the most highly invasive weeds first. He also explained that ALG is 6% of the budget, as much of the budget cannot be reallocated as it is tied to particular areas. (For example, there is a large budget for Blackberry especially on the lower Cotter). He discussed the challenges of protecting yellow box red gum remnants, and the problems of slashing roadsides. He stressed the need for effective follow-up programs for any eradication or control strategy. The following diagram shows the projected 2010-2011 budget for weed control.



Luke Pope's work in the district with farms has found that ALG reduces carrying capacity. ALG impacts on feed quality (producing low quality feed) and therefore on the farms' production system. African Lovegrass, as a summer growing grass, is dormant in winter. If a paddock or a property is dominated by African Lovegrass, this means that in the cooler months, the area does not have any feed or production value. This has a detrimental impact on animal health and farm economics. Mr Pope highlighted the problems of it being spread easily by rain, water, vehicles, native fauna, and livestock. He considered the range of management options currently employed by landholders. These include:

1. Live with it and use it – graze it ; but even following trials of African Lovegrass undertaken at Bredbo in 2008, ALG was found to have a digestibility of 50-54%. Stock feed needs to have a

digestibility of 58% for animals to maintain weight. Thus, ALG is below healthy animal requirements. (Mr Pope noted that this was the short form of the species).

2. Kill it when it is a light infestation - need to “hammer” it. Slashing and laying 30cm mulch on grid still allows ALG to grow as it seeds and grows at low levels. Competition from other grasses is excluded by the mulch. Therefore, this process is not effective as an eradication method.
3. Burning – clears the vegetation to burnt stumps. Leaving lots of bare earth after ALG is burnt, is a problem as ALG thrives on hot arid ground, Burning also opens up opportunities for other weeds to colonise bare ground.
4. Herbicides:- the ones available include
 - i. Flupropanate, which is absorbed by both the roots and leaves; It won't kill some introduced species but will kill most of the native grasses. It is a residual herbicide - it stays in the soil until leaching rainfall – so you have to be careful using it and it is best not used by itself in Spring.
 - ii. Glyphosate will kill what you spray and is fast acting and absorbed through actively growing leaves. It won't work on a moisture stressed plant, nor does it work on ash, soil or in dust storms.
 - iii. Bottom line is that you need to know how and when to use herbicides and what is not appropriate.
5. Chipping is the most effective method of eradication. He suggested taking out plants whenever they are discovered or seen. The most effective eradication is to remove the plant and replace it. ALG has a large seed bank, with possibly many thousands of seeds per square metre if there has been a long history of ALG in the area.
6. The key is competition. Minimise bare ground. Have suitable plants – deep fibrous rooted perennial growth is the best to use as the roots battle for moisture and nutrients. Replacements need to be cost effective. Unfortunately replacing can currently cost approx. \$300 per hectare to establish new pasture, and may take a decade to see a return for the outlay.

Mr Pope concluded that the way to manage ALG is

- Keep clean areas clean of ALG, use more fertilizer, have longer rest periods for natives, and quarantine the ALG
- Don't rely on lovegrass in a production system
- Think about the end goal for the paddock when making a plan,

and he reconfirmed his belief that “It is that bad!”

The third speaker, **Geoff Butler** was instrumental in developing an ALG Management Strategy in 1998. Providing an overview of both the plant and its history in the area, Mr Butler explained that despite strong media publicity in 1995, and the development of a Management Strategy in 1998, when a workshop was organised 10 years ago there was a clear lack of interest by landholders and residents, with only 3-4 people attending. He was pleased to see that now there is more recognition of the problem, but unfortunately, 10 years of control and eradication time have been lost. In addition, that there have been no apparent changes to ways of dealing with ALG since then.

