



Northern  
Territory  
Government



# Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve

Joint Management Plan June 2011



PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve Joint  
Management Plan

Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport

PO Box 344 KATHERINE NT 0851

This document is available at [www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/manage/plans/katherine.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/manage/plans/katherine.html)

Published by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport

ISBN 978-1-921519-60-4

## **Acknowledgements**

This Plan is the result of extensive consultation between the Traditional Owners of Gregory National Park and Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers, Planning and Joint Management staff. Northern Land Council (NLC) and Central Land Council (CLC) staff assisted the joint management partners and provided valued input into the Plan's preparation.

## VISION FOR THE PARK

***“We want that place to grow up with jobs for Traditional Owners to look after country and tourists.” (Traditional Owner)***

The joint management partners of Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve will work together to look after the Park, respecting and acknowledging each others' skills and knowledge and communicating clearly.

A strong partnership will mean:

- Country is looked after properly, according to Aboriginal Law and culture as well as current biodiversity conservation and heritage objectives.
- The Ngarinyman, Karrangpurru, Malngin, Wardaman, Ngaliwurru, Nungali, Bilinara, Gurindji and Jaminjung cultures, languages and Dreamings of Gregory National Park will be acknowledged and respected as fundamental to landscape management.
- Traditional Owners will be involved in decision making and work on the Park.
- Knowledge will be shared with the next generation of Traditional Owners.
- Visitors will enjoy the Park, respecting and learning about country culture and history.
- We continue to improve how we look after the Park and how we do Joint Management.



*A hair string belt made by an Elder is symbolic of joint management – a strong, practical blend of the traditional and the modern.*

## HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This is the first Joint Management Plan to be prepared for Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. It was prepared by the Parks and Wildlife Service and Traditional Owners from across the Park with assistance from the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council as well as input from the broader community.

Planning for formal joint management of the Park began with a series of meetings between Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife Service staff, NLC and CLC staff in 2005. Traditional Owners and park staff have discussed how to work together to manage the Park at meetings, country visits and camps throughout the Park over the past five years. This Plan is the culmination of many hours of hard work and negotiation by the partners to establish an effective and appropriate way to look after this large and complex Park.

*Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife and Land Council staff meet to work on the Draft Plan (2005).*



## CONTENTS

<b>Vision for the Park</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How this Plan was Developed</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary of this Plan</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The Values of the Park	6
1.2 The Purpose of the Park	7
1.3 The Plan	8
1.4 Joint Management	9
<b>2. Governance – Making Joint Management Work</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Planning and Decision-Making	14
2.2 Business Operations	20
2.3 Park Zoning	30
<b>3. Managing the Park's Values</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Managing Country	33
3.1.1 Aboriginal and Historical Values	34
3.1.2 Natural and Ecological Values	40
3.2 Managing For Visitors	54
3.2.1 Recreational and Tourism Values	55
<b>4. Information Sources</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>5. Appendices</b>	<b>69</b>
Appendix 1: Park Map	68
Appendix 2: Extracts from the <i>Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act</i>	69
Appendix 3: Guidelines for Decision Making	72
Appendix 4: Park Threatened Species List	73
Appendix 5: Important Weeds for Park Management	74
<b>6. Figures</b>	
Figure 1: Park Location Map	5
Figure 2: Roles and Responsibilities	17
Figure 3: Park Zoning Map	32

## SUMMARY OF THIS PLAN

Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve are located in the Victoria River District, near the Western Australian border. Encompassing approximately 1 300 000 hectares it is the largest park in the Northern Territory parks estate, and is ranked as one of the highest valued parks for biodiversity conservation. Few parks in the Northern Territory have a combination of such outstanding natural, Aboriginal, historic and visitor values.

The Park is a living cultural landscape for many groups of Traditional Owners who continue to have deep and ongoing connections with the land. It is recognised as an invaluable resource for Traditional Owners in their efforts to transfer cultural knowledge between generations, maintain traditions through ceremony and ritual, and ensure that Aboriginal ways of looking after country are sustained. The Park also offers visitors the opportunity to connect with these living Indigenous cultures. Management of the Park's cultural assets is a high priority. Involving Traditional Owners in park management presents an opportunity for local people to utilise their knowledge and skills about country for the benefit of their communities, the Park and the public.

Judbarra supports a great diversity of flora and fauna including significant habitats for threatened species. Conservation of the Park's biodiversity is a major management focus. An understanding of threatening processes as well as the distribution of threatened species and vegetation types on Park, is the key step towards integrating Operational Plans for fire, weeds and feral animals in order to appropriately manage biodiversity values. Survey and monitoring of the Park's biological resources and inclusion of Traditional Owners and their ecological knowledge in park management programs will further enhance conservation management.

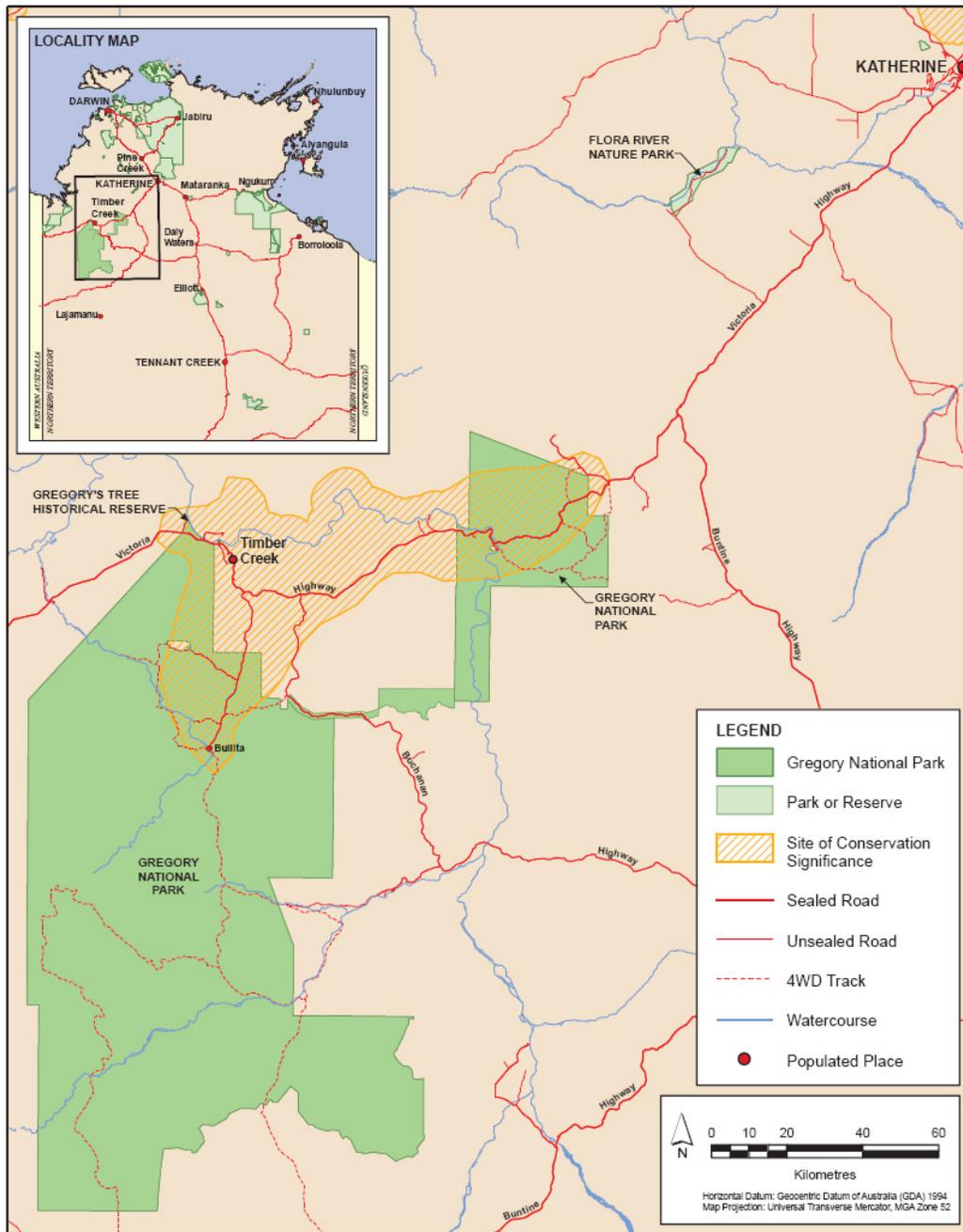
For the majority of visitors the Park's appeal lies in the remote, rugged and unspoilt landscape. Protecting this vast and spectacular park for nature and culture-based visitor enjoyment and learning is a high priority. Healthy waterways with good fishing opportunities, a network of adventurous four-wheel drive tracks, easily accessible picnic and camping areas and a rich and well interpreted Aboriginal culture and history provides for a memorable visitor experience.

Joint management of the Park means Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service are looking after country together, two ways. Responsibility for decision-making will be shared by the partners through a Joint Management Committee, guided by relevant legislation, this Plan and other jointly developed policy and guidelines that are consistent with such legislation and this Plan. Collaboration between Northern Territory Government agencies and with stakeholders such as neighbours and the tourism industry will enhance the success of joint management.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Judbarra / Gregory National Park is located in the Victoria River District, roughly midway between Katherine and the Western Australia border. Encompassing 1 299 455 hectares it is the largest park in the Northern Territory park estate. Access is via the Savannah Way (Victoria Highway), Binns Track, or by four-wheel drive routes off the Buchanan and Buntine Highways. Over 21 000 visitors use the Park every year.

Figure 1 Park Location Map.



The Park lies at the transition of the wet/dry tropics and the semi-arid zone of northern Australia. Most of the Park is within the Victoria Bonaparte bioregion and part of the southwest of the Park lies within the Ord-Victoria bioregion. The vegetation of the Park is accordingly diverse. Tropical woodlands cover extensive areas and scattered pockets of monsoon vine-forest occur, whilst spinifex grasses dominate areas in the south.

Vast tracts of generally rugged terrain that include spectacular sandstone escarpments and gorges, mesas, limestone karst formations, rolling hills and alluvial plains define the Park's character. The Park lies entirely within the catchment of the Victoria River, the largest in the Northern Territory. The upper sections of the Wickham, Humbert and East Baines Rivers also lie within the Park.

For ease of reference in this Plan, "the Park" and "Judbarra" includes both Judbarra / Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve.

## 1.1 THE VALUES OF THE PARK

Judbarra serves to protect one of the Territory's most valuable natural and cultural landscapes and contributes significantly to biodiversity conservation.

The Park's values are summarised in this section of the Plan. Together with the joint management partners' vision they establish the purpose of Judbarra and the focus of management directions for the term of this Joint Management Plan.

*The Victoria River winds through the Park that is a living cultural landscape for several Traditional Owner groups.*



### ***A diverse and shared cultural landscape***

For the Traditional Owners of Judbarra, the land is vested with spiritual significance and is an integral part of their cultural identity. The Park encompasses the traditional lands of several Aboriginal language groups that include Ngarinyman, Karrangpurru, Malngin, Wardaman, Ngaliwurru, Nungali, Bilinara, Gurindji and Jaminjung. People of each group continue to use the natural resources of the Park, protect sites of significance and maintain cultural traditions through ceremony and ritual. Numerous archaeological sites on the Park bear testimony to a long history of Aboriginal occupation. Traditional Owners have obligations to look after their country and believe that their relationships with country involve mutual rights and responsibilities. The Park is an invaluable resource for Traditional Owners in their efforts to ensure that cultural knowledge is transferred between generations, maintaining and strengthening culture and ensuring that Aboriginal ways of looking after country are sustained.

The Aboriginal history of the area since settlement is closely interwoven with European pastoral history and of this, a rich oral tradition remains. There are numerous sites through

the Park which remain a tangible reminder of early European exploration and the region's famous pastoral history including Gregory's Tree, Jasper Gorge, Drovers Rest Boab Precinct and the Bullita Homestead Precinct and Stockyards. The recent history of the area encompassed by the Park is the history of contact, conflict and negotiation between colonialists and Aboriginal people. Accordingly, there are many places and artefacts on the Park that testify to the history of both cultures, a number of which can be accessed and appreciated by Park visitors.

### ***An internationally significant conservation area***

The Park's geographic position and size are reflected in the diversity of its flora and fauna, contributing greatly to conservation of Australia's biodiversity. Fifteen threatened species of plants and animals of national and local significance occur within the Park. The large area of the Park offers it some resilience to threats and therefore enhances its potential for long term biodiversity conservation. A range of fire sensitive vegetation communities such as monsoon rainforest, sandstone heathlands and Lancewood persist within the Park. The internationally significant "Victoria River middle reaches and Gregory area" Site of Conservation Significance spans the east and west sections of the Park<sup>i</sup>.

The Park includes a karst field and cave system of international significance with few if any similar sites recorded elsewhere in Australia. The fauna associated with the karst system are not well surveyed but likely to be significant.

The healthy waterways of the upper Wickham, East Baines and Humbert Rivers and the significant Victoria River catchment all offer valuable habitat for aquatic plants and animals as well as important associated riparian vegetation.

### ***An exceptional nature and culture-based tourism experience***

The vast and remote natural and cultural landscape of the Park offers a unique tourism and recreation experience. Over 500 km of four-wheel drive tracks traverse a range of landscapes, offering visitors the best remote, adventure four-wheel driving and camping of any National Park in the Northern Territory. The Park's rivers are attractive recreational resources offering significant boating, fishing, scenic and wildlife viewing opportunities. The north's most prized game and table fish, the Barramundi, draws keen fishing from across Australia.

The Park offers a range of quality interpretive opportunities for visitors' to interact with nature, Aboriginal culture and early pastoral history. The rich living culture of nine language groups with strong spiritual and ecological connections to the Park present a unique and rare opportunity for the development of quality tourism experiences.

## **1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE PARK**

---

<sup>i</sup> There are 67 identified Sites of Conservation Significance in the Northern Territory. These areas contain special biodiversity values that require additional protection (Harrison et al. 2009).

Gregory National Park was first declared under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* in 1990 with the acquisition of the former Bullita Station, and portions of Innesvale, Auvergne, Delamere, Humbert River, Victoria River Downs and Mt Sanford Stations. The two hectare Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve was declared in 1978.

As a result of a decision of the High Court affecting many Territory Parks and Reserves, Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve were re-declared under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* in 2002. In 2003 the Gregory National Park and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve were listed in Schedule I of the Parks and Reserves (Frameworks for the Future) Act, enabling transfer of ownership of the Park to the Traditional Owners. The Park is leased from a number of Aboriginal Land Trusts by the Northern Territory for 99 years. The Wambardi Aboriginal Land Trust has also leased to the Territory Aboriginal land held by the Trust which adjoins the Park, effectively increasing the size of the Park and linking the eastern Victoria River sector and western Gregory sector of the Park. The Park is jointly managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service and the Traditional Owners.

Judbarra will be managed to retain its natural character and protect its highly significant Aboriginal, historical and natural values, whilst providing opportunities for visitors to enjoy the landscape, culture, history and wildlife.

Priorities will be to:

- Protect the outstanding natural, Aboriginal and historical resources of the Park;
- Provide a range of interactive nature and culture-based experiences for visitors and;
- Ensure Traditional Owners benefit from joint management arrangements.

### **1.3 THE PLAN**

This Plan has been written for the joint management partners, to guide and support them in joint management. It is also a public document by which the public may learn about the Park, its values and management.

This Plan explains how the joint management partners will work together to look after the Park. It provides direction for operational planning and day-to-day programs. It provides for the ongoing conservation of the Park's significant natural and cultural values and continued public use and enjoyment. It shows how public interests in the Park will be best served while recognising that the Park belongs to and is of deep cultural and spiritual significance to the Traditional Owners.

This Plan sets management objectives against which the Parks and Wildlife Service, Traditional Owners and the general public may measure progress. The Plan presents both general and specific management directions with respect to the Park's purpose and current management issues. It also outlines measures that will ensure that future development of the Park is appropriate.

This Plan will be reviewed after five years with the expectation that it will remain in effect for approximately 10 years when it will be amended or replaced by a new Plan.

## 1.4 JOINT MANAGEMENT

Joint Management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together in order to achieve their shared goals and aspirations, exchanging their knowledge and expertise, solving problems and sharing decisions.

In 2005 the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* was amended to provide for joint management of 27 parks and reserves that were subject to the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*, often called the 'Framework Act'. The *Act* provided for the settlement of land and/or native title claims over these areas and created the framework for their joint management. Judbarra is one of the parks subject to the new joint management arrangements.

The land comprising Gregory National Park is held by a number of Aboriginal Land Trusts on behalf of Traditional Owners under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. The land has been leased back to the Northern Territory for 99 years. This Joint Management Plan has force in law under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. It must also comply with several leases<sup>ii</sup> and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)<sup>iii</sup> registered under the *Native Title Act*.

Selected parts of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* are included in Appendix 2. Briefly, the *Act* defines the joint management partners of a park or reserve as the Northern Territory, or a body nominated by the Territory as its representative, and the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve.

Section 25AB of the *Act* states:

*The objective of joint management of a park or reserve is to jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve as part of a comprehensive and representative system of parks and reserves in the Territory and for the following purposes:*

- (a) Benefiting both the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and the wider community;*
- (b) Protecting biological diversity;*
- (c) Serving visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment.*

The *Act* also establishes the requirements of Joint Management Plans and the role of the Land Councils in assisting joint management by representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to the Park's management.

---

<sup>ii</sup> Four Leases exist for the Park – Wombardi, Winan, Nalipinkak and Bilinarra-Jutpurra.

<sup>iii</sup> Three ILUAs exist for the Park – Gregory NP (NLC), Gregory NP (CLC) and Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve.

