



## Kimberley water activities E-bulletin January 2010

The Department of Water does a range of work in the Kimberley including:

- Licensing
- Water information (quality and quantity)
- Planning
- Waterways management



### Kimberley regional water plan progress

The department is in the middle of drafting the Kimberley regional water plan. The draft is being prepared with the input and feedback from the community and other stakeholders, following the scoping of issues and consultation.

We will be releasing this draft for public comment this year, so you will have another chance to have input.

What will the regional water plan do?

It will identify

- water issues that exist or will be apparent in the future
- the strategies to tackle these issues and
- actions that will be implemented.

How will it benefit people in the region?

It will

- Recognise issues of concern to community, industry and stakeholders
- Set a direction for Government to continue its work that is informed by the Kimberley people (such as planning, licensing, water data and research) and
- Provide a good basis for future decisions and investment.

## Other water work

### Licensing facts

Water licensing is one of the tools that the Department of Water uses to manage the Kimberley's water resources to ensure that enough good quality water is available to meet environmental needs and to support development.

Licences may be required if you are using surface or groundwater, or if you are constructing bores. You may require a permit if you are doing any works that may disturb the bed and banks of rivers and wetlands.



Water licences provide a person or company with a right to take and use a particular volume of water, subject to a set of conditions. Holding a licence does not guarantee water availability or quality but, for the term of the licence, it does protect your entitlement to access water.

More information on licensing will be provided in the next e-bulletin. If you have any licensing questions at any time, or want to find out if you need a licence or permit, contact one of the Kimberley licensing staff in the Kununurra office on 9166 4100.

## Rangers help with water sampling on the Fitzroy River

The Kimberley measurement team conducts regular low-flow water quality and quantity sampling at gauging stations on the lower Fitzroy River to improve the accuracy of level discharge rating curves. This intensive fieldwork is extremely important as it furthers knowledge of the interaction between surface and groundwater.

Michael Harris and his measurement team were thinking they could do with some extra hands on the ground so asked local rangers to assist.

So keen were the rangers to be involved that a request for two people turned into a training exercise in discharge measurement and water quality sampling for eight rangers. The Kimberley team will be endeavouring to find more opportunities to involve the various ranger groups, particularly within the water measurement and waterways' work.



## Waterways' education refunded

The region recently received funds from the WA Natural resource management program 2009–10 small projects fund for the Kimberley waterways' recovery program. This funding will allow the department to expand the **waterways' education program** and undertake the second stage of the **Fitzroy fishway scoping** study.

The waterways' education funding will build upon the delivery of the program in 2009 (a partnership between the Department of Water and UWA) and include additional schools and ranger groups. The second stage of the Fitzroy fishway project will build upon the scoping study and community consultation work undertaken by Environs Kimberley earlier last year to develop a detailed engineering design for the fishway at Camballin barrage.



## Fitzroy surface water-groundwater study

We are continuing to collect groundwater and surface water data in the floodplain below Fitzroy Crossing. Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) water quality sampling along the length of the lower Fitzroy River in 2008 showed that groundwater is entering the Fitzroy River upstream of Noonkanbah Crossing. With the consent of the land owners, and after consultation with the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the department, in collaboration with TRaCK, drilled nine shallow bores in the south east corner of Noonkanbah Station in October 2009 (top). The drilling gave information about the rocks and hence the types of aquifers present. The water levels in the bores and the river are being monitored (bottom). The chemistry of the water in the bores will be compared with the chemistry of the river water, before and after the wet season. This will tell us how and when water is flowing between the river and the shallow groundwater aquifers.

Anyone with a bore close to the river who is willing to have it monitored, or anyone seeking further information, is invited to contact Louise Stelfox in Kununurra on 9166 4123.



## Wet season flood gauging

In preparation for the impending wet season, the Water Information team has deployed mobile gauging units at two remote sites in the Kimberley (top). The units are sea containers that have been fitted out with all the necessary equipment (bottom) to undertake flood gauging when the rivers are running high. The units are also equipped with the essentials (food, power, beds, and an annexe for shelter) to allow three staff to camp at the site for up to a week.

When significant rain is received and the river begins to flood, Kununurra hydrographers will be dropped into the station via helicopter to record river flows. Setting up a wet season gauging camp is similar to the old days, except we now have telemetry technology so we can target exactly the best time to go to the station.



## Water legislation reform

At a recent Water Dialogue, WA Water Minister Graham Jacobs released the *Discussion Paper Water Resources Management Options* (found on our website [www.water.wa.gov.au](http://www.water.wa.gov.au)). Kim Taylor (right) our Director General, also made a presentation.

Developed by the Legislation and Legal Services Branch, the paper discusses the benefits for modernising water resources management legislation, and provides a package of options for the way forward.

The paper is an important step towards gaining approval to draft the legislation, and ensuring a full package of water reform is implemented under the new Government. The Minister is keen to see wide community consultation on the paper.



Contact John Roberts in our Perth office for any questions or feedback: [john.roberts@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:john.roberts@water.wa.gov.au)  
6364 7120

## La Grange field trip

Kimberley water licensing staff took advantage of a trip to the West Kimberley in October to undertake a trip to the La Grange area south of Broome. While there, staff met with pastoralists and licencees about water use, licensing and allocation planning. The two full days spent in the field on various properties proved invaluable in getting a first hand understanding of pastoral diversification activities, water requirements, the unique La Grange landscape and challenges faced by some of the commercial water users. It also gave staff the opportunity to update landholders on the status of the draft La Grange Plan and discuss and clarify key issues.



## Ord competitive tender process

The Department of Water has just invited potential irrigation water service providers to submit formal proposals for the initial stage of the Ord Irrigation Expansion Project (OIEP) by 19 January 2010.

The OIEP project forms one part of the Ord-East Kimberley Development Plan - a comprehensive package of initiatives for the East Kimberley that includes funding from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program and the Federal Government.

Water Minister Graham Jacobs said the rigorous process would ensure healthy competition from the water and irrigation services industry.

Developing the proposal process was a joint effort between technical specialists in the Department of Water and the Water Corporation, LandCorp, Department of Regional Development and Lands, Department of State Development, State Solicitors Office, Marsden Jacobs Associates and probity auditors, Stantons International.



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