

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Flora River Nature Park Joint Management**

A joint management arrangement for Flora River Nature Park between Wardaman Traditional Owners and Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is gaining momentum.

Since the Wardaman traditional owners of Flora River Nature Park entered into the joint management arrangement with PWS in December 2005, a Planning and Management Group has been formed and have met several times to discuss management of the Park, located 122km south west of Katherine.

All information gathered will be summarised and put into a management statement that will be the basis of a Joint Management Plan.

There has been employment of local Wardaman contractors to undertake fence-line and boat-ramp maintenance, as well as the appointment of Wardaman man Michael Murrimal who is employed as a trainee ranger at Flora River Nature Park.

Mr Murrimal previously worked as a station hand but has enjoyed his transition to a trainee ranger.

“Working for Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service means I can do hands on work on my home country, rather than on a station,” Mr Murrimal said.

“Since becoming a trainee ranger I have learned several things such as how to re-bait crocodile traps to manage crocodiles as well as learning which plants are weeds and how to control them.”

Parks and Wildlife Service ranger Sam Washusen said he too had learned a lot from Mr Murrimal since the pair recently began working together.

“Through working with Michael I have learned more about how the land can be read and the time and places where rare wildlife can be found,” Mr Washusen said.

"I have also learned more about land marks that define the Wardaman and Jawoyn boundaries as well as important sites from a particular Dreamtime story that range from an extensive area covering many Aboriginal groups across the NT.

"Working with Michael has also increased my understanding of the aspirations of the Wardaman people, the things they find important about the Park, and how interested they are in setting up tour operations on the Flora River and the benefits they will bring."

Joint management between Parks and Wildlife Service and the Indigenous Peoples of the Katherine region was recognised in the Regional and Remote Development category at last month's inaugural Chief Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management held in Alice Springs.

This project was also Highly Commended in the Indigenous Community Development category.

Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Chief District Ranger Sarah Kerin accepted the awards at the ceremony, saying it was a tremendous achievement.

"This is a marvellous recognition of the hard work and effort that staff put into ensuring the success of joint management in the region" Ms Kerin said.

"Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to strengthen its relationship with joint management partners in the Katherine region."

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Sam Washusen on 8975 9940 or Sarah Kerin on 8972 1886**

Issued: 3pm Tuesday, 31 October 2006