

Eradication of Frogbit from the Upper Georges River

COUNCIL NAME

Campbelltown City Council

WEB ADDRESS

campbelltown.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

312 km²

POPULATION

168,139

Overview

In May 2019, Campbelltown City Council identified Frogbit (*Limnobium laevigatum*) in the upper Georges River. Frogbit is listed as a 'Prohibited Matter' under Schedule 2, Part 4 of the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015 (The Act). It is known for its fast growth and rapid spread and has been identified as a significant biosecurity risk in NSW with the potential to impact the environment, agriculture and community in many different ways. Over the past 15 months, Council has worked closely with project partners to plan and manage removal, which has seen new methods trialled and key learnings shared. Surveillance will continue over the coming years to ensure total eradication in the area.



Background

Frogbit was identified in May 2019 in the upper Georges River at Glenfield Bridge on land bordered by State and Commonwealth owned land within the Campbelltown and Liverpool LGAs. Campbelltown Council voluntarily took responsibility for its management as an extension of its requirements as a Local Control Authority (LCA) under the Act. The benefits of Council adopting management included extensive local knowledge, ease of contact with residents and land owners, well developed marketing streams, existing contracts and well-established partnerships with key organisations to ensure ease of delivery.

Objectives

Key objectives for the program, identified in consultation with stakeholders, included:

- Investigate and identify the potential source of the infestation.
- Undertake appropriate containment, treatment and long term maintenance of the infestation.
- Work with key stakeholders including land owners, land managers, NGO's and experts to ensure best practice is implemented.
- Undertake appropriate recording and record keeping to ensure traceability.
- Undertake education initiatives regarding priority weeds including Frogbit.

Implementation

Council initially reported the occurrence of Frogbit through the established 'Prohibited Matter' reporting process under the Act, followed by an onsite inspection with NSW Department of Primary Industries. Consultation with key stakeholders was then undertaken to discuss surveillance, funding, awareness and management.

Further surveillance was undertaken by Campbelltown and Liverpool councils at high risk sites within a 5km radius of the initial infestation, which identified several additional large infestations, both upstream and downstream. This was followed by the production of media releases and social media posts, which included coverage from Macarthur Chronicle, Macarthur Advertiser and South West Voice newspapers.

Funding provided through the Greater Sydney Local Land Services' Weed Action Program (WAP) enabled procurement of a contractor to survey and treat the infestation using herbicide application and manual harvesting (\$34,020). The potential spread pathways were identified and additional funding of \$58,365 was provided under the WAP for additional on ground works

and installation of booms at strategic locations to assist with source identification and containment following wind spread of infestations up and downstream. This was followed by additional WAP funding of \$47,842 for further works, with planned increases during the warmer months. Strategic educational inspections were also undertaken of all properties with waterways and ponds within a 5km radius, as well as local nurseries and aquariums. Staff monitored online sales, which resulted in three occasions where Frogbit was seized from outside the target area.

Outcomes

Collaboration both within council and with other stakeholders has been paramount to the success of this project. Key stakeholders involved in the project include:

- NSW Department Primary Industries (NSW DPI)
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services (GSLSS)
- Liverpool City Council (LCC)
- Georges Riverkeeper (GRK)
- Campbelltown Council Operational Services
- Campbelltown Council Communications and Marketing

The education and extension activities that were completed have also provided flow on benefits for other projects and existing problems. Additional stakeholders involved in these activities include:

- Commonwealth Department of Defence (DoD)
- Glenfield Scouts
- Macquarie Links Golf Course
- Glenfield Waste Facility
- Local nurseries and aquariums
- Campbelltown community
- Bushcare volunteers

Through-out the scoping, planning, surveying and on ground weed management works, best practice was applied in an ever-evolving situation. The project has greatly improved the local environment and the ongoing education and learnings have benefited key stakeholders, contractors and the community to better manage similar situations in the future. The project objectives specified above have been achieved and adapted, where required, including following significant flooding in February 2020. There are currently no visible plants at the site, however ongoing monitoring will continue for at least another 3 years to ensure that the overall aim of eradicating Frogbit from the Georges River catchment can be achieved.

Key Learnings

The unplanned nature of invasive plant incursions highlights the need to mobilise action in a fast and effective manner, ensuring collaboration between stakeholders at the early stages and throughout the project.

Increased awareness of invasive species is needed to ensure that they are managed at the eradication or containment stages, where possible, as management in the early stages generally requires fewer resources and input than managing established infestations.

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This project was the 2020 winner of the Invasive Species Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards