Natural Heritage Trust

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An Australian Government Initiative

National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium Hobart 2005

'Challenges and opportunities in achieving better NRM through M&E'

Proceedings

30 August - 1 September 2005
Hobart Function and Conference Centre
Elizabeth Street Pier, Hobart Tasmania

National Land & Water Resources Audit
An Initiative of the Natural Heritage Trust

Tasmania
DEPARTMENT of PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, WATER and ENVIRONMENT

Australian Government
Land & Water Australia

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The National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium was organised by a steering committee of regional, state and national representatives and was supported by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), Land & Water Australia (LWA) and The National Land & Water Resources Audit (Audit). In particular, the *Knowledge for Regional NRM* project provided invaluable support to the steering committee and the on-going day to day organisation of the event and follow-up activities. A special thanks to Alice Renton as she was the face behind that support.

Steering Committee:

James McKee (Chair)	NRM North Region, TAS
Joanne Caminiti	West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, VIC
Damian Crilly	Department of Agriculture, WA
Keith Ferdinands	Department of Natural Resources, Environment & the Arts, NT
John Harkin	Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment, TAS
Bruce Male	Australian Government NRM Team, ACT
Melissa Morley	Land & Water Australia, ACT
Patrick O'Connor	O'Connor NRM Pty Ltd, SA
Rob Thorman	National Land & Water Resources Audit, ACT
Helen Watts	Department of Natural Resources, NSW

On-going website:

Discussion at the Symposium identified that it would be useful to establish an on-going website where M&E information and examples were made available. In collaboration with the *Knowledge for Regional NRM* project, links to M&E plans will be provided from the Australian Government Natural Resource Management Monitoring and Evaluation webpage http://www.nrm.gov.au/monitoring/index.html

If you would like to contribute, or for more information please contact Alice Renton at Land & Water Australia on (02) 6263 6000 or alice.renton@lwa.gov.au

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Foreword

The following are the proceedings and action plans that came out of a National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium for Natural Resource Management held in Hobart, Tasmania 30 August to 1 September, 2005. The Symposium was organised by a steering committee of regional, state and national representatives and was supported by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), Land & Water Australia (LWA) and The National Land & Water Resources Audit (Audit).

The Symposium came about when some practitioners from the states and regions approached the Audit and LWA about supporting such an event. The *Knowledge for Regional NRM* project organised a focus group of regional and state representatives to put all the issues on the table. From this a smaller steering committee was formed to develop the conference objectives and assist in the organisation of the event.

Some of the main objectives of the Symposium were:

- To highlight the core concepts of M&E including social and economic aspects;
- To stimulate a different way of looking at M&E and explore its various functions including:
  - Its importance in steering the ship
  - Its use in adaptive management
- To provide an opportunity to network and exchange information;
- To provide opportunities to further define the roles and responsibilities of the various players; and,
- To showcase innovative M&E processes and principles from regions and other disciplines.

Some of the key messages that came from the Symposium are outlined below.

Networking opportunities are absolutely necessary

The opportunity for regional practitioners to network with each other and their state or Australian Government counterparts is essential in building relationships and developing partnerships, particularly in a complex area such as M&E. It was clear that the Symposium provided an invaluable opportunity to swap stories along with engendering an overall sense that we are on a journey together and not working in isolation. It provided the opportunity to learn from each other, at the same time recognising the differences and synergies in each region. One size doesn't fit all, but in sharing common goals, there is the ability to gain unity and develop a supportive environment.

> ***"I now feel like I am part of a network and I would feel comfortable about ringing any of the participants that have been part of this symposium"***

Adaptive management is the culture we need to work within

Many of the discussions revolved around the importance of adaptive management in the NRM process. It was accepted that one of the most important aspects of adaptive management, and probably the reason why it is not always used to its optimum, is the resistance we have as individuals to recognise mistakes as important learning points. The adaptive management cycle hinges on learning as you go. It is only human to want to do a good job and *get it right* the first time round. Few of us feel comfortable with the idea of making mistakes but we all recognise that this is often how we gain the best lessons.

Successful adaptive management relies on this ability and has its foundation in willingness by each of us to *learn by doing* and share those lessons.

