Declared Plant Policy

Fountain Grass (*Cenchrus setaceus*)

Fountain grass is a perennial tussock grass that has been widely planted in South Australia for ornamental purposes and is established from garden escapes.

Management Plan for Fountain Grass

Outcomes

- Native vegetation protected from the impacts of fountain grass.

Objectives

- Further spread of fountain grass into native vegetation minimised.

Implementation

- Biosecurity SA to publicise the status of fountain grass as a declared plant, and its impacts.
- Natural Resources Management (NRM) authorities and Chief Officer to enforce the prohibition on sale of fountain grass.
- NRM authorities to increase awareness of the impacts of fountain grass.
- NRM authorities in the control area to map infestations and prioritise for control.
- NRM authorities in the control area to develop partnerships with stakeholders to achieve effective control of fountain grass.

Regional Implementation

Refer to regional management plans for further details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRM Region</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges</td>
<td>Contain spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alinytjara Wilurara</td>
<td>Destroy infestations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyre Peninsula</td>
<td>Contain spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroo Island</td>
<td>Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern and Yorke</td>
<td>Limited action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australian Arid Lands</td>
<td>Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australian Murray-Darling Basin</td>
<td>Contain spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>Destroy infestations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Declaration

To implement this policy, fountain grass is declared under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* throughout the whole of the State of South Australia so that further spread can be prevented. The movement or transport of the plant on a public road by itself or
Fountain Grass policy

as a contaminant, its entry to South Australia, or its sale by itself or as a contaminant are prohibited.

In the Alinytjara Wilurara, Eyre Peninsula, South Australian Murray-Darling Basin, Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges and South East NRM regions, NRM authorities may require land owners to control fountain grass plants growing on their land. NRM authorities in these regions are required to control plants on road reserves and may recover costs from the adjoining land owners.

Fountain grass is declared in category 3 under the Act for the purpose of setting maximum penalties and for other purposes. Any permit to allow its movement or sale can only be issued by the regional NRM Board pursuant to section 188. Under the Natural Resources Management (General) Regulations 2005, the transport or movement of grain for milling or wool for cleaning is exempt from the operation of sections 175 and the sale of wool or grain is exempt from section 177(2) if at the time of the sale the person believes on reasonable grounds that the purchaser will remove the plant from the wool or grain before any re-sale.

The following sections of the Act apply to fountain grass throughout each of the NRM regions noted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections of Act</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>175(1) Prohibiting entry to area</td>
<td>AMLR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175(2) Prohibiting movement on public roads</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177(1) Prohibiting sale of the plant</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177(2) Prohibiting sale of contaminated goods</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 Requiring notification of infestations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182(1) Landowners to destroy the plant on their properties</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185 Recovery of control costs on adjoining road reserves</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by 2020, or in the event of a change in one or more regional management plans for fountain grass.

Weed Risk

Invasiveness

Fountain grass seed is mainly dispersed by wind but can also be carried by vehicles, humans, livestock, animals and birds. It establishes on road reserves and other unmanaged rocky or sandy sites.

Fountain grass is well adapted to post-fire regeneration, and burning may contribute to its invasion.

Impacts

Fountain grass can form dense pure stands that exclude all other herbaceous vegetation. Once the plant forms these dense infestations it can have high nuisance value, impeding both pedestrian and vehicular access.
Fountain Grass policy

Fountain grass out-competes and suppresses native vegetation. It can increase fire risk compared to other roadside weeds that accumulate less dry matter. It is of little value to grazing due to its rough course leaves which make it unpalatable to stock.

Potential distribution

In Australia fountain grass has been found as far north as Cape York and as far south as southern Tasmania, implying a wide ecological range and a broad potential distribution in South Australia. This is supported by the wide scatter of the known infestations.

Fountain grass is tolerant of high temperatures, high humidity, and acidic to alkaline soils. It is drought tolerant and established plants can grow in areas where rainfall is less than 127 mm of rain annually. However it does not survive prolonged periods at low temperatures and does not tolerate saline conditions.

Feasibility of Containment

Control costs

Fountain grass is difficult to eliminate, as control may need to be repeated several times a year. The plant has a long-lived seed which makes continued monitoring after treatment essential.

Control is directed initially to outlying populations followed by treatment of the core area. Small infestations of fountain grass can be removed by uprooting plants and destroying their seed heads.

Extensive infestations of fountain grass are best controlled by a combination of herbicides and mechanical techniques.

Persistence

Research has shown that seeds of fountain grass can remain viable in soil for up to 10 years in the soil, implying the presence of a significant seed bank that makes continued monitoring after control treatment essential.

Current distribution

Fountain grass is scattered in the Eyre Peninsula, Northern and Yorke, Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australian Murray-Darling Basin and South East regions.

State Level Risk Assessment

Assessment using the Biosecurity SA Weed Risk Management System gave the following comparative weed risk and feasibility of containment scores by land use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land use</th>
<th>Weed Risk</th>
<th>Feasibility of control</th>
<th>Response at State Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native vegetation</td>
<td>high 168</td>
<td>high 23</td>
<td>Contain spread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considerations

Risk assessment indicates a management action at State level of containment in native vegetation. Regional management plans vary according to regional habitats and presence of the weed. The Eyre Peninsula, South Australian Murray-Darling Basin and Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM regions aim to contain spread, and Kangaroo Island monitors for any incursion of fountain grass. Alintjara Wilurara and South East aim to destroy any infestations found. Limited action is planned to be taken in Northern and Yorke, and the weed is monitored in the South Australian Arid Lands.

Fountain grass has previously been available for sale throughout the State as an ornamental plant. It was used in gardens and landscape plantings from which it has readily escaped, establishing wild populations at a number of sites across the region.

The non-seeding hybrid fountain grass *Cenchrus advena* (Wipff & Veldkamp) Morrone includes many cultivars such as Moulin Rouge, Cherry Sparkler, Rubrum, Purple Splash, Cupreum Compactum, Fireworks, Sky Rocket and Viridis. It not included in this policy and not declared at this time.

Synonymy


Basionym:  
*Phalaris setacea* Forssk., Fl. Aegypt.-Arab. 17 (1775).

Nomenclatural synonyms:  