

Water Quality Monitoring

Developing a Water Quality Monitoring Framework for the Katherine and Daly River Catchment

Planning is underway to develop a Water Quality Monitoring Framework (the Framework) for the Katherine and Daly River Catchments.

Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK), is working in partnership with Charles Darwin University, Greening Australia Northern Territory and the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport, to develop the Framework in consultation with the community. The project is funded by the Northern Territory Natural Resources Management Board and runs from September 2008 to the end of March 2009.

Why does water quality matter?

Changes in land use and increasing demands on our water resources often lead to a deterioration in water quality. This has been a common experience in other parts of Australia.

Poor water quality not only affects the health of the ecosystems (plants and animals) that depend on water, but it can also directly affect our own lives. For example, severe contamination of our rivers may mean that we can no longer use the water for drinking or swimming, watering stock or irrigating crops.

What is the purpose of the Framework?

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- a) Identify beneficial uses for our water resources (where they have not already been set), so they can be appropriately managed in the future to protect the needs of water dependent ecosystems, current water users, existing businesses and allow for future development in a sustainable manner, and
- b) Guide the planning and implementation of water quality monitoring programs in an integrated, comprehensive manner.

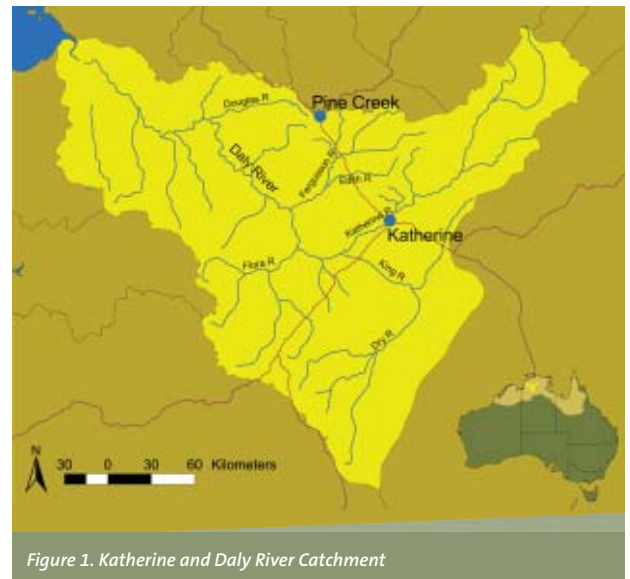


Figure 1. Katherine and Daly River Catchment

What does the Framework examine?

The focus of the Framework is on water quality and relates to the chemical and physical nature of water (e.g. turbidity, nutrients, and pH). It does not include all aspects of river health (e.g. habitat, fish, turtles and plants) however, it is important to realise that these are directly linked.

The Framework will cover surface water (water in rivers and creeks) and groundwater (water within aquifers accessed via bores and springs) within the Katherine and Daly River catchment, upstream of the Daly River estuary (refer to **Figure 1**).

The Framework will be consistent with the National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS), by adopting an adaptive management approach and undertaking community and stakeholder consultation. The ideas of the community and key stakeholders will be sought so that the Framework is locally relevant and captures the values and beneficial uses that the community want to protect now and for future generations.

What are beneficial uses and why are they important?

Beneficial uses describe the purpose of water use that the community wants to maintain and protect.

Once the beneficial uses for the water resources have been identified then targets can be set. Water quality monitoring will inform managers and stakeholders as to whether or not those targets are being met. This will assist with early detection of potential problems and prioritising resource management efforts. There are 7 categories of beneficial uses including the protection of:

- The environment
- Public water supply
- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Culture, recreation and aesthetics
- Rural stock and domestic
- Industry

What information is the project seeking from stakeholders and community members?

The community and key stakeholders will be asked questions such as:

- What are the current and future values and uses of the water resources you want to protect?
- What are the risks or threats to the quality of our water resources?
- What are the priorities for monitoring?
- Who can and should be doing the monitoring?
- How can monitoring fit into our current management systems?

The answers to these questions will be vital to informing the development of the Framework and identifying beneficial uses (where they have not been set previously).



What are the major steps and times when input will be required?

Date	Framework Development
1. Sept 2008	Review Existing Information
2. Early Oct 2008	Raise Awareness of Project – Identify stakeholders
3. Oct – Early Dec 2008	Seek input through individual, group and public meetings and written submissions. Public Meetings will be held 14 Oct 2008 – 7 Nov 2008
4. Jan 2009	Release Draft Framework for comment
5. Jan – Feb 2009	Call for submission on Draft Framework
6. Mar 2009	Amend Draft Framework
7. Mar 2009	Submit Framework

How do I get involved?

We all use water in our daily lives and we all have a role to play in the management and maintenance of our water quality. If you would like to have input to the development of the Framework please contact Lyz Risby at the TRaCK Office at Charles Darwin University via phone, fax, e-mail or in writing.

By registering your interest you will be notified of upcoming public meetings and workshops, and kept informed of the development of the Framework.

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