

RAINFOREST ABORIGINALnews

Issue twelve : June 2020



World Heritage update

Welcome to the 12th edition of the Rainforest Aboriginal Newsletter (RAN). In this edition we share some of the on-ground stories that have been happening in the Wet Tropics region.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum scheduled for May has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More information is provided in this newsletter.

The Authority's Board of Directors held its second board meeting of the year on 19–20 March via video conference for the first time ever. Throughout the two days, the board discussed the potential short-term and medium-term impacts of COVID-19 on Authority staff, our partners and Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, as well as the Authority's capacity to implement its programs as planned. With engagement and consultation at the core of its work, the Authority will implement mechanisms to ensure engagement is maintained and projects are kept on track during this strange and challenging time.

The Aboriginal Partnerships team updated the board on the progress of the refresh of the Regional Agreement that is being led by the Traditional Owner Leadership Group (TOLG). The pandemic has impacted progress of this, particularly regarding the community engagement roadshows that were scheduled for March and April. The TOLG and partners are currently reviewing their communications strategy to ensure that effective community engagement continues to occur.

There are some changes coming with the Authority's board and committees. At the end of May, three of the Authority's Board members stepped down at the end of their term: Anne Clarke, John Courtney and Leah Talbot. The recruitment process for their replacements is currently being finalised and the new members will be announced soon.

The Authority's Scientific Advisory Committee and Community Consultative Committee recruitment process has been finalised, and the committees had their induction along with their first joint meeting on 22 May.

We would like to thank all outgoing board and committee members of the Authority and wish each of them all the best in their future endeavours.

In this difficult time, we encourage everyone to stay positive and take care.



Dr Leah Talbot and Phil Rist
Directors Wet Tropics Management
Authority Board

NRM update

We are pleased to announce that Michael Morta has joined Terrain as our new Biodiversity and Indigenous Engagement Coordinator. His background in marine, indigenous liaison and cultural heritage roles and his knowledge of Wet Tropics landscapes and communities is a welcome asset to our team, particularly to our Building Rainforest Resilience project.

Michael has joined Terrain at a very interesting time: just as the COVID-19 pandemic leads to changes in the way we operate, particularly for field work and consulting with the community. Terrain is in a good position thanks to the leadership of our CEO Stewart Christie and board chair Keith Noble, who took early and definitive action for the organisation.

Terrain is now working on the best ways to keep in touch with you all. Like many organisations, our face-to-face group meetings are moving online, we are investigating alternative ways of engaging with partners, stakeholders and the wider community.

In other news, it was great to see the Traditional Owner Leadership Group rolling out road shows in February and early March to engage Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples in the review of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement. Meetings were held in Innisfail, Atherton, Cairns and Mossman before COVID-19 measures. We are now looking at other ways to keep the community informed.

I also enjoyed being part of the recent Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Conference, hosted by the Djabugay Bulmba Rangers in conjunction with the Queensland Government at Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. One hundred and fifty rangers from all over the state were at the event. The annual conference is a great way to share knowledge on caring for country.

Barry Hunter
Director, Terrain NRM Board



Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference 2020

This year's Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference was proudly hosted by Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation and the Djabugay Bulmba Rangers in partnership with the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger (ILSR) program.

Themed 'More than a Ranger', this year's conference brought together over 150 Indigenous rangers from all over the state. Indigenous rangers came from as far as Stradbroke Island and the Torres Strait Islands to share knowledge on caring for country.

Djabugay's project manager, Barry Hunter, facilitated the three-day conference and presented some of the workshops throughout the week. Rangers were involved in several sessions exploring rangers' involvement and roles in tourism ventures. Workshops were held on Indigenous-led research, health and wellbeing, social media and public speaking. A highlight of the week was

a special training and development session that was held at the Nyawarri Estate for the 'From Bush to Buffet' session—this is planned to showcase Djabugay peoples' aspirations for a bush food and resource garden to retain cultural practices and explore economic culinary opportunities. The group enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch based on local resourcing and native ingredients before heading back to the conference in Smithfield.

The rangers attended the conference dinner that was emceed by local Murri actor and comedian Mark Sheppard. Special guest, the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts), thanked the rangers for the positive impact their culture and specialised knowledge of country brought to land management and conservation. Her encouraging words were received well, and throughout the night rangers were

seen mingling and capturing images.

Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation gave a public thanks to Minister Enoch and to the ILSR program team before the night concluded with a handover to Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, who will co-host the next conference in 2021. The final day of the conference included field trips to Mossman Gorge and Kuranda. The Bulmba rangers led the Kuranda field trip which featured a Skyrail trip to Kuranda and a guided tour of Jumrun Creek with Errol Hunter. Rangers then embarked on a return trip to Cairns aboard the Kuranda Scenic Railway.

Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation would like to thank all the attendees; it was wonderful to have you all, and a pleasure to share in your insights, experiences and stories.

See you at the 2021 Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference!

Rainforest Aboriginal Grants 2020

Round one of the Rainforest Aboriginal Grants program for the 2019/20 financial year has now closed. We thank all those who submitted an application. The Authority will be notifying all applicants of the results.

Round two for the Rainforest Aboriginal Grants program will open Monday 13 July 2020. Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and their organisations can apply for funding to support projects within the Wet Tropics Bio-cultural Region.

What's available? Funding and support from \$5,000–\$10,000 (GST exclusive).

Who can apply? Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and their organisations who are doing work in cultural or natural resource management including: ranger groups, RNTBCs, PBCs and private Indigenous-owned enterprises with a focus on working on country. Applications can be submitted by individuals or groups and evidence of support from the Traditional Owner group or PBC/RNTBC of the area is required.

