

Minutes

Meeting Five of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group

Teleconference held on Tuesday 27 March, 2012

Attendees: Colin Grant, DAFF (Chair); Robyn Martin, DAFF; Leanne Herrick, DAFF; Anne Ferguson, DSEWPaC; Belinda Brown, DSEWPaC; Greg Fraser, PHA; Rod Turner, PHA; Sophie Peterson, PHA; Jenna Taylor, PHA (Secretariat); Mike Ashton, DEEDI; Satendra Kumar, NSW DPI; Pat Sharkey, DPI Vic; Russell McMurray, DPI Vic; Anne Dennis, DSE; Hugh Bramwells, DSE.

Apologies: Lois Ransom, DAFF; Mike Cole, DAFF; Tegan Honing-Wassenburg, DAFF; Sam Malfroy, PHA; Kareena Arthy, DEEDI; Suzy Perry, DEEDI; Jim Thompson, DEEDI; Bruce Christie, NSW DPI; Kathy Gott, NSW DPI; Graham Wilson, OEH; Hugh Millar, DPI Vic; Tuesday Phelan, DSE.

Item 1 – Welcome by the Chair

Colin Grant welcomed all Members of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group (MRTMG), and in particular Anne Ferguson from DSEWPaC, Belinda Brown from DEWHA, Anne Dennis and Hugh Bramwells from the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment who were attending for the first time. It was noted that Tuesday Phelan from the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Graham Wilson from NSW's Office of Environment and Heritage have both accepted their invitations to participate in the MRTMG but were unable to attend this meeting. It was also noted that Queensland's Department of Environment and Resource Management is yet to accept their invitation for a representative to participate in the MRTMG.

Item 2 – Endorsement of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

After a brief discussion, led by Colin Grant, the minutes from Meeting Four were endorsed with only minor changes. PHA will make them available on the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program website.

Item 3 – Action Items from the Previous Meeting

Colin Grant ran through the action list from Meeting Four. The status of each action item was discussed and amendments were made where necessary.

Item 4 – Reporting from PHA

Contracts

Rod Turner advised that as PHA is dealing with a range of stakeholders and sometimes multiple stakeholders for any given project, the contracts for the Australian Government funded projects in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust are still in various stages of completion:

PHA is currently negotiating with DPI Vic over milestones and milestone payments for Project 3.1.

The contract for Project 3.2 has been signed and the first milestone payment made to CSIRO.

The Orange Agricultural Institute has indicated to PHA that it is no longer interested in undertaking Project 3.3. PHA is yet to receive formal notification of this.

PHA is working with Suzy Perry and Morag Glen to determine how much of Project 3.4 has already been completed overseas and how the remaining work will be best completed. PHA will also approach Angus Carnegie regarding the possibility of linking his upcoming overseas activities to Project 3.4.

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The Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens has requested that some minor changes be made to the milestones in the contract for Project 3.5 that was originally sent for consideration. PHA has accepted these changes and will send an amended contract to the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens for signing. PHA is aware that some work that will impact on this project may exist internationally. If this work is published this contract will be varied so as to achieve a positive outcome.

The University of Sydney Plant Breeding Institute has revised its proposal for Project 4.1 to reflect a reduced timeframe. PHA will amend the original contract accordingly and send it to the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens for signing.

PHA is currently waiting to receive a revised proposal from the University of Sydney for Project 5.1.

The contract for Project 6.1 has been sent to ANU for consideration. It is currently being reviewed by ANU's legal office.

The contract for Project 6.2 has been sent to CSIRO for consideration.

SharePoint

Sophie Peterson advised that PHA has developed a SharePoint site for the sharing of MRTMG and Myrtle Rust Scientific Advisory Group (MRSAG) documents. The SharePoint site will be used as a means of distributing the agenda and any other documents prior to MRTMG and MRSAG teleconferences and as a repository for finalised minutes and action lists.

