

NO PERMIT – NO USE MARAROA AND LOWER WAIAU RIVERS

A Controlled Area Notice will be put into effect in August 2005 on the Mararoa and lower Waiau rivers to help prevent the spread of *Didymosphenia geminata* (Didymo) algae. The notice is issued under Section 131 of the Biosecurity Act 1993.

The best way to avoid risking the spread of Didymo is to avoid these rivers and their tributaries altogether. One drop of water is all it takes to spread Didymo to another waterway.

The Controlled Area means that those people that need to use the river must obtain a permit. Application forms will be available from Environment Southland, AgriQuality, Southland Fish and Game, and the Department of Conservation, (see below).

To get a permit, applicants will need to demonstrate knowledge of the measures required to stop Didymo from spreading. It will take a few days for permit applications to be processed.

It also means that the movement of any item that has been in contact with the water in the Controlled Area is not allowed without a permit. This applies to any item, including water, machinery, vehicles, boats, clothing (including footwear), animals or vegetation or parts of them, and any inorganic material such as rocks, soil and gravel. This applies for all activities including swimming.

Didymo is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. Those knowingly spreading an unwanted organism can be liable for up to five years imprisonment or a fine of up to \$100,000.

Not complying with the Controlled Area is also an offence under the Act, and carries the same penalty.

Background

Didymo was found in the Mararoa and lower Waiau rivers, Southland, in October 2004. Its arrival in New Zealand is the first recorded occurrence in the southern hemisphere. It is normally found in northern Europe and northern North America.

Didymo is not a human health risk but could have significant impacts on most New Zealand rivers and our clean green image if it were to spread.

Description

Didymo is a freshwater alga. It is made up of cells that can't be seen with the naked eye until it forms blooms on the bottom of streams and rivers. It only takes one drop of affected water to spread it to another waterway.

Didymo attaches itself to the streambed by stalks to form "dreadlocks" that can turn white at their ends. Larger blooms form a thick white or brown layer that smothers rocks, submerged plants and other materials. The algae looks slimy, but feels like



wet cotton wool. When washed up on stream banks it looks similar to clumps of wet toilet tissue paper.

Biosecurity New Zealand has not found evidence of Didymo in any waterways other than the Mararoa and lower Waiau rivers.

Stopping the spread – Cleaning methods

If you need to use the rivers you must have a permit and you must clean all items that have been in affected water with the following methods:

1. Before leaving the river, remove obvious clumps of algae, and look for hidden clumps. Leave them at the affected site. If you find any later, DO NOT wash them down drains. Chemically treat and dry them. Dispose of them in a rubbish bin.
2. Soak and scrub all items for at least one minute in hot (60°C) water, a two percent solution of household bleach or a five percent solution of salt, nappy cleaner, antiseptic hand cleaner or dishwashing detergent. A two percent solution is 200ml, a five percent solution is 500ml or two large cupfuls, in a ten-litre bucket of water.
3. If chemical cleaning is not practical, items must be completely dry for 48 hours before they can be used in an unaffected waterway. The 48 hours begins after dampness and trapped moisture have completely evaporated.

Bear in mind that some items, such as waders, wetsuits, spray skirts and jetboat intakes are difficult to get completely dry and should be chemically treated.

Under no circumstances should fish, plants or other items be moved from an affected waterway to another waterway.

THE THREAT

Avoid this river system, do your activities elsewhere. If necessary to use this river system, get a permit and clean your equipment after using the river. Application forms will be available from Environment Southland, AgriQuality and Southland Fish and Game offices in Invercargill, the Department of Conservation offices in Te Anau and the Tuatapere service station. Under no circumstances should any items be moved from an affected waterway to another waterway.



Further information is available by calling:

0800 80 99 66 or online at www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo