One of the world’s worst weeds found in the Shoalhaven

One of the world’s worst aquatic weeds, *Alternanthera philoxeroides* or alligator weed as it is commonly referred to, has been found in the Shoalhaven catchment.

Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA), in partnership with Shoalhaven City Council (SCC) and with funding from NSW Department of Primary Industries and Australian Government’s Caring for our Country initiative, has been working to eradicate an outbreak of the noxious weed in a Berry Mountain farm dam.

Southern Rivers CMA Chair, Pam Green said alligator weed is amongst the worst aquatic weed threats in Australia due to its impact, invasiveness, capacity to spread and regenerate from fragments, ability to grow in diverse habitats and tolerance to a range of control treatments.

“Alligator weed came to Australia in the 1940s in ship’s ballast from South America,” Mrs Green said.

“It has been declared a weed of national significance and is listed as a priority management action in the Southern Rivers Regional Weed Management Strategy because it poses one of the greatest threats to local rivers, wetlands and irrigation systems.

“Alligator weed typically flourishes in wet lowlands and on the banks of fresh water bodies. It can form dense floating mats over the water surface, choking waterways, but it is so robust it can also thrive on land.

“It affects native plant and animal species, water flow, water quality and the access and use of waterways. As a consequence it can affect recreational use of waterways, which in turn can impact local tourism. On land it degrades pasture and crop production affecting agricultural viability.

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“Southern Rivers CMA and SCC with assistance from DPI’s aquatic weeds project officer identified the best management approach to treat the infestation at Berry Mountain was to dig it out and bury it.

“A large excavator was used at the site for three weeks to remove over 800 metres of spoil,” Mrs Green said.

“Best practice requires the weed to be buried in a plastic lined pit with a 2 metre cap of soil placed over the top. All equipment and vehicles were thoroughly cleaned prior to leaving the site to ensure transfer of small fragments did not occur.

“The Berry site will be monitored and maintained for the next 10 years to ensure the weed has been eradicated.”

Identifying features of alligator weed are single, white, papery ball-like flowers that are 1.2 to 1.4 centimetres in diameter. The leaves are glossy, spear-shaped, smooth and 2 to 7 centimetres long. The key feature is the stem, which is completely hollow.

Anyone who finds alligator weed in the Shoalhaven is urged to contact Shoalhaven City Council’s weed officer.

***ENDS***

**Image 1:** Alligator weed, one of the world’s worst aquatic weeds has been found in a Berry Mountain farm dam.  
**Image 2:** A large excavator removes alligator weed from a Berry Mountain farm dam.
Media contacts:
Pam Green
Chair
Southern Rivers CMA
Telephone: 0438 608 790
Email: Pam.Green@cma.nsw.gov.au

Debra Thompson
Communications and Media Officer
Southern Rivers CMA
Telephone: (02) 4224 9707
Email: Debra.Thompson@cma.nsw.gov.au