

## 4.9.1 Indigenous Landscapes of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

Project Leader  
Mike Wood

Acknowledgements:  
Traditional Owners,  
Aboriginal Rainforest Council, Girringun  
Department of the Environment and Water Resources  
Other project partners

### Project Overview

- Issue
- How are Indigenous resource practices, knowledge and values being recognised by Wet Tropics management agencies ?
- How can Traditional Owner engagement with management be enhanced ?

## Research Aims and Objectives

1. Identify Indigenous resource use, values and knowledge relevant to WTWHA.
2. Best practice nationally and globally re: protected area co-management and incorporation of Indigenous resource use, values and knowledge. Identify gaps in WTWHA management practice.
3. Enhance Traditional Owner management capacities, e.g. research and recording capacities; data management. Professionalisation of culturally appropriate Indigenous research capacities.

## Underlying Theoretical Approach

1. Political ecology with some pragmatic use of social ecology (Berkes and Folkes, but often too reliant on 'ecosystem' metaphors when thinking of the 'social' and Indigenous understandings).
2. Potential in using Indigenous theories of environment to rethink dominant management paradigms. Different notions of agency, environmental accountability etc. Open up a wider policy agenda for both managers and Traditional Owners.
3. Use Indigenous concepts of research to generate culturally appropriate research questions and methods.
4. Collaborative approach, driven by Traditional Owners through the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, Giringun and strong partnership with the cultural mapping project.
5. Protected areas and new theoretical foundations: governance diversity, adaptive co-management, benchmarks defined by "best-practice" and heritage significance.

## Key People

### Project Team

- Steve Turton (JCU)
- \*Bruce White (Project research officer)
- \*Rosemary Hill (CSIRO, FNQ NRM Ltd)
- Indigenous research officer (in process)
- \*Chantal Roder (Project Leader, Cultural Mapping, ARC), Russell Butler (ARC) \*Allison Halliday (ARC)
- Phil Rist (Girringun), \*Leigh Pentecost (Girringun), \*Ellie Bock (Girringun)
- \*Allan Dale (FNQ NRM Ltd)
- \*Nigel Hedgecock (WTMA)

(\* = Members of Project Co-ordination Committee)

## Stakeholder groups /project partners

- Partnership group: WTMA, FNQ NRM Ltd, CSIRO, JCU, ARC, Girringun. Other groups: QEPA, DEW.
- ARC/Girringun – Cultural Heritage Mapping Project (Chantal Roder). Recording cultural heritage (sites, knowledge, songs, life story, etc.) and preparing nomination material for cultural listing of the Wet Tropics.
- ARC/Girringun drive, and partnership group co-ordination, review 4.9.1 outputs and define project objectives through Project Co-ordination Committee plus soon to be formed Traditional Owner Sub-Committee that will have greater Aboriginal involvement and input.
- Traditional Owners interested in enhancing skills in resource and cultural heritage management issues linked to Wet Tropics.

## Methodology

- To date: largely desktop reviews (IP protocols, Indigenous knowledge and values, national and global best practice management)
- Ethnography (my training) – highly detailed case studies (thick description or hyper-empiricism?).
- Indigenous research methods (e.g. accountability to elders, accountability via appropriate interaction through ARC, Giringun; narrative as environmental management).
- Systematic comparative evaluation (dimensions, thresholds of significance, criterion-based analysis, global and national focus).
- Active/ participatory learning strategies, e.g. Traditional Owner input into reports generated by 4.9.1.

## Project Timeframes

- Completion of overviews of (1) Indigenous and other research methods on resource use; and (2) global and national best practice regarding co-management (end of March 2007).
- Completion of reviews of best practice in enhancing Traditional Owner research capacities (June 2007). Data for this report largely generated by CHMP.

## Key Research Outcomes

- Identification of key values, knowledge and practice influencing Indigenous co-management aspirations.
- Reciprocal interchange of data between 4.9.1 and ARC/CHMP – currently being developed as possible model of best practice in research.
- Enhancement of Traditional Owner skills in reference to management issues and research capacity.
- Identification of best practice policy regarding Indigenous values and management in a global and national context.

## LINKS TO ECONOMICS?

- Need to have an analysis of the costs of a formal Traditional Owner management regime – cultural landscape monitoring, management and reporting in the case of re-listing as World Heritage Area.
- Possibly a role regarding Tourism and art market.
- Possibly a role in better understanding the knowledge economy (IP intersects with Indigenous protocols concerning knowledge).
- Role for Indigenous understandings of economics or economy (gift)?