

DALY RIVER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING RECORD FOR

MEETING 10: 11 – 12 December 2008

Darwin Airport Resort

Present

Committee Member	Committee Role
John Childs – in attendance Thursday only	Chair
Chris Makepeace	Proxy for Warren de With representing Recreation/ Fishing interests and the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT
Rob Lindsay	Proxy for Gary Higgins representing Tourism and the Katherine Region Tourism Association
Stuart Gold	Government Conservation and Recreation Manager
Mark Meldrum	Government Land Use Planner
Bruce Sawyer – Proxy for the Chair for Friday, Day 2	Government Primary Industries
Ian Lancaster	Government Water Manager
Lorraine Corowa – in attendance Thursday only	Government Regional Development Planner
Darlene Lion	DRMAC Executive Officer
Apologies	
John Ety	Represent Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Horticultural Association
Gary Higgins	Represent Tourism and the Katherine Region Tourism Association
Mona Liddy – attended for agenda item 10 only	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
William Hewitt	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
Stuart Blanch	Represent Conservation interests and the Environment Centre of the NT
Warren de With	Represent Recreation/ Fishing interests and the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT

Other Attendance

The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Alison Anderson MLA and Senior Adviser, Mathew Fagan, attended the meeting for Agenda Item 4 to meet with DRMAC.

Kelly Howitt, Water Allocation Planner, attended the meeting to advise on water management issues.

Lachlan Kelsall, Water Allocation Planner, attended the meeting for agenda items 6 and 7 to advise on water management issues.

Valemina White, Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group, attended the meeting as an observer for agenda item 11 and 12.

Phillip Goodman, Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group, attended the meeting as an observer for agenda item 11 and 12.

Presentations

Richard Cresswell from the Northern Australia Sustainable Yields project attended the meeting for Agenda Item 8 to provide a presentation.

Tony Griffiths and Alistair Stewart from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) attended the meeting for Agenda Item 9 to provide a presentation.

Provided Presentations at the DRMAC Research Forum – Agenda Item 11

Michael Douglas, TRaCK, Charles Darwin University.

Bob Wasson, Charles Darwin University.

Ian Halliday, Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries.

Marcus Finn, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

Stephen Garnett, Charles Darwin University.

Hmalan Xenie-Hunter, Charles Darwin University.

Neil Collier, Charles Darwin University.

Day 1: 9 October 2008

1. Welcome

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from John ETTY, Gary Higgins, Stuart Blanche, Mona Liddy, William Hewitt and Warren de With.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Chris Makepeace as proxy for Warren de With and Rob Lindsay as proxy for Gary Higgins.

2. Previous Meeting

2.1 Meeting Record

A change to the heading for Agenda Item 7 was noted in the Record for Meeting 9. The heading should read 'Presentation'.

The Meeting Record for Meeting 9 was accepted by DRMAC.

2.2 Action Sheet

Progress of items on the Action Sheet for Meeting 9 were noted.

Ian Lancaster advised that a one day workshop is planned for February 2009 to complete the development of the social branch of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Component Tree for the Daly River Catchment.

John Childs advised that he has not yet received a response to the letter sent to the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources regarding forestry in the Daly. Bruce Sawyer will follow up the response.

3. Prepare for Meeting with the Minister

The Chair advised that the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Alison Anderson MLA, would attend the meeting from 2.30pm on Friday 12 December 2008 to meet with DRMAC.

John Childs advised that he met with the Minister's Senior Adviser, Mathew Fagan, prior to the DRMAC meeting. Much of their discussion was about land clearing. John Childs also asked about the future of DRMAC beyond 30 June 2009. Mathew Fagan advised that the intention is to continue with DRMAC.

Ian Lancaster advised that NRETAS has included funding for DRMAC in the Living Rivers submission that Cabinet will consider.

Chris Makepeace advised that the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT has forwarded a submission to the Minister of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources about recreation fishing in the Daly River Catchment.