While usernames and passwords have already been generated for most members of the MRTMG and MRSAG, they have not yet been generated for newer members as PHA's IT support is on leave. Once these outstanding usernames and passwords have been generated Jenna Taylor will circulate usernames and passwords as well as instructions regarding accessing the SharePoint site to all members then commence using the SharePoint site as described above. In the meantime, however, Jenna will continue to distribute the agenda and any other documents for future teleconferences via email.

Item 5 – Reporting from Queensland

Mike Ashton gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Queensland. The report is attached at Attachment A.

Item 6 – Reporting from NSW

Satendra Kumar gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in NSW. The report is attached at Attachment B.

There was some discussion regarding the circumstances under which "Guava Rust"¹ was detected on guava in Northern NSW. The general consensus was that Myrtle Rust has not jumped hosts.

Item 7 – Reporting from Victoria

Russell McMurray and Anne Dennis gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Victoria. The report is attached at Attachment C.

The MRTMG was particularly interested in the fact that DSE is investigating seed banks for endangered species at risk from Myrtle Rust. Satendra Kumar advised that similar work is being undertaken by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Mount Annan Botanic Gardens in Sydney and the

¹ There is some disagreement among researchers as to whether the Australian rust should be named *Uredo rangellii* (Myrtle Rust) or *Puccinia psidii* (Guava Rust) and this is reflected here. It is anticipated that the results from Project 3.1 will resolve this issue.

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Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra. Belinda Brown advised that there is also an Australian Seed Bank Partnership.

It was agreed that Satendra Kumar would contact Anne Dennis to discuss this further and that they would write a paper outlining what is being done at present and how these activities could be coordinated. This paper will be discussed at the next meeting of the MRTMG.

Item 8 – Myrtle Rust Technical Liaison

Pat Sharkey reminded Members that it was identified at the previous meeting of the MRTMG that there is a need for liaison between environmental departments to increase awareness of the ecological impacts of Myrtle Rust that have been observed interstate and the scope for management of these impacts. After some discussion it was agreed that, as MRTMG Members are largely unfamiliar with the environmental issues, the representatives from environmental departments would meet out of session between MRTMG meetings and decide on issues (such as the seed bank issue) to be discussed at the next meeting of the MRTMG. It was also agreed that Satendra Kumar would coordinate this liaison.

Item 9 – Next Meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting of the MRTMG was scheduled for Tuesday 10 April. It was decided during the Asian Honey Bee Transition to Management Group (AHBTMG) meeting that the AHBTMG meeting on this date would be cancelled as the two week turnaround between meetings was insufficient. It was discussed and agreed that the MRTMG meeting on Tuesday 10 April would be cancelled also and the MRTMG will next meet via teleconference from 3.00pm-4.00pm on Tuesday 15 May.

Item 10 – Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked the Members of the MRTMG for their participation in the teleconference and closed the meeting.

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Attachment A

Myrtle rust in Queensland – report from Biosecurity Queensland for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Five held by teleconference on Tuesday, 27 March 2012

1. There has been no extension of geographic range in Queensland since the February MRTMG meeting. Myrtle Rust detections in the natural environment remain restricted to South East and Central Queensland in an area stretching from the New South Wales border to Yeppoon in Central Queensland and west as far as Toowoomba. There have been no detections of Myrtle Rust in the environment west of the Great Dividing Range.

To date, there have been some detections in nurseries in centres outside the current known infested area (i.e. Cairns, Townsville, Airlie Beach, and Chinchilla) but there is no evidence that the disease has established in the environment in any of these centres.

The disease is, however, expected to continue to spread north along the Queensland coast.

2. There have been no new species identified as hosts of Myrtle Rust since the February MRTMG meeting. The total number of confirmed host species in Queensland remains at 125 species from 35 genera. These have been diagnostically and botanically confirmed in Queensland.

When data from other states is added (not all diagnostically or botanically confirmed), the total is estimated to be around 250 species from 50 genera in Australia so far. This is already well in excess of the total number of species and genera known to be hosts worldwide prior to the detection of Myrtle Rust in Australia (70 species from 17 genera) and the disease is yet to reach its full geographic range.

