



MEDIA RELEASE

Battle Against Cabomba Progressing Well

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts' fight to eradicate the noxious weed Cabomba from Darwin River is showing further signs of success.

NRETA Weeds Management Branch regional weeds officer Steve Wingrave said the intensity of strategies to combat Cabomba such as the use of herbicide and shading was gradually being reduced in line with the weed's reduced distribution.

Cabomba is a submerged freshwater plant native to South America which can have a negative impact on biodiversity, water quality, water storage, water distribution infrastructure and recreational activities and is classed as a Weed of National Significance (WONS) after it was ranked as one of the worst 20 weeds in Australia.

Mr Wingrave said the success to date of the fight against Cabomba can be attributed to the significant resources invested, which has enabled the NT to develop a national best practice eradication program.

"We appear to be winning the fight to eradicate the Cabomba weed," Mr Wingrave said.

"There has been very low recruitment of the weed so far this year with no further outbreaks in Darwin River, meaning Cabomba is on its way to being eradicated from this water body."

Cabomba was first discovered in Darwin River in October 2004 and a short herbicide eradication program was undertaken prior to the 2004-05 wet season commencing.

A quarantine restriction of Darwin River from the Cox Peninsula Road crossing to the Leonino Road crossing was also implemented and remains in place until November 2008.

Mr Wingrave said a print and television awareness campaign was recently launched advising people not to breach the quarantine area, which extends five metres from the water's edge onto the river's bank.

"People who breach the quarantine restriction area to participate in water-based activities such as fishing, swimming or boating could face a \$50,000 fine as they risk spreading this noxious weed we've worked so hard towards eradicating," Mr Wingrave said.

"We need the community's help and support in the fight against Cabomba so that it doesn't reach Darwin River Dam, either by not breaching the quarantine zone themselves or reporting any incidences to us."

Mr Wingrave said access to the area is available only by way of permit from NRETA's Weed Management Branch.

He said surveys of Darwin River in 2005 found that Cabomba had regenerated with tests later revealing the weed was producing viable seed and re-generating, the first time recorded anywhere in Australia.

"When Cabomba was first discovered it posed a major threat to Darwin's water supply with a worst case scenario being the requirement of a \$40 million water treatment plant, which no one wants to see become a reality," Mr Wingrave said.

“As our fight against Cabomba gathers pace our focus on herbicides and shading will be reduced with a greater emphasis on continued survey work.”

Local landholders can find out current information available on the website at www.cabomba.nt.gov.au or by phoning the Cabomba Hotline on 8999 8954.

All possible Cabomba sightings should be reported to the hotline.

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Steve Wingrave on 0428 888 204

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