



Northern Territory Government

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

Fishing for science in the Howard River

How much water do fish need in the Howard River during the dry season?

This is the question Dr Simon Townsend from Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts is seeking to answer.

“Current use of groundwater in the Howard River area, in Darwin’s rural region, may reduce flow in the Howard River during the dry season,” said Dr Townsend.

“It is important flow is kept in the river so the river remains healthy and fish are one of the best indicators of how healthy a river is.”

The work is being conducted in collaboration with TRaCK, the Tropical River and Coastal Knowledge research hub at Charles Darwin University and will contribute to the water allocation plan being developed for the Darwin area by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.

Dr Townsend said they have just finished sampling fish from the Howard River at six sites and more fish will be sampled in October.

“The fish are sampled by a technique called electro-fishing, which does not harm the fish when properly used” Dr Townsend said.

“Each site covers 50-100m of the river, though the actual electrofishing is effective over less than one metre, so field officers need to walk up through shallow areas of the river.

“Electricity is used to stun the fish, so they can be collected in a net.

“They are then counted and identified before the fish are returned to the river.

“Information about the fish will be combined with a model of the river’s flow to make predictions about the movement of fish and the area of suitable places to live in the Howard River.”

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Dr Simon Townsend on 8999 3413

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