Mr Butler explained that Australia's seasonal conditions assist ALG to thrive. Gravel, topsoil, and river stones coming from the Monaro have spread ALG to Canberra, especially in the new development areas. New fire control activities will spread the ALG even further. He stressed the importance of roadside vegetation, and the fact that as ALG is classified as a class 3 pest, it must be contained...but the only way is to be persistent and keep at it. The Management Strategy written in 1998 will be made available on the ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water and [SACTCG](#) websites.

b. Tackling African Lovegrass from a Local Perspective:

Providing differing experiences of managing the weed on-farm, **Andrew Geikie** spoke of how they have been managing ALG on Lanyon. ALG was first noticed on the farm in the 1970s, and it was allowed to grow and be utilized as part of the farm system, as his uncle had seen it used in Mauritius. Mr Geikie sees ALG as a good soil stabilising plant, spreading easily on sandy soils, and with high protein content in its young growing stage. He puts his heifers in paddocks full of short ALG; thus using ALG as a strategy on the farm.

He utilises barley grass in winter and ALG in summer as stock feed; but does not burn ALG, as that seems to make it thrive. Mixing urea, molasses, and water and feeding it as a supplement to the lovegrass in licky drums has proven very successful, and his cattle will search out the lovegrass when placed in a paddock. Because the ewes and lambs nestle in amongst it, it also provides protection, and has reduced lamb loss.

On his boundary, between the fence and the road, is a monoculture of ALG. He has also noticed that where willows have been removed (as a WONS), ALG is now flourishing. The problem of serrated tussock was also mentioned and Mr Geikie considers serrated tussock to be a higher priority than ALG.

Geoff Hyles' family has been farming in the region since 1849. He has had ALG on his property since the early 1980s and has thus been one of the small group of people who has for a long time been interested in managing ALG. Inspired by a paper written by Catherine Keirnan in 2008, Mr Hyles decided to again do something about ALG on his property (on good soil on the west side of the river). Ninety five percent of his farm is totally covered in ALG. However, with a farm income of less than \$100K per annum, he considered the ALG problem too great for him to address adequately. In 1970, the ALG came to the farm from sand

mining in the river, and he has made a number of serious attempts to address the infestation over the years, at significant cost, but these have not been successful.

For six consecutive years he grew winter wheat in his farm paddock, but after two years fallow, the paddock is 100% ALG. His calves however seem to have thrived on it. His cattle choose ALG over lucerne if given a choice. He grazes his cattle on barley grass in winter and ALG in summer. Whilst he makes use of it on his property, he believes that it is important to protect those areas where ALG is not a problem at present. He also feels that the current apathy about the issue is because of the short-term landholder tenures, which had existed for so long.

Now ALG is a priority and he would like to assist those without the problem, to protect their land. He recommended Katherine's paper as a reference for all participants to read, and offered to send a copy to the Southern ACT Catchment Group.

Peter Saunders spoke of the Conservation Project in Scottsdale, and the luxury of managing a project that since purchased by Bush Heritage in 2006, is not dependent upon income from the land to maintain its activities. Several sites on the property are undergoing different research trials. One site is a seven-acre site which was 100% ALG, where Mr Saunders has been trying to convert it to native grasses. This is being achieved by spraying out the area, then spraying again, letting the area run fallow through winter and then spraying the following spring; after which he will then plant winter native grasses (C3). He explained that such action is very expensive and time consuming, and required the use of a high quantity of chemicals.

Research has shown that soils where ALG is growing have a higher moisture content, and can be relatively warmer and cooler, suggesting that ALG could be used as a soil restoration process. He also found that snow gum seedlings have grown within ALG, and an old pine is also reseeded. Showing a photo of a small yellow box in an ALG area, it was pointed out that there was no ALG below the drip line of the tree. Research continues into the interrelationship of plants and ALG.

Darren Roso, senior Ranger in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, took attendees through some of the challenges of managing ALG in ACT reserves. There are over two million people who regularly use the reserves – walking groups, individuals, tourists, ACTEW, etc, and they help carry the seed to new places. The Murrumbidgee corridor is considered to be home to the ALG.

Mr Roso agreed that whilst there was concern about ALG in the 1980s, and research in the 1990s, there was not much agreement about it during that time, and little was done to contain it; although it did make it into the Territory's Pest Plants Declaration and was recognised as a weed that must be contained. He examined some of the typical issues of control, which included where neighbours were not financial

enough to address an infestation; rural landholders had different priorities; absentee landholders were unaware of ALG as a problem; and where landholders appeared to not care.

