UMGENI WATER · AMANZI

AQUATIC INVASIVE WEEDS AWARENESS 2021

Pontederia crassipes (Water Hyacinth)

Pistia stratiotes (Water Lettuce)

Salvinia molesta (Kariba Weed)

Weed Buster month represents the annual culmination and highlight of the on-going campaign aimed at the management and containment of invasive alien plants. The Working for Water Programme is the largest public-funded initiative aimed at managing invasive alien plants in the world, and an excellent example of integrating environmental conservation and poverty alleviation objectives.

Much remains to be done towards increasing public awareness on the issue of invasive alien plants, promoting voluntary pro-active responses and community ownership of initiatives aimed at the management and containment of invasive alien plants (IAPs).

Invasive aquatic weeds are defined as non-native or non-indigenous that have adapted in, on or next to water and can grow either submerged or partially submerged in water. Due to the lack of natural enemies and the resistance to local diseases, these plants tend to spread aggressively, which then threatens ecosystems, habitats and the diversity and abundance of native plant species and can upset the ecological balance in water resource habitats, resulting in negative impacts on ecosystem services, socio-economic and health impacts.

Most importantly, aquatic weeds have serious impacts on water quality and consumes a lot of water, which have serious implication for sustainability of water supply.

Alien aquatic weeds can spread in many ways, including through boats, aquaculture, aquatic recreation, connected waterways and many pathways. Through these and other means aquatic weeds have been introduced to South Africa. With water being a key enabler for future economic growth and environmental sustainability, the control and management of invasive alien plants is important aspect in the protection of ecological infrastructure and water resources.

According to the recent Alien Aquatic Weeds status report, Water Hyacinth, Water Lettuce and Kariba Weed are the most common problematic aquatic weeds found in Umgeni Water raw water resource catchments.

High risk areas for infestation are Midmar Dam inflow, Albert Falls Dam inflow, Mkabela River that flows into Nagle Dam, Inanda Dam inflow, Home Farm Dam at Ixopo and E.J. Smith Dam at Umzinto. All sites are regularly monitored to ascertain the risk levels of infestation. Chemical and Bio control methods are used to control the spread of these species.

The Water Education Team within Umgeni Water conducts awareness presentations to schools and communities on the impacts of both terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species on our water supply and water quality. Schools and communities are encouraged to identify then remove invasive species from their surroundings and replace these with water wise indigenous plants or start a food garden.

Let's all work together to stop the spread of Invasive Alien plants so our water resources and indigenous species are protected.