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I fish and I don't spread weeds

Marketing weed awareness to recreational fishers in the Northern Territory

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The Top End waterways and floodplains represent some of Australia's, and the world's, most idyllic and pristine environments. A low population, a managed fishery and a variety of fishing opportunities over a large land-mass mean that our waterways can produce a range of quality fishing experiences throughout the year. In the Top End, fishing is a valued way of life and a profession, and must be preserved for future generations. Introduced plants or weeds, however, can negatively impact on this way of life by:

- altering habitats and displacing plants and animals,
- choking or blocking waterways which affect fishing and camping access,
- altering fire and flood patterns, and
- reducing the aesthetic value or recreational experience.

Unfortunately, recreational fishers can be vectors in the spread of weeds, as they frequent areas where weeds such as Mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*), Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*),

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



THIS is Leslee Hills (and not Jill Kerby ... see correction on Page 2). Leslee is with the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development, Darwin, Northern Territory. Email: Leslee.Hills@nt.gov.au

Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) and Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) occur.

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From the editor

A grab bag of topics in this edition. Leslee Hills' feature story is a good example of well-defined and well documented extension strategy with a focus on evaluation.

Please read the information on the APEN AGM on page 4 ... it'd be wonderful to see as many faces as possible for professional and social reasons at Tatura in November.

In this edition, we introduce a "new members" page (p11). It's a good way to put faces to names and vice versa. If you're new to APEN, give your mug a plug!

Now that I'm more settled in the editor's chair, I'm happy to say this edition is 12 pages long (rather than eight). Your APEN sub is now an even better investment!

- Darren Schmidt

IN THIS ISSUE

APEN AGM p4

The AGM will be in Tatura, Victoria, on Friday November 8. More details on page 4.

Brain dominance workshops, WA p7

Amanda Miller evaluates the success of these workshops in the west.

Exit/re-entry statements from APEN members p8-9

Former horticulturist Noel Ainsworth and "re-born" extensionist Max Coster give their views on extension from the outside.

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Horticulture Australia

I fish and I don't spread weeds (cont'd from p1)

Although efforts have been undertaken in the past to raise 'awareness' levels, the lack of a extension methodology has resulted in the absence of a documented, coordinated and planned approach



CORRECTION

THIS is Jill Kerby, who wrote the article in the previous edition of ExtensionNet titled "Implementing on-ground change" (devolved grants). The photo inadvertently used last time was of Leslee Hills who penned *this* edition's feature article. The mix up was entirely the fault of the editor who apologises to all parties involved.

The accidental spread of weeds to 'weed free' areas is a real threat, and is one of the reasons for a weed marketing campaign targeting recreational fishers in the Northern Territory. The Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT) was chosen as the target group as it has a large membership base - greater than 600 - and access to members' personal details could be obtained for the survey.

The campaign comprised three stages:

- (1) Benchmarking survey
- (2) Marketing and awareness campaign
- (3) Follow up survey and evaluation.

The specific objectives of the three-stage project were to:

- (1) Determine fishers' knowledge and attitudes toward weeds
- (2) Determine whether a change in practice could be achieved as a result of an education/awareness campaign
- (3) Determine the best methods of information delivery to AFANT members.

Stage 1 Benchmarking

Stage one of the campaign consisted of a benchmarking survey to determine fishers' current awareness and attitudes toward noxious weeds. Although efforts have been undertaken in the past to raise the 'awareness' levels of fishing enthusiasts, the lack of a extension methodology has resulted in the absence of a documented, coordinated and planned approach to this issue. Sheley *et al.* (1996) point out that many educational programs are often developed and delivered without consideration of the level of interest and knowledge of the audience. Without such knowledge, educators may make false assumptions about levels of public awareness or understanding of the issues, which could result in the development of ineffective programs.

The results of the benchmarking survey assisted in identifying gaps in knowledge of AFANT members so that a communication plan and campaign could be developed to address these gaps. This was followed by a second survey to determine if any change in practice occurred.

Results

Out of 648 questionnaires posted, 228 were returned, or 35% of the sampled population. This figure is considered a reasonable return rate (Czaja & Blair 1996). Respondents' self rated knowledge and assessment of the seriousness of noxious weeds reveal that they knew a little or knew something about them (80%). Only 3.8% indicated that they knew a lot about weeds and 15% were not knowledgeable at all. Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents considered weeds were a serious or very serious problem. When asked to name the two worst or most damaging weeds in the Top End, 81% of respondents could name at least two weeds. *Mimosa* (*Mimosa pigra*) (76%) was mentioned most, followed by *Salvinia* (*Salvinia molesta*) (61%).

To prevent noxious weed invasion, it is important to know how weeds spread and why they are able to spread rapidly. Most of the members surveyed could name at least two ways in which weeds were spread. The most common answers were wind, water, vehicles and wildlife in that order, and to a lesser extent people and agricultural practices.

Most of the respondents did not perceive themselves as being actively involved in spreading weeds (56%). When asked to identify their current activities which might result in the spread of weeds, 46% could not think of an answer.