Knowledge and understanding underpins it all

Nearly all discussions stressed the importance of knowledge and the role it plays in providing understanding. M&E is an important process in gaining both information and understandings in the NRM context. Its incorporation into our daily business rather than leaving it to the *dedicated* M&E officer is vital in developing sound organisational processes. There are two fundamental factors to the success of M&E at any scale with the first being a clear understanding of all the roles and responsibilities and how they fit together. The second is overcoming the attitude that M&E is only about reporting. It is much more than this. Its relevance for knowledge and understanding through adaptive management, goal setting and strategy review, state of the region assessment, information gap identification, communication and promotion amongst other things makes M&E the back-bone of successful programs and organisations.

Trust is the essential and sometimes elusive ingredient

The final message that resonated throughout the Symposium was the paramount importance of trust. Participants agreed that trust is what makes relationships, partnerships and collaborations work. Defining how to build trust is a much trickier business. All agreed that we each have a role to play through clear communication, effective listening and providing leadership in areas where we have skills. This may involve stepping up as opportunities present themselves, and falling back when other skills are required. We can also create trust through supporting each other in the activity of learning through adaptive management.

> ***"I began as seeing myself as an observer but by the end was very engaged and appreciated that I had something to offer and there were abundant opportunities to contribute."***

A number of action plans and working groups resulted from the discussions that took place during the Symposium. These include:

- Improving dialogue and engagement between regions, States/Territories and the Australian Government.
- Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks/models (that incorporate output reporting with long-term resource condition outcomes).
- Developing strategies and structures to assist with capacity building and knowledge sharing.
- Progressing indicator development and access to information on specific theme areas such as rangelands, soils and coasts and estuaries.

The event itself sparked many linkages and new partnerships. It made confident steps towards a more cooperative environment within and around M&E in NRM. The Steering Committee thank all the participants and sponsors who contributed and hope this marks the first in an ongoing series of events to foster further sharing and support.

The National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium Steering Committee.

National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium Hobart 2005

"What are the challenges and opportunities before us in achieving better NRM through M&E?"

Open Space

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Participants at the National Monitoring & Evaluation Symposium

Last Name	First Name	Organisation	State
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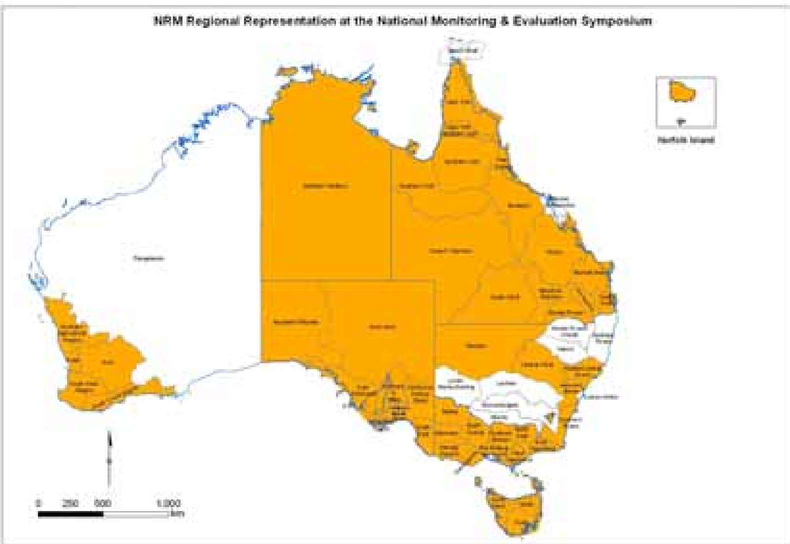

Partnerships between CMA's/Regional groups and Landcare Groups

Convenor Noel Ainsworth, SEQ Western Catchments Group, PO Box 731 Ipswich Q 4305, phone (07) 38169700 / 0409 003 909, email operations@seqwcg.com.au

Participants Paul Gribben, Grant Ebert, Les Russell plus others.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Landcare Groups disenfranchised in rollout of Regional Groups

- Between NHT1 and NHT2, when Landcare groups lost facilitators, many were not able to get them back or replace them
- Most energy went into setting up regional groups pushing aside Landcare Groups. This left most wondering where this array of groups fit in with the new arrangements. With the array of regional approaches, existing groups, networks and structures, this will inevitably lead to an array of arrangements with community groups. This will be dependent on local factors and leadership in both the regional groups and the community groups
- Desire of regional groups is that Landcare and other community groups see themselves as partners in dealing with NRM challenges, where Landcare groups focus works on mutually identified priority regional areas, formulating projects with landholders and accept the interest from the regional groups in the full suite of their activities including spatial details

