

Cape York

Healthy Country

NEWSLETTER

Issue 39

2020

*Cape York NRM joins call for
\$4b land management and
conservation package*

Page 17

*Save the North
Australia Fire
Information website*

Page 18



CEO's welcome to 'Healthy Country'



THOSE WERE THE DAYS...

While we can't rub shoulders with you anymore, the Cape York NRM team is available to provide voluntary support to the Cape York community and organisations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.*



We can check on your property, assist with basic property maintenance so you don't have to travel outside permitted areas, pick up or drop off goods across our three locations, and support community groups and organisations helping people manage the COVID-19 outbreak ... or just let us know how we can help!

We are based in Cooktown, Atherton and Cairns, so if you need a hand, or know of someone who does, please call Danicka on 0409 956 997.

COOKTOWN

ATHERTON

CAIRNS

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Healthy Country Newsletter*. In this edition we continue to highlight some of the projects being supported by Cape York NRM and our partners and hopefully this provides some positive news in these trying times.

I know everyone is impacted by the spread of Coronavirus and having to adapt to often stressful changes as a result. Whether that's changed employment, travel restrictions and family separation, or staying home because you are elderly, or have underlying health conditions, one thing's for sure – we have all been impacted, and we are all in this together.

We have:

- supported all those who can work from home to do so
- ensured all staff are informed about, and in compliance with, social distancing rules
- banned all external visitors from our Cooktown, Atherton and Cairns offices
- changed all meetings to phone and video conferencing
- cancelled all non-essential travel
- banned all Atherton and Cairns staff from visiting the Cape, and
- banned all staff travel to remote communities until further notice.

While we are still on a learning curve, staff are adapting to the new arrangements and working as hard as they can to deliver our services in a drastically changed environment.

'While this is an evolving situation, and things will have changed by the time this goes to print, I want to outline the steps Cape York NRM has taken to protect staff, stakeholders and remote communities.'

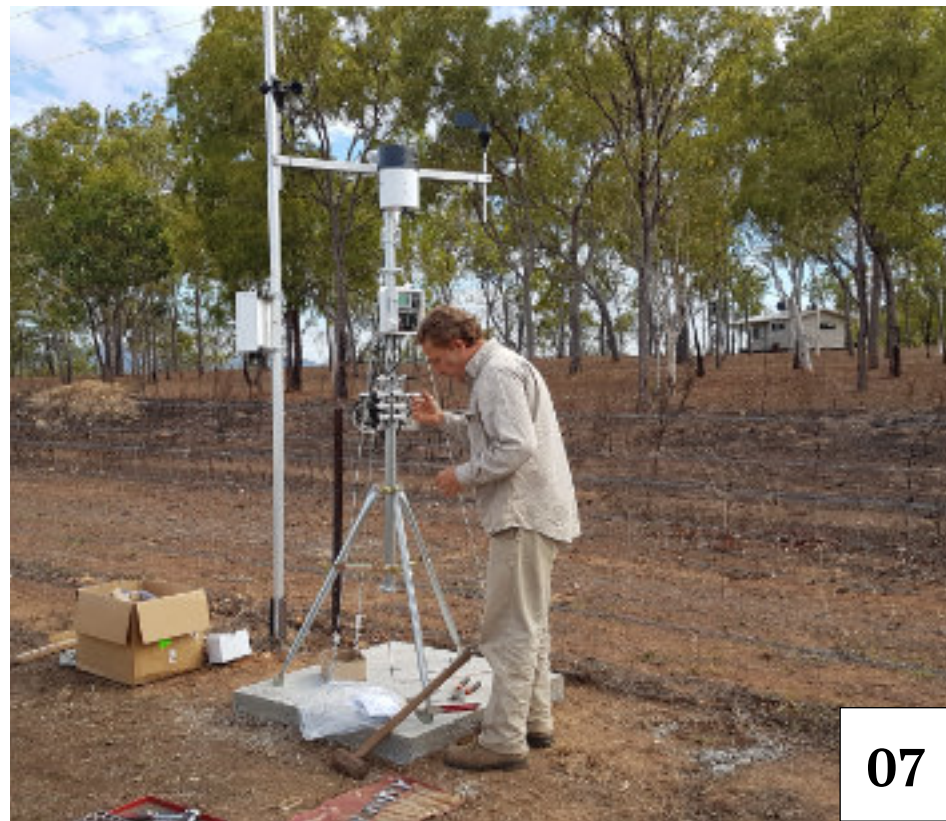
Despite the disruption some things remain the same.

