



Cape York
Healthy Country
NEWSLETTER

Issue 37
2019

*\$16m to protect the Far
North's natural resources*
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*Milman Island marine
turtle monitoring*
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\$16m to protect the Far North's natural resources

Cassowaries and the endangered golden-shouldered parrot are among the winners in a \$16 million investment for Far North Queensland

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE

The Australian Government's Regional Land Partnership (RLP) program has invested in eight Far Northern projects covering threatened species, vulnerable ecological communities, the quality of soil on farms, erosion and water quality.

Cape York NRM, Terrain NRM and Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, working together as the NQ NRM Alliance, will deliver the RLP program from Ingham in the south to the tip of Cape York and out west to Karumba.

The investment will fund five biodiversity projects focused on protecting littoral rainforest, woodlands and coastal vine thickets as well as cassowaries, the ant plant and the golden-shouldered parrot.

It will also support the organisations to work with farmers across Far North Queensland over the next five years to deliver initiatives aimed at boosting farm productivity while improving habitat for native animals.

These projects will tackle issues such as hillslope erosion and soil acidification, while providing workshops and programs to build farmer knowledge about soil management.

Cape York NRM Chair Emma Jackson said the investment was a win for the Far North.

'We are thrilled to be working with our NQ NRM Alliance partners to deliver this significant investment in conjunction with community partners' she said.

'The projects support a whole range of improved management practices to better manage and maintain Far Northern lands and waters.

'This investment will support livelihoods across the Far North, increase our knowledge of key threatened species and improve farming practices.'

Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch said it was important to protect the unique environment of Far North Queensland.

'It is terrific news that the three NRM bodies across the region are working together to maximise the Government's investment in our environment and I am excited that NQ NRM will be working with community partners to deliver these eight RLP projects to protect some of our most critical natural assets,' he said.

'This work will support local livelihoods across the Far North, increase our knowledge of key threatened species and improve farming practices.'

This project is supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



SOUTHERN CASSOWARY



GOLDEN-SHOULDERED PARROTS | PHOTO BARRY LYON

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Looking after land and water on the Mitchell

Improving native vegetation and soil condition of grazing lands of the Joint Management Area within the Mitchell River basin

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE

Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf Resource Management Group are working with graziers in the Mitchell catchment to help them develop their knowledge of native vegetation management in a bid to reduce erosion.

Cape York NRM Acting Principal Program Manager Michael Goddard is managing the project.

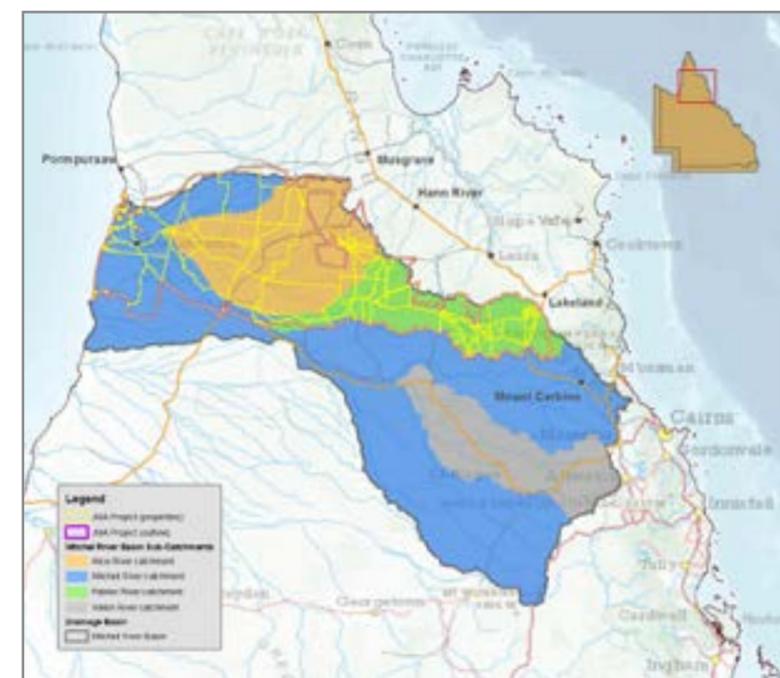
'We aim to walk alongside land managers to support them in what must often seem to be an endless battle as they address the significant challenges of running a property in a demanding environment,' he said.

'We have been having one-on-one discussions with landholders in the Mitchell basin, and working with them to develop property specific action plans to support water quality outcomes.

'We're aiming to get eight properties on board this year, so I encourage graziers in the Mitchell River basin to get in touch and find out more about how we can assist them to implement property action plans.'

Mitchell River catchment land managers who would like to take part in this project are invited to contact Michael on michael.goddard@capeyorknrm.com.au

This project is funded by the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Investment Program



About the Joint Management Area
Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf Resource Group jointly manage the natural resources in the Joint Management Area (JMA). The JMA includes the Palmer River and northern side of the Mitchell River catchment.

About the Mitchell River Catchment
The Mitchell catchment is approximately 72,000 km² and flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria. It includes part of the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme and supports a population of approximately 6000 people. Pastoralism comprises over 95% of the catchment land use. The second largest land use, conservation reserves, covers about 3% of the catchment.
Source: CSIRO, June 2018.

Landholders gain foothold on weed infestations

Laura River rubber vine control

WORDS ROBYN MAY

Rubber vine has been treated in the Laura region by Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals (CYWafa) Inc. with support from Cape York NRM.

Cape York NRM Gully and Grazing Project Officer Michael Goddard said the project was all about restoring native ground cover and reducing erosion.

‘The Laura River Rubber Vine Control Project is reducing the amount of rubber vine growing along the waterways, allowing the return of native grasses and minimising soil loss during rain events,’ he explained.

CYWafa Environmental Operation’s Manager Trevor Meldrum said rubber vine treatment is being carried out on properties from the Crossing through to Turalba Valley Station.

‘Work started near Carrolls Crossing on the Laura River on the Peninsula Developmental Road south-east of Laura,’ he said.

‘Landholders are thrilled with the results they’re seeing.’

‘I’ve actually seen them smiling about what the team has achieved, so they’re quite impressed with what’s been accomplished since November last year. They can’t thank the Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals team and Cape York NRM enough. Getting rid of the rubber vine allows grass to return. Grass holds the soil in place and stops the soil runoff into waterways, plus it takes the energy out of the water before it actually gets into the river systems.’

