

DALY RIVER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING RECORD FOR

MEETING 8: 26 – 27 June 2008

Knotts Crossing Resort

Katherine

Present

Committee Member	Committee Role
John Childs	Chair
John Eddy	Represent Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Horticultural Association
Mona Liddy	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
Mark White	Proxy for William Hewitt, Representing Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
Warren de With	Represent Recreation/ Fishing interests and the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT
Bruce Sawyer	Government Primary Industries
Ian Lancaster	Government Water Manager
Stuart Gold	Government Conservation and Recreation Manager
Mark Meldrum	Mark Meldrum, Government Land Use Planner
Darlene Lion	DRMAC Executive Officer
Apologies	
Gary Higgins	Represent Tourism and the Katherine Region Tourism Association
William Hewitt	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
Stuart Blanch	Represent Conservation interests and the Environment Centre of the NT
New member to be confirmed	Government Regional Development Planner

Other Attendance

Kelly Howitt, Water Allocation Planner, attended the meeting to assist and advise on water management issue agenda items.

The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Len Kiely MLA and Adviser, Andrew Buick, attended the meeting for Agenda Item 4 to meet with DRMAC.

Presentations

Stuart Gold, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) provided a presentation for Agenda Item 7. John Woinarski and Bryan Baker from NRETA and Bob Pressey from James Cook University, attended to provide technical advice and to meet DRMAC.

Des Yinfoo and Steve Tickell, NRETA, attended the meeting for Agenda Item 8.3 to provide a presentation.

Day 1: 26 June 2008

1. Welcome

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Gary Higgins, William Hewitt and Stuart Blanche.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mark White as proxy for William Hewitt.

2. Previous Meeting

2.1 Meeting Record

The Meeting Record for Meeting 7 was accepted by DRMAC.

3. Prepare for Meeting with the Minister

The Chair advised that the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Len Kiely MLA, would attend the meeting from 11am to 12pm to meet with DRMAC.

DRMAC discussed the issues that they would talk to the Minister about, including the land clearing in the Daly River Catchment outside the moratorium area and application of the cascade assessment process, development of Living Rivers.policy and the future of DRMAC, forestry and development. DRMAC would also advise the Minister that DRMAC is considering water management relating to the Ooloo aquifer.

4 Meet with Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Len Kiely MLA

DRMAC met with the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, the Hon Len Kiely MLA, and his Advisor, Andrew Buick.

The Minister advised that the draft Water Allocation Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (Katherine) has been released for public comment and thanked the Committee for their work on water allocation. The Chair advised that DRMAC will develop a draft water allocation plan for the Ooloo aquifer.

The Minister said that he was impressed with the quality of the draft Water Allocation Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer and is confident that it provides a good model that can be used to develop the plan for the Ooloo aquifer. The Minister noted and commended the work of Daniel Connor, Water Allocation Planner with NRETA, and the Katherine Water Allocation Committee in developing the Plan for the Tindall.

DRMAC discussed a range of issues with the Minister including clearing in the Daly River Catchment outside the moratorium area, impacts, guidelines and regulations for forestry, the development of living rivers policy and DRMAC.

DRMAC were advised that codes of practice for forestry are being developed to address erosion and sediment controls and the uptake of water. NRETA is finalising work on Living Rivers policy for the Minister's consideration. An opportunity to comment on areas such as the development of forestry will be provided as part of the Living Rivers public review process.

It was noted that research is required on the levels of erosion associated with a change in land use from improved pasture to forestry, the interception of water associated with mahogany tree plantations and other tree types being planted in the Daly, and the rates of water use and loss from forestry trees compared to native trees and improved pastures.

5. Closed Discussion - member Issues

As items discussed under this agenda item are confidential to the Committee, a record of the Closed Discussion is not included in this meeting record.

6. Land Clearing Issue

6.1 Discussion on Land Clearing Issue Developments

It was suggested that a list of clearing applications and approvals in the Daly River Catchment be provided at each meeting to enable the Committee to monitor land clearing developments in the Daly River Catchment.

Action

A list of land clearing applications and approvals in the Daly River Catchment will be provided at each DRMAC meeting.

6.2 Pastoral Land Development Applications

DRMAC noted the letter of response from Graeme Fagan, A/Director Rangeland Management Branch regarding change of use of pastoral land in the Daly River Catchment.

Action

A briefing will be provided by Rangeland Management Branch for the next meeting on development applications in the Daly River Catchment lodged with the Pastoral Land Board involving change of land use and land clearing applications, as well as non-pastoral uses of pastoral land.

