



AgForce GPS training gives Council tech skills for pest management

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Last week AgForce Projects led Flinders Shire Council staff and local landholders through a comprehensive, hands-on GPS training course in Hughenden as part of the Council's Good Neighbour Program (GNP).

Dilki Wanniarachchi, Land Management and GIS Officer, Flinders Shire Council, said the training was an excellent opportunity for Council staff to learn how to use GPS technology to help prevent the spread of pest animals and weeds in the shire.

"With the support of Flinders Shire Council Deputy Mayor, Ninian Stewart-Moore, five new Catchment Management Groups have been created and each group is about to implement a Good Neighbour Program in a bid to stem the increasing spread of pest plants within the Shire," Ms Wanniarachchi said.

"This will include the introduction of buffer zones on boundaries and watercourses as well all other measures designed to stop the spread of weeds from one property to another."

Ms Wanniarachchi said Council staff will be able to more accurately collect and record the location of weed affected areas and buffer zones using the GPS units when visiting properties.

The Flinders Shire Council will also use the technology to record the location of wild dog sightings.

"Whether or not a Council staff member has a role related to the environment, if they are out in the field inspecting a building for example, and they spot a Class 1 weed or a wild dog or pig, they can just use their iPad to take a picture, record the coordinates and bring the data back to us," Ms Wanniarachchi said.

"This data is very important and will make it easier for everyone in Council to support our approach to pest management."

Flinders Shire Council also invited staff from Forest Products, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to complete the training which will help encourage greater information sharing to assist weed and pest animal monitoring in the Shire.

The training was conducted by AgForce GIS Technical Officer Noel Brinsmead who showed participants how to correctly set-up and work with a hand-held GPS unit. He outlined how to select the correct datum to ensure accurate on-ground navigation and led field activities demonstrating how to mark and record specific waypoints and use tracks.

"It is great to be helping the Flinders Shire Council develop these skills to create a more efficient and strategic approach to weed and pest animal management," Mr Brinsmead said.

"The Good Neighbour Program is a great initiative and better use of GPS technology will help the Council provide better support to landholders by improving accuracy and efficiencies."

For more information about the Good Neighbour Program and the Flinders Shire Pest Management Plan please contact the Council on (07) 4741 2900.

For more information about AgForce GPS services please contact (07) 3238 6048.

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