



# WORKING TOGETHER ON LAND AND SEA COUNTRY

Territory Natural Resource Management  
Supporting Aboriginal Natural Resource Management



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



## Who is Territory Natural Resource Management?

Territory NRM is a not-for-profit community organisation that supports a wide range of Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects in the Northern Territory. We're the only NRM Regional Body in the Northern Territory and we work across four regions. We partner with community organisations such as Indigenous Ranger groups, Land Councils, pastoralists, Landcare groups, Local Government, and Industry groups to achieve good NRM outcomes and create a healthy environment into the future.

Territory NRM has worked with the community to develop the NT Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRM Plan) which is used to guide good planning and decision making about NRM in the Territory. We also take a strategic approach to NRM in the Territory through implementing the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.



*NT Regions Map*

## What is Natural Resource Management or NRM?

Natural Resource Management or NRM is about the management of natural resources such as land, water, soil, plants and animals, with a particular focus on how management affects the lives of present and future generations. NRM includes the continued practice and maintenance of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) by older and younger generations of Aboriginal people.

## How we support projects with Aboriginal people

Territory NRM supports many Aboriginal groups and organisations across the Territory to do a wide range of natural resource management work on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal owned land.

## How can we help?

We support the following types of work:

- Pest and weed management
- Indigenous Ecological Knowledge
- Protecting threatened species and ecological communities
- Looking after significant cultural and natural sites
- Fire management and soil conservation
- Workshops and information about natural resource management

## We can also provide help with:

- Updates and information about NRM issues in your area
- Advice and information about NRM support and networks
- Brokering partnerships for NRM projects
- Funding support and project support
- Workshops and training
- Communicating your NRM successes

## Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Program

From 2008 to 2010 Territory NRM was funded by the Australian Government to deliver the Territory-wide Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) Program, in partnership with the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) and Central Land Council (CLC).

The IEK program included:

- 80 on-ground projects
- 2,000 indigenous people involved throughout the Territory
- 60 partner organisations involved in running the projects, including schools, community organisations, NGOs, Land Councils, health organisations, and the Northern Territory Government.

The IEK Program funded some important reports explaining relevant law and best practice guidelines for recognising and protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) including IEK in the Territory:

- Guidelines for IEK Management (including archiving and repatriation)
- Handbook for Working with IEK and Intellectual Property
- Report on the Current Status of Indigenous Intellectual Property

These resources can be found in the publications section of our website [www.territorynrm.org.au](http://www.territorynrm.org.au). A definition of ICIP can be found at the end of this brochure.

An Evaluation of the IEK Program completed in September 2011 highlights the successes and challenges of the program and makes recommendations about how IEK work could continue to be supported in the future.



**Some of the comments from people involved in IEK Projects:**

“Connecting children with country. That was the most important thing. Connecting children the first time ever. And learning some of those stories, getting a glimpse of those stories.”

“Without the program and that funding being available, the contribution of those Traditional Owners wouldn't have been valued in a two way approach to land management...”

Find the IEK Evaluation Report on our website at [www.territorynrm.org.au](http://www.territorynrm.org.au) in the About Us section under TNRM Publications Library.

*Left: Miyalk Nursery Djama  
Photo: Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation*



*Collecting bullrush seed on Santa Teresa Land Trust. Photo: Meg Mooney, Tangentyere Council*

## **IEK project: A Two-way Approach to Survey and Manage Central Australian Water Bodies**

This project was one of nine in the Territory that provided funding and support for organisations to better incorporate Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) into their mainstream NRM work.

In this project, the Northern Territory Government worked closely with Traditional Owners and other partners to include IEK into a survey and monitoring project of five culturally significant waterholes on the Santa Teresa Land Trust. The project aimed to build a two-way model for managing the waterholes, which could be used at other locations.

Over 25 trips were made to permanent springs on the Santa Teresa Land Trust between April 2008 and June 2010. Many different activities and survey techniques were used to build the model, including surveys of reptiles, birds, plants, and aquatic animals, written questionnaires and oral interviews with Traditional Owners regarding IEK, the use of infra-red surveillance cameras to monitor na-

tive wildlife and feral animals, and the participation of school students from Santa Teresa.

