

## **4 MANAGEMENT OF THE MANGROVE RESOURCE**

### **4.1 The Framework for Mangrove Management**

#### **NT Coastal Management Policy**



A new NT Coastal and Marine Management Policy will provide a new direction for coastal zone planning, management and conservation and outline the Northern Territory Government's approach to the management and use of the coastal zone.

The policy will enable an integrated approach to conservation and development and ensure that management of the coastal zone is based upon principles of ecologically sustainable development.

The Northern Territory Government has developed a number of legislative mechanisms to ensure that the natural resources of the NT are utilised appropriately and not over exploited.

These include Acts relating to:

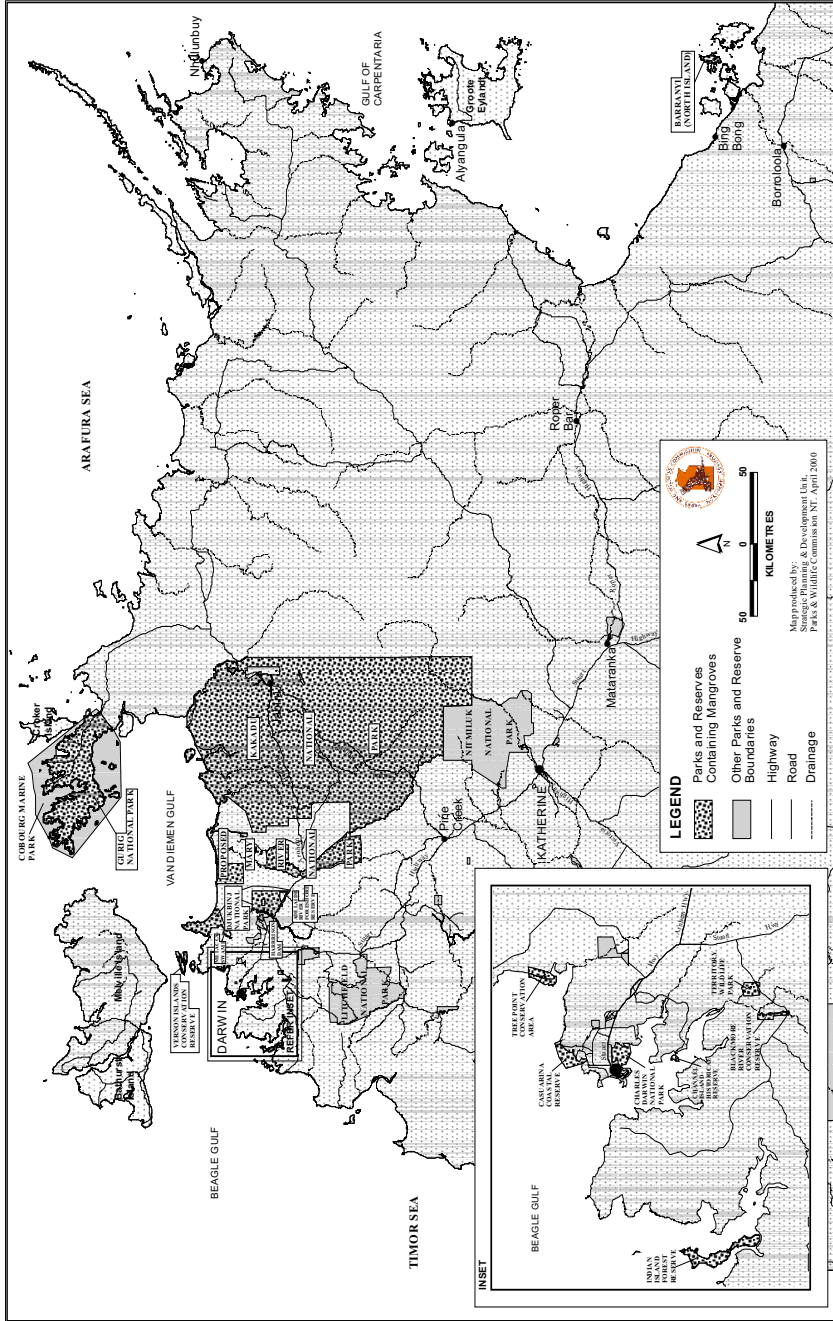
- Planning;
- Environmental Assessment;
- Parks and Wildlife Conservation;
- Fisheries; and,
- Water.

### **4.2 How will Effective Mangrove Management be Achieved?**

Effective mangrove management will be achieved by providing a coordinated framework for future mangrove conservation and utilisation around the NT coastline. To date, around 450 km<sup>2</sup> or around 12% of the mangroves found throughout the Territory have been protected within National Parks, Conservation Reserves, Nature Reserves and other Conservation areas.



