

Salvinia control program for the Hawkesbury–Nepean River

Over the next few months, the Hawkesbury River County Council will be working to clear the river of any remnants of the water weed salvinia.

This infosheet describes the control program for salvinia, and answers some questions that local residents and visitors might ask.

Salvinia outbreak in the Hawkesbury–Nepean River

Over last summer (2003/2004) the aquatic weed *Salvinia molesta* spread rapidly in the Hawkesbury–Nepean River due to favourable conditions largely brought on by the drought. In several parts of the river, salvinia formed a solid raft stretching from bank to bank.

Salvinia is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness, potential for spread and economic and environmental impacts. It is of particular concern because it shadows out any submerged plant life and impedes oxygen exchange, making the water unsuitable for fish and other animals.



Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)

Salvinia control program to date

A control program commenced in late April 2004 to deal with the current outbreak in the Hawkesbury–Nepean. The State and Federal governments have jointly funded the program. The program used aquatic weed harvesters to physically remove the weed and quickly clear the area of the river below Windsor.

The river was closed to all water activities during this period but has now been reopened below Windsor due to success in clearing the weed from this part of the river. Harvesters will continue to operate above Windsor until the end of September 2004.

What next?

The next major step of the control program is to use herbicide to control small pockets of salvinia trapped in snags and vegetation at irregular intervals along the riverbank and other areas inaccessible to the mechanical harvesters.

If these small pockets of weed are not controlled this spring, they will quickly regrow and reinfest the river over summer. Further control measures may be required, and the public will be notified of these.

From late August to late October 2004, the Hawkesbury River County Council will be spraying these small pockets of weed between Pacific Park and Wallacia Weir. This spraying will comply with all licences, permits, herbicide registration and legal requirements.

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What herbicide will be used?

The herbicide selected to control the remaining patches of salvinia in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River is glyphosate, more commonly known by trade names such as Roundup® Biactive®, Weedmaster® Duo or Credit® broadacre herbicide.

Why choose this herbicide?

There are very few herbicides with the right environmental characteristics for safe application over water. Glyphosate-based herbicides are registered and approved for use in waterways for the control of a wide range of aquatic weeds. Glyphosate has a long history of use for aquatic weed control both in Australia and overseas.

How can we be sure that glyphosate will be safe to use in the river?

All herbicides are thoroughly tested before they can be registered for a particular use. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority examines all the available scientific data and carries out risk assessments to confirm that a herbicide will not cause harm to people, property or the environment when used for the intended purpose.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has issued a permit to use glyphosate to control this weed. In providing this permit the authority followed a very rigorous risk assessment process.



Harvesters clearing remaining salvinia from Freeman's Reach.

Will the glyphosate affect water quality?

The proposed application of glyphosate to control small patches of salvinia within the river will not exceed the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for glyphosate.

Can I continue to use water from the river?

There is no restriction on the use of river water for human consumption, irrigation or livestock watering following treatment with glyphosate.

The public will be kept informed of the spraying operations through notices to landholders, advertisements in local newspapers and various media releases.

Will glyphosate affect fish, crustaceans or other aquatic organisms?

Glyphosate has been used extensively around the world to control aquatic weeds and there have been no documented cases of adverse effects on fish or aquatic invertebrates as a result of such use.

Given that

- the spray will be directed at the plants and not at open water
- the spray will be hugely diluted
- the herbicide has a low toxicity and degrades rapidly,

the NSW Food Authority indicates that there is no reason for concern about the safety of seafood harvested in the waterways where treatment occurs.

Who should I contact for more information about the salvinia control program in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River?

For any further information about the salvinia control program you can contact the NSW Department of Primary Industries on 1800 084 881.