7. Presentation – Daly Conservation Plan

Stuart Gold from Biodiversity Conservation, NRETA, provided a presentation on the proposed development of the draft Conservation Plan for the Daly River Catchment. Stuart described the principles, objectives, consultation mechanisms and timeframe for developing the Plan. The plan will use and build on data from the previous draft Conservation Plan for the Daly Basin Bioregion. It will be broader in focus than the previous draft plan, cover the Daly River Catchment and will be developed in consultation with community and interest groups. The aim is to develop the final draft of the plan by the end of July 2009.

It is proposed that DRMAC will act as a reference group for the draft Plan and provide feedback on it as it develops, like it did with the draft plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer. DRMAC members will also facilitate the contribution and input of the stakeholder groups that they represent, eg the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group and the Amateur Fishing Association of the Northern Territory. Consultation will also be undertaken with the community and other stakeholder groups not directly represented on DRMAC.

DRMAC welcomed the proposed development of the draft Conservation Plan and expressed its support and interest in contributing to its development.

Action

Stuart Gold will provide an update briefing on the draft Conservation Plan for the Daly River Catchment for the next meeting.

8. Water Management Issue

8.1 Draft Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (Katherine)

Ian Lancaster presented DRMAC members with copies of the draft Water Allocation Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (Katherine) and associated documents which were released for public comment. The public review period for the Plan will be for 5 weeks to the end of July 2008. At the end of the public review period, comments will be collated and considered. If there are any significant issues raised, they will be referred to the Katherine Water Advisory Committee (KWAC) and DRMAC.

It was noted that the Plan does not set aside water in the consumptive pool for Indigenous economic development. Ian Lancaster advised that the Tindall Plan caters for those who currently have requirements for water. Three Indigenous associations currently have licences. It is expected that there will be water set aside for Indigenous economic development in the Draft Water

Allocation Plan for the Oolloo Aquifer as a substantial amount of land in the area is aboriginal owned land.

DRMAC requested a copy of the Independent Consultant's Report referenced in the Water Allocation Plan as URS, (2008) Katherine Water Allocation Assessment Draft Report.

Action

A copy of the Independent Consultant's Report will be sent to DRMAC and KWAC members.

8.2 Issuing of Water Extraction Licences for Lower Daly

The Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights Act (N.T) 1976 recognises the banks of the Lower Daly River as Aboriginal Land held by the Malak Malak Aboriginal Land Trust. Only one freehold landholder has formally obtained permission from the Malak Malak to extract water from the Lower Daly over Malak Malak Land.

Ian Lancaster advised DRMAC that once freehold landholders who wish to extract water from the lower Daly River have entered into a lease agreement with the NLC to legally formalise their access rights to the beds and banks of the watercourse, licences for extraction of water can be issued. The issue of non-licensed extraction of water across Malak-Malak land has been referred to the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG).

Mona Liddy advised that the ARG has asked the Northern Land Council for legal advice on this issue.

When the ARG has received legal advice and is ready to negotiate a lease with the landowners, it will advise the NRETA Director Water Management. Landowners will then be advised that they are required to negotiate a lease with the ARG to extract water from the river across Malak Malak land.

Action

An update on progress on this issue will be provided to the next meeting of DRMAC, to determine what action DRMAC may take.

9. Reports/ Information Papers

9.1 Development of a Component Tree System

A DRMAC workshop was held on 29 May 2008 to develop a component tree system for the Daly River Catchment. Participants spent the day developing 2 branches of the Component Tree.

Action

DRMAC will consider further action once the results of the workshop have been received.

9.2 Forestry in the Douglas Daly

DRMAC noted the briefing provided for agenda item 9.2.on plantation development in the Daly.

Ian Lancaster advised that an intergovernmental committee has been set up and is drafting codes of practice to address erosion and sediment control, interception and other potential impacts. Forestry companies will be required to provide data on interception of water and trans-evaporation.

Action

Bruce Sawyer will provide the names of forestry company representatives to the Executive Officer, DRMAC. A representative of one of the forestry companies will then be invited to make a presentation on forestry development in the DRC to DRMAC at the next meeting.

9.3 Draft Proposal for Irrigation Research in the Daly

Ian Lancaster advised that there is no news yet on the CSIRO application for funding for irrigation research in the Daly River Catchment.

An application for funding for another project has been submitted with the National Water Commission under the 'stressed aquifers theme'. Funding has been requested to explore water movement through the Ooloo aquifer, solute movement and recharge.