### ***Traditional Owners***

Judbarra includes the traditional lands of several Aboriginal language groups including Ngarinyman, Karrangpurru, Malngin, Wardaman, Ngaliwuru, Nungali, Bilinara, Gurindji and Jaminjung. The area also encompasses the major boundary between Australian language families, Pama Nyungan and Non-Pama-Nyungan (Northern). The language of the south-western portion of the Park is Ngarinyman which is the northern most language of the Pama-Nyungan family in the western half of the continent. This family of language encompasses all Australian Aboriginal languages to the south of this area.

At a broad level, connection to country can be expressed in terms of an individual's membership of a 'language-owning group'. Country is said to 'hold' language. Each language originated from the Dreamings who were the creators of the specific tract of country and the first speakers of its language. Illustration of the areas of language-owning groups is provided in ceremony song texts, particularly those of major Dreamings such as Walujapi, which change language at specific hand-over points as they pass from one language-group area to the next. Belonging to a language-owning group carries with it connection to a specific tract of country, although the rights that come with this are of a general nature, such as the right to hunt and forage. Stronger decision-making and other rights over specific areas are generally held by smaller sub-groups.

*Walujapi  
(Black-headed  
python) has  
great spiritual  
significance  
for Indigenous  
people across  
northern  
Australia.  
Photo: © Barritt &  
May 2009.*



### ***Land Affiliation***

In the Aboriginal tradition of the Park area, land is divided up into 'countries' (estates) which are owned by groups of 'owners' recruited by a descent principle. Although this area encompasses many different groups the descent principle generally used in the recruitment to landholding groups is through:

- Patrilineal descent (descent from Father and Father's Father)
- Patrilineal-matrilial ('owners' from Father's Father, etc and 'workers' from Mother, Mother's Father, etc.)
- Cognatic (all descendants of a designated ancestor or group of siblings through any number of patrilineal or matrilineal ties)
- Language group (where all associated with a language identity are included)

In English the term 'Traditional Owner' is commonly used to refer to someone who is a member of the clan associated with a particular clan estate (and has a particular meaning

under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)*. Estates are single, bounded areas abutting each other, with no vacant territory. However, in some cases shared responsibility can occur for areas of land on the boundaries of an estate in which there is a responsibility of two groups, where the area is shared or 'fifty' in local parlance. The boundaries of estates are not usually described by Traditional Owners in terms of a line boundary but with reference to affiliation of sites in an area. In particular, where a 'travelling dreaming' crosses the country there are recognised hand over points where responsibility for the singing of the juju (song) passes from owners of one group to owners of another. It is also important to understand for joint management purposes that Indigenous 'culture' is dynamic and adaptive and changes in owner groups can and do occur and probably have done for thousands of years through various processes of succession, fission and fusion of groups.

### *Connection to country*

The notion of Aboriginal connection to country is obviously broader than land ownership rights. It encompasses a complex and varied range of connections for both individuals and groups. These include primary customary rights and responsibilities to land established through descent principles as summarised above. It also includes rights and responsibilities attained through personal experience, such as attainment of ritual knowledge, as well as connections based on lived experience, such as having been born on country or residing for significant periods in consequence of marriage or work. The contextual significance of these different types of connections varies significantly, particularly in cross-cultural settings, making the identification of Aboriginal interests in land a complex matter.

At its most fundamental level, connection to country derives from the totemic or spiritual significance of the land and the rights and interests that this invests in the traditional owners of the land. The country we see today is believed to have been created from a primordial landscape by the actions and travels of ancestral beings (or Dreamings). These Dreamings created the unique sites and features of the land, and the plants, animals and people who inhabit and are bound to it. The proof of this history and of an individual or group's place within it, is embodied in the present by the distinct languages, sacred song texts, stories, totemic dances and designs and in specific features of the landscape (sacred sites) that are the living, transformed spiritual manifestations of the Dreamings themselves and their actions. These define the cultural divisions of language-owning groups and smaller clan or estate groups, mapping them onto the landscape and providing the 'title deeds' of membership and associated rights of ownership and custodianship responsibilities for country. It is with reference to these 'title deeds' and the rules of behaviour established by Dreamings, that Aboriginal people make the assertion that 'Aboriginal law doesn't change'.

### *Cultural change*

Relationships and connections to country *do* change over time. This can occur in response to change in the composition and stability of cultural and social groupings, change in knowledge and experience of country, and change in residential patterns. As natural socio-cultural processes they have also been externally influenced by the impacts of European invasion and occupation. The most significant historical impact was the high

death rates that occurred on the frontiers that dramatically reduced local populations and estate groups, requiring adjustments, including the merging of some groups, in order to maintain viable land-holding structures and continuity of ritual responsibilities to country. Colonisation also drastically affected the life circumstances of individuals and families, resulting in increasingly complex cultural and social connections associated with voluntary and forced changes to residential patterns. The concentration of groups into centralised station and town communities, often not the traditional countries of many of the residents, has had a significant impact on relationships and connection to country.

### *Joint Management*

In the joint management context, the Traditional Owners of the region want to incorporate their knowledge and understanding of country into the management of the Park. Of utmost importance to them is the preservation of this rich knowledge and the desire to keep it alive through the generations to come. Many Traditional Owners also recognise the opportunities that joint management brings and want to further develop park based employment opportunities for their people either through the Parks and Wildlife Service or enterprises such as tourism that provide livelihoods for their families, to maintain links with their country and to be involved in park management on a day to day basis.

### ***The Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service***

The Parks and Wildlife Service is a division of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport. It is a field-based organisation with approximately 120 Rangers supported by scientific, planning, management and administration staff. The Service is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of 87 parks and reserves, while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities for visitors. The Service is committed to engaging the public and working with the interests of the community.

The recent formalising of the joint management process on many Territory parks has provided for Aboriginal people to be involved in park management in a more concerted way than before. The Parks and Wildlife Service is committed to seeing that the joint management partnership grows and becomes truly equitable and that Traditional Owners benefit culturally, socially and economically from joint management.

This Joint Management Plan has been developed by the joint management partners in a positive spirit. Like the Traditional Owners of the Park, the Parks and Wildlife Service is optimistic about the future.

## 2. GOVERNANCE – MAKING JOINT MANAGEMENT WORK

*“Burrbbarni ngurramala – everybody working together.” (Traditional Owner)*

### Introduction

Joint Management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together to achieve their shared goals and aspirations, exchange their knowledge and expertise, solve problems and share decisions. A mutual understanding of country, Law, culture and Indigenous decision making principles are fundamental to making good joint management decisions. For the purpose of joint management, the term **governance** is defined as “the way the partners organise themselves and the rules they put in place to realise their shared vision.” It includes all aspects of partnership, communication, planning and decision-making.

Making sure that the joint management partners have a clear structure and process for making decisions is essential for good joint management. The partners are optimistic that this new way of learning and working together will improve equity in management arrangements. Both partners acknowledge that it will take time to build a strong and effective working relationship.

Joint management of the Park will be consistent with this Plan and:

- *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*;
- *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)*;
- Aboriginal Law associated with Judbarra;
- *Bushfires Act (Northern Territory)*;
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*;
- *Heritage Conservation Act (Northern Territory)*;
- ICOMOS ‘Burra Charter’;
- Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) associated with Judbarra;
- *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*;
- *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*;
- Northern Territory Government Park Leases associated with Judbarra.

## **Principles for Effective Governance**

- Decision-making and accountability should be equally shared.
- Time spent together on country is important for developing mutual trust, respect and understanding between the partners.
- Indigenous decision-making processes must be respected.
- Management priorities will be guided by the Park's key values.
- Planning and decision-making must incorporate risk identification and minimisation.
- Engagement and employment of Traditional Owners in management operations is central to joint management success.
- Resources are limited and must be efficiently used.
- Joint management has to be checked to see that it is working well. It is important to keep improving.
- Public support for joint management is very important.

## **2.1 PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING**

### **Background**

The vast size of Judbarra and the number of Traditional Owner groups that are involved in caring for country on the Park make the process of joint management particularly complex. It will take time to build capacity through good communication and engagement of Traditional Owners together with park rangers. Learning together through shared experiences in looking after country will help to build the partners decision-making skills over time.

Joint management provides new opportunities to make better management decisions based on a combination of Indigenous and scientific knowledge. Successful joint management relies on meaningful engagement of Traditional Owners and will be measured against achievement of the aims in this Plan and the satisfaction of the joint management partners.

For Traditional Owners of Gregory National, ensuring that appropriate senior people are involved in making decisions related to their country is fundamental. They say "you need to be able to talk to elders." On Judbarra, different groups of Traditional Owners have decision-making responsibility for different areas of the Park. Appropriately qualified staff from the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Central Land Council (CLC) will help with the identification of those with traditional authority and other cultural interests on the Park.



*Traditional Owners will decide on their representatives for a joint management committee.*

An important aspect of Aboriginal law is that only the people who can speak for country make decisions about that country. During joint management planning three groups of Traditional Owners with rights in the south, north and far north-east respectively have discussed how joint management should work. They stressed the need for “Aboriginal people to do things for themselves on their own country, to show parks mob what they can do and talk about how they can do it together.” Traditional Owners have emphasised the importance of ensuring that decision-making structures will reflect these regions of responsibility between different groups.

Traditional Owners' values and perceptions of joint management and caring for country are strongly influenced by what they value most highly – Aboriginal Law and extended family. The ability of joint management partners to appreciate cultural difference will significantly assist the partnership and provide the basis for effective joint management and governance of the Park.

While Traditional Owners highlight the importance of involving the right people in decision-making they are also pragmatic about managing the Park effectively and utilising resources efficiently. Accordingly, decision-making will be structured so that the people whose country is affected are well informed about park operations and are involved in decisions.

Traditional Owners will be involved in all aspects of park management, including operational planning through a Joint Management Committee consisting of Parks and Wildlife staff and Traditional Owners representatives from the different areas of the Park. Both partners will need support to be meaningfully involved in decision-making.

The formation of and management through a Joint Management Committee will take some getting used to for Traditional Owners as this is not a level of management control they have been used to. Appropriate training and capacity building will be provided to ensure that Parks staff and Traditional Owners alike can jointly understand what constitutes good decision-making and exercise that responsibility well.

## ***Roles and Responsibilities***

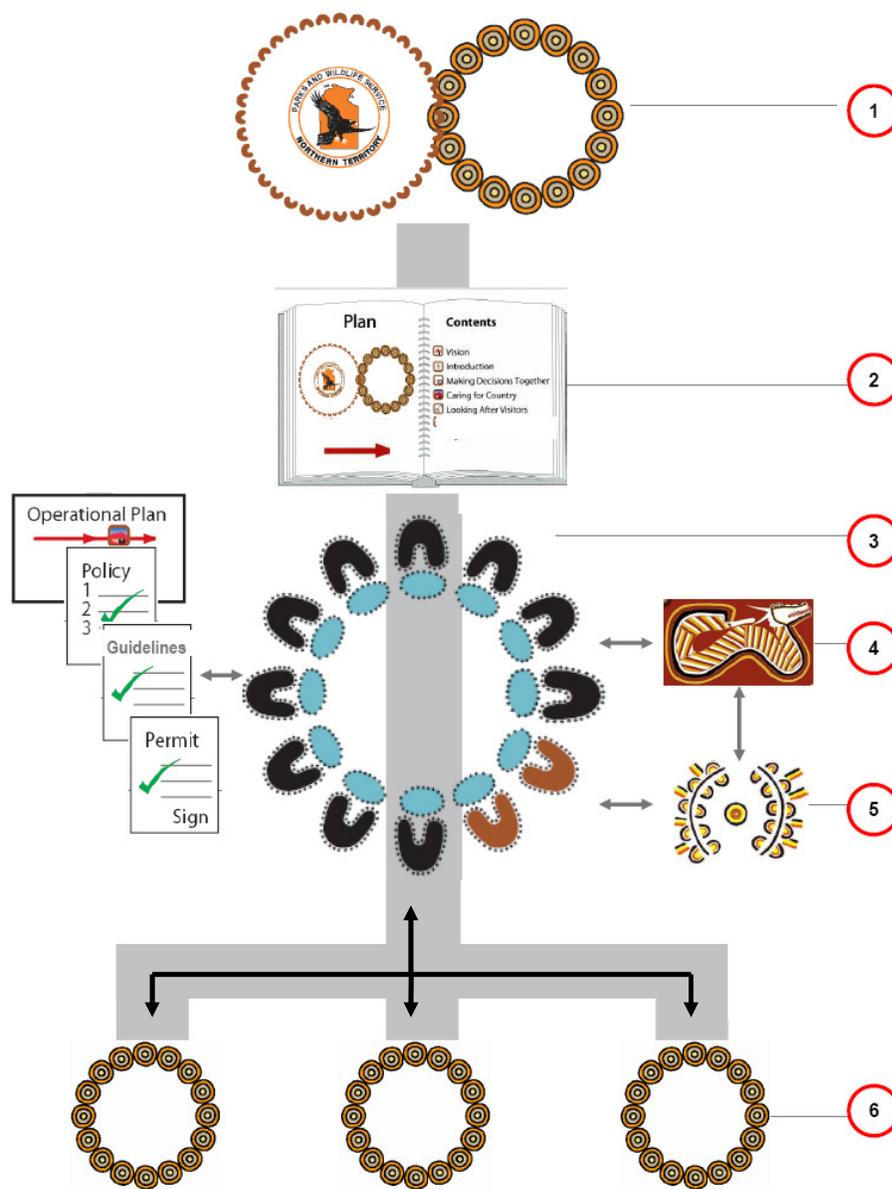
Clear roles and responsibilities are essential for joint management and each of the partners have responsibilities for looking after the Park. These are described below and reflected in **Figure 2**.

- The **Parks and Wildlife Service** has been nominated by the Territory as its representative as the joint management partner with the Park's Traditional Owners. Parks and Wildlife is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Park under the direction of the Joint Management Committee. The Parks and Wildlife Service is required to finance and resource the Park's ongoing management including administrative functions, staffing, infrastructure and services. Parks and Wildlife employees are responsible to the Minister for Parks and Wildlife and the head of the Department.
- **Traditional Owners** are responsible to the land, Law and culture. Their views and wishes are essential to the direction and management of the Park. Core members of landholding groups have responsibilities for decision making and overseeing cultural protocol. Traditional Owners also have responsibilities for managing traditional knowledge and passing it on to the right people, looking after the land and its resources, maintaining sacred sites and keeping the country alive.
- The **Joint Management Committee** will be the principal decision making body for the Park and its functions are to: ensure that information is shared with all Traditional Owners; review progress against management directions in this Plan; review satisfaction of the partners; develop, review and provide advice regarding policies and procedures; set direction and approve Operational Plans each year. The Committee is responsible to the Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service and the wider community.
- The **Northern Land Council** and **Central Land Council** are independent statutory bodies created under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)*, responsible for consulting with and protecting the interests of Traditional Owners of the Park. They will support the process of joint management including the functioning of the Joint Management Committee.

## ***Monitoring Joint Management and Building Effective Governance***

The Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife Service know that the partnership will need to keep growing and improving through commitment and new skills in governance. Monitoring the partnership and progress against the aims in this Plan is important to build effective joint management and a strong partnership. Good governance will develop from the shared experience. Traditional Owners have said "we'll know when joint management is working when we start to see things happening rather than just talking."

Figure 2 Roles and Responsibilities.



- 1 Joint Management Partners**  
The Parks and Wildlife Service and the Traditional Owners of Gregory National Park.
- 2 Joint Management Plan**  
An agreement between the Joint Management Partners about managing the Park together.
- 3 Joint Management Committee**  
A representative body that will meet at least once a year to review progress and ratify annual operational plans, policy, guidelines and permits. They are responsible for providing information to the wider Traditional Owner group.
- 4 Northern Land Council**  
A statutory body responsible for consulting with and protecting the interests of Traditional Owners.
- 5 Central Land Council**  
A statutory body responsible for consulting with and protecting the interests of Traditional Owners.
- 6 Local Management Areas**  
Three different groups of Traditional Owners with rights and responsibilities in the north, north-east and south of the Park provide direction to the Joint Management Committee.

## Aims

- Successful governance through a committed and effective partnership focussed on results and based on equity, accountability, strong communication and understanding between Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife Service staff.
- Partners that are satisfied with the processes and outcomes of joint management.

## Management Directions

**2.1 Joint Management Committee** – a committee will be established as the governing body for the Park. The committee will meet at least once each year. In time, membership will consist of two senior Parks and Wildlife officers and up to 12 Traditional Owners as follows: four representatives from the Ngaliwurru, Wulayi and Ngarinyman groups, four representatives from the Wardaman, Karrangpuru and Nungali groups and four representatives from the Bilinara, Ngarinyman, Gurindji and Jaminjung groups. Traditional Owners will decide who will represent them and who can speak for areas of country. Traditional Owner representation on the committee will include a mix of women, men, young people and old people. A minimum of twelve representatives (four from each area) and two park staff will be required at key meetings.

**2.2 Making decisions** – The joint management partners will share decision-making equitably and responsibly according to the framework outlined in **Table 1**.

Decisions will be made in the three **Local Management Areas (Figure 2)** and ratified by the Joint Management Committee. The NLC/CLC will ensure the appropriate people are consulted. The partners have developed guidelines for the four levels of decisions required for management of Judbarra (see **Appendix 3**).

Decisions regarding operational planning and permit approvals will be made by consensus, based on the directions of this Plan, the Park Zoning Scheme, Departmental policies and locally developed policy and guidelines. Decision making will be inclusive of others who have an interest or who may contribute to more informed management.

**2.3 Dispute resolution** – The joint management partners will aim to resolve disputes through open discussion and consensus at the Joint Management Committee level. However, should a dispute arise between the joint management partners which cannot be resolved, the partners will follow the dispute resolution process set out in the Leases.

**2.4 Supporting and building effective governance** – The partners and the NLC/CLC recognise that joint management will be a process of continuous learning and growth. The partners' capacity to be effective in shared decision-making will develop through experience within the partnership. As experience in Joint Management grows the partners may agree to other governance arrangements not detailed in this Plan, to aid effective and efficient management.