*Mangrove Management in the Northern Territory*



**Figure 8** Parks and reserves of the Northern Territory (Source: PWCNT, 2000)

Effective management will be achieved by:

- highlighting mangrove areas which have specific conservation, economic or community values;
- ongoing monitoring and reporting on the condition of mangroves;
- research to fill the information gaps;
- utilising current legislative mechanisms to conserve these values, and
- ensuring that future coastal development is progressed in an ecologically sustainable manner.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to conserving and managing the mangroves of the NT in recognition of the concept of ecologically sustainable development.

As new information becomes available and the knowledge base with regard to the mangrove ecosystem expands, the Government will incorporate this accordingly into the current mangrove management regime.

#### **4.2.1 Monitoring Mangrove Ecosystems**

Monitoring mangrove ecosystems can be viewed as a highly effective management tool. As outlined in previous sections of this report, the primary aim of monitoring is to develop a better understanding of mangrove environments within the NT. This knowledge can then be applied to the ongoing protection and management of our mangrove resources.

The Northern Territory Government, in collaboration with NTU, has implemented eleven projects, the majority of which are nearing completion. These projects have been designed to gather baseline data on mangrove extent, condition, health and investigate the flora and fauna interactions that occur within them.

Our knowledge of mangrove ecosystems is increasing over time. As this knowledge base increases, new information will come to hand and management techniques will be reviewed and altered accordingly to reflect the current state of knowledge with regard to this unique ecosystem.

#### **4.2.2 Planning and Legislative Framework**

In order to conserve the values that mangroves provide, whilst allowing for sustainable coastal development, the Northern Territory Government has developed a number of legislative, planning and management mechanisms which direct and influence the management of mangrove ecosystems in the NT.



These mechanisms have been developed in accordance with National and International Agreements. They recognise the importance of mangroves to the marine ecosystems and the values that they have to the NT community.

The existing legislative controls under the *Planning Act* and the *Environmental Assessment Act* have been successfully used to limit the unnecessary destruction of mangroves. With the exception of fairly discrete and isolated developments around the coast, the majority of mangrove clearing occurs within Darwin Harbour. Only 2% of mangroves in Darwin Harbour have been cleared to date. These mangroves have been removed to enable coastal infrastructure development necessary for the future growth of Darwin. Whilst current planning measures and frameworks dealing with coastal reclamation and mangrove clearing have focussed on the Darwin region, these measures have proven to be effective.

Whilst mangroves are not under any great threat through expanding coastal development at this stage, there are other legislative mechanisms which could be pursued to afford these communities greater protection in the future.

#### **4.2.3 Knowledge Sharing: Information Dissemination/Education**

To inform the general public about the importance of mangrove communities and how they are managed in the NT, the Northern Territory Government will continue to conduct informative talks and field trips as part of their regular advisory services.

The discussions arising from these presentations have been a valuable forum for the identification of mangrove management issues and have helped in the formulation, and ongoing revision, of this Report.

#### **4.2.4 Regular Reporting**

The Report is to be updated every 3 years. As research is completed and new knowledge is gained, the report will be revised and updated.

### **4.3 Why is Mangrove Management Necessary?**

Mangrove communities are a vital and valued component of the NT environment. They support a wide array of plant and animal life. Mangrove areas are also an important part of the NT economy, supporting tourism, commercial and recreational fishing and the development sector.



In recognition of the significance of mangrove ecosystems, the Northern Territory Government has established a number of legislative and planning frameworks to provide for their sustainable management. While these mechanisms have been used to manage mangrove areas in the past, it has been recognised that a more integrated and holistic management approach is required. The management of mangroves in the NT will draw upon the strengths of existing mechanisms and frameworks, and ongoing monitoring as a management tool whilst allowing flexibility in order to integrate new knowledge of this ecosystem as it comes to hand.

#### **4.4 Who will Benefit from Mangrove Management?**

All Territorians who enjoy and utilise the unique values that mangrove ecosystems provide to the Territory will benefit from effective management of the mangrove resource. The retention of large proportions of mangrove ecosystems will ensure that recreational pursuits are maintained while opportunities to progress sustainable coastal development will support the expansion of the NT economy.

#### **4.5 Steps for the Future**

While the release of this, the first Mangrove Management Report for the Northern Territory, is a major step towards sustainable mangrove management, further scientific research will inevitably lead to a greater appreciation and understanding of these valuable ecosystems. Community views and aspirations towards effective and integrated mangrove management will also change over time.

Accordingly, there will be an ongoing requirement to continually evaluate and review the contents of this report.