Traditional Owners talked about active traditional management of the sites such as keeping the sites clean for use of waterhole by important species, burning to clear vegetation, fixing up paintings and holding ceremonies, all the time talking to the land. One of the significant project results was a renewed awareness of the value of traditional water management techniques. These techniques increased both the amount and longevity (e.g., how long water lasted) of water in the landscape, which in turn had positive benefits for native wildlife and enhanced the ecological services that desert wetlands provide.



**Traditional Owner Veronica Dobson explained that:**

“The springs are still very special to us. We have to rely on funding to care and look after them because feral animals are destroying these waters. We need to care for them and protect them by keeping out horses, bullocks and camels... Now we are making changes like putting up fences to keep out the feral animals from these main sites; and getting rid of foreign grasses that animals bring in.”

*Left: Feral camel  
Photo: TNRM*



*Above: Crocodile Island Rangers sing Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. Photo: Chiara Bussini. Below: Yan-nhangu language Indigenous Ecological Knowledge resources. Photo: Bentley James*

## IEK project: Yan-nhangu Ecological Knowledge and Learning in the Crocodile Islands

This project was delivered through NAILSMA, Milingimbi Outstation Progress Resource Association (MOPRA) and the Crocodile Islands Rangers (CIR). It involved the inter-generational transfer and documentation of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge held inside the Yan-nhangu language of the islands. The project focused on the linguistic and cultural knowledge of fish, shellfish and the coastal ecology in the Crocodile Islands. People aged 1 to 95 collaborated in the transfer and maintenance of this unique site based Yan-nhangu IEK reflecting the following key learning areas:

- |               |                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| ➤ Murru       | Types of seafood               |
| ➤ Lolo        | Types of fish traps            |
| ➤ Ganatijirri | Tides and bodies of salt water |
| ➤ Gurrutu     | Kinship                        |
| ➤ Rom         | Requisite behaviours, law      |
| ➤ Yakarra     | Naming                         |
| ➤ Minytji     | Colours and patterns           |
| ➤ Dhangany    | Stories, songs and dances      |
| ➤ Wangalangga | Sites, places, location        |



Some valuable resources were produced for this project which will help pass this knowledge on to others, including two posters about Yan-nhangu fish and sea-shell names, an introductory handbook for identifying shellfish of the Crocodile Islands, and a short video about a country visit called 'Time and Tides on the Crocodile Islands.' Sound recordings were also made of a complete song cycle which will be transcribed and made into a CD for Yan-nhangu people.

The project helped with planning for the creation of a Ranger Program and other local projects to manage the threat of biodiversity loss. It also provided opportunities for the documentation of linguistic and cultural information relating to Yan-nhangu marine sites, and the documentation of more streamlined protocols for access to some of these areas by Yan-nhangu and non-Yan-nhangu people.

#### Quote from the project:

'Latju limalama binkamunu wangalangga!' –

The best thing is visiting our country!



**Above right: Miyapunu Mapu - Turtle Eggs. Photo: Vanessa Drysdale**

**Below: Teaching Indigenous Ecological Knowledge through stories. Photo: Chiara Bussini**



## Waanyi Garawa Feral Animal Survey Project

Territory Natural Resource Management supported the Waanyi Garawa Ranger Group with a grant to conduct a feral animal survey on the Waanyi Garawa Land Trust. The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) sponsored the project and Steve Eldridge, a feral animal scientist is assisting Traditional Owners to develop a feral animal management plan for the area.

This project introduced the rangers to standard aerial survey methods which are an important tool for developing feral animal management programs over large areas that are hard to get to. It was the first time rangers had learnt about these methods and participated in aerial surveys. The project introduced the rangers to Cybertracker data collection, a skill they will use for future management of the Waanyi Garawa Land Trust. The Waanyi Garawa Ranger Group also talked about feral animal management with neighbouring pastoral properties, which may lead to future collaboration and cooperation.

