

National Land & Water Resources Audit

An Initiative of the Natural Heritage Trust



Monitoring and Evaluation of Australia's natural resources

Considerable investment is directed to natural resource management (NRM) issues –from national government programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) through to regional and private investment.

These investments target priority land management issues and aim to maintain and improve Australia's resource base. Monitoring and evaluating the success of these programs is essential to see, over time, the impact of the investment and to ensure it is directed strategically to priority issues.

How effective are the investments?

To help assess both the

- health of the nation's land, water, vegetation and biological resources
- performance of government programs, strategies and policies

a Framework called the National Natural Resource Management Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (NM&EF) has been established by the Australian and State and Territory Governments

The NM&EF sets out broad key issues called "Matters for Target" which will be reported on using a range of indicators. The 'sets of indicators' monitor

- resource condition and
- community and social issues relevant to NRM programs and adoption of sustainable management practices.

This information can be used to inform policy, future investment strategies and help in the evaluation of government programs.

The Audit is developing Australia's Resources Online (ARO), an electronic reporting mechanism that will make information compiled for the NM&EF readily available at various scales.

Australia's Resources Online will have the most current national data on Australia's natural resources. It will use, where possible interoperable systems so that the most currently available data can be accessed from distributed data sources which are managed by the custodian.

> The Audit's role

The National Land & Water Resources Audit (the Audit) is co-ordinating the collation of information to underpin the National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework. The key activities required for this are:

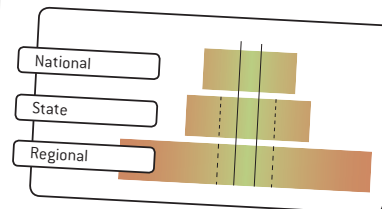
> Identifying the natural resource management information needs for all levels of government

This includes identifying those indicators that would be used at different scales.

> Documenting available data, including identifying gaps, to report against the resource condition and social and economic indicators at various scales.

> Communicating to NM&EF users the role of the indicators and the need for data collection within the Framework by reporting on the condition and trend of the natural resources. This will be developed through Australia's Resources Online.

Identifying core NRM indicators relevant to different levels of government



A range of NRM indicators may be relevant at a regional scale but only some of these will be relevant for monitoring and evaluation activities at State and national levels.



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THE AUDIT PROVIDES DATA, INFORMATION AND NATIONWIDE ASSESSMENTS OF AUSTRALIA'S LAND, WATER AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Regional Trials >>>

> Piloting the Framework through regional trials

The National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (NM&EF) was trialed in selected regions from mid 2003 to early 2005. These trials were coordinated by the Audit in partnership with the States and Northern Territory Governments.

The trial regions were:

- **New South Wales**
Southern and Western catchments
- **Victoria**
All regions
- **South Australia**
Murray Darling Basin
- **Western Australia**
Northern Agricultural and South West regions
- **Northern Territories**
Daly Basin
- **Queensland**
Condamine and Burnett-Mary regions

> The Trials aimed to:

- Test the NM&EF for application at the regional scale (specifically the “Matters for Target”, related indicators and proposed methods).
- Assess the availability of data to report against the NM&EF.
- Test the capacity of State and Territory data systems to allow access to relevant information.

> Summary from the regional trials.

The regional trials highlighted four key areas:

> 1. National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

- General agreements about the ‘Matters for Target’
- Some indicator sets and their method of collection is incomplete
- There are various degrees of compatibility with regional and State systems
- The indicators will not necessarily be applied consistently across all regions.

> 2. Communication about the National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

- The trials demonstrated a need for clarification of the roles and responsibilities for resource condition monitoring, particularly between regional bodies and State agencies.

Monitoring and reporting on:

- Management Action Targets - MATS (i.e. Activity or Output reporting such as dollars spent or length of fencing).
- Progress towards resource condition targets - RCTs (an assessment of whether there is a change in resource condition as a result of specific NRM program investment). This can be referred to as “point of investment” monitoring.
- The overall regional resource condition and trend irrespective of NRM program investment. This can be referred to as “surveillance” monitoring.

Stakeholders need to clearly define where their reporting responsibilities lie.

While the Audit’s primary focus is on the last point, a sound Monitoring & Evaluation system will include links between all of the above.

> 3. Data Availability

- The adequacy of data to report against indicators is low and there is often a lack of baseline and trend data
- The availability of data is dependent on State data system and priorities. There are spatial and subject area limitations
- Generally the data to describe simple distribution and extent is better than data on more complex measures such as resource condition.
- There is a perceived difficulty in accessing data with poorly understood data sharing protocols between agencies and regional bodies.

> 4. Reporting

- State / Territory agencies and regional bodies have a number of reporting obligations other than under the National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework. There is a need to streamline the multiple reporting requirements.

Location of trial regions.



The National Land & Water Resources Audit is addressing the issues raised in the trials by:

- **Assisting with the clarification of State / Territory data needs and the availability of data.**
- **Working with the various theme based “national co-ordinating committees” to**
 - refine the indicators and measurement methods
 - develop associated data and information systems
 - develop information products for each theme eg maps, tables or graphs.
- **Building Australian Resources Online**
- **Supporting regional workshops including the National Monitoring & Evaluation Symposium.**

Essentials >>>

Key activities

The National Land & Water Resources Audit has six key areas of activity;

- 1) Developing a consistent national reporting mechanism for collating natural resource information collected under the National Natural Resource Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This will allow access to and progressive identification of information to support the evaluation of government's investments in natural resource management.
- 2) Collating information to support the National State of the Environment (SoE) Reporting – ensuring efficiencies in information collection to serve multiple purposes.
- 3) Developing nationally consistent, integrated resource condition reports – linking biophysical, social and economic information.
- 4) Facilitate reporting on the ongoing collection of natural resource information for key theme areas including those related to the National Natural Resource Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – developing a strategic information capture program.
- 5) Reporting on National Data and Information Management (in collaboration with ANZLIC – the Spatial Information Council) – ensuring information is managed to allow ready access by those who need it.
- 6) National Resource Assessments. Delivering reports as specifically requested by clients on the state of knowledge of natural resource issues.



Matters for Target under the National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Biophysical

- Land salinity
- Soil condition
- Native vegetation integrity
- Inland aquatic ecosystems
- Estuarine, coastal and marine
- Nutrient in aquatic environments
- Turbidity
- Surface water salinity
- Significant native species and ecological communities
- Invasive species

Social and economic

- Land managers
- Regional groups
- Communities

Contextual information

- Land use



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Want more information?

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Other information sheets in the 'About the Audit' series include:

- National Data and Information Management
- National Coordination of Information
- Signposts for Australian Agriculture
- Social and Economic



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