Support and training will be provided to the partners in communication, partnership, planning and governance. Permanent camps will be established for Joint Management meetings as well as "back to country" trips. The partners will be pro-active in engaging the local community and key stakeholders through established communication networks and forums.

The capacity of the joint management partners will be enhanced by:

- **Governance training** – Governance training will be provided to the joint management partners to give them the tools and skills to work effectively in the partnership.
- **Professional development** – Professional standards and staff competencies will be supported by ongoing training in all aspects of park management with special emphasis on cross-cultural training run by Traditional Owners and other providers.
- **Information exchange** – Park staff will be responsible for ensuring that information about park management programs and other significant activities are communicated effectively to Traditional Owners. The Joint Management Committee, with the assistance of the Land Councils and the Parks and Wildlife Service will be responsible for ensuring that information is effectively communicated to the wider Traditional Owner group, local community and key stakeholders. Information bulletins will be trialled.
- **Community based Junior Ranger program** – The partners will engage the local community through a jointly planned and delivered community education program. The Junior Ranger program will focus on Traditional Owners and their families to build joint management capacity and support from an early age.
- **Performance monitoring** – A monitoring and evaluation program will be developed collaboratively by the partners and implemented as a high priority to develop effective governance. Performance and satisfaction of the joint management partners will be measured annually using indicators relating to: the effectiveness of the joint management partnership (including decision-making processes); the implementation of annually agreed priorities and; the achievement of Aims stated in this Plan.



*Community based junior ranger programs will assist in meeting the long term aims of joint management.*

**Table 1: Decision Making Framework.**

	<b>Joint Management Committee</b>	<b>Parks Staff</b>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise executive authority and be accountable for the management of the Park.</li> <li>• Set direction for park management programs for parks staff to implement.</li> <li>• Endorse annual allocation of budgets to programs.</li> <li>• Set policy and procedure.</li> <li>• Endorse commercial and development proposals.</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate management performance.</li> <li>• Seek direction from Traditional Owners of Local Management Areas.</li> <li>• Engage as necessary with stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day to day management of the Park.</li> <li>• Implement programs, policy and procedure as approved by the committee.</li> <li>• Maximise on-ground participation of Traditional Owners in management of the Park.</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Decisions and how they will be made</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve annual Operational Plans relating to biodiversity, fire, feral animals, weeds and visitor management.</li> <li>• Consultation with community and wider group of Traditional Owners as appropriate.</li> <li>• Committee may delegate tasks to working / advisory groups or groups of Traditional Owners who can speak for the affected country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine activities and program implementation as approved.</li> <li>• Issue permits according to policy and procedure.</li> </ul>

## **2.2 BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

### **Background**

Employment and economic opportunities for Traditional Owners are central to joint management arrangements and joint management success. If the partnership is working well, outcomes will include jobs and training for Traditional Owners, healthy country and satisfied visitors. Meaningful participation of Traditional Owners in all aspects of park management is essential for an equitable partnership and successful joint management.

Joint management will thrive with the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into many aspects of the Park’s management. The partners recognise it is important that Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) is protected by Departmental policy agreed to by the joint management partners.

The joint management partnership is accountable to the community, recognising that the Park is a public asset. This section summarises a commitment to the public interest and to fostering constructive partnerships with neighbours and other stakeholders.

### ***Indigenous Training, Employment and Business Opportunities***

It is important that joint management provides opportunities and helps support sustainable livelihoods for Traditional Owner families. Many Traditional Owners live on communities and outstations across the Victoria River District. Some have expressed interest in pursuing Aboriginal Living Areas, similar to Bob's Yard and Barrac Barrac located within the Park.

Throughout the joint management planning process, the Traditional Owners emphasised the importance of accredited training and employment for their families and acknowledged their responsibility to support young people. They look forward to new opportunities in working on country and applying their skills and knowledge to look after the Park. They also recognise that they will benefit from support if they are able to take up new opportunities created through joint management.

The Parks and Wildlife Service will make every effort to increase the employment of Aboriginal people at Judbarra, in accordance with employment laws and policies in force in the Northern Territory. The Parks and Wildlife Service has previously employed Aboriginal people as rangers at Judbarra. There are currently two Indigenous trainee ranger positions based at Timber Creek. Helping local people develop the skills needed to work as Rangers is critical. In the long term the benefit will be a Park that is staffed with Rangers who have a practical and culturally-based, long-term commitment to looking after the area.

Since the establishment of new joint management arrangements, Traditional Owners have participated in paid park management programs. Flexible, project based employment provides many benefits including work experience, skills exchange, accredited training and helps build positive working relationships between Traditional Owners and Parks staff. It helps Traditional Owners become work-ready and local Aboriginal organisations including community ranger groups contract-ready.

Flexible employment arrangements can be expanded to effectively engage Traditional Owners from across the Park. Ensuring that the necessary administrative arrangements are in place is critical in providing equal work opportunities for all Traditional Owners. In the past various projects have been contracted to organisations such as the Ngaliwurruwuli Aboriginal Association and the Timber Creek Town Council. The Victoria Daly Shire established in July 2008 has an important role in community relations and the development of opportunities for locals.

It is important to acknowledge that the broader employment aspirations of Traditional Owners and their families cannot be met by joint management alone. There are only a few permanent ranger positions at Judbarra. Consequently, employment and training plans established by the partners will need to be developed within a local and regional context and involve other sections of government, groups and organisations. Traditional Owners identified a range of employment opportunities during planning meetings including: Park and community rangers, tour guides, apprenticeships and family businesses.

While most maintenance on the Park is carried out by Rangers, contractors are occasionally engaged for works projects and services. Traditional Owners are keen to be involved in contract work. Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations they support will be given preference to contracts for services where they have demonstrated the capacity to meet contract requirements and subject to any law in force in the Northern Territory.

Where capacity is lacking, the partners will encourage interested Traditional Owners to undertake training and pursue apprenticeships, helping them gain skills and accreditation required. The potential contracting opportunities on the Park include visitor facility construction and maintenance, fencing, track work, weed management, feral animal management and campground management.

*Maintenance of visitor areas can be contracted to Traditional Owners.*



### ***Effective Resource Use***

Judbarra is the largest park managed by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service and has significant Aboriginal, natural, historical and tourism values. The majority of funding to manage the Park and develop services and facilities is provided by the Northern Territory Government, allocated as a share of funds to manage this Park and all other parks and reserves across the Northern Territory system. The Northern and Central Land Councils also make significant contributions to a wide range of joint management activities. Minor and major capital works programs are subject to whole of government and Departmental priorities.

Parks and Wildlife have been working to prioritise the allocation of resources across the Northern Territory Parks estate. The values of each park have been individually assessed and scored against standard criteria for their contribution to biodiversity and cultural site conservation, recreation and tourism. The results of this process rate Judbarra as deserving the highest level of protection. The partners recognise the opportunity to explore external funding sources and public/private partnerships in order to augment core funding and enhance management programs.

The main park headquarters is located in Timber Creek, where office and workshop facilities, as well as government housing for staff is supplied. Management facilities and staff accommodation are also located at Bullita. At the time of this Plan's preparation, there are eight Ranger positions on the, as well as two Indigenous trainee Ranger positions. Ongoing staff training is important to maintain and develop competent and professional park staff. Training in cross-cultural communication and governance are high priorities.

Volunteers have provided invaluable contributions to management programs on the Park over recent years. The partners are keen to continue this arrangement, providing it does not compromise Traditional Owners' opportunities for work.

Effective use of limited resources hinges on integrated operational planning. All Operational Plans are developed and reviewed annually in which priority actions are

identified against available management resources. These plans will include biodiversity conservation, weeds, fire, feral animals, visitors and cultural heritage. Annual fire, weed and feral animal plans are based on long-term strategies of five years or more. Co-ordination and integration into a prioritised, annual Operational Plan, based on protection of core values is essential to maximise resource use and efficiency.



*Planning together will ensure country is looked after properly.*

The joint management partners have a statutory obligation to protect the values of the Park and a duty of care to park visitors. Risk identification, assessment, prioritisation and threat abatement should be incorporated into annual Operational Plans.

It is important to acknowledge there are currently limited opportunities for rangers and Traditional Owners to work in the south of the Park due to the distance from infrastructure and low tourist visitation. The partners recognise a need to increase opportunities for management work and access into this area. Due to the special cultural sensitivities of this part of the Park, this will best be achieved with the direct involvement of senior Traditional Owners as well as the development of Community Ranger groups to the south of the Park.

### ***Research, Survey and Monitoring***

Decisions for management of the Park are enhanced with good information about the Park's values, environmental trends and the effectiveness of management actions. This information is sought through research, survey and monitoring programs generally carried out as internal projects by the Parks and Wildlife Service or its Department. Research is also carried out by external agencies or individuals and associated activities such as interfering with wildlife and taking, interfering or keeping protected wildlife requires a permit issued under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. Local research guidelines are required to assist the permit approvals process. Research is most strongly encouraged when resulting knowledge is expected to contribute to improved management and where no marked impact on the Park's values is expected.

Targeted research is likely to benefit the partners and their ability to manage the Park more effectively.

Monitoring data on visitor numbers, demographics, behaviour and satisfaction is used to guide visitor management, including planning and design of facilities and interpretive programs. This data can also be useful to inform Traditional Owners interested in developing tourism enterprises.

Traditional Owners have knowledge of the Park that may contribute to research outcomes. It is important that they are consulted and invited to participate in research, survey and monitoring projects and, where possible, employed in this work. Research outcomes must be communicated clearly to the partners and the intellectual property rights of Traditional Owners protected.

### ***Permitting special activities and development***

Permits issued under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* are required for activities that involve special access or use of any part of the Park and for commercial purposes. This includes: research, public gatherings, commercial tourism, aircraft operation and commercial film and photography. Permits are issued with conditions by which permit holders must abide to minimise negative impacts on the values of the Park and other park users. It is important that the permit application and approvals process is clear, consistent and efficient. The Joint Management Committee will be responsible for developing practical local guidelines for commercial activities. Activities authorised under some permits may require supervision.

A permit is required for commercial activities involving special access or use of the Park. In granting permits to carry on a trade or commerce in Judbarra, the Northern Territory Government must give preference to the participation of traditional Aboriginal owners of the Park in any commercial activities conducted under the Lease, subject to any relevant laws in force in the Northern Territory. Traditional Owners would like to explore business opportunities including cultural tours and sales of arts and crafts. Current tourism operations include a boat tour running from the Big Horse Campground working within an Operational Agreement that sets out the rights and obligations of the concessionaire.

Additionally, where a secure form of land tenure is needed for the occupation or specific use of an area, a licence or sub-lease may be issued with the approval of the relevant Aboriginal Land Trust and endorsement of the Joint Management Committee. Any licence or sub-lease must be consistent with the provisions set under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* and the relevant Park Lease. A Telstra sub-lease within the eastern sector of the Park has been approved and once formalised will remain in effect until November 2026.

Tour operators can have a strong influence on visitors' experiences of the Park. Tour companies visiting Northern Territory parks require a permit under the Tour Operator Permit System, introduced in April 2006. The Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service want visitor information given by tour operators to be accurate and appropriate. The Tour Operator Permit System provides a means for the joint management partners to better liaise with tour operators, and to monitor the activities of tour groups.

Development proposals must be consistent with Departmental policies and subject to appropriate assessment to ensure that natural, cultural and historical values are not impacted. Protection for cultural sites is provided by the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern*

*Territory) Act 1976 (Cth), the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act as well as the Heritage Conservation Act. Significant developments may be subject to the Environmental Assessment Act and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth).*

### **Mining**

Mining and extractive activities have the potential to adversely impact the natural and cultural values of the Park. A small number of gravel pits exist on Park. Several applications for exploration licences over the Western section of the Park are due to expire by 2012. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)*, Traditional Owners have the right to control mining on Aboriginal Land. The transfer of the Park to Aboriginal Freehold requires the partners to re-apply for Reservation from Occupation under the *Mining Act* to protect areas of the Park with significant natural, Aboriginal or historic values from mining.

### **Maintaining a positive public profile**

Media coverage and other forms of promotion can help build public support for the Park with flow-on benefits to the partners and the Northern Territory. Departmental Commercial Film and Photography policy and locally developed guidelines will ensure the Park is promoted properly without compromising the Park values.

Accurate promotion and marketing of the Park gives visitors appropriate expectations. It also influences visitor numbers, behaviour, safety and satisfaction. Traditional Owners have expressed a desire for local names of country to be used throughout the different regions of the Park.



*A permit is required for professional film and photography.*

### **Relations with Community and Neighbours**

Park neighbours and the wider community have been involved in the management of the Park for many years. Joint management arrangements will not change this situation. The Park is a public asset and the partners are jointly accountable to the community. Managing issues and influences beyond the Park boundary and promoting cooperation with neighbours will enhance land management programs.

The size and remoteness of the Park reinforces the importance of working closely with neighbours and other stakeholders. The Park borders the township of Timber Creek as

well as a number of Aboriginal Land Trusts, military lands and pastoral lands (see **Appendix 1**). The Wardaman people are planning to develop an Indigenous Protected Area that could share the northern border of the Park.

The Territory Eco-link is a long-term Northern Territory Government initiative to link parks from the tropical savannahs of the Top End to the desert of the Central Australia through a network of public and voluntary private conservation arrangements. Judbarra is a vital link in the conservation corridor. This landscape scale partnership approach to conservation will assist conservation efforts by allowing ecosystems to adapt to climate change, whilst enhancing regional tourism and development.

Matters of mutual concern between park management and neighbours include fencing, boundary access, control of stock and feral animals, weed control, fire management and to some extent, visitor access and safety. Due to its rugged terrain much of the Park is unfenced and management cannot be strictly aligned with park boundaries. This has led to the establishment of a “working boundary” with some neighbours.

The wider community and stakeholder groups such as Tourism NT, Tourism Top End and the wider tourism industry, Community Ranger Groups, Threatened Species Network, Greening Australia and the Victoria River District Conservation Association have interests in the Park. It is important that the partners build good working relationships with these groups and other agencies.

## **Aims**

- The Management Directions in this Plan achieved with resources used effectively on agreed priorities.
- An increase in the number of permanent and casual Indigenous staff employed on the Park.
- Traditional Owners benefiting economically through employment and business relating to the Park.
- An improved knowledge base for informing decisions on Park.
- A community that is engaged in, and supportive of joint management.

## **Management Directions**

**2.5 Indigenous training, employment and enterprise development** – A program for training, employment and enterprise development will be determined by the partners each year and reviewed annually, based on Traditional Owners’ interests and capacity and a Departmental Indigenous Employment and Training Strategy. The Parks and Wildlife Service and the Land Councils will ensure that where they cannot directly assist, accredited training and business development support is provided to Traditional Owners through co-ordination with relevant agencies.

- **Indigenous employment opportunities** – The partners will continue to identify and provide opportunities for flexible and direct employment and training for Aboriginal people across all sectors of the Park. The Aboriginal Ranger traineeship program will continue as a means to increase opportunities for local people to become Rangers.

- **Contract services** – Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations they support will be given preference to contracts where they have demonstrated capacity and subject to any applicable laws. Contractors providing training and employment to local Aboriginal people will be strongly encouraged to apply.
- **Tourism** – Traditional Owners will continue to be encouraged to take up commercial tourism opportunities including camp fire talks, campground maintenance, cultural tours or other viable enterprises. Appropriate support will be provided and agencies such as the Land Councils and Tourism NT will assist with developing ideas and identifying service providers to support the development of business plans, skills and funding sources. The joint management partners will liaise with the tourism industry through established forums and organisations as required (see **2.17** and **3.23**).

**2.6 Operational Plans** – Prioritised Operational Plans will be developed annually based on protection of the Park's core values and assessment of risks or threats to them.

The joint management partners will have a shared role in the annual planning and review of management programs and Operational Plans for the Park. Operational Planning will pay particular attention to:

- The vision, principles, core values, aims and directions of this Plan.
- Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and priorities into park management programs.
- Regional priorities, available resources and external funding options.
- Maximising paid Traditional Owner participation in on-ground programs.
- Listening and responding to concerns raised by the partners and the public.
- Integrating Operational Plans.
- Encouraging and supporting local business.

**2.7 Financing** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will finance and resource the Park's ongoing management including administrative functions, staff, infrastructure and services. Partnerships with private industry for the provision of infrastructure and visitor services will be encouraged and considered by the partners. External funding will be sought for specific projects.

**2.8 Living areas, subleases and expansion of the Park** – Proposals for living areas, subleases or expansion of the Park will be considered initially by the joint management partners through the Joint Management Committee and the relevant Aboriginal Land Trust. Wider consultation and full consideration of the issues will take place as appropriate. Living Areas and subleases will be subject to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)*, relevant Park Lease, Departmental Policy and local guidelines developed by the partners and environmental impact assessment.

**2.9 Permits – Delegated Senior Rangers** can endorse standard permit applications that involve an approved activity, require no special access, are low impact and in keeping with Traditional Owners wishes. The **Joint Management Committee** will develop local guidelines for assessing special access or activity permits.

- The Committee or affected Traditional Owners may be convened to consider applications if an activity or permit application involves special access or activities.

Traditional Owners from the affected area must be consulted (see **2.2**).

- Activities or proposals that are culturally sensitive, large or complex, or part of a major commercial project will require the Committee to fully consider all details before passing the application to the **Traditional Owners** affected by the proposal. Preference will be given to commercial activities that benefit Traditional Owners.
- Any proposal involving significant disturbance of new ground, Aboriginal archaeological sites or Declared Heritage Places will be referred to the Environment and Heritage division to aid decision-making or set development guidelines and will require a clearance from the relevant Land Council (see **3.5** and **3.6**).

