Meeting opened 10.20am.

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<tr>
<th>Committee Member</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Childs</td>
<td>Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kate Peake</td>
<td>Representing Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Horticultural Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dan Thomson</td>
<td>Represents Non-Indigenous Landholders and the NT Cattlemen’s Association</td>
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<td>Fergal O’Gara</td>
<td>Representing Non-Indigenous Landowners and the Northern Territory Agricultural Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gary Higgins</td>
<td>Representing the Northern Territory Tourism Industry and the Katherine Region Tourist Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Makepeace</td>
<td>Representing Recreation/ Fishing interests and the Amateur Fishermen’s Association of the Northern Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mona Liddy</td>
<td>Proxy for Elizabeth Sullivan - Represents Indigenous landowners and Aboriginal Reference Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juanita Croft</td>
<td>Representing Conservation interests and the Environment Centre of the NT</td>
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<td>Bruce Sawyer</td>
<td>Government Primary Industries</td>
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<td>Eddie Webber</td>
<td>Government Parks and Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerhard Visser</td>
<td>Government Land Use Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phil Anning</td>
<td>Government Regional Development Planner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherie Jackson</td>
<td>Executive Officer DRMAC</td>
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**Apologies**

- Ian Lancaster: Government Water Management
- Michael Foster: Represents Indigenous landowners and Aboriginal Reference Group
Other Attendance

The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Karl Hampton MLA attended the meeting for Agenda Item 5 to meet with DRMAC.

Presentations

Michael Douglas, Bob Pressey and Vanessa Adams from Tropical Rivers and Coast Knowledge (TRaCK) attended the meeting for Agenda Item 8, to provide a presentation.

Lachlan Kelsall from Water Resources, NRETAS, attended the meeting to advise on water management issues at agenda item 9.

Claire Brown from Water Resources, NRETAS, attended the meeting for agenda item 9, and as an observer.

Simon Townsend from the Aquatic Health Unit, NRETAS, attended the meeting for agenda item 10 to provide a presentation.

Francis Pantus from the Tropical Rivers and Coast Knowledge (TRaCK) attended the meeting for item 13 to provide a presentation.

Day 1 – 15th September 2011

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone, and introduced Juanita Croft as the new representative for Conservation interests and the Environment Centre of the NT.

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Michael Foster, Ian Lancaster and his proxy Chris Wicks.

2. Previous Meeting

2.1 Meeting Record

The Meeting Record for Meeting 19 was accepted by DRMAC.

2.2 Action Sheet

The progress of items on the Action Sheet for Meeting 19, were noted.

For action item 2.2, DRMAC agreed that a briefing paper on buffers and corridors be prepared by NRETAS, incorporating the latest knowledge, as the basis for DRMAC developing land clearing guidelines for the Daly Catchment Regional Management Plan, under the Native Vegetation Act. The briefing paper should consider buffers.
and corridors at a landscape and property scale, in the context of a healthy landscape. The paper should be available for DRMAC Meeting #21.

For action item 6.2, the Chair advised this action would be postponed until the Native Vegetation Consultation is closed

For action item 13.0, the Chair advised his letter was sent to the Minister by post on 04/08/11 and we have not yet received a response.

**ACTION**

DRMAC to ask NRETAS to present a paper based on current best knowledge on use of buffers and corridors at a landscape and property scale, at the next meeting.

**ACTION**

Gerhard Visser to follow up on the request for a copy of the infrastructure plan for the Daly.

### 3. Closed Discussion

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

**DRMAC agreed** to have a presentation at the next meeting on the latest information available on management of carbon in the landscape, its relevance to land owners and managers, and how they could benefit from appropriate carbon management. Suggestions for presenters included Jeremy Russell-Smith and David Pearse.

**ACTION**

Request an appropriate person/persons to give a presentation on exploiting and managing carbon in the landscape, to the next meeting of DRMAC.

### 5. Meet with the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Karl Hampton

DRMAC met with the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Karl Hampton MLA.

The Minister thanked the Chair and the committee for the invitation to attend the meeting and expressed he valued the input that members put into the committee.