What projects will the Authority fund? The Authority will fund projects that align with the Authority's Strategic

Plan. Some examples include:

- Planning to support management of country from impacts such as climate change and other threats.
- Support Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples through protection, presentations and monitoring of cultural sites.
- Develop cultural education and training to involve the community.
- Livelihood development around tourism and recreation.
- Research and recording of traditional ecological knowledge.

The process? Applications will be accepted from 13 July 2020 and close on 27 July 2020. Applicants will be notified of the outcome by 10 August 2020. Successful applicants will need to sign a funding agreement with the Authority.

How to apply?

Applications are available via email. **Please contact Alicia Haines** alicia.haines@wtma.qld.gov.au or 07 4241 0500 for a copy of the application and grant guidelines.

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum 2020—cancellation notice

As most would now be aware, the 2020 Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum that was scheduled to take place in Cairns from 9–10 May 2020 had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of Bama is our priority, and we must ensure that our Elders and knowledge holders are not unnecessarily placed at risk. We will ensure to continually update the community regarding the forum moving forward.

In addition to this, the following Rainforest Aboriginal organisations advised of the closure or reduced operations during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Djabugay Aboriginal Corporations
- Girringun Aboriginal Corporations
- Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation administration office.

With the easing of restrictions, some organisations have returned to operational functionality by adopting virtual technology.

Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' help to improve water quality

Mamu and Gulgnay people have been helping to monitor water quality in the Innisfail-Tully region through the Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project.

Five indigenous water quality samplers have joined the project team to help collect samples from waterways and piezometers.

The community-designed project is trialling different methods to improve water quality in farming hotspots, and ultimately the Great Barrier Reef.

The new team members have trained with water quality scientists from the Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science, and they've gained specialised skills.

Shai Ivey has been working on the project for over a year. He's found the job rewarding and enjoys being out in the field.

"Every day is different. I've learnt new skills and enjoy working with lots of different people, from scientists to

project staff" he said. "It's good to be part of a team and a project that's helping country."

Gulgnay Elder Clarence Kinjun has been involved in the project since it began, and his input was invaluable during Walking the Landscape workshops in the project's design phase.

Clarence now helps with piezometer water quality sampling at demonstration sites. He also maintains several of the project's in-situ water monitoring stations and flumes.

He featured in a television commercial about the project last year, and he believes getting the word out is an important part of caring for country.

"What happens on the land affects the ocean," he said. "It shouldn't rest on one individual. It's up to all of us to look after country and land."

Clarence and Mamu Elder Alf Joyce have also helped with cultural heritage assessments of catchment

repair sites and were on the scene during wetlands construction work.

Alicia Buckle, Terrain NRM's water quality leader in the Major Integrated Project, is thankful for the extra help and knowledge that the new staff bring.

"This project relies heavily on people monitoring in the field," she said. "Our new team members are a huge help for data collection, which is a fundamental element."

The Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project is funded by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program. The project also includes the construction of water treatment systems ranging from bioreactors and high-efficiency sediment basins to wetlands.

It's up to all of us look after country and land.



Traditional Owner Leadership Group update

The TOLG have continued to progress the work to refresh the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement as part of the commitment to Traditional Custodians of the Wet Tropics. As planned, a number of community roadshows were undertaken in Innisfail, Yarrabah, Atherton and Mossman however the overall attendance was far less than what was anticipated. These roadshows were to provide an opportunity for all Bama to have their say and input into the process for the refresh of the Regional Agreement. However, who would've predicted the course the last couple of months has taken with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to the cancellation of the remainder of the community roadshows, the postponement of the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' Regional Forum, and the TOLG having to re-strategise how to progress the refresh of the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement. Our work continues.

Welcome to new staff

Buddy Ahmat



Buddy recently commenced employment with the Wet Tropics Management Authority in the Principal Project Officer (Indigenous Identified) position with the Aboriginal Partnerships team. Prior to this, he was employed as the Senior Heritage Liaison Officer for 10 years with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Far North Queensland. Buddy was born and raised on

Thursday Island and relocated to Cairns which he now has called home for the past 11 years. He proudly identifies as being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with connections to the Kungarakany (Northern Territory), Kaurareg (Torres Strait/Northern Peninsula Area) and Mabuyag (Torres Strait) language groups. Buddy has worked extensively in local and state government and brings with him over 37 years of experience and knowledge working with Indigenous people, more recently in the fields of cultural heritage, Native Title and Indigenous engagement.

Michael Morta

Michael has recently been appointed as Terrain NRM's Biodiversity and Indigenous Engagement Coordinator. In this role he'll be monitoring threatened species and ecological communities across the Wet Tropics region. He will also be working with Wet Tropics Traditional Owners. Michael is a proud Ngadjon-Jii Traditional Owner.

Michael works on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8:30am-4:30pm, and on Thursdays from 8:30am-12:30pm. He can be contacted on 07 4043 8000 or by emailing: michael.morta@terrain.org.au



Updates

What's been happening in the Wet Tropics...

10-12 March: Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers Conference 2020

19-20 March: Wet Tropics Management Authority board meeting

8 April: Land Restoration Fund First Nations Webinar

23 April: Looking After Country Grants closed

20-21 May: Wet Tropics Management Authority board meeting

26 May: National Sorry Day

27 May : 1967 Referendum

27 May-3 June: Reconciliation Week

3 June: Mabo Day

What's coming up in the Wet Tropics...

5-12 July: NAIDOC Week 'Always Was, Always Will Be'

10-12 July: Cairns Indigenous Art Fair online presentation

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