Landcare Groups and other community groups are recognised as the arms and legs of regional group capacity

- Community Groups are an effective and efficient way to deliver services
- Support for Landcare Groups and networks of groups, is through the CMA's/Regional groups in some states, through Local Councils in others and not at all in some. The value of the Landcare networks has been highlighted by the fact that support through Councils has helped those councils to develop local weed strategies. Other opportunities in the future include Landcare groups advice into carbon-trading schemes under development.
- **The future** of the value of the CMA/Regional groups – Landcare partnerships will be recognised not just by the capacity to deliver resource condition outcomes, but also the incredible **leverage offered by the partnerships**. Penny Scott (Capacity Building Team) has published some information on this area on the NRM website.

Investment approach restricts opportunities to develop partnerships with Landcare groups

- CMA's likely to be restricted in their ability to target Landcare groups or other community groups due to inherited Government tendering models
- Landcare Groups are often not equipped to tender for works in the same way that other Industry bodies and consultancies are

Impact of funding streams

The existence of the separate funding streams NHT, NAP and NLP has added to the difficulties of Landcare Group disengagement. NLP seemed to be thrown to Landcare groups as a lifeline.

- NLP increasingly being targeted for the "brown" NRM issues whereas the main investment strategies for regional groups are based around the NAP and NHT funding streams. NAP and NHT are being targeted for more of the "green" NRM issues
- The separated elements of NLP, EnviroFund, Water Grants etc are being brought into the NAP/NHT planning process with time
- Many Landcare groups have pulled back to activity reliant on sporadic EnviroFund grants, then being simply reliant on a coordinator somewhere to help them develop the EnviroFund applications. Some Landcare groups have continued due to a social void left by the collapse of other community groups and many others have a greater urban component. Some Landcare groups also weakened by the development of direct funding streams of incentives from Regional Bodies or Local Government to landholders
- Newer Landcare groups were more production or industry based accessing NLP. NGO's also increasingly successful at accessing NLP
- Controls on NHT/NAP funding (eg 80% to on-ground in NSW) has limited the funding to support social capital and Landcare group coordinators
- Corporate funding is likely to be looking for on-ground outcomes and limited investment in social capital further restricting Landcare support unless leverage opportunity is sold

Waterwatch cited as an example of a community group facing significant challenges under the regional model of NRM delivery

- In some areas, Waterwatch now has just a educational role when EPA and catchment Boards have no faith in the data collected. Other areas, Waterwatch has seized the opportunity to act in the project monitoring, crucial role in state-wide water quality monitoring as well as regional community educational role

Recommendation/action

After a minimum of two years of operations, review the success of different approaches to partnerships between Regional groups with Landcare and other community groups in terms of the delivery of outcomes, lead-times for delivery and leverage of investment. Share these lessons actively across NRM regions.

North Central and North East Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – A positive example of how monitoring and evaluation is working for us.

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Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Presentation of Regional approach

Laura Chant and Luke Bayley presented and discussed experiences surrounding their regions development and initial implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. They have been working with Jessica Dart and are exited by the prospects of what this framework is offering. These regional M & E frameworks will provide a set of processes that will help both regions to:

- Monitor the state of the natural environment
- Coordinate data collection from all projects under the Regional Catchment Strategy
- Demonstrate the contribution towards improvement in resource condition made by projects prioritised under the RCS
- Provide performance information to inform the annual planning cycle for the Regional Catchment Investment Process and to improve and refine the RCS (adaptive management)
- Be accountable to funders and community stakeholders
- Effectively manage reporting processes

These plans are dynamic documents that should evolve over the coming years as more detailed information come to hand. We are looking forward to sharing our experiences and resources with regions around Australia.

If you would like copies of this framework, or wish to discuss the concepts further please contact Luke or Laura.

At what level should we evaluate the success of NRM projects?

