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2013-2014 NSW DPI Habitat Action Grants- Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach community willow control project information

The Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach (UMDR) willow control project is one of 30 NSW DPI Habitat Action Grants funded in the latest round of the grant, aimed at enhancing and rehabilitating degraded recreational fish habitat throughout NSW. Habitat Action Grants are made available each year by the Recreational Fishing Trusts for on ground works which rehabilitate fish habitat to provide long-term sustainable benefits for native fish stocks which, in turn, benefits NSW recreational fishers who will enjoy more healthy productive fisheries as a result. Improvements in fish habitat will also provide more opportunities for rural and regional communities to promote local tourism.

This project is an example of onground works that are being carried out by the UMDR, a Murray Darling Basin Authority initiative, which aims to show how a range of actions can be applied to rehabilitate our native fish populations, which have severely declined compared to pre European settlement times. The UMDR, which recently has been reinvigorated under the auspices of Kosciuszko 2 Coast, funding by MDBA and Bush Heritage Australia and support of the SE Local Land Services and the Act Government shows the value & strength of partnerships between government and non-government organisations and indeed between jurisdictions (NSW and the ACT) to enhance river health in our region.



The upper Murrumbidgee River has areas which contain healthy riparian vegetation. This photo was taken in the Michelago area.

The UMDR community willow control project, supported by the Willow Warriors and NSW Department of Lands, will use the funding to control young emerging willows growing in-stream on the upper Murrumbidgee River between Bredbo and the ACT border. The aim is to remove these willows before they have the chance to establish, impact on the river's aquatic ecosystem and become a source of future willow infestation. Young sapling willows may be small and have little impact on the river at the moment, but they can grow big in a short period of time. Once established willows are much more difficult and costly to remove, especially in-stream where access can be limited without highly specialised equipment and skills. Landholders also report that in-stream willows are problematic to control because they exist beyond property boundaries, but once established can impact on-site water quality and cause blockages in the river bed. Furthermore they can encroach and reinvade banks where willows have been controlled. The project will target those areas where good quality native vegetation remains, thereby protecting these areas before willows have the chance to take over.



Young willows such as these are being propagated in-stream and are an emerging threat which will become increasingly costly and difficult to remove as time passes. This is critical especially in areas of the Murrumbidgee River where healthy native vegetation remains.

The project will carry out control works assisted by small teams of volunteers to paddle the river and remove willows along the way. The project will be carried out under the guidance of qualified professionals including trained river guides and apply best practise methods to control willows. The project will also identify areas which should be protected against further willow invasion (where high value riparian and aquatic habitat remains), as well as identify source areas of willow spread so that future willow management can be strategic and targeted.

For more information about the project please contact the UMDR facilitator via 0429778633 or facilitator@upperbidgeereach.org.au. For more information about the Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach initiative visit www.upperbidgeereach.org.au