

Aquatic Pest Awareness Update

Update No 3. April 2005.

National Directions

Commitment Continues

The Department of Conservation will continue to support the national coordinator role into 05/06. In doing so, DOC recognises the enthusiasm shown by the national group to adopt national aquatic pest messages and the value of the work that the group has progressed.

Biosecurity Managers Group

The work of the national aquatic pest awareness was discussed at the Biosecurity Managers Group on the 12th of April. There was agreement at the Biosecurity Managers Group that there was value in a coordinated national approach to aquatic pest issues. Members of the Biosecurity Managers Group will be putting forward recommendations for discussion at the newly created Biosecurity Coordinating Group who is responsible for passing recommendations through to the Chief Executive of Biosecurity New Zealand.

Webpages

Options have been investigated for including information about the work of the national aquatic pest awareness group on the DOC website (for external users) and DOC intranet (for internal users). The webpage will include information about the national group, copies of the updates and a list of available resources. An email will be sent around with the link when the page is activated. Based on the Weedbusters experience, the cost of getting a free standing webpage designed and produced would be \$6,000+ so this will need to be weighed up against other priorities by the national group.

Boat Flags

1300 boat propeller flags are being printed as give-aways for 05/06 summer boat ramp programmes. The propeller flag is a simple 300mm x 400mm yellow rectangular flag with 2 eyelets and a black cord to LTSA standards on yellow safety material. The flag features the stop aquatic hitchhiker symbol. Thanks to the DOC Biosecurity Unit for sponsoring these flags. They will be distributed to conservancy offices for use in the existing regional boat ramp programmes in the coming months.

Programme Evaluation

A baseline weeds awareness survey conducted by AC Nielsen at the start of the Weedbusters programme (“NZers Knowledge of, and attitudes towards weed invasion 2003”) has generated some useful stats about community awareness towards pest waterweeds.

- When asked directly, 46% of respondents rate weeds/pest plants as a serious threat to our environment.
- When asked about the way in which weeds/pest plants are a threat, 18% identified that they invade waterways.
- When asked about what actions contribute towards the spread of weeds/pest plants 6% identified dirty boats.
- Pest waterweeds **did not** rate in the top 12 most commonly recalled weeds.
- 80% of respondents claim they are likely to remove a weed/pest plant from their garden in the future.
- At best, 43% of respondents are likely to actively seek information from regional council regarding problem species on their property.
- Information on weeds was most picked up via newspapers/magazines (15%), information from



The latest in EBoP signage. One of 2 sign designs targetting aquatic pests complete with flashing lights, battery unit and a solar panel.(Photoat Lake Rotoiti (NI): M. Blowham - EBoP).

**Want to check the legal status of a plant or animal?
The unwanted organism register is a great store
house of information**

Go to www.biosecurity.govt.nz

Select the pests and disease tab (top RHS) and “registers and lists” on the pull down menu.

This will bring up the Unwanted Organism Register. Click to bring up the search guide.

The easiest way to generate an up-to-date list of unwanted organisms is to select an ‘organism type’ from the “organism type field” (leave the other fields as they are).

The organism types most relevant to freshwater are weeds, fish, amphibians, crustaceans and molluscs.

regional councils (15%), general information (14%), choking of waterways campaigns (12%), information about specific weeds (11%), weeds information on TV (10%), Old Mans Beard eradication (8%) and identification of weeds on gardening programmes (7%).

The AC Nielsen work is due to be resurveyed in 2008.

Super Regional Groups

A Central North Island Aquatic Pest Group meeting occurred in early February with attendees from Environment Waikato, Environment Bay of Plenty, Auckland Regional Council, Fish and Game and DOC Bay of Plenty and Waikato. Information was shared and discussed on current issues. The next meeting of this group will occur in August 2005.

Representatives from councils and DOC in the lower North Island have also met to try to ensure a level of consistency in the broader regional approach to aquatic pests.

