

Understanding Roadside Vegetation Management



East Gippsland Shire Council plays a key role in ensuring roadsides are well maintained, safe for all users, and that the flora and fauna that makes our shire so special is protected.

WHAT WE DO

We maintain almost 3,000 kilometres of local roads, or about 6,000km of roadside. We are mindful of differing views around roadside vegetation management, but our work is guided by various pieces of legislation and policy.

East Gippsland Shire is geographically large and diverse in its terrain and ecosystems, and there are multiple agencies involved in the funding, management of roads, roadsides and protection of flora and fauna.

We do not manage vegetation along some of the region's roads, including highways. To see what roads are managed by us, view the **Public Road Register** on our website or at one of our Customer Service Centres.

WHY WE MANAGE ROADSIDE VEGETATION

We maintain roadsides so they can:

- Facilitate safe use of our roads at all times.
- Contain examples of remnant vegetation pertaining to that area.
- Act as wildlife corridors that animals can safely travel along.
- Preserve species of high ecological value.
- Preserve sites of high cultural value.
- Provide safe access and egress in times of fire and flood.
- Act as firebreaks or control lines during times of fire.

Our work on roadside vegetation ensures:

- Driver sightlines are maintained.
- Dangerous trees are identified and managed.
- Weeds are controlled.
- Bushfire fuel loads (bark, leaf litter, grass, small branches) are managed.
- Wildlife corridors are protected.
- Drainage and surface water is managed.

HOW WE DO IT

Roadside regrowth - clearing and slashing

Fuel reduction, part of our bushfire risk-management strategy, comprises planned fuel-reduction burning (conducted by the Country Fire Authority), slashing, mulching and the use of herbicides.

What we do:

- Slash to one metre past guideposts on designated Council-managed roads for fire fuel reduction, rather than slashing from gutter to boundary fence.
- Conduct a slashing program from around October to January.
- Cut grass to a height of 100mm.
- Consider conducting full-width cuts from guidepost to fenceline, where warranted or in agreement with a local CFA brigade.

In addition to reducing fuel load, roadside slashing of grass on road reserves can:

- Improve driver visibility.
- Ensure vehicles can safely use the full span of a road.
- Assist in managing drainage issues.

Extra clearance is often carried out near intersections, crests, bends, road signs and areas where pedestrians, wildlife or livestock might encroach on the road.

Trees that pose a hazard due to site, condition or a change in road conditions may also be pruned or removed.

Regional Roads Victoria, Council and DELWP have been assessing and removing fire-affected trees across the shire. If you have concerns about hazardous trees on a Council-controlled roadside, contact us on (03) 5153 9500. If the tree is on public land, contact DELWP's Customer Contact Centre on 136 186).

CFA brigades regularly contact Council and provide advice on road reserves that are carrying high levels of fuel. Council works with the CFA's Risk Landscape Officers to establish the level of risk the road is carrying by determining the location, the level of fuel and the best manner in which to manage the fuel load. Burning the roadside is often not the best option as few "burn days" eventuate through the year. Sometimes, slashing and mulching are the preferred method as these activities carry a lower level of risk than using fire.

Removing native vegetation

Our road maintenance and bushfire hazard works aim to remove the minimum amount of native vegetation necessary.

There are significant obligations on us and other parties to ensure protection of listed ecological communities under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. We work with DELWP and CFA to implement an agreed approach that both manages fire risk and protects environmental values.

We are generally only able to undertake limited fuel management and clean-up of debris along roadsides. Where this is beyond our resources, we will advocate for funding to undertake the necessary works. It is not practical to remove all reminders of the impact of the fires and fire-killed vegetation can still play an important habitat role.

What you can do:

On Council-owned land, ratepayers must gain Council land manager approval before carrying out works such as fence repairs or roadside works, such as driveway access.

You can find an approval application form [here](#). If a permit is granted, a native vegetation offset must also be obtained.

Permits are required for vegetation removal in areas where species are protected. Permission to clear native vegetation is sought through DELWP.

Removing, destroying or lopping native vegetation requires separate approval.

Please contact us for guidance on seeking approvals.

Weed control

We control weeds on our roadsides to prevent damage to protect both native vegetation and assist good management of private land. In particular, we identify and treat weed species that pose the biggest threats.

These species can be a risk by spreading into agricultural and natural areas and impact yields, human and animal health, biodiversity and habitats, recreation and amenity.

New and emerging weeds can be reported to Agriculture Victoria on 136 186 or via the Exotic Pest Plant Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Native vegetation plays an important role in suppression of weed establishment on roadsides by limiting the areas where invasive weeds can grow.

Regenerating vegetation on roadsides naturally rehabilitates disturbed areas and plays an important role in habitat recovery for native flora and fauna.

Legislation safeguards vegetation on roadsides to support habitat conservation and protection of threatened species and communities.

Contact us for a copy of the Roadside Weeds and Pests Control Plan and the Sustainable Gardening booklet, which contain information on common weeds.

Hazardous trees

Our arborists and contractors assess trees on Council roadsides. Trees can be pruned or removed if a hazard due to a safety risk, put property at risk, or if they limit road use.

What we do:

- Assess trees on age, species and health and condition.
- Determine a tree is a hazard if its roots are causing significant damage to property or have the potential to, or they pose a trip hazard (remedial action is considered before removal).
- Alert people to potentially hazardous trees by marking them or creating exclusion zones.
- Create an incident report and further assess the tree.
- Include powerline hazard identification, reporting and management in our assessment.
- Prune or use other methods for remediation.

Given the size of the shire, it is simply impossible for us to actively monitor all trees and vegetation issues.

Report trees considered a hazard by calling (03) 5153 9500 or via the **Snap Send Solve** app.

Firewood collection

Firewood collecting is generally prohibited on Council-managed roadsides. In exceptions, Council will advertise where firewood can be collected on sections of roadside. Managed by Forest Fire Management Victoria, firewood can only be collected twice per year from state forests at specified times and locations.

For a map showing your nearest collection point, visit ffm.vic.gov.au/firewood/firewood-collection-in-your-region.

Cultural heritage significance

Roadsides can contain artefacts of cultural heritage significance that require considered management.

Significant Aboriginal sites are protected a cultural heritage management plan may be necessary before any works commence. Non-Aboriginal historical sites, which can include significant trees, monuments or relics, are protected under the Victorian Heritage Act 1995.

Roadside litter and Illegal dumping

Roadside litter poses a threat to driver safety, vegetation and health. The Snap, Send, Solve app allows the public to quickly and easily report roadside dumping.

Details of litter and illegal dumping sites on Council managed roads can also be emailed to us via feedback@egipps.vic.gov.

For reports or contact details that inform our management of roadsides please contact Council or visit our **website**