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Visit our website at: <http://www.clw.csiro.au/naif/>

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Northern Australia Irrigation Futures (NAIF) e-newsletter, NAIFNEWS.

In the first edition of NAIFNEWS in March 2006 we introduced the NAIF project. This edition we go into a little more detail about the methodology behind the NAIF research project and about the collaboration that is occurring across northern Australia.



With an outlook of 50 years plus, the NAIF project is attempting to develop a framework for decision-making about irrigation in northern Australia that communities and governments can aspire to. This work is not only challenging in terms of research but often evokes passionate responses. For some, it is a much needed opportunity to consider what sort of future we would all like for northern Australia and to consider the key question of who gets to determine that future. For others, it raises concerns about the potential for increased pressure for irrigation in northern Australia.

In recognition of these perspectives, the NAIF Steering Committee recently endorsed several minor but important changes in the project objectives. The changes reinforce that the project is not about deciding whether new irrigation developments should or should not occur in northern Australia, but about assisting those that will need to make such decisions by improving the knowledge, tools and processes available to them. The project objectives are available on the NAIF website at http://www.clw.csiro.au/naif/project_outline.html

Keith Bristow – Project Leader

The NAIF Project Work Plan

The two stages of the NAIF project are (i) project initiation, definition and development of partnership arrangements; and (ii) building knowledge, tools and processes to support development and testing of a sustainability framework. A third stage supporting the utilisation and enhancement of the sustainability framework is envisaged. The Stages of the NAIF project are represented in Figure 1.

NAIF PATHWAY TO A SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

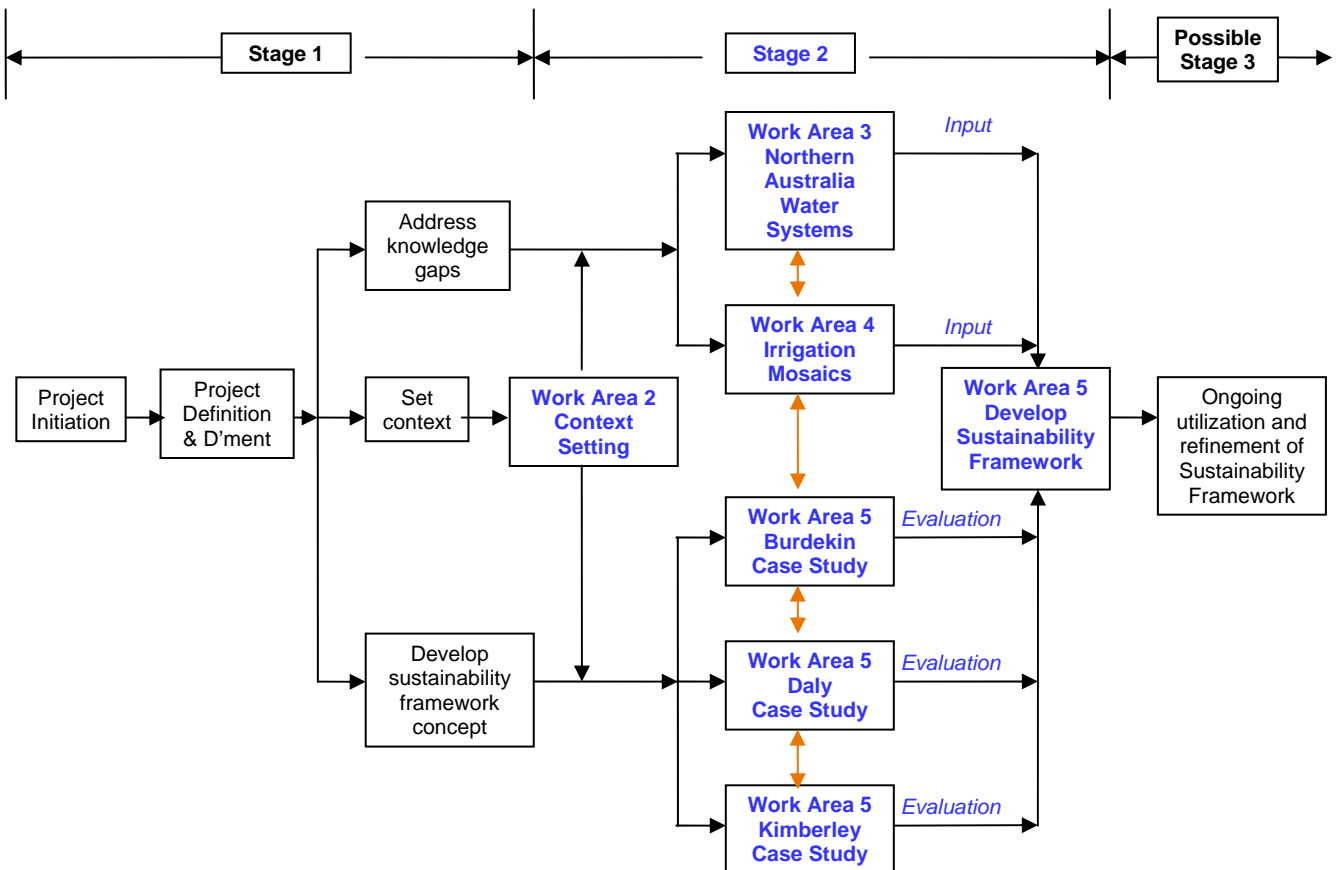


Figure 1

Stage 1 was launched in October 2003 and focussed on engaging a broad range of clients and stakeholders, and formulating a work plan, project team and funding arrangements for Stage 2. The current Stage 2 focuses on collating and developing knowledge on northern water systems, particularly the groundwater systems, understanding the concepts of irrigation mosaics and developing, testing and applying a sustainability framework.