Many of those surveyed did not perceive themselves as being actively involved in slowing weed spread either. When asked what they could do to reduce the spread of weeds 44% of respondents could not think of anything they could do to minimise the spread of weeds.

Stage 2 The campaign

The campaign consisted of a number of products, messages and information delivery methods to AFANT members. These products included stickers, pamphlets, posters, Agnotes and brochures. Information and articles on weeds were delivered via displays, presentations, advertisements, the AFANT newsletter, weed signage and the

print media. A television segment on mimosa was also made and broadcast. A weed page was also developed for inclusion on the AFANT web site, and linked back to the department where more weed information could be found.

Stage 3 The evaluation

The following data relate to the responses of AFANT members to the second questionnaire, following the campaign. Out of the 228 follow up questionnaires posted, 94 were returned or 41.2%.

As a result of the weed awareness campaign 51.2% of respondents felt that they knew a little more about weeds than they did before the campaign. Twenty one percent indicated that they knew a lot more and 19.5% said that they knew no more than they did before.

Increase in understanding

Nearly 70% of respondents indicated that they had a greater understanding of the extent of the weed problem in the Northern Territory. Seventeen percent indicated that they knew no more than before, and 5% didn't know whether they had or not. Similar results were gained from the question asking whether respondents had a wider understanding of the impacts that weeds have on the environment: 70% indicated that they did have a wider understanding as a result of the campaign.

Preventing the spread of weeds

Seventy three percent of respondents indicated that they were more aware of how weeds are spread as a result of the campaign. At the benchmarking stage, 44% could not think of anything they could do to prevent or slow the spread of weeds, compared to 17% for the second survey. This is a considerable improvement.

Removal of weeds

Finding out whether respondents had attempted to remove weeds/seeds from their boat, motor and camping gear assisted with determining whether AFANT members had incorporated a particular skill or action as a result of gaining more knowledge.

Over 80% indicated that they had checked their boat, motor and camping gear before departing an area. This section also gave respondents an opportunity to provide examples of what they had done if they answered 'yes' to the question. One respond-

ent's reply was "Through cleaning of the boat on a sand-bar, brushing all leaves and seeds off the camper and all tarps etc".

Weed Recognition

Respondents also indicated that they had improved their recognition of Mimosa and Salvinia followed by Noogoora burr and Parkinsonia. The range of products, displays and presentations evidently had an impact in improving weed recognition. Articles in the AFANT newsletter were most seen, followed by weed signage, posters, television etc. This gives the department an indication of where best to target resources via appropriate mechanisms/tools.

It is useful to have a range of products even though some cost more than others. High cost options such as weed signage should not exclude one product over the other on the basis of cost alone.

The television segment was the 4th ranked medium seen. Television is an excellent medium for delivering information as it is visual, packaged in a form that is easy to understand and requires little thought or concentration from the audience.

So what?

The weed marketing campaign effectively raised the level of knowledge and understanding of large percentage of AFANT members about weeds, and provided the department with feedback on the best and most cost effective ways of delivering this information. With this information, the department will be able to continue marketing weed awareness to this target group appropriately and cost effectively. The total cost of the campaign excluding the department's time was approximately \$5000 to achieve changes in practice. While an education campaign such as this may not directly reduce weed outbreaks, it should still be recognised as a worthwhile investment.

Bibliography

Czarja, R & J. Blair (1996), *Designing surveys: A Guide to Decision and Procedures, Stages of a Survey*, Pine Forge Press, Sage Publications Ltd., London, United Kingdom.

Sheley, RL, Jacobs JS, Floyd JW. (1996) Noxious Weed Survey: Awareness and Attitudes in Montana. *Weed Technology* 10, 592-598.

Acknowledgements

Leslee thanks AFANT members and John Harrison for their support of the campaign and Jeff and Cheryl Reid (Reidy's Lures) for the generous donation of lures as an incentive prize for the return of the questionnaires.

Your APEN - your network

Advance Notice Annual General Meeting

Australasia-Pacific Extension Network

Friday 8 November 2002 at 4.40 pm

The **2002 APEN AGM** will take place at the NRE Tatura Institute of Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture as part of the AAAC/APEN workshop, “**Managing in a time of climate and landscape change**”. See opposite for details.

The agenda for the AGM will be as follows:

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of the AGM held on 3 October 2001 at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba
- President’s Report
- Treasurer’s Report
- Election: Vice President
Treasurer
Committee members (3)
- Appointment of Public Officer
- Appointment of Auditor
- General business
- Close

Elections for the APEN National Executive

The position of Vice President is for election.

Those finishing two year terms and thus up for re-election to the committee for a further two year term are: Greg Cock (Treasurer), Terry Reid and Paul Ainsworth (Committee). There is also a further vacancy on the committee.

Nominations are called for positions on the APEN National Executive, to reach the APEN Secretariat by 4.40 pm **1 November, 2002**. Nomination forms are available from Rosemary at the APEN Secretariat and from the APEN website (www.apen.org.au).

General business

Notification of any other business should reach the APEN Secretariat by 4.40 pm 25 October 2002.

**We look forward to seeing as many of our members
at the AGM as possible!**