

Queensland steps up battle against parthenium weed

The battle to stop the spread of one of Queensland's most invasive weeds is being stepped up across the Border Rivers and Maranoa Balonne regions of southern Queensland, commencing with an audit of the public vehicle wash down facilities.

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) is conducting the audit to determine how effective and efficient these facilities are in preventing the spread of invasive weeds such as parthenium.

Parthenium weed is one of the most tenacious weeds affecting Queensland's pastoral and grazing areas, affecting approximately eight million hectares in central Queensland. Severe outbreaks in southern Queensland saw the introduction of wash down facilities to stop the weed spreading.

The QMDC has received \$200,000 in funding from the Australian Government's \$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) to support weed spread prevention programs, including the audit which will involve nine public wash down facilities across the region.

One of the facilities involved in the audit is located at Injune. Run by the Bungil Shire Council the Injune facility receives a broad spectrum of agricultural vehicles such as earth moving equipment, utilities, cattle trucks, harvesting equipment as well as private cars and caravans.

Director of Public Works for the Bungil Shire, Andrew Burns, is pleased with the facility's high volume of use, but sees education as one of the most important keys in preventing the spread of Parthenium.

"The Injune facility is very popular with a variety of different users, however education about the weed and how easily it is spread is definitely one of the keys to controlling it," Andrew said.

"The popularity of the facility has meant that we are looking at installing another wash down bay, however we also need to look at other aspects, such as how to recycle the water it uses."

The audit will assess water usage, along with disposal and/or storage of waste material from the facilities. Currently a series of settling ponds are used at the Injune facility for waste water disposal.

Rod Davis of FSA Consulting, contracted by the QMDC to conduct the audit, suggests that possible recommendations for future facilities may include measures such as water meters and controlling who uses the facility.

"While it is hard to measure the effectiveness of the facilities at the moment, conducting the audit allows us to benchmark the facilities, making it easier to measure their effectiveness in the future," Rod said.

Stage One of the project, which finishes in February 2006, includes ensuring the facilities: meet Occupational Health and Safety requirements; make efficient use of resources; remove soil and organic material from vehicles; clean the number and range of vehicles required to make a

significant impact in weed spread prevention; and ensure that vehicle wash-down is convenient and manageable for a range of users.

Projected to finish in October 2006, the audit ultimately aims to identify potential upgrades to existing facilities, as well as any gaps in the existing network where new facilities would be beneficial. The QMDC will then seek to increase public awareness of the facilities, and encourage more people to take advantage of them.

Nine public vehicle wash down facilities are being incorporated into the project, including those in Rolleston, Taroom, Stanthorpe, Roma, Injune, Mitchell, Goondiwindi, Mungindi and Hebel.

For further information on this project, contact Regional Coordinator – Weeds and Pest Animals for the QMDC Darren Marshall on 0429 056 450

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