Of interest is that some species initially thought to be resistant from host testing following the detection in NSW are now being shown to be hosts in the field.

3. The Queensland Myrtle Rust Program is currently working with the Local Government Association of Queensland, local councils, the Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland, and other key stakeholders to develop a practical disease management guide to help people dealing with Myrtle Rust. The guide will be developed along similar lines to the industry Farm Biosecurity Manuals developed by PHA and will provide people with tools and strategies that will help them assess the risks associated with Myrtle Rust and develop strategies for managing the disease that are appropriate for their needs. The guide is expected to be released in the next few months.
4. The Myrtle Rust Advisory Committee, which is made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups and oversees and advises the Queensland Myrtle Rust Program, met on 29 February 2012. The Committee was updated on developments in Queensland and in other jurisdictions and reviewed the Program's Work Plan for 2011/12.
5. Myrtle Rust Information Sessions for the community, local businesses, and the council were held in Gladstone during March. Further sessions are planned for Townsville in April and throughout SE QLD over the coming months.
6. The Myrtle Rust Program provided an information sheet to delegates attending the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia National Conference on the Gold Coast during March. The information sheet provided advice and information to delegates on Myrtle Rust and risk mitigation measures they could take to minimise the risk of moving the disease back to their businesses or jurisdictions following the conference.

The Myrtle Rust Program also had a stand at the Redlands Research Station during the Conference tour of the station. The stand provided delegates with information about Myrtle Rust, detailed the

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R&D work the Program is currently doing, and provided delegates with access to staff who could answer their questions about the disease and its management.

7. Queensland's Department of Environment and Resource Management has been successful in obtaining a \$300K Caring for Our Country grant to address Myrtle Rust management in World Heritage Areas in Queensland.

The project, *Mitigating the impacts of Myrtle Rust disease on Queensland World Heritage Areas*, will develop a long-term monitoring program and management strategies for rainforest areas in Queensland's World Heritage Areas.

The project will be led by Dr Gordon Guymer, who works closely with the Myrtle Rust Program and is a member of the MR Advisory Committee.

The project will be conducted over a three year period with the aim of:

- Identifying and tracking the infection and impact of Myrtle Rust in the Gondwana, Fraser island and Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas
- Improving the understanding of the disease's biology in rainforest conditions
- Supporting Myrtle Rust research projects
- Modelling the potential long-term impacts of the disease on host plant species and associated dependent flora and fauna.

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Attachment B

Myrtle rust in NSW – report from NSW DPI for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Five held by teleconference on Tuesday, 27 March 2012

1. As reported during the February MRTMG meeting, New South Wales is well into a “management” mode for Myrtle Rust. Comprehensive information on Myrtle Rust management for all stakeholders is available from the NSW DPI website (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust>).

This information includes:

- What is Myrtle Rust?
 - Reporting
 - Host list and distribution
 - What can I do to manage Myrtle Rust
 - Myrtle rust management resources and factsheets for:
 - Home gardeners
 - Bush regenerators
 - Nursery and Garden Industry
 - The environment
 - Further information and links
2. There have been no reports of Myrtle Rust in natural vegetation to the west of the Great Dividing Range thus far.
 3. In early March suspect symptoms of rust was reported on guava from Northern NSW. Diagnosticians from DEEDI confirmed this as “Guava Rust”². The guava in question was a self-sown seedling growing as a weed on a property that was present in close proximity to an infected *Rhodomytus psidiodes*. The plant had already been cut down and the sample had to be collected from prunings. Only a single pustule was found after the plant had been cut down for several days. No further rust symptoms were noted on guava in the surveillance that was conducted in the vicinity.

² There is some disagreement among researchers as to whether the Australian rust should be named *Uredo rangellii* (Myrtle Rust) or *Puccinia psidii* (Guava Rust) and this is reflected here. It is anticipated that the results from Project 3.1 will resolve this issue.