Regional Round Ups

Northland

Advocacy and survey work has been continuing with a number of reports being received from the public and landowners. No new koi carp records were confirmed, the suspected koi carp observations proving to be goldfish. An observation of a grass carp was made from a stream (Orira), that enters the headwaters of the Hokianga Harbour. No permits have been issued for grass carp in this particular stream catchment, raising concerns of an illegal introduction. There is a remote possibility that a grass carp could have escaped from Lake Omapere. The grass carp would have had to have swum all the way down Utaura Stream (outlet stream

of Lake Omapere), entered the Hokianga Harbour, made its way to this stream catchment (past a headland) and swum in the upper freshwater layer during flooding. This is a distance of 9kms (“as the fish swims”). Other pest fish reports were brown bullhead catfish, all from known catfish habitats (Wairoa-Wairua river catchment). Two small populations of koi carp are to be eradicated from ponds located just to the south of Whangarei.

Auckland

Auckland Regional Council had a successful display at Helensville A & P Show on the 26th of February with a display featuring aquatic pest plants and fish. About 10,000 people went to the show with many people asking questions about the live aquatic plants on display. Aquatic pests were also featured at Kumeu Show. Auckland Conservancy (DOC) has been assisting with developing fish farm protocols to reduce the risk of *Gambusia* “hitching a ride” on legitimate freshwater fish transfers. For a number of years Auckland Zoo and Kelly Tarlton’s Underwater world have held koi carp on display. This creates an opportunity to send out a clear message about the threats koi pose to our waterways. Koi are now declared unwanted organisms under the Biosecurity Act and permit renewals are under consideration. A suggestion has been made that, if permits to keep the unwanted organisms are issued, they should be prominently displayed. A number of other facilities are interested in holding “nasties” and the conservancy has been increasingly asked to play a role in recommending alternatives to pest fish for these ponds. The Conservancy has a first draft of a pest fish strategy. Koi carp are the number one pest! A major enforcement exercise involving DOC, Ministry of Fisheries and NZ Police was successfully undertaken to target specific fish retailers allegedly offering live koi for sale. Retailers where live koi were found, were clearly notified that this was illegal. In January a “lone crayfish” was found scuttling along a footpath in West Auckland by a young boy. This led to a joint DOC, Biosecurity NZ, Ministry of Fisheries and Auckland Regional Council investigation of a property in the vicinity. The initial inspection (which also found gudgeon) widened to an investigation which confirmed the crayfish was marron, a West Australian species declared an unwanted organism in 1992. Marron was eradicated by Ministry of Fisheries from a property in Warkworth in 1992. The investigation is ongoing. A decision has now been made by Biosecurity New Zealand, to undertake a delimiting survey to determine whether there are any other populations of marron or gudgeon present.



Joe Starinchak checks out the signage and sandwichboard used in the Bay of Plenty (Daily Post '05) K.T.

Bay of Plenty

A draft of the Aquatic Pest Management Strategy for the lakes of the Rotorua District will be available in May. Surveys have been completed by NIWA to baseline data for the lakes. The 04/05 awareness programme demonstrated a high level of awareness with 77% of boat owners reporting that they had purposely cleaned their boats prior to launching, up from 36% in 03/04. Key rings, stickers and awareness banners continue to be popular. Environment Bay of Plenty have also been busy with the discovery of alligator weed growing along the banks of two canals that flow into the Tarawera River. Staff located 40 clumps of weed which have now been treated. Environment Bay of Plenty suspects the weed established in a nearby grazing property, which hosted an infestation more than a decade ago. At the time, it was suspected the weed was brought into the area on contaminated farm machinery. Bay of Plenty DOC have engaged a local consultancy firm to undertake a feasibility study for a network of washdown stations located in the Rotorua lakes catchment. The annual monitoring of five lakes for catfish has been completed. The use of an electric fishing boat has confirmed a sighting of koi carp in Waimutu Stream - which is the first report of koi in a natural stream in the region.

Waikato

Environment Waikato has been continuing its public awareness work in conjunction with the DOC in the Taupo/Tongariro Conservancy over the summer period. An article on 'Aquatic Hitchhikers' is due out in the April edition of Target Taupo. The Aquatic Pest Education kit was used at an information day in Raglan during March with a good response from the public.

East Coast/Hawke's Bay

DOC and the regional council is looking at joining forces to produce an A5 flier based on the 'time to take a closer look in your garden pond' flier used in Marlborough and featuring the symbol relating to aquatic pest transfer.

Aquatic pests themes are being incorporating into the national freshwater aquarium in association with DOC, Hawke's Bay Regional Council and NIWA.