- We are open for business
- We are part of the Cape York community and are working hard to make a positive difference
- We are changing the way we deliver so we can continue to support the communities and land managers on the Cape

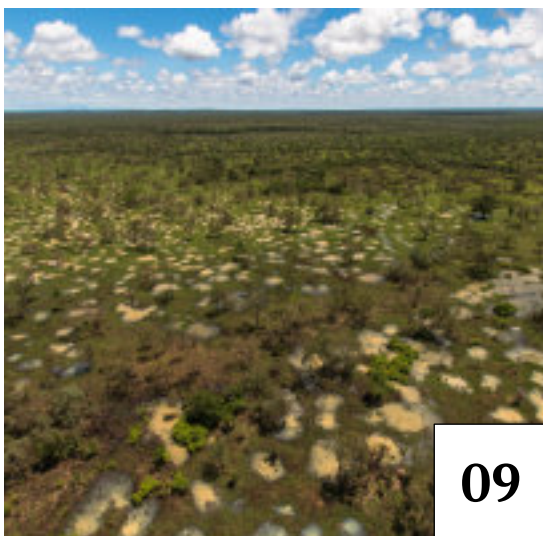
I hope you enjoy Issue 39 of Cape York Healthy Country magazine which showcases the amazing people and places of this special region.

Warm regards

Cape York NRM CEO John Gavin



07



09



11



13



22

CONTENTS

- 02 How can we help?
- 03 CEO's welcome
- 04 Contents page
- 05 Mitchell catchment project
- 06 Peer to peer networking
- 07 #Weather
- 08 Healthy Farming Futures
- 09 Picaninny Plains
- 10 Peer to peer Q&As
- 11 Peer to peer Q&As
- 12 Lifeline for endangered turtles
- 13 GCBF Funding for turtles
- 14 Soils & weeds field day
- 15 Soils & weeds (cont.)
- 16 It's OK to reach out
- 17 Call for \$4B stimulus package
- 18 Save NAFI website
- 19 Open letter to Governments ~ NAFI
- 20 Arson campaign
- 21 Cape York Fire Forum
- 22 Directors' update
- 23 Director & contact info
- 24 10 Year Anniversary

Looking after soil and water in the Mitchell River catchment



South Cape York Catchments (SCYC), Northern Gulf Natural Resource Management (Northern Gulf RMG) and Cape York NRM are working with graziers in the Mitchell River Catchment to help protect soils and waterways.

Last year, Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf RMG worked with Maitland, Old Maitland, Spring Hill, and Bonny Glenn Stations. This year Balurga, Harkness, and Strathaven Stations are coming on board.

The project, delivered by South Cape York Catchments Program Manager Jessie Price-Decle, aims to support graziers to tackle soil management challenges. On-ground projects will reduce soil loss and improve creeks and rivers, which has the knock-on effect of improving marine environments.

'Stations in the Mitchell Basin have similar land management issues to lots of cattle stations on the Cape, including erosive soil types, wildfires, weeds and feral animals,' Jessie said.

'There are some significant alluvial gullies across the region and late season fires are a real problem - often they're illegally lit by outsiders. In 2019 a fire lit in the Palmer River catchment spread for months across to and past Laura, burning out many properties.

There are also infestations of weeds like rubber vine and grader grass which can outcompete native vegetation, impacting both biodiversity and grazing profitability.

'We are working with land managers to support them to better manage these kinds of problems. 'On ground projects this year aim to spread grazing pressure more evenly over the properties. Work like this can protect sensitive river edges, reduce hillslope erosion, and protect areas of bare ground.

We also hope to do some early aerial burning with Cape York NRM's Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator Andrew Hartwig - he's got a good plan of what breaks could go in to save these properties from getting burnt out at the end of each year.'

Jessie said there are no quick fixes when it comes to tackling issues like erosion, wildfires and feral pests and weeds, but you could see results from some actions within a year.

'Some simple soil conservation measures on property tracks can prove themselves in one wet season, while other actions, like good fire management and pest control, need to continue each and every year.'

'The project team has a good history of supporting Cape York graziers to make management changes on their properties. I've never worked in the Mitchell Catchment before, so I'm personally really excited to get out on the ground in the coming dry season to learn about a new area and work with a different grazing community.'

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

People on the land networking for positive practice change

Producers on the Cape are developing peer relationships as they work together to cultivate advanced farming methods.

Greater engagement amongst the producers on Cape York has been facilitated by Cape York NRM's Regional Extension Officer, Oliver McConnachie, under the Queensland Government's Enhanced Extension Coordination in Reef Catchments project.

'The guiding principle of the project is that practice change is not to do with land—it's to do with people. By focusing on the people, positive change in land management is being achieved,' Oliver said.

Producers have been coming together since the program began in 2018, and have attended a variety of workshops on subjects such as improved watering and fertilising methods, soil health and weed control.

To assist with decision-making, *Focus Farms* have been established in the Normanby and Endeavour catchments allowing farmers to trial new techniques to see how they work before trying them out at home.

