

Northern Territory Water Allocation Planning Framework

1 Policy

All available scientific research directly related to environmental and other public benefit requirements for the water resource will be applied in setting water allocations for non-consumptive use as the first priority, with allocations for consumptive use made subsequently within the remaining available water resource.

2 Contingent allocation rules

In the absence of directly related research, contingent allocations are made for environmental and other public benefit water provisions and consumptive use. These are explained below.

2.1 Top End (northern one third of the Northern Territory)

2.1.1 Rivers

At least 80 per cent of flow at any time in any part of a river is allocated as water for environmental and other public benefit water provision, and extraction for consumptive uses will not exceed the threshold level equivalent to 20 per cent of flow at any time in any part of a river.

In the event that current and/or projected consumptive use exceeds the 20 per cent threshold level, new surface water licences will not be granted unless supported by directly related scientific research into environmental other public benefit requirements.

2.1.2 Aquifers

At least 80 per cent of annual recharge is allocated as water for environmental and other public benefit water provision, and extraction for consumptive uses will not exceed the threshold level equivalent to 20 per cent of annual recharge.

In the event that current and/or projected consumptive use exceeds the 20 per cent threshold level, new groundwater licences will not be granted unless supported by either directly related scientific research into groundwater dependent ecosystem/ cultural requirements, or in the absence of such research, hydrological modelling confirming that total groundwater discharge will not be reduced by more than 20 per cent.

2.2 Arid Zone (southern two thirds of the Northern Territory)

2.2.1 Rivers

At least 95 per cent of flow at any time in any part of a river is allocated as environmental and other public benefit water provision, and extraction for consumptive uses will not exceed the threshold level equivalent to five per cent of flow at any time in any part of a river.

In the event that current and/or projected consumptive use exceeds the threshold levels of five per cent for river flow, new surface water Licences will not be granted unless supported by directly related scientific research into environmental other public benefit requirements.

2.2.2 Aquifers

There will be no deleterious change in groundwater discharges to dependent ecosystems, and total extraction over a period of at least 100 years will not exceed 80 per cent of the total aquifer storage at start of extraction.

In the event that current and/ or projected consumptive use exceeds the threshold levels of 80 per cent of the consumptive pool for aquifers, or groundwater discharges to groundwater dependent ecosystems are impacted, new groundwater licences will not be granted unless supported by directly related scientific research into groundwater dependent ecosystem/cultural requirements.

3 Document change history

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1.0	1 July 2000	Northern Territory Government	Approved – original policy
1.1	6 May 2020	Water Resources Division	2020 NT Government template applied. Headings 1, 2 and 3 added and all headings numbered. Minor formatting changes, no word changes.