*Rangers and Traditional Owners involved in feral animal survey. Photo: Waanyi Garawa rangers*





The project has had some very important outcomes for managing pests on Waanyi Garawa Land Trust. Now that the Traditional Owners know approximately how many feral animals exist on the Land Trust and where they occur, they can start making decisions about how they should be managed.

A big meeting was held to talk about the survey results, and the outcomes of the meeting will be used to produce a strategy for managing feral animals on the Waanyi Garawa Land Trust. All future feral animal management undertaken on the Land Trust will follow this strategy.

#### Quote from project:

“Through this animal survey that we did on the Nicholson ALT area, I think it gives us the Rangers a better understanding of how many wild animals are there on Aboriginal land. And with so much wild animal on country this could mean jobs for Traditional Owners.”

*Above: Feral pigs, Daly River.  
Photo: Stuart Blanch*

## ***Mimosa pigra* in the Daly and Moyle Catchments**

Territory NRM is building on previous work in the Daly, Moyle & Fitzmaurice catchments by supporting a collaborative approach between Indigenous and pastoral land managers to reduce outlier infestations of the Weed of National Significance *Mimosa pigra*.

From 2009 to 2011 the Mimosa project partners made significant progress in containing the spread of *Mimosa pigra* through capacity building and working together. Some of the achievements of this project include:

- Development of a five year catchment plan
- 41 land managers demonstrated improved knowledge about mimosa control
- Over 30 000 ha surveyed for mimosa infestations
- 16 000 ha mimosa treated and re-treated

***Thamarrurr Rangers, TNRM staff and pilot working on Mimosa project. Photo: Tony Schultz***





***Thamarrurr Rangers treating mimosa.  
Photo: Caroline Biggs***

Partnerships with four Aboriginal groups – Thamarrurr, Asyrikkarrak Kirim, Woodcupaldiya and, Malak Malak Ranger Groups – were central to delivering these good outcomes.

These groups were involved in project planning and on-ground management of mimosa on Aboriginal land; working together with other landholders and government to manage mimosa in the region; capacity building activities; and providing guidance and advice on appropriate access and management of important cultural sites.

#### Quotes from the project:

“The whole community is starting to understand. Even the kids are starting to recognise mimosa. The other day some kids came to me and said “I see that one” and took me to a stand of mimosa we did not know about. If everyone knows, and we work together, we have a much better chance of finding it.”

“It is great. We go out with the men rangers and the women rangers and we will camp out for a week, working on mimosa. We have our camp and they have theirs. It saves travelling back and forth. They are up working early in the morning, coming in for their second load of spray while it is still early. We have a break during the middle of the day, then we can work till the evening. During the break they can rest, do some fishing, enjoy being out on their land.”

## Arafura Swamp Saltwater Intrusion Project

The Arafura Swamp is a nationally significant freshwater swamp located on Arnhem Land Aboriginal Land Trust near the community of Ramingining. It is the largest swamp in the Northern Territory and possibly the largest in Australia, when at its fullest. The swamp has distinctive vegetation and is of great significance for wetland biodiversity.

Since about 1995 the Yolngu people of the Arafura swamp started to notice ecological changes. Northern parts of the swamp that had previously supported magpie geese and long-necked turtles – important resources for Yolngu people – have become severely affected by saltwater entering the swamp. This change has corresponded with an increase in feral animal numbers on the swamp.

In 2011 a mapping and modelling project aiming to detail the causes, rates and impacts of saltwater intrusion on the Mary River floodplains was initiated by the NT Government. Territory NRM was able to complement this work by supporting the Wangka Djakamirr and Gurruwiling ranger groups, Northern Land Council and Charles Darwin University to study similar impacts on Arafura Swamp. This project aimed to identify options for managing these threats and present these options to landowners and other Aboriginal people to help with decision making about managing the area. The project created a hydrodynamic model of Arafura swamp to help understand the movement of water in the swamp, and Wangka Djakamirr rangers continue to test water in the region to establish baseline data.