In his presentation, Mr Roso highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of ALG:

“Strengths: Not favoured by most grazers, drought and soil type tolerant, long lived, massive seed bank, high fecundity, disturbance, has divided public opinion, good soil stabiliser, ok habitat for a range of native species

Weaknesses: Feeble seedlings, as a seedling intolerant of: competition, a stable ground cover layer, shade, many allelopathic chemicals of various trees and grasses and high susceptibility to low rates of flupropanate.” (He stressed the need for careful use of flupropanate, as one incorrect use can cause problems for the landscape for years)

He identified the key way of addressing ALG infestation, to be the education of the community and organisations to, when using reserves, identify, pullout, and dispose of ALG. He gave an example of Outward Bound staff and students finding, removing, and appropriately disposing of an ALG population found 6km away from a known site. It was thought that it might have been carried there on previous walkers’ boots.

Mr Roso commented that the landscape is now in a fire prone state, and ALG thrives with fires. He recommended the following key actions for the future:

- Need an ACT weed strategy with its basic principles clearly set out.
- The community needs to accept a course of action, and target and actively and tactfully, lobby the politicians and funding providers to sustainably fund high priority actions.
- ACTPC&L needs to work out how to *ensure* that we never lose control of a species like this again.”

Phil Graham from DPI explained that we have to accept that “ALG will be here forever as it has the attributes to colonise.” He presented the different forms that ALG can take, and stressed that control must be taken rapidly in agricultural land, believing that “we can live with it elsewhere.”

He confirmed that it is agreed that for any weed control, the pressure must be placed on it in its growing stage. When dormant, competition species need to be planted so they can be established before the warmer months. Phosphorous need to be put on the boundaries of the ALG to assist the optimum fertility of other species, so that the bare ground that ALG requires to colonize, is reduced. As a monoculture, ways of reducing it need to be determined. He stressed that animals can be trained to eat other foods.

c. Towards a strategy for Managing African Lovegrass

Bill Johnston completed his PhD on the Grazing Management of ALG in 1972, and has continued to be seen as an authority on the weed. He informed participants that ALG produces 3.5 million seeds per kg. It is a late spring to early summer germinator and a summer grower and is therefore out of phase with other grasses, which makes it hard to contain. (All available commercial species germinate most reliably in autumn, and grow from autumn to spring.)

Mr Johnston believes that spraying roadsides has been creating a “weed corridor.” He stressed that no matter how much money is spent to eradicate it, ALG will always be a problem, and therefore we need to start thinking differently, and about how we can live with it. Living with it requires new management strategies and attitudes so that it can be better used. Mr Johnston has found that carpet wiping (herbicide wiped onto the ALG using an applicator) has been very successful, but it needs to start with one paddock at a time.

He stressed that each case needs to be considered in relation to its reasons for failure or success e.g. stocking rate, and learning from its utilization of what happened. He believes that ALG does have positive attributes and if it did not exist then

- “Groundcover would become a serious issue
- We’d lose productivity
- Having something is better than nothing
- We’d lose catchment values (soil erosion etc)
- Biodiversity changes would be unpredictable
- All things being equal, there is no guarantee that we’d end up with a better situation.”

Given the above, his final recommendation was to “tread softly, start small, and look back and learn.”

Recurring themes:

The presenters covered history, personal and professional experiences, and past and current research.

There were however, some recurring issues and messages. These were:

- ALG impacts on agriculture production and is a cost to the farmer
- Some farmers manage it as part of their feedstock, many don’t.
- ALGs infestation into Canberra has not been checked, and new development areas especially are newly infested as a result of importing river pebbles, soil and gravel from the Monaro region
- Chemicals used to eradicate ALG have to be used carefully and accurately to minimise damage to other flora
- Chipping is the most effective method of removal

- Fires assist the colonisation of ALG
- Landholders, urban and rural residents, need to be educated about ALG- what it looks like, and how to remove and dispose of it appropriately.