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Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Weed Identification Book

Campbell gave the example of an NRM project to develop a weed identification book to assist landholders identify weeds and eradicate weeds. The hierarchy of steps in the program logic could include:

- Print and publish weed ID books.
- Distribute and publicise weed ID books.
- Promote landholder use of weed ID books.
- Increase landholder awareness of weed species.
- Increase landholder knowledge and identification of weed species.
- Improve prevention of new weeds.
- Increase eradication of existing weeds.
- Improve resource condition.

The group was asked:

- At what levels should NRM Body evaluate whether the project was successful?
- At what level should the NRM Body be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for weed control?

Discussion and recommendations

What is the appropriate evaluation level?

- Some suggested that the project should be evaluated at the resource condition level. It would be no use unless it contributed to improved resource condition.
- Others suggested that the project could only be expected to achieve increased landholder knowledge and identification of weeds. There are many other factors affecting weed prevention and eradication and resource condition. The weed ID book cannot be expected to achieve outcomes at this level. The weed ID book may be successful and assist in weed ID while the resource condition continues to deteriorate.
- It was also suggested that a project should be evaluated at the point where it could trigger adaptive change to achieve a resource condition target.
- The needs and values of the community are also important in assessing the success of the project. Some people's weeds are other people's crops and gardens. The weed book may be fulfilling a community need or educating some sectors of the community about what weeds especially threaten resource condition.

- It was noted that the level of evaluation may move up the hierarchy over time as outcomes eventuate.

Community ownership of NRM implementation and evaluation.

- The NRM Plans should be owned by the whole community, not just the NRM Boards. An example was provided from central Queensland where the NRM Board had decided that the best way to achieve ownership of NRM actions was to operate through the 27 Shires in the NRM region. Monitoring and evaluation was undertaken by four panels made of local government officers from each Shire. The panels are assessing whether management action targets are being achieved and what the projects are achieving for the regions resource condition.

Who is responsible for evaluating resource condition?

- It was suggested that NRM Bodies can evaluate their environmental assets and the threats to those assets. However, they do not generally have the resources to evaluate at the resource condition level. They often do not feel that they have any long term security to undertake resource condition monitoring. There needs to be partnerships between Government and the community for resource condition monitoring.
- It was suggested that the bigger picture of resource condition monitoring should be the responsibility of the Australian and State Governments. It should be a broad integrated process with a commonality of themes.

Rebuilding the nexus between NRM Planning and M&E

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Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The issue:
It was proposed that for a number of reasons there exists a disconnect between NRM Planning and M&E, where logic tells us that that they should be inextricably linked.

Comments from the Group
- All plans need to indicate what needs to be measured
- NRM plans should integrate the M&E framework
- M&E Officer should be redundant (ie. integrated into larger organisation role) if the planning works
- Raises question of WHO is responsible for RCT monitoring. If regional plan state the need, does that obligate regions to do it?
- Planning officer should also be the M&E officer
- Confirmation that has been a tendency for very little connection between regional plans and M&E frameworks
- There is a huge divide between M&E and plans that is not seen in other industries
- Symptom of lack of details in the outset and now being brought 'into the fold' of planning.
- Resourcing issue with pressure to get plans done has led to lack of integration of M&E into initial planning.
- Collaboration between state, national level processes needs to increase communication
- Continuous reactive responses to many data/reporting demands are a distraction from the real job
- M&E should be fundamental to doing business, not just a subsection of the bigger picture.
- Constant dialogue between the state and the regions (and federal) will improve progress.
- Need to get beyond the assumption that the state should understand what they want before the regions can (ie. No one should be waiting for anyone)
- No cohesive approach from the state and there is a disconnect between state data and the regional needs.

Recommendation/action

- Look at the WA state wide RCM project, with lead person for each MfT (theme) to help regions with the data they need.
- Modify how the M&E jobs are marketed and described to re-inforce the connection to the planning cycle
- Acknowledge that there is a need for M&E Frameworks but more work to build them into the planning cycle

- A new focus on aligning expectations of who is measuring what across the national, state and regional ‘wedding cake’
- A focus on building the capacity for planning and M&E in the state and regions

Unrealised Expectations of Planning and M&E between regions, states and the AG

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Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Background

This followed on from the discussion about the nexus between planning and M&E, which had identified that there were different and unrealised expectations of the three level of who was doing what in M&E