The CYWafa team is killing the weed using the basal barking technique to apply a mixture of diesel and the herbicide Access, which is a biodegradable herbicide registered for use on rubber vine.

‘Basal barking is where you run a ring around the basal or trunk area of the rubber vine from knee-height down to the root where the diesel burns the chemical into the sapwood, and the sapwood picks up the Access which kills the plant outright,’ Trevor said.

‘We’ve been using the basal barking method all the way down because in a lot of the areas it’s the only way you can access the weed—the areas are pretty degraded and it’s very hard to get at with machines—and a lot of this rubber vine is above two metres tall and anything above two metres tall you cannot foliar spray, so basal barking is the only technique that can be used successfully.’

Rubber vine is declared
Restricted Matter under the
Biosecurity Act 2014

The Australian Government’s Laura River Rubber Vine Control Project is a component of the Reef Trust Phase IV: Scaling up Normanby Basin gully and stream bank remediation in priority areas program

The aim of the project is to reduce sediment loss by increasing native ground cover through the reduction of rubber vine infestations.

The result of this work will enable landholders reduce their management input in weed control on their properties to the point that only minor follow up control is required.



CRAIG GIBSON, PROPERTY OWNER KEN VALE, NEVILLE BOWEN AND JOEY DIX AT BEEFWOOD PARK
PHOTO ROBYN MAY



RUBBER VINE CONTROL WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY NEVILLE BOWEN | PHOTO SUPPLIED



PHOTO JESSIE PRICE-DECLÉ

2019 Cape York Grazing Forum

Cape York grazing families didn't let a little thing like a Cat 1 cyclone deter them from heading to the 2019 Cape York Grazing Forum held in Laura recently

WORDS ROBYN MAY

Cape York NRM ran the event in partnership with South Cape York Catchments, Rural Financial Counselling Services North Queensland, AgForce, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and was a great success.

Graziers from across the Cape travelled to Laura for the two-day event and thankfully Cyclone Anne lost her way and was a no-show.

Cape York NRM Acting Principal Program Manager Michael Goddard, who coordinated the event, said he was very happy with the way it rolled out.

'Each of the partners was integral to the success of the event. I extend a special thank you to Tahna Jackson from Rural Financial Counselling Services North Queensland who worked tirelessly to put the program together to ensure the concurrent sessions ran smoothly,' he said.

'Everyone had the opportunity to attend each session.'

The annual Grazing Forum showcases the latest farm management practices and tools to support graziers to better utilise their time and improve profitability within the beef industry. The two-day program covered a variety of topics including succession planning, finance and valuation, biosecurity, Paddock to Reef program, border security, and quad bike safety.

Major and Organised Crime Squad detectives updated graziers on a range of relevant topics, including what to do if people are trespassing on private property, and what to do in the case of an arson event.

Lyndal Scobell from the University of Southern Queensland presented on Climate Variability, providing farmers with information on how they can access a variety of tools to interpret seasonal climate drivers for risk management and decision-making about their herds and pastures.

Attendees also benefited from the opportunity to get together with their peers and swap stories.

The event was held at Laura Rodeo Grounds and catered for by the Laura Rodeo and Campdraft Association headed by Mary Shepherd. Mary's catering expertise kept everyone more than satisfied with the continuous supply of food and beverages.

This event was supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's Reef Trust program and supported by the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Investment Program

Following the Grazing Forum, Cape York NRM hosted a Horticultural Round Table at Lakeland which was attended by growers from that region. Presentations were delivered by Major and Organised Crime Squad, University of Southern Queensland, and Cape York NRM. *This event was supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and supported by the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Investment Program*



PATRONS TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR UP-TO-DATE DATA, ENGAGE WITH PRESENTERS AND GRAZIER, AND ENJOY SOME GREAT SOCIAL TIME | PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE ROBYN MAY

Extension trainee hits the ground running

Harry James might have grown up in the city but he never missed an opportunity to go bush

WORDS ROBYN MAY

Harry is Cape York NRM's first Agricultural Extension Graduate, and one of fourteen in Queensland.

Meeting graziers at the 2019 Cape York Grazing Forum gave Harry a great head start in the new role which will be to support graziers and growers across the region in land management and water quality monitoring.

During the next 12 months he will receive training, mentoring and hands-on experience from Cape York NRM staff.

'I want to help improve the future for our natural systems by supporting leading land management practices,' Harry said.

'I'm excited to get out and see the Cape and put theory into practice, and I'm looking forward to upcoming visits to Crocodile and Springvale Stations.'

Despite growing up in Brisbane, Harry always wanted to move away from the city and work in a role that assists landholders and supports sustainable practices.

'A lot of people in cities have the impression that farming and agriculture stand at odds with maintaining a healthy environment, but the way I see it, farmers, particularly on the Cape, are excellent stewards of the land,' he said.

As he becomes more experienced Harry hopes to be able to share his skills with people in developing countries.

When he's not studying or working, Harry enjoys hiking, surfing and volunteering, including a stint as a volunteer turtle monitor on Queensland's Heron and Peak Islands.

The Agricultural Extension Work Placement Program is facilitated by the Queensland Farmers' Federation, under the support of the Queensland Government



UNI DAYS | PHOTO PROVIDED



HARRY AT WORK IN CAPE YORK PHOTO LIAM O'NEILL

Coordinated burn in southern Cape

Late season fires can destroy wildlife and livestock, threaten property, scorch groundcover leaving the ground vulnerable to erosion, kill pasture, pump carbon into the atmosphere, and require significant time, funds and human resources to bring under control

WORDS AND PHOTOS JESSIE PRICE-DECLÉ

Late season fires can destroy habitat, threaten property and livestock, and scorch groundcover leaving country vulnerable to erosion. Fighting fires is also a significant drain on people's time and resources.

To protect themselves and their land, some managers burn off parts of their properties soon after the wet season in order to create fire breaks and reduce fuel loads. This is often done only when the land manager has the opportunity, and is an exercise in logistics: shifting stock, warning neighbours, utilising helicopters to light fires in remote terrain, and bringing in resources to manage the burn.

In a bid to increase efficiency, reduce costs, improve communication and reduce the chance of controlled burns becoming wildfires, South Cape York Catchments (SCYC) is managing a coordinated, early burn program which has multiple landholders working together to plan and implement their burns. The landholders are working with Cape York NRM staff and SCYC, and working collectively is making a difference economically and environmentally.