Principle issues discussed with the Minister included the following.

- The need for adequate resourcing for the implementation and enforcement of legislation and regulations. Of particular concern are native vegetation provisions, water management, fishing, access and vandalism of private and public property.
- It was emphasised that mining and exploration both needed to be included in the provisions of the Native Vegetation Act.
- The Minister agreed with the need for the draft Ooloo Water Allocation Plan to be released for public comment as soon as possible. His understanding was that the Plan would be released for comment in 2 to 3 weeks.
(As can be seen from item 9.1 the draft Oolloo WAP will be re-presented to DRMAC at its December meeting and will not therefore be released until after that meeting.)

6. Land Clearing Issue

6.1 Report of Land Clearing Applications and Approvals
DRMAC noted the report and updates on non pastoral use approvals, subdivisions and clearing approvals.
DRMAC noted the Determinations, Appeals and Applications lodged or considered to date.

6.2 Briefing on the feedback received through the public consultation process, on the draft Native Vegetation Management Bill.
Public consultation closed on 31 May 2011. A number of groups sought extensions, the longest being until 5 August. However the live cattle export ban resulted in additional time for NT Cattlemen’s Association and the Agricultural Association to complete consultation with members. These are due to conclude on 16th September 2011.

Twenty written submissions have been received to date and all are available on the internet at: http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/natres/natveg/legislationreview/submissions.html

A range of matters were raised during consultations and in the submissions received to date. Some of the substantive matters include but are not limited to:

- **Healthy Landscapes**: The definition of healthy landscapes was queried by a number of people and organisations who felt that it emphasised environment at the exclusion of people and development. Wider input is being sought and will inform a modification of the definition.

- **Exemptions**: The list of exemptions (from requiring consent to clear) was commented on in a number of submissions. Some of the activities currently exempt that are not listed in the draft Bill include airstrips on pastoral land and in the course of Aboriginal traditional use.

- **Principles of ESD**: Principles of ecologically sustainable development were raised as an omission by the Environment Centre of the NT (ECNT) and several partner organisations in a comprehensive submission. The same issue was raised by the EPA.

- **Mining**: The issue of mining and how it will be treated under the proposed Act was raised at almost every consultation and in submissions. As written, the Bill requires mining activities to comply with all requirements. Submissions from Department of Resources and the Minerals Council of Australia (NT) sought full exemption for mining. Ongoing discussions are working through possible options.
Cap and Safety Net: Explicit quantification of a ‘cap’ on clearing within the legislation was sought by ECNT. A number of people at consultation forums asked about the scientific basis for establishing caps and safety nets.

Pastoral Land Board: Removal of the Pastoral Land Board’s consent powers for land clearing is an issue raised by the Pastoral Land Board and some individuals who see that too much power is proposed for the Chief Executive Officer of the department (NRETAS). The Board also considers that the model proposed for decisions on clearing applications is a flawed model.

Regional Planning: Support for the concept of developing regional plans came through in submissions and at consultation meetings. Department of Resources submission questioned who is best-placed to produce regional plans and noted that regional plans are de facto land use plans and perhaps best dealt with by the NT Government department that deals with strategic land use planning.

Committees: Interest was shown in the composition and function of the Territory and especially the Regional Committees. Opinion varies about whether Committees should be larger rather than smaller as flagged in the draft Bill. Discussion is generally around the concept of smaller committees that are skills based and larger committees that take account of the breadth of stakeholders and organisations in a region.

Carbon: A number of submissions raised questions around carbon and greenhouse gas emissions and that accounting for emissions (from clearing) will be problematic.

The draft Bill is undergoing a process to account for the comments made in submissions and comments in consultation meetings. In some instances further input is being sought from stakeholders e.g. dealing with mining and expanding the definitions for healthy landscapes. It is proposed to finalise work on the Bill by the end of the year.

Regulations for this legislation will include codes (guidelines) for clearing. Affected stakeholders will be included in development of those regulations.

DRMAC agreed that two issues needed particular attention in relation to the public comments on the draft NVA.

