



Cape York

Healthy Country

NEWSLETTER

Issue 41

2020

Date claimer

Cape York NRM AGM

Page 3

*Sawfish research
along the Mitchell
River*

Page 8-9

ARSON IS A CRIME

Arson causes wildfires

which threaten, damage or destroy homes,
livelihoods, cultural sites and the environment

If you see someone illegally lighting a fire call Triple Zero (000) immediately
[#ArsonAwareness](#) [#YourFireYourResponsibility](#)



CAPE YORK ARSON
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



Welcome to the Cape York Healthy Country Newsletter



It's been a busy time since the last edition of the Cape York Healthy Country Newsletter. The relaxed COVID-19 travel restrictions and dry season weather has meant that we've been busy out on ground making up for lost time in delivery of projects. We're continuing to respond to the challenges that COVID-19 has created, and with extra safety in place we've managed to get projects underway. Although it's only September, it feels like the race to the end of the year has begun.

In the last edition of the newsletter we mentioned the restructure of the organisation so we could deliver projects more efficiently. We have created two program teams—one focussing on Sustainable Agriculture and Water Quality and the second focussing on Biodiversity and Fire Management. We highlighted the activities of the Biodiversity and Fire program in Issue 40, so in this edition we're checking in on the activities of the Sustainable Agriculture and Water Quality team.

This edition outlines the projects the team has been working on to increase the sustainability of the industries on Cape York and reduce the impacts of sediment and nutrient loss onto the Great Barrier Reef. This is highlighted in the article on the project at Beefwood Park where massive gully remediation work is underway.

This edition also highlights the work being done to develop the Community Action Plan for the Great Barrier Reef.

With 10 years' experience behind us, the Board has decided to review the Board structure and composition. We recently met in Lockhart River for a strategy workshop where we looked at the current arrangements. This discussion is in line with the development of the new Corporate Plan and the review of the regional NRM plan for Cape York.

The next 12 months will be critically important for setting the direction for the organisation so be prepared for us to be out and about asking about what you think we have achieved in the last 10 years and what you see as the priorities going forward.

On 11 October 2020 Cape York NRM will turn 10 years old, and if all goes to plan we will have a celebration in line with the AGM on Saturday 28 November in Cooktown.

Once again, thank you for following and allowing us to support your great work across Cape York. I hope to see you somewhere on the Cape soon.

Warm regards
John Gavin



Cover photo | Cool burning, Cape York

- 02 Arson is a Crime
- 03 CEO’s welcome
- 04 Contents page
- 05 Cape York NRM and Wenlock CMG AGMs
- 06 Turtle protection continues
- 07 Cape York Reef Community Action Plan (CAP)
- 08–09 Sawfish research along the Mitchell
- 10–11 Sus Ag & Water Quality program
- 12 Your Cape York Life
- 13 Late season wildfire protection action
- 14–15 Bloom & Prosper women’s event
- 16–17 Gully transformation at Beefwood Park
- 18 Directors update
- 19 Board of Directors, and ‘CONTACT US’
- 20 Cape York NRM turns TEN in 2020



7



10



14



16



Invitation

Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 28 November
COOKTOWN

RSVP

by 18 November 2020
admin@capeyorknrm.com.au
or 07 4091 2273

Wenlock Catchment Management Group

Provided by Lyndal Scobell

Because of the remoteness of its members, Wenlock Catchment Management Group were already professionals at Zoom meetings when COVID-19 hit.

This year they've continued the committee meetings and the Healthy Country Planning process (supported by Community Bred and The Nature Conservancy) - mixing up old workshop techniques with new technology.

Lockdown time has been well used with the production of a first-pass assessment of climate change impacts for the catchment (Cath Moran Ecological), and a literature review of the available ecological and water science on the catchment (Christina Howley and Barry Lyon).



