

by ALEX NANKIVELL, Conservation Programmes Manager

Buffel grass (Cenchrus ciliaris and C. pennisetiformis) has been identified as a major threat to biodiversity in South Australia and was listed as a declared weed under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004 in January 2015. It is considered a true ecosystem transformer species, out-competing all native understorey species. Buffel grass invasion can also dramatically increase the frequency and intensity of fire, which will negatively impact fire-sensitive native plants.

Originally from Asia and Africa, buffel grass is a perennial tussock grass introduced for rangeland improvement (pasture and dust suppression) and mining reclamation. It has become widespread across northern Australia and in recent years has been extending further into the South Australian pastoral and agricultural zones.

Declared weed status prescribes management obligations on landholders (depending on the NRM region), including prohibition on sale and movement on public roads in all regions, a requirement to destroy all plants in the agricultural zones and to control the plant in the pastoral zones.

The weed has not yet been recorded at Hiltaba Nature Reserve but has been located on Witchelina Nature Reserve where it favours creek lines and floodplains. These habitats contain the highest diversity and are of high conservation value.

NFSA's Council has identified buffel grass as the highest priority weed for control. In order to protect important habitats from further invasion, we have been undertaking a property wide management program that has mobilised managers and volunteers to map all known infestations and begin control efforts.

It is imperative that we exercise good visitor management and hygiene practices to minimise the impact and spread of buffel grass at NFSA reserves. If you are visiting Witchelina, only use designated tracks, observe signage and avoid long grass. Further, if you visit an area of buffel grass infestation please let our managers know so they can organise a vehicle wash-down.



Nature Foundation SA, working to SAVE, PROTECT and RESTORE South Australia's natural biodiversity.