

Cape York

Healthy Country Newsletter

Our fragile soils

Issue 22 - Autumn 2015

The Cape York landscape is grounded with ancient and fragile soils, which require careful management to ensure long term health of the land and to maintain our water quality across Cape York for the generations to come. This issue of Healthy Country newsletter focuses on some of the work being undertaken across Cape York to Care for our soils.

Do you have a project to care for wetlands and soils on Cape York?

Expressions of Interest close on Friday 22 May for grants of up to \$25 000 through the National Landcare Programme for projects caring for wetlands, springs and waterways on Cape York. More details on page three.



Update your membership!

As we near the end of the financial year, it's time to renew your membership with Cape York NRM. We update our memberships annually, to ensure that your details are current.

Not a member? Membership is free and enables you to help shape the direction of natural resource management on Cape York.

Please call us on 1300 132 262 or email us on admin@capeyorknrm.com.au to collect a form, or update your details.

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Monitoring Lama Lama Wetlands

submitted by Charles Darwin University (CDU)

[A video](#) launched late last year explores the success of a program that has seen Indigenous rangers partnering with researchers to better monitor and manage their land.

The short clip looks at how the Lama Lama Rangers, from Cape York Peninsula, have trialled new methods to assess the condition of their wetlands, including the use of I-Tracker tools.

Short for Indigenous Tracker, the I-Tracker program is an initiative of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA) that supports Indigenous land and sea managers to collect, map and report on spatial information to assist in the management of country.

Indigenous land and sea rangers are collectively responsible for over 25 million hectares of land and sea across northern Australia and managing threats to their country is a high priority.

NAILSMA Executive Chair Peter Yu says the new rapid assessment method has been tailored to suit the needs of Indigenous land and sea managers.

“The I-Tracker program uses world renowned CyberTracker software, coupled with field-tough hardware appropriate for use in remote areas. These tools improve the way that people can collect and manage both natural and cultural information,” he said.

In 2009 and 2010 the Lama Lama Rangers joined forces with local land management group South

Cape York Catchments (SCYC) to monitor wetland health using an in-depth, paper-based method.

Through this project, a complementary rapid assessment method was developed by NAILSMA, SCYC and the rangers using a customised I-Tracker digital data collection application. This simplifies the data collection, analysis and management; and allows the rangers to monitor a larger number of wetlands every year.

“For a lot of environmental and scientific issues, long-term monitoring is very important,” Mr Yu said.

“Improving the community’s capacity to be able to implement monitoring will be significant in allowing both the Traditional Owner community and the wider Australian community to be able to get good information on issues over the long term.”

In [the video](#), project team members explain how they have been using the rapid assessment method to monitor changes in their wetlands, including some sites that have been fenced off from pigs and cattle.

These types of collaborative partnerships are assisting Indigenous land managers to take the lead in monitoring natural resources on their country, with practical tools adapted to the individual needs and aspirations of local communities.

Visit <http://www.nerpnorthern.edu.au/news/2014/video-working-together-lama-lama-wetlands> to see the film.



Above: Using the cyber tracker. Photo: CDU



Above: Monitoring wetlands conditions with I-Tracker. Photo: CDU

Call for Expressions of Interest for projects caring for Cape York's Wetlands, Springs and Waterways



Cape York Peninsula contains over 13 million hectares of wetlands that are identified as nationally significant. As part of Cape York Natural Resource Management's regional funding allocation provided by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme, Expressions of Interest are now invited for projects that will help care for these wetlands, springs and waterways.

Chairperson for Cape York Natural Resource Management (Cape York NRM) David Claudie has welcomed the funding and said Cape York NRM is now inviting land managers and community organisations to apply for grants of up to \$25 000 to look after the health of the wetlands, springs and waterways where they live.

"We are inviting Expressions of Interest from Cape York based landholders, Traditional Owners and community natural resource management groups for projects on Cape York that care for our soils and wetlands" he said.