Context Setting and Northern Australia Inventory

This work aims to capture current knowledge about the history and current state of irrigation in northern Australia. This includes a review of institutional frameworks and comparisons and learnings from the Daly, Ord and Burdekin irrigation areas.

Understanding Tropical Water Systems

This work will synthesise existing geological, geomorphological and hydrogeological studies of northern Australia and provide an overview of the general characteristics of groundwater flow systems and key hydrological issues relating to irrigation within a catchment context.



Irrigation Mosaics

This work will develop our understanding of the concept of irrigation mosaics, or patchworks of irrigation, in northern Australia. The review will focus on national and international experience and determine what existing tools can be used to provide an understanding of how irrigation mosaics work in northern Australia, including the impact of various patterns of irrigation on groundwater quality and quantity and on surface-groundwater interactions.

Sustainability framework

This work focuses on bringing together the available knowledge, tools and processes into a sustainability framework to support debate and decision making about irrigation in northern Australia. The framework will help demonstrate the necessity of interdependent visioning, planning, assessment, monitoring and reporting practices to improve decision making transparency, consistency and sustainability. Importantly, the NAIF project will not make decisions about irrigation; these will continue to be the responsibility of governments and the relevant communities.

Case Studies

Local case studies are important for the development of the sustainability framework and help ensure that the framework is practical. Of particular interest are the



similarities and differences between the various jurisdictions, the aim being to help develop a shared approach to understanding and managing the north of Australia. Case studies in the Burdekin, Daly and Ord River areas will provide insights into historic decision-making, current operations, processes for developing community visions for irrigation within catchments and changes required to improve the sustainability of northern irrigation systems.

Please contact Jeff Camkin (08) 9333 6398 if you would like to know more about the NAIF work plan.

Developing collaboration across northern Australia

A feature of the NAIF project is its increasing role in supporting collaboration across northern Australia.

The project was initially funded in 2003 through the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation (NPSI) and CSIRO but has since expanded with significant additional support from the QLD, WA, NT and Australian Governments, the Cooperative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures (CRC IF) and others.

The project has a nine member Steering Committee, a nine member Stakeholder Reference Group and a growing stakeholder network of over 250 across Australia. Other areas in which NAIF is assisting collaboration across northern Australia include:



- Chairing monthly meetings with the Department of Environment, Natural Resources and the Arts, Charles Darwin University and the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist, Northern Territory;
- Assisting the development of the program for *RiverSymposium 2006*
- Assisting the development of the program for ANCID 2006
- Addressing the North Queensland Local Government Association
- Facilitating a National Water Commission stakeholder workshop on project ideas for the Water Smart Australia program irrigation call
- Briefing the National Water Commission on the NAIF project and how it might assist in implementation of the National Water Initiative in northern Australia.

Wanted: Additional member for NAIF Stakeholder Reference Group

The Stakeholder Reference Group provides an important point of contact for the Project Team to help guide project direction and ensure that proposed activities and outcomes will be practical. We would like to strengthen our Group further by appointing an additional member who can bring a good understanding of local government perspectives. If you are interested in this opportunity to contribute please contact Jeff Camkin (08) 9333 6398.



National Water Commission Workshop
Canberra, March 2006
(photo courtesy of the National Water Commission)

Water Smart Australia Program applications closing

On 2 February 2006 the Australian Government announced that there would be an irrigation specific funding round under the Water Smart Australia program. Applications close on 16 June 2006. For more information, contact the National Water Commission (<http://www.nwc.gov.au/>).

Upcoming events

4 – 7 September, 9th International RiverSymposium 2006, Brisbane, QLD
15 – 18 October, ANCID Conference 2006, Darwin, NT

Next issue

Over the next few issues we will provide a more in depth look at some of the activities and outputs from the NAIF project. In the meantime, please visit the project website or contact the Project Team whose details appear below.

NAIF CONTACTS

Project Team

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Project Partners

Land & Water Australia

National Program for Sustainable Irrigation

CRC for Irrigation Futures

CSIRO Land and Water

Department of Water, Government of Western
Australia

Northern Territory Department of Natural
Resources, Environment & the Arts

Queensland Department of Natural Resources
Mines & Water

Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry



Australian Government
Land & Water Australia



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



Queensland Government
Natural Resources, Mines and Water



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