This project, led by Oliver McConnachie, is delivered across two regions of the NQ NRM Alliance, and has seen the establishment of three peer to peer groups. The *Sustainable Dairy and Beef Production Network* and the *Tablelands Young Grazing Network* in the Terrain NRM region, and the *Endeavour and Normanby Catchments Productivity Network* on Cape York.

The groups have enabled producers to share their knowledge, learn about and trial new ideas, and discuss the outcomes.

Oliver said that the next step will be to gather the data from the *Focus Farms* program and run producer-group meetings to discuss ways of moving forward.

To discuss this project further, contact Oliver McConnachie on 0472 597 854 or oliver.mcconnachie@capeyorknrm.com.au

This program is 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



#Weather



Cape York NRM have installed the last of three internet – enabled weather stations in Lakeland in order to provide the local producers with more reliable weather information to help them make important decisions around nutrient and water use.

Regional Extension Coordinator Oliver McConnachie, who is leading the initiative, said gathering weather information accurately at the local level and integrating it with Bureau of Meteorology data will lead to more reliable weather predictions.

'Current weather data available for Lakeland, about an hour south of Cooktown, and districts further west, is very limited, which means it offers little value to weather modelling and hence prediction. Lakeland is probably the heart of the Cape's agricultural sector and being able to better predict weather is a dream come true,' Oliver explained.

'Setting up weather stations at strategic locations on key properties allows land managers to access the most up to date forecast simply by logging into an app on their phone. This gives producers the quality of data they need to better inform business decisions.

For example, if rain is predicted, producers can hold off on watering or delay fertiliser applications. These things may seem small but save time and money and ultimately reduce the amount of sediment and nutrient run - off into local waterways.'

'The other exciting thing about this initiative is that it was producer – driven. Part of my role is to establish local producer networks so producers can learn from each other, and choose what expertise they wish to improve by inviting guest presenters and advisors.

Producer groups, once established can begin applying for funding otherwise not available to them as individual businesses which benefits all group members as well as the community as a whole. The weather stations story is just one of many exciting example of producer lead intervention suggested by, and benefiting, local farmers.'

This initiative is 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

Healthy farms healthy country on Cape York

Cape York NRM's Healthy Farming Futures project is working closely with Cape York's pastoralists to help their businesses become more sustainable.

Co-led by Cape York NRM's Regional Agriculture Land Facilitator Andrew Hartwig, the project sees graziers in western flowing catchments in Central Cape York increase the amount of ground cover on their properties to help reduce erosion, sediment run-off and improve water quality in the Gulf.

It also provides a pathway towards business sustainability.

'The Healthy Farming Futures team has been working with Merluna, Piccaninny Plains, Astrea, Holroyd River, Yarraden, Crystalvale and Watson River,' Andrew explained.

'The goal is to increase and maintain ground cover and biodiversity, remediate erosion hotspots where practical, and reduce the amount of sediment heading out to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

'This can be achieved through a variety of methods depending on individual landholder goals and aspirations.

'Graziers know their country better than anyone, and activities can include erosion remediation works, fire management, weed and feral animal management, fencing off sensitive areas, wetland management, wet season spelling and grazing rotation.

'We usually start out with a grazing framework self-assessment and then develop a property specific grazing plan.

The plans are useful to achieve long term goals and diversification, and also when applying for other grants such as Smart Farms.

'When we take an integrated approach, we see a range of benefits.

'The land does the work and the grazier saves money. The land also becomes more resilient and can help graziers keep their businesses afloat during hard times.'

'Participation in the program is voluntary, and we are hoping to get around to all grazing properties within the project area in the next couple of years to see if we can be of help.

'I am confident that these kinds of changes will make a significant difference to sediment running off these properties, the sustainability of the businesses and ultimately, through knowledge sharing, and seeing the positive results of practice change, to the way we graze cattle on the Cape.'

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



Cape York NRM's Healthy Farming Futures project is supporting a Cape York Wildlife Sanctuary which has so far received over 2,500 mm of rain this wet season, to stabilise the landscape to protect critical habitat.

Piccaninny Plains Wildlife Sanctuary lies in the heart of Cape York Peninsula, a region of global significance for conservation. Covering almost 165,000 hectares, Piccaninny Plains is a property of stunning ecological diversity, protecting a mosaic of rainforests, woodlands, wetlands and grasslands and iconic wildlife like the Palm Cockatoo, Red Goshawk and Spotted Cuscus.

Sally Gray and her partner Graham Woods manage the Sanctuary for the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC).

'Everything we do here is aimed at achieving the AWC goal of protecting and enhancing habitat for endangered and threatened species,' Sally explained.