"Cape York has some of the healthier waterways in Australia, and we need to work together to try and keep them healthy".

Erosion, overgrazing, wildfires and changes to annual weather patterns can contribute to degrading soils, infilling wetlands and springs and contribute to increased sediment in waterways. Projects which reduce impacts such as these could include fencing off wetlands, springs and waterways to keep out

stock and feral pigs, improved fire management practices, feral animal control activities, increasing watering points for stock and the recording of important cultural sites.

"There is broad scope for projects, which will ultimately care for our important wetlands, springs and waterways" Mr Claudie said.

Grants of up to \$25 000 are available for projects which:

- Protect or enhance springs, or wetlands of national significance
- Maintain or enhance soil quality and reduce erosion
- Deliver integrated pest and/or fire management
- Improve grazing and agriculture practices
- Enhance water quality
- Maintain biodiversity
- Protect or enhance important cultural sites

Larger projects may be considered through negotiation.

Expressions of Interest should be for projects to be delivered in the 2015-2016 financial year. They must be submitted by 22 May 2015.

For more information and an application go to www.capeyorknrm.com.au or call 07 4095 7132.

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

New developments for NAFI

submitted by Cape York Sustainable Futures

Currently the fire scar information that is provided on the NAFI (North Australia Fire Information) website is mapped using MODIS satellite imagery which has a pixel resolution of 250m x 250m, and there is a delay between when a fire actually occurs and when the resulting scars are displayed on the site. This delay is caused by the time it takes for a useful, clear satellite image to become available and then the mappers to use this imagery to produce the fire scars for the website. Although new imagery becomes available daily, a lot of the time fire scars are obscured by cloud cover.

In November 2014 a workshop was hosted by Cape York Sustainable Futures (CYSF) in conjunction with Charles Darwin University (CDU). The workshop was run by CDU's Rohan Fisher and was designed to demonstrate some free tools that can be used to monitor and review fire activity beyond the information provided via the NAFI website. These simple tools and training allow anyone to access free higher resolution Landsat images as well as daily MODIS images and then use this imagery to visualise burnt areas. Landsat images have a much

better pixel resolution at 30m x 30m however, new images only occur fortnightly.

Some more information including 'how to' videos can be found here: <https://bushfiresresearch.wordpress.com/training/>

A new training and planning application 3D Sandpit Fire Simulation, which is in development by NAFI and CDU, was demonstrated at the workshop. The tool uses a basic model to demonstrate potential fire spread with consideration of variables including terrain, vegetation, wind and fire history. The model is displayed using a projector and a sand box which gives the terrain a more realistic appearance. While still in development, the potential of the tools for a planning or 'round the table' situation was evident at the workshop. A brief video of the Sandpit Fire Simulation in action can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBUYwPS901g>

Cape York NRM funds Cape York Sustainable Futures to carry out NAFI fire scar mapping for the state of Queensland.

Are you serious about Farm Safety?

Growcom and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) are delivering workshops to give you the skills to build your business's Work Health & Safety policies and procedures.

Workshop topics include:

- legislative requirements for workers' compensation
- identifying and assessing risks
- hazardous tasks in the agricultural industry
- setting up a safety management system
- the importance of management commitment to safety
- reporting safety
- workers compensation and returning to work procedures
- workplaces for wellness initiatives.

Where: Mareeba Thursday 30 July

Time: 9am to 1pm including light lunch

Register: <http://www.growcom.com.au/fsw15/>
or Growcom reception on 07 3620 3844

Field day success at Fairview

Cape York graziers were able to benefit from the knowledge of veterinarian Ian Braithwaite, at the recent beef cattle pregnancy testing workshop held at Fairview Station.

The workshop was organised by Cape York NRM through the Sustainable Agriculture program. Understanding breeder pregnancies contributes to best practice cattle management.

To express interest in future workshops contact us on 1300 132 263.