9.4 Natural Resource Management Legislation

DRMAC noted the briefing provided for agenda item 9.4.

9.5 Economic, Social and Cultural Values of the Daly

DRMAC noted that the study is pending. A budget has been allocated for the study under the Living Rivers 2008/09 budget.

9.6 Crossland Uranium Mines – Exploration in the Daly

DRMAC noted the briefing provided for agenda item 9.6.

9.7 Daly River Landscape Design Project

DRMAC noted the update briefing provided for agenda item 9.7.

Action

Ask the project researchers if the impact of clearing on soil erosion and on carbon emissions can be investigated as part of the study.

9.8 Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group Update

Mona Liddy advised that Kim Hill has been appointed as the Chief Executive of the Northern Land Council. Mona is still acting in the ARG Facilitator position and as part of her work recently attended a meeting of the Indigenous Water Policy Group in Kununurra. The ARG recently promoted their work through mounting a display at the Merrepin Arts Festival.

Action

Mona Liddy will work with the ARG to develop engagement guidelines to assist in consulting with Indigenous people in water allocation planning. These guidelines will be presented to DRMAC for consideration and use when they are developed.

Day 2: 27 June 2008

8.3 Water Allocation Planning Ooloo Aquifer Presentation – Modelling of the Ooloo Aquifer

Des Yinfoo and Steve Tickell from Land and Water Division, NRETA, provided a presentation on modelling progress for the Ooloo Aquifer. Des Yinfoo reported that NRETA has a good foundation for the model, however more data and calibration is required to further develop it.

Members appreciated the work done on the model by the project team and the scale of the task, particularly given the poor performance of the consultant in developing the model to date. Members indicated where they considered the model needed to be better developed and validated. This included a better representation of monitoring bores particularly in aquifer discharge areas and the updating of monitoring equipment, an increase in the number of recharge study sites, better surveyed data on the aquifer and better modelling of groundwater levels particularly in the southern areas of the aquifer,

Action

DRMAC is to receive an update report on the Ooloo and DRC Model at each future meeting.

Proposed Ooloo Water Control District

DRMAC reviewed the briefing *Water Control District for Ooloo Water Allocation Plan* and the options for declaration of a water control district that encompasses the entire Ooloo Aquifer area.

DRMAC recommended that the Water Control District for Katherine be revoked and replaced with a new Water Control District for the Daly River Catchment. All water allocation plans under development will fall within the Water Control District for the Daly River Catchment.

Action

DRMAC requested the following information for the next meeting:

- A map showing the locations for proposed observation bores.
- Advice on whether non-observation bores can be used for monitoring.
- An update on the Ooloo water monitoring program and the results from monitoring. This is to be provided at all future DRMAC meetings.
- The map of the Agricultural Classes of the Land Resources of the Daly Basin overlaid with the Ooloo Aquifer and land tenure boundaries.
- The map showing cleared areas in the Daly River Catchment overlaid with the Ooloo Aquifer.

8.4 Oolloo Aquifer action plan

Kelly Howitt presented a timeline for the development of the draft Oolloo Water Allocation Plan. At this stage it is estimated that the draft plan will be finalised by early 2010.

DRMAC discussed potential consultation mechanisms to ensure that local people and stakeholders can contribute to the water allocation planning process.

Action

Kelly Howitt will develop a draft community engagement plan for consideration at the next meeting.

10. Communication

10.3 Community Engagement

As per agenda item 8.4, a draft community engagement plan for the Oolloo water allocation planning process will be considered at the next meeting.

DRMAC requested another newsletter be prepared with information including the development of the draft Oolloo Water Allocation Plan and the draft Conservation Plan for the Daly.

Action

DRMAC Executive Officer to arrange the production and distribution of a DRMAC newsletter.

10.4 Membership

Membership was discussed under Agenda Item 5. Closed Discussion – Member Issues.

Action

The Chair will write to the NTCA Executive Director to formally request that NTCA provide representation on DRMAC.

10.5 New Business

DRMAC requested a briefing on the new local government arrangements in the Daly River Catchment and the implications for land clearing, water and other natural resources.

Action

Provide a briefing for the next meeting on the new local government arrangements in the Daly River Catchment and the implications for land clearing, water and other natural resources.

13. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held early October 2008 in the Douglas Daly area.

As part of the next DRMAC meeting, DRMAC will visit one of the plantations of the larger companies operating in the Douglas Daly, eg the African Mahogany Association or Great Southern.

DRMAC will also visit the Douglas Hot Springs and if possible, will meet there with traditional owners of the area.