



BOARD COMMUNIQUE 115

The Board of Directors of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) were honoured to be on Country with Eastern Kuku Yalanji People during National Reconciliation Week. Directors were warmly welcomed onto Country with a smoking ceremony at the start of their field trip on 26 May 2021. Their board meeting followed at the Daintree Rainforest Observatory on 27 May 2021. Key items discussed included the:

- Land tenure resolution process
- Daintree Management Plan
- Ecological Restoration Initiatives
- Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program
- 2021 Rainforest Aboriginal People’s Regional Forum
- Advisory Committee Reports
- 18th Cassowary Awards

Land tenure resolution process for Daintree National Park, Ngalba Bulal National Park, Black Mountain National Park and the sea Country, Hope Islands National Park

The Board has observed land tenure resolution processes with Traditional Owners across Cape York for many years. For the first time, the Authority has been involved in this process in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area with the Eastern Kuku Yalanji Peoples (Bama) and the Department of Environment and Science (DES). The Board met with Bama, the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, DES and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) to learn more about their strategies and aspirations for Country. It was also briefed about proposed joint management activities.

The Board extends its sincere and heartfelt appreciation to Bama and Jabalbina’s Deputy Chair, board members, General Manager, Manager of Land Tenure Resolution, staff and rangers for welcoming Directors, observers and staff onto Country and for sharing experiences and learnings in the land tenure resolution process. The Board looks forward to continuing a strong partnership with Bama and Jabalbina and continues to advocate for a similar process for Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Daintree Management Plan

QPWS&P spoke about the Daintree Management Plan during the meeting. The Plan was jointly developed by DES, QPWS&P and Bama and provides a values-based management framework for the Daintree National Park. Approved by Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation in February 2019 and published in March 2019, the Plan recognises the unique cultural landscape and the World Heritage values of the national park. To ensure that the Plan includes the agreed outcomes of the joint management negotiations, it will be reviewed 12 months from the signing of the Indigenous Management Agreement – the agreement to formalise the joint management arrangements at handback.

Wet Tropics Bioregion Ecological Restoration Initiatives

Following the launch of the Authority’s Accept Act Adapt Climate Adaptation Plan in 2019, efforts are escalating with its response to climate change in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The 2020-21 State of the Wet Tropics report will focus on ecological restoration and the Authority will be hosting an ecological restoration symposium in September 2021. The Board endorsed progressing a restoration initiative in the Southern Atherton Tablelands with partners and Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and recognised the importance of the region to assist the World Heritage Area adapt to climate change.

The initiative will support the work of existing partners and bring in new partners to improve connectivity and extent of habitat patches to ensure future climate change refugia.

The Board noted the Authority's progress on a range of other adaptation initiatives including:

- a high-altitude species monitoring project in partnership with QPWS&P
- a Reef Assist project in collaboration with Rainforest Aboriginal People
- working with the Australian Tropical Herbarium, funded by the Ian Potter Foundation, with translocations of high-altitude rare species.

The Board congratulated the Authority for being recognised at the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia (2021) with an award for its on-going community restoration project at Mt Hypipamee.

Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program

The Authority's program received the Queensland Pest Animal Team Award, from the Weed Society of Queensland and was congratulated by the Board for its ongoing success. The award recognises the Authority's excellence in pest animal management and the yellow crazy ant eradication team's collaborative approach to yellow crazy ant eradication, involving all partners and stakeholders including community, industry, Traditional Owners and government.

The Board also acknowledged the success of the recent Natural Assets Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC) Taskforce in partnership with the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils. The NAMAC Taskforce has been the biggest survey yet for the Authority, with more than 100 people on the ground covering more than 240km and collecting more than 68,500 survey data points.

The Board praised the Authority for the significant media coverage of the program's success with national feature stories on the ABC network which were picked up by the BBC. The Board also noted that ongoing investment is required to ensure long term success is achieved for the eradication program.

Upcoming Rainforest Aboriginal People's Regional Forum

The Authority hosts an Annual Rainforest Aboriginal Regional Forum, as part of a commitment under the 2005 Regional Agreement. The next forum will be held in Cairns on 23 to 25 July. The forum was not able to be held last year due to COVID—19.

The Board noted the importance of being able to bring Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples together and the opportunity for the Rainforest Aboriginal People's Think Tank (RAPTT) to provide an update on the refresh of the Regional Agreement progress. A range of topics will be discussed such as pathway to treaty, Traditional Owner governance across land and sea Country and associated programs.

Advisory committees

The Scientific Advisory Committee met in April to provide input into CSIRO's climate vulnerability assessment for the region. The Board looks forward to seeing the finalised report due for release mid-year. The Community Consultative Committee has met twice since February and provided advice to the Authority on a number of issues including citizen science initiatives, appropriate funding opportunities and biosecurity priorities. It also provided detailed feedback on the Sustainable Tourism Plan following a workshop. A joint SAC and CCC meeting will be held soon.

18th Cassowary Awards

The Authority's prestigious Cassowary Awards will be held in Cairns on 19 June 2021. More than 50 nominations have been received for nine categories, which celebrate and support the outstanding contributions made towards the conservation and presentation of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The Board were delighted with the calibre of nominations and the sponsorship support this year. Up to 200 people are expected to attend the gala presentation in the Tanks Art Centre. The event will be live streamed to increase participation.

Board Strategic Priorities for 2020-2023 are now available on the Authority's website [here](#).

Board meeting 116 will be held on 4 and 5 August 2021.

For more information, please contact Phone 07 4241 0500 or email wettropics@wtma.qld.gov.au



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