Together, they have shared experiences, shaped burn plans, and designed aerial incendiary runs. Helicopter time has been funded by Cape York NRM's Reef Trust III project and South Cape York Catchments won a grant to purchase an aerial incendiary machine, which is further reducing aerial burning costs for these landholders.

Burning took place in June and July, and an evaluation of the pilot project will be available in August.

Thanks to the Australian Government's Reef Trust III program for project funding, and to the Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund for funding the purchase of the aerial incendiary machine.



LAND MANAGERS FROM THE NORMANBY BASIN DOING A BENCH TEST WITH SOUTH CAPE YORK CATCHMENT'S NEW RED DRAGON AERIAL INCENDIARY MACHINE.

That's a wrap – the Reef Alliance Cape York Grazing Project draws to a close

WORDS JESSIE PRICE-DECLÉ AND JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTO JESSIE PRICE-DECLÉ



Project duration 2016–2019



Number of properties 20



Number of land managers 50+

The three-year project saw graziers make changes to their land and grazing practices to improve land condition and water quality outcomes.

The project team, made up of Cape York NRM, South Cape York Catchments, and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff, worked across 20 properties over the life of the project.

South Cape York Catchments Grazing Project Officer Jessie Price-Decle said the project made a difference to water quality and land condition.

‘It was rewarding to work closely with graziers and support them to make changes which improved their grazing land condition, and had the flow-on benefit of improving water quality,’ she said.

‘Most of the on-ground projects also had an economic benefit for the graziers, so win-win!’ The project team supported land managers to put together property – specific actions plans, attend training events, and conduct on-ground projects such as gully remediation, wetland and waterway fencing, and weed control.

Training events included pregnancy testing, low-stress stock handling, and sediment management. These events were hosted on stations across the region, and were well-attended by the Cape York grazing community.

On-ground projects included riparian fencing, pasture improvement, the building of off-stream watering points, and gully erosion rehabilitation. A project with Violet Vale Station, which saw 11,000 hectares of sensitive soils fenced off from cattle and horses, was shortlisted for the 2018 Reef Champion Awards.

Jessie said one of the unexpected highlights of the project was running the Cape York Grazing Forum.

‘We’re hoping it can become an annual event,’ she said.

‘It is a fantastic opportunity for the wider Cape York grazing community to come together with industry bodies, government departments and agencies, and relevant businesses. Cape York is a big, remote place – to bring these services to the people of the Cape is a great thing.’

With the introduction of new Reef Regulations, Jessie said she was optimistic that the State and Australian Governments would continue to invest in northern Great Barrier Reef catchments.

‘We’ve got great relationships with land managers who are keen to do more great work with us. Here’s hoping that this is recognised, and we see continued investment in Cape York and the northern Great Barrier Reef!’

This project is funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust with the support of Cape York NRM

Violet Vale

Violet Vale is a large grazing property on the Eastern side of Cape York with extensive wetland complexes. Owners James and Niki Collins, who wanted to take a best practice approach, contacted Cape York NRM in 2014 to discuss options for their new grazing operation.

An agreement was made to fence off the wetlands with a 32km exclusion fence to protect the significant natural values of the wetland complex. The landholders then decided to establish an 11,000-hectare cattle exclusion area to remove cattle, feral pigs and horses and increase ground cover. This area is low value from a grazing perspective but sheds significant sediment loads as it includes a large alluvial fan denuded of grass cover from years of grazing.

The two projects have created a 21,000-hectare exclusion zone and illustrate James and Niki’s commitment to undertake significant environmental works on their property to protect the integrity of the Great Barrier Reef.



Fencing on Normanby Station

Normanby Station Traditional Owners have been working hard to improve their land condition and water quality.

Through the Balnggarrawarra Ranger Program, Traditional Owners are remediating gullies, controlling weeds and feral animals, and managing fires.

As part of the Reef Alliance Grazing Project, the Traditional Owners have been able to fence a new paddock on their better grazing country. This paddock will improve grazing management on the station, and also act as a cattle trap for feral cattle that move along the Normanby River.

Resilient rural women revitalise

Far North Queensland women took time out to head to the three day 2019 Basalt & Beauty Bash at Mount Surprise in May

WORDS AND PHOTO ROBYN MAY



Many of these women have never taken a day, let alone three days, away from their roles as land managers, mothers, wives, teachers, accountants and the rest, to focus on themselves.

Some of the women attending have overcome or are still experiencing seemingly insurmountable challenges during their lives on the land. Outside their comfort zone, many shared their stories in the comfort of others who understand.

Basalt Bash & Beauty, an annual women-only event which has been running for four years, focuses on health, wellbeing, creativity, social support, networking and friendship.

Hosted by Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland, and RFCS Farm Liaison Officer, the event attracts women from the agriculture and grazing sectors across the Far North.

Attendees participated in a range of sessions, including livestock data systems, industry updates, financial assistance & budgeting, soil health, plus resin jewellery craft, networking & wellness, and lots more.

One of the organisers, Northern Gulf RMG's Community Liaison Officer Kathy Rowling, said, "Basalt Bash & Beauty is an essential networking event for rural and remote women to keep up with industry updates, learn new skills for their business and work on giving themselves some 'me time'.

"I see Basalt Bash and Beauty as a safe place for women to offload problems or concerns and seek assistance, either financial or personal, if needed."

"This is a time for women to make new friends, catch up with old friends and share, but most of all laugh and go home refreshed," Kathy said.

The event kicked-off with the highly-anticipated Pyjama Cocktail Party. This little soiree alone resulted in the more shy in the crowd chatting and making new friends. The atmosphere was delightful and a credit to the organisers.

After dinner the following night everyone was in hysterics as they joined in team games of Pictionary and Celebrity Heads.



Planting the seed into the minds of Cape York women. Would you be keen to attend an event such as this on the Cape?

Let us know by contacting Robyn on robyn.may@capeyorknrm.com.au

Talaroo Fire Forum focuses on threatened species

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTOS JAMES DONALDSON

Cape York NRM is partnering with Northern Gulf Resource Management Group to facilitate opportunities for Australian Indigenous people to showcase and share their cultural fire knowledge, establish a network of Indigenous fire practitioners and protect the habitat of threatened species.

In May, Northern Gulf RMG coordinated an on-country fire workshop at Talaroo Station in the northern Gulf area. The three - day event was hosted by the Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation.

