



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 7 August 2012

\$800,000 PROJECT TO TARGET AQUATIC WEEDS IN HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN

A new \$800,000 project is set to wage war on problem aquatic weeds that are choking the world-renowned Hawkesbury-Nepean river systems, NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson announced today.

The four-year project will see the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), Sydney Weeds Committee and the Hawkesbury River County Council team up to target a number of invasive weeds that are a widespread problem right across the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment.

"The NSW Government, working collaboratively with local stakeholders, is providing direct action to help improve the quality of the river and put it on a sustainable footing," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"The project will tackle some of the most serious and destructive aquatic weeds in the country, including Salvinia, Water Hyacinth, Alligator weed, Senegal Tea plant and Egeria.

"Left uncontrolled, these problem weeds strangle river systems, deplete the water of oxygen, impede river flows and water quality, and damage the aquatic ecosystem," Ms Hodgkinson said.

The project will bring together a range of innovative control and containment strategies, including:

- targeted mechanical harvesting at critical points along the river;
- the use of barrier 'booms' to contain weeds and stop their spread to other downstream areas;
- decreasing nutrient runoff that feed the development of aquatic weeds; and
- biological control methods.

Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney and Member for Hawkesbury, Ray Williams said aquatic weeds are a longstanding issue for the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment.

"This project will improve river health, boost local economies and agricultural industries and allow the community to enjoy these iconic rivers for years to come," Mr Williams said.

Member for Londonderry and chief proponent of the 2008 Hawkesbury Nepean River Summit Bart Bassett said the long term funding would provide certainty for weed mitigation strategies along the river.

"I am pleased that in Government, I am part of a team that has provided realistic and sustainable funding for weed mitigation along this important waterway," Mr Bassett said.

Member for Riverstone, Kevin Conolly said the Hawkesbury-Nepean is home to a number of agricultural industries and recreational pursuits including fishing, water skiing and the Sydney International Regatta Centre, one of the best rowing and sprint kayak courses in the world.

"There are many important economic benefits experienced by communities along the river so we should protect these through proper weed control," Mr Conolly said.

Member for Penrith, Stuart Ayres welcomed the announcement and said addressing weed issues will help protect the environmental and recreational benefits of the river.

"The Hawkesbury-Nepean district is a world class tourism destination at Sydney's doorstep so I am pleased steps are being taken to improve the quality of the river," Mr Ayres said.

Hawkesbury River County Council, Chairperson, Clr. Bob Porter said the new project is a welcome step forward in addressing problem weeds in the Hawkesbury-Nepean rivers.

"We are going to see a cleaner and healthier river as a result of this project and want to ensure this continues long term," Clr. Porter said.

The project will be jointly funded and NSW DPI and the Hawkesbury River County Council will each invest \$400,000 into the project over four years. The project will be implemented by the Sydney Weeds Committee and is part of the NSW Government's commitment to regional weed management and capacity building.