'Piccaninny Plains Wildlife Sanctuary is our life at the moment. This is a 24/7 job, something you take on for love. The Cape is so important as one of the last wild places and we want to do everything we can to keep it that way. Looking after the landscape, including reducing erosion caused by epic rainfall, is an important part of this work.'

The wet season tally on Piccaninny varies from around 900mm to 1500mm - all falling between December and March.

'During the 2019-20 wet season, we were impacted by three cyclone events and total rainfall topped 2600mm!' Sally said.

'With this volume of water there's a lot of soil instability which leads to erosion. Often it is part of a natural cycle of change across the land, however erosion issues can be exacerbated by other

disturbances, such as the historic Old Telegraph Line track that traverses the property.'

This is where the Healthy Farming Futures team come in. Regional Agriculture Land Facilitator Andrew Hartwig has been working with Sally and Graham to identify key erosion sites and make plans for their remediation.

Two sites have been identified with preliminary assessment and documentation completed. On-ground works are due to get underway once the country dries.

'We need to wait for the dry to get works underway,' Sally said. 'At the moment we are confined to the homestead due to the nature of the Piccaninny country - the black soil and many, many creeks make it impossible to move around for months at a time during the monsoon.'

We focus our energy on catching up on maintenance, workshop jobs as well as taming the crazy grass growth, so lots of mowing, plus some weed control works.

'With the wet season still impacting our movements, we are yet to commence the on-ground works program. Obviously this is something we tackle once the dry kicks in and impact of the wet season inundation for the year can be assessed.'

Sally said she appreciated the energy and commitment of Cape York NRM's Healthy Farming Futures team.

'It's challenging for everyone working up here and it takes special kinds of people to make things happen. The Cape York NRM team seem to have what it takes!'

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

How peer to peer producer groups are making a difference in the Far North

Cape York NRM and Terrain NRM Enhanced Extension Coordination in Reef Catchments project aims to change land management practice in order to improve the water quality of the northern Great Barrier Reef.

Part of the project involves establishing facilitated Peer to Peer producer groups to help foster inter-community learning, initiate on – farm projects, participate in workshops and Field Days, and develop a network of relationships which seed beneficial practice change.

So far three groups have been established, one in the Cooktown area and two in the Atherton Tablelands.

The Peer to Peer groups are making a big difference to local farming communities and Cape York Healthy Country Newsletter caught up with facilitators Kasmin, Louise and Trevor to learn more about their networks.

This initiative is 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

Endeavour River Productivity Network

Facilitator:
Trevor Meldrum

est November 2019

Members: 14

Location:
Endeavour Catchment



Tell me about yourself?

I am a Cooktown local, and run the Endeavour River Productivity Network, as well as Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Inc.

What has the group been doing recently?

All the members reviewed their Property Pest Management Plans, we held a very successful Weeds and Soils Solutions Field Day at Rivernook Farm and have established two Focus Farms - one in the Normanby, the other in the Endeavour Catchment where we are conducting land management trials.

What has been the best thing about establishing and facilitating the group?

Having the resources to be able to help producers in a real way. Many of the producers involved in this project have met for the first time and the ongoing support they are receiving has seen many of them improve their management practices.

Tell me about the social and mental health benefits of belonging to this kind of group.

Farmers and graziers are pretty busy people - they work alone and often live a long way from town. Getting together as part of this group has meant people get to know their peers and build a bit of a community around themselves.

Can you think of someone who has really benefited from the group?

Rivernook are developing new strategies to improve production and reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides, Valley View (the Normanby Focus Farm) are going well with their land remediation and are sharing techniques and learnings with less experienced farmers in the network.



To find out more contact
Trevor on 0400 368 834

Beef and Dairy Farmers Network

Facilitator:
Louise Gavin

est October 2019

Members: 26

Location:
Atherton Tablelands



Tell me about yourself?

I am an experienced facilitator and have worked in Natural Resource Management for 13 years with landholders, volunteers, small community associations, clubs and schools.

What has the group been doing recently?

We have had a number of get togethers and people are interested in doing a trial to improve the number of dung beetles on the Tablelands in the dry winter months. Dung beetles mean less flies, less chemical to eradicate flies and they are also great for soil!

What has been the best thing about establishing and facilitating the group?

Seeing beef and dairy farmers come together and talk about the things they'd love to see happen in their industry. Farmers see the importance of their role in improving water quality and would like to show how they are contributing to good land and animal management.

Tell me about the social and mental health benefits of belonging to this kind of group.

People are getting to know each other better through the meetings and workshops. People ask genuine questions to get a better understanding of an issue on the farm and it's through these kinds of interactions that trust and longer-term friendships develop.

Can you think of someone who has really benefited from the group?

I think a lot of people benefited from our first meeting where people shared stories about what's worked and what hasn't on their farms, asked questions about how much time and cash a new strategy costs and put faces to the names they'd seen only on emails in the past.



