

**Media Release:**

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## **Temporary Swimming Closure at Ellery Creek due to Natural Fish Kill**

Ellery Creek Big Hole, in the West MacDonnell National Park will be temporarily closed for swimming as a natural process where weather, pond vegetation, and the interaction of the two has caused local populations of fish to die.

Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service Chief District Ranger, Chris Day said the fish kill occurs every year in winter, and has been seen at Ellery Creek Big Hole in previous years.

“The fish kill is more pronounced this year, which may be due to an above average number of fish present in the waterhole following a run of good conditions for fish breeding,” Mr Day said.

“While it is unlikely this natural event affects water conditions to a degree that would impact on human health, Parks and Wildlife are arranging bacteriological tests of the water and analysis of the dead fish as a precautionary measure.

“Until we can confirm the bacteriological levels are safe for swimming, parks and reserves affected by this seasonal event will remain closed for swimming.”

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) scientific officer Jayne Brim Box said fish kills are common in winter months, likely to be caused by low dissolved oxygen levels.

“In the winter, if the bottom anoxic layer of a pond or waterhole is disturbed, it can create a biological oxygen demand that can lead to fish kills,” Dr Brim Box said.

“This happens when rain and wind stir the waterhole up, and material on the bottom comes into contact with the upper water levels.

“Once that material reached those levels, microbes begin to decompose and in some cases, can actually use up all the oxygen in a system.

“This is quite a quick process and that is why fish can appear to die en masse and for no apparent cause.”

Initial water test results from Ellery Creek Big Hole are expected by Thursday, 30 June 2011. NRETAS will advise when bacteriological levels are safe for swimming to resume.

Parks and reserves throughout the Central Australian region that are affected by this seasonal event may be temporarily closed for swimming until bacteriological levels are confirmed to be within the national guidelines for recreational swimming. The public are urged to comply with advisory signs at these locations.

For the latest access reports to parks and reserves administered by the Northern Territory Government go to [www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks).

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**Media Note – for more information contact Chris Day on 8955 1119 or 0427 601 237.**

**Images – Evidence of the natural fish kill at Ellery Creek Big Hole.**

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