L-R Phillip Mango (Chair) Jocelyn de Jersey (Secretary) Sally Gray (Vice Chair) and Jason Jia (Treasurer) | May 2019 AGM



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 14 October 2020
Mapoon
11 am - 12 noon

RSVP: wenlockcmg@gmail.com or 0403 063 182

Turtle protection funding continues



Female turtle on Crab Island returning to the ocean after laying her eggs

Turtles on the western coast of Cape York Peninsula will benefit from ongoing protection by the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) Rangers, thanks to the announcement by the Queensland Government of continued funding.

Rangers work hard to control and manage predators such as feral pigs, and reduce the predation on marine turtle nests to less than 30% of all nests per beach for each species.

In the Mapoon area, pregnant turtles endure the added threat of crocodiles that predate on them as they slowly make their way up the beaches to nest.

WCTTAA is a partnership of Cape York land and sea owners and managers from Northern Peninsula Area, Mapoon, Napranum, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama, who work together to protect marine turtles along the west coast of Cape York.

Before and during the peak turtle nesting season, the WCTTAA partners worked extremely hard to protect nests by utilising a combination of both aerial and ground culling activities, as well as carrying out turtle nest monitoring and protection.

Turtle nest monitoring, data collection and analysis is carried out across six priority beaches on the western Cape during nesting seasons, covering nearly 150 kilometres of coastline.

Being on the beach allows Rangers to respond immediately to predator activity, and to install nest protection cages on the endangered olive ridley and hawksbill nests.

The Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance is supported by Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd. WCTTA is funded by the Australian and Queensland governments through the Nest to Ocean Turtle Protection Program



Installing nest protection cage



Welcome to the world little one!

Don your thinking caps for CAP projects

Cape York NRM's Community Action Plan (CAP) team will soon be heading to three communities in the south-east Cape to run workshops to develop the Cape York CAP.

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation will compile input from six Queensland regions to create the state's overall Plan that will identify shared goals for community Reef protection.

Cape York NRM is leading the development of the Cape York Community Action Plan in partnership with South Cape York Catchments. The Plan will provide an opportunity for Traditional Owners, community members, and youth to share their ideas for community actions that will benefit local marine, estuarine and coastal areas.

Prior to the upcoming workshops, community members have been contacted through face-to-face meetings, phone conversations, and online surveys. Feedback from this engagement process will make sure that the workshops are focused on the issues and actions that matter most to the community.

The Community Action Plan that is produced as a result of the workshops will be presented to funding providers to demonstrate the real needs and wishes of the community in an effort to progress the project concepts into on-ground action.

Contact us to find out more and to RSVP

Michael Goddard 0498 760 022
mgoddard@capeyorknrm.com.au

Harry James 0427 994 333
harry.james@capeyorknrm.com.au

Interests in the Great Barrier Reef are vast and varied, and according to Deloitte Australia the Reef has an economic, social and icon asset value estimated to be \$6.4B nationally, \$3.9B across Queensland, and \$2.9B within the Great Barrier Reef regions. This amounts to 64,000 jobs nationally.

These figures are a reflection of a cross-section of value placed on the Reef, such as cultural significance, commercial and recreational fishing, it's sheer beauty, recreational activities, tourism opportunities, and environmental values to name a few. And of course, the Great Barrier Reef is listed as one of the seven wonders of the natural world.

Do you want to increase fish numbers, attract sustainable tourism, improve dugong habitat, or simply want a say in how we look after this area of the Reef? Whatever your interest, please come along to one of the workshops and join in the conversation.



WUJAL WUJAL

TUE 27 Oct
Wujal Wujal Community Hall
8:45 am–2:45 pm

COOKTOWN

WED 28 Oct
Hillcrest Guest House | 130 Hope Street
9 am–3 pm

HOPE VALE

THU 29 Oct
Hope Vale Meeting Room | Muni Street
9 am–3 pm

Community members after beach clean-up campaign
Photo Jessie Price-Decle

Sawfish research along the Mitchell River



The SARA team samples the Mitchell River for sawfish eDNA | Image Barbara Wueringer (SARA)

Since 2015, Sharks And Rays Australia (SARA) has been running regular expeditions to the Mitchell River in Cape York under the lead of Dr Barbara Wueringer, an expert on sawfish and other sharks and rays.

