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How healthy are the Daly and Katherine Rivers?

New research has set the stage for a more comprehensive and more collaborative approach to monitoring the health of the Katherine and Daly Rivers.

Researchers from the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) research hub have provided the NT government and the Natural Resource Management Board of the NT with a clear framework on how to improve water quality monitoring and how to develop water management practices that respond to monitoring results.

“A river health monitoring system for the Katherine and Daly needs to be resourced,” says TRaCK researcher Dr Simon Townsend. “And the feedback from the NT government and the Daly River Management Advisory Committee has been supportive.”

“Our report highlights the fragmented nature of water quality monitoring at present, and recommends a collaborative approach to monitoring, where there’s data shared and where there’s reporting to all members of the public and stakeholders.”

As part of the project, the researchers held meetings and workshops throughout the Katherine and Daly River Catchments seeking feedback from the community about what values they place on water quality and what they saw as the major threats to water quality.

“We surveyed the community, and nearly everyone ticked ecosystem protection as the thing they value the most,” says Dr Townsend. “It showed they value maintaining the rivers in a healthy state so that’s what a good monitoring program will focus on.”

Dr Townsend pointed out that a good monitoring program needs to keep a check on things that affect water quality such as land use changes, water extraction and fire.

“Good monitoring relies on understanding how the water quality responds to changes in the environment and in the catchment. So we developed models to link these two things.”

Drawing together more than 70 of Australia’s leading social, cultural, environmental and economic researchers, TRaCK focuses on Australia’s tropical rivers and estuaries in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory with a degree of intensity, coordination and integration not previously seen in the region.

This project was funded by the Northern Territory Government and the Natural Resource Management Board of the NT. Research was done in collaboration with Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS), Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources (DRDPIFR) and Greening Australia. TRaCK receives major funding for its research through the Australian Government’s Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities Initiative; the Australian Government’s Raising National Water Standards Program; the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation; and the Queensland Government’s Smart State Innovation Fund.

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More information about TRaCK and a copy of the report are available from:
<http://www.track.gov.au/publications/registry/765>

Jpeg photos showing Simon conducting monitoring activities in the Katherine River are also available..