Lorraine Corowa advised that the Senate Standing Committee of Environment, Communications and the Arts is considering forestry and mining on the Tiwi Islands. DRMAC will monitor the outcomes of the inquiry.

Rob Lindsay talked about the increasing movement of sand down to the bottom end of the Daly and suggested that there was possible potential for sand mining and extraction. It was agreed that DRMAC would see what the TRaCK researchers have learnt about the movement of sand and associated processes through their research. DRMAC would also like to know how locals in the area feel about sand deposition and extraction, the value of the sand and the implications of extraction.

DRMAC discussed the causeway to be built to provide year round access for Nauiyu Nambiyu .

DRMAC discussed the issues that they would talk to the Minister about, including:

- update on the moratorium
- concerns about forestry in the Daly as the impacts are still unclear.

John Childs advised DRMAC that the Director of African Mahogany (Australia), Steve Hoban, has approached the Minister about forestry representation on DRMAC. John Childs asked for the Committee's views on forestry representation. It was suggested that it may be timely to review the membership of DRMAC as the terms of appointment for all DRMAC members expire on 30 June 2009. It was agreed that it is important that an advisory Committee representing all stakeholder groups exists since development is continuing throughout the Daly River Catchment and the likely focus of the Northern Australian Taskforce is on the Daly.

Action

Mark Meldrum will provide a briefing on the causeway to Nauiyu Nambiyu for DRMAC's information at the next meeting.

John Childs will circulate for comment by DRMAC members draft advice to the Minister regarding the Committee's suggestions for a review of DRMAC.

4. 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.

5. Land Clearing Issue

5.1 Discussion on Land Clearing Issue Developments

This agenda item was covered under Agenda Item 12, Meeting with the Minister.

5.2 Report of Land Clearing Applications and Approvals

DRMAC noted the reports of clearing applications and approvals in the Daly River Catchment.

Action

DRMAC requested that new applications for clearing in the Daly River Catchment are forwarded to DRMAC, out of session if required, for consideration and comment.

6. Water Management Issue

6.1 Draft Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (Katherine)

The Water Allocation Planner for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer, Lachlan Kelsall, outlined the issues raised through the consultation process for the draft Water Allocation Plan for the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (Katherine) and the subsequent revisions to the Plan and policy changes. The Katherine Water Advisory Committee has agreed to the changes.

DRMAC reviewed the revised Plan.

DRMAC agreed that the revised draft Plan should be released for a second round of consultation.

NRETAS has requested approval from the Minister to release the revised Plan for a second round of consultation. The final draft Plan will be forwarded to DRMAC for consideration and presentation to the Minister.

The aim is to have the Plan declared in April 2009 and to be able to issue licences from 1 May 2009, with the Implementation Plan well under development.

6.2 Issuing of Water Extraction Licences for Lower Daly

Lachlan Kelsall described the surface water pump extraction survey conducted in October 2008 in the lower Daly. Twenty three surface water pumps were detected. Eight applications for water extraction have been received for these pumps. Two of the applications were approved and 6 of them were pending. Only two of the properties using the pumps have legal access approved by the traditional owners of the land which the water is pumped over. The land that the pipes cross is owned by the Malak Malak Aboriginal Land Trust.

Lachlan presented the survey information to the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group in October 2008.

In the new year, NRETAS will write to the pump owners about the processes for applying for a licence to extract surface water and to request approval to extract water over Malak Malak land.

Ian Lancaster advised that he will talk to the Northern Land Council and the Malak Malak Rangers about the applications.

7. Water Allocation Planning Ooloo Aquifer

The Water Allocation Planner for the Ooloo Aquifer, Kelly Howitt, presented the revised general outcomes for the Ooloo Water Allocation Plan based on the feedback provided by DRMAC and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group. The general outcomes will guide the development of management strategies for the aquifer.

Kelly Howitt advised that the water control district for the water allocation plan, the Daly Roper Water Control District, has been approved. The District covers the Daly River and the Roper River Catchments. Licences are now required for any use of water in the District other than stock and domestic.