To find out more email
louisegavin@remarkablenrm.com.au

Tablelands Young (at heart) Grazing Network

Facilitator:
Kasmin Brotherton

est June 2019

Members: 7

Location:
Atherton Tablelands



Tell me about yourself?

I love learning and the challenge of setting something up to run well. Facilitating this group has been a beautiful mash-up of my past lives in financial planning, business administration, team coaching/group facilitation and now cattle production.

What has the group been doing recently?

A couple of our members are taking part in Terrain's Digging Deeper program with David Hardwick which has been brilliant. In March we held a Grazing Nutrition workshop and had great feedback from attendees.

What has been the best thing about establishing and facilitating the group?

Meeting other people in the industry and realising that everyone is still learning and genuinely interested in helping and sharing information.

Tell me about the social and mental health benefits of belonging to this kind of group.

There is a sense of comfort in finding people doing the same thing you are. When you find a bunch of people you can share your wins, fails and laughs with, it brings its own layer of support.

Can you think of someone who has really benefited from the group?

So far, I don't think I'd be far off the mark to say me! I think in another couple of months I will be able to rattle off at least another three or four though – including a few new potential members that we met at the recent workshop.



To find out more email
kasmin@onebootfarms.com.au or call
0428 913 614

Endangered turtles thrown a lifeline



A generous donation of 50 turtle nest cages by two businesses, Hickey's Metal Fabrication, and Specialised Brake and Clutch Service, to the Pormpuraaw Land and Sea Management Rangers (Pormpuraaw Rangers) will help the next generation of endangered olive ridley turtles survive.

Staff from the Penrith, NSW - based businesses donated time and materials to the effort which was organised by Specialised Brake and Clutch Service's Kevin Gavin.

'Everyone was very pleased to help,' he said.

'This is the least we can do to help protect Australia's endangered marine turtles.'



Despite its record of success, WCTTAA funding is due to cease in June 2020.

'It is not overstating it to say WCTTAA is the only thing standing between olive ridley turtles and localised extinction on the western Cape,' Kerri said.

'If businesses would like to provide support for the program to continue, please contact WCTTAA on kerri.woodcock@capeyorknrm.com.au

WCTTAA is supported by Cape York NRM and is funded by the Nest to Ocean Turtle Protection Program, a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland Governments

Sand temperature influences sex of marine turtle hatchlings



Ongoing efforts to protect marine turtles on western Cape York Peninsula will be boosted with the assistance of a grant to Cape York NRM from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

Funds will be used to purchase sand temperature loggers and nest protection cages.

Two of the major threats to nesting marine turtles on the Cape are nest predation by feral pigs, and an increase in sand temperature as a result of climate change.

Why is the increase in sand temperature a threat? A little-known fact is that the sex of marine turtles is determined by the temperature of the sand that is incubating the eggs. Warmer sand produces females and cooler sand produces males.

Studies undertaken on the green turtle population on the northern Great Barrier Reef have shown that the proportion of female turtles is now much higher than males, as a result of the increase in sand temperature. If this trend continues, eventually there will be no males and the population will not be able to reproduce.

Data collected from Cape York NRM sand temperature loggers will be able to tell us if marine turtle populations nesting on the western Cape beaches are facing similar rising sand temperatures and altered sex ratios.

Turtle protection cages stop predators from digging up the turtle nests, protecting eggs and allowing baby turtles to leave the nests safely.

Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) Rangers have been using these cages for several years, but have simply not had enough. They are able to be used repeatedly, so will save thousands of marine turtle nests from being predated.

The equipment being provided by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund will be used by WCTTAA groups, which is a partnership of land and sea managers from Northern Peninsula Area, Mapoon, Napranum, Pormpuraaw and Kowanyama that work together for the protection of marine turtles on the western coast of Cape York Peninsula.

Kerri Woodcock, Cape York NRM's WCTTAA Coordinator, said, 'While we have been having good success on reducing predation rates on nests, and will continue to focus on this immediate threat, it is also important to be proactive about other threats facing the turtles.'

'Climate change is one of these. By recording the sand temperatures where marine turtles are nesting on the western Cape, we hope to be able to understand the scale of the problem for these populations, so that we can consider what management actions might be needed.'

'The sand temperature loggers and nest protection cages will be available for the WCTTAA Rangers to install once it is safe to do so after the COVID-19 threat has passed.'

Two main species of sea turtles that nest on the west coast of Cape York are the flatback and the olive ridley. Both are protected under the Australian Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), and Queensland's Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Soils and Weeds Solutions Field Day



Cape York NRM hosted a Soils and Weed Solutions Field Day in Cooktown on 29 February.