Group Questions and Comments

Following the presentations, participants were invited to ask questions of any or all speakers, or to add their comments to the discussion. Those additional comments and questions raised by participants included the following:

- One Park Care group has been working with volunteers removing lovegrass in a reserve adjacent to rural lands for the last 4-5 years. These areas are now largely under control; so much so that they are now weeding the neighbouring property to assist the landowner to control his weeds and reduce the opportunity for reinfestation. It was pointed out that there are 350,000 potential weeders in the ACT. They simply need to have information and be invited to be involved.
- There are models in Sydney where urban and rural residents work together. These models encourage Landcare and Parkcare people on rural lands.
- It was agreed that we need to recruit more volunteers to work on weeding on public and private lands and train them to recognise weeds, and how to deal with them.
- One of the problems of managing weeds by landowners was identified as the tenure issues in the ACT. It is now the first time in 100 years that landholders can have a vision of rural ACT being an essential part of a Canberra, as a viable and valued rural community.
- It was suggested that to be viable, rural residents must reach out to and engage with the urban community. There are only 150 rural landholders in the ACT.
- One of the difficulties and frustrations with ALG is the social element, as it is different to other weeds.
- Hope was expressed that one of the outcomes of today's workshop will be that a web based dialogue will be established – sharing current and new information.
- It was suggested that a key priority area of management would have to be managing roadsides. Participants agreed that alternative ways of managing ALG on roadsides is needed as RTA NSW

sprays the Monaro Hwy, not with the view to controlling weeds, but rather to control vegetation for traffic safety.

- In some rural areas, the native grass, Red Grass, is seen to provide a barrier between ALG on the roadsides and vegetation in paddocks. It was suggested that this interface between African Lovegrass on the roadside and paddocks, needs to be encouraged through roadside weed management programs that don't target the Red Grass. It was mooted that growing short growth vegetation on the roadsides as a barrier to ALG spread could also be considered. In addition, a participant questioned why community members /Parkcare groups were not allowed to weed the roadsides in urban areas e.g. along Barry Drive and Belconnen Way, to where ALG has also spread.
- Concern was expressed that serrated tussock is an even more damaging weed, causing greater agriculture production loss.
- To the questions of what keeps ALG under control in Africa, Geoff Butler replied that it is controlled by the animals that eat it and are able to digest it, and thus be a bio-control - an option we don't have in Australia. In Argentina ALG is apparently managed as a ground cover, in competition with other plants; thus healthy natives or exotic pastures can control its spread.
- Sarah Sharpe informed the Workshop that the Friends of Grasslands (FOG) has proposed seeking funding to support the establishment of a "Bush Management Team" in the ACT, based on similar initiatives around Australia. The Bush Management Team would be a trained and skilled group of professionals, separate from government, with skills in a range of conservation, bush regeneration, weed control, and landscape repair work on public and private lands. The team would work with, and as needed train, volunteer groups, government staff, community members, and rural landholders. Various city councils are also doing this as they have identified the need to increase residents' skills. FOG is considering seeking alternative funding e.g. offsets to fund the Team.

2.2. Small Group Sessions

Following on from these discussions, and capturing the passion and conversation, Anna van Dugteren introduced the next part of the workshop, and randomly allocated participants to one of five small breakout groups. Each group was facilitated by one of five presenters. (Sarah Sharp, Peter Saunders, Luke Pope, Geoff Hyles, and Kerrin Styles – for Steve Taylor)

Within each group, participants were asked to consider the challenges and opportunities for managing African Lovegrass; the planning options; and to recommend specific priority actions.



[Attachment D](#) lists all the itemised concerns of each small group's discussions and recommendations. The main priority actions and issues raised by the groups included:

- The need for training in identification of the weed, and eradication practices which community members can use
- Opportunities to share information and to keep up to date
- Concern for economic factors in containment or eradication of ALG:
 - government competing priorities and foci
 - community needs to be involved – grants, time, coordination, collaboration
 - focus on roadside ALG eradication and control
- The problem of ALG to be raised to a political awareness level
- The possibility of and opportunity for, urban and rural residents to work together to assist in the management of ALG in the ACT



3. PRIORITY ACTIONS

Following the small group discussions, a member of each group reported to all participants on the issues their group considered most important, plus their key priorities.

