

# INFFER and Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds

## Introduction

A project to establish Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds is underway in NSW in conjunction with the 13 Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs). This natural resource management project has elements in common with the INFFER (Investment Framework for Environmental Resources) process. This document outlines the aims of each project, their complementarities and differences and how each is likely to progress.

## What is each framework designed for?

**INFFER:** INFFER is designed to prioritise environmental assets for public investment and choose broad policy tools (incentives, extension, regulation, further research, direct intervention, no action) that is most effective to protect or enhance priority assets. The intended direct users of INFFER are Catchment Management Authorities (both staff and boards) and governments investing public funding to achieve positive environmental outcomes. A website ([www.inffer.org](http://www.inffer.org)) covers all aspects: including an overview; detailed instructions; frequently asked questions and supporting materials.

**Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds:** This project is designed to assist each of the 13 CMAs in NSW to prioritise environmental assets at risk from widespread weeds. This will help guide CMA investment and deliver on a number of key NRM policy and government initiatives, specifically:

- NSW Invasive Species Plan  
[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/nsw-invasive-species-plan](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/nsw-invasive-species-plan)
- NRM target for invasive species in the 2009 State Plan
- Weed actions in individual Catchment Action Plans (CAPs).

The project was supported by all 13 CMAs in NSW and prepared jointly by the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and Industry and Investment NSW (I&I NSW; formerly NSW DPI).

This project uses a threat abatement approach to mitigate the impacts of multiple widespread weed species on biological assets. Similar to other threat abatement plans (TAPs), this project aims to (i) abate, ameliorate or eliminate the adverse effects of widespread weeds on threatened species, populations or ecological communities; and (ii) prevent species, populations or ecological communities, that are not listed, from becoming eligible for listing as threatened. The main outputs of this project are 1) identification of widespread weed species that pose a threat to biodiversity, 2) identification of the biological assets at risk and 3) a list of prioritised sites for control where the greatest conservation outcomes can be achieved. Priorities were developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in each CMA. An internal report was circulated to each CMA in 2009 and a final report is due in 2010. For more information see the project website [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cmaweeds](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cmaweeds).

This project focuses on widespread weeds and their impacts on biodiversity and as such will help address Goal 3 of the NSW Invasive Species Plan, which is to reduce the impacts of widespread invasive species. This approach complements other Goals in the Plan, including Goal 1 – prevent the establishment of new invasive species; Goal 2 – eliminate or prevent the spread of new invasive species; and Goal 4 - ensure NSW has the ability and commitment to manage invasive species.

**Complementary areas:** The two approaches are highly compatible and complementary. INFFER is strongly based on the public:private benefits framework (PPBF – see [www.inffer.org](http://www.inffer.org)) and evaluates and prioritises projects to protect or improve environmental assets. The Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds project does a similar thing but is specifically to protect biological assets from the impacts of widespread weeds. The development steps or stages in each are also similar (see Table below). Thus, the priorities developed in the Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds project could be used in the INFFER process (either as a whole or as substitutes for specific steps) and vice versa but only for weeds.

INFFER Step	Description	BPWW Stage	Description
		1.	Develop a list of widespread weed species posing a threat to biological assets
1.	Develop a list of significant natural assets in the relevant region(s)	2.	Develop a list of the biological assets at risk from the weeds identified in stage 1, including but not limited to threatened species
2.	Apply an initial filter to the asset list, using a simplified set of criteria	3.	Identify sites which contain the biological assets and weed species posing the threat
3.	Define projects and conduct detailed assessments of them	4.	Use a triage approach to prioritise biological assets and sites for management (using site attribute data and initial assessments)
4.	Select priority projects	5.	Select priority sites
5.	Develop investment plans or funding proposals	6.	Work with site managers at priority sites to develop site-specific management plans, based on Bitou TAP model ( <a href="http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/bitouTAP/siteplans">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/bitouTAP/siteplans</a> )
6.	Implement funded projects	7.	Implement funded projects
7.	Monitor, evaluate and adaptively manage projects	8.	Monitor, evaluate and adaptively manage projects

**Areas of difference:** The Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds project is specifically for weeds and the INFFER process addresses multiple NRM issues. The primary difference lies in when each stage or step is applied with respect to land manager involvement and the type and degree of actual data collected for each step or stage.

## Vision for the future

**INFFER:** The vision is for INFFER to be used as a rigorous and transparent approach to environmental asset prioritisation and investment within Australia and internationally as applicable. INFFER can be used to underpin investment

at the regional, state or national level. It has been trialled or used to varying degrees in 17 regions in 4 states (6 in WA, 5 in Victoria, 5 in NSW, 1 in Qld), and has been adopted as the preferred approach to environmental asset prioritisation and investment in Victoria.

INFFER has now been trialled in a number of NSW regions. These pilots have shown that there is a great opportunity for more cost-effective outcomes to be achieved by better prioritisation of investment. However, regional bodies find the process challenging and need support and training to implement a more comprehensive and rigorous decision making process. The INFFER team has had discussions with the Natural Resources Commission and DECCW about possible future use of INFFER in NSW.

***Biodiversity Priorities for Widespread Weeds:*** The final report on the project across all 13 CMAs in New South Wales will be completed in 2010. The priorities outlined will be used to help guide investment in widespread weed management in each CMA region for biodiversity protection until 2015. This will ensure delivery of conservation outcomes through weed control.

*This document has been prepared by weed staff from Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and Industry and Investment NSW and by Professor David Pannell, University of Western Australia.*