- Mining, including exploration, needs to be included in the provisions of the NVA.
- The definition of “healthy landscapes” needs to include different forms of land use and the place of people in the landscape.

ACTION
The chair will provide a draft comment and circulate to members for further comment. It will include DRMAC’s concerns with the mining management act.
6.3 Briefing on the feedback received through the public consultation process, on the proposed Pastoral Land Act Amendments

This agenda item was postponed as the consultation period is still open.

7. Presentation – progress of the soil and land testing for the land suitability and capability area/map plan in the Daly River Catchment

NRETAS Land Resources was requested to provide information to Department of Lands and Planning (DLP) to inform planning in the Daly Region. The data supplied is generally not new but utilises existing information and data that has been refined supplemented with additional work carried out at a local scale.

DLP has approached NRETAS Land Resources regarding the possibility of Land Resources Branch undertaking further detailed mapping in some areas, primarily the Nauyiya area.

Given current commitments to priorities such as Weddell landscape mapping, finalising vegetation mapping in the Daly Catchment and preparing for implementation of proposed legislative reforms it is not anticipated that any further detailed work can take place until at least the start of the dry season (May) 2012.

A new vegetation map of the Daly Basin is currently being finalised and should be available in the next month. A draft vegetation map in digital format has been supplied to DLP.

Historic soil profile and vegetation data and information are continually being captured in the NRETAS Soil and Land Information System (SALInfo) and the Resource Assessment Vegetation System (RAVS). Landscape data & vegetation collected up to 40 years and recorded as hard copy is being incorporated into the spatial data system, in excess of 20,000 records have been scanned, secured and loaded into the data sets. These two databases provide the base line data that underpins and informs land capability, land suitability, land management and vegetation management decisions.

DRMAC agreed that NRETAS management be advised that while the maps available on the NRETAS website are a valuable resource, they are extremely difficult to access because of the very unfriendly “front end” software. The maps could be an important public relations and education tool if they were easy for the public to access and use.

ACTION

A letter to be written to NRETAS suggesting that the accessibility and ease of use of their on-line maps could be improved, with benefits for the Department.

8. Consultation Workshop – Regional Conservation and Development Plan Project

This project is part of a broader project being conducted by the NERP North Australian Hub, entitled "Catchment to coast planning project" in the Fitzroy, Daly and Gilbert catchments in northern Australia.

Major features of the project incorporate the following:

- Multiple objectives – resource quality, cultural, production, development, conservation.
- Spatially uncorrelated values – different objectives have different relative value.

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• Investments are incremental – they continue over time.
• There are ongoing changes in values.

The Project will tackle the issues of managing trade-offs and achieving complimentary outcomes. It will explore different scenarios.

The purpose is to develop an interactive and participatory decision support system, with the following features:
• Done separately for each catchment.
• Will utilise and build on previous work done in the catchment.
• Will be collaborative with the community.
• Innovative.
• Will be able to be used for resolving options for developing a plan.
• It will incorporate adaptive planning and management.

It will also be useful in the following ways:
• define the best use of resources.
• not be prescriptive, but provide options and their values.
• provide useful advice for policy and investment.
• include both on-site and off-site impacts.
• provide development options and their requirements.

Objectives and goals of importance to DRMAC members were provided to the project team. These will need to be further developed and reviewed at the next DRMAC meeting.

**DRMAC agreed:**

1. That the output required from this project should include;
   • A ‘tool’ which allowed different scenarios and assumptions to be tested in developing regional plans.
   • A regional plan for the Daly Catchment based on best use of its natural resources to achieve healthy landscapes and desirable economic and social development.

2. The project team should have a discussion with DRMAC at its next meeting to agree on the Goals and Objectives for conservation and development to be used in the project.

**ACTION**

Request a report and discussion on the objectives and goals for conservation and development to be used in the Conservation and Development Project at the next DRMAC meeting.

**ACTION**

Request Michael Douglas to provide DRMAC with an update on NERP programs and current status.
DRMAC Field Trip – Tour of Local Farms

The visit to a number of irrigation farms around Katherine highlighted the following issues of relevance to regional development. These issues and others that were brought to our attention need to be considered in the 'Conservation and Development Plan' Project.