Kelly outlined a proposal to give licence exemptions for small volume uses that are not stock and domestic.

DRMAC agreed to a 5 megalitre limit for licence exemptions for small volume users that are not stock and domestic.

DRMAC asked that it be noted that it would also like to encourage conservation of water use by stock and domestic and small volume users.

DRMAC discussed the proposed framework for licence review and assessment. A model for calculating water use is being developed for the Douglas Daly and will use crop water use figures provided by the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources.

Kelly Howitt provided a consultation update, including:

- recent presentations were provided at the Annual General Meeting of the NT Agricultural Association and at an Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) meeting.
- the ARG, the Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and Indigenous Water Policy Group will be consulted about setting an allocation of water for Indigenous Economic Development.
- information on the Ooloo plan will soon be available on the DRMAC website
- a situation report is under development for release in late January 2009.
- community information sessions in the Douglas Daly and Katherine are planned for February 2009.

DRMAC requested that NRETAS continue to consult with all stakeholders in the development of the Ooloo Water Allocation Plan.

Action

DRMAC requested a paper for the next meeting covering:

- licencing assessment;
- options for Indigenous economic development; and
- an update on the modelling of the Ooloo aquifer.

DRMAC requested that sections of the water allocation plan be provided to the Committee for consideration as they are drafted.

8. Presentations

Richard Cresswell, Project Leader for the CSIRO Northern Australia Sustainable Yields Project, provided a presentation about the project.

Angus McGregor from the Department of Water, Environment, Heritage and the Arts provided a presentation on the Northern Australian Water Futures Assessment.

9. Presentation

Tony Griffiths from NRETAS provided an update on the Landscape Design Project. The three main components of the project include the landholders economics study, the fragmentation (correlation) study and monitoring.

John Childs advised Tony Griffiths that the project is important to DRMAC in informing the development of improved clearing guidelines and the establishment of a monitoring program, including the development of tools for landholders engaging in a landscape monitoring approach.

DRMAC requested that copies of the study reports be forwarded to it as soon as they are available.

10. Reports/ Information Papers

10.1 Draft Conservation Plan for the Daly

Stuart Gold advised that work is progressing on data collection and analysis to enable identification of high conservation value areas, hot spots and scenario planning. The plan will also need to be aligned with the clearing guidelines and new vegetation management act.

A consultation program is to be developed, which will include convening joint meetings with stakeholders of the Ooloo Water Allocation Plan and the Conservation Plan, advertising about the development of the Conservation Plan and seeking input and submissions.

Action

Stuart Gold will provide an update paper on the draft conservation plan for the next DRMAC meeting.

Brian Baker will provide a presentation on the results to date of the data analysis.

10.2 Engagement guidelines for Water Allocation Planning

As noted under 10.7, the ARG will develop engagement guidelines to be used when working with Indigenous people in water allocation planning. **DRMAC will** consider the Guidelines and how to use them when they are presented to DRMAC.

10.3 Development of a Component Tree System

As noted under 2.2, a one day workshop is planned for February 2009 to complete the development of the social branch of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Component Tree for the Daly River Catchment.

Action

The DRMAC Executive Officer will organise a one day workshop to complete the development of the social branch of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Component Tree for the Daly River Catchment and to commence development of the other outstanding branches.

10.4 Draft proposal for irrigation research in the Daly

Ian Lancaster advised that there are a couple of research proposals to be submitted for funding consideration, including a solute transport study utilising the work being done at the Peanut Company of Australia farm and another study involving putting in monitoring bores across the Ooloo aquifer.

A collaborative study to investigate the impacts of forestry on biodiversity is also being considered. This work may be done as part of the Landscape Design Project.

DRMAC supported the development of research proposals, particularly in relation to tree water use, and requested that project proposals be presented to DRMAC for consideration and comment.

10.5 Natural Resource Management Legislation

Ian Lancaster advised that NRETAS is developing a Natural Resource Management Framework for the Chief Minister. The Framework identifies NRETAS priorities for the next 4 years, including activities such as the Stage 2 Water Act Review, development of Native Vegetation Legislation, the Living Rivers Program and the review of the Pastoral Land Act and the Soil Conservation and Utilization Act.