Soil Erosion Successfully Controlled

by Denis Kelly, South Cape York Catchments

The rain has fallen, the rivers are up, the grass is green again and the end of last years dry season is all but a distant memory.

The wet season is a welcome relief but it does bring some associated problems with it. One such problem for the Balnggarrawarra Rangers from Melsonby is soil erosion and the effects it has on rivers and wetlands.

Thankfully soil management work undertaken by the Rangers over the past two years can now be seen to be reducing soil erosion. By far the main factors that contribute to erosion at Melsonby Station are wildfire, cleared firebreaks and vehicle tracks. Last year burning by the Rangers in the early dry

season using Traditional and aerial burning methods prevented wildfires from entering the property. In addition, earthworks along firebreaks and access tracks have also achieved great results in controlling soil loss. Whoo-bouys and drains are now diverting water away from the road in a controlled manner.

How do we know we are successful?

Balnggarrawarra Rangers continually collect data and photos on the FULCRUM application. Specific sites are monitored each year and photos are reviewed back to back to reveal any differences. With lots of rain already fallen things are looking good for our soils.



Above and Below: Monitoring points were established by Balnggarrawarra Rangers to gauge results of erosion controls. Before (on left) and after (on right)



Below: Rangers at work monitoring the sites and putting erosion controls in place (Photos supplied)



INVITATION TO COMMENT: WHAT IS NEEDED TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO ACTION ON INVASIVE ANIMALS

Submitted by Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has identified that legal, administrative and other institutional issues may be a key barrier to citizens taking action in controlling feral animals.

Around Australia, governments are proposing reforms like combining pest animals and plant agencies, changing the laws within the states, and reorganising national coordinating structures. These changes are important but the CRC suspects that there are more fundamental issues that need more consideration.

Invasive Animals CRC's Professor Paul Martin says the organisation has started to identify what the

Recycled Art Activities Coming To Weipa

Students from Western Cape College will learn about environmental management through the creation of art works from recycled rubbish and will exhibit their work at the upcoming Weipa Fishing Classic.

The Cape Create Crew, an initiative of Cape York NRM and UMI Arts, will be visiting Western Cape College to deliver an environmental awareness program called Litter-Ed, educating students about the impacts of rubbish, particularly plastics, on the environment and wildlife.

The group's vision is to improve social, emotional and environmental wellbeing across Cape York through environmental awareness, education, promotion and collaboration, by linking our environment, arts & culture.

Project coordinators Waratah Nicholls and Andrea Gower said the Cape Create Crew will be visiting Western Cape College on the 3rd and 4th June to deliver the Litter-Ed Program to school students.

"We will be teaching about the horrific impacts that rubbish has on our environment and creating recycled art pieces and an installation from locally collected rubbish" said Waratah Nicholls.

"We will also be at the Weipa Fishing Classic; everyone is very welcome to come along to meet the Cape Create Crew and learn more about caring for country at Fishing Classic on the 5th, 6th & 7th June with our Transforming Trash Art Stall" Waratah said.

barriers really are and what might be done about them.

"The hope is that by working with government, farmer, environment and community organisations, the Invasive Animals CRC can trigger improvement to identify and resolve the strategic problems that limit invasive animal control" he said.

Feedback is invited on the Centre's discussion paper on the issue: Invasive Species Management Institutions From A Citizen Perspective which can be downloaded at <http://goo.gl/8eG17g> Responses can be submitted with an online feedback form at <http://goo.gl/Mcl6Y3>

Andrea Gower said children's activities would be a focus at the Fishing Classic.

"With your help, we want to create a public art installation that will be a fun and unique addition to the Weipa landscape, providing key messages about waste disposal, littering and the impact it has on environmental, social, cultural and economic values of Cape York" she said.

Donate Your Rubbish

The Cape Create Crew is calling for donations of clean recyclable rubbish, but no glass.

Please deliver them to our stall at the Weipa Fishing Classic, next to the Cape York NRM and Western Cape Landcare stall.

