

16th December 2010

South Coast Communities Sea Spurge Control Recognised

Southern Councils Group has received a "Highly Commended" in the 2010 Local Government Excellence in the Environment Award, weed management category.

The Award was presented to the Southern Council's Executive Officer Lesley Scarlett and Bega Valley Shire Council's Botanist Stuart Cameron at a function in Sydney on Tuesday 30 November 2010 conducted by the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW.

The South Coast Communities Sea Spurge Control Project commenced in May 2009.

It is a region-wide effort to remove sea spurge from all beaches on the NSW South Coast, and significantly reduce other beach weeds.

Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) is a highly invasive weed which is changing the shape of beaches on the south coast of NSW.

It has invaded breeding habitat for threatened shorebird species, prevented natural sand movement, formed dune monocultures, displaced endangered beach vegetation, invaded coastal Endangered Ecological Communities and reduced the amenity and use of beaches. It thrives on our beaches and has no predators.

The project has seen the removal of Sea Spurge from affected beaches from Kiama in the North to the Victorian border in the South.

The project has involved the cooperative efforts of four Councils - Bega Valley Shire, Eurobodalla Shire, Kiama Municipal and Shoalhaven City, as well as the NSW and Commonwealth National Parks, local Indigenous communities and local coastal volunteer, landcare and bushcare groups.

The Councils each employed a part time staff member to oversee the on the ground control work and the community education and awareness component. Together they have monitored, mapped and assessed the severity of infestations on all beaches in their Local Government Area, determined appropriate control methods for each site, engaged work crews and increased community awareness.

Control measures including spraying and hand removal have been implemented to address existing infestations, as well as to control new seedling growth over 12 months. Most beaches have had multiple sweeps along the entire beach.

In the Shoalhaven, the worst beaches were Cudmirrah and Wairo, plus the beaches in Boodoree and Conjola National Parks. Other beaches affected were at Crookhaven Heads, Callala Bay, Bendalong, Rennies and Kioloa, while most Shoalhaven beaches had some small scattered patches. While the sea

spurge was being tackled, workers and volunteers also controlled other problem beach weeds including Bitou, asparagus fern and beach daisy.

The battle with this invasive weed continues with seedlings appearing on some beaches. However, the project has successfully removed adult plants on beaches along the coast and improved beach conditions for locals and visitors.

The South Coast Communities Sea Spurge Control project is funded under the Australian Government's "Caring for Our Country" initiative.

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