### **2.10 Research, survey and monitoring**

- **Scientific research, survey and monitoring** – Programs will be described in Operational Plans and be subject to annual review and local guidelines developed by the joint management partners. Indigenous knowledge components will be incorporated in project objectives and outcomes where appropriate. Research, survey or monitoring by an external proponent will require a permit that encourages Traditional Owner involvement and complies with Departmental Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property policy and locally developed guidelines (see **3.4**). The partners will request plain English summaries of any external research conducted on the Park.
- **Visitor monitoring** – Visitor monitoring projects will be determined by the partners. Visitors will be counted with traffic counters or other reliable means. Qualitative surveys will be conducted on a five year basis or as required. Visitor comments sheets will continue to be collected and considered, as appropriate. Data will be used by the joint management partners for planning and decision-making (see **3.15**).
- **Park Reporting** – Every five years, the partners will review the implementation of this Plan and prepare a State of The Park Report, reporting on the condition of key values and recommending adaptive changes to management if appropriate. This process may also contribute to State of the Environment Reporting.

**2.11 Excavation, mining and exploration** – Soil and gravel will be extracted for soil conservation works in the Park with the approval of the partners, the Environment and Heritage Division and clearances by the relevant Land Council.

- External requests for excavation will require a written application that will be subject to the approval of the joint management partners and any law in the Northern Territory. The partners will need to consider the terms of approval including conditions of site rehabilitation and adequate compensations to the Aboriginal Land Trust.
- The partners will seek to protect selected areas of the Park from mining by applying for it to be Reserved from Occupation.
- Traditional Owners have the right to gather ochre under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.
- Fossicking will not be allowed.

**2.12 Community engagement** – Neighbours and local stakeholders will be encouraged to work with the joint management partners in matters of mutual interest, planning strategically with the partners in conservation and tourism matters, resolving issues and

developing opportunities including those that are related to the Park's interests, but lie outside its boundary.

- The Northern Territory Government will continue to work in partnership with private landholders in linking Judbarra to conservation corridors as part of the **Territory Eco-link** initiative. Participating private landowners will be offered government assistance through partnership agreements.
- The established **volunteer** program will continue on the basis that it will not compromise or compete with Traditional Owners' aspirations or opportunities (see **3.23**).
- Park staff will regularly liaise with neighbours to support cooperative management in the use and control of fire, control of stock and feral animals, weed control and soil conservation across tenures (see **3.16**). It may be necessary to establish/maintain practical working boundaries due to the rugged terrain of the area. Integrated, regional community partnerships will be encouraged with particular emphasis on adjoining landholders and established community ranger groups. The partners may consider developing a "control area" with neighbours where cooperative management for certain threats such as weeds and feral animals is applied.
- The partners will work with relevant agencies to ensure park images and messages are accurate and appropriate (see **3.21**). Traditional Owners will retain ownership of their **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property** and control the use of cultural information in keeping with standard policy developed between the partners and the NLC/CLC (see **3.4**). Parks will ensure that staff have an adequate understanding of issues regarding the ownership of intellectual and cultural property.

**2.13 A new name for Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve** – The Joint Management Committee will consider changing the name of Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve to reflect Aboriginal ownership. If agreed by the partners, a dual naming system will be used according to departmental policy.

## **PARK ZONING**

### **Background**

The Park is managed for multiple purposes, including nature conservation, protection of cultural and historical values and provision for a range of visitor experiences. Different areas of the Park however, will usually be managed accordingly with greater emphasis on one purpose. A zoning scheme is a general summary of the purpose and focus of management for all areas of the Park based on the specific values of those areas and their level of visitor access and facility development.

The zoning scheme indicates management intent at the time of this Plan's preparation. It is not intended to be a basis for regulation of access or development and may be changed during the term of this Plan to provide for improved protection of values and / or enhancement of visitor opportunities.

Some highly visited areas within the Park are also places of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity. The partners may need to review visitor access and activities in these places and consider options with the tourism industry.

### **Aim**

- Park values protected whilst providing for public access and enjoyment.

### **Management Directions**

**2.14 Zoning** – Management of the Park will be in accordance with the zoning scheme outlined in **Table 3** and shown in **Figure 3**.

**2.15 Special Protection Areas** – Areas of exceptional conservation or cultural significance include Big Horse, Bullita, Barrac Barrac, Jasper Gorge, Limestone Gorge and areas in the south of the Park (see **Figure 3**). Such areas will be subject to special attention with regards to conservation and cultural heritage management programs. Additional special protection areas may be designated or extended during the life of this Plan with the approval of the Joint Management Committee.

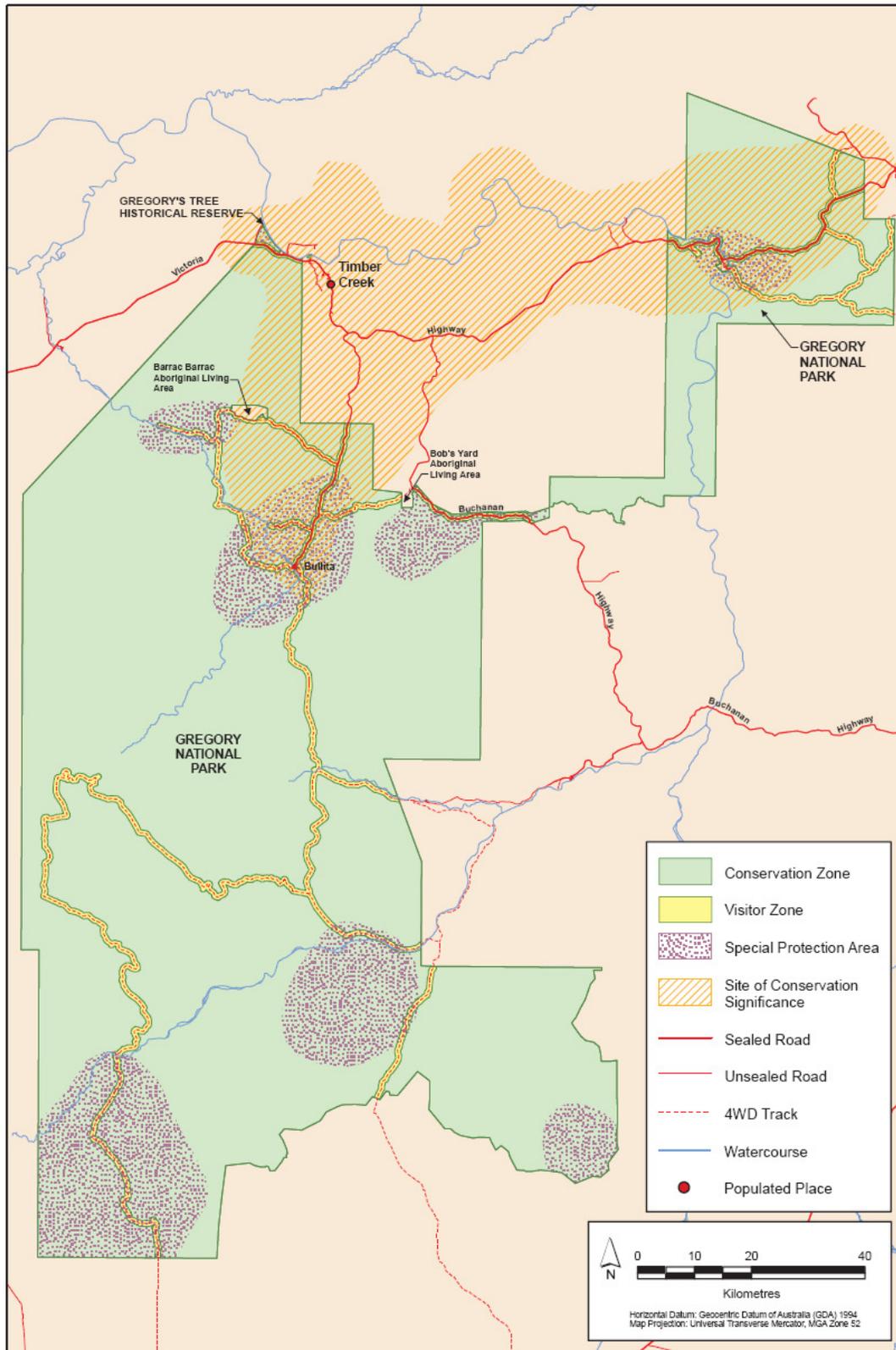
**2.16 Development** - Regardless of the designated zone all management and development will proceed with maintenance of the Park's natural character and conservation values as a priority. Any new development will be subject to the approval of the partners and appropriate environmental, sacred site and cultural heritage clearances and protection measures (see **2.15, 3.5, 3.6, 3.14, 3.15** and **3.20**).

**2.17 Visitor Zone Review** – Visitor access and activities will be reviewed in culturally sensitive areas with relevant Traditional Owners (see **3.1**). Local interests and the tourism industry will be consulted with regard to proposed change and development of alternative experiences (see **2.5** and **2.15**). Zoning will be amended or special conditions applied where necessary in relevant Conservation Management Plans (see **3.8**).

**Table 3. Zoning Scheme Summary**

	<b>Visitor Zone</b>	<b>Conservation Zone</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrated visitor use whilst minimising negative impacts.</li> <li>• Provision for significant future development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of natural and/or cultural values</li> </ul>
<b>Management Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and presentation of visitor facilities, information, interpretation and visitor safety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land conservation programs; fire, weed and feral animal management.</li> <li>• Research.</li> <li>• Maintenance of management facilities and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conventional and four- wheel drive vehicle access.</li> <li>• Boat access to Victoria River.</li> <li>• Marked walking tracks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overnight hiking by permit only or in connection with approved concession.</li> <li>• Public access to Bullita ranger station for business and emergency contact only.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking, walking, nature appreciation and photography, four-wheel driving, fishing, boating, camping (and canoeing within approved concession).</li> <li>• Interpretation of park values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and cultural activities.</li> <li>• Self-reliant bush walking, research and commercial tourism (including bush camping) under permit.</li> </ul>
<b>Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking, picnic, camping, emergency and boat ramp facilities.</li> <li>• Toilets, walkways and viewing platforms.</li> <li>• Shade shelters, visitor information and interpretive walks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranger/ joint management base.</li> <li>• Other management facilities necessary to protect key values.</li> <li>• General provision for nature or culture based tourism under terms of concession permit.</li> <li>• Major tourism development will be subject to public comment.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3. Park Zoning Map**



### 3. MANAGING THE PARK'S VALUES

Judbarra is valued by the joint management partners and the wider community for its internationally significant species diversity, rich Aboriginal, historic and pastoral associations and dramatic scenery. This Plan encourages the joint management partners and the wider community to work together to conserve the Park's rich natural, Aboriginal and historical values.

This section of the Plan relates to the management of the Park as:

- A diverse and shared cultural landscape;
- An internationally significant conservation area; and
- A remote and unique tourist attraction.



*Boab trees throughout the Park have great natural, cultural, historical and interpretation value.*

#### 3.1 MANAGING COUNTRY

##### Introduction

Joint management brings a new way of looking at managing country. Under customary Law, Aboriginal people and land are seen as one, and country is defined by sites and dreamings not as clearly bound entities. Traditional Owners of Judbarra have an obligation to protect and maintain their ancestral homelands within the Park and beyond its boundary.

Traditional Owners respect the land and their ancestors by performing ceremonies on country and passing spiritual and ecological knowledge onto their descendants. Caring also entails visiting, managing and watching the country, moving appropriately on it, and passing knowledge onto family.

Caring for country in a joint management context requires cross-cultural awareness and good communication, to ensure that country is looked after properly in a way that involves both partners combining western science and Indigenous ecological knowledge and priorities. It is critical that Traditional Owners are afforded every opportunity to continue and strengthen their relationships with, and management of country.

## Principles for Managing Country

- Managing country means working together on country to look after the natural and cultural values.
- Management should protect and enhance park values.
- Traditional Owners' management and practice of cultural knowledge is integral to managing country.
- Impacts of wildfire, weeds and feral animals should be minimised.
- Cultural heritage conservation follows the guidance of the Burra Charter.

### 3.1.1 ABORIGINAL AND HISTORICAL VALUES

#### Background

Judbarra is a rich and complex living cultural landscape. The Park also has an exceptional historical heritage that is shared by its original inhabitants and new-comers. The Park encompasses the traditional homelands of several Indigenous language groups including Ngarinyman, Karrangpurru, Malngin, Wardaman, Ngaliwurru, Nungali, Bilinara, Gurindji and Jaminjung. For thousands of years, these ancient peoples have worked together to maintain the spiritual and physical integrity of their lands. Early decades of exploration and pastoral settlement were marked by both conflict and co-operation, and tangible reminders of this exist today.

#### ***Aboriginal Cultural Values***

The Aboriginal cultural values of the Park are of outstanding regional and national significance. Under laws from the Dreaming or creation time, the Traditional Owners of the Park are responsible for country and are obliged to maintain and protect it. Under Aboriginal law, Traditional Owners have responsibility for maintaining and protecting their country. They maintain the integrity of their ancestral homelands by following and teaching religious and ecological knowledge from the Dreaming to their children.

Traditional Owners use areas of the Park for hunting, fishing and the collection of traditional resources such as bush tucker, medicines, fibre, ochre, and timber. Access to the land and its resources is critical for Traditional Owners to exercise their responsibilities in relation to land, law and culture.

*Accessing country with young people is important for keeping culture alive.*



Although many Traditional Owners live on the Park or in close proximity to the Park, there is generally a desire for more access across the Park for traditional purposes including “hunting, fishing, looking for goanna, bush honey, turtle, catfish, bream, bush turkey, kangaroo, water lily, onion and tiny lily that grows on dry land.” Traditional Owners say their “young people need to be trained with old people to make sure it’s done properly.”

A considerable amount of research has been conducted in relation to the Aboriginal culture of the Victoria River District and the Park area. This includes detailed studies of land ownership and connection to country, archaeological and anthropological studies, recordings of oral histories, and Indigenous ecological knowledge projects. Information collected from Traditional Owners on the history and cultural values of the Park must be properly stored and archived so that information of a personal and culturally restricted nature is protected and Traditional Owner access is assured.

The partners support the establishment and maintenance of an actively-held body of Aboriginal cultural knowledge controlled by the Traditional Owners of the Park. Repatriation of Aboriginal cultural information and stories and their appropriate archiving will be an important part of protecting the cultural values of the Park. There are many aspects of cultural information that Traditional Owners are willing to share with visitors.

Cultural knowledge held by Traditional Owners is vulnerable due to the declining number of older people with extensive direct knowledge and experience of country, cultural sites and associated ritual knowledge. Effective long term joint management will require a body of culturally-knowledgeable Traditional Owners far into the future and well beyond the present generation of senior Traditional Owners. Intergenerational knowledge transfer via on-country visits involving senior Traditional Owners and younger generations will be a priority and the partners will need to establish mechanisms to support this.

### ***Archaeological Sites***

Archaeological sites are abundant throughout the Park. The majority of sites are relatively undisturbed and located in remote areas of the Park, inaccessible to the public. These include surface scatters, stone tools and blades, ochre quarries, burial sites, old earth ovens, stone arrangements, stone bird-hunting hides, fish traps, rock shelter occupation deposits and numerous rock art sites.

The rock shelters and caves of Judbarra support a wealth of rock art. Much of the rock art of this region appears to represent an art province quite distinct from other areas. Recorded techniques include painting, stencilling, drawing, printing, pecking and pounding, with human figure motifs being most common. The very high number of composite engraved and painted figures is one of the most prolific sites in Australia.

Prescribed Aboriginal Archaeological Places and Objects on the Park are protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*. Several sites are considered significant, however there has been no proper assessment of their significance and heritage value across the broader region. It is important that archaeological sites are protected from visitor impacts. Traditional Owners say “the right Traditional Owners need to introduce rangers and strangers to country” to ensure sites of cultural significance are respected and protected.

Archaeological evidence dates occupation from at least 20,000 years ago.



### **Sacred Sites**

Numerous registered and recorded Aboriginal Sacred Areas occur throughout the Park. Protection for places that are of cultural significance in the Northern Territory is afforded under overlapping legislation. The Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* gives legal recognition to areas which that Act terms “sacred sites” and defines as:

*“a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and includes any land that, under a law of the Northern Territory, is declared to be sacred to Aboriginals or of significance according to Aboriginal tradition”. The ALRA makes it an offence to enter or remain on land that is a sacred site.*

Complementary Northern Territory legislation, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act (NTASSA)* also provides protection for all sites that fall within the scope of this definition. This protection is generally provided in the form of an Authority Certificate from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) in response to land use proposals. It means that the traditional Aboriginal owners have an enforceable right to say who enters their sacred sites, and what cannot happen on their sacred sites. Illegal entry, works on or use of a sacred site is an offence under the NTASSA.

Strong joint management will ensure that sacred sites are protected in accordance with Traditional Owners’ wishes. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* the Northern Land Council and Central Land Council has a specific function to “assist Aboriginals in the taking of measures likely to assist in the protection of sacred sites” and under its established procedures will carry out this role in facilitating joint management.

### **Historic Sites**

Many events of historical interest have occurred within the Park giving it considerable historical value. These values are focused around the Park as a site of contact between Aboriginal people and colonialists and associated histories of cross cultural clash and negotiation, early European expeditions in the area and the pastoral development of the region.

Tangible reminders of the exploration and establishment of the pastoral industry exist on the Park and require special management and protection. These include:

- **Gregory's Tree** is a carved boab located on the Victoria River, 15 km west of Timber Creek. The two hectare site was declared a Reserve in 1978 and listed on the NT Heritage Register in 1995. The tree marks the area of Augustus Gregory's "entrenchment camp" and still bears inscriptions noting the arrival and departure dates of his North Australian Expedition. Gregory Tree is also an Aboriginal sacred site.
- **Bullita Homestead Precinct and Stockyards** is proposed for listing on the NT Heritage Register. The site consists of the original Bullita Homestead built by pioneer Charlie Shultz in 1960 on the eastern banks of the East Baines River and stockyards built in the 1950's. The homestead precinct includes the homestead and surrounding garden, meat house, generator shed, windmill, tank stand and stockyards. The area contains many sacred features and is of great importance to Traditional Owners.
- **Drovers Rest Boab Precinct** is listed on the NT Heritage Register. Consisting of seven carved boabs, the area is associated with the early pastoral industry of the NT when cattle were overlanded along stock routes to meatworks at Wyndham and Vestey's in Darwin.
- **Jasper Gorge** is listed on the NT Heritage Register and contains a diverse range of cultural features within a scenic gorge setting, including carved boabs, rock art and stone hawk-hunting hides. The gorge has historical significance as the location of many early Aboriginal - European encounters and it is associated with early exploring activities of Gregory and his party. The gorge is highly valued by the local Aboriginal community as the location of numerous Dreaming sites.
- **Numerous carved boabs** of varying significance occur throughout the Park and have been well documented. They relate to early exploration and settlement, including times when many Aboriginal people worked on cattle stations for little or no money.