The hands-on event, aimed at growers and graziers, explored the latest thinking on sustainable solutions to the ongoing challenge of weed and soil management.

The event brought together members of two Cape York agriculture and grazing networks—the Endeavour and Normanby Mixed Farming and Grazing communities.

The groups are made up of local producers and graziers who meet on a regular basis to share knowledge, socialise, support each other, and participate in professional development opportunities.

A producer needs-analysis was completed for the Endeavour peer to peer group earlier this year.

Trevor Meldrum—group facilitator and local farmer, said the Field Day was developed in response to farmers’ needs.

The groups are an initiative of Cape York NRM’s Enhanced Extension Coordination Project.

Project Coordinator, Oliver McConnachie, said the groups and the event supported better economic, social and environmental outcomes for Cape York farmers.

‘Bringing producers and graziers together provides a great opportunity for them to hear about new or improved practices from one of their own.

‘People learn best from each other, so this project is all about making that happen and bringing in experts to share their knowledge with the group, to spark even more learning and discussion. There are so many innovative thinkers here on our door-step, and their home solutions are gold for other producers.

‘People want to hear about local solutions that work!’

‘This Field Day gave the two groups a chance to spend time together and hear from some of the best in the business, including soil health expert David Hall, and *AutoWeed* engineer Alex Olsen.’

Alex has developed an innovative solution to weed management.

David, an agronomist and soil health expert who has worked in agriculture for 30 years, said his work was all about working closely with farmers to develop localised solutions.

‘I work closely with farmers and growers to develop Soil and Nutrient Management Plans to help them achieve better results, and am working on practical and meaningful soil health tests so they have a clear source of information about the state of their soils,’ he explained.

‘At the field day we discussed soil and plant nutrition, soil and plant nutrient deficiencies, how to improve soil health, soil biology and plant disease tolerances, and fertigation—a process where organic fertilisers are added to irrigation water so you get more bang for your buck every time you give your plants a drink.’

Alex Olsen holds a doctorate in Engineering from JCU where he developed deep learning algorithms to detect weeds using image shape, colour and texture.

In 2019, at the completion of the PhD, he had developed a prototype robotic spot-sprayer that was demonstrated to achieve a significant reduction in herbicide usage on Queensland cattle stations.

This research led to the start-up agricultural technology company *AutoWeed*, which is now developing this technology to be robust, user-friendly and retro-fitted onto existing spray booms for application in both crop and pasture.

Alex and the *AutoWeed* team recently demonstrated their prototype ATV spot-spraying system on Sowthistle at the ‘WeedSmart Week’ in Emerald in 2019.

They are also working with the Malanda Beef Group aiming their new technology at Navua Sedge in pasture paddocks on the Atherton Tablelands.

‘*AutoWeed*’s deep learning technology detects individual weeds within crop or pasture and allows precise per-plant control of weeds,’ Alex explained.



This initiative is 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, and Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Inc.

Speaking up about mental health



Cape York NRM recognises the challenges and complexities of living in remote Australia.

We are all one community and need to support each other, through the good times and the hard times.

With this in mind, we are sharing mental health messages across our platforms and want to hear your stories and suggestions on how to reach out, or reach in, when times are tough.

Please send through your stories to media@capeyorknrm.com.au and let us know if you would prefer us not to use your name.

One thing we know is that when things become overwhelming support from other people can really help.

It might be difficult to ask for help or you might not even realise that you need help. But getting help when you need it doesn't have to be difficult.

Don't be afraid to try different types of support until you find what works best for you.

Here are some ideas:

- Recognising when things are getting too much - look out for any changes in your behaviour, thoughts or physical health that might indicate you need some help.
- Visiting your doctor
- Looking online - Lifeline and BeyondBlue are great places to start
- Talking about your challenges with someone you trust
- Being positive and proactive - It can be helpful to focus on what you can do, rather than what's out of your control
- Getting professional help if you need it – contact your GP to get a referral

For ideas, information and support lines, check out Lifeline's Rural Mental Health page: lifecycle.org.au/get-help/topics/rural-mental-health

Content courtesy Lifeline

Cape York NRM joins call for \$4b land management and conservation package



Cape York NRM has joined over 70 natural resource management, farming and conservation organisations in a call for a \$4 billion stimulus package for the land management and conservation sector.

In an open letter to the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers, organisations including Natural Resource Management Regions Australia, Landcare Australia and Country Needs People, outlined a proposal which would see 24,000 workers undertake land management and conservation activities such as pest and weed management, coastal habitat restoration, marine debris management, and bushfire zone restoration.

Cape York CEO John Gavin said investment in land management and conservation would provide a valuable legacy for Cape York and the rest of the nation.

‘Cape York, as anyone who has visited it, or lives here, knows, is an extremely special place, which is why we need to look after it.