In July 2020, when COVID-19 travel restrictions to the Cape eased, SARA, together with Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG, ran a research expedition to sample for sawfish along the Mitchell River.

‘Globally, sawfish are amongst the most endangered of all sharks and rays, and while four species are still found in Queensland’s waters, their numbers appear to be dropping, Dr Wueringer explains.

‘These large predators inhabit shallow coastal, inshore and riverine waters, making them susceptible to habitat modifications, gill netting and interactions with recreational fishers’.

Sites along the Mitchell River, located on Koolata Station, Highbury Station and on the exclusive native title lands of Kowanyama, were sampled using gill nets, drum lines and hand lines. Water samples were also filtered to allow collaborators from the Global Sawfish Search Project to check for sawfish eDNA—tiny particles of DNA shed by fishes into their environment.

In Kowanyama, the team was joined by the Kowanyama Land and Sea Rangers and Traditional Owners.

Dr Helen Penrose from Cape York NRM, who joined the expedition, acknowledges that ‘working with Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to protect endangered species like sawfish is critical, as these animals are now restricted to extremely remote areas. The Traditional Owners are a respected and valued source of ‘Traditional and Contemporary Ecological Knowledge’ for threatened species conservation and management’.

‘The Mitchell River appears to be one of the strongholds for sawfish in Queensland, and so it is important that these animals are taken into account for environmental impact assessments of potential habitat modifications and water extractions’, explains Dr Wueringer.

Capture in gill nets is the main threatening process for sawfish so SARA continues to work with commercial inshore gill net fishers.

If you have seen a sawfish in Queensland, you can report your sighting to SARA via their online form www.cytags.com

The fieldwork has received funding from the Shark Conservation Fund, the Save Our Seas Foundation and the Sea World Research and Rescue Foundation Inc.



Dr Wueringer and Shane Ross sample a juvenile bull shark *Carcharhinus leucas* at Highbury Station | Image Daniela Matheus Holland (SARA)



Dr Wueringer explains tagging for sawfish to Kowanyama Land and Sea Rangers L-R Vernon Bernard, Luey Native, Fitzroy Lawrence | Image Daniela Matheus Holland (SARA)



Dr Wueringer takes a blood sample from a freshwater whipray *Urogymnus dalyensis* while Alex Barber maintains a spine cover in place | Image Daniela Matheus Holland (SARA)



The SARA team checks a gill net for sawfish, and is joined by Traditional Owner Gerard Greenwool | Image Barbara Wueringer (SARA)



A juvenile freshwater sawfish *Pristis pristis* was caught in a gill net | Image Amy Cruickshank (SARA)



The SARA team samples the Mitchell River for sawfish eDNA | Image Barbara Wueringer (SARA)

Sustainable Agriculture and

Some great things have been happening on the land in Cape York during 2019–2020. Projects continued to roll out across the Cape despite the disruption of COVID-19 border closures and travel restrictions.

Cape York NRM's Sustainable Agriculture and Water Quality team supports Cape York people to enhance agricultural practices and improve the quality of fresh and marine water. The team and its partners have worked across a variety of projects during 2019–2020 including hazard reduction burns, gully remediation and streambank stabilisation.

Landholders worked together across a vast area—from west of Cooktown in the south to Holroyd Plateau in central Cape York—to coordinate their annual hazard reduction burns in an effort to reduce the risk of late season wildfires. The project was done in partnership with two community groups, four landholders, two Ranger groups, and land managers from 17 properties.

Continued efforts to reduce sediment loss into the Cape's fresh and marine waterways have seen gully remediation projects implemented across three properties in the Normanby basin—Spring Creek, Normanby Station and Beefwood Park. Land condition and water quality are improved by the stabilisation of erosive landscapes and reduction of sediment loss.