Many of the historical sites of the Park are listed on the NT Heritage Register. Still many remain, such as stone yards, carved boabs and grave sites that have not yet been assessed to determine their heritage value.



*Historical carvings on Boab trees are reminders of the area's rich pastoral history.*

### *Site Assessment and Protection*

The partners are required to consult with NT Heritage Officers and seek cultural heritage clearance for any proposed works at these sites subject to all relevant laws. Heritage approvals will complement sacred site clearances.

Sustained connection to country means that Traditional Owners have detailed historical knowledge of the region's past, including interactions between Aboriginal people and European settlers. Significance of sites to relevant Traditional Owners should be incorporated as part of the site documentation and assessment process. This knowledge could also be interesting to visitors. Some Traditional Owners are interested in "interpreting the pastoral history of the Park for tourism."

Fire and flooding are the main threat to historic sites within the Park. Damage by stock, human interference, encroaching vegetation, erosion and termite damage are examples of other threatening processes. Sites should be properly documented and conserved until their significance is appropriately assessed.

### **Aims**

- Significant sites and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protected.
- Traditional Owners able to fulfil their cultural obligations.
- Indigenous knowledge, skills and priorities incorporated into management programs for the Park.
- Historic sites on the Park properly documented, assessed and conserved as appropriate.

### **Management Directions**

**3.1 Culturally sensitive areas** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will manage restrictions and guidelines for sacred sites and culturally sensitive areas of the Park as directed by Traditional Owners or the Land Councils as their representatives. All park staff will be aware of significant dreaming tracks and restricted areas. Access to rock art sites in the south of the Park requires Traditional Owner supervision. Some visitor use areas occur in areas of extreme cultural sensitivity and their continued use is in some instances a matter of ongoing concern for Traditional Owners and has the potential to impact on the cultural values of the Park. Advice from Traditional Owners will be sought in managing these concerns (see **2.17**).

**3.2 Aboriginal cultural business** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will respect Traditional Owners' advice and directions relating to cultural matters and customary obligations. These include; restricting access for ceremonial purposes, respecting their need to access country, maintain traditions, and respecting that men's and women's sites' require different management considerations. Access restrictions for cultural purposes are unlikely to affect the main visitor areas. Ample notice will be given to the public regarding temporary closures (see **3.18**).

**3.3 Traditional hunting and gathering** – Rights in relation to hunting and harvest of plant materials and ochre from the Park will extend to Traditional Owners and Aboriginals

who have traditionally used the area in accordance with Aboriginal Tradition. Impacts will be reviewed annually when the Joint Management Committee meets and if warranted, hunting and harvest activity changed by mutual agreement. A hunting and gathering policy, including consideration of hunting dogs, will be developed by the Joint Management Committee and approved by all Traditional Owners. Driving off designated tracks will be actively discouraged (see 3.15).

**3.4 Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** – Traditional Owners will retain ownership and control of their cultural and intellectual property consistent with policy agreed between the Land Councils and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**3.5 Sacred site clearances** – The NLC/CLC has sacred site clearance responsibility for all proposed works on the Park. However, should the joint management partners agree in consultation with the NLC/CLC, then a proponent for certain work in the Park may apply for an AAPA Authority Certificate under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*.

**3.6 Cultural heritage clearances** – Clearance will be sought under the *Heritage Conservation Act* for Declared Heritage Places, works to prescribed Aboriginal Archaeological Places and Objects in the Park as well as any significant soil disturbance, including mining. Sacred site clearances through the NLC/CLC will also be sought for works to any archaeological sites on Park.

**3.7 Managing Aboriginal and historic values** – The joint management partners will develop a Cultural Heritage Management Program and guidelines for the Park with input from NLC/CLC. The partners and the NLC/CLC will work together to identify supporting resources if required. The Program will provide for:

- “Back to Country” activities providing opportunities for the partners to spend time on country together, facilitating transmission of cultural knowledge and skills between Traditional Owner families, to the younger generation and to the Rangers, as appropriate. The program will be supported by the NLC/CLC and will support the maintenance of an actively-held body of Aboriginal cultural knowledge controlled by the Traditional Owners of the Park.
- Previously recorded cultural information and stories from Traditional Owners will be assessed and submitted to an archival system controlled by the Traditional Owners as well as entered into the Park Cultural/ Historic Sites Register where appropriate. The NLC/CLC will consult with Traditional Owners concerning their wishes with regard to the cultural knowledge and other records that they hold. Parks and Wildlife will seek assistance from the NLC/CLC in order to appropriately store and archive information so that it is protected according to the wishes of those who provided it, Departmental ICIP policy and locally developed guidelines (see 3.14).
- Research, including recording oral histories and Indigenous knowledge, will be encouraged where resulting knowledge is expected to contribute to site assessment. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property will be protected (see 3.4).

**3.8 Managing archaeological, cultural and historic sites** - Sites will be properly documented and assessed for their significance and heritage value, incorporating significance to relevant Traditional Owners where appropriate. The Burra Charter principles and process will guide this assessment.

- Sites of significance will be submitted for nomination to the NT Heritage Register under the *Heritage Conservation Act* with the approval of the joint management partners.
- Archaeological sites may be made accessible and interpreted for the public, subject to permission of relevant Traditional Owners and provided the sites are adequately protected.
- Sites will be maintained until they can be properly assessed for their significance and heritage value. Historic sites will be managed to ensure that threats such as erosion and graffiti do not negatively impact on their values. Visitors may not remove historic artefacts.
- Sites containing rock art and wooden artefacts will be protected as part of the Fire Management Program under the direction and supervision of the relevant Traditional Owners (see 3.11).
- Traditional Owners may initiate activities to protect sacred sites which may also be incorporated into management programs. Training will be provided for Traditional Owners in cultural site management including rock art preservation techniques.
- **Conservation Management Plans** for NT Heritage Register sites listed will be developed by the partners with the assistance of the Heritage Officer and revised as necessary (see 2.17 and 3.1). Guidelines for carved boab management will be developed.

### 3.1.2 NATURAL AND ECOLOGICAL VALUES

#### Background

Judbarra is the largest park in the Northern Territory's park estate. The Park has natural and ecological values of international significance and contributes greatly to the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of the Northern Territory reserve system. This section of the Plan details the care and protection of the land, waterways, plants and animals of the Park. To effectively protect the land and its biodiversity, management must work to minimise the impacts of weeds and feral animals and manage fire and visitors appropriately.

Management decisions are supported by knowledge. A long-term vegetation monitoring program was established in 1998 to understand the effects of fire on different habitats. An expanded, formalised program of biodiversity survey, research and monitoring is required that also incorporates and records Indigenous ecological knowledge, priorities and land management practices. This should result in a better understanding of ecosystem dynamics and ability to manage key threats and their impacts.

#### ***A vast protected landscape***

The large size of Judbarra offers it some resilience to threats and therefore enhances its potential for biodiversity conservation. The Park's size offers a large range of climatic conditions and refugia for species and fewer "edge impacts" from unreserved adjoining land. Judbarra provides a key link in the Territory Eco-link strategy aimed at connecting public and voluntary private conservation efforts across the Territory.

The upper catchments of the Wickham, Humbert and East Baines Rivers and the Snake and Depot Creeks lie within the Park, in addition to the mid and lower catchment of the Victoria River. Results of the Australian Rivers Assessment Scheme indicate good environmental health of these surface waters and the spring fed upper Wickham River is noted for its high conservation value. The continued health of the Victoria River catchment is important to the lower reaches of the Victoria River, which supports significant waterfowl breeding colonies and feeding/ roosting sites for migratory shorebirds.



The Park is known for its healthy waterways.

### ***A high concentration of significant species***

Over 1 000 native plant species and 334 native vertebrate species have been recorded for the Park as well as 52 families of aquatic invertebrates and 58 species of cave invertebrates. Several of these species are significant due to their conservation status, endemism or distributional range.

Sections of the Park fall within the internationally significant “Victoria River middle reaches and Gregory Area” Site of Conservation Significance (see **Figure 1** page 7). These are sites identified within the Northern Territory with special biodiversity values that need particular attention.

In this section of the Plan, threatened species are attributed with a category based on listings under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. Assessment criteria for these categories follow those accepted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. See **Appendix 4** for national listings under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*.

There are three Vulnerable plant species listed for the Park; Venus-hair Fern, a *Gleichenia* Fern, and *Triodia fitzgeraldii*. Until further research fully establishes the status and distribution of these populations as well as any potential threats, precautionary principles will be applied in the management of their habitat.

The Endangered Gouldian Finch and the Vulnerable Purple-crowned Fairy-wren both occur on the Park and warrant special management consideration. The most important factor in the decline of these species appears to be understorey vegetation change due to feral grazing animals and extensive late dry season fires. These birds benefit by protection of riparian vegetation from grazing animals, protection of primary habitats especially canegrass areas from frequent fires and for the Gouldian Finch in particular, special focus on fire regimes that protect the wet season feeding grounds.

*Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens rely on healthy river country.*



Although Emus and Australian Bustards are widespread in their distribution, they are in decline in the Northern Territory. The major threat to these species on Park is frequent extensive fire leading to a reduction in food supplies and decreased nesting success. Elsewhere in the NT, hunting has been suggested as a potential threatening process for Bustards and although only Traditional Owners have hunting rights on the Park the partners will need to develop local guidelines for sustainable hunting of this species.

The Partridge Pigeon is known from Judbarra. As they forage, nest and roost on the ground, they are highly susceptible to predation by feral cats as well as changes in grass cover and composition associated with fire and any grassy weed incursions. The species is advantaged by a regime of frequent, patchy but localised fire.

The Masked Owl is also known to occur on the Park, but little is known of the threatening factors leading to its decline in population numbers. However, the protection of large trees with hollows in tall forests, and the exclusion of invasive exotic grasses on the Park would be a benefit to this species.

Although Mertens Water Monitor and Yellow-spotted Monitor are widespread and protected on many parks, including Judbarra they are listed as Vulnerable in the Northern Territory because of their propensity to eat cane toads and die from the ingested toxins. The endemic Pygmy Rock Monitor also occurs in the Park. Rangers have already observed local population declines of these monitors with the arrival of Cane Toads.

The Vulnerable Angalarri Grunter has only been recorded from Limestone Gorge on the East Baines River and from an upper tributary of the Angalarri River on Bradshaw Station. Although little is known of the ecology of this highly localised fish species, its potential threats include degradation of riparian vegetation due to altered fire regimes and impacts of feral animals. Park management actions for Limestone Gorge will need to reflect these protection measures.

The Vulnerable Freshwater Sawfish is known to inhabit the Victoria River. Although primarily a marine species, it spends significant periods of its life history in the muddy-bottomed upper reaches of Rivers. It is vulnerable to net fishing and development resulting in degradation of riverine habitat. With the absence of these two factors in Judbarra, the species is offered an important refuge.

The Critically Endangered Fitzroy Land Snail and another Vulnerable Land Snail are only known from Judbarra where they are restricted to a few low limestone hills. The snails lay dormant during the dry season where they are unprotected from hot fires and are vulnerable to trampling by feral animals. Cane Toads may also have a significant impact on these snails.

The identification and mapping of important habitat areas for threatened species on Park needs to be a priority. Overlaid with other attributes such as accessibility for management, and levels of current and potential threat, this biophysical mapping will enable the partners to determine which areas of the Park to prioritise for threatened species management. This will allow very specific areas of the Park to be managed in particular ways to diminish threatening processes for these species.

Involving senior Traditional Owners and young people in joint management will enable Indigenous ecological knowledge and priorities to be incorporated into Park management as well as ensuring intergenerational transfer of Indigenous ecological knowledge is promoted.

The recording and promotion of Indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK) is seen as a critical part of joint management for Judbarra by Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife staff. At the request of senior Traditional Owners, a joint project began in 1986 with Parks and Wildlife to record Aboriginal knowledge of flora and fauna from Judbarra. The project has resulted in three invaluable resources<sup>iv</sup> that will assist with integration of IEK and inter-generational transfer of biological knowledge.

Many animal and plant species in the Park are also spiritually significant, either as Dreamings or through being included in Dreaming stories and song cycles. Indeed, there are thousands of individual plants that are regarded as significant features of sacred sites. Fifty-seven plant species have been identified as spiritually significant within Judbarra.



Cluster figs are important Dreaming tucker for Walujapi (Black-headed python).

### ***Karst and cave systems of International significance.***

The rugged landscapes of the Park are the result of marine depositions 1 500 million years ago and their subsequent uplift and erosion since the late Tertiary. Today, one of the most outstanding geological features of the Park are the fascinating limestone karst features, tufas and stromatolites in the Limestone Creek area. Karst is terrain with distinctive landforms and hydrology that has developed from the high solubility and porosity of limestone.

The caves and karst resources of Judbarra are of international significance with aspects of the karst system on the Park considered rare on a world scale. The Bullita cave system

<sup>iv</sup> (1) Jaminjung, Ngaliwurru and Nungali – information on 249 plants and 226 animals recorded;

(2) Ngarinyman – information on 233 plants and 237 animals recorded (Widjburru 2009);

(3) Bilinarra, Gurindji and Malngin – information on 207 plants and 248 animals recorded.

represents the longest cave system in the southern hemisphere, with over 100 km of surveyed passages. Multiple entrances have been mapped, and a network of passages represents a greater complexity than any other system recorded in Australia.

Some mapping and invertebrate fauna survey has been carried out on the cave and karst system of Judbarra.

There is no public access to the caves for safety, cultural and environmental reasons, however visitors can walk through some of the karst system and see tufas and stromatolites guided by interpretive signage in the Limestone Gorge area.

*Interesting limestone formations are abundant in the Limestone Creek area.*



The caves have long been known to Aboriginal people in the area, and numerous Aboriginal art sites occur in caves or in close proximity to cave entrances. Caves of Judbarra are important cultural sites that must be properly protected to ensure their physical and spiritual integrity.

The caves system is not actively managed other than some monitoring for activities which might threaten the cave values. A better understanding of these systems will be attained by encouraging further research of expert speleologists under permit endorsed by the Joint Management Committee.

### ***Fire sensitive ecosystems***

Fire has long been a part of the environment and has played a major role in shaping the vegetation communities of Judbarra. Aboriginal burning practices prior to European settlement in the area was likely based on frequent small burns throughout the year. Altered fire regimes since those times have resulted in higher fuel loads and more extensive hot late dry season fires and hence vegetation change that negatively impacts ecosystems and species. Traditional Owners have retained knowledge relating to traditional burning practices and see it as an essential part of maintaining the country's spiritual integrity, "cleaning up" areas and making it more accessible. Fire management activities present a valuable opportunity for Traditional Owners to visit country.

The Park contains a number of fire sensitive vegetation communities including: monsoon rainforest and karst vegetation, riparian communities, sandstone heathlands, and Lancewood thickets.

Monsoon rainforest patches and karst vegetation often share a similar and species rich flora that is different from the dominant surrounding woodlands. These highly fragmented vegetation types support many fruiting species utilised by flying foxes and birds. The movement of these seed dispersing animals between rainforest patches and also riparian vegetation facilitates the spread of rainforest plants. These vegetation types are most at risk of invasion from woodland species with increased fire frequency, which in turn encourages more frequent fires.



*Monsoon rainforests exist as isolated pockets in Judbarra.*

Riparian vegetation generally supports a high species richness of both plants and animals. As they retain moisture for longer periods than surrounding vegetation they provide important food and refuge areas. Protection of riparian vegetation from fire is also critical for general river health.

Sandstone heathland communities are of high conservation value as they are limited in extent and are particularly vulnerable to changed fire regimes. When fires are frequent changes occur in their species composition favouring more short-lived and fire tolerant species. For the plants that typify these heathlands to reach reproductive maturity, fire-free intervals of at least five years are required.

The Lancewood patches on the Park represent the western most distribution of the species range. It is a long lived species which only reproduces by seed and takes a long time to grow to seed producing age. Recent studies have indicated fire regimes in the Park are causing significant negative impacts on patches of Lancewood. This vegetation needs less frequent fire, achieved by burning the more fire tolerant habitats in the landscape, hence proving protection to these patches.

Vegetation change caused by reduced fine scale burning coupled with hot late dry season fires is known to be a threatening process for various threatened species as previously discussed.

As a means of better understanding the effects of fire on different habitats, a vegetation monitoring system was established in 1998. Detailed species presence and community structure data are collected from these sites and overlaid with fire history to help the partners understand the response of different vegetation types to a range of fire regimes. Control burns and wildfires are recorded on the Park's Geographical Information System (GIS). Good information enables the partners to work together more effectively to plan burns and respond to changes in vegetation over time.

Early wet season burns are favoured to reduce environmental impacts.



The fire management strategy for Judbarra emphasises habitat diversity as a principle objective. This includes maintaining a range of fuel ages across the landscape of the Park in order to “break up country” in the event of unplanned fire. The conservation goal of substantially increasing the extent of relatively long unburnt habitat will be further emphasised. Development of the fire strategy is needed to identify and record the geographic locations of fire sensitive communities and target them with the most appropriate fire regimes based on the advice of experts. The program also provides for the protection of human life and property, cultural sites (eg. rock art, and old stock yards), fire research and monitoring, and wildfire suppression.