Around 40 people attended the workshop including Traditional Owner groups, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, James Cook University, and the Department of Environment and Science.

Participants spent time on country learning about cultural burning and how it helps protect threatened species including endangered golden-shouldered parrots.

Attendees also spent time discussing the idea of a North Queensland Indigenous Fire Practitioners Network which would enable Traditional Owners to share knowledge and experiences on how cultural fire management delivers outcomes for carbon, improved soil and water quality and ecological conservation.

Northern Gulf RMG Biodiversity Officer James Donaldson said the workshop and the North Queensland Indigenous Fire Practitioners Network meeting were part of a broader strategy to protect the endangered golden-shouldered parrot.

'Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rangers and other land managers on the appropriate use of fire will increase knowledge, skills and capacity and increase people's capacity to address key threats to golden-shouldered parrots across their country.'

This project is supported by Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



Pig trapping and peer to peer learning

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTOS PROVIDED

Project: Enhanced Extension Coordination in Reef Catchments

A Cape York NRM project is asking farmers what changes should be made on their properties to support them and their businesses, and funding a number of their suggestions.

Regional Extension Coordinator Oliver McConnachie explains:

‘I’m running a project to help farmers and land managers learn from each other through regular get-togethers, meetings and workshops.

‘There is a new Grazing Group and a new Precision Agriculture group up and running in Cape York, and also a new Grazing Group has started up in the Tablelands area. Groups are focusing on alternatives to inorganic fertilisers, such as microbial soil conditioners for improving productivity in mixed cropping, horticulture and the grazing industries.

‘Members have been getting a lot out of these groups – they get to share new ideas in a non-threatening context and this helps them to feel less isolated as farming and grazing can be uncertain, demanding and stressful business.

‘One of the exciting things is that members of the groups have access to a pool of funding, known as Peer to Peer Funds, for improving management practice and for Peer to Peer learning events.

‘These events can be beneficial to the production bottom-line short term as well as for trialing new technologies at the local scale where benefits may take a longer time to be realised.

‘There is also flexible funding for training and other project work... there are lots of options.

‘One of our first Funded events saw Cape York NRM staff get together with the Cape York Precision Agriculture Network (PA group) and install three JAGER PRO M.I.N.E. Automated pig traps on three southern Cape York properties in April 2019.

‘Feral pigs are a major problem across the Cape, and cause lots of problems for fruit, vegetable and grain growers as they basically plough up the ground and destroy the crops and even fertigation and irrigation infrastructure.

‘Farmers are generally time poor so the traps are designed to reduce the time normally needed to conduct a coordinated feral pig management program.

‘These traps are equipped with high resolution cameras that detect movement and transfer images directly to your cell phone. The poised gates can be activated remotely from your phone to maximise animal trapping.

‘Just over two months in, the project has been really successful. We have trapped 37 pigs, the farmers have learned the ins and outs of installation and by working together can better coordinate feral pig management at a larger scale with ease. Traps will be shared amongst the PA group and remain their property.’

‘Excitingly, this is only part of the project – we are also putting in weather stations and partnering with the Bureau of Meteorology to improve the accuracy and resolution of weather data, help farmers better manage their water resources, expand on the current options farmers have within Precision Agriculture, and also benefit the wider community. Once the program is fully functional there may be a whole lot more benefits that will emerge.’

‘I really encourage Cape York and Wet Tropics Farmers to get in touch and find out more about the Grazing and Agriculture Peer to Peer learning groups and come along and throw around some ideas to utilise Flexible and Peer to Peer Funds.’

Regional Extension Coordinator Oliver McConnachie can be contacted on oliver.mcconnachie@capeyorknrm.com.au



TIME LAPSE IMAGES OF PIGS CAUGHT IN PIG TRAP



Funding for this Enhanced Extension Coordination Project is provided by the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Milman Island marine turtle monitoring 2019

A remote sand cay off the north east coast of Cape York, Milman Island became a centre of activity during the annual turtle census in summer 2018/2019. Led by the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, turtle monitoring on Milman Island has been a regular event on the turtle calendar since 1991 when it was first established as a representative monitoring beach for northern Queensland hawksbill turtles (Eretmochelys imbricata).

WORDS KERRI WOODCOCK | WESTERN CAPE TURTLE THREAT ABATEMENT ALLIANCE (WCTTAA) COORDINATOR
CAPE YORK NRM HOSTS THE WCTTAA CO-ORDINATOR

A range of scientists, researchers, volunteers and students took part in this year's monitoring activities, most of which occurred under moonlight. All turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs were recorded using unique flipper tag numbers to assist in population size estimates. Participants also dug up and assessed the contents of hatched nests to determine hatchling emergence success rates.

Monitoring conducted on Milman Island over the past 28 years indicates a significant decline in hawksbill turtle nesting and formed the basis for the Queensland Government upgrading the status of the species from 'Vulnerable' to 'Endangered' in 2017 (Nature Conservation Act, 1992). While hawksbill turtles nest and feed in waters of the Great Barrier Reef, they also nest, migrate and feed in other parts of the State and neighbouring countries, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Key threats to hawksbill turtles across their distribution include unsustainable and illegal take, nest predation, ghost net and marine debris entanglement, and the impacts of climate change.

This year the annual Milman Island survey ran for an extended 12 week period (January to March 2019) to accommodate an additional climate adaptation research project being conducted by Melissa Staines from the University of Queensland, in partnership with WWF Australia and the Queensland Government. Koala, an Australian designed furniture company which has sustainability embedded in their mission, provided the major sponsorship for this project. The Sea Turtle Foundation also contributed a small grant.

Climate change is driving an increase in global temperatures, including the temperature of the sand in which marine turtles lay their eggs. The sex of marine turtles is determined by sand temperature during incubation, with warmer sand producing more females and cooler sand producing more males. With the increase in sand temperatures on nesting beaches, a corresponding increase in the proportion of female turtles is expected. If this process continues, it may eventually result in an all-female population, and the subsequent inability of a population to reproduce.

A recent study of the northern Great Barrier Reef (GBR) population of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) nesting on Raine Island (approximately 65 nautical miles to the south-east of Milman Island) found that female turtles currently outnumbered male turtles by at least 116 to 1. The study concluded that "the northern GBR green turtle rookeries have been producing primarily females for more than two decades and that the complete feminisation of this population is possible in the near future"¹.