Vast area of coordinated annual hazard reduction burn



Planning stages of gully remediation works at Olive V



Birdseye view of regrade and grade controls at Beefw

and Water Quality program



ale Station



Riparian recovery reconnaissance trip at Piccaninny Plains



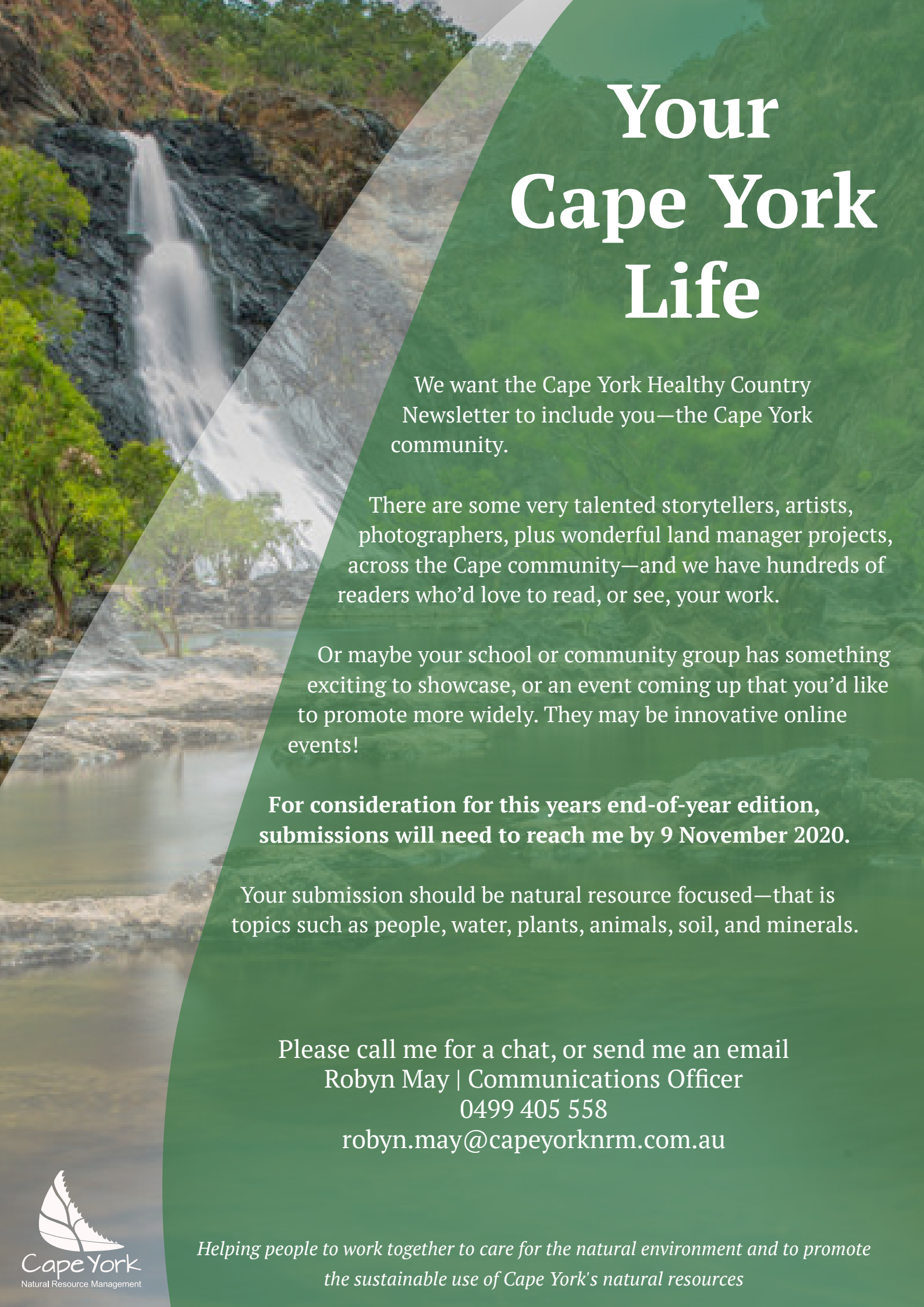
ood Park in the Normanby catchment

Also in this field, detailed engineering designs are currently being produced for more gully remediation projects to be completed before the Australian Government's Reef Trust IV program wraps up in July 2021. Further work will take place on Normanby Station, plus new projects at Olive Vale and Spring Creek.