Materials needed include:

Plastic bottles (no glass), plastic containers, hard plastics, polystyrene, plastic bags, bubble wrap, cardboard boxes, magazines, rope, string, wire, fishing net, bottle lids, tops, tin cans, backing board for mosaics, e.g old table tops, doors, ply wood boards etc.

Found objects: e.g. shells, seeds, pods, drift wood.

Unique objects: e.g. thongs, toothbrushes, fishing reels/rods.

For more information about the project contact:

Waratah Nicholls waratahnicolls@gmail.com
Ph: 0429 695 533.

Andrea Gower andrea.gower@yahoo.com.au
Ph: 07 4096 3008.

Our Jess, Making National Headlines

Cook Shire's current Young Citizen of the Year award is now taking on the rest of Australia, helping Cook Shire secure the 2015 Young Legend award at the national Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns Awards in Sheffield, Tasmania, in February. Jessie Price, 25, took out the award for her work in environmental management on Cape York. Jess has worked with South Cape York Catchments since June 2013, and has undertaken some diverse tasks in that time.

Through her role with South Cape York Catchments, Jess has worked with young Traditional Owners from the Dharrpa Land Trust on weed identification and chemical handling; with the Lama Lama rangers and NAILSMA to undertake wetlands monitoring and assisted in the development of a rapid assessment methodology for Cape York wetlands health; undertaken community and Traditional Owner engagement for the Your Climate Project with Cape York NRM; and is currently assisting with Traditional Owner engagement for the development of a Cape York Water Quality Improvement Plan, also with Cape York NRM.

Jess is extremely modest about receiving the award. "I didn't know about the nomination" she said. "It was a total surprise."

"It is nice for South Cape York Catchments to be recognised on a national scale for the work we do on Cape York. It's not often areas like Cape York get showcased in this way and it creates awareness about what smaller groups like South Cape York Catchments can achieve."

Jess is passionate about her job and about Cape York. After high school she became a trainee ranger with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, a role she held for three years. She then attended James Cook University in Cairns, studying Environmental Science. She'd not long returned to Cooktown

when she started work with SCYC.

"I'm lucky because in this field (environmental science) there are vast opportunities to create a meaningful career in the bush. There are opportunities for young people from small communities who have gone to get qualifications to come home and work in areas which helps shape the future of your community" she said. "It's all down to individual choices of where to live, but there are real opportunities in these areas to kick-start your career and gain interesting experience – and that can be true of almost any field of work."

"Don't think that the only way to create a fulfilling and interesting career for yourself is to stay in the cities! Regional Australia is a fantastic and rewarding place to work and live" she said.

Jessie loves Cape York. "It's beautiful" she said. "In around 50 kilometres you can drive from the wet tropics to the dry tropics to savanna. You can go from escarpment Country to Nifold Plains. I love the diversity of our environment."

"I feel lucky to work here and be involved in amazing projects. I am proud to know that others (around the country) recognise we are doing a good job" she said.

"Cape York is such a unique place, made up of so many different types of ecosystems, you could never get bored working here! I love working somewhere that is so far from everything else, where there are still new things to be discovered. It's also such an important area to Australia, I feel privileged to be working up here protecting something so special. "I'm not going anywhere. The work I am doing is marriage between technical science and the community, and I feel my future may be in making environment science easier to understand for the community. And there is no better place than Cape York to do that".

Photo: Jessie Price undertaking wetland monitoring with Lama Lama Rangers, with Christy Davies Image supplied by CDU



Towards Agricultural Sustainability on Cape York

Six Cape York cattle properties are working on property planning with Cape York NRM through the Sustainable Agriculture (Sus Ag) program.

Cape York NRM has engaged the services of Land Management Consultant, Peter Spies, to work alongside our Sustainable Industries officer Michael Goddard and GIS services to support delivery of the Sustainable Agriculture Project within the Cape.