Sustainable fire regimes, particularly in the south of the Park where many of the sensitive vegetation communities occur, will be achieved through a strong Indigenous involvement. Traditional Owners want to be involved in fire management planning and to “do burning the right way to get bush tucker.” Burning is both a land management tool for Traditional Owners and an important part of their spiritual relationships and obligations to country. There is a need to incorporate Indigenous burning practices and priorities into the fire strategy.

Liaison with Park neighbours and establishment of long-term fire breaks remains a critical part of effective fire management. Collaboration and education is essential for protecting the Park from large wildfires originating from outside the Park.

The Northern Territory Government is committed through its Greenhouse Policy to abating greenhouse gas emissions. The most realistic method of achieving this is through improved fire management on the Government estate, including Parks. Specifically minimising emissions by concentrating fire activity to the early part of the fire season.

### ***Feral animal management***

Nine introduced fauna species are recorded for Judbarra. Of these, donkeys, horses and cattle cause the most extensive environmental damage throughout the Park. Although water buffalo, camel and pig do occur in the Park, they are not widespread.

Damage caused by large feral animals includes; overgrazing, vegetation loss, trampling and foraging causing soil disturbance, accelerated erosion, invasion and spread of weed species, destruction of habitats by rooting and wallowing, siltation and widening of sensitive watercourses, as well as reducing the aesthetic value of the landscape. Understorey vegetation change caused by these large grazing animals has been directly

implicated as threatening to the Gouldian Finch, Purple-crowned Fairy-wren and Australian Bustard.

Judbarra falls within the Victoria River District Pest Declaration Area, which requires landholders to control donkeys at a management target of less than 0.1 donkeys per km<sup>2</sup>. An aerial survey of donkeys and horses in 2006 indicated a substantial increase in the numbers of grazing feral animals on the Park since previous surveys. An aerial survey and landscape scale control is well overdue.

Effective long-term control of horses, donkeys, cattle, buffalo and pigs requires a strategic approach and ongoing commitment of resources. Control methods have included strategic fencing, mustering and removal by pet meat operators under concession agreements, aerial shooting, ground shooting and trapping.

Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service have different perspectives regarding the removal of cattle and feral animals from the Park. Traditional Owners are reluctant to endorse broad scale culling of large herbivores due to their affinity with animals through pastoral work and their desire to gain economic benefit from the Park. The partners need to work together to achieve a balance between economic opportunities for Traditional Owners and effective and acceptable feral animal control methods, particularly in relation to cattle and horses.



*Control methods for large feral animals need to be negotiated between the partners.*

Feral cats have well established populations on the Park, especially in the sandstone escarpment areas. There is no formal control program for cats on Park, nor any availability of broadscale control options.

Black Rats have been recorded in canegrass areas along the Victoria River and may be impacting on the nesting success of Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens. Should further research indicate this predation is significant, a remedial program should be established.

Cane Toads probably reached the Park in 2006 as they progressed from the east. The Rangers and Traditional Owners have noticed a decline in goanna populations since that time. No practical broad scale control method is presently known for Cane Toads.

## **Weed Management**

Fifty two introduced plant species have been recorded for the Park. The majority of these species are either isolated records or species not considered environmentally threatening. Most of the important weeds requiring management attention are confined to riparian habitats, are spread by wet season floodwaters or are associated with water-holding black soil areas (see **Appendix 5**).

Weed control works on Park take into consideration weed risk (invasiveness, impacts on park values and potential distribution) as well as feasibility of control (control costs, current distribution and persistence). There is also a legal obligation to control all weeds declared under the *Weeds Management Act*. These criteria are used within a weed management prioritization matrix to direct operational programs.

Devil's Claw is the Park's highest priority weed to control. Management activity has been focused along a 50 kilometre section of the East Baines River, a two kilometre section of the Humbert River and the lower section of Gibbie Creek sub-catchment. The involvement of volunteers and community members in the annual Devil's Claw festival has been the core control effort for the past 10 years. Devil's Claw also occurs in several major tributaries of the Victoria River.

*Volunteers work together with community and rangers on the annual Devil's Claw "festival."*



*Parkinsonia* is listed as a Weed of National Significance (WONS), which means the partners have a legal duty to control this species. Other WoNS weeds, including Mesquite and Prickly Acacia occur in the area around the Park and it will be important to monitor likely habitat areas for incursions of these species. There is also a need to remain vigilant for the entry of Rubber Vine (WoNS) entering the Park from infestations in nearby Western Australia.

The control of local infestations of Mission Grass, Noogoora Burr and Castor Oil Bush in riparian habitats will be important where significant populations of Purple-crowned fairy-wrens occur.

For the most efficient use of resources, weed control activities described in annual Operational Plans are based on a longer term weed management strategy. The focus is on controlling established weed populations in areas of high biodiversity within the Park boundaries, whilst minimising the opportunities for the establishment of new weed species. The effectiveness of this program relies in part, on weed control activities by neighbouring

landholders, making it necessary to liaise closely with landholders and other stakeholders in the upper catchment of the Victoria River.

### Aims

- The Park's natural landforms and scenery protected and valued by the whole community.
- Improved knowledge, confidence and competence in managing the landscape and threatening processes.
- Indigenous knowledge and priorities incorporated into management programs.
- Threatened species and ecosystem function maintained across the broader landscape.

### Management Directions

**3.8 Scenery** – Protection of the Park's natural character and aesthetic values will be afforded the highest priority. Any development will be carefully sited and designed in accordance with the natural environment and significant sites, so as not to detract from the Park's outstanding landscape and scenic values (see **3.20**).

**3.9 Biodiversity Conservation** - Protection of the Park's biodiversity will be the highest management priority.

- The mapping of important habitat areas for threatened species, areas of high species richness and fire sensitive vegetation types on Park will be undertaken to determine which areas of the Park to prioritise for specific management actions. This will enable the integration and implementation of the Park's Operational Plans for fire, weeds and feral animals.
- Transfer and recording of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) particularly for threatened species will be a focus of partners spending time together on country. Traditional Owners will retain ownership and control of their IEK (see **3.4**).
- Survey and recording of the Park's biological resources will be a priority. As far as possible, at least one survey will be conducted each year with the collaboration of the biodiversity scientists, parks staff and Traditional Owners. Priority areas are those under-represented on the fauna atlas database.
- Research or monitoring programs will be developed and implemented for selected threatened species, taking into account relevant Species Recovery Plans. Priority should be given to Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens, Partridge Pigeon and Land Snails due to their conservation significance and the achievability of research outcomes relevant to Park management.
- External research projects will be encouraged. Research projects will be subject to a Research Permit in accordance with *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (see **2.10**).

- Recreational fishing will continue to be subject to the *Fisheries Act* and Regulations and the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, Departmental policy and local guidelines (see **3.19**).

**3.10 Karst and Cave Systems** – Protection of the nationally significant karst and cave systems will remain a priority.

- Assistance from specialists may be sought in improving the understanding of karst and cave systems. Particular focus will be given to spatial information about cave openings and passages, and improving data on associated flora and fauna.
- Traditional Owners will retain control of their IEK in regard to karst and cave systems (see **3.4**) and any research will be subject to appropriate permits and approval processes (see **2.9**).
- Information about these systems may be linked to the Park Cultural/Historical Sites Register (see **3.7**)
- Due to the complexity of the cave system on the Park as well as their environmental and cultural sensitivity there will be no general public access to the caves on the Park. Access to karst areas and caves for special purposes will be by permit only.
- The Emergency Response Plan actions regarding caves will be reviewed and updated as required.

**3.11 Fire management** – The management of fire will be a high priority for protecting life, cultural sites, infrastructure and biodiversity from the effect of wildfires. Biophysical data such as available vegetation mapping and mapping of habitats important to threatened species will be used to define fire sensitive areas of the Park.

- Strategic firebreaks will be created through prescribed burning and long-term physical fire breaks will be maintained. Bushfires NT and neighbours will be notified prior to burning.
- Fuel loads will be maintained at low levels around park infrastructure and historical/cultural sites to ensure the protection of people, personal property, park assets and heritage values (see **3.8**).
- Information about threatened species and fire sensitive ecosystems will inform implementation of appropriate fire regimes. Environmental burns to maintain biodiversity will be planned annually using biophysical data, and this data will be used to further develop the long term fire management strategy.
- A Biodiversity Monitoring Program based on established fire plots will continue to be re-surveyed every five years to assess whether the fire management program is effectively maintaining biodiversity values.
- Wildfires will be reported to Bushfires NT and action taken to control their spread whenever possible. Assistance will be given to neighbouring landholders to control wildfires that may threaten the Park and to reduce fuel loads, on request. Graders and other heavy machinery will be used for wildfire suppression purposes only in extremely threatening circumstances, utilising existing tracks where possible.

- Traditional Owners' priorities and knowledge about fire, landscape and site protection will be incorporated into the fire management strategy. They will be involved in implementation of fire management programs, including traditional burning as agreed as part of the fire strategy.

**3.12 Weed management** – Management of weeds will seek to reduce the impact of particularly environmentally threatening weeds such as Devils Claw and *Parkinsonia* and guard against major visual impact on the visitor experience. The Park's GIS will continue as the basis for annual mapping, monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of weed control efforts and determining priority control areas around sensitive habitats. Current weed distribution data, vegetation mapping, and sites of biological and cultural significance will be incorporated into strategy to effectively prioritise where weeds are controlled on the Park. The management program will focus on a catchment approach to weed control.

- Weed control will be prioritised in high biodiversity areas most susceptible to invasion and impact of environmental weeds. Sites of cultural significance at risk of high fuel loads will also be managed under the direction of Traditional Owners.
- Regular survey and monitoring for the presence of threatening weeds will be undertaken across the Park with particular emphasis on areas highly susceptible to invasion.
- New weed species outbreaks will be targeted for eradication as soon as possible following detection.
- Machinery involved in road and verge maintenance will need to be cleaned prior to commencing work on the Park. This should be addressed through contractual arrangements and documentation.
- The Weed Strategy will reflect the Katherine Regional Weed Management Strategy and the requirements of the *NT Weeds Management Act*. NT Weed Risk Management Technical Working Group updates to weed "risk scores" and liaison with the Victoria River District Conservation Association will be incorporated.

**3.13 Feral animal management** – The partners will seek to reduce the impact of introduced animals on native plants, animals and the environment by exclusion and removal of large grazing animals. Traditional Owner involvement in operational planning will ensure that the views of both partners are represented. The Park's GIS will be used to map feral animal occurrences and record control actions.

- Camels, cattle, donkeys and horses will be removed from the Park according to Departmental policy and local guidelines developed by the partners. The Victoria River District Pest Declaration will also guide feral animal management. Priority will be given to sensitive areas suffering negative impacts.
- Economic opportunities for Traditional Owners for the control of feral animals will be explored by the joint management partners. This may include mustering contracts and pet meat in the short-term (see 2.5).
- Boundary fences will be regularly patrolled and maintained to prevent the entry of camels, cattle, donkeys and horses. Any new fencing will be strategically sited to

minimise the impacts of feral animals on the Park. When funds allow, Parks staff will conduct aerial surveys of inaccessible areas of the Park.

- Targeted control of Black Rats may be employed along riparian habitats suitable for Purple - crowned fairy – wren if research warrants. Cats and Cane Toads will not be a high control priority unless effective broadscale control options become available.
- Parks staff will liaise with neighbours to ensure stock are excluded from the Park.
- Rangers will enforce the Parks and Wildlife Service Pets in Parks Policy and relevant Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-Laws.

**3.14 Water Quality** – Maintaining water quality in the Park's waterholes and other surface waters will remain a priority.

- Potable water quality will be periodically monitored at major visitor nodes for visitor safety as required.
- Only non-residual, biodegradable herbicides will be used along creeklines.
- Any new developments will protect natural hydrologic processes, water quality and aquatic diversity.
- Any new toilet and sewage facilities will consider the protection of park surface and groundwater from contamination.
- Feral animals will be managed to protect waterways in accordance with the feral animal control program.

**3.15 Soil conservation** – Biophysical mapping data used in conjunction with the Park's GIS will assist future Park development and management planning. Expert advice from soil conservationists will also be sought in consideration of any management activities that have the potential to cause erosion.

- Infrastructure design and installation will minimise soil disturbance and erosion potential.
- Walking tracks, vehicle tracks, fence-lines and other erosion prone areas will be assessed after each wet season. Further erosion control work, track realignment and closures will be pursued where necessary. Soil and gravel extraction for park maintenance will be subject to relevant clearances (see **2.11**).
- Driving off designated tracks will be actively discouraged.
- Riverbanks will be monitored at access points to determine the impacts of boating, fishing and other visitor use. Access may be managed to enable soil stability to be restored where visitor activity is a cause of erosion (see **3.18**).
- Degraded areas will be rehabilitated on a priority basis. Healthy vegetation surrounding erosion areas will be used to seed rehabilitation areas.

**3.16 Stakeholder liaison** – The partners will liaise with local community and relevant stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated approach to weed, fire and feral animal control across tenures and neighbouring properties (see **2.12**). "Control areas" may be pursued in which assistance be given to neighbours to control ferals and weeds near to the Park boundary. Integrated, regional community partnerships in natural resource management

planning will be encouraged, with particular emphasis on adjoining landowners and community ranger groups.

## 3.2 MANAGING FOR VISITORS

### Introduction

This section addresses visitor management and identifies ways of accommodating visitor interests while protecting the natural, Aboriginal and historic values of the Park.

The Park offers visitors a remote, outback experience with the opportunity to explore its rich natural and cultural heritage or to simply relax, enjoy the stunning vistas and catch a fish. Approximately 21 000 visitors each year traverse the northern part of the Park, experiencing key attractions along the scenic Victoria Highway. The vast interior of the Park largely remains a wilderness area, attracting about 4 670 visitors each year. The opportunity to experience the Park's many attractions with little contact with other people is a key part of the Park's appeal for many.

Traditional Owners enthusiastically welcome visitors to the Park. They want to share their country and culture. They also want visitors to respect the area's values, both cultural and natural, and to learn about and enjoy the Park safely. They say "we hope tourists come to our country and spend time learning about our country and behaving the right way." The joint management partners believe good visitor information is a key to those outcomes. They want visitors to have well maintained facilities suitable for the Park's character. There is potential to expand the experiences offered to the public, in particular authentic Indigenous experiences.

The joint management partners encourage visitors to have a safe and interactive experience at Judbarra. They would like the following key messages to be communicated to visitors:

- We welcome you to this special place. Help us to look after its important cultural, natural and historical values by showing respect.
- Visitors have the chance to learn about different Aboriginal cultures and country during their stay.
- Follow the guidelines we have put in place to look after the Park and make sure you stay safe.
- Traditional Owners and Rangers are looking after the Park together, two ways.

### Principles for Managing Visitors

- Appropriate tourism development can benefit the local community creating demand for, and generating income from visitor services.
- Well designed facilities protect Park values and promote safe, enjoyable visitor experiences.
- Visitor safety is paramount.
- Visitors' appreciation and respect for the Park is enhanced by sharing information about the Park's unique natural and cultural values.
- Well managed commercial operations helps visitor management by providing opportunities, services and facilities that the Parks and Wildlife Service cannot provide.

- Monitoring visitor activities and satisfaction helps decision-making and can identify enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners.

### 3.2.1 RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM VALUES

#### **Background**

While continued growth in tourism is generally forecast for the Northern Territory during the term of this Plan, a dramatic increase in visitors to the Park is not expected. Promotion of the Park's four-wheel drive tracks is expected to increase some use of the track network. It is important for the joint management partners to liaise closely with Tourism NT and Tourism Top End to ensure marketing and promotion is consistent with the character of the Park.

Judbarra's significant recreational and tourism values are based around:

- Opportunities for visitors to rest and appreciate the spectacular scenery along the Victoria Highway;
- Access to fishing and boating opportunities on the Park's picturesque and unspoilt creeks and rivers;
- The vast, wild and remote landscapes enjoyed via the Park's four-wheel drive tracks;
- Interpreting the diverse cultural values of the Park to visitors;
- Interpreting the Park's natural landscape features and species of interest; and
- Interpreting important historic sites such as Gregory's Tree.

The partners are committed to providing accurate up-to-date information, well designed and maintained facilities and a range of safe and appropriate activities for visitors to enjoy. The appropriate development, use and level of access is determined by the Park Zoning Scheme (see 2.14) and relevant parks tourism development plans.

#### ***Top End Touring***

The majority of visitors to the Park are in transit, travelling the sealed Victoria Highway between Katherine and the Western Australia border - a part of the "Savannah Way". This type of visitor typically uses the facilities of Timber Creek as well as park facilities located along the Victoria River Highway, camping overnight or having picnics. For many visitors of this type their use of park facilities is unplanned and motivated by roadside signs and scenic opportunities as they travel through the Park.



*Stunning vistas of the Victoria River District are a major tourism drawcard.*

Facilities provided and maintained for these travellers are focussed at the main visitor nodes (see **Appendix 1**), including:

- **Orientation shelters** located beside the Victoria Highway. The shelter at the western boundary of the Gregory sector contains comprehensive welcome and orientation information. The shelter at the eastern boundary of the Victoria River sector requires information panels and upgraded access.
- **Big Horse Creek**, located ten kilometres west of the Timber Creek township beside the Victoria River, is the most visited site on the Park. It includes approximately 20 designated camping sites including sites for coach groups, a picnic area and boat ramp. Facilities include composting toilets, wood fires and picnic tables. Water for visitor use is transported to the site. The main group using the facilities is visitors in pursuit of fishing opportunities, attracted by the convenient access to the Victoria River. A tour operator currently runs boat tours from this site under an approved concession and Operational Agreement. The Parks and Wildlife Service manages all campgrounds with fees collected via a visitor honesty system.
- **Sullivan Creek Campground** is located about 15 kilometres within the eastern park boundary beside the Victoria Highway. The area caters for about six groups and has basic amenities including picnic tables, wood barbecues and a pit toilet. Water is not supplied. A nearby waterhole offers a short walk and fishing. The main use of this campground is as a roadside stop, picnic area or overnight camp for highway travellers.
- **Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve** is two hectares of land situated off the Victoria Highway, close to Timber Creek. Gregory's Tree is a Declared Heritage Place and an Aboriginal sacred site where visitors can enjoy views of the Victoria River and read and learn about early explorers and Aboriginal people. A boardwalk surrounds and protects the boab tree.
- **Joe Creek Picnic Area** is located about eight kilometres west of the Victoria River Crossing, south of the Victoria Highway. Encompassed by spectacular escarpment, the site provides a scenic picnicking opportunity and basic amenities including wood barbecues and a pit toilet.

