



Media release

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Boost to protection of local Ramsar wetland

An increasing number of local landholders are joining a campaign to stop weeds from smothering the internationally recognised wetlands of Bowling Green Bay south of Townsville.

The 35,500 hectare area is listed as a Ramsar wetland because it provides an important habitat for migratory water birds.

Nearly 100 landholders have now made a financial contribution to a Riparian Management Agreement for Bowling Green Bay, with the Burdekin Shire Council, NQ Dry Tropics, and Wetland Care Australia.

The cost-sharing agreement enables the Burdekin Shire Council to increase the amount of aerial and boat spraying conducted for ongoing weed control along wetland systems adjacent to private properties.

NQ Dry Tropics WetlandCare Australia Consultant, Scott Fry, said having farmers support and contribute to the Riparian Management Agreement has been vital in preventing weeds affecting the Ramsar wetland.

"When the agreement was first introduced back in 2003, there were 32 landholders on board, so we're happy to see we've now tripled that number to 96," Scott said.

"It means these landholders are now voluntarily responsible for improving the health of seven local waterways. This amounts to hundreds of hectares of Burdekin's highest value wetlands being protected.

"Within these areas, weeds are the main threat. Weeds such as salvinia, hymenachne, water hyacinth, water lettuce and cabomba bind together to choke the waterways, crowd out native vegetation, reduce the number and distribution of native fish species, and limit the ability of birds to feed and breed."

Scott said the work carried out through the agreement has also improved conditions for landholders.

"It's improved water quality to a significant degree, and many landholders have commented on how they can now fish with their kids in waterways that were previously choked with weeds and infested with mosquitoes," Scott said.

"They've also noticed fish and bird species they haven't seen for years. It's been an exceptionally successful program so far, and this progress will only continue as more parties join our efforts."

Sunwater, Lower Burdekin Water Boards, and Sucrogen-Kalamia Mill have also contributed funds to the Riparian Management Program.

NQ Dry Tropics' region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays. **Media contact:** Sara Lando 4722 5729 or 0466 014 728. Email: sara.lando@nqdrytropics.com.au

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