10.6 Landscape Design Project – Steering Committee Update

DRMAC noted the update on the Landscape Design Project provided at agenda item 9.

10.7 Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group Update

Mona Liddy advised that she has resigned from the ARG and will continue work as the Facilitator for the ARG. Mona thanked DRMAC for the opportunity to participate on the Committee as an ARG representative. The development of Indigenous Engagement Guidelines has been passed on to the ARG to complete.

John Childs thanked Mona Liddy for her significant contribution to the work of DRMAC.

10.8 DRMAC Annual Report 2007-08

DRMAC noted the Annual Report for 2007-08.

10.8 Sites of Conservation Significance in the NT

Stuart Gold advised that NRETAS has identified 67 important sites for biodiversity conservation and prepared draft information papers for each of these sites. A couple of the sites are in the Daly River Catchment. The draft information papers have been made available for public comment. The identification and information on these sites are useful in assessing applications for land clearing and development.

11. DRMAC Research Forum

The following research update presentations were provided by researchers from the TRaCK consortium for DRMAC.

TRaCK Overview by Michael Douglas, Charles Darwin University

Sediment Sources and Channel Dynamics by Bob Wasson, Charles Darwin University

Regional Scale Sediment and Nutrient Models by Bob Wasson, Charles Darwin University

River Flows and Fisheries by Ian Halliday, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Value of Rivers and Wetlands to Aboriginal People by Marcus Finn, CSIRO

Valuing Tropical River Ecosystems by Stephen Garnett, on behalf of Anna Stratton, Charles Darwin University

Power Tools and Change Stories by Hmalan Xenie-Hunter, Charles Darwin University

Scenario Planning by Neil Collier, Charles Darwin University

In a workshop session following the presentations, DRMAC were provided with an opportunity to look at how the scenario planning modelling will work.

12 Meet with Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Alison Anderson MLA

DRMAC met with the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, the Hon Alison Anderson MLA, and Senior Advisor, Mathew Fagan.

The Minister thanked DRMAC for the opportunity to attend the meeting, its work throughout the year and wished the Committee and its families the best for Christmas.

The Minister advised DRMAC that she has considered DRMAC's recommendations in relation to clearing and will announce a series of major reforms in native vegetation management in the NT, including the Daly Region as follows:

- The development of a 'worlds best' Native Vegetation Management Act for the Territory.
- Amendment to Interim Development Control Order 17 (commonly known as the 'Daly Moratorium')
- An immediate tightening of land clearing procedures across the Territory.

Further details relating to the reforms are provided in the Minister's media release dated 12 December 2008.

There was considerable discussion and clarification of issues with the Minister and her Adviser.

The Minister advised that she would like to continue to work with DRMAC and attend further DRMAC meetings. DRMAC will play a role in assisting with the application of the land clearing guidelines and developing an adaptive management approach.

13 Communication

13.1 Community Engagement

DRMAC noted that consultation programs are underway for the Ooloo Water Allocation Plan and the Conservation Plan for the Daly River Catchment, as discussed at agenda items 7 and 10.1.

13.2 Membership

DRMAC membership was discussed under Agenda Item 3.

13.3 New Business

Ian Lancaster advised that the Northern Australia Sustainable Yields Project will present some preliminary reports for the 4 priority catchments to the Northern Australia Taskforce in January 2009. DRMAC may be able to see the reports by its May/ June 2009 meeting.

An email from Stuart Blanch dated 3 December 2008 was considered by DRMAC. As Stuart Blanch was not able to attend the meeting, he requested that DRMAC in his absence consider requesting a briefing on discussions between the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and NRETAS regarding the Strategic Environmental Assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBCA) and Bioregional Planning under the EPBCA.

Ian Lancaster and Stuart Gold advised that the matters are being discussed. DRMAC decided not to request a briefing at this stage.

14. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held February/ March 2009 in Darwin.