



National Environmental Science Programme



Indigenous rangers trained in managing mangroves on their country

Healthy mangrove forests play a vital role to maintaining the quality of water flowing out to the Great Barrier Reef, and Traditional Owners have a strong interest in helping monitor and manage their land and sea country.

A Traditional Owner ranger group based in Bundaberg near the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef are now equipped with valuable skills and experience in monitoring and managing the health of mangroves on their sea country, after involvement with a program supported by the National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

Dr Norm Duke from James Cook University heads up a [NESP Tropical Water Quality Hub project](#) to work with Traditional Owners to collaboratively develop and deliver a mangrove management plan for the Port Curtis Coral Coast Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) area.

Dr Duke partnered with Gidarjil Development Corporation (GDC) and the wider community to train rangers in the Shoreline Video Assessment Method (S-VAM), a technique for capturing geo-referenced imagery to identify serious issues like erosion, dieback, bank accretion and infrastructure modifications like boat ramps.

Dr Duke said working with Traditional Owner groups like GDC had several advantages.

"It raises familiarity and awareness amongst these local stakeholders of coastal ecosystems, it raises the capacity of Aboriginal people and other community members to conduct scientifically valid monitoring of estuarine and shoreline habitats, it builds local ownership and responsibility amongst community for their local waterways and it provides opportunities for rangers to become qualified and licensed in small boat handling," he said.

"The results generated are useful for managers and industry end-users for their knowledge and understanding of tidal wetlands in improving water quality."

GDC Caring For Country Program project manager Ric Fenessey said involvement with the program had been very beneficial for the organisation's rangers, particularly the development of skills needed to meet its strict scientific standards.

"The program has been great for the rangers, it's provided a very good opportunity for them to reconnect with their sea country and learn a lot more about mangroves and saltmarshes in the area," he said.

"It's quite a demanding methodology so they have had to zone into the fact that quality control on the data is essential to make sure the data is useable for scientific purposes, the method has to be followed to the letter.

"These skills are transferrable to use in other areas - we have had one ranger who's now doing compliance training work with GBRMPA, and another that has enrolled in Environmental Management studies at university for next year because of his experiences in this program."

Factsheets and other reports about this collaborative work on the southern coasts of the Great Barrier Reef can be found [on the project's website](#), including:

- Developing a Mangrove Management Plan (<http://bit.ly/2KMuOmM>)
- Mangrove Management Plan (<http://bit.ly/2Wwpm0>)



Indigenous Rangers from Gidarjil Development Corporation monitoring mangrove health on their sea country in the catchments of the southern Great Barrier Reef. (image: Norm Duke)

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