

Taking to the air to control African Boxthorn

During the first week of March Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula (NREP) staff will be using a helicopter to undertake African Boxthorn control in Waldegrave and West Islands off the coast of Elliston, Lake Newland Conservation Park, coastal crown land and privately owned Heritage Agreement properties between Kiana and Convention Beach. The parks will not be closed as there is little risk to park visitors although visitors need to be on the lookout for a low flying helicopter.

This aerial technique is proving to be cost effective with good results in comparison with ground based methods in areas which are hard to access.

Andrew Freeman, WildEyre Project Officer said the technique involves aerial application of granulated herbicide (200g/kg Tebuthiuron) at the label rate.

"The herbicide is applied from directly above the boxthorn from a helicopter hovering approximately 1m above the plant into the centre of the canopy providing a precise even granule distribution into the drip zone and access to the top of very large plants," he said.

"The herbicide can be expected to be residual in the soil for up to 3 years."

This residual nature is seen as an advantage to controlling boxthorn seedling growth following defoliation of the parent plant.

The aerial method is cost effective in inaccessible locations, such as sand dunes and islands. Using the granular herbicide also leaves the boxthorns standing and roots in place minimising the potential for erosion.

"Granular herbicide application may not be suitable in all scenarios. If you plan to undertake this activity in areas that have a high slope or are near areas of water or native vegetation advice should be sought to see if other control methods are more appropriate," he said.

"We plan to do a lot more control of African Boxthorn using this technique on offshore islands and coastal crown land, in the future", said Mr Freeman.

"Undertaking aerial control of boxthorn using this technique may for the first time allow real progress toward achieving longer term control of the boxthorn infestation across EP".

African Boxthorn was listed as a Weed of National Significance in 2013. In May 2014 an EP African Boxthorn Control Plan developed by NREP will be rolled out to the community.

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For more information on the technique, costing and appropriate use of the chemical and aerial control method, particularly around native vegetation contact your local NREP office.

