

Collaborating to protect WEST ARNHEM LAND AND KAKADU

Protecting West Arnhem Land and Kakadu from invasive species and threatening processes (2018-2023)

Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) is working collaboratively with land managers, ranger groups and other organisations across the West Arnhem and Kakadu region to protect environmental assets from the negative impacts of invasive weeds, feral animals and destructive fires.

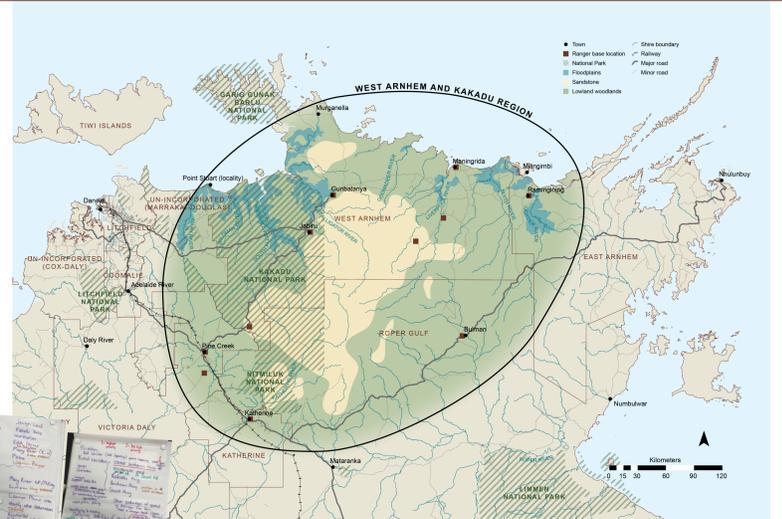
Project objectives:

- Prevent spread of gamba grass and other priority weeds into the West Arnhem and Kakadu (WAK) region - target: treatment across 40,000 ha of land adjacent to Kakadu
- Manage buffalo and other priority feral animals to reduce impacts on the WAK region - target: management of 50,000 ha adjacent to Kakadu**
- Support fire management to improve the condition of 5,000 ha of Arnhem Land Sandstone Plateau
- Increase community awareness about priority threats (i.e. weeds, ferals) to World Heritage Area, Ramsar wetlands and Arnhem Land Sandstone Plateau values
- Support collaborative planning and action to manage threats

Participatory planning to work out what needs to happen and where:

Project activities were determined using participatory planning processes. Many groups took part in workshops to determine what needed to happen and where. At the end of this process we had many lists of activities. We divided activities into three categories (weeds, ferals and fire), and two priority levels.

Activity lists from participatory planning workshop March 2019



The project region is vast, covering approximately 9 million hectares of the Top End of the NT

Many groups contributed to the participatory planning process



FERALS

Feral animal activities undertaken include surveys and planning, controlling numbers, raising awareness and monitoring impacts

Through this project, TNRM is supporting groups to enhance their feral animal management knowledge and awareness of population sizes, as well as undertaking management to reduce numbers and impacts.

Priority feral activities identified in the planning process covered a range of feral management aspects, many of them relating to improving ways to inform management. We have now completed year three of the project and most activities have been progressed. Some activities have been completed, and many are on-going.

July - August 2019: Feral herbivore surveys over Barnjarn ALT, upper Katherine River – Centipede gorge and Snowdrop area to assess feral numbers



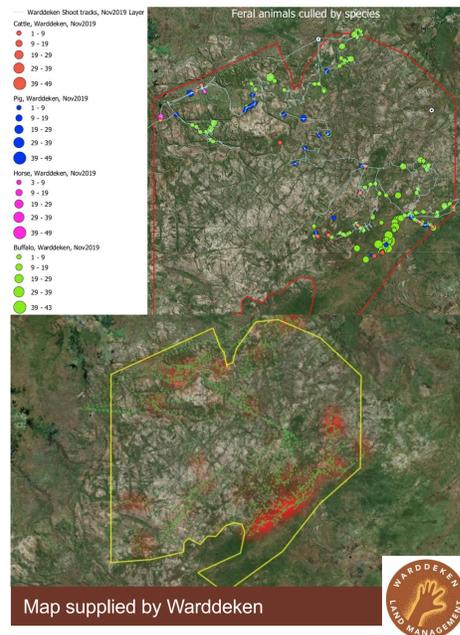
Images supplied by Wildscience

September 2019: Feral planning workshop at Jabiru, for land managers to get together and hear about feral population dynamics and research work on feral animals to help understand their movement patterns and general ecology



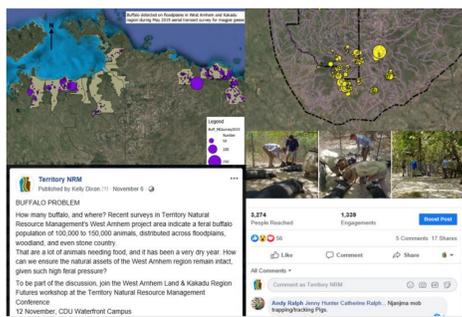
Thanks to Bawinanga for initiating the idea of a regional feral workshop

October 2019 and November 2020: Feral herbivore cull over targeted parts of Warddeken IPA, totaling more than 180,000 ha across the catchments of the Goomadeer, Liverpool, East Alligator, Mann and Cadell Rivers



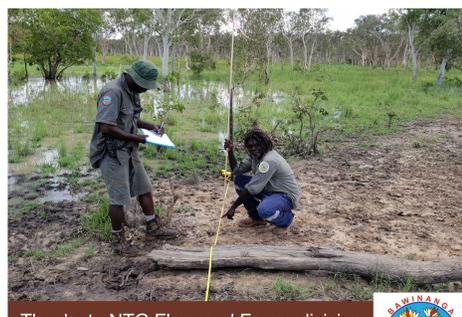
Map supplied by Warddeken

November 2019: Awareness raising campaign about feral herbivore situation, including Top End buffalo density estimates made using available data



Thanks to NTG Flora and Fauna division for making Magpie Goose survey data available for analysis

February 2021: Working with Bawinanga Rangers to estimate feral buffalo population sizes, take-off numbers and establish monitoring sites in target areas



Thanks to NTG Flora and Fauna division for making Magpie Goose survey data available for analysis

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the many stakeholders, ranger groups and organisations who have been working together to protect West Arnhem Land and Kakadu from invasive species and threatening processes

Image credits: Wildscience, Harry MacDermott, Warddeken Land Management



This project is supported through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program



Where to next (activities for years four and five of the project):

- Continue to support groups to plan for feral herbivore management and reduce numbers.
- Educate people about feral animal population growth rates, control options, and the need for strategic long term management so that feral buffalo, pigs, horses and cattle do not continue to destroy habitat across the Top End.
- Raise awareness of buffalo population sizes in West Arnhem and Kakadu - numbers have doubled in the past 10 years and this has caused muddying of permanent springs, siltation of watercourses in woodland and upland country, and loss of magpie goose and crocodile nesting habitat on floodplains through trampling and removal of nesting materials. Currently there are so many buffalo in the West Arnhem region that even if 20,000 buffalo were harvested each year, the buffalo population would continue to grow by 10%.
- Engage the buffalo industry and Northern Land Council in discussions around how best practice buffalo harvest and buffalo management on Aboriginal Land should look.