Another activity that is progressing well is the Riparian Recovery Program funded through the Queensland Government's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This program will remediate areas along the Endeavour River addressing damage done by the 2019 monsoon trough. With the engineering design underway, all on-ground works are scheduled to commence in 2021, following the wet season.

Cape York NRM continues to invest in the Cape by facilitating these and many more projects. Now that we're able to travel we look forward to seeing you soon.

Get in touch to find out more about these projects, or to discuss future opportunities: Michael Goddard mgoddard@capeyorknrm.com.au or 0498 760 022.



Your Cape York Life

We want the Cape York Healthy Country Newsletter to include you—the Cape York community.

There are some very talented storytellers, artists, photographers, plus wonderful land manager projects, across the Cape community—and we have hundreds of readers who'd love to read, or see, your work.

Or maybe your school or community group has something exciting to showcase, or an event coming up that you'd like to promote more widely. They may be innovative online events!

For consideration for this years end-of-year edition, submissions will need to reach me by 9 November 2020.

Your submission should be natural resource focused—that is topics such as people, water, plants, animals, soil, and minerals.

Please call me for a chat, or send me an email
Robyn May | Communications Officer
0499 405 558
robyn.may@capeyorknrm.com.au

Protecting Country from late season wildfires on northern Cape York

Land managers from northern Cape York, in a vast area spanning from the western to the eastern coast, came together in July this year to plan a coordinated burn in order to reduce the risk of wildfires. This collaborative project brought together land managers from across the Embley, Mission, Wenlock, Olive and Pascoe catchments.

More than 20 people attended the planning meeting held at Moreton Telegraph Station on 30 June to develop a fire plan and discuss the coordination of resources to implement prescribed burns. This is the fourth year that this group of stakeholders has met, representing a range of tenures including National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land), mining leases, wildlife reserves and pastoral properties.

Many participants also have savanna burning carbon projects, which aim to reduce the frequency and extent of late dry season fires, resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions being released.

A variety of vegetation types are also represented across this landscape, including forests on the eastern Cape which provide habitat for the endangered southern cassowary.

The impact of Cyclone Trevor in March 2019 has left a large amount of fuel in this area, and there were community concerns, that without early burning operations in 2020, there was a risk of a single large wildfire burning through the whole landscape.

Cape York NRM funded the regional fire planning workshop, and supported burning operations for those land managers without savanna burning carbon projects. This funding was provided from donations and other sources as part of our not-for-profit public fund. Combined with contributions from each of the participants, 5,000 kilometres of helicopter support and just over 6,000 incendiaries were used over a three week period as part of the coordinated early burn program.

It is hoped that collaborative planning and implementation will result in fire breaks which will successfully reduce or prevent the impact of wildfire later this year.

Thank you to Lana Polglase and Daryl Killin (Natural Carbon) for their contributions to the project.



Participants at the fire planning meeting at Moreton Telegraph Station on 30 June 2020

Bloom and Prosper 2020



Lyndal Scobell from Community Bred leads the discussion on disaster management and preparedness

Laughter, friendship and even a few tears—Northern Gulf’s women’s events for 2020 kicked off in September with events in Mount Carbine and Walkamin, and concluded in Mount Surprise.

This year’s event, *Bloom and Prosper*, focussed on disaster preparedness and personal development, with participants gaining skills and knowledge to support their families and communities with disaster resilience.

Lyndal Scobell from *Community Bred* led participants through disaster recovery arrangements and highlighted how our community connections are impacted by disaster and what we can do to support personal and community recovery from events.

‘Increased knowledge helps women living in remote areas prepare and respond better,’ Lyndal said.

Building on the preparedness theme, Kasmin Brotherton led a conversation around developing your own inner management plan—building awareness around the ongoing and broad nature of self-care, the key “buckets” to monitor yourself through, and the development of a supportive structure to help deal with the chaos of everyday life.