From these were recorded thirty (30) recommendations for actions required to reduce the impact of African Lovegrass.

All participants were asked to vote for the three actions that they considered to be the most important. Voting was determined by placing a gold star against the recommendation they considered the highest priority, a silver star against the second most important, and a red heart against the third most important. After all participants had voted, the scores for all thirty recommendations were tallied.

The priority scoring was undertaken in three ways: priority to gold stars, raw scores, and weighted scores. The results were consistent across all three methods to reveal the following order:

To the question: “What are the key actions required to reduce the impact of ALG?” the top three priorities were clearly identified in order, as:

1. Contain outbreaks
2. Lobbying pressure on importance of ALG control
3. Education of community problem and therefore community solution

The next seven recommendations were also strongly supported:

4. Change management of road corridors
5. Technical training for all chemical users (how and when)
6. Cost benefit analyses specifically on roadside control
7. Education of new landholders & landholders currently unaffected
8. Make African Lovegrass a Weed of National Significance
9. When there is a problem - identify and protect
10. See what success looks like

See [Attachment E](#) for the full list of recommendations and their scores.

4. CONCLUSION

The workshop identified an increasing interest in and concern for the management of African Lovegrass.

The most often raised issues by presenters and participants included the need for ongoing research, the need for careful and appropriate handling of chemicals; the importance of being able to identify ALG separate to other grasses, and the importance of continuing discussion of and updating on ALG management issues.

Following voting, the Workshop's participants identified the three priority action areas as:

- 1. Contain outbreaks of African Lovegrass**
- 2. Lobby on the importance of African Lovegrass Control**
- 3. Education and community involvement**

Participants were reminded that to make a difference, the next step is to follow-up on the recommendations and consider the options, potential processes and procedures needed, and to implement the priority action areas.

Steve Welch thanked all present for donating their time and expertise to the morning's workshop. Steve particularly thanked Anna and Esther for facilitating the Workshop, Martin and Pauline for organising all the refreshments and lunch, and the Namadgi Visitors Centre for providing the venue for the Workshop. In turn, Steve was thanked for his time and effort in organising the day's event.

It was agreed that the Workshop had provided a valuable opportunity to share significant information about African Lovegrass and to inspire action and consideration of the many issues involved with its current and future management.

Attachment A: INVITATION AND PROGRAM

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND LIVING WITH LOVEGRASS

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER ON HOW TO MANAGE AFRICAN LOVEGRASS

**Saturday 22nd May
Namadgi Visitor Centre Tharwa**

African lovegrass is a highly persistent, summer growing, perennial grass weed that is invading rural properties, urban parklands and roadsides and nature reserves across our region. The Southern ACT Catchment Group supported by the ACT NRM Council is coordinating this workshop to bring land managers together to discuss how we can better deal with this invasive weed.



The Southern ACT Catchment Group is supported by Caring for Our Country

Program

- 9.00 Guests arrive and seated in theatre
- 9.10 Introduction

What is African Lovegrass, why is it a regional land management problem?

- 9.20 Sarah Sharp - *Lovegrass biology*
- 9.30 Steve Taylor - *Lovegrass and the ACT Government weeds program*
- 9.40 Luke Pope - *Lovegrass grazing*
- 10.00 Geoff Butler - *An environmental weed*

Tackling the problem, some local experiences

- 10.10 Andrew Geikie - *Managing Lovegrass on Lanyon*
- 10.20 Geoff Hyles - *Castle Hill and Lovegrass*
- 10.30 Peter Saunders - *Managing Lovegrass on Scottsdale*
- 10.40 Darren Roso - *Managing Lovegrass in ACT Reserves*
- 10.50 Phil Graham - *African Lovegrass trials*

- 11.00 Morning Tea

Towards a strategy for managing African Lovegrass

- 11.20 Bill Johnston—*Perceptions of Lovegrass*
- 11.30 Panel discussion and comments from the floor
- 12.30 Summary and agreement on future action

- 1.30pm Barbeque lunch.