If governments support this proposal, there are a range of activities which would benefit the Cape including enhancing Indigenous Ranger programs, pest and weed management, revegetation, plastic and marine debris management, tourism infrastructure maintenance, erosion control, and wildlife reserve restoration and maintenance.’

Mr Gavin said investment in land management and conservation jobs could benefit many of those who have been rendered jobless as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak.

‘We are entering a period of high unemployment due to the COVID – 19 pandemic,’ he said.

‘The conservation and land management work, the demand, is there – we are calling on the state and federal government to support supply once restrictions are eased.

‘If governments support this proposal, it will reduce unemployment, build workers’ capacity, and improve the trajectory and resilience of our natural environment, farmland, and tourism destinations.’

‘There is also a broader social and economic benefit to this proposal - investing in jobs in rural and regional Australia boosts local economies.

Investment in land management and conservation jobs would bring much needed support to rural communities doing it tough as a result of drought, bushfires, and the Coronavirus pandemic.

Save the Northern Australian Fire Information website

Cape York NRM, on behalf of far northern landholders, pastoralists, conservationists and carbon project managers, is calling on the Australian and Queensland governments to continue funding the Northern Australian Fire Information (NAFI) website, a critically important, real time fire coordination tool used by land managers across northern Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Funding for the site, firenorth.org.au, runs out in June.

In an open letter, sent to federal and state politicians this week, Cape York NRM Chair Emma Jackson said it was vitally important the site remained live.

‘People from across far north Queensland came together for the Cape York Fire Forum in Cooktown last December.

Participants, including Indigenous land managers, pastoralists, conservation managers, and carbon industry and agency staff, unanimously voted to request that the Queensland and Australian

Governments provide funding to ensure that this vital service continues,’ Ms Jackson wrote.

‘The risk of uncontrolled wildfires is increasing, and sadly, the most recent fire season is demonstration of this.’

‘The NAFI website allows land managers to protect vegetation and infrastructure, and to plan and coordinate their activities with others to improve property and regional fire regimes.’

‘We urge both the Queensland and Australian Governments to extend this support to the NAFI website, which is the critical tool through which all land managers in the North access fire data. Please do not let the NAFI website fail at a time when it is needed the most.’



An open letter to the Queensland and Australian Governments

Request for ongoing funding of North Australia Fire Information Website (www.firenorth.org.au)

I am writing on behalf of all attendees at the 2019 Cape York Regional Fire Forum, to request your support for the future of the North Australia Fire Information (NAFI) website. Nearly 100 participants at the Forum, representing Indigenous land managers, pastoralists, conservation managers, carbon industry and agency staff, unanimously voted to request that the Queensland and Australian Governments provide funding to ensure that this vital service continues.

In 2004, land managers across Northern Australia began to manage and control the spread of fires using information provided through the North Australia Fire Information (NAFI) website. This revolutionary technology meant that land managers including National Park rangers, pastoralists, Indigenous land managers and industries such as mining, could monitor fires through an interactive map. For the first time land managers could access the fire history for their properties and real time information on current fires. The value of this information to people living and working in remote northern Australia cannot be overstated.

Access to information through the NAFI website is providing clear environmental, economic and social benefits. Climatic patterns have changed, seasons are unpredictable, and people have been travelling across northern Australia more than ever before. The risk of uncontrolled wildfires is increasing, and sadly the most recent fire season is demonstration of this. The NAFI website allows land managers to protect vegetation and infrastructure, and to plan and coordinate their activities with others to improve property and regional fire regimes.

Properties with carbon projects rely on the NAFI website to assist with planning and reporting cool seasonal burns. These projects provide significant financial benefit to landholders and reducing late season wildfires is providing environmental outcomes. Without the NAFI website a critical tool in the generation of Australian Carbon Credit Units will be lost and land managers will lose the ability to successfully contribute to Australia’s greenhouse gas reductions.

While we commend the Australian Government for their support of the fire scar mapping, we urge both the Queensland and Australian Governments to extend this support to the NAFI website, which is the critical tool through which all land managers in the North access fire data. Please do not let the NAFI website fail at a time when it is needed the most.

Yours Sincerely

Emma Jackson

Chairperson, Cape York NRM

Cape York Fire Forum explores carbon farming through burning



While unprecedented fires ravage southern Australia, leaders in fire management came together in Cooktown to further their work in managing fire across northern Australia for grazing, biodiversity, greenhouse gas emission reduction and cultural outcomes.

The Cape York Fire Forum, held in Cooktown on 3–4 December, focused on the opportunities and challenges of carbon farming through burning—a process where Australian Carbon Credit units are produced by preventing or reducing greenhouse emissions through planned early dry season burning practices.

