

## **Progress Report CF 2011-117**

# **WAMSI 2: Kimberley Marine Research Program**

**Marine Science**

### **Project Core Team**

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### **Project status as of July 11, 2016, 1:42 p.m.**

Approved and active

### **Document endorsements and approvals as of July 11, 2016, 1:42 p.m.**

Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

## WAMSI 2: Kimberley Marine Research Program

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### Context

The Kimberley Marine Research Program (KMRP) is undertaking a program of marine research to support the management of the proposed Great Kimberley Marine Park (which will include state marine parks at Camden Sound, Horizontal Falls, North Kimberley, Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach) and the coastal waters outside of these proposed marine parks. The KMRP is being developed and implemented through the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI), with Parks and Wildlife as lead agency responsible for the direction, coordination and administration of the research program.

A Science Plan for the KMRP was developed to address priority research and information needs to support the management of ecological and social values in the Kimberley region through joint management of the Kimberley marine park network. The plan comprises a suite of multidisciplinary research projects focussed around two themes: (1) biophysical and social characterisation, to provide the foundational datasets required for marine park and marine resource management, as well as better understanding and management of current human impacts; and (2) understanding key ecosystem processes, to provide the scientific understanding of ecosystem functioning and response to a range of potential human impacts that are likely to arise in the future, including climate change.

The research program will be underway between 2012 and 2017 and will involve up to 80 scientists from eight research or management institutions in Western Australia working collaboratively on 25 research projects. Aboriginal involvement is a key component to the success of the research program and all projects are engaging with Aboriginal people and developing partnerships with the relevant traditional owners to include their participation and to ensure the research outcomes benefit local communities.

### Aims

- Ensure the KMRP research projects are developed and delivered in line with the State's priority needs, and to meet Parks and Wildlife and joint manager management strategies for the newly-formed and proposed marine parks and reserves in the Kimberley.
- Ensure integration of research projects within the KMRP, both in terms of field logistics and science findings, so that the program as a whole produces a clear understanding of Kimberley marine ecosystems and the interactions between them that is useful to management.
- Ensure that the KMRP is undertaken in a culturally appropriate way in partnership with local Aboriginal people and delivered in a way that will help their longer-term aspirations.
- Ensure that knowledge transfer and uptake occurs between scientists, joint managers and decision makers.

### Progress

- Field research has been completed for thirteen of the 21 projects with a field component while the remaining eight will be conducting field work in 16/17. Thirteen of these 21 projects have included participation by traditional owners on field work.
- Final reports have been received and reviewed for three projects and milestone reports received, reviewed and approved for an additional 13 projects.
- The final Project Agreement for the Indigenous Knowledge project was completed and signed off and the project work has commenced. This project includes a Saltwater Country Working Group with representatives from seven indigenous communities, all participating in this project on integrating indigenous knowledge with western science for healthy country management.
- Two workshops were held with the Saltwater Country Working Group that is leading the Indigenous Knowledge project to assist in developing and implementing this project and also to develop a forum for these saltwater communities to come together to share knowledge and interact with a regional perspective.
- Engagement with relevant traditional owner groups is ongoing and formal research agreements are in place with three indigenous groups. Relationships have been established and fostered with the IPA Coordinators

for Dambimangari and Bardi Jawi and the Healthy Country officer of Wunambal Gaamberra to assist with indigenous engagement and the practicalities of working on country with sea ranger groups.

- The Knowledge Transfer and Uptake Plan is being implemented through a range of activities including:
  - The KMRP Advisory Committee has been formed and includes representatives from major stakeholders including Parks and Wildlife planning and regional management staff, and Department of Fisheries and indigenous representatives. The Advisory Committee has met four times over the past year.
  - Topic-specific workshops have continued with the focus during 2015/16 on data management and sharing.
  - Two Node Leader memos have been issued to address cross-node issues including reporting, communication, data management and indigenous engagement.
  - The Node Leadership has met regularly with the WAMSI CEO to discuss project issues, program outcomes and knowledge exchange.
  - Two Science Review sessions have been held, evaluating eight KMRP projects. All actions arising from these reviews have been addressed.
  - Legacy opportunities are being developed through ongoing discussions with the WAMSI CEO, Kimberley Institute, the Saltwater Country Working Group, the science community as well as a range of central and regional Parks and Wildlife staff.
  - The Communication Strategy is being implemented through a range of activities including:
    - \* Stories released in the WAMSI Bulletin and Kimberley Tides Newsletter;
    - \* ABC radio and video communications on at least five projects;
    - \* Production of project profiles describing research objectives, findings and management implications for eight projects, which are available on-line; and
    - \* The KMRP has provided financial assistance to the Science in Roebuck Bay Seminar Series for 2016. This has included three project presentations to the community so far, with an additional two planned later in 2016.

## Management implications

The KMRP outputs will increase the capacity to manage human impacts in the Kimberley marine reserves and improve understanding of the ecological and socio-cultural significance of the biodiversity assets of the Kimberley for joint managers, industry and the community. The program also enhances the capacity of indigenous rangers and working relationships with indigenous communities, thereby increasing the opportunity for more productive and bipartisan joint management in the future. Findings to date are being used in the development of a monitoring program for key biodiversity assets across the Kimberley.

## Future directions

- Ensure that research progresses as planned and is completed in a timely manner.
- Review final reports and develop management implications and tools jointly with lead scientists and managers.
- Ensure that key research findings are shared with stakeholders in a format that allows for direct discussion and feedback on management needs, including products and tools that will support ongoing collaboration and management.
- Refine and develop a synthesis plan for the KMRP to provide a regional perspective on marine biodiversity, ecosystem function and the pressures on these values which can be mitigated by management.
- Continue with the implementation of knowledge exchange activities through the Advisory Committee and other avenues.