The increasing popularity of camper trailers in this visitor group will need further consideration as the existing camping facilities do not adequately meet their needs and causes congestion of campgrounds during peak visitor periods. The provision of toilet facilities at the western entry to the Park and the Victoria River boat ramp is also a management priority.

Walks which are generally enjoyed by this visitor group include:

- The **Escarpment Walk**, about two kilometres west of the Victoria River Crossing, is a moderately difficult track that takes about ninety minutes to complete. This popular walk climbs to a lookout on the escarpment edge offering superb views over the rugged terrain of this part of the Park. Interpretive and safety information is provided at the start of the walk as well as along the track.
- The **Joe Creek Walk** is a moderately difficult ninety minute walk. The track runs to the base of the escarpment where Livistona palms and native ferns grow and interpretive signs inform visitors about these and other interesting plants. Aboriginal rock art along the rock cliff is a potential interpretive opportunity.

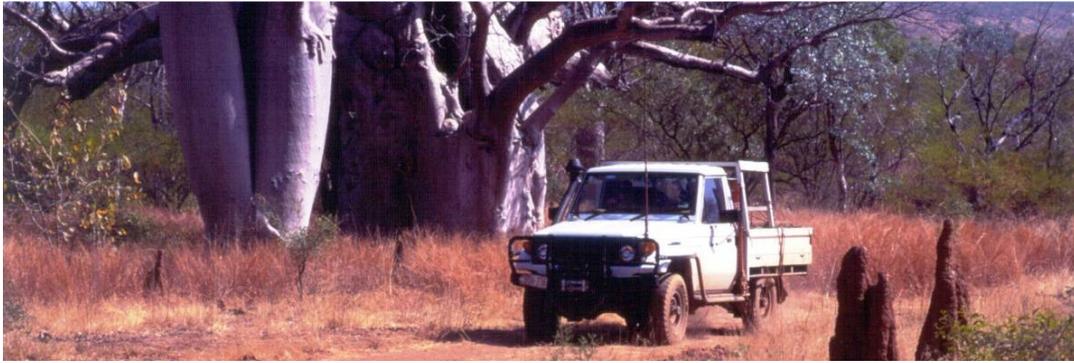
The Park's waterways are recreational resources of high significance, offering scenic **boating** and **fishing** opportunities that draw visitors from the Top End and interstate. There is boat access to the Victoria River at Big Horse Creek and the Victoria River Gorge Picnic Area. Fishing from the river bank is pursued at these and other sites including the Old Victoria River Crossing, the East Baines River at Limestone Creek and Bullita and at a number of accessible locations along the Humbert and Wickham Rivers. Motorised water craft are not permitted on the Wickham River due to its significant natural and cultural values.

Scenic **flights** occasionally operate over the Park from Timber Creek and the Victoria River Wayside Inn. The airstrip at Bullita is not maintained and there is no provision for visitors to land within the Park without special permission.

### ***Remote four-wheel drive adventuring***

The other type of visitor to Judbarra has usually pre-planned their visit and stay longer in the Park. This group is typically interested in adventurous four-wheel driving, camping and fishing opportunities.

For this type of visitor, the Binns Track, Buchanan Highway and Buntine Highway connect to the four-wheel drive tracks in the south of the Park (**Appendix 1**). The Bullita Access Road which leaves the Victoria Highway 15 km east of Timber Creek is the most frequently used unsealed road in the Park, providing access to the popular sites of Limestone Gorge, the Bullita Homestead Precinct and Stockyards and the Park's four-wheel drive tracks. High clearance four-wheel drive vehicles are required on all tracks and the towing of trailers is not recommended.



*A network of tracks cater for 4WD enthusiasts during the dry season.*

While the Park's four-wheel drive tracks currently receive relatively little use, it is envisaged that four-wheel drive touring will become a more significant visitor activity during the term of this Plan. A relatively new Tourism NT initiative and promotion of the Binns Track from Mount Dare (in South Australia) to Timber Creek may enhance visitor usage of the Park track network. Tourism NT four-wheel drive market research will be valuable for future planning of the Park track network.

The four-wheel drive network usually opens in the dry season (May) and then closes in the wet season (generally late November) with the onset of rains. Opening and closing dates vary with the amount and timing of rainfall.

The Park's four-wheel drive track network includes about 500 kms of tracks including:

- The **Bullita Stock Route** is the most popular track with an estimated 150 vehicles per year. The route follows part of an old droving trail into the remote western section of the Park and loops back onto the Bullita Access Track. Requiring about eight hours to complete, the track passes through limestone-terraced hills and scenic sandstone ranges and includes the Drover's Rest Boab Precinct.
- The **Humbert Track** begins near Bullita and winds in a southerly direction for 62 km through sandstone mesas and over limestone ridges, exiting the Park near the Humbert River Station Homestead. Used by about 100 vehicles per year, the track takes approximately six hours to complete. This section of track is part of the much more extensive **Binns Track** which is promoted as "one of Australia's epic four-wheel drive journeys."
- The **Gibbie Creek Track** branches off about 45 km from the head of the Humbert Track. This track crosses the scenic middle reaches of the Wickham River. Within the Park the track is 92 km long. The southern portion of the track is known as the Gibbie Creek Track. The track exits the Park near the Mt Sandford Station from where it is a further 65 km to Kalkarindji on the Buntine Highway.
- The **Broadarrow Track** winds for 293 km through the Park's remote southwest connecting with the Buntine Highway. Originally developed as part of the Territory Explorer Four-wheel Drive Route to allow visitors to travel through the Territory north/south completely by four-wheel drive tracks, it also provides management access to the Park's interior. This track is the Park's most remote and challenging, requiring at least three days to complete.

- The **Tuwakam Track** links the Bullita Access Track to the Buchanan Highway near Jasper Gorge. This track makes a pleasant day trip from Timber Creek.
- The **Limestone Gorge Track** is a short track off the Bullita Access Road, which travels through an impressive landscape dominated by limestone features, tufa dams and boabs.

Low-key, small campsites are established at various points along these tracks. Typically these are within natural, attractive settings and are close to waterholes with fishing opportunities. In keeping with the self-reliant philosophy, the only amenity that is provided at these campsites are wood fireplaces with hotplates.

Walks which are generally enjoyed by this visitor group include:

- Two walking tracks in the **Limestone Gorge** Area: The Calcite Flow walk with interpretive signs that explain the area's fascinating karst terrain and limestone formations with pleasant views across the surrounding landscape. The longer Limestone Ridge walk (approximately one hour) leads to lookouts and has interpretive signs along the track.
- Two walking tracks along the **Humbert** four-wheel drive track. The Fig Tree Lookout walk and the Policeman's Waterhole walk are short (approximately thirty minutes) and are described in pre-visit literature.

Extended overnight bushwalking in remote areas is permitted in the Park subject to permits issued by the Parks and Wildlife Service. The Park's climate limits significant demand for this type of activity however and such opportunities are not actively promoted. Similar opportunities exist elsewhere within the region and are widely promoted.

Other facilities provided for the four-wheel drive adventurer include:

- River access at the Victoria River Gorge provides for boat launching from the rocky river bed (three kilometres south of the Victoria River Crossing).
- The Old Victoria River Crossing, 300 metres off the Victoria Highway within the Victoria River Sector, is essentially undeveloped and offers informal opportunities to explore the Victoria River and access a large dry season waterhole.
- Limestone Gorge has a small campground and day-use area at the junction of the East Baines River and Limestone Creek. Basic facilities include wood barbecues, tables and a pit toilet at the walk-in day-use area.
- The Bullita Homestead Precinct and Stockyards is located near Bullita in the Gregory sector. Near the Bullita Homestead Precinct and at the start of the Bullita Stock Route four-wheel drive track is the Bullita campground, which has basic facilities including wood barbecues, toilets and a public telephone.

## Managing the Park for visitors

### *Visitor Safety*

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk, it can be reduced if facilities are well maintained and visitors are prepared, have realistic expectations and behave appropriately. Having a clear and current set of emergency response procedures, appropriately trained Rangers and adequate resources will assist in providing effective management of emergency incidents.

The main safety concerns include:

- Visitors becoming lost, injured or affected by heat or dehydration whilst walking in the Park;
- Injury to visitors in remote locations;
- Road and air accidents /incidents;
- Boating and fishing accidents;
- Fire;
- Dangerous animals (including crocodiles and feral animals) and;
- Flooding and visitors becoming bogged or stranded between rivers.

Significant improvements to risk management in recent years include enhanced pre-visit information and upgraded information panels with improved safety advice, particularly in relation to the four-wheel drive tracks. Proper preparation and safety messages in regard to use of the Park's four-wheel drive tracks are strongly promoted in all Parks and Wildlife Service literature, in on-site information at Top Springs Roadhouse, Victoria River Roadhouse, Kalkarindji and Timber Creek and also in signage at both ends of every track. Other visitor safety measures include on-track markers, including distance markers. People accessing remote areas of the Park are encouraged to have radio contact or carry a satellite telephone and a personal locator beacon.

Improved walking track marking and track maintenance has generally lessened the scope for lost or injured walkers. The Park Emergency Response Plan continues to be reviewed on an annual basis. Rangers are trained in advanced first aid and respond to a range of incidents including first aid, search and rescue, medical evacuations and vehicle accidents.

Swollen rivers and wet roads generally prohibit access within the Gregory Sector for months during and following the wet season. Public information on these closures are displayed on Departmental websites. Track erosion is kept in check through an annual maintenance program effected through the support of Departmental soil conservation experts.

Further work is required with Traditional Owners to ensure that concerns regarding culturally dangerous areas such as sickness country, men's and women's areas are addressed and reflected through the Park Zoning scheme and management.

**Canoeing** and **swimming** the rivers in the Park is actively discouraged due to the potentially dangerous estuarine crocodiles that inhabit waterways. As crocodiles are not actively managed on the Park, canoeing will only be permitted as part of an approved

commercial activity. A "Be Crocwise" education program is delivered by Park rangers to the local community and schools.

*Safety signs warn Park visitors of inherent risks.*



Judbarra is occasionally sought out for more unusual activities or "**adventure pursuits**". Such activities may or may not conflict with other park values or the enjoyment of other visitors. They are however, activities for which Parks and Wildlife do not generally cater and which can usually be pursued outside parks. Among these activities are mountain bike riding, rock climbing and abseiling.

Special access permission is required for a range of activities including: remote walking and camping, canoeing, functions, landing aircraft, research, volunteers and commercial interests. See **2.9** and **2.10**.

#### *Information, Interpretation and Public Education*

Information and interpretation plays an important role in visitor management by informing people about the values of the Park and how visitors can respect them. Public education informs visitors about facilities, activities and relevant regulations and, explains or interprets the Park's natural and cultural features.

To date there has been no interpretation plan for the Park. Developing a plan for the way the Park is presented to the public would ensure that messages and themes are consistent as well as giving the partners the opportunity to set interpretive directions. In particular, there is scope for the cultural values of the Park to be more comprehensively interpreted to visitors by Traditional Owners. Interpreting plants, animals and landscapes of special interest should also form a part of any new interpretive strategy. Ensuring that visitors can access information through a variety of different media is also important. Signs and fact sheets will remain important and can be complemented by web based material and face-to-face interpretation.

Currently visitors can access pre-visit information through web-based materials and publications. The majority of this information is provided by Tourism NT and the Parks and Wildlife Service. It is important that the public information and images of the Park are accurate, appropriate and consistent with the values and character of the Park.

More specific park orientation and awareness is promoted through Park Fact Sheets prepared by the Parks and Wildlife Service. Over time, these fact sheets will be redeveloped with input from Traditional Owners.

As part of the Parks and Wildlife Service interpretation program, Gregory rangers present slideshows, guided walks and talks at various locations around the Park throughout the dry season. Visitor feedback indicates that this experience is highly valued and that similar experiences with local Aboriginal people are a visitor experience that should be developed.

### *Regional Tourism*

Visitor surveys are important for understanding visitor needs and expectations, and hence for the planning of future developments. Currently, visitor surveys and tourism industry feedback indicate satisfaction with low key development and ongoing improvements provided by the Parks and Wildlife Service. Visitor surveys show the majority of visitors are generally satisfied with facilities and experiences provided, but would like more contact with the Rangers and further opportunities for cultural experiences with local Aboriginal people.

As visitor interest in the Park continues to grow, it will continue to be important for the joint management partners to work closely with all tourism interests in the area and respond appropriately to visitor feedback. The Joint Management Committee will require ongoing capacity building so they can effectively engage with the tourism industry and tourism development proponents. The partners will be guided in their decision making by an overarching Territory Parks Tourism and Recreation Plan, a Private Investment in Park Tourism Infrastructure Policy and a Tourism Development Strategy for the Park.

An increasing number of visitors value authentic, personal interaction with local Aboriginal people. They want to learn about their lives, history and culture as well as observing Indigenous art and painting. These exchanges can foster appreciation of the living cultural landscape of the Park and encourage visitors to enjoy the Park with greater respect.

Traditional Owners of Judbarra maintain strong connections to country through language, culture, stories and ecological knowledge. Many regularly hunt and gather bush tucker and materials on the Park. They live on or in close proximity to the Park, providing viable opportunities for visitors to connect with the oldest living culture on earth.

A strategic, regional approach is required for Indigenous tourism product development consistent with Tourism NT's Indigenous Tourism Business development framework. Traditional Owners wanting to develop tourism businesses and concessionary operations including remote four wheel drive and bush camping experiences may require assistance of other Northern Territory Government agencies, the Northern and Central Land Council and the tourism industry. Joint ventures and working with existing enterprises may be a good way to enter the tourism industry. Some tour operators have expressed interest in a closer working relationship with Indigenous communities.

## Aims

- Provision of outstanding visitor experiences, centred on the Park's wild and remote landscapes and shared cultural heritage.
- Well presented facilities and services.

## Management Directions

**3.17 Zoning** – Visitor access, activities and facilities will be managed and developed according to the zoning scheme in this Plan (see **2.14**).

### 3.18 Access

- The partners will maintain communication with the relevant roads management and soil conservation advisory branches within Northern Territory Government to reduce erosion at major creeks and to minimise the impact of the wet season on visitor access (see **3.14** and **3.15**).
- Directional and safety signs on public access roads will be standardised throughout the Park to meet Tourism NT four-wheel drive standards.
- Correct routes and appropriate behaviour when travelling through adjoining pastoral properties will be supported through signage and pre trip information (see **2.12**).
- Permits will be required for walkers wanting to camp overnight in remote areas of the Park (see **2.9**).
- River access will be monitored and controlled to minimise erosion (see **3.15**).
- Entry of pets will be consistent with existing Parks and Wildlife Service policy.
- The Park or areas within it may be temporarily closed to the public for fire, wet season, erosion control, rehabilitation works, feral animal culls and important Aboriginal ceremonies (see **3.2**). As much public notice as possible will be given to minimise inconvenience. Effort will be made to avoid closure at times of high public visitation.

### 3.19 Activities

- Camping will continue to be allowed in designated camping areas.
- Fishing in the Park is subject to the requirements of the *Fisheries Act* and the *TPWCA*. Nets or traps will not be permitted. Rangers will enforce these requirements (see **3.9**).
- Boating is permitted in the visitor zone. Impacts will be monitored and crocodile safety information communicated to visitors. Canoeing will be permitted as part of an approved concession only. Motorised water craft will continue to be excluded from the Wickham River.
- Four-wheel drive tracks will be closed during the wet season for visitor safety and to reduce track maintenance.
- A permit will be required for adventure activities including mountain bike riding, rock climbing and abseiling. Departmental Policy and local guidelines will be developed by the partners, should interest warrant.

**3.20 Existing Facilities and Future Developments** – Park infrastructure will be monitored and maintained and, subject to needs and resources, will be upgraded. Visitor

surveys and Tourism NT four-wheel drive sector surveys will continue to inform development planning (see **2.10**). The Joint Management Committee will endorse forward works plans and site development plans in collaboration with stakeholders, guided by relevant parks tourism and recreation development plans. Decisions will be made in accordance with structures and processes outlined in Section 2. The need to protect scenic, natural, cultural, historical values and the character of the Park will underpin any future developments (see **2.5, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 3.14** and **3.15**).

- Existing orientation shelters will be outfitted with comprehensive information, including the joint management of the Park. The Eastern orientation shelter requires complete outfitting with signage as well as improved access.
- Toilet facilities will be provided at the western park entry and the Victoria River boat ramp.
- A review of the Park's walking tracks will be conducted to improve access, reduce impacts and ensure protection of cultural sites.
- Highly visited areas and sections of existing walking tracks will be hardened for improved access and to reduce erosion. A safe lookout area in the Victoria River sector, including interpretive signage will be considered.
- The Limestone Gorge Track will be realigned and shortened and the campground relocated to improve visitor access.
- Appropriate concessions to operate campgrounds, particularly at Big Horse and Sullivan Creek campsites will be pursued (see **2.5**).
- Energy efficient technology, such as hybrid power generating systems will be used where possible.
- The partners will consider ways to better accommodate increased visitation as numbers increase including:
  - The Big Horse Creek Campground and picnic area and Sullivans Campground will be reviewed for site design aspects and capacity.
  - A high quality camping facility in the Victoria River sector accessible to conventional vehicles will be developed subject to resources.

**3.21 Community education and interpretative program** – The partners will develop an Interpretation Plan for the Park. Both partners will be involved in planning, prioritising and delivering interpretation, information, community education and Junior Ranger programs.