The day concluded with a bit of fun as personal stylist Gerlinda led us through how to feel our best through our personal presentation. The ladies enjoyed having a colour consultation and learning some tips for dressing for their body types.



Financial planning with Tahna Jackson and Lynette McGuffie

“Topics of the workshops at our events change annually to suit peoples’ needs and topical regional situations”
Kathy Rowling



Kasmin Brotherton from Inner Boss



Karlene Shephard from Crocodile Station sharing her disaster preparation plans

Tahna Jackson attended the event in her capacity as a Regional Recovery Officer for *The National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency*, where she supports communities impacted by drought and flood.

‘These events in my mind are priceless. They bring together women from different backgrounds to one place to receive the knowledge to cope with what living in rural and remote communities can deliver, be that drought, flood, or cyclone.

‘These events teach ladies new skills, provide them the access to service providers and what programs and grants are available.

“This event allows us to make connections with women from across our regions” Zoe Williams, CEO Northern Gulf RMG



Northern Gulf RMG's Zoe, Kathy and Vickie; and Robyn from Cape York NRM

‘I see the women make connections to other like-minded women, and these are very important to ensure the women, who may not get to many events during the year, have a safe environment to share stories and get individual help and advice,’ Tahna said.

This event was proudly delivered by Northern Gulf Resource Management Group and Cape York Natural Resource Management, and was jointly funded by the Australian Government and the Queensland Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors under the Commonwealth/State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018.



Workshops were fun but the subject was serious—what might happen within a community in and following a disaster

Gully transformation at Beefwood Park

The day's task is to push a lot of dirt around. The end result, however, will be a complete transformation of the landscape.

At Beefwood Park, a 102-hectare property 20 kilometres west of Lakeland, Cape York NRM has supported the land manager's challenge of turning an eroding mass of gullies into a productive landscape.

Why? To restore the country to a healthy condition, to further the owner's land management skills, and to keep the soil where it is supposed to be—on the land and not muddying up waterways.

'This project has three main aims,' says Cape York NRM Project Officer Harry James.

'First, stabilise the actively eroding areas. This has been achieved by using a bulldozer to flatten the whole area. Second, stop sediment from running off into waterways. Several rock check dams were built into the channel to slow down water flow and trap the sediment, and a diversion bank was constructed along the gully edge to direct water away from the gully.

'The last thing is to grow grass. That will be the hardest part. Gypsum has been incorporated into the soil across the whole area—this improves the soil structure, helps water to infiltrate the soil, and will reduce soil dispersion. Finally, the area was covered in mulch and right before the wet season grass seed will be spread to restore ground cover.'

Landholder Ken Vale is impressed with the results.

'It's great to see everything fixed up—to see the land restored. It already looks so much better. I can't wait to see it keep improving over the next few years'.

To prevent cattle from entering the area, Ken will build an exclusion fence. From this point, it will be left to recover on its own.

While Ken will keep an eye on the progress of recovery, Cape York NRM will keep official records, considering such things as the integrity of erosion control structures and ground cover recovery.

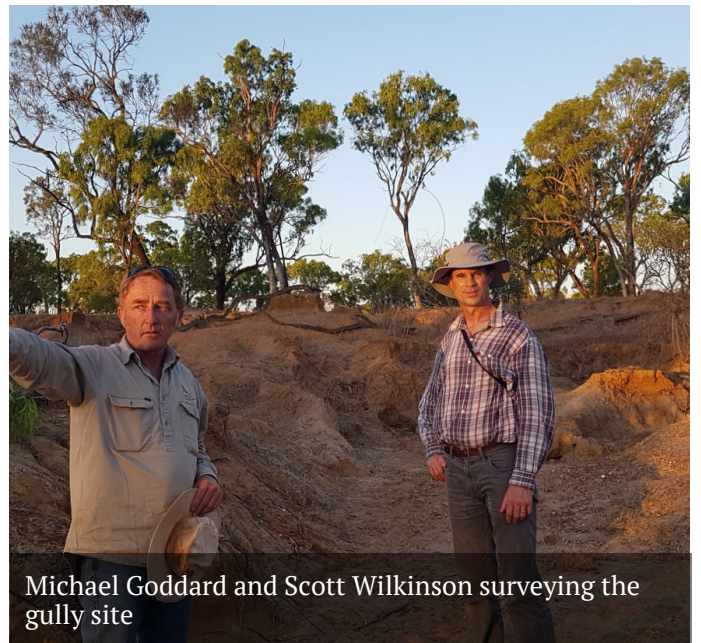
The Scaling Up Normanby Basin gully and streambank remediation in priority areas project is funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust



