



Seagrass & seaweed removal from beaches

G-6.4

Seagrass beds are often associated with estuarine and sheltered coastal environments in Tasmania and are highly productive ecosystems that provide a nursery for juvenile fish and stabilise sandy sediments. Seaweeds, or marine algae grow on inshore rocky reefs. Both groups of plants can produce abundant leafy material (wrack) that can wash ashore on some Tasmanian beaches, particularly after heavy storms. This wrack is an important resource, trapping sand, providing shelter for breeding shorebirds and habitat for beach invertebrates. The dried plant material also returns minerals and nutrients to the beach as it decomposes.

Sometimes it is seen as necessary to remove excess wrack to improve the amenity of the beach for recreational use or to remove the odour of decomposing material from the beach for aesthetic reasons. Removal of wrack may require access to the beach with vehicles or machinery which can cause damage to fragile dune areas and vegetation, introduce weeds and diseases and has the potential to destroy wildlife habitat and cause disturbance or harm to shorebirds.

Use these guidelines in conjunction with the information provided in Chapters 4 & 6 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.

Approvals

Approval from the land manager is required before removing any material from the beach and a licence is required from Crown Land Services under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*.

Removal of cast seaweed or seagrass is sometimes undertaken to make use of the resource. Non-commercial users may remove up to 100kg per person per day, approval required. However, if the material is to be sold directly or manufactured into a commercial product, then under the *Living Marine Resources Act 1995*, a harvesting license is required from Wild Fisheries in DPIWWE.

Planning

Seek advice from local council Natural Resource Management (NRM) officer to determine if removal is appropriate. Seagrass and seaweed removal should only be undertaken after careful consideration of other coastal values that may be impacted on. Non commercial collection should be kept to a minimum and only undertaken for special community events and peak recreational periods if absolutely necessary. Periods of non-removal of dried seagrass are important throughout the rest of the year. Develop a seagrass removal plan and schedule including details of key environmental, heritage and community considerations for each site.

Often community members request the removal of dried seagrass. Provide information to beach users about the value of the dried seagrass on the beach to reduce their desire to have the material removed. Consult with local care groups that have an interest in the site to keep them informed of planned works and ensure that works will not impact on group activities.

Identify vegetation or wildlife values that may be impacted on such as penguin colonies, shearwater rookeries, shorebirds. Schedule works to avoid shorebird and shearwater breeding times from September to March and penguin breeding and moulting times from August to April in areas with bird values, if possible. If removal must occur during these times on bird breeding beaches extreme care must be taken to minimise disturbance. Seek expert advice.

Identify Aboriginal heritage or other heritage values that may be impacted on by the activity. Seek advice from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. If a new relic is discovered stop work and contact Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Disclaimer

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Schedule removal to times of day when minimal beach users are present. Undertake works prior to peak recreational demand.

Minimise area to be cleared. Reconsider if large areas of beach require ongoing management.

Before works start

Accessing the site with vehicles or machinery will have the biggest impact. Identify appropriate access points that minimise damage to the foreshore and coastal vegetation.

Remove all litter and debris from seagrass or seaweed.

Clean soil and plant material off machines, tools and boots before and after works to avoid introducing weeds and diseases on machinery, tools and personal equipment such as boots.

Undertake a risk assessment including fuel spill management.

Ensure all works staff and contractors are briefed on minimising environmental impacts and provide adequate supervision to ensure best practice environmental standards are being implemented.

On the job

Avoid disturbance to wildlife. Take care to identify any shorebird nests before works commence. Ensure breeding shorebirds are not disturbed during extreme weather as eggs and chicks will die if left unattended during the heat of day or in cold weather. Schedule works for early or late in the day.

Only collect dried seagrass above the low tide mark. If removing dried seagrass from site, minimise the amount of sand removed from the beach. Do not alter dune profile.

Do not dump seagrass on dunes, coastal vegetation or in other waterways, drains and gutters.

Avoid use of machinery and keep vehicle movements on the beach to a minimum. Use of smaller lightweight machinery is preferred. Vehicles should not be used on shorebird breeding beaches. Consider damage to foreshore areas when creating access for vehicles.

Re-deposit and re-spread collected seagrass, or mix with sand and bury, at another location further along the beach. If material must be removed off-site ensure it is protected from blowing during transport.

Checklist



C-6.4

Seagrass & seaweed removal from beaches

Removal of cast seaweed and seagrass (wrack) from the beach may be deemed necessary for aesthetic reasons. This activity should be kept to a minimum and should only be undertaken in consultation with the NRM officer in local council and Crown Land Services in DPIPWE. Removal often requires access to the beach with vehicles or machinery which can cause damage to fragile dune areas and vegetation, introduce weeds and diseases and has the potential to destroy wildlife habitat and cause disturbance or harm to shorebirds.

Use this checklist in conjunction with the accompanying Guideline and the information provided in Chapters 4 & 6 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.

Is removal of wrack required or permitted?

- Advice of local council Natural Resource Management (NRM) officer sought
- Special community event or peak recreational use affected by seagrass/seaweed on the beach
- Commercial harvesting
- Approval from the land manager granted
- Licences granted

Planning

- Seagrass/seaweed removal plan and schedule documented, including details of key environmental, heritage and community considerations for each site
- Periods of non-removal of dried seagrass determined in schedule
- Identification of areas that are being actively managed by a local Coastcare or other community group
- Consultation with care group to ensure that works will not impact on group activities
- Identification of vegetation or wildlife values that may be impacted on such as threatened species, penguins, shearwaters or shorebirds
- Heritage or Aboriginal heritage values identified. Assessments and approvals sought if required
- Works scheduled to avoid shorebird, shearwater and penguin breeding times in areas with bird values if possible
- Boundaries of the beach area to be cleaned determined. Keep clearing to a minimum
- Access points selected to avoid damage to foreshore stability, vegetation and wildlife values
- Works scheduled for late spring/early summer or before the peak recreational demand and when minimal beach users are present

Before work starts

- Contractors briefed on environmental management issues
- All litter and debris removed from dried seagrass prior to collection
- All tools and machinery and personal equipment washed down. Especially important if coming from a weed infested or diseased site or entering a site that is weed and disease free
- Risk assessment undertaken including fuel spill management

On the job

- Collection of seagrass/seaweed limited to above the low tide mark
- Minimal amount of sand removed from the beach with the seaweed
- Seagrass/seaweed not dumped or left in coastal vegetation, other waterways, drains and gutters
- Use of machinery avoided or kept to a minimum. Vehicles should not be used on shorebird breeding beaches
- Disturbance to breeding shorebirds avoided during extreme weather as eggs and chicks left unattended will die
- Seagrass/seaweed re-deposited in another location along the beach and re-spread where possible, or mixed with sand and buried away from the area to be cleared
- Material that must be removed off-site protected from blowing around during transport

More information

DPIPWE website: Sea Fishing and Aquaculture pages

Tasmanian coastal works manual: Chapters 4 & 6, Page & Thorp 2010

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