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What's been happening in 2005?

Strategies to manage and protect Darwin Harbour are making good progress during 2005.

Funding of \$300,000 from the Northern Territory Government has been allocated to implement action items listed in the Darwin Harbour Regional Plan of Management. The Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee's role is to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

Key initiatives include:

- Identification and mapping of the most significant and vulnerable areas of the harbour and its catchment.
- A public information program to let people know via newsletters, mailed flyers and media advertising the action being taken to make sure Darwin Harbour is being managed sensitively and properly.
- Further development of an integrated conceptual model of the harbour which will be used to guide management decision making.
- Development of a strategy that explores effective involvement of indigenous people in monitoring, planning and management of the Darwin Harbour region.



Field workers inspecting a quarry site in the Berry Springs area. Photo: Lorraine Williams

Understanding indigenous cultural heritage sites around the harbour

As an important part of the development of the Darwin Harbour Management Plan, an archaeological survey of Indigenous cultural heritage sites around the harbour is being undertaken.

This survey will increase our understanding of the nature and distribution of these sites, and will include the investigation of previously unsurveyed sections of the coast for cultural material.

The work is being undertaken by Charles Darwin University archaeologist Dr Patricia Bourke, in consultation with Larrakia traditional custodians, and includes a review of existing documentation and the use of maps and aerial photos to identify areas of interest. Fieldworkers are participating in 'on the ground' surveys to assess sites, an activity most effectively undertaken in the dry season as vegetation burn off improves the visibility of sites.

Aboriginal shell mounds (middens) and areas of scattered stone artefacts are the commonest archaeological sites found in the Darwin region. The middens are composed of the remains of edible shellfish and may be up to 2,500 years old. The evidence suggests that these features were built as part of ceremonial feasts and gatherings or as markers in the coastal landscape.

When the survey is completed, recommendations will be made on the conservation status and significance of the sites located. Considerations regarding the short and long term management of Indigenous cultural heritage in Darwin Harbour will be included in the recommendations, and will incorporate the views of traditional custodians. The survey should be completed this year.



What's ahead in 2005?

The following activities that aim manage and protect Darwin Harbour are being conducted in 2005:

- A cultural heritage survey to identify sites of cultural and heritage significance (see article on middens in this newsletter).
- Preparation of a storm water strategy, involving stakeholder groups.
- Identification of knowledge gaps and finalisation of a risk analysis for the Darwin Harbour region.

Environmental monitoring systems review

The *A Review of Environmental Monitoring of the Darwin Harbour Region and Recommendations for Integrated Monitoring* report is now available at: www.harbourplan.nt.gov.au. Look in the Reading and Links section then go to New Publications.

The Northern Territory Government and industry have identified over 40 monitoring programs and have measured over 100 environmental indicators. For the most part, a good job is being done with very little resources. However there needs to be a coordinated approach to ensure the health of Darwin Harbour region's environment can be assessed.

The report identifies the main barriers of achieving an integrated monitoring program for Darwin Harbour and its catchment, and makes 12 recommendations to overcome these barriers.

A major recommendation is to publish a report on the health of the Darwin Harbour and its catchment. Such a report would integrate current monitoring results, and be accessible to the community and government. This report is needed to improve accountability on the environmental management of the harbour and would be a primary a tool used to manage the region. It is anticipated that it will become more vital as development pressure increases.

To change your contact details or to receive the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee's updates, please fill out this form and post or fax it to us.

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