



---

## **What is the Waterways Restoration Program?**

The Waterways Restoration Program aims to cleanup Willow debris, remove and control Willows and undertake river restoration works in identified priority areas.

In late-2010 Canberra experienced significant storm events which resulted in the build up of Willow debris in our waterways and creeks. In response to these major storm events the ACT Government has invested \$1.5 million toward the Waterways Restoration Program.

## **Where and when will the work take place?**

The Waterways Restoration Program will focus on the following areas:

- Molonglo River at Oaks Estate;
- Queanbeyan River at Oaks Estate;
- Molonglo River below Scrivener Dam; and
- Woolshed Creek.

The Waterways Restoration Program will be carried out in three phases:

1. Clean up of heavy woody debris (October 2011 – March 2012);
2. Willow removal and control along priority waterways (January – April 2012);  
and
3. Rehabilitation of banks and in-stream (March-May 2012).

Works across the different sites may be undertaken concurrently e.g. planting might be occurring at one site while willow control is undertaken at another.

## **Why are Willows considered to be a serious weed?**

Most species of Willow are Weeds of National Significance. They are among the worst weeds in Australia due to their invasiveness, potential for spread and economic and environmental impacts. Willows have a direct negative impact on the ecosystem influencing both flora and fauna species biodiversity.

Studies of bird biodiversity along waterways in South Eastern Australia show there are almost twice as many birds in native vegetation areas than in either willow invaded or cleared areas (Holland Clift et al 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

Dense woody weeds such as Willows impact the riparian zone and obstruct views of the water.

---

<sup>1</sup> Holland Clift S., O'Dowd J., MacNally R. (2011) Impacts of an invasive willow (*Salix x rubens*) on riparian bird assemblages in south-eastern Australia. *Austral Ecology*. **36**, 511-520.



---

### **How will the willow debris be removed?**

Depending on the location, a range of different techniques may be used to remove the debris. Debris may be:

- burnt on site with the assistance of the ACT Rural Fire Service;
- chipped and spread on site; or
- chipped and removed from site.

### **How will Willows be controlled / removed?**

Small willows will be cut and poisoned by hand. This means they will be cut off at the base with shears and immediately treated with an approved poison. Larger willow trees will be cut down and dabled by specialist forest harvesting machines. All freshly cut material will be removed from the flood zone to prevent debris build up in future storm events.

Stumps will be left in place to provide soil and bank stabilisation until newly planted trees are well established.

### **What about other weeds of national significance?**

The Waterways Restoration Program focuses primarily on willow control and removal however the project team is liaising closely with other Territory and Municipal Services staff undertaking general weed control across the ACT to ensure maximum impact on all high priority weeds.

### **What is being done to minimise impact on animals?**

The project team is liaising closely with the Canberra Ornithologist Group and the ACT Government's Conservation, Research and Planning Unit to minimise the impact on animals including birds. An experienced ornithologist from Greening Australia is conducting a comprehensive survey of all treatment areas. The survey report will include recommendations for replanting and rehabilitation work. No major tree removal or planting works will be undertaken in the Spring nesting season. Where there are large stands of willows and no native trees, some trees will be left in place to provide habitat until replanted natives become established.

All operations will be supervised by an experienced ACT Government ranger with a strong knowledge of local flora, fauna and ecology.



**Will public access/recreation activities be restricted?**

Works will be staged so that only small sections of walking/cycling tracks will be impacted. In most cases access to these tracks will remain open. Traffic controls and fencing will be used to contain the work area and to minimise any impact on public access. Signage will also be in place to alert people of the work.

**What will happen after the Willows are removed?**

The third phase of the Waterways Restoration Program is to rehabilitate the area. Once Willows are removed they will be replaced by endemic species of local provenance. Expert advice will be sought from the Molonglo Catchment Group and ACT Government specialists in aquatic and riparian ecology to identify the right species and the best time of year to replant. Plantings will include trees, shrubs, grasses and rushes to ensure a structurally complex ecosystem develops over time.

**Where can I get more information?**

For further enquiries call Canberra Connect on 13 22 81.