Wanganui

Rosemary Miller from DOC Wanganui spent 2 days at the national scout jamboree presenting the aquatic pests schools programme to 100's of local and international scouts. The DOC Wanganui draughting team made laminated posters using the aquatic pest symbol for the day. Aquatic pests were also incorporated into the world wetlands trips. Since December, Horizons Regional Council has been busy distributing floating keyrings to boat retail outlets and lake and river users. Horizons staff talked to participants at the Wanganui fishing competition and the Masters Games. Staff were impressed with the number of out of town visitors familiar with the 'Stop the Spread' message. The local lake user groups are doing an excellent job policing weedy boat owners and weed harvesters. Unfortunately there have been recent sightings of very large orange fish (Koi carp??) in the Wanganui River near the confluence of the Ohura river and down towards the town of Pipiriki. DOC are asking river concessionaires to report further sightings with the aim of catching and formally identifying these fish.

Wellington

Wellington DOC has initiated the eradication of koi carp from five ponds and possibly catfish from one pond in the Waikanae region. The work is being carried out in conjunction with Greater Wellington Regional Council who will be removing aquatic pest plants at the same time. Greater Wellington has also been involved in removing eel grass and egeria from local waterways. Koi carp have been spotted in the Waikanae River and attempts are being made to remove them. Work is continuing on finalising 2 aquatic pest fact sheets - a detailed factsheet and an A5 sheet for distribution through Live Environments Aquarium Franchise. DOC is in discussions with Porirua City Council, Greater Wellington and the NZ Fish and Game Council (Wellington) to manage the aquatic pests from Whitby Amenity Lakes (1 of 2 known Gambusia sites in the Wellington region). Wellington Regional council will be progressing lake signage in the coming months. The school kits is continuing to be used in the Kapiti area.

Nelson/Marlborough

The aquatic pests schools programme has been incorporated into the Waimaori and Whitebait Connection school programmes which has been active in the region. Powerpoint presentations on aquatic pests

have been delivered to two large Rotary Clubs and aquatic pests were featured at the DOC stall at the Nelson Lakes Classic Boat Regatta. All boats were inspected as part of the registration process. A DVD of the 2003 Nelson Lakes survey, which included images of the pest waterweeds from North Island lakes, was revealed at the regatta and is now being shown to school groups by community relations staff. Work has begun on a display on the lake at the Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre which will feature the DVD (which was produced by Vicki Froude and Chris Richmond). DOC is concerned that people may be illegally releasing the sports fish, tench, into waterways in the Motueka area that have been previously poisoned in an effort to eradicate koi carp and Gambusia. Tench have been found in five treated sites. One explanation for the pest fish's reappearance could be that eggs were surviving the poisoning, but that the size of the fish indicated that it was more likely they had been illegally released. The Nelson-Marlborough Fish and Game manager said he was



Display at the South Canterbury Museum freshwater exhibition set up by Sjaan Charteris.

concerned to hear that the fish were reappearing in these sites.

Canterbury

“Stop the spread” signs have been erected at four rudd eradication sites within the Canterbury region. These four sites are top priority for eradication as they lie well outside the rudd populations in greater Christchurch area. Helen McCaughan and Debbie Armstrong (North Canterbury Area DOC Pest Fish Rangers) fielded three calls regarding possible koi/rudd sightings before Christmas which turned out to be large goldfish. They have also found new lagarosiphon sites and a rough horsetail site. Aquatic pest resource material have been handed out to landowners. Two small, private ponds full

of parrot's feather, were recently reported by a Christchurch resident following a DOC/Environment Canterbury (ECan) newspaper article on the nasty aquatic weed. ECan immediately removed the aquatic pest from the ponds. Aquatic pests have also been displayed at shows and events by DOC and ECan staff. Displays and talks were presented at the New Zealand Ecological Restoration Trust day at Amberley. Talks were given at a local scout meeting during Conservation Week and at a World Wetlands Day outing at Coes Ford (co-organised with Fish and Game). An aquatic pest display was also present at Aquafest. Sjaan Charteris (DOC, Canterbury Conservancy, Freshwater Ecologist) assisted in the opening of the South Canterbury Museum Freshwater Exhibition which is running from March 18th – May 14th. Aquatic pest material and aquatic information resources are being displayed, and the museum plans to use part of the DOC aquatic pest awareness kit in their education programme. Sjaan Charteris presented a talk Timaru which included aquatic pest issues. The Purple Peril campaign (or the Purple Loosestrife campaign involving DOC, ECan, Ngai Tahu and the Christchurch City Council) has been progressing well over the summer months. A few sites around Christchurch have shown a little re-growth on follow-up visits. Newspaper publicity features led to the identification on new city sites and a big infestation at Ashburton.