- Family farms face ongoing difficulties of accessing capital and the consequences of smaller scale of production.
- The importance of managerial ability is paramount, and has a major impact on productivity and profitability.
- There are specific requirements for farming in the tropics. Everyone who starts farming in the north has to go through the process of learning these specific 'tricks of the trade'.
- The importance of markets and marketing cannot be overstated. It impacts on all aspects including crop selection.
- An important aspect of management is flexibility in coping with variability in season, pest and disease and weed problems, labour availability, market prospects and many agronomic, financial and personal issues. Policy and practice in the provision of resources and infrastructure should assist managers in coping with these issues and their variability.

9. Water Management

9.1 Update on the progress of the draft Ooloo WAP.

The Ooloo Water Allocation Planner, Lachlan Kelsall from Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport provided an update on the Draft Ooloo Water Allocation Plan.

The Draft Ooloo WAP progress:

- Approved by DRMAC
- Acknowledged by Minister
- Draft version sent to NAILSMA and NLC
- Reviewed by NRETAS Legal Service
- Reviewed by NRETAS Policy Unit

NRETAS policy unit have raised concerns with over allocation & under allocation of modelled data, application of Erskine’s recommendations and the annual extraction limits versus monthly extraction limits.

**DRMAC agreed** that the proposed changes to the draft Ooloo Plan proposed by the NRETAS Policy Unit be accepted at this time, although we disagree with them, so that the release of the draft Plan for public discussion is not delayed.

The issues will be addressed when the final version of the Ooloo WAP is being drafted. In particular;

- Over and under allocation according to the hydrological model must be considered in the context of levels of confidence and accuracy, and of a precautionary approach.
• The products and findings of research must be used to improve the precision and utility of water management values, particularly Erskine’s flow values.
• Allocations to licensees need to be made in a way that enables them to undertake good crop management aimed at maximising their probability of achieving a profitable return. Annual allocations provide the necessary managerial flexibility in responding to seasonal conditions and agronomic requirements.

**DRMAC agreed** to continue with the annual allocations for the protection of cultural and environmental flow provisions.

New modelling is underway to inform the Ooloo process with results expected to be available in late September 2011. The background document has been developed and circulated internally for comment.

**ACTION**
Lachlan Kelsall to provide DRMAC with the frequency of environmental flows and impacts.

**ACTION**
DRMAC would like to see a comparison of the predicted and actual flows in the Katherine River and Daly River, at the next meeting.

**ACTION**
The background document to accompany the draft Ooloo Water Allocation Plan is to be sent to the Chair of DRMAC as soon as possible for comment.

**ACTION**
Given the Minister’s support, the Ooloo WAP should be released for public comment within 2 to 3 weeks of the DRMAC meeting. This will enable the completion of the WAP process to enable Ooloo water allocations to be made in early 2012.

### 9.2 Update on the Tindal (Katherine) WAP

DRMAC agreed that a progress report on the implementation of the Tindal (Katherine) WAP be presented at the next meeting to enable DRMAC to understand the issues and respond to them as necessary. The report to include:

- The number and size of water trades.
- The status of implementation of development plans. The numbers in each category of; fully on schedule, partially, delayed, not commenced.
- Water use compared with predicted use. In total and by licensee (% categories under and over).
- Status of the SIR.

**ACTION**
Lachlan Kelsall is to be asked to provide a report and briefing on the progress of implementation of the Tindal (Katherine) WAP with particular reference to trading, water use and development, to the next meeting of DRMAC.

Simon Townsend from Aquatic Health Unit NRETAS on behalf of the Daly River Monitoring Advisory Group (DRMAG) presented the Daly Health in the Daly Catchment draft report to DRMAC for comment and evaluation.

The Water Quality Report for the Daly River Catchment should continue to be developed with the objective of a release for public comment in 2012.

