



MEDIA RELEASE

Athel Pine

Last month's National Athel Pine Management Committee meeting in Alice Springs has highlighted the threat the weed poses to the national landscape.

Athel Pine is a drought tolerant tree with a high water uptake and is officially recognised as one of Australia's 20 weeds of national significance.

It can take over areas displacing native trees and shrubs that are a food source for native animals.

Interim Athel Pine national coordinator and Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts regional manager Neil Phillips said committee members were astounded at how devastating the weed can be.

"The spread of Athel Pine can be prolific and if left untreated its effects can be profound and widespread," Mr Phillips said.

"Committee members left the three-day meeting that included tours of Athel Pine affected areas along the Finke River and other places, with a greater awareness of the threat posed by the weed and were really appreciative of the work we have done to combat Athel Pine."

Mr Phillips said NRETA would support Australian Government efforts to permanently fill the national coordinator's role, which is due to be advertised in coming weeks.

He said the position would be based in the Northern Territory with the primary focus on eliminating Athel Pine as a threat to the Australian environment.

"Athel Pine can spread very quickly over vast areas with the 2000 flood in central Australia demonstrating the weed can even grow in large clay pan areas, which is quite concerning," Mr Phillips said.

"While the Athel Pine has been removed in many areas of central Australia such as those affected by the flood, this still proves we are susceptible at any time as long as it is still around."

The Northern Territory Government with support from the Commonwealth and landholders has managed to reduce Athel Pine's 600km coverage along the Finke River 15 years ago to about 200km today.

Weed species such as Athel Pine cost the Australian economy more than \$4 billion each year on herbicides, production loss and other eradication programs.

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Media Note _ For more information contact Neil Phillips on 8951 9259

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