

WeedBuster Week 2007
Media release by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
8 October 2007

“Invasive alien plants (IAPs) have invaded over 10 million hectares of South Africa and because they multiply so fast, if left unchecked, the problem could double in the next 15 years”, said Mandisa Mangqalaza, General Manager of the *Working for Water (WfW)* programme. Mangqalaza added, “In order to protect our natural resources the programme is calling on communities to be more aware of and take responsibility for removing IAPs. We are encouraging communities to safeguard their natural heritage by planting indigenous species. The theme for WeedBuster Week, which takes place from the 8 -12 October 2007 is “Protect Our Natural Resources”.

Working for Water is Government’s flagship Expanded Public Works Programme. The clearing of invasive alien plants during the 2006/7 financial year has yielded an estimated release of 48-56 million cubic meters of additional water for alternative uses annually. Over 30 000 previously unemployed beneficiaries receive employment and training through the programme annually. According to Mangqalaza, “The *Working for Water* programme has also spearheaded a massive catchment rehabilitation programme of more than 300 clearing sites, in addition to work on aquatic weeds and the use of biological control agents and has established programmes in eight fire-prone regions of South Africa”.

Up to date the programme has ± 3700 beneficiaries.

WeedBuster Week represents the annual culmination and highlight of the ongoing campaign aimed at the management and containment of invasive alien plants. The campaign is a multi-departmental initiative led by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry through the *Working for Water (WfW)* programme, and supported by various partners and stakeholders. The South African campaign is linked bi-laterally to invasive plant control initiatives by countries such as Australia and New Zealand, and multi-laterally to the broader Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and other structures and frameworks.

Mangqalaza said, “Invasive alien plants (IAPs) are vigorous growers, which are introduced into foreign countries where they take over from indigenous species. IAPs are highly adaptable and can invade a wide range of ecological niches. They have few natural enemies, mature and bear enormous amounts of seeds within a few years and their growth outstrips that of local plants. They crowd out local plants to the detriment of the environment and economies. Of most concern in South Africa is the fact that most of these species consume vast amounts of water”. Experts maintain that more than 7% of all water run off is lost to alien plants. That’s some 3,3 billion cubic metres of water in excess of that used by indigenous vegetation every year.

In addition, IAPs destroy the ecological balance and impact negatively on the hydrological functioning of large water catchment areas – a severe problem in water-scarce South Africa. The incremental water use of alien plants has been estimated at 3 300 million cubic metres a year; this volume is equivalent to the mean annual run-off of the Vaal River. This is an enormous amount of water when one considers that the Vaal River supplies South Africa’s biggest urban centre. Invading alien plants use nearly three times more water than commercial forestry. IAPs intensify flooding and cause erosion. This destroys riverbanks and leads to the siltation of dams and estuaries, and consequent poor water quality.

This WeedBuster you can PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES by:

- Planting indigenous plant species.
- Talking to your neighbours, so that your land is not invaded as a result of "seed pollution" from invasive alien plants on your neighbours' land.

- Not buying invasive alien plants from nurseries and other outlets.
- Not bringing foreign plants or animals into our country (or take our plants and animals to other countries).
- Joining a volunteer clearing ("hacking") group, and adopting a piece of land to keep it clear.
- Encouraging your local authority, agricultural union, school, church, community bodies and others to work with the *WfW* programme.
- Remembering that a "stitch in time saves nine" - the sooner the work is done, the less it will cost, and the lower the damage.
- Contacting the *WfW* programme on 0800 005 376, for advice on invasive alien plants and how best to remove these species.

Host	Date	Venue	Focus	Activities
Soutpanberg Area	08/10/07	Capricorn Toll gate	Raise public awareness about the impact of invasive alien plants species	Awareness in tollgates
	09/10/07	Baobab Tollgate (Musina)	Raise public awareness about the impact of invasive alien plants species	Awareness in tollgates
	10/10/07	Makhado T/ndou	To provide public with information and skills required to play a responsible role in safeguarding water resource in particular and natural heritage in general	Exhibition
	11/10/07	Nurseries	To encourage nurseries to sell and protect indigenous plants	Visit nurseries
	12/10/07	Albasini	To foster land owners and community leader to be aware of the treat posed by the spread of IAP	Information session
Water burg area	8/10/07	3 schools at Mookgopong	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	Presentation
Host	Date	Venue	Focus	Activities
	9/10/07	School at Modimolle	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	Presentation
	10/10/07	School at Mabatlane	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	Presentation

	12/10/07	Waterburg (Kranskop tollgate)	Raise public awareness about the impact of invasive alien plants	Raise public awareness about the impact of invasive alien plants
	11/10/07	Post offices: Mabatlane, Mookgopong, Modimolle	Make information available to the Local communities through pamphlet	Distribution of pamphlets and posters
Tzannen	11/10/07	Tzangeni crossing	Make information available to the Local communities through pamphlet	Information desk
	16/10/07	Wolkberg project	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	presentation
	17/10/07	Letaba project	Same as the above	presentation
	19/10/07	Mamathola project	Same as the above	presentation
Host	Date	Venue	Focus	Activities
	23/10/07	Lekgala meetse	Same as the above	Presentation
	25/10/07	Gravellot	Same as the above	Presentation
	30/10/07	Modjadji	Same as the above	Presentation
	01/11/07	Tzannen	To foster land ownership of the challenge of controlling the spread of invasive alien plants	Information session with landowners
Groblersdale area	03-04/10/07	Groblersdale, Middleburg and Stofberg	Make information available to the Local communities through pamphlet	Distribution of pamphlets and posters
	Ongoing	AC meeting and other stake holders	Make information available to the Local communities through pamphlet	Distribution of pamphlets and posters
	5/10/07	Tollgate	Raise public awareness about the impact of invasive alien plants	Awareness in tollgates
	19 09/07	At school	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	Presentation
	26/09/07	At school	Distribution of information to the students for them to make it available to their parents	Presentation

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