Westcoast

The West Coast regional council have been working on a regional pest management strategy which includes the pest waterweeds that have been found in the region. Two staff from the West Coast Regional Council have been involved with aquatic pest training through NIWA. DOC is continuing to deliver the aquatic pest schools programme in the region.

Otago

A 10 year management plan for Lake Wanaka has been recently compiled. The management plan highlights the importance of public awareness to prevent the spread of lagarosiphon. Otago Regional Council have been active in giving out information to the public at boat ramps and on the lake shore over the summer.

Southland

Fish and Game staff discovered lagarosiphon (*Lagarosiphon major*) in early April in the mid reaches of the Oreti River. This finding has Environment Southland and DOC staff on high alert - whilst lagarosiphon is known to be present in localised streams in Invercargill and in fish and duck ponds on private property, this is the first time the pest plant has been discovered in the Oreti. During the initial inspections



Lagarosiphon major smothering native *Chara* meadows at Lake Rotorua (Photo: John Clayton NIWA).

Keith Crothers noted the presences of lagarosiphon in a number of side channels. The results of the delimiting survey will determine the response to the new infestation. Signs are to be erected to alert people to the presence of the pest, and asking people to take care with their movements in and around the river. the public are asked to be on the lookout for lagarosiphon in the catchment.

The next update is due out on the 5th of August

Please send through any information for inclusion in the next update no later than the 15th of July.

Next Meeting

Monday the 26th of September is the most popular date for the next national meeting. Please mark it in your calender. I will get back to the group with more details in the coming month.

Want to know more about the National Aquatic Pest Awareness Group?

Contact Anne Brow - Aquatic Pest Awareness Coordinator at the Department of Conservation.
ph (03) 546 3171 (VPN 5071 for DOCers)
email: abrow@doc.govt.nz
C/O Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy Office
Private Bag 5, Nelson.

Available Resources:

CD of national symbols - no cost

“Aquatic Hitchhikers Symbol”:

T-shirts \$20.00 + GST each

Propeller Flags \$4.50 each + GST for 500

\$3.00 each + GST for 1000+

Templates:

Tackle box sticker featuring the aquatic hitchhiker symbol (Pagemaker)

‘Time to take a closer look in your garden pond’ double sided A5 flier that can be regionally adapted, featuring ‘top ten’ aquatic pests and transfer symbol (Pagemaker).

Aquatic Pest Presentation (Powerpoint)

Aquatic Pests Schools Kit - \$300.00 + GST

CD, shirts, flags and templates available from Anne Brow (ph (03) 546 3171 email: abrow@doc.govt.nz)

Sandwich Boards - \$300.00 per sign. Contact John Bell (johnbell@business.otago.ac.nz) to organise printing.

Floating Keyrings - Costs approximately \$1.15 each at 1000+

Unwanted Freshwater Fish Poster and Ornamental Pets are Monumental Pests Poster

\$889+GST/1000 posters

Ornamental Pets are Monumental Pests Factsheets

\$800+GST/2000 factsheets

Available from Ian Bradley - Auckland Conservancy ph (09) 307 4827

Some useful websites

www.doc.govt.nz - information and useful links under conservation/freshwater, animal pests/pest fish and weeds

www.weedbusters.co.nz - up to date Weedbusting news and profiles of plant pests.

www.biosecurity.org.nz/links - links to national and regional

www.niwa.co.nz/ncabb - new freshwater flora and fauna ID quick guides, Aquatic Biodiversity & Biosecurity Updates, national aquatic databases.

Some useful lists :

Aliens-L (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) - to subscribe contact the list owners: aliens-l-owner@indaba.iucn.org

Envioweeds (Australian weeds list) - to subscribe contact: kelly.scott@adelaide.edu.au

L/weeds (internal DOC weed list which is also available to external users). Contact Clayson Howell, Weed Ecologist and Database Administrator, Research, Development and Improvement Wellington ph: (04) 471 3113 or email chowell@doc.govt.nz.

Let me know if you have additional resources, websites or networks that might be useful to the group.