Suggested reading:

Meat & Livestock Australia African Lovegrass Fact Sheet: http://images.wool.com/pub/3D_Weed_Guidelines_AfricanLovegrassJune2009_lowresFINAL.pdf

and

K2C ALG info at http://www.k2c.org.au/ALG_Info.htm

RSVP:

Steve Welch
6296 6400

or email

info@sactcg.org.au

This Forum is supported by the ACT Government and Australian Government through Caring for Our Country.

Attachment B: SPEAKER PROFILES

A. The first speakers: addressed the question:

What is African Lovegrass and why is it a regional land management problem?

Sarah Sharp is a natural resource management consultant, who has specialised in the ecology and conservation of natural grasslands and woodlands, and in particular the implementation of conservation management. She was formerly a member of the ACT's Weeds Working Group. Sarah is co-author of several publications, including a field guide to grassland plants, a guide to developing conservation management plans and a guide to undertaking monitoring by community groups.

Steve Taylor is currently Ranger in Charge of Environmental Weed Coordination across ACT public land. He has worked as a Ranger for ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands (ACT Parks & Conservation Service, Environment ACT) for 10 years, and is experienced with the management of African Lovegrass on public lands.

Luke Pope is the District Agronomist for the NSW Department of Industry & Investment, based in Cooma for the past eight years. As the extension officer whose district covers the Monaro and Braidwood areas, Luke has focused upon working one on one with land managers to tackle serious weed problems; and researching alternative management options for the protection of the region's native pastures.

Geoff Butler worked at the Australian National Botanic Gardens for 22 years, and worked in most sections of the Gardens. Geoff left the Gardens for self-employment in environmental and horticultural consultancy, which he has been doing for 17 years. He prepared a strategy for management of ALG in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor in 1998. He is a pessimist about ALG impact on grassland and woodland environments in the longer term.

B. "Tackling the problem, some local experiences"

Andrew Geike is a local Landholder interested in learning to live with love grass, and finding the positives. Andrew will be talking about his experience of managing lovegrass on Lanyon.

Geoff Hyles' family has been farming in the district since 1849. Geoff has an Economics degree from the ANU and a Masters in Rural Development from the University of East Anglia. He worked throughout the world as an agricultural consultant for 25 years and has had a lovegrass infestation on his farm at Tharwa since the early 1980's.

Peter Saunders is the South East Regional Reserve Manager for Bush Heritage Australia. Based at Scottsdale, which was until recently a productive farm with ALG well established on land previously used for cropping, his responsibilities also include the reserves of Nardoo (Victoria), Tarcutta Hills, Nameless (Berry), Brogo (near Bega), and Burrin Burrin (Braidwood).

Darren Roso works with the Department of Parks, Conservation and Lands as a Senior Ranger with the Murrumbidgee River Corridor, and has been involved with managing Lovegrass in ACT reserves.

Phil Graham is a Technical Specialist in Grazing Systems with the NSW Department of Primary Industry Phil has 30 years experience in sheep and cattle grazing management issues. He has been involved in various lovegrass work in the ACT over the last 10 years

C. Towards a strategy for managing African Lovegrass.

Bill Johnston became interested in lovegrass in 1972 in the context of finding species/cultivars that could be useful for sowing on degraded sites/poor soils/ dry habitats (Soil Conservation Service of NSW, Wagga Wagga). Bill has completed a Masters in Science and a PhD focussing on grazing experiments. He is currently involved in a small project with the Southern Rivers CMA with the aim of improving the management of Robusta types of African lovegrass in the Bega-Candelo area.

