Concept Plan SP 2020-018

Assessing the effectiveness of the community engagement activities of the Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project.

Animal Science

Project Core Team

Supervising Scientist	Andrew T Knight
Data Custodian	Andrew T Knight
Site Custodian	

Project status as of July 3, 2020, 8:51 a.m.

Pending project plan approval

Document endorsements and approvals as of July 3, 2020, 8:51 a.m.

Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

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Biodiversity and Conservation Science Program

Animal Science

Departmental Service

Service 7: Research and Conservation Partnerships

Background

Dirk Hartog Island (DHI) is Western Australia's largest island and predominantly comprises 620 km2 of sand dunes occupied by open heath and low closed/open heath. Historically, it had a diverse fauna and rich flora (over 250 species recorded, including several local endemics). Sheep and goat pastoralism degraded the island's vegetation and eight invasive weed species are present on the island. Invasive alien fauna, notably cats, decimated the native mammal fauna.

DHI is located within the traditional lands of the Malgana Aboriginal People and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. It was gazetted as a National Park in 2009. Funding for a 20-year ecological restoration initiative through the Net Conservation Benefits Fund (NCBF) in 2008 allowed restoration of the island's vegetation communities and mammal and avian fauna. Thousands of sheep and goats were eradicated by 2017. Cat eradication began intensively in 2012 with DHI declared cat-free in October 2018. These activities prepared the island for fauna reintroductions which began in 2017 with translocation of two hare-wallaby species, with 11 more species planned for reintroduction over the next 10 years.

A community engagement project has comprised one element of the ecological restoration project. Its primary objective is to communicate the project to stakeholder groups and gain community understanding and support for the project. Stakeholders include neighbouring landholders on Dirk Hartog Island, Shire of Shark Bay, Shark Bay Community, all DHI visitors including DHI Lodge visitors and national park visitors, key contributors including NCBF, volunteers, special interest groups including Birdlife Australia, the tourism community, as well as WA visitors to Shark Bay.

Community engagement activities have included: signage on the island and the nearby mainland, biosecurity signage at Edel Land, , information on the DBCA Explore Parks and the Sharkbay.org website, ongoing biannual newsletter (Wirruwana News), ongoing updates in the town's "Inscription Post" four times annually, social media via DBCA Facebook page including all Denham groups, a permanent interpretive display at Monkey Mia, community artwork projects, children's activities in local schools and school holiday activity programs, DHI visitor and biosecurity brochures, stalls at key events including the Bush Heritage Science Fair, Denham markets, and biosecurity welcome packs for island visitors,

Understanding stakeholder's values, attitudes and behaviours is fundamental to ensuring an effective project and for adapting future communication and engagement activities, as required. An evaluation of the community engagement activities provides the opportunity to determine the effectiveness of the project.

The methodology to be applied by this research comprises seven stages: 1) strategic review of relevant literature; 2) scoping interviews with key DBCA staff linked to the DHINPERP; 3) identification of potential participants using a stakeholder analysis; 4) design and review of an online survey; 4) development of the online platform; 5) distribution of the survey to potential participants via email and social media; 6) analysis of the survey data using appropriate software; and 7) reporting of the findings, in the first instance to the DHINPERP Management Committee, and subsequently to relevant stakeholders.

Aims

The primary aim of this research is to assess the knowledge and understanding of the local community engaged by the project as regards its goals and activities.

Expected outcome

Information on the knowledge and attitudes exhibited by the local community towards the DHINPERP that is useful for determining the effectiveness of the initiative's community engagement activities.

Strategic context

Recognising the importance of, and engaging with, stakeholders in biodiversity and its conservation is a means through which to achieve outcomes sought through both the 'DBCA Strategic Directions 2018-21' and the 'DBCA Science Strategic Plan 2018-2021'. People and their communities are directly or indirectly relevant to most of the business processes of the department, as people either implement, fund or are affected by both internal and/or external DBCA activities.

The implementation of an assessment of a community engagement program is relevant to our community and partners for the achievement of four 'Strategic Directions' including: 'Biodiversity and conservation'; 'Natural and cultural values'; and 'Our community and partners'. An assessment has multiple benefits that contribute directly to the DHINPERP, including: 1) determining the effectiveness of DHINPERP community engagement activities; 2) building of partnerships between DBCA and stakeholder groups, including Traditional Owners, tourists and the public; and 3) designing future community engagement activities that can educate and inspire the broader public.

The proposed research aims to directly complement the ecological restoration work that is currently being undertaken by BCS and Regional and District staff.

Expected collaborations

Research relationships that underpin the effectiveness of this research include: Dr Andrew Knight (BCS), Dr Karl Brennan (Project Manager, DHINPERP), Ms Wendy Payne (Regional Interpretation Officer, Midwest Region/DHINPERP), John Asher (Manager, Ecosystem Health Branch, CEM), Steve Nicholson (District Manager, Shark Bay), Sue Hancock (Regional Leader Parks and Visitor Services, Midwest Region), stakeholders including mainland local residents, island residents such as those from DHI Lodge, and visitors to the island.

Proposed period of the project

March 2, 2020 – July 31, 2020

Staff time allocation

Role	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Scientist	0.3	N/A	N/A
Technical	N/A	N/A	N/A
Volunteer	N/A	N/A	N/A
Collaborator	0.07	N/A	N/A

Indicative operating budget

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Consolidated Funds (DBCA)	0	0	0
External Funding	0	0	0