

## Bitou Bush Control – Tweed Coast

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Weeds of National Significance funding received by Tweed Shire Council Dunecare Advisory Committee in June 2002 provided the opportunity for an increased effort to control Bitou Bush, particularly in areas of ecologically significant vegetation. As part of the project funding the Tweed Shire Bitou Bush Control Strategy (James & Wilson 2003) was prepared and coordinated Bitou bush control works planned and undertaken.

The aim of the strategy is, to provide guidelines to reduce the distribution, abundance and impacts of Bitou bush in and on the ecosystems of the Tweed Coast. This is to be achieved through, reduction in incidence and abundance of Bitou bush, minimization of the impacts on native plant communities, coordination of stakeholder and community involvement and evaluation and monitoring. The environmental significance of the Tweed coastal zone demands an integrated approach to the control of Bitou bush

As part of the strategy detailed GIS mapping at 1:20000 was undertaken and includes, incidence of Bitou bush (including location of Glory lily and monitoring transects), ecological status (very high, high and medium), tenure and works undertaken as at December 2002. A series of tables were generated from the four mapping themes. The following table shows the area of work undertaken from commencement of the project in July 2002 up to December 2002.

<b>Agents responsible for work</b>	<b>Area worked (ha)*</b>	<b>%*</b>
Tweed Shire Council Recreation Services	100.3	10.8
Tweed Shire Council aerial spray contractors	80.9	8.7
Tweed Shire Council bush regeneration contractors	68.5	7.4
Far North Coast Weeds	14.1	1.5
National Parks and Wildlife Service bush regeneration contractors	5.0	0.5
Dunecare workers	57.0	6.1
Green Corps workers	13.3	1.4
Casuarina Beach contractors	24.5	2.6
<b>Total area treated</b>	<b>298.1</b>	<b>32.1</b>
Area not treated	630.7	67.9

The stakeholders currently involved in the implementation of the strategy are, Dunecare groups (seven), Tweed Shire Council, Far North Coast Weeds, Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), Department of Lands, Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council (TBLALC), TAFE students, school students, Greencorps and Work for the Dole participants. Contribution to the project includes, control of Bitou bush and other environmental weeds by various methods from aerial spray to manual removal, rehabilitation works, funds, grants and planning. The stakeholders are coordinated by representatives of the Tweed Bitou Bush Control Committee.

The control program undertaken between July and December 2003 maintained the works previously undertaken and undertook the initial treatment of additional land in the ownership of DEC (37ha) and TBLALC (50ha) in the northern section of the shire. Works planned for the current year include the all important follow up of previous works, initial treatment of land in the ownership of DEC (49ha), TBLALC (50ha), Tweed Shire Council (43ha) and large scale plantings in highly degraded areas where natural recruitment is limited. This will bring the total area worked, generally high and medium incidence of Bitou bush, up to 388ha (41% of total Bitou bush). Reference to the tables within the strategy indicates that after three years 95% of high and medium incidence of Bitou bush has been included in the program. The remaining low incidence, 59% of total Bitou bush, is scattered throughout this total area (540ha) and is to be targeted in the current year. Included in the strategy is the priority of controlling Bitou bush and other environmental weeds and encouraging natural regeneration in areas identified in the mapping as very high and high ecological significance.

The strategy to date has been funded by the initial grant in 2002 (aerial spray and bush regenerators working in vegetation identified as very high and high ecological status), Department of Lands 2002, 2003 and 2004 (aerial spray and general control on crown land), Far North Coast Weeds 2002 (aerial spray) and DEC (control on DEC land). Tweed Shire Council and Far North Coast Weeds have made a significant contribution by undertaking follow up ground spraying of regrowth Bitou bush on an annual basis. Similarly the seven Tweed Coast Dunecare groups have continued works to control Bitou bush and undertake and maintain plantings and fencing. The TBLALC has applied for the latest round of Envirofund to fund the continuation of the control program commenced on their land last year.

The success of the control program to date has been the securing of initial and ongoing funding and the commitment of all current stakeholders to undertake a coordinated approach to Bitou bush control within Tweed Shire.

The committee is confident that with this continued support Bitou bush and other coastal weeds will be controlled and replaced with stable weed free native plant communities as set out in the aim of the Tweed Shire Bitou Bush Control Strategy.