Range of Issues Raised

- Regions don't have the resources to do what is (apparently) expected
- The WA state-wide RCT monitoring project is dealing with the
    1. clarity of who is responsible for what
    2. the resourcing issue, and
    3. the need for longer term monitoring

- the array of RCT's across regions introduces a (dysfunctional?) complexity
- Clarity that the regions should be responsible for an "asset based" approach to M&E, as opposed to landscape RCT monitoring (for which regions do not have the responsibility for providing data to the Audit)
- The discussion focussed on how to reconcile the agreed need for standardisation and absolute need for appropriateness of indicators etc at different scales
- Highlighted that the need for states to have a frameworks (eg the SA State NRM Plan) for the regions to work within and to assign and align roles and responsibilities
- Highlighted that much of the energy applied to regional M&E is expended on satisfying the needs of external requirements, particularly micro-management of financial reporting that distract the regions from the main game.
- Big question is why is there this mis-alignment of expectations given that the AG has provided the leadership and the parties have 'signed up' to the arrangements??
- Clearly a disconnection has occurred despite the formal arrangements.

Recommendation/action

- That progress will be made through establishing a mechanism to align expectations and establish realistic frameworks for who is doing what across the three levels.
- Critical to this will be an exploration of 'getting the questions right' for the different scales of planning, M&E and reporting
- That the WA state wide RCT project be promoted and explored further for all states to adopt.
- That there be acceptance that there is an array of different kinds of data (including narrative) that support M&E and that these can be plugged into the reporting: ie a more flexible approach to the current MATs and RCTs standard.

- Need to re-assess the principle in the national M&E Framework that all data must be accessible and useful to all parties
- That the annual gathering of the AG M&E team with the state based counterparts include a sample of (**or maybe ALL**) people with prime responsibility for regional Planning and M&E to:
    1. Open the dialogue
    2. Build understanding, trust and relationships
    3. Work on how to manage the need for standardisation, capacity to aggregate data, while maintaining a high level of appropriateness and usefulness at all levels.

Measuring the Social Foundations of NRM

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Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The Question

The NHT and NAP were established by the Australian Government and States/Territories to maintain and improve the condition of land, water and biological resources. Improvements in natural resource condition are dependant upon the achievement of intermediate outcomes – such as the establishment of the social foundations underpinning how natural resources are managed. How does one assess these achievements? There are issues associated with the conceptual framework to use in framing the question, the methodology and the political partnerships required to inform and finally get signoff to a proposed methodology.

The NLWRA in partnership with the Australian Government / Queensland Government and States are piloting the development of a methodology to assess theses social foundations, which include:

- Capacity (Regional organisations have the capacity to make decisions on NRM issues)
- Engagement (A shared NRM vision and ownership of NRM at the regional level)
- Partnerships (Effective NRM partnerships between government and regional organisations)
- Recognition (Governments and regional organisations recognise the importance of the social dimensions of NRM

The process will involve workshops and discussions within each of the jurisdictions, with a trial of the methodology and indicators undertaken in the latter part of 2005 with a view to possible implementation in 06/07.

The group were asked to discuss the project and identify key issues the consultant – Mark Fenton should consider in undertaking the project.

Key Issues

- The relationship between regional group and sub regional (community groups) is essential to include in such an analysis
- The identification of informants (CEO, Chair, Joint Steering Committee) members as important sources of information.
- Longitudinal tracking is required to show changes over time.
- Work in this area would help with:
    - developing a common language / messages in discussing the impact of regional groups' activities to community groups and government

  - identifying the need to balance investment in monitoring resource condition targets with intermediate outcomes.
- The pilot methodology will involve consultations in each of the jurisdictions with State and regional representatives to identify the appropriate achievement statements, indicators and sources of data.
  - It is not proposed that the regions would be responsible for collecting additional data
  - It is important to capture not only the perceptions of the regional group but also the perceptions other groups have of the regional body.

- Partnerships should examine interagency relationships at the State and national level.
- Confidentiality of data and its use need to be clearly stipulated. It is proposed that data on their own performance would be available to the regional group, but would be aggregated to the State level for State and National decision makers.
- Potential uses of the data could range from benchmarking to the development of tools for performance improvement. Caution and extensive discussion would be required before moving on any suggestions of target setting.
- Contextual data would also be collected to assist with interpretation of results eg. Length of time the group has been established, budget, number of staff etc.

