

Question on Notice
No. 391
Asked on Thursday, 13 March 2008

QUESTION:

MR O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) — What action has his department taken to ensure the protection of our National Parks in Far North Queensland from weed infestation?

ANSWER:

Control of weed infestations is part of the day-to-day business of Queensland Parks and Wildlife rangers. To ensure that weeds are high on the agenda for day-to-day operations, the Northern Region has developed the Critical Conservation Issues initiative which ensure weed threats to Northern Queensland National Parks are given a high priority.

Critical Conservation Issues that deal with weeds are divided into the following five broad categories:

- Class 1 weeds which are the target for eradication;
- Weeds of National Significance for which there are National Management Committees;
- Strategically located weeds which may or may not be declared;
- Weed hygiene which underpins all the weed issues; and
- Weeds that degrade river systems.

To enhance the day-to-day activities, a new funding initiative directed at pest management on parks and forests was started in 2004. Through this initiative \$1.9 million has been allocated to Far North Queensland for weed control work alone in the past four years. In this financial year \$380,000 has been provided to the Northern Region to target weeds on National Parks. Some of the weeds targeted through the initiative were:

- Lantana on Forty Mile Scrub, Girringun and Kinrara National Parks;
- Siam Weed on Maria Creek National Park and Jalum Conservation Park;
- Rubber Vine on Bowling Green Bay, Great Basalt Wall, Moorinya and Porcupine Gorge National Parks;
- Lionstail on Lakefield and Boodjamulla National Parks;
- Gamba Grass on Hann Tableland National Park; and
- Olive Hymenachne on Eubanagee Swamp National Park.

QPW also recognises that weeds do not stop at national park boundaries and that weeds are everyone's responsibility. The best outcomes are achieved when landholders work together and QPW tries to facilitate cooperative programs wherever possible.

Examples of partnership weed control activities undertaken by QPW in the Northern region are:

- The Lantana infestation at 40-Mile Scrub National Park. In the past 12 months over 107,000 plants have been hand removed from an area of approximately 40 hectares. The lantana has been significantly adding to the fire risk of this endangered, locally restricted Regional Ecosystem. QPW's commitment has attracted funding from a number of other sources.
- On Lakefield National Park over 24,000 plants of the introduced tree Siamese Cassia have been removed from a 7.5 kilometre stretch of the Laura River in the past four years.
- In the Coen area in the past four years over 26,000 Siamese Cassia, 30,000 Orchid Trees and 500 Poinciana trees have been removed from a 50 kilometre stretch of the Coen River. Most of these trees were removed from the river upstream from the Mungkan Kaanju National Park boundary.
- QPW works closely with staff from Biosecurity Queensland involved in control of Siam weed, Miconia species, Mikania, and Koster's Curse. These declared Class 1 weeds are the subject of a nationally funded eradication program. All known infestations on the QPW estate are under active ongoing control.
- QPW is currently establishing a Salvinia weevil breeding facility to be located at its restoration services nursery at Lake Eacham. This is part of a network of such facilities located along the east coast. Salvinia weevils are an effective biological control of this weed of national significance. QPW is working cooperatively with local government weed officers to coordinate weevil releases in strategically located catchments.
- A number of staff are working cooperatively with weed scientists from agencies such as Biosecurity Queensland, CSIRO on control of invasive grasses such as grader grass, para grass and olive hymenachne.

QPW has applied broader management activities to weed management in an intergrated approach to environmental management. To this end other specific pest programs such feral animal control coupled with fire management are used to complement weed management efforts.