

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands, on which the Rural City of Wangaratta communities reside.

We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures. We are committed to walking beside all traditional owners as we move toward reconciliation.

Introduction

Roadsides contain some of the last remaining patches of our native grasslands, woodlands and forests that were once widespread across our region prior to European settlement. Important cultural heritage sites may go unnoticed to the passer by and yet, they are hidden there, quietly and proudly representing the history of Australia's first people.

Today, local roadsides provide an essential network of habitat corridors in our landscape, containing food and shelter that are central to the movement and survival of our native wildlife. Roadsides provide a significant contribution to our local biodiversity and are home to countless numbers of woodland birds, mammals, frogs, reptiles and invertebrates.

We may drive past these roadsides every day and not appreciate their significance, overlooking the aesthetic features and views they provide that shape the character of our region. Often our roadsides contain the oldest and most hollow bearing trees in the landscape that are irreplaceable in our short lifetimes.

Legislation exists in Victoria to protect native vegetation on public and private land, including our roadsides, to ensure that these valuable areas are retained for future generations.

This guide has been prepared to support rural landholders in understanding the values of their local roadsides, what activities can be undertaken on roadsides and when a permit is needed.

Image: Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond



Further Information

Regional Roads Victoria (previously called VicRoads) is responsible for managing declared highways, freeways and arterial roads in the State. You must seek permission from RRV for any activities on these roadsides.

www.regionalroads.vic.gov.au
133 778

Parks Victoria are responsible for managing most roads and tracks within declared National Parks, State Parks and Conservation Parks.
www.parks.vic.gov.au
131 963

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action are responsible for managing most roads and tracks within State Forests and other public land areas.
www.deeca.vic.gov.au
136 186

Country Fire Authority should be consulted for all activities related to fire management. CFA District 23 should be consulted for all activities related to fire management.
www.cfa.vic.gov.au
03 5720 2300

Image front cover: Crystal Speakman

Rural City of Wangaratta
62-68 Ovens Street
Wangaratta VIC 3677
03 5722 0888
council@wangaratta.vic.gov.au
wangaratta.vic.gov.au



Working together to care for our rural roadsides



Working within a roadside

Depending on the activity, you may need a permit from Council or another authority to undertake works on a roadside. Sites may need to be assessed by Council to guide recommendations and permit conditions to ensure that vegetation quality is protected. It is important to understand your responsibilities as a landholder to avoid potential fines or prosecution.

A list of the most common activities and their requirements is provided below. Refer to Council's Roadside Conservation Management Plan at www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au for a detailed list of requirements for specific activities.

We can all help to conserve our precious remnant roadside vegetation by following these guidelines.

Firewood collection

Collection of firewood from reserves and roadsides managed by Council and Regional Roads Victoria is not allowed due to liability, legislative and environmental risks and penalties do apply for illegal collection.

Fallen timber and decomposing wood provides habitat, food and shelter for many types of native animals and is important for weed suppression, erosion control and nutrient cycling. Without an intact ground layer many species will not survive.

Residents of the Rural City of Wangaratta can purchase a permit to collect firewood when available from one of our two firewood depots. Firewood at the depots has been sustainably sourced with timber salvaged from storm events, council works, and plantation timber. Supply is limited. Check the Council website for details.

Slashing

Slashing and mowing adjacent to your property does not need consent from Council, however you should seek advice when slashing on Very High and High conservation value roadsides.

Council Officers can provide advice on suitable times and techniques for slashing to manage pasture grasses and avoid damage to any native vegetation, including native grasses and herbs.

Image: Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond



Grazing

Grazing roadsides in late winter and spring can be a useful management approach for sites dominated by pasture grasses and weeds.

A permit is required for grazing stock on any roadside. Vegetation composition and site conditions may determine the site to be unsuitable for grazing at some or all times of the year.

Grazing is generally not permitted on roadsides of Medium, High and Very High conservation value to avoid damage to the health and diversity of native plant and animal communities.

Moving or droving stock

Moving stock between neighbouring paddocks via the roadside does not require a permit.

Droving is the practice of walking stock over longer distances, to move them from one location to another. A permit is required for droving stock on all roadsides, including RRV roads. Droving is generally not permitted on roadsides of Very High or High conservation value.

Access points

Earthworks including drainage and the creation of access tracks, often creates large areas of soil disturbance and may directly damage native vegetation on the roadside, including native grasses and herbs. The construction of a new access point requires a permit.

Ploughing

Ploughing, grading, cropping or haymaking is generally not permitted on roadsides and requires a permit. Ploughing disturbs the soil, encourages the germination of weeds and reduces the vegetation quality of the roadside over time.