Peter has a background in land systems classification, mapping, soil conservation and grazing land management. A 'land system' refers to recurring patterns of landform, soils, underlying geology, vegetation and native pastures. The soil is the building block. Land systems are used extensively in surveys of land use planning and land management. Soils are the backbone of our production systems.

The Sus Ag program is mapping resources to allow for Best Management Practice, whether that is determining safe and sustainable stocking rates and carrying capacity, priority for infrastructure such as fences and water points, or identifying best soils for intensification of use. Peter is identifying current land condition for sustainable carrying capacity based on ABCD land condition classes, its 'grazing value' (based on the fertility of those soils and pasture species present), weed recording and identifying unutilised or 'at risk' areas that may be prone to erosion.

Priorities can also be determined for fencing according to land type, determination of more suitable country for any pasture improvement, and ensure that only best and suitable country be developed first, according to best practice management principles. "Healthy country is land with a good body of 3P grasses - perennial, palatable and productive with no erosion or weeds" Peter Spies said.

Some of the products that are coming out of the project, in partnership with participating properties, include property-scale mapping of vegetation, land systems and soils, grazing rings from watering points (to determine true effective carrying capacity), land condition assessment and factsheets on soil and land types. The Sustainable Agriculture project is also working with the Rangelands Alliance Spatial Hub project to establish super sites that use remote sensing to assist with property planning, management decision-making and monitoring land condition and trend. These products can work together to assist in best practice decision making for land use.

Operations Manager Peta Standley said soil characteristics, including type and moisture, play an important role in decision making for fire management practices. "Fire planning is an essential part of property planning. The sustainable agriculture project is providing support to land managers to assist with fire planning and implementation" she said.

The sustainable agriculture project also has a focus on cattle herd management, with particular attention paid to the management of breeding cows and maiden heifers. Peter Spies said large savings can be made through better management of breeders and thereby needing less lick. "Splitting the herd on early and late season calves and knowing what our effective safe carrying capacity is based on permanent water points are some of the management strategies we can use" he said.

The project ran a field day on breeder management on 30 July 2014 and a cattle pregnancy testing day on 21-22 April 2015. Further workshops are planned for this year. For more information on the Sustainable Agriculture project contact Michael Goddard on 0498 760 022 or email mgoddard@capeyorknrm.com.au.

Successful Scholars

Cape York NRM was the proud sponsor of three scholarships for the Hill Top Farm *Getting to the Heart of Permaculture* program, which ran 10 -14 April.

Congratulations to Roman Jost, Waratah Nicholls and Fiona Mitchell.

Together with Hill Top Farm's Wendy Seabrook, we'll be monitoring how Roman, Waratah and Fiona put their new knowledge into practice.



Above: Successful Scholar, Fiona Mitchell (left) at the Getting to the Heart of Permaculture workshop. Photo Supplied.

Monitoring Erosion Through Simulating Rainfall

By Will Higham

Cape York NRM is working with Ken Rhode from Catchment Solutions to undertake a series of rainfall simulation experiments. The rainfall simulator provides a standard rainfall event (80mm/he) to a standard plot size 1.5m x 1.5 m and enables collections of runoff water samples and discharge rates.



Michael Goddard and Ken Rhode using the rainfall simulator to test for sediment and nutrient loss at Springvale (above and below and Olivevale (below right)

Cape York NRM's Sustainable Industries Officer Michael Goddard said they were using the rainfall simulator to compare runoff rates and water quality of pastures and roads on several soil types.

"In particular we are trying to gether data that quantifies sediment loss from roads which have been identified as a source of sediment" he said.

It will take a few months to get the samples analysed at the laboratory. Cape York NRM will then discuss the learnings with landholders.



RITE Group to Help

A not-for-profit Charters Towers based training company which has been training some of Cape York's future graziers has recently supported Cape York NRM's beef cattle pregnancy testing field day held in April on Fairview Station.