Recommendation/action

The consultant should consider / incorporate as appropriate existing work:

- NSW Natural Resource Commission standards for engagement
- Rebeccah Brown at Monash University has done work on categorising Local Governments in terms of their level of integration with NRM and support by stakeholders
- WA Salinity Investment framework developed scales for measuring the social assets required to deal with salinity issues, and the State evaluation proposal to the JSC has some common elements with the project and is worthy of some further discussion.

What are the requirements for effective resource condition monitoring?

Convenor Damian Crilly, State NRM Office, 3 Baron Hay Court, South Perth

Participants Ian Morgans, Anne Fordham, Vanessa Elwellfauns, Linda Soterio, Lynne Robertson, Collin Wilson, Wayne Tennant, Ros Waldron, Jens Light, Eric Wright, John Herpen, Sandy Gunter, John Gavin, Aidan Smith, Susan Storall, Campbell Clarke, Dan Lynch, Lorraine Rosenburg, Holly Hanlan, Noeline Gross, Lucy Schapel, Ken Harrison, Maros Strudwicke, David Brereton, Diana Patterson, Dierdre Maher, Dugal Wallace, Man Thong, Greg Pickard, Danny O'Neill.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

What are the requirements for effective resource condition monitoring?
Resource condition monitoring is the long-term, systematic repetition of a specific natural resource survey, and an analysis of the generated data.

Properly designed resource condition monitoring provides information on the linkages between changes in resource condition and their causes.

It provides a basis for understanding observed changes to determine whether they are within natural levels of variability or whether they may be indicators of human influences.

Considerable investment will be made by the NRM Regions in Western Australia under the Natural Hertitage Trust and National Action Plan, to ensure our natural resources are protected and used sustainably. To do this effectively, the NRM Regions need to be able to understand what condition the natural resources are in, and if they are improving, maintaining or degrading. They need to be able to respond to problem areas by implementing appropriate on-ground actions and assessing whether their efforts have been effective.

Resource condition monitoring is crucial for enabling continuous improvement through an adaptive approach to the management of natural resources

The conservation and sustainable use of natural resources requires a broad-based understanding of the dynamic nature of natural systems and resource condition. Improved NRM outcomes can only be achieved therefore, if decision-makers in each of the NRM Regions in Western Australia, have the required understanding through access to resource condition monitoring data, to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resource base.

Appropriate resource condition monitoring systems must therefore be designed to identify and track threats, understand the status and trends in natural resource condition, and assess progress made by the NRM Regions. Central to this approach is the need for high quality resource condition monitoring data and information (SLIP), which must be available and accessible to NRM decision-makers in all NRM Regions across the State to assess the performance (effectiveness) of management actions towards achieving resource condition targets.

Resource condition monitoring is a critical element in providing the context for management systems that can operate at a national, state, regional, local and individual property levels, inter-dependently. The management of natural resources requires the integration of processes across spatial and temporal scales as well as across social scales.

A systematic approach to resource condition monitoring enables the integration of property level management with NRM Region objectives. Effective stewardship of those resources requires resource security and support. Through increased NRM performance at the property level, progress towards the achievement of NRM Region objectives can be achieved. Through progress towards increased industry/sector process standards, response to strong market signals/drivers can also be achieved with tangible benefits in the form of resource access or market premiums.

A systematic approach to resource condition monitoring also helps to develop an increased understanding of how the achievement of management action targets contributes to the achievement of resource condition targets

Determination of Resource Condition Monitoring requirements were developed by assessing:

- What are the requirements for resource condition monitoring under the National Framework?
- What is currently being done?
    - Monitoring infrastructure
    - Baselines and benchmarks
    - Data sets and data sources
- What would be the optimum situation?
- What would it cost to move from the present situation to the optimum situation?

Four key steps were identified for the project analysis stage to enable determination of statewide resource condition monitoring requirements. These involved:

- Regional monitoring needs analysis
- Analysis of current State agency monitoring programs
- Identification of gaps and requirements to fill them
- Feasibility analysis (technical and economic) to determine viability of gap solutions.