Spreading gypsum prior to mulching



Ken Vale | Owner of Beefwood Park



Michael Goddard and Scott Wilkinson surveying the gully site



Before reshaping and the installation of rock check dams



After reshaping and the installation of rock check dams



Check dam construction



Mulch being shredded and spread at the completion of gully work

Update from the Directors

In September, your Board met for its first face-to-face meeting for 2020. Although we have had the phone and video to connect us for previous meetings, coming together in person was great. One of the strengths of how the Board was designed from its inception was to ensure it captures the knowledge and skill from various geographical areas of the Cape, and the sectors in which we work, live and breathe.

We came together towards the end of September for a workshop that gave us an opportunity to not only consider why we sit around this table and who we are as the Board of Cape York NRM, but also to challenge our thinking. The workshop was a combination of training, sharing, information, consideration and rethinking how we function, as well as the first step to our broader strategic process.

One of our reflections was that when we come together as a Board our focus is always the organisation. We discuss the direction we are heading and we review reports and items that fall under our Business Plan. We oversee the financial management and other areas that are core to the functioning of the organisation, but we have placed little focus on getting to really understand each other as individual Directors... as people.

If we, as your Board, are going to deliver the best for this organisation then it is crucial that we spend a little more time getting to know each other. We are excited about rethinking how we function as a Board, and after ten years it is time for change.

It has been great to see members putting up their hand to nominate on the Board and this year's election will bring some change. If any member wishes to get to know the Board more, please get in touch through our website.

As we approach the end of the dry season, we hope our members have had a 'good' year, however that looks for you. Some businesses have closed their doors and some have turned over more revenue than previous years. The weather is warming up and the landscape is drying out quite rapidly, which brings unwanted fires across the Cape.

We would like to thank our staff for all their hard work this year. 2020 was supposed to be a ten year celebration for the organisation and even though that celebration might look slightly different to the original intention, we should certainly all be applauding our efforts and achievements.

Thank you to all who have worked with us this year and supported us through 2020.

Happy Birthday, Cape York NRM!

Warm regards
Emma Jackson, Chairperson



Emma Jackson
Chairperson
Primary Industries Sector



Trevor Meldrum
Vice Chairperson
Community Sector



Joseph Elu
Indigenous Sector
Zone 1



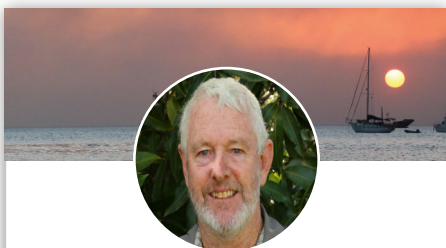
Pauline Smith
Indigenous Sector
Zone 2



Eric Rosendale
Indigenous Sector
Zone 4



Desmond Tayley
Local Government Sector



John Charlton
Tourism, Small Business, Mining
and Other Industries Sector



Sally Gray
Conservation Sector



Currently Vacant
Indigenous Sector
Zone 3



CONTACT US

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Contribute or subscribe to the Cape York Healthy Country Newsletter media@capeyorknrm.com.au 0499 405 558



Helping people to work together to care for the natural environment and to promote the sustainable use of Cape York's natural resources



Improving the quality of water flowing into the northern Great Barrier Reef



Protecting threatened species and threatened ecological communities



Supporting best practice management of Cape York's lands and waters



Championing cultural and savanna burning



Investing in community partnerships



Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Cape York NRM



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