

Minutes

Meeting Eleven of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group

Teleconference held on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Attendees: Colin Grant, DAFF (Chair); Louise Clarke, DAFF; Melissa Hart, DAFF; David Forsyth, DSEWPaC; Alex Blanden, DSEWPaC; Greg Fraser, PHA; Rod Turner, PHA; Jenna Taylor, PHA (Secretariat); Geoff Pegg, DAFF Queensland; Satendra Kumar, NSW DPI; Graham Wilson, OEH; Pat Sharkey, DPI Vic; Russell McMurray, DPI Vic; Stuart Holland, DPI Vic; Lucy Sutherland, ASBP; Gavin Matthew, AFPA.

Apologies: Vanessa Findlay, DAFF; Andrew Wilson, DAFF; Rose Hockham, DAFF; Nin Hyne, DAFF; Belinda Brown, DEWHA; Suzy Perry, DAFF Queensland; Jim Thompson, DAFF Queensland; Mark Panitz, DAFF Queensland; Gordon Guymer, DSITIA; Bruce Christie, NSW DPI; Kathy Gott, NSW DPI; Anne Dennis, DSE; Hugh Bramwells, DSE; Andrew Greenwood, DSE; Shaun Suito, DSE; Peter Grist, AFPA.

Item 1 – Welcome by the Chair

Colin Grant welcomed all Members of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group (MRTMG).

Item 2 – Endorsement of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

It was discussed that the draft minutes from Meeting Ten had been circulated for comment out of session. No comments or amendment requests had been received and the minutes were taken to be endorsed. They have been made 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 Ten and the status of each action item was discussed.

Item 4 – Report from PHA

Contracts

Rodney Turner reminded Members that all but one of the contracts for the Australian Government funded projects in the Plan for Transition to Management of Myrtle Rust have been signed and the researchers are actively undertaking work.

Since the last meeting, PHA has received three progress reports from researchers. These have been circulated to the MRTMG for their information. They have also been circulated to the members of the Myrtle Rust Scientific Advisory Group (MRSAG) who have been invited to provide comment on the reports if they wish to.

There are three further progress reports due. Jenna Taylor will circulate these to both the MRTMG and the MRSAG as soon as they are received by PHA.

With regards to the remaining contract, as has been advised previously, one of the Australian researchers in Acelino Alfenas' collaborative group of international researchers working on *P. psidii* was to contact Acelino then develop and provide to PHA a proposal for Acelino to make collections of *P. psidii* in South America and send them to Australia for use in research that will complement the whole genome sequencing of *U. rangelii* that is currently being undertaken by NSW DPI. The collections may be used in morphological work also. Acelino is available to travel to Australia in June to attend a Myrtle Rust workshop in Sydney. This workshop will be funded by the Myrtle Rust

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Transition to Management Program and will provide an opportunity to discuss the Program's research projects, the outcomes of this science, as well as future directions.

Item 5 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in Queensland

Geoff Pegg gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Queensland. His report is attached at Attachment A.

Item 6 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in NSW

Satendra Kumar and Graham Wilson gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in NSW. His report is attached at Attachment B.

Item 7 – Report on Myrtle Rust Activities in Victoria

Russell McMurray gave an update on Myrtle Rust activities in Victoria. His report is attached at Attachment C.

Item 8 – Report on National Myrtle Rust Activities

David Forsyth gave an update on national Myrtle Rust activities. His report is attached at Attachment D.

Item 9 – Report on the Australian Seed Bank Partnership

Lucy Sutherland gave an update on the Australian Seed Bank Partnership's Myrtle Rust activities. Her report is attached at Attachment E.

Colin Grant suggested that Lucy take the lead on coordinating the development of a Caring for our Country application and to liaise with PHA in arranging a meeting with any MRTMG Members who are interested in contributing to the development of this proposal.

Item 10 – Report on Forestry Activities

Gavin Matthew gave an update on the Forestry industry's Myrtle Rust activities. His report is attached at Attachment F.

Item 11 – Cessation Strategy

Colin Grant reminded the Members that the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program would conclude at the end of June 2013 and it is likely that there will be no further funding available beyond June other than Caring for our Country and Biodiversity Fund funding. As such, Colin had asked Jenna Taylor to draft a Cessation Strategy for the Program which was similar to the Cessation Strategy that was written by DAFF Queensland for the Asian Honey Bee Transition to Management Program. Jenna has done so and a draft Cessation Strategy was circulated to the MRTMG prior to the meeting.