- Visitor information will be reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness. Aboriginal people, place names and language will be represented (see **2.13**). Information will include new uses of communication technologies where possible and appropriate.
- The joint management partners will work with Tourism NT and other relevant agencies to ensure the Park is marketed and promoted accurately and appropriately, consistent with the values and character of the Park (see **2.12**).
- The partners will contribute materials to the Parks and Wildlife Tour Guide Training Program. Traditional Owners will ensure that all Aboriginal cultural information shared with visitors is accurate and appropriate.

**3.22 Visitor safety** – The Park's facilities and visitor management practices will be subject to ongoing monitoring, maintenance and risk assessment. All park facilities will be designed, constructed and maintained to minimise risk of injury.

- Identified risks will be rectified on a priority basis.
- The Emergency Response Plan will be annually reviewed and Rangers will receive appropriate training.
- Fire prevention, information about heat and humidity and other relevant safety messages will be communicated to visitors.
- Swimming will be actively discouraged through signage and good visitor information and the “crocodile” education program as estuarine crocodiles endanger the safety of visitors.
- Visitors to remote areas of the Park will be encouraged to have radio contact or carry a satellite phone and a personal locator beacon.

**3.23 Indigenous tourism** –The partners will collaborate with Tourism NT, sectors of the tourism industry, NLC/CLC and local operators to foster Aboriginal employment in tourism and assist development of local Indigenous tourism enterprise. Cross-cultural voluntourism opportunities will be developed and promoted (see 2.5).

*Indigenous experiences are highly sought by visitors.*



## 4. INFORMATION SOURCES

Australia ICOMOS. 1999. *The Burra Charter*.

Cooper, D. 2009. Report on Aboriginal Land Use and Cultural Values in the northern-western portion of Gregory National Park. A report to the Parks and Wildlife Service.

*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, Australian Government.

Gregory R. 1994. Site Patterning in the Ord-Victoria River Region: a GIS database. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*: 51-7

Gregory R. 1998. Aboriginal Settlement Patterns in the Ord-Victoria River Region: PhD thesis. NTU, Casuarina.

Gunn, R.D. 1989. Langgay Rock Art Survey: second survey and assessment of Aboriginal Rock Art Sites in the Victoria River Crossing area, Gregory National Park. A report to the Conservation Commission (NT) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Harrison, L., McGuire, L., Ward, S., Fisher, A., Pavey, C., Fegan, M. and Lynch, B. (2009). An inventory of sites of international and national significance for biodiversity values in the Northern Territory. Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport, Darwin, NT.

*Heritage Conservation Act 2000*, Northern Territory of Australia.

Indigenous Land Use Agreements associated with Gregory National Park. 2005. (Gregory NP (NLC), Gregory NP (CLC) and Gregory's Tree Historic Reserve).

Lewis, D. and Rose, D. 1988. The Shape of the Dreaming. The cultural significance of Victoria River Rock Art. The Institute Report Series. Institute of Aboriginal and Islander Studies.

Lewis, D. 1996. The Boab Belt. A survey of the historical sites in the north-central Victoria River District. Volume 2: sites 47-96. Australian National Trust Report.

McNickle, H. 1991. A survey of rock art in the Victoria River District, Northern Territory. *Rock Art Research* 8:36-46.

Northern Territory Government Park Leases associated with Gregory National Park. 2010. (Wombardi, Winan, Nalipinkak and Bilinarra – Jutpurra).

Northern Territory Parks and Conservation Masterplan 2005. Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts. Northern Territory of Australia.

O'Malley, C. 2006. National Recovery Plan for the Gouldian Finch (*Erythrura gouldiae*). WWF-Australia, Sydney and Parks and Wildlife NT, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, Northern Territory Government, Palmerston.

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory 2002. Draft Gregory National Park Plan of Management.

Parks and Wildlife Commission, Northern Territory. 1998. Gregory National Park, Resources and Information.

Rose, Deborah Bird. *The Dingo Makes Us Human: Being and purpose in Australian Aboriginal Culture*. Mich. University Microfilm

Rose, Deborah Bird. 1991. *Hidden Histories: Black stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies press

Russell-Smith, J., Yates, C.P., Brock, C. and Westcott, V.C. 2010. Fire regimes and interval-sensitive vegetation in semi-arid Gregory National Park, northern Australia. *Australian Journal of Botany* 58(2).

*Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* 2006, Northern Territory of Australia.

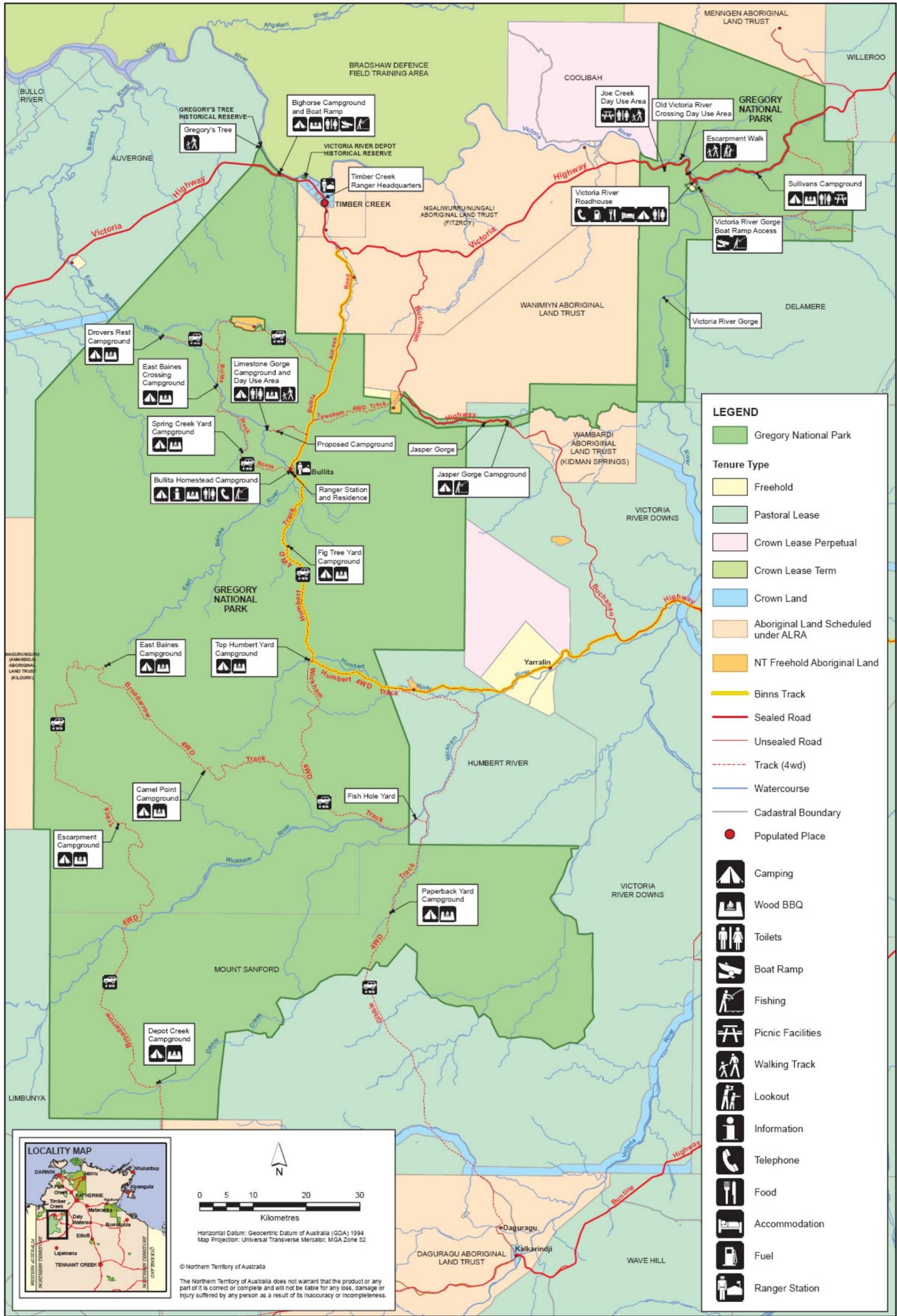
White, S. and White, N. 2009. Bullita cave, Gregory Karst, NT Australia: A maze cave in proterozoic dolomite. International Union of Speleology Congress, Texas.

Widjiburu, B., Harrington, D., Balwanjer, R., Roberts, E., Waterloo, P., Roberts, L., Nuwalad Harrington, R., Roberts, J., Nemit, N., Moerkerken, C., and Wightman, G. 2009. Ngarinyman plants and animals: Aboriginal knowledge of flora and fauna from Gregory National Park and the Victoria River area, northern Australia. Parks and Wildlife, Northern Territory.

Wightman GM, Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. 1992. Mudburra ethnobotany: Aboriginal plant use from Kulumindini (Elliott), northern Australia.

Wightman GM, Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. 1994. Gurindji ethnobotany: Aboriginal plant use from Daguragu, Northern Australia. Darwin: Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

Woinarski, J., Pavey, C., Kerrigan, R., Cowie, I., and Ward, S. 2007. Lost from our landscape: threatened species of the Northern Territory. Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.



## **APPENDIX 2. EXTRACTS FROM THE *TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT***

### **part iii – joint management of certain parks and reserves**

#### **Division 3 – Joint management partners, objective and principles**

##### ***25AA. Joint management partners***

###### **(1) The joint management partners for a park or reserve are –**

- (a) the Territory or a body nominated by the Territory as the representative of the Territory; and
- (b) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve.

###### **(2) The joint management partners are together responsible for the management of the park or reserve.**

###### **(3) The joint management partners must perform their functions under this Part in respect of a park or reserve in a manner that –**

- (a) is consistent with any lease referred to in section 8(c) or 10(1)(f) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (b) is consistent with the joint management agreement referred to in section 8(d) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (c) is consistent with any indigenous land use agreement referred to in section 8(e) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (d) achieves the objective stated in section 25AB;
- (e) is in accordance with the principles stated in section 25AC; and
- (f) is in accordance with the joint management plan for the park or reserve.

##### ***25AB. Objective of joint management***

The objective of joint management of a park or reserve is to jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve as part of a comprehensive and representative system of parks and reserves in the Territory and for the following purposes:

- (a) benefiting both the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and the wider community;
- (b) protecting biological diversity;
- (c) serving visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment.

### **25AC. Principles of joint management**

The objective is to be achieved by managing the park or reserve in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) recognising, valuing and incorporating Aboriginal culture, knowledge and decision making processes;
- (b) utilising the combined land management skills and expertise of both joint management partners;
- (c) recognising and addressing the need for institutional support and capacity building of the joint management partners;
- (d) recognising that community living areas in or in close proximity to parks and reserves are an integral part of the natural and cultural resource management of parks and reserves;
- (e) involving continuing statutory responsibilities and functions of the Minister with respect to parks and reserves;
- (f) managing parks and reserves may include cooperative management agreements for areas of land outside parks and reserves;
- (g) establishing a process for the consideration of applications for mining and petroleum

## **Division 6 – Role of Land Councils**

### **25AN. Application of Division**

This Division applies in relation to the parks and reserves specified in Schedules 2 and 3 to the Framework Act.

### **25AO. Functions of Land Councils in relation to parks and reserves**

(1) Pursuant to section 23(2) of ALRA, the following functions are conferred on a Land Council:

- (a) to ascertain and express the wishes and the opinion of Aboriginals living in its area as to the management of the parks and reserves in that area and as to appropriate legislation concerning those parks and reserves;
- (b) to protect the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves;
- (c) to consult with the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves about the use of those parks and reserves;
- (d) to negotiate with persons desiring to obtain an estate or interest (including a licence) in any of those parks or reserves on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners of that park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in that park or reserve;

- (e) to supervise, and provide administrative and other assistance to, the Park Land Trusts holding, or established to hold, park freehold title in parks and reserves in its area.

(2) In carrying out its functions under subsection (1) in relation to a park or reserve in its area, a Land Council must have regard to the interests of, and must consult with, the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in the park or reserve and, in particular, must not take any action (including, but not limited to, the giving or withholding of consent in any matter in connection with the park freehold title held by a Park Land Trust) unless the Land Council is satisfied that –

- (a) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve understand the nature and purpose of the proposed action and, as a group, consent to it; and
- (b) any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed action has been consulted and has had adequate opportunity to express its view to the Land Council.

**(3) In this section –**

- “area”, in relation to a Land Council, has the same meaning as in ALRA;
- “park freehold title” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act;
- “Park Land Trust” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act.

### APPENDIX 3. GUIDELINES FOR DECISION MAKING

Level 1: Activities part of normal day to day management, as agreed in this Plan	Level 2: Activities that cover the whole park, but do not have a big impact on people's lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not need Traditional Owner consultation.</li> <li>• Decisions made through normal park management processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Wildlife staff must ask Traditional Owner representatives.</li> <li>• Representatives must ask Traditional Owners and seek a decision.</li> <li>• The representatives will carry the decision back to Parks and Wildlife.</li> </ul>
Level 3: Activities that have a big impact on one area, but not on other areas	Level 4: Activities that have a big impact on the whole Park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks must first ask the Traditional Owner representative group.</li> <li>• Parks will work with the Traditional Owner representatives and the relevant Land Council to provide information and issues to all affected Traditional Owners.</li> <li>• Traditional Owner representatives will also give information to Traditional Owners not affected by the proposal.</li> <li>• The Land Council must make sure people have good information before making a decision.</li> <li>• The information may be presented to family groups or in local area meetings.</li> <li>• All Traditional Owners of the affected area will make the decision, and will give this decision to their representatives, to be taken back to Parks and Wildlife staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Wildlife staff must first ask the Traditional Owner representative group.</li> <li>• Parks and Wildlife will then work with the Traditional Owner representatives and Land Councils to give information about the issues to all Traditional Owners.</li> <li>• The Land Councils must make sure people have good information before making a decision.</li> <li>• The information may be presented to family groups, or in local area meetings.</li> <li>• All Traditional Owners will make the decision, and will give this decision to their representatives, to be taken back to Parks and Wildlife staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Note: For all activities on the Park, Traditional Owner representatives do not make decisions, but instead carry information and decisions between the Parks and Wildlife Service and Traditional Owners.</p>	

## APPENDIX 4. PARK THREATENED SPECIES LIST

	Species	Common name	NT status	National status
<b>Plants</b>	<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	Venus-hair Fern	Vulnerable	Not Listed
	<i>Gleichenia sp.</i> Victoria River	Fern	Vulnerable	Not Listed
	<i>Triodia fitzgeraldii</i>	Spinifex	Vulnerable	Not Listed
<b>Invertebrates</b>	<i>Mesodontrachia fitzroyana</i>	Fitzroy Land Snail	Critically Endangered	Endangered
	<i>Prototrachia sedula</i>	Land Snail	Vulnerable	Not Listed
<b>Fish</b>	<i>Pristis microdon</i>	Freshwater Sawfish	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
	<i>Scortum neili</i>	Angalari Grunter	Vulnerable	Not Listed
<b>Reptiles</b>	<i>Varanus mertensi</i>	Mertens Water Monitor	Vulnerable	Not Listed
	<i>Varanus panoptes</i>	Yellow-spotted Monitor	Vulnerable	Not Listed
<b>Birds</b>	<i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i>	Emu	Vulnerable	Not Listed
	<i>Ardeotis australia</i>	Australian Bustard	Vulnerable	Not Listed
	<i>Geophaps smithii smithii</i>	Partridge Pigeon	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae kimberli</i>	Masked Owl	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
	<i>Malurus coronatus coronatus</i>	Purple-crowned Fairy-wren	Vulnerable	Vulnerable
	<i>Erythrura gouldiae</i>	Gouldian Finch	Endangered	Endangered

## APPENDIX 5. IMPORTANT WEEDS FOR PARK MANAGEMENT

(including weeds that occur near but not on park)

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Species name</b>	<b>Current weed declaration status*</b>
Gamba Grass	<i>Andropogon gayanus</i>	A and C
Neem Tree	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	-
Barleria	<i>Barleria prionitis</i>	A and C
Calopo	<i>Calopogonium mucunoides</i>	
Rubber Bush	<i>Calotropis procera</i>	B and C
Buffel Grass	<i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i>	-
Rubber vine	<i>Cryptostegia spp.</i>	A and C
Hyptis	<i>Hyptis suaveolens</i>	B and C
Bellyache Bush	<i>Jatropha gossypifolia</i>	A and C
Lions Tail	<i>Leonotis nepetifolia</i>	A and C
Devils Claw	<i>Martynia annua</i>	A and C
Parkinsonia	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>	B and C (WONS)
Purple Top Mission Grass	<i>Pennisetum pedicellatum</i>	-
Mission Grass	<i>Pennisetum polystachion</i>	B and C
Mesquite	<i>Prosopis spp.</i>	A and C (WONS)
Castor Oil Bush	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	B and C
Sickelpod	<i>Senna obtusifolia</i>	B and C
Spiny Head Sida	<i>Sida acuta</i>	B and C
Giant Rats Tail Grass	<i>Sporobolus spp.</i>	-
Grader Grass	<i>Themeda quadrivalvis</i>	B and C
Para Grass	<i>Urochloa mutica</i>	-
Noogoora Burr	<i>Xanthium occidentale</i>	B and C
Chinee Apple	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	A and C

**NT Weed Declaration categories** (class A - to be eradicated, class B - growth and spread to be controlled, class C - not to be introduced to the NT).

**WONS** (Weeds of National Significance)

No weed declaration status in the NT (-)

\*The Northern Territory weed declaration list is currently being reviewed, and several weed species on or near the Park have been proposed for declaration by the Weed Risk Management Technical Working Group. Buffel Grass, Giant Rat's Tail Grass, Annual Mission Grass, Neem Tree, and Para Grass have been deemed a high or very high weed risk and require a strong management response. All declared weeds from the Park require management consideration and should be included in Operational Plans for the Park.