

# Guidelines



## Slashing and mowing in coastal areas

G-7.4

It is sometimes necessary to remove native vegetation as part of land management works such as to reduce fire hazards in coastal reserves, to clear lines of site along coastal roadsides or to provide access to the foreshore. Slashing and mowing with machinery and brush-cutters is a common way to manage vegetation but it is much more than just removing vegetation. Careful consideration is required in coastal areas because vegetation removal can lead to destabilisation of foreshores and damage to fragile coastal ecosystems.

*Use these guidelines in conjunction with the information provided in Chapter 7 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.*

### Planning

Generate a specific slashing program that details key environmental, heritage and community considerations for each site requiring maintenance. Monitor and adapt the program as required.

Undertake an initial on-site inspection to determine the extent of the works required. Seek advice from NRM officer within local council.

Identify any areas that are being actively managed by a local Coastcare or other community group and ensure the slashing will not impact on any revegetation or natural regeneration works.

Identify any vegetation or wildlife values that may be impacted on by accessing the site with machinery and undertaking the vegetation removal, such as threatened species, shorebirds, and penguin and shearwater rookeries.

Identify any heritage or Aboriginal heritage values that might be impacted by the works and seek assessments and approvals if required.

Schedule works to avoid shorebird and shearwater breeding times, from September to March, and penguin breeding and moulting times, from August to April, in areas with bird values if disturbance is likely.

Schedule works to promote native species and minimise weed seed spread. Consider the life cycle of local native species. Allow flowering and seed ripening before slashing to maintain the seed supply and the capacity for natural regeneration.

Ensure contractors can demonstrate a high standard of environmental management practices and provide contractors with clear environmental management targets in contract schedules.

### Slashing & mowing methods

Do not have the mower or slasher set too low otherwise the machine will scalp the ground causing serious soil disturbance. Scalping leaves bare patches of earth subject to erosion, in sandy soils the risk of erosion and destabilisation is very high.

Ensure grass clippings are collected in a grass catcher or projected away from waterways, drains and gutters. Removal of grass clippings is always advisable as they can be washed or blown down stormwater drains or into waterways spreading weeds or causing problems for gross pollutant traps or water quality.

#### Disclaimer

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Consider sending collected grass clippings to a composting facility or worm farm.

Maintain vegetation on the edge of waterways as it protects the water from contaminants and pollution. It is best to re-establish native grasses and shrubs along these areas that will require minimal maintenance.

Take care with fuel products especially around waterways and avoid spills when filling machinery. Ensure that managing a fuel spill is covered within the risk assessment. Clean up any spills immediately.

Remove all litter and debris prior to slashing to prevent further spreading of these contaminants.

Avoid mowing or slashing if the ground is very wet to minimise soil compaction or channels caused by machinery and tyre tracks that can lead to erosion.

### Weed hygiene

Good hygiene is critical in coastal areas, to avoid spreading weeds and diseases, such as Phytophthora root rot, from an infested area to an unaffected area on vehicles, equipment and/or boots.

Wash down tools and machinery to prevent the spread of weeds and disease.

Wash down should be undertaken:

- before entering a new site
- after operating in an area affected by a weed or disease that is under containment
- after transporting weeds or soil known to be infected with weed seeds or a plant pathogen
- before moving machinery along roadsides or river banks, or transporting soil and quarry materials

Remove invasive environmental weeds with ripe seed, by hand, prior to slashing and mowing, to prevent the spread of weed seeds.

### More Information

*Tasmanian coastal works manual: Chapters 7 & 8, Page & Thorp 2010*

*Tasmanian coastal works manual: Guideline and Checklist 8.2 Weed hygiene*



# Checklist

## C-7.4

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Use this checklist in conjunction with the accompanying Guideline and the information provided in Chapter 7 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.

### Planning

Seek assistance from local council Natural Resource Management (NRM) officer.

- Contractors briefed on environmental management issues.
- Slashing program documented, including details of key environmental, heritage and community considerations for each site.
- Identification of areas that are being actively managed by a local Coastcare or other community group.
- Consultation with community groups to ensure that works will not impact on revegetation or group activities.
- Identification of vegetation or wildlife values that may be impacted on such as threatened species, penguin colonies, shearwater rookeries, and shorebirds. Seek specialist advice.
- Works scheduled to avoid shorebird, penguin and shearwater breeding times in areas with bird values.
- Heritage or Aboriginal heritage values identified. Assessments and approvals sought if required.
- Works scheduled to promote seed setting of native species and minimise weed seed spread.
- Native species allowed time to flower and go to seed before slashing.

### Before work starts

- All litter and debris removed.
- All tools and machinery and personal equipment washed down. Especially important if coming from a weed infested or diseased site or entering a site that is weed and disease free.
- Risk assessment undertaken including fuel spill management.
- Activity rescheduled if the ground is very wet. Soil compaction and channels caused by machinery and tyre tracks on wet ground leads to erosion.

### On the job

- Mower or slasher set high enough to avoid scalping the ground. Scalping leaves bare patches.
- Grass clippings collected in a grass catcher or projected away from waterways, drains and gutters.
- Grass clippings removed from the site. Consider sending collected grass clippings to a composting facility or worm farm.
- Vegetation retained on the edge of waterways to protect the water from contaminants and pollution.
- Care taken to avoid fuel spills when filling machinery. Any spills cleaned up immediately.

### More Information

*Tasmanian coastal works manual: Chapters 7 & 8, Page & Thorp 2010*  
and Guideline and Checklist 8.2 Weed and disease hygiene in coastal areas

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