

31<sup>st</sup> July 2009

EMBARGOED until 11am, Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009

### **Pine Trees posing major threat to biodiversity along the Kalgan River**

An infestation of introduced pine trees along Albany's pristine Kalgan River will be removed and the area's biodiversity restored as part of a new project coordinated by South Coast Natural Resource Management.

The \$120,000 project is funded by the State Government and will be delivered by South Coast NRM in collaboration with the City of Albany, Oyster Harbour Catchment Group, local landholders and volunteers.

About 120 pine trees, some reaching up to 40 metres high and with 25 metre canopies, will be cut down over the next two months while significant native re-vegetation and weed spraying efforts get underway.

South Coast NRM invasive species coordinator Matthew Kennewell said pine trees were a prolific invasive species that upset the balance of native ecosystems.

Mr Kennewell said some of the larger saplings growing along the Kalgan River were preventing sunlight from reaching the Riparian Zone (riverbank) and the establishment of native vegetation.

"These pines are an increasing problem in the Riparian Zone because they out-compete native species and steal nutrients. Directly under the trees you'll see a mat of decaying pine debris that increases acidity and reduces biodiversity," he explained.

"In some cases, hardy species such as grasses cannot establish themselves there."

The pesky pines are thought to have grown from seeds dispersed from original trees planted on nearby private properties to produce ship masts in the 1800's. About 24 of these original trees will be retained due to their heritage value.

City of Albany reserves manager Mark Ford said that once the adult pine trees were removed, the task of removing future pine seedlings by volunteers and local landholders would be relatively easy.

“Working with South Coast NRM and volunteer groups provides a great opportunity to remove woody weeds so the area can be re-vegetated with local natives such as Marri, Jarrah and Peppermint which native fauna rely on.

“Before South Coast NRM came along, we weren’t able to get rid of all of these pine trees...we need input from other sources to get these projects underway,” he explained.

Public safety was another consideration in completing the project, Mr Ford said, as some pine tree limbs could become unstable.

Sections of the trees will be retained as saw logs and the debris burned on site.

About 20 volunteers will make sure that bush walkers and recreational boat users stay out of the area during felling while local landholders have kindly offered their sheds and homes to keep crews refreshed.

**ENDS**

Photographs of the project can be supplied on request. If you require further information please contact;

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**The not-for-profit South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. is the leading regional group for natural resource management on the South Coast of Western Australia. Funding is provided by the Australian Government and the Government of Western Australia.**