What are State Alert Weeds?
These are invasive weeds that are not known to be in South Australia, or if present, occur in low numbers in a restricted area, and are still capable of being eradicated. An Alert Weed would pose a serious threat to the State’s primary industries, natural environments or human health if it became established here. All Alert Weeds are declared under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004: their transport and sale are prohibited (Sect. 175 and 177), plants must be destroyed (Sect. 182), and if found on your land their presence must be notified to NRM authorities (Sect. 180) – refer overleaf.

Eurasian watermilfoil
Myriophyllum spicatum

WHAT IS IT?
- A highly aggressive and invasive submerged aquatic plant, recognised as a weed worldwide
- Native to Europe, Asia and North Africa, but has not yet been introduced to Australia
- Forms dense stands of vegetation, and can fill a lake surface from shore to shore
- Also known as: Spike water milfoil
- Looks very similar to some native Myriophyllum species

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?
- Displaces native aquatic species by forming dense stands that reduce light and alter the temperature profile of a water body
- Dense mats can also interfere with recreational activities, boat traffic and irrigation
- Can be a safety hazard when swimmers become entangled in the thick submersed growth
DESCRIPTION
A submerged perennial herb with an emergent flower spike bearing tiny, 4-petalled pinkish flowers. The flower spike is held erect above the water up to 8 cm high, but lies parallel to the surface when the fruit sets. Underwater stems averaging 3 m long, but which can grow to 7 m, are rooted to the base and grow towards the surface of the water where they branch out to form a dense canopy. The leaves are submerged, feathery and olive-green, in whorls of 3-5 with 5-24 leaflets.

HOW IT SPREADS
Water milfoil has typically spread vegetatively from stem fragments through boating and fishing activities or water currents, even though it reproduces by seed. Short distance dispersal results from stem fragments becoming entangled on motor boats and mechanical weed harvesting. Long distance dispersal is linked to the aquatic nursery trade, and dumping of unwanted vegetative material.

HABITAT
Grows in deep fresh or stagnant to slightly brackish, stationary or slowly flowing bodies of water, but can grow in fast-moving water. It tolerates a wide range of water and temperature conditions.

ORIGIN
Water milfoil is native to Asia, North Africa and Europe.

DISTRIBUTION IN AUSTRALIA
Current: Not yet present in Australia.
Potential: Has the potential to become a significant weed of stationary bodies of water in temperate Australia, such as lakes, dams, and reservoirs.

HOW IT GOT HERE
It could potentially be imported as a contaminant of freshwater aquarium materials or in mistake for another water plant. It looks very similar to some native Myriophyllum species.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Be on the alert for this plant using this Fact Sheet as a guide. If you see a suspicious plant that may be this State Alert Weed, please report it to your local Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board (contact details at www.nrm.sa.gov.au). For more information on weeds, including Alerts, contact your local NRM Board or visit either www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity (phone 08 8303 9620) or www.weeds.org.au.

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