Colin highlighted the fact that future activities have been identified in the draft Cessation Strategy. In some cases a party has already agreed to fund the activity, for example maintenance of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program website by PHA. In other cases, although no one party has as of yet agreed to fund the activity, we can be confident that it will be funded, for example national registration of the most effective fungicide(s) for controlling Myrtle Rust (as identified in the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program-funded fungicide efficacy trials) will be completed and funded by chemical registrants. In other cases still, for example the building of a comprehensive *ex situ* collection of Myrtaceae species to support conservation placing priority on collecting threatened species and building a genetically diverse collection, it is intended that a funding proposal will be submitted for the activity.

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In the case of the activities that remain, funding must be committed to each before the end of June so that the MRTMG will not have to coordinate this beyond the conclusion of the Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Program. It was discussed that many Members do not yet have an indication of their organisation's budget for the next financial year and as such are unable to commit funding at this stage.

It was agreed that this issue should be discussed further at the next meeting at which time the Members may be aware of their organisations' budgets for the next financial year and therefore which activities they may be able to commit to.

Item 12 – Next Meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting was scheduled for 3.00-4.00pm AEDST on Tuesday 16th April 2013 and were asked to add this time and date to their diaries.

Item 13 – 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 DAFF Queensland for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Meeting Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Reports

Myrtle Rust reports have declined in the last couple of months following extended hot and dry weather conditions. However, recent rains have seen a slow increase in infection levels on known hosts.

Host Range

New hosts for Queensland detected in January/February 2013

Nine new species were identified as hosts of Myrtle Rust in Queensland in January and February. These are:

- *Austromyrtus* sp. (Lockerbie scrub)
- *Backhousia hughseii*
- *Rhodamnia blairiana*
- *Syzygium apodophyllum*
- *Syzygium bamagense*
- *Syzygium erythrocalyx*
- *Syzygium endophloium*
- *Syzygium pseudofastigiatum*
- *Syzygium macilwraithianum*

Research

Impact on *Melaleuca quinquenervia*

Approximately two years of data has now been collected from a natural regeneration site of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* with disease ratings completed on a monthly basis. Other data collated includes impact on growth rate (done 6, 12 and 18 months since first detection) and impact on flowering rate.

The findings are that there is a significant correlation between disease severity and apical growth rates and also between disease levels and flower production.

Flowering was monitored over time and seed has now been collected from trees that were more resistant under field conditions. Seedlings have been germinated and will be tested under glasshouse conditions to determine levels of resistance/susceptibility within the progeny.

Impact on *Melaleuca quinquenervia* regeneration plantings

Four regeneration sites, established as part of the two million tree program, are being assessed in collaboration with Brisbane City Council and students from Griffith and Queensland Universities. Changes in disease severity are being assessed monthly in relation to site (inland vs coastal; mixed vs monoculture), climate, and tree age. Twelve months of data have been collated to date.

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Disease Epidemiology studies

Disease epidemiology data has been collated from sites in Brisbane examining disease incidence and severity in relation to climatic conditions. This data is being compared to experiment sites in NSW (Angus Carnegie). Approximately two years of data has been collated and is in the process of being analysed.

Plantation eucalypts – resistance screening

Disease screening has been completed for the main species used in hardwood plantation development in Queensland. These are:

- *Eucalyptus cloeziana* (Gympie messmate – inland and coastal ecotypes)
- *Eucalyptus argophloia* (Chinchilla white gum – rare and endangered)
- *Corymbia citriodora* subsp. *citriodora* (Spotted gum)
- *Corymbia citriodora* subsp. *variegata* (Spotted gum)
- *Corymbia henryi* (Spotted gum)
- *Corymbia torelliana* (Gadagii)
- *Corymbia torelliana* x CCV hybrids (Corymbia hybrid)

Of all species tested *Eucalyptus argophloia* was found to be most susceptible. However, in all cases resistance was identified at a provenance level. Studies on *Eucalyptus cloeziana* suggest some ecotype difference with coastal provenances being more susceptible than inland provenances.

Evidence from all studies shows the possibility of selecting trees for breeding resistance.

A paper has been submitted:

Pegg GS, Brawner JT, Oostenbrink J, Lee DJ Screening *Corymbia* populations for resistance to *Puccinia psidii*. Submitted December 2012 Plant Pathology

Testing of eucalypt species of significance to Asia and Africa has commenced in collaboration with FABI (University of Pretoria). Seedlings are being established and inoculations will commence in approximately two months' time. Species being studied include:

- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*
- *Eucalyptus grandis*
- *Eucalyptus pellita*
- *Eucalyptus urophylla*

Seed includes provenance material from Australia and seed orchard material from, Asia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Student Projects

Honours Project – Griffith Uni

Studying the impact of Myrtle Rust on the rare and endangered *Gossia gonoclada*.

PhD Student – QUT

Impact of Myrtle Rust on flora and fauna in coastal *Melaleuca* ecosystems.