The aim of the research project carried out on Milman Island was to determine the best method to reduce sand temperature of the nests, which could then be adapted to nesting beaches with populations experiencing feminisation to re-establish a more natural gender ratio. Several different methods were trialled to cool the sand temperature of sea turtle nests, including the use of artificial and natural shade structures, and seawater irrigation.

The green turtle nesting recorded on Milman Island was significantly lower during the recent

2019 monitoring census, with a mean annual nesting density of only 52, compared to 182 greens per year recorded for the previous four nesting seasons. This was an unexpected result, given the high density seagrass available and favourable climatic conditions that north Queensland had been experiencing.

The results of the nesting cooling project will be released by WWF Australia in the coming months and will have important implications for managing the impacts of climate change on nesting marine turtle populations on Cape York into the future.

Thanks to Dr Ian Bell (Queensland Department of Environment and Science), Christine Madden Hof (WWF Australia) and Melissa Staines (University of Queensland) for their contributions to this article.

¹Jensen, M., Allen, C., Eguchi, T., Bell, I., LaCasella, E., Hilton, W., Hof, C., Dutton, P. (2018). Environmental Warming and Feminization of One of the Largest Sea Turtle Populations in the World. *Current Biology* 28, 154–159.



MELISSA STAINES WATERING A RESEARCH PLOT AS PART OF HER RESEARCH INTO METHODS FOR COOLING TURTLE NESTS.



HAWKSBILL HATCHLINGS PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE KERRI WOODCOCK



TURTLE TRACK ON MILLMAN ISLAND PHOTO MELISSA STAINES



KERRI WOODCOCK, WITH JOHANNA KARAM (SEA TURTLE FOUNDATION), MEASURING A HAWKSBILL TURTLE FOUND DECEASED DUE TO ENTANGLEMENT IN MARINE DEBRIS | PHOTO ALASTAIR FREEMAN

Springvale Station sediment solution

Looking after land, water and livelihoods

WORDS AND PHOTOS JULIANA FOXLEE

Springvale Station Nature Refuge is located 40km south west of Cooktown. Once a cattle station, the culturally – important property is now a refuge for a diverse range of vulnerable flora and fauna.

The Palaszczuk government purchased Springvale Station in 2016 in a bid to reduce sediment flowing from the degraded paddocks into the Normanby River.

The Queensland government is now investing in a new project which will support water quality outcomes and *Bama livelihoods.

As part of the Natural Resources Investment Program’s Springvale project, targeted remediation works will commence on the West Normanby Distal Gully site on Springvale Station – identified by the Eastern Cape York Water Quality Improvement Plan as the most important source of sediment in the Normanby Basin.

Primary outcomes from this work will be stabilisation and rehabilitation of a major source of sediment and importantly, practical testing of methodologies to determine the best treatments to be applied on Springvale. The involvement of Griffith University will provide scientific rigour to the design and evaluation of results as well as accredited training.

The Yalanji Joint Venture, the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science, Griffith University and Cape York Natural Resource Management (Cape York NRM) are working together to deliver the project which will

remediate the West Normanby Distal Gully site, develop a Gully Demonstration Site which will showcase different types of gully remediation techniques, develop an accredited training program for Bama, and identify and utilise Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

‘The Springvale Project is a learning-by-doing project that incorporates traditional knowledge and scientific expertise in alluvial gully management in the savannah landscapes of Cape York,’ said Cape York NRM Acting Principal Program Manager Michael Goddard.

‘The project will greatly improve the Yalanji people’s ability to design and implement future erosion management on Springvale Station and elsewhere in Yalanji Country.’

‘Incorporating traditional knowledge and scientific expertise to protect the waterways of Cape York is critical to the success of the project.’

‘Gully remediation is now being carried out by employees from Yalanji Joint Venture. This supports the Bama ability to design and implement future erosion management on Springvale Station and elsewhere in Cape York.’

*Bama is the collective, and preferred term, for Far North Queensland’s Rainforest First Australians/ First Nations people, which includes Western Yalanji and Jabalbina peoples.

This project is funded by Queensland Government’s Natural Resources Investment Program



SECOND SPRINGVALE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, MAY 2019



DISTAL GULLIES AT SPRINGVALE STATION

A healthy farming future for Cape York

WORDS AND PHOTO JULIANA FOXLEE



Through improving pastures and coverage year round on grazing properties, both farm and farmers' resilience to a changing climate and shifting market is improved,' Abbey said.

'This project will see us develop site specific action plans, remediate erosion affected areas and contribute to baseline data in western draining Cape York catchments by monitoring 100 existing and 50 new on-ground land condition sites, measuring changes in overall land condition'.

While improving land condition is vital to adapting to climate change, ensuring land managers feel connected and supported also has priority.

'As part of the Healthy Farming Futures program, Cape York NRM recently held its annual Grazing Forum in Laura and Horticulture Round Table in Lakeland Downs,' Abbey explained.

'These events bring local graziers together to discover the latest information relevant to improve land management in order to adapt to a changing environment.'

'Hosting events where people can gather and share information across stations, organisations, industry and government is an essential part of building support, community and resilience for agriculture, supporting a healthy farming future for Cape York and its people.'

'Cape York NRM is very invested in this project as it ticks a whole range of boxes on climate change adaptation, improving land and water condition and bringing people together to learn from one another.'

To find out more please contact Abbey on abbey.ernst@capeyorknrm.com.au.

This project is supported by Cape York NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

A resilient, future-focused and adaptive Cape York farming sector is the goal for Cape York NRM's Healthy Farming Futures project.

Healthy Farming Futures aims to help raise awareness of how climate change will impact farm practices, land condition and support the identification of adaptation strategy, increasing the resilience against the projected impacts of climate change.

Healthy Farming Futures' co-lead, Sustainable Industries Officer Abbey Ernst, said the program supports landholders in Cape York's western flowing catchments to increase ground coverage to improve soil condition and biodiversity in hillslope erosion hot spot areas.

'By increasing ground cover, the extent of bare ground is decreased and soils are stabilised, reducing erosion and improving the quality of water draining into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

2019 Cape York Indigenous Fire Workshop

WORDS ROBYN MAY AND PETA-MARIE STANDLEY | PHOTO ROBYN MAY

'Manage landscape and all species benefit' was just one of the many positive comments made during the feedback session following the 2019 Cape York Indigenous Fire Workshop.

This year's workshop was held in July at Mary Valley and coincided with the school holidays, so lots of kids were able to attend and learn an array of traditional fire and land management techniques while spending time on Country. This is critical as these children are the land and sea managers of the future.