Attachment C: Attendees

Mr Steve Welch Workshop Organiser and Chair; and Coordinator SACTCG
Ms Esther Duffy Facilitator, and ACT Landcare Coordinator
Ms Anna van Dugteren Facilitator ACT Natural Resources Management Council

Presenters

Sarah Sharp
Steve Taylor
Luke Pope
Geoff Butler
Andrew Geike
Geoff Hyles
Peter Saunders
Darren Roso
Phil Graham
Bill Johnston

Registrants and Attendees

(NB some attendee names may be absent, as they may not have registered on the day)

John Adamson	Will Goggin	Clare McInnes	Jason Shimitras
Tom Baker	Naarilla Hirsch	Nola MacKeon	Helen Shimitras
Terry Birtles	Sue Howieson	Richard Martin	Annette Smith
Rosemary Blemings	John Hyles	Heather Mason	Linda Spinaze
Bernadette Brown	Anne l'Ons	Kevin McCur	Kerrin Styles
Pauline Carder	Luke Johnston	Ian Muirden	Lauren Van Dyke
Bill Clarke	Catherine Keirnan	Martyn Noakes	Sue Vidler
Keith Clarke	Nadia Kuzmanoski	Will Osborne	Steve Young
Joe Clifton	Ross Langwill	Julie Palmer	Lynne Duckham
Bethan David	Christina Langwill	Margaret Roseby	Jean Geue
David Eddy	Sonja Lenz	Tony Robinson	
Catherine Keirnan	Martin Lind	John Starr	

Attachment D: Small Groups: Discussions of Key Actions

The groups consider the following question:

What are the key actions required to reduce the impact of African Lovegrass?

Group A: (Facilitator Sarah Sharp)

- Key action: concentrate on and contain outbreaks where they appear
- To control initial “invasion”/outbreaks
- To manage infestations routes – roads,
 - Who is allowed to work on these?
 - What can be done about infested soils and materials – assessment methods
 - how in relation to volunteers
- Chem.-cert – volunteers, landholders council weeds officers
- Introduction of soil/source fill control, inspection of vehicles
- Identification of best control methods for specific agriculture and conservation
- Effective economic affordable efficient strategies
- Communication of “success stories” , inform
- Set desired outcomes – be really clear;
 - What are the landholder’s goals? The private/public goals?
- Educational and information networks
- Grant applications? For implementation plans – matching “ competitors” in suitable/similar environments
- “Bush management teams” – to assist full range of land managers address weeds and impacts on agriculture productivity and conservation areas – via paid specialists/ experienced landowners, for case studies

Group B: (Facilitator Peter Saunders)

- Practical volunteer, community assistance (Kevin from NPs, CVA, Detainees, K2s, Catchment groups, FOG
- Raise as WONS – divided agreement on this in the group
- Lobbying pressure importance –focussed on ACT government, Conservation, Councils, FOG
- Interface Government land and rural owner /occupiers
- Soil quarry boundaries and barriers
- Partnership/credibility with government (lack of faith with government to date –ACT Government)

Group C: (Facilitator Luke Pope)

- Cost vs size of land (all owners of public land) and the resources problem to be managed
- Increase accountability – for everybody...even those currently unaffected
- Taking responsibility for weed management on own land (Public/private, urban/rural)
- Enforcement of standards for contractors e.g. clean fill, clean equipment
- Educating prospective property buyers/new landholders
- Liaison between urban park care groups and the rural fringe increased
- Define obligations/responsibilities with government (ACT)
- Increase awareness among recreational users
- More technical training =- how and when to use -(application and calibration), how do they work, how to be used
- Open, flexible balanced approach

- Grants for weed management to be simplified and restrictions removed – and to be seen as a priority at federal level – e.g. Caring for our Country program
- Advice for roadside weed management in specific areas- need to know how to do a better job
- Investigate/research biological control agents/alternatives

Group D: (Facilitator Geoff Hyles)

4 key arrears identified:

1. What to do where there is a problem, and
2. What to do where there is no problem = identify and protect – informing and educating people
 - Assistance to those who need it
 - How to “get” those who need it – preaching to the converted
 - Cost of action when infestation is large
 - “Community weed team” to work on lands in locality
 - Psychological effect of the visual impact
 - Continue the dialogue – makes “you” feel better (sharing the problem)
 - Fear factor may drive action
 - Get onto it early to avoid monoculture
 - Awareness in community to be spread
 - Individuals not able to be effective in making change – work together to lobby all political parties
 - Wish list research for control agents (biological/genetic engineering/herbicide)
 - What will trigger action?
 - EPBC Act
 - Politicians getting information
 - Cost benefit analyses (address economic, social and environmental issues to see full range impact of doing nothing or something)
- 3 Popularise the problem – responsibilities and rights – making change by working together
- 4 Set achievable targets to get action