Cape York NRM Biodiversity and Fire Program Manager Kerri Woodcock, who coordinated the 2019 event, said it was an opportunity for people involved in fire management on the Cape, and beyond, to come together.

‘Around 70 people came along, some from as far away as Canberra, and Injinoo on the Tip of Cape York.

We had pastoralists, Indigenous Ranger groups, State Government agencies, along with carbon farming service providers, not for profits, and other organisations working in this space – altogether a great mix,’ she said.

Presentations focused on fire management projects on the Cape, how to plan and monitor fire projects using the latest technology and the co-benefits of planned burning practices such as cultural, primary production, fire protection and biodiversity outcomes.

‘Carbon reduction is one benefit of reducing late season wildfires but there are others,’ Kerri explained.

‘By carrying out planned burns early in the season, you can select the vegetation type, fuel loads and weather for cooler and patchier burns.

This protects plants, animals and ground cover, which prevents erosion and supports primary production.

Arson awareness campaign for the Cape

Participants at the Fire Forum requested Cape York NRM develop an Arson Awareness campaign for the Cape. We are doing just that—so keep an eye out for our arson awareness messages in our newsletter, eBulletin and social media feeds.

The Fire Forum was delivered as part of a pilot project of the Land Restoration Fund and was supported by the Queensland Government, Cape York NRM, and The Nature Conservancy



If you're heading out bush be an #ArsonAlly
If you see someone illegally lighting a fire
call the police on 131 444

#ArsonAwareness

Update from the Directors

Cape York is one of the only places in the country that is able to isolate as a region. While this is a valuable situation for our residents, it brings with it many challenges for our teams to continue to deliver on projects.

Crisis brings creativity, and our team is working hard to service the Cape through NRM activities as much as possible, without physically getting out and about.

Your Board believes this is not a time to put business on hold, but a time to progress by adapting to modified delivery methods and outcomes. We feel for our crew, and our partners, and the challenges they are currently facing. Every one of us cares deeply about the Cape and the importance of delivering on projects together.

For us, our priority is looking after our people within the organisation and being kind to the needs of everyone. Our staff are rising to the challenges that the restrictions have brought, and offering whatever help they can to those in Cape York, without being here physically. We are also negotiating with investors to make sure most projects carry on post COVID-19.

2020 marks the 10-year birthday of this organisation with plans for celebrations altering somewhat. Who said that we must celebrate the commencement of an organisation at the ten-year mark? Who decided that we celebrate in a traditional way? We are working on it and adapting the plans, just as many of you also have to with your own celebrations.

Our methods of communication and connection within the organisation have changed, our priorities have changed and our outcomes will change, but your Board is still continuing with governance expectations, our CEO, John, is leading this whole organisation with improved collaboration, communication, a calmness and a compassionate approach towards his staff, our partners and broader community.










Natural resource management still needs you to play your role. Continue with your fire management planning, weed spraying, feral animal control and repairs to property infrastructure.

Although much of the world outside of Cape York may be very much brought to a halt, the landscape does not understand this expectation. We still need to do our bit.

Stay healthy and stay safe. The Board commends the whole of Cape York and the communities for supporting the importance of protecting this region.



ARCHER RIVER | PHOTO PROVIDED BY SALLY GRAY

 <p>Emma Jackson Chairperson Primary Industries Sector</p>	 <p>Trevor Meldrum Vice Chairperson Community Sector</p>	 <p>Joseph Elu Indigenous Sector Zone 1</p>
 <p>Pauline Smith Indigenous Sector Zone 2</p>	 <p>Eric Rosendale Indigenous Sector Zone 4</p>	 <p>Desmond Tayley Local Government Sector</p>
 <p>John Charlton Tourism, Small Business, Mining and Other Industries Sector</p>	 <p>Sally Gray Conservation Sector</p>	 <p>Currently Vacant Indigenous Sector Zone 3</p>



Cape York
Natural Resource Management

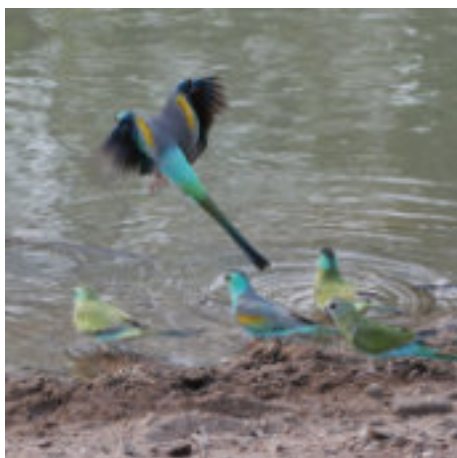


CONTACT US

Cape York Natural Resource Management, 47-49 Maunds Road | PO Box 907, Atherton QLD 4883

1300 132 262

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



1300 132 262



Cape York NRM



@capeyorknrm