Fire is a key threatening process for many endangered and vulnerable species.

Getting fire management right is crucial for maintaining and improving the condition of vegetation communities upon which these species rely—this is why improving fire management is a key component of all our regional land partnership programs.

These workshops are helping to support the building of an Indigenous Fire Network across Cape York, Northern Gulf and Terrain natural resource management regions.

This project is supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



Less than 3000 golden-shouldered parrots left in the wild

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTOS BARRY LYON

As the focus on Australia's extinction crisis heats up, Cape York Natural Resource Management and Northern Gulf Resource Management Group are working to protect the habitat of one of Cape York's rarest birds — the golden-shouldered parrot.

The golden-shouldered parrot was once found in large flocks across Cape York, and has cultural significance to Traditional Owners.

Today there are estimated to be around 2,500 golden-shouldered parrots remaining in far north Queensland, restricted to just two known populations on central east Cape York and the northern Gulf.

Golden-shouldered parrots are listed as Endangered under the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act. The key threats to the species include altered fire regimes, feral pigs and grazing.



The Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG project is focused on delivering on-ground actions that address known threats to the health of the species, and to the landscape more broadly.

Northern Gulf RMG's Biodiversity Officer James Donaldson said culturally appropriate fire management was a key component in protecting golden-shouldered parrots.

'A number of the threats facing golden-shouldered parrots stem from inappropriate fire regimes,' he said.

'In particular, there has been a reduction in open grassland habitat favoured by these birds due to the combined impacts of grazing and unmanaged fire regimes, which results in woody thickening. Woody thickening presents a number of challenges to golden-shouldered parrots, namely a reduction in grass seed (their main food supply), increased predation from woodland predators and a decrease in available habitat and food for termites, which provide nesting sites for the parrots.'

In a bid to reduce destructive wildfires in golden-shouldered parrot habitat, Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG are working with land managers to develop burning practices which protect golden-shouldered parrot country.

'Over the five years of the project we hope to increase the skills and knowledge of land managers and Traditional Owners to implement improved fire management practices and develop local action plans with landholders to identify and prioritise actions for golden-shouldered parrot conservation,' James said.

'Activities such as the annual Northern Gulf and Cape York Indigenous Fire Workshops, and the development of the Indigenous Fire Practitioners Network, will all contribute to improving the trajectory of the golden-shouldered parrot.'

This project is supported by Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



A decade of progress through the Queensland Government's Paddock to Reef program

2019 marks a decade of successful operation for the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program (Paddock to Reef program).

WORDS ABBEY ERNST AND ROBYN MAY | PHOTO ROBYN MAY

It is through the Paddock to Reef program that Cape York NRM has effectively continued its work with landholders in the Normanby catchment of the Great Barrier Reef.

Paddock to Reef Regional Coordinator Abbey Ernst said, 'This project has engaged and maintained connections with seven landholders in the Lakeland Downs region—a hub for intensive horticulture, cropping, bananas and small scale avocado plantations'.

'This project allows Cape York NRM and land managers to work together to improve land management practices, strengthening knowledge and capacity to reduce the quantity of nutrients, pesticides and sediment leaving the paddock.'

'This in turn improves the health and resilience of the connected Normanby catchment and marine ecosystems,' she said.

Project achievements for Cape York are made available to the public through the Healthy Country Newsletter, Cape York NRM website, and at annual regional events such as the Laura Grazing Forum.

Paddock to Reef staff attend this event providing an opportunity for people to raise regional issues that influence water quality, providing data to enable the continued improvement and success of the project for another decade to come.

The Paddock to Reef program measures and reports on the Cape York region's progress towards the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (Reef WQIP) targets through the Reef Report Cards. To understand more, follow this link—Great Barrier Reef Report Card.

This project is funded by the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Investment Program

Connecting the farmer and farm services dots

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTOS ROBYN MAY

Cape York NRM and Terrain NRM are working together to help farmers learn from each other and bring greater coordination to personal farming support services, also known as extension services.

Known as the Enhanced Extension Coordination project, the three - year initiative is designed to improve coordination, collaboration and communication between extension networks and farmers within the Wet Tropics and Cape York catchment areas to increase efficiency, reduce duplication and improve environmental outcomes.

The project is managed by two Regional Extension Coordinators—Terrain NRM's Michael Nash who covers the cane and banana industries, and Cape York NRM's Oliver McConnachie who works with graziers and mixed croppers.

They pair are tasked with:

- establishing Regional Extension Coordination Networks
- establishing Peer to Peer groups
- allocating Flexible Funding and supporting the implementation of Flexible Funding projects

Cape York NRM Regional Extension Coordinator Oliver McConnachie said his role was all about bringing people together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of extension services, and creating opportunities for farmers to learn from each other.

'I have established a Regional Extension Network which brings together regional Extension Officers, and host organisations such as Cape York NRM, South Cape York Catchments, Cape York Weeds and Ferals Inc., Barron Catchment Care, Terrain, private consultants, lifestyle and business coaches and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries,' Oliver explained.

'I am also in the process of establishing place-based Peer to Peer networks to enable farmers to share knowledge, learn from each other, and propose initiatives which would increase knowledge and improve practice, such as workshops or professional development, or practical, on- the-ground-activities.'

Oliver can be contacted on oliver.mcconnachie@capeyorknrm.com.au

This project has been funded by the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program





Who.Plans.Here.

How to find Cape York plans

Who Plans Here is a Cape York NRM tool accessible on our website. The tool enables users to locate plans that are in place across the region. Plans are updated regularly, with over 150 plans currently available.

Plans that Cape York NRM has permission to share can be located by searching a selected area on the site's Cape York map—plans within that selected area will be displayed. Users will then have the option to download, or to contact the plan owner for access.

This tool gives voice to both past and current planning on Cape York from property to regional scales.

A few examples of plans already available are:

- Survey of Forest Resources of Cape York Peninsula
- Surface Water Resources of Cape York Peninsula
- Fire on Cape York Peninsula
- Recovery plan for marine turtles

Why is this tool useful?

This is a one-stop site that enables Cape York landholders to do a quick search to find out what plans are already in place in their location of interest, and who to go to to find out more information on that plan.

