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WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Wet Tropics assists in hurricane research

The devastating effect of cyclones on vegetation has captured the interest of a group of visiting American academics.

Several plant ecology and remote sensing researchers from the University of Maryland, Geological Sciences Department, visited the Authority to view historical records of cyclone damage in the Wet Tropics region.

Palmerston Highway post Cyclone Larry

The Professors, accompanied by a remote sensing student analyst, are experts in the field of hurricane damage and recovery of native forests. Their research program was prompted by the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

The group met with Principal Scientist Steve Goosem and Senior Technical Officer Mike Stott, to view colour infrared mapping and aerial photography collected by the Wet Tropics Management Authority following Cyclone Larry in March 2006 and Cyclone Yasi in February 2011.

Their aim was to investigate the severity of damage to vegetation and identify the most resilient species. They used algorithms to estimate the number of trees that were dead or fallen or where the vegetation was totally defoliated and correlated these findings with attributes such as slope, aspect, and altitude.

These remote sensing analyses allowed the researchers to select a range of field sites for detailed ground assessment and measurements to observe damage and regrowth of forest in the World Heritage Area. You can download a summary of the research **here**.