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Attachment B

Myrtle Rust in NSW – report from NSW DPI and OEH for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Geographic Range

Reports in natural areas are down from last year.

Despite Myrtle Rust being considered endemic in NSW, the disease is yet to be reported in natural vegetation in the west of the Great Dividing Range.

Communication

The NSW DPI Biosecurity website (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust>) is being updated regularly and remains the major site for information on Myrtle Rust management in NSW. Further information on Myrtle Rust management in natural vegetation is available from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/20110683myrtlerustmp.htm>.

Management

OEH is writing a best practice protocol to help minimise national spread of Myrtle Rust and other plant diseases.

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Attachment C

Myrtle Rust in Victoria – report from DPI Vic for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Geographic Range

There has been only one detection of Myrtle Rust since the last meeting in December 2012. This was on a private property in the eastern metro area of Melbourne.

The total number of infected premises stands at 72 mainly across Melbourne with outliers in Shepparton, Lorne, Bairnsdale, and Ballarat.

The disease is still active at a number of sites but has not been detected in the natural bush.

Low temperatures in late spring and the dry weather over summer has contributed to a much lower than expected spread of disease.

Training and Communication

A number of public information sessions were held since the last meeting and at least six more are planned in regional areas over autumn.

Over 2000 people have now attended Myrtle Rust information sessions.

There is still a strong demand from local councils and other land management groups for information and training.

Version 2 of the CD-ROM of training resources, including images of symptoms found in Victoria is now available.

The DPI website was updated recently, including dates of upcoming information sessions. Around 400 visits per month have been made to the Myrtle Rust landing page.

Information and/or images were provided for field days, festivals, council newsletters, and magazines.

Surveillance and Tracing

There has been good participation from stakeholder groups in the surveillance program.

Over 150 sentinel sites have now been established and data from these sites is being provided by land managers, e.g. Parks Victoria, for collation by DPI. These sites provide early warning in high risk areas such as significant bushland sites.

Market Access and Compliance

From 30 June 2012, Myrtle Rust has been declared as an endemic disease in Victoria and the Victorian Importation Order has been rescinded. This means that Myrtle Rust host material is able to enter Victoria from disease-affected states without certification. It remains illegal under Victorian plant biosecurity legislation to sell plants with visible symptoms of Myrtle Rust.

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The Victorian Myrtle Rust Coordination Committee of government and industry representatives has not met since the last meeting but are being kept aware of developments.

DPI activities are according to "Phase 3 – Monitoring Plan for Myrtle Rust", which focuses on providing training and technical advice to land managers, following up detections in new hosts and high risk areas of plantation and natural bush and collecting surveillance and impact data.

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Attachment D

National Myrtle Rust activities – report from DSEWPaC for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Workshop

DSEWPaC held its “Myrtle Rust in natural ecosystems” National Workshop in Canberra in December.

A two page summary of the outcomes of the Workshop will be circulated to participants shortly.

Management

DSEWPaC is writing a threat abatement plan for Phytophthora with a view to doing the same for Myrtle Rust in the future.

Attachment E**The Australian Seed Bank Partnership's Myrtle Rust activities – report from the Australian Seed Bank Partnership for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013****Caring for our Country Update**

The call for submission of applications for Caring for our Country funding came out last week.

Page 15 of the Caring for our Country Guidelines for applicants indicates support for seed-related work and consequently provides opportunities for a bid to build collections of species susceptible to Myrtle Rust i.e. *'While we are seeking applications to maximise on-ground activities, we recognise that many recovery programs incorporate other activities such as education or appropriate collection and storage of seed. Applications are invited for projects that invest in education, training or other activities supporting species recovery programs where it can be demonstrated that these activities are essential to the success of on-ground outcomes.'*

Lucy has contacted the ASBP members to ensure that there would be no conflict or overlap with applications they may be preparing for local work. At the moment there are no obvious conflicts and Lucy is proposing that an application be prepared for the building of an *ex situ* collection of Myrtaceae species to support species recovery. Lucy is not currently clear on the size of this proposed project and whether it will require an Expression of Interest (projects over \$1 million) due on 18 March or a full application (projects \$50,000-1 million) due 10 April.

Updates from Select Individual Partners

Lucy had nothing additional to report from the last meeting in terms of the ASBP partners and their Myrtle Rust-related work.

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Attachment F

The Forestry Industry's Myrtle Rust activities – report from the Australian Forest Products Association for Myrtle Rust Transition to Management Group Eleven held by teleconference on Tuesday 19 February, 2013

Situation Update

There have been no detections of Myrtle Rust in plantations.

The forestry industry's Industry Biosecurity Plan has been finalised and released.