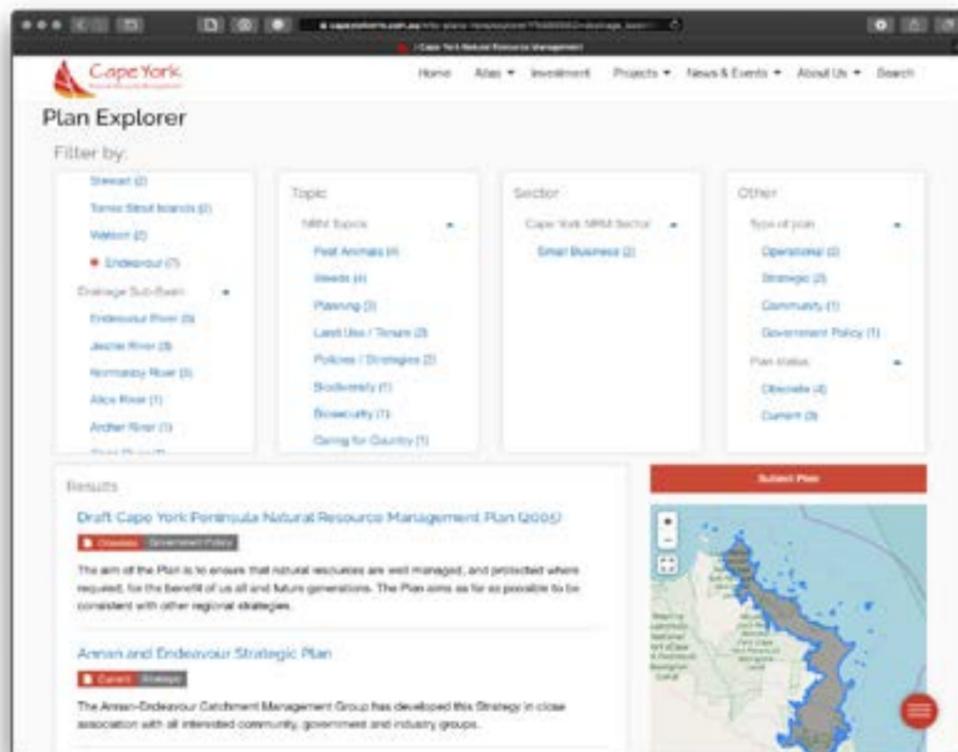
Submit your plan

Land and sea managers on Cape York are invited to submit their plans online by going to capeyorknrm.com.au/who-plans-here/explorer

Click on the 'Submit' button and follow the prompts.

Of course, if you have any questions or need some guidance, please call our office on 07 4095 7136 and ask to speak to Ben Lister. You can also contact Ben on ben.lister@capeyorknrm.com.au

This project is supported by Cape York NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



Communications and Engagement Workshop for Extension Officers

WORDS JULIANA FOXLEE | PHOTO HARRY JAMES

A Communications and Engagement Workshop for Extension Officers took place in Mareeba on 23 May.

Attended by a mix of Cape York NRM and Department of Agriculture staff and contractors, the full day workshop covered body language, empathy, and managing emotions in ourselves and others.

The workshop was held as part of the joint Cape York NRM – Terrain NRM Enhanced Extension Coordination project, a three - year initiative designed to improve coordination, collaboration and communication between extension networks and farmers to increase efficiency, reduce duplication and improve environmental outcomes.

Cape York NRM Regional Extension Coordinator Oliver McConnachie, who is joint lead of the project along with Terrain NRM Regional Extension Coordinator Michael Nash, said a key focus of his role was increasing the skills and capacity of extension officers through establishing a Regional Extension Network and a range of professional development opportunities.

Coordinated by Cape York NRM Communications Manager Juliana Foxlee, and attended by Cape York NRM and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff, the workshop was designed to support extension officers learn more about effective communication and engagement.

'I attended the workshop and found it very rewarding,' Juliana said.

'I was particularly impressed with trainer Tracy Benson's focus on how we communicate. In general, we tend to focus on what others are doing, or not doing, rather than looking at ourselves and asking, how well do I listen, how well do I empathise?'

'Good communication and engagement skills are integral to effective extension and in turn, to improved environmental outcomes.'

This workshop was funded by the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries with partner organisations Cape York NRM and Terrain NRM

This workshop was funded by the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries with partner organisations Cape York NRM and Terrain NRM





More than an ‘IT guy’

When Cape York NRM’s Systems Analyst and Program Support Officer Ben Lister isn’t busy turning data into knowledge, he’s training for triathlons and perfecting the art of roasting – and consuming – coffee.

WORDS ROBYN MAY | PHOTO PROVIDED

Ben’s role involves developing data collection and storage systems that support decision making for the organisation and Cape York land managers.

Ben can quickly turn data into knowledge, such as analysing the number of hits on a particular page has on the Cape York NRM website. This leads to the identification of the area on the website people are most interested in so the organisation can ensure it is effectively communicating with stakeholders and the wider community.

‘I have an analytical mind and way of looking at information differently,’ Ben said, ‘To me, data is not only useful, but is interesting.’

‘I like making people’s lives easier through the use of smart systems and technology.’

Ben grew up in Cairns and after graduating from Cairns High went straight into the workforce selling and repairing computers. From there he moved into a video production role which led to his starting a Bachelor of Multimedia Studies at Central Queensland University.

While he found the course interesting he realised Information Technology (IT) was his real passion and would deliver a solid career.

Ben joined Cape York NRM in 2014 and shortly afterwards enrolled in a Bachelor of Information Technology degree through the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

CEO John Gavin said Ben is a valued employee.

‘Ben’s work supports all our projects and has delivered real benefits to land managers across the Cape through simplifying the collection of information for project reporting.’

Out of work hours Ben pursues his other passions.

He trains daily—swimming, cycling and running, is a regular entrant in triathlons and has recently completed his first Half Ironman competition which was held in Cairns in June 2019.

‘Exercise is an important aspect of my life as it helps me to stay sharp at work. I find that it really boosts my productivity.’

Besides keeping fit, Ben likes to indulge in a wide range of hobbies, including roasting (and drinking) coffee, photography, videography, cooking, travel and camping.

Ben is happy balancing his passion for IT with his other pursuits, and is looking forward to what the future brings.

‘I think Information Technology is such an important area of Natural Resource Management. It will be exciting to see how IT allows for innovation and efficiencies in the future. I can’t wait to be a part of that innovation.’

‘And I plan to continue triathlon training and entering events.’