Burning

You must seek approval and obtain a permit from Council for fire management on any roadside. Burning during a Fire Danger Period is not permitted.

The collection and burning of fallen timber on roadsides is not permitted at any time.

Regular burning without consideration of appropriate frequency or intensity can encourage weed growth, increasing fire fuel loads and damage the condition of roadside vegetation.

Image: Crystal Speakman



Pest animal and weed control

Council are responsible for the control of declared noxious weeds and pest animals on rural roadsides through the Roadside Weed and Pest Program. There is no legislative requirement to control or remove environmental weeds from roadsides.

Landholders have a responsibility to ensure that noxious weeds and pest animals do not spread from their private land to the adjacent roadside.

Landholders do not need a permit to manage weeds on roadsides adjacent to their property.

When spraying, select the most appropriate chemical for the targeted weed, minimise spray drift and ensure you have the appropriate knowledge and qualifications to undertake the task without damaging native vegetation.

A handy guide *Weeds in the Rural City of Wangaratta* is available free from Council to assist with weed identification and control.

Fencing

A permit may be required if native vegetation needs to be removed as part of boundary fence construction or maintenance. An exemption may apply if the combined width of vegetation to be removed is less than 4m. Conditions apply to the completion of these works.

Revegetation

Revegetation can help to improve vegetation and habitat quality on roadsides of Medium and Low conservation value. Plans must be developed in consultation with staff from CFA District 23 and Council, with consideration of traffic management, asset maintenance and fire prevention works. Consent must be provided prior to the commencement of any planting. Planted species must be native and indigenous to the area, matching the vegetation type of the site.

Removal of native vegetation

The removal, destruction or lopping of any native vegetation requires a permit. Native vegetation includes trees and shrubs, large dead trees, grasses and herbs.

The removal of any native vegetation directly reduces the habitat quality of our roadsides and may impact on cultural heritage sites. Your application to Council must demonstrate that you have avoided or minimised the removal of native vegetation at the site. Fencing, access points and fire prevention exemptions may apply.

Image: Chris Tzaros, Birds, Bush and Beyond



Management of roadsides

Council are committed to promoting appropriate management of roadside vegetation to ensure environmental and cultural values are protected for the benefit of our community, whilst also meeting key functional and fire prevention requirements.

In the context of this guide, rural roads are roads outside of the 80km/hour township zones that are managed by the Rural City of Wangaratta (Council). Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) are responsible for managing roadsides adjacent to all state arterial roads, highways and freeways.

Roadsides are sometimes also referred to as road reserves. Roadsides are the area of public land that extends from the edge of the road shoulder and drain to the fence line with private land.

Some roadsides provide the only remaining habitat for specific indigenous plant communities and animal species (such as the Brush-tailed Phascogale or Inland Carpet Python) or may include threatened native plant species (grassland plants including orchids are good examples). Conservation of these roadsides is critically important and results in higher levels of controls over allowable activities on particular roadsides.

How valuable is my roadside?

The conservation value of roadside vegetation across all our rural roads has been determined using a combination of roadside vegetation assessment and existing data.

Rural roadsides have been classified as either **Very High, High, Medium** or **Low** conservation value and have been colour coded accordingly on the reference map (below). The roadside conservation value guides what activities can be undertaken on the roadside, whether a permit is required and any additional conditions that must be adhered to.



Signage on roadsides

Some Very High and High conservation value roadsides may have signage to help identify and promote their significance within the local area, however not all will be signed.



Very High Value Roadside

- A high value roadside with remnants of an endangered Ecological Vegetation Class (this means that there is limited vegetation of this type remaining in Victoria)
- A high or medium value roadside with a recent record or physical sighting of a threatened flora or fauna species



High Value Roadside

- Native vegetation makes up more than half of the site
- Good diversity of native species
- Mostly continuous native tree layer
- Native shrub layer is obvious as patches or clumps
- Ground layer cover is more native than weedy



Medium Value Roadside

- Native vegetation cover is low (less than 20%)
- Low diversity of native species
- Scattered trees and/or small patches of native trees present
- Scattered native shrubs may be present
- Ground layer is mostly weeds and pasture grasses



Low Value Roadside

- Native vegetation is very low (less than 10%)
- Low diversity of native species
- Isolated trees, with no continuity of native woody vegetation
- Individuals or small patches of shrubs, or none at all
- Ground layer is mostly weeds and pasture grasses



Nil Value Roadside

- No native vegetation

Images on right (top to bottom):
 Glenrowan Moyhu Road, Greta West
 White Post Road, Everton Upper
 Boggy Creek Road, Moyhu
 Allans Lane, Milawa
 Whorouly Bowmans Road, Whorouly
 Images: Crystal Speakman