**Senior Wangka Djakamirr ranger  
Solomon O’Ryan said**

“We all know that the sea levels is rising and will affect all coastal wetlands but maybe if we save some of them we will still have something for the future to show and tell about. All will be lost if we do not act soon.”

*Buffalo swim channel surveyed by S.O’Ryan and M. Miloshis. Photo: Chantal Bramley*





**Above: Women from Docker River burning on the Petermann Aboriginal Land Trust. Photo: Central Land Council. Below right: Traditional Burning Methods. Photo: Hayley Hollis**

## **Improved Fire Management on Aboriginal Land in the South West NT**

Funding from Territory NRM supported more than 50 Traditional Owners of the proposed Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) to participate in a two-day fire planning workshop to identify traditional owner burning priorities, including burning priorities for sites of cultural significance.

The burning priorities identified at this workshop, together with a Central Land Council Fire Management Strategy aimed at protecting biological assets, informed the 2011 burning program for the IPA. 23 on-ground burns were undertaken as part of the project, including the burning of 11 priority sites identified in the Fire Management Strategy and nine culturally significant sites identified by Traditional Owners at the workshop. Aerially-assisted burning was undertaken at two locations – Lake Neale/Lake Amadeus and Mt Currie – on the basis of their cultural significance as well as the protection of ecologically important old-growth stands of marble gum.

This project has helped to provide localised habitat protection for populations of threatened species such as the great desert skink, mulgara and brush tailed pos-

sum, and achieved a reduction in risk to fire-sensitive vegetation communities, including stands of mulga and hill/range communities. The burns have also assisted to break up large areas of high fuel loads to reduce the risk of landscape-scale wildfires.

The project also generated positive social and economic outcomes for Traditional Owners of the region. People of all ages were involved in the burning work, coming from distant communities to participate including Docker River, Mutitjulu, Ernabella, Amata, Areyonga and Alice Springs. Prior to this project, fire management activities across the Petermann region were largely confined to those undertaken by the Docker River rangers.

The 2011 fire project was a precursor to a much more ambitious \$1 million cross-border fire management program directed at collaborative fire planning and management in the NT/SA/WA tri-state region in 2012-2013.

### **Territory NRM's Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Policy**

'Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property' (ICIP) means all parts of Aboriginal cultural heritage for which the owners want recognition and protection. It includes both 'unseen' or 'intangible' aspects (such as stories, dance, songs, hunting practice) as well as physical or tangible things (such as paintings or cultural objects).

Territory NRM has developed a policy to guide our staff and project participants in relation to the recording, use, management and storage of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. The policy recognises the following important principles, and provides important steps on how to make sure these are put into practice:

- Aboriginal ownership and control
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Group property
- Benefit sharing
- Valuing inter generational transfer
- Proper acknowledgement

A full copy of the policy can be found in the publications section of our website

**[www.territorynrm.org.au/about-us/tnrm-publications-library](http://www.territorynrm.org.au/about-us/tnrm-publications-library)**



## Contacts

### How to get in touch with Territory NRM

Indigenous Engagement Coordinator:

Anna Gilfillan.....0439 833 995

### Regional Coordinators:

Top End: Chantal Bramley.....08 8999 4102

Gulf Savannah: James Wright.....08 8973 8837

Barkly/Arid: Heidi Groffen.....08 8951 9284

*Below: Fish Traps. Photo: Chiara Bussini*

*Front cover (top) 'Fire Women'. Photo: Peter Cooke, Wardekker Land Management*

*Front cover (bottom) Papunya Ranger, Bob Dixon with a Fat-tailed False Antechinus*

*Photo: Jeff Hulcombe*

Territory Natural Resource Management has made every effort to ensure this booklet does not contain material of a culturally sensitive nature. However if you have concerns over any material displayed in this booklet, please contact Territory NRM's Communications Officer at [cara.burke@territorynrm.org.au](mailto:cara.burke@territorynrm.org.au) or (08) 8999 4110

