

MEDIA RELEASE

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Attention: News Editor

Medal finalist tackles dieback

New weapons to help limit the spread of dieback have been developed by Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) Medal for Excellence finalist Gary Muir.

Mr Muir, manager of WOW Wilderness, has designed dieback cleaning stations for vehicles and walkers that promise more effective dieback suppression in susceptible areas.

Development of his Phyto Fighter 1000 boot cleaning spray system and Bush Bidet for vehicles was supported in part by \$1000 Mr Muir won as a finalist in the 2008 GSDC Medal for Excellence in NRM.

His work was also aided by South Coast NRM, the Department of Environment and Conservation, Murdoch University and ALCOA, and Mr Muir added his own contribution.

Bushwalkers using the Phyto Fighter 1000 boot cleaning station walk onto a grate with a fixed brush to remove loose material from their footwear, and then operate a hand pump to deliver dieback-disinfecting spray onto the soles of their boots or shoes.

A prototype Phyto Fighter 1000 is in use at the entrance to the Point Nuyts wilderness area west of Walpole and Mr Muir said it was proving easy to use and effective.

“Brushing boots at cleaning stations the old way was ineffective and was putting people off,” Mr Muir said. “It is hard to remove soil from boot soles with a brush, but



A bushwalker sterilises his boots with the Phyto Fighter 1000 before entering a dieback protection area.

the sterilant we use has a wetting agent that will penetrate clinging soil and kill the dieback spores within 20 seconds.”

GSDC Chief Executive Officer Bruce Manning said Mr Muir’s work was a valuable contribution to dieback suppression.

“We are pleased that recognition and support from the GSDC has helped Mr Muir to raise the standard of dieback hygiene in the bush,” Mr Manning said.

“Effective management of the Great Southern’s natural resources is a key focus of the GSDC and Mr Muir’s work could be a significant step towards minimising the spread of this destructive plant disease.”

Dieback affects more than a million hectares of Western Australia and threatens 40 per cent of plant species in the State’s South West.

Mr Muir said the Phyto Fighter 1000 was ready to be deployed in priority areas in consultation with the Department of Environment and Conservation and with South Coast NRM.

The unit was designed to cost less than \$1000 and to have a capacity to spray 1000 boots, serving 500 walkers, before needing a maintenance visit to restock the sterilising solution.

Further development work is under way on the Bush Bidet, a vehicle cleaning station that delivers the sterilising spray onto tyres and the underside of off-road vehicles.

Off-road vehicle users drive onto grates over the spray system and turn on a pump which can be powered through the vehicle’s accessory socket.

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