

MEDIA RELEASE

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Weed management program puts mesquite in retreat

More than 95 per cent of mesquite weed species located along watercourses at the Mary Kathleen uranium mine site has now been eradicated, thanks to the jointly funded Australian and Queensland Governments Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Weeds and Pest Management Program.

The extreme climate conditions of prolonged drought and 2019's major flooding event created ideal conditions for weed and pest species to flourish in the Southern Gulf region. Mesquite is just one weed species targeted in the program to assist producers with weed and pest management on their properties.

The mesquite species planted is a single-stemmed tree with a spreading canopy growing to 15 metres and with a great propensity to rapidly spread far and wide, especially down watercourses. After the Mary Kathleen uranium mine closure in 1984, rehabilitation works included topping the tailings dam with rock and planting the area with mesquite presumably for soil stabilisation purposes.

During the 2019 monsoon floods, every creek and river in the vicinity of the Mary Kathleen tailings dam flooded. The dense stands of mesquite on the tailings dam and scattered around and downstream were expected to unleash a mass of regrowth down the Cameron River.

To treat the impending disaster, Southern Gulf NRM engaged a local contractor with a team of 10 to basal bark spray mature and regrowth mesquite down creeks from the Mary Kathleen plant.

Southern Gulf NRM Project Officer Charles Curry has monitored the site and its many photo points.

"This rather arduous project was conducted professionally and a kill rate well in excess of 95% has been achieved with no damage to native vegetation or to the multitudes of small fish observed in the waterholes of Cameron River," Mr Curry said.

“Follow-up activities by Mount Isa Landcare Group some months later treated surviving mature mesquite and all regrowth mesquite on part of the tailings dam and along the creeks flowing into Cameron River as well as several kilometres down Cameron River; a highly successful operation” he said.

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