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Attachment C

Myrtle rust in Victoria – report from DPI Vic and DSE for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Five held by teleconference on Tuesday, 27 March 2012

1. DPI Vic has detected Myrtle Rust at 28 sites in the greater metro area. The majority of the sites are wholesale and retail nurseries or private residences with a direct link to these nurseries. Disease at the majority of these sites have been contained in that the infected plants have been removed and destroyed or treated and no further signs of disease are in evidence.

Detections consist of:

Site	Number of detections	Status
Wholesale and retail nurseries	19	All contained - no further evidence of symptoms.
Private residence (with trace linkages to infected nursery)	6	Five contained - no further evidence of symptoms. One site remains infected, ongoing pruning, fungicide treatment and reinspection program in place.
Private residences (currently with unknown trace)	1	Contained - no further evidence of symptoms.
Botanic park (with trace linkage to infected nursery)	1	Ongoing surveying, pruning, removal and fungicide treatment of trees in conjunction with park management and local council.
Street frontage (with trace linkage to infected residence)	1	Recent detection (21 March) by BV staff surveying streets surrounding detection site. Council advised and a decision is pending as to whether affected trees (2) will be removed or whether a program of pruning and fungicide treatment will be undertaken by the council.

Myrtle Rust has currently been detected on:

Acmena smithii (lilly pilly); *Agonis flexuosa* (willow myrtle); *Backhousia citriodora* (lemon scented myrtle); *Lophomyrtus X ralphii* (Black Stallion); *Metrosideros collina* (Fiji Christmas bush); *Metrosideros excelsa* (New Zealand Christmas bush); *Myrtus communis* (common myrtle); *Syzygium australe* (lilly pilly/scrub cherry/Aussie southern); *Syzygium paniculatum* (dwarf magenta cherry); and, since the last report, on *Chamelaucium uncinatum* (Geraldton wax) and *Callistemon sp.* (bottle brush, species identification pending).

2. Ongoing surveying around detection sites is being conducted to provide early identification of any spread of disease from affected properties. To date only one such survey has indicated any spread of the disease into the surrounding area (street frontage detailed above).
3. BV is coordinating a network of sentinel sites throughout Victoria. These sites, currently approaching 100, are located in areas which are frequently visited by the general public, have a high risk of a spore finding a susceptible host and can be easily and regularly monitored by selected stakeholders. BV staff are monitoring some of these sites but most are being established by other agencies that are providing data from the sites to BV.
4. BV is continuing to receive about 20 calls and email enquiries per week through the Customer Service Centre and plant protection email account about suspect disease and related issues.
5. A Myrtle Rust Coordinating Committee of state and local government agencies and private industry stakeholders has been active in managing the response and assisting with surveillance, reporting, tracing and organisation of communication and training activities.
6. In early March, BV transitioned from emergency response mode to a project based program. The Victorian Myrtle Rust Response Program Plan is being revised to reflect the current situation and to provide detail of changing response activities in the likely event that the number of detections rises or the disease becomes established in the natural environment.

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7. BV staff have delivered 17 training sessions on Myrtle Rust to over 700 personnel from nurseries, DSE, Parks Victoria, local councils, interest groups, and beekeepers.
8. BV staff have worked with the Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria (NGIV) to deliver ICA 42 accreditation courses and provide inspection services to nurseries seeking accreditation to trade Myrtaceae to South Australia.
9. BV staff have worked closely with the organisers of this year's Melbourne International Flower and Garden show and the Melbourne City Council to ensure stall holders are aware of Myrtle Rust and the regulatory requirements for moving Myrtaceae into Victoria.

Staff from BV have provided advice on appropriate protocols to minimise the risk of disease transfer and allow exhibitors to display their Myrtaceae at the Show. A team from BV will visit the show the day before opening to inspect the site and speak with stall holders.

BV is also providing literature to NGIV as well as the Australian Plant Society and the Victorian Horticultural Society for display and distribution during the Show. The intention is for a BV expert on Myrtle Rust to visit the show periodically to provide further advice if needed.

10. DSE is exploring the potential *ex-situ* conservation (seed banking) of the most threatened and significant Myrtaceae at risk from Myrtle Rust in Victoria.