Ben is so much more than the ‘IT guy’.

Do you know the Endeavour or Jeannie Catchment areas?

Catchment Story Workshops

Are you a Traditional Owner, landholder, or someone with in-depth knowledge of the Endeavour, Annan or Jeannie Rivers, or the landscape around them?

You are invited to attend free workshops to share your knowledge about these catchments.

These workshops will help us work out how best to look after these vital areas, and where to direct future funding opportunities.

Endeavour Catchment Workshop

Date Tue 27 August 2019
Time 8:30am to 4pm
Venue Cooktown PCYC | 3 May St

Jeannie Catchment Workshop

Date Wed 28 August 2019
Time 8:30am to 4pm
Venue Hope Vale meeting room | Muni St



You are welcome to attend either or both workshops.
Please RSVP by 23 August
 to Kerri Woodcock on 0428 354 700 or
 kwoodcock@capeyorknrm.com.au
Catering is provided



These workshops are supported by Cape York NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Queensland Wetlands Program within the Department of Environment and Science.



capeyorknrm.com.au

Are you an Indigenous Australian? Yarrie Yarns would love to hear your story

Yarrie Yarns is a social project that shares Indigenous stories (yarns) for inspiration, motivation, education, empowerment, reconciliation and crime prevention.

The yarns are shared on the Yarrie Yarns social media sites on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

facebook.com/yarrieyarns or instagram.com/yarrieyarns or twitter.com/yarrieyarns.

You can send ideas, stories, photos and videos via social media channels or by email to yarrieyarnsproject@gmail.com

STORY AND PHOTO PROVIDED BY YARRIE YARNS | STORY OF CAROL – WUJAL WUJAL ELDER



When I was growing up my Dad told me all the stories. Mungumby means 'waterfall,' the name has been altered a bit, the old people had a different pronunciation to it, to what it is now today.

Today we take family to riverside at Mungumby but never take them up Black Mountain. Black Mountain is all about different animals, it's very sacred.

A lot of people go and climb those mountains not knowing how sacred it is. When I take my family back on country we talk about the country. That's from my Father, Father's side. My Mum's side is Shiptons Flat, Rossville. Last year (2017) I went to Black Mountain with a couple of people from National Geographic where I gave my story about Black Mountain. We welcomed them on country. They did a story on it.

When I'm there, I am at peace—when I'm there I can feel the Elders.

I want our kids, no matter where they come from to experience what I experience. When my Granddaughter comes back from Townsville College (for the holidays) we take her out on country where I teach her things, like when she goes on country for a day you have to let our old people know where you are, like fishing, or what you are doing. She gets excited about all of that.

Some of the kids get in contact with our Elders and let them know when they go out on country."

"I grew up here in Wujal, my homeland is Helenvale, Mungumby. I was sent away from there when I was a couple of weeks old down to Woorabinda.

We came back up to Mossman Gorge in the 60's, then up to Cooktown and down to Ayton where our clan group had a big campground there. I was then sent to the dormitory at middle camp where the school is now. That's the old dormitory there (points across the road), it's a library now, Indigenous Knowledge Centre.

When that broke up (Mission), this is when this community (Wujal Wujal) was made. So that's my country up the road.

My traditional home is Helenvale, that's where I was born. For me and my family we had a camp up at a place called Mungumby. They have a lodge there now. There is a waterfall there that women are not allowed to go to. Men only, men's only business area.

Update from the Directors

It's been a full program for the Board and staff in the first half of the year, with loads more to come over the ensuing months.

WORDS DIRECTOR EMMA JACKSON

The teams have kicked off the dry season hard, continuing with projects from soil to gully remediation, from fire to water, and weeds to pests. Updates on many of the successes and challenges are in the newsletter, but what about the Directors? What have we been up to behind the scenes?

Community Director Trevor Meldrum has been busy on the southern lands in his field of weeds and pests, working with community and working closely with Director Rosendale.

Our Local Government Director Desmond Tayley has been busy meeting with Cape leaders and jet-setting around the globe accumulating an array of innovative ideas and practices to bring back to our region. The Board recently visited his local lands of Wujal Wujal where his Council shared with us their aspirations and designs for upgrades and improvements. We were fascinated by their vision and attitudes, not only in Council but out in the community.

Director Gray recently hosted the Erosion Control Workshop with Darryl Hill at Piccaninny Plains. The workshop provided patrons with demonstrations on how to maintain and repair station tracks, fence-lines, firebreaks, washouts and gullies.

Artemis Station and Old Maitland also played host to these workshops. It was wonderful to see a practical workshop being hosted across Cape York in different locations, and the feedback from attendees has been extremely positive.

It would be great to hear more about what you would like to see and learn through practical workshops in NRM.

Director Smith has been busy in Mapoon and attending meetings and training down in Cairns, whilst Director Charlton, our Director for the Small Business, Mining and Tourism sector, is busy catching up on what is happening around the Cape and in the very far north.

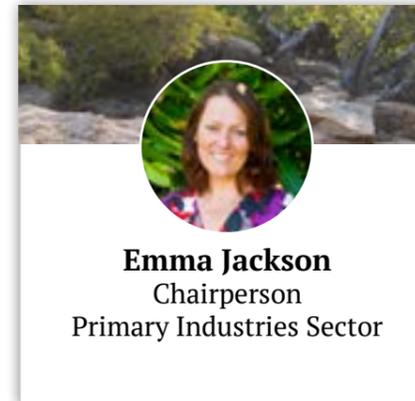
Business is gets busy for Cape York each year from the April school holidays onward until the wet season returns.

Your Chair has been quite active in the world of NRM, liaising with many of you following Cyclone Trevor, checking out the fantastic 2019 Cape York Grazing Forum in Laura, attending many meetings to encourage action and investment in NRM for our region, as well as working on stronger links and relationships with partners.

Seeing the Containers for Change scheme grand opening in Weipa was a privilege, and watching more and more residents and businesses jump on board with their recycling and reusing is fantastic.

Our next Board meeting will be held on 29–30 August in Coen and we invite our local friends and partners to meet with us while we are there. If you are about then, we look forward to seeing you. Otherwise, stay well and good luck with the season ahead.

Board of Directors



Director elections close 21 August
Nominations are now open for six Director positions on Cape York NRM's Board of Directors.

Contact Michelle on 0409 472 306, or michelle.hamilton@capeyorknrm.com.au for information and to receive the Director Nomination Information Package.



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