



National Environmental
Research Program

TROPICAL ECOSYSTEMS *hub*

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub Conference 2013

**Tuesday 7 May 1530-1700
Forum Synopsis**

Managing for Change

Convener: Carole Sweatman
Chief Executive Officer, Terrain - NRM in the Wet Tropics



Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**

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It goes without saying that we are part of a constantly changing global environment, influenced by the biophysical and social dynamic of both the region and beyond.

Working within this dynamic, this forum may be more correctly titled "understanding and working with change". With so many variables in our landscape significantly influenced by human intervention, the challenge for research users will be the layering and adaptive use of the information needed to influence policy, programs, projects and community activity for long term and agreed outcomes.

The breadth of projects covered in this forum suggests that, at any one time, a land manager will be weighing up the impacts and use of potential tools for fire, weeds and pests, climate change and the planning and governance arrangements in place. The challenge from this forum is to understand both the research undertaken within the NERP, and the way it can account for community attitudes, interests and values before use in decision making.

The five papers presented will provide insight into the biophysical responses and outcomes from change, practical tools for improvement and improved governance frameworks for achieving better environmental outcomes in the face of some of these changes.

- Dr Dan Metcalfe will provide an understanding the biodiversity impacts of changing fire regimes on rainforest boundaries, and in particular the EPBC listed littoral forest habitat in the Wet Tropics.
- Prof Carla Catterall is focussing on the approaches to managing and accelerating vegetation regrowth particularly the potential for natural passive strategies for cost effective rainforest restoration.
- Dr Helen Murphy's work will help to clearly identify optimal strategies for weed management across the Wet Tropics particularly focussing on which invasive species cause or are likely to cause the greatest environmental harm.
- Dr Justin Welbergen's work will provide an analytical toolkit for assessing vulnerability to extreme climatic events including generation of high resolution maps on exposure to extreme temperatures.
- Dr Allan Dale's work is exploring and developing tools and governance frameworks for the emerging ecosystem service markets in the Wet Tropics. He will tell us about the mechanisms for NRM organisations and end users to guide carbon investments for priority biodiversity outcomes.

Joining the researchers in the Q & A panel at the end of the presentations will be three representatives who are working in the practical realm with the community and government who can potentially take these outcomes and tools to influence better landscape outcomes.

Some focus questions for the speakers and this forum are:

- How does the research help us to work through complex land management decisions and prioritisation of effort?
- Given that the changes happening are greatly influenced by human activity and intervention, how do we account for the social dimension to utilise the research outcomes?
- Given that land management is constantly evolving and adapting to change, how can the research help us with adaptive strategies?