**DRMAC agreed** that Members would send comments on the draft report to Simon Townsend.

**ACTION**
Simon Townsend to provide an update on the Water Quality Report at the next DRMAC meeting.

11. Presentation – Progress report on the development plans for the Daly River Crossing

Gerhard Visser advised the committee on the progress of the Land Use Plan for the Douglas Daly region.

The boundaries of the regional study area have been determined in conjunction with NRETAS. In order to ensure conformity with prospective regional native vegetation retention and management plans the boundaries for the study area have been based on sub-catchments in the north-western section of the Daly River catchment area.

NRETAS has been requested to provide the appropriate vegetation datasets for the study area to allow mapping of sensitive vegetation areas to provide a broad overview of “no-go” areas.

A principle agreement has been reached that a co-funded mapping study will be undertaken for relevant portions of the local study area north of Nauiyu to provide detailed natural resource information that is currently lacking. Final funding and approval will need to be obtained from Dir and ED.

Power and Water Corporation has been requested to provide mapping information on the services infrastructure for the regional study area to allow inclusion and evaluation of the infrastructure distribution in the Land Use Plan.

The DLP Road Network section and Transport Assets section has been approached for their input on transport infrastructure for the region and the Department of Resources has been approached for their input on mining interests in the region.

Draft Area Plans have been completed for the towns of Nauiyu, Maranunga and Fleming. The draft plans are being circulated to Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (Service Delivery Coordination Unit, Land Tenure Unit, Government Employee Housing Unit); NT Police, Fire Emergency Services; Department of Health; Department of Education; NRETAS and Power and Water Corporation for their input on current and future land use requirements.

Finalisation of draft plans for the regional and local study areas can be expected within 3 – 4 months depending on the availability of NRETAS and PWC personnel to undertake the detail investigations and mapping required for the local area.

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A draft report and plans are expected to be available for DRMAC members consideration in early 2012.

A draft report inclusive of all planning aspects should be available for circulation to stakeholders towards the middle of 2012.

At the next meeting DRMAC should consider a strategy for involving local communities in the development of these plans.

DRMAC thanked Gerhard Visser and his Department on the progress made in producing development plans for the Daly River Crossing and the regional study area.

12. Reports / Information Papers

12.1 Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group Update

Mona Liddy advised the committee that, a Water Forum of ARG members would be conducted on the 17th & 18th October 2011 in Darwin to consider the Ooloo Strategic Indigenous Reserve, and develop strategies and a response to the proposal.

13. Other Business and Comments

Francis Pantus from Tropical Rivers and Coast Knowledge (TRaCK) gave a presentation on the Daly Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) project.

The presentation related to the Tindal aquifer and Water Allocation Plan. It demonstrated the usefulness of the MSE in determining the accuracy of predictions and forecasts, the calculation of components of the model and the impacts of incorporation of new information and knowledge on the usefulness and accuracy of the hydrological models. It could also include the effects on economic development, social outcomes (e.g. population density and its impact on waste, water use), recreational harvesting and cultural use.

**DRMAC agreed** that the Daly Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) project should continue to develop scenarios for the Daly River Catchment. A presentation by Francis Pantus demonstrated applications of the software of value to the activities of DRMAC.

The particular applications of interest include the following.

- Allow the estimation of the accuracy of predictions e.g. flows.
- Enable calculation of hydrological components e.g. groundwater inflow.
- Allow calculation/prediction of the impacts of various levels of extraction.
- Refine and update sustainable environmental flows e.g. Erskine.
14. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in Darwin in early December 2011. The agenda will include:

- A report on the public consultation response to the draft Ooloo WAP.
- A report and discussion on the objectives and goals for conservation and development to be used in the Conservation and Development Project.
- A report on the implementation (water use compared with allocation, rate of development, trading) of the Tindal (Katherine) WAP.
- A presentation and discussion on the use of buffers and corridors at the landscape and property scales.
- A report on the outcomes of public consultation on the draft Native Vegetation and Pastoral Land Acts.
- The outcomes of a run of the "Ooloo Model" for this year.
- A presentation on the potential for exploitation of carbon in the environment (carbon farming, fire abatement, etc).

Meeting closed at 3.15pm.