Group E: (Facilitator Kerrin Styles)

- Key: Know your weed – so that people can identify it
 - Who? Government, rural landholders
- Cost benefit of mowing rural road verges?
 - (benefit analyses spraying , slashing roadside – see why)
 - Who? Government, unis, researchers, PCL
- Education weed control/tools/mapping
 - Who? Shire council, local govt, on-site workshop, PCL, landcare groups
- Need weed control trials
 - long term showing ALG establishes, and outcomes of action taken (Commitment could be difficult
 - Who? Landholders and volunteers
- Collate/disseminate educational materials
 - Collaboration on all the information to make best management manual – provide access to the information in different ways eh on the web, hard copy, practical demonstrations, and experience
 - Who? Catchment groups, shire councils
- Community involvement
 - Who? Everybody
- Future trials –Need lots of workshops around the area, and in peoples backyards
- ALG management is beyond individual resources and land managers to do this – need to highlight community problem – community needs to be involved – grants, time, etc

Additional comments from the floor after group presentations:

- Everyone needs to see a level of success
- Need a “Greening Australia type group – e.g. “Weeding Australia”
- There are many sources of information about the weed – but you don’t know what it is until you actually get shown what it is in the field
- Need to lobby the government for extension workers (to help educate people)
- Need to educate people who live in towns also, so that when they go for walks they can address the infestation and can pull out the weed, bag it and bin it.
- Need random media releases – information, and articles on ALG so that urban dwellers can assist
- Need different levels of education
- Impact of absentee landholders e.g. Numeralla, where people live in Canberra or urban areas – and rarely go to their rural areas. Perhaps prosecution for those who do nothing to rid their land of weeds
- Carrot approach not big stick approach
- Need changing management of roadside managing African Lovegrass

Attachment E: Prioritisation of Recommendations

What are the key actions required to reduce the impact of ALG?

Recommendation	gold star	silver star	red heart	raw score	weighted score *
	1st	2nd	3rd		
1. Contain outbreaks	7	2	4	13	29
2. Lobbying pressure on importance of ALG control	4	5	1	10	23
3. Education of community problem and therefore community solution	3	4	1	8	18
4. change management of road corridors	4	0	2	6	14
5. Technical training for all chemical users (how and when)	2	3	1	6	13
6. Cost benefit analysis specifically on roadside control	2	2	2	6	12
7. Education of new landholders & Landholders currently unaffected	2	1	3	6	11
8. Make ALG a Weed of National Significance (WONS)	2	2	0	4	10
9. When there is a problem - identify and protect	1	1	4	6	9
10. See what success looks like	0	2	4	6	8
Soil and gravel importation control	1	1	0	2	5
Bush Management team	1	1	0	2	5
Workshop/field days	1	1	0	2	5
Management and implementation plan (1998)	1	0	1	2	4
Threatening activity under EPBC	1	0	1	2	4
Future research trials - long term trial of 15 years, rotating management of ALG i.e. staged approach	1	0	1	2	4
Variety of information/resources collection of written material	1	0	1	2	4
Set achievable targets - cost benefit analysis research	0	2	0	2	4
Clarity of outcomes of land manager goals	1	0	0	1	3
Seek assistance on rural/gov land border	1	0	0	1	3
Fund public land appropriately for area to manage	0	1	1	2	3
Research	0	1	1	2	3
Practical volunteer assistance (CV, FOG, Alexander	0	1	0	1	2

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Problem - provider information of what to do and when. Early action	0	1	0	1	2
Put pressure on govt to reinstate extension workers	0	1	0	1	2
Conversations between private and public to know and understand obligations of public agencies	0	0	1	1	1
Raise weeds profile in grant programs (OG FOG)	0	0	1	1	1
Levy for absentee landowners	0	0	1	1	1
Education of recreational land users	0	0	0	0	0
Levy	0	0	0	0	0

* **NB** weighted scores: 1st = 3 points, 2nd = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point