RITE works with government and industry groups to provide training programs for Cape York, and specialises in nationally recognised training in agriculture.

They provided five portable cattle crushes for the field day.

To find out more about RITE's services, contact them on 07 4787 4933, or visit their website: www.rite.com.au



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To express your interest in future Cape York NRM field days, contact Michael Goddard on 0498 760 022 or email mgoddard@capeyorknrm.com.au.



Cooktown's Healthy Country Hub was officially opened on 15 April. The hub will be home to community organisations working on natural and cultural resource management programs. Cape York NRM, South Cape York Catchments and Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Inc. are the regular tenants, however, other groups are invited to use the hub. The opening was attended by over 50 people. The offices are located at 122 Charlotte Street in the old Westpac Bank building.



Above: Members David Ainscough and Waratah Nicholls attended the opening. Below: Cape York NRM's Will Higham demonstrates the rainfall simulator (see page 9) at the event.



Above: Member Audrey Nicholzen together with Cook Shire's Kaz Price and Peter Scott. Below: Mitchell River's Peter Alden receives the competition prize from SCYC's Jess Price.



Around the Cape . . .



Above: The Wenlock Catchment Management Group have appointed Robbie Corrie (top centre, blue shirt) to help get them up and running. Robbie will work with the group to help them continue to be a voice for the Wenlock. Below: Are you a thoughtful traveller? NRM, arts and tourism organisations and businesses across Cape York are working together on a campaign to reduce the environment impacts from locals and visitors while travelling in Cape York. From left - Jason Carroll (SCYC), Lyndal Scobell (Cape York NRM), Trevor Meldrum (Weeds and Ferals Inc.), Cathy Waldron (Cook Shire), Kristina Davidson (Cook Shire), Heidi Taylor (Tangaroa Blue) and Waratah Nicholls (Cape Create Crew)



Above: Around 20 people attended the Queensland Water and Landcarers (QWaLC) meeting in Cooktown on 15 April. Pictured from left: Landcare's Andrew Hartwig, SCYC's Deni Kelly, Bonny Glen's Eric Rosendale, Jabalбина's Phitlip Minniecon, Mitchell River's Peter Alden, Cape York NRM's Peta Standley and John Giese representing QWaLC.

Below: Attendees from the QWaLC meeting held at Cooktown's Natures Powerhouse. National Landcare Programme's community grants were key on the agenda.



Above left: Bradley Creek (left) from Jabalбина recently sighted what is thought to be the first recording of a platypus in the Normanby Catchment. Bradley made the sighting after a day of pest fish and salvinia work with Jason Carroll from SCYC (right) at Mt Poverty, around 500 metres above sea level. "I thought it was a turtle or a fish but it was a platypus" he said. The recording has been sent to WILDNET.



Right: Cape York NRM's Sustainable Industries Officer works through a small grants contract for weeds with Lakeland landholder Urs Leiser. Once weeds are controlled on the 30 acre block, Urs plans to undertake market garden style agriculture.



Board of Directors



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John Giese
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Emma Jackson
Primary Industries Sector



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



Shane Gibson
Indigenous Sector, Zone 4

Calendar of Events

May

- 19 Western Cape College Careers Day
- 18 21 23 [BMP Workshops Weipa, Coen, Laura](#)
- 24-28 [Cape Bedford Beach Clean-up](#)
- 24 [Cooktown and District Beaches Clean-up](#)
- 27-28 [Mareeba FNQ Field Days](#)

June

- 5-7 [Weipa Fishing Classic](#)
- [Cooktown Discovery Festival](#)
- 10-18 [Captain Billy's Landing Beach Cleanup](#)
- 13-17 [Indigenous Fire Workshop](#)
- 19-21 [Laura Aboriginal Dance Festival](#)
- 21-26 Grow Do It!
- 26-28 [Laura Rodeo, Races and Horsesports](#)

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Australian Government



Queensland Government