Gaps in Regional Investment Plans

In general terms and across all regions, little or no allocation has been made for management of data and databases and the technical analysis of data to provide information for investment decision making provision of data to other users or reporting to NLWRA and NAP/NHT2. No provision has been made for integration of information across regions. These components are often overlooked as the focus is often on data collection rather than analysis and reporting. The RCM project will pick up all these elements in a uniform way.

These project components were developed based on an extensive gap analysis of regional strategies and working in consultation with regional staff, so by intent there is not a duplication of the requested works in regional strategies. In fact the opposite may be true; regional investment planning has focussed on RCT activities on a local scale on the basis that this project will pick the regional scale or agency scale work. Most regions have not adequately covered point of investment or effectiveness monitoring by spreading M and E investment across RCTs as well. This project would allow them to focus and do this important task well

The analysis phase of the Statewide Resource Condition Monitoring Project has assessed the shortfall between current State agency monitoring programs and optimum resource condition monitoring requirements in the NRM Regions and established cost projections to fill those gaps. These cost estimates include capital costs for infrastructure, data collection, storage and analysis.

In response to the JSC request to cut the $28,995,000 application for the proposed state-wide Resource Condition Monitoring project by 30%, RCM Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were established to review the optimum option and reduce it to $20,000,000 by considering potential savings by looking at overlaps and opportunities within and between NRM Regions and State agenciy programs

TWG Determinations Key considerations for each TWG were:

What and where are the existing RCM programs?
What needs to be done to provide an effective, efficient and appropriate RCM network for each NRM Region?
What will it cost?
What synergies exist between programs to minimise duplication and costs?
What are the critical thresholds for an effective, efficient and appropriate RCM network in each NRM Region?
What can be achieved with the $20 million allocation quarantined by the JSC?

- What is State Investment?

- Will this project assist development of RCTs?

Yes

- Need to develop a conceptual model of monitoring framework, processes, methodologies and schedules
- This project provides alignment across reporting mechanisms
- It will encourage stewardship by providing commercial advantage through increased monitoring and compliance
- Project will assist realignment of state monitoring programs with regional monitoring requirements
- Need to define roles and responsibilities for reporting results
- Need to encourage regions to invest with the state in information needs requirements through partnerships
- Need to provide mechanism fro capturing third party investments and behaviour change in NRM through regional activity

Program Logic

Convenor Jess Dart – Consultant, Clear Horizon Consultants, PO Box 341, Hastings Vic 3915, Australia Ph 03 9783 3662 jess@clearhorizon.com.au

Participants Laura Chant, Luke Bayley, Sean Dwyer, Georgie Luckock, Lynne Turner.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

What this session was about

This was really an explanatory session to convey what program logic is. I presented an overview of program logic as a 'theory of change' behind any intervention.

Program logic has been used by the North Central and North East CMAs in Victoria. The logic models were developed through a workshop process to which various stakeholders attended (DSE,DPI, Parks Vic). The resulting model allowed us to understand the gaps and assumptions in our framework and specifically to challenge the MATS.

An issue emerged

An interesting issue emerged about what MATS should cover– I explained how we used the program logic process to revise the MATS. We mentioned that we believe MATS should focus on the gap between the outputs and the resource condition change (the miracle leap). We also stressed how well-defined MATS at this level have the advantage of giving us insight as to whether we are contributing to resource condition change. We also said they are really valuable, critical, for adaptive management – eg. Telling us what is working and what is not – this should feed into the regional investment process.

Anyway, we mentioned that our MATS largely relate to projects prioritised by the regional investment process. One participant raised the issue that each CMA had a responsibility to report on MATS for the whole region. We said that we have to start somewhere and this is what is most useful for *our* planning processes. But in fact for the two regions - both State money, NHT etc. do go through the RCIP process – so we do capture most of this.

Recommendation/action

Do more program logic, and share your experiences with this tool. Examples can be found from Luke Bayley and Laura Chant. We will run another session to showcase this work tomorrow.

Monitoring & Evaluation Strategies for Small Projects

Convenor Gavin Doyle, Hunter-Central Rivers CMA, (02) 4938 4938,
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Participants Michael Shultz, Richard Mills, Melissa Jeffs.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Need for M & E of small projects

Most of the sessions/discussions of this symposium have related to broad scale issues of RCT & MAT M & E. This discussion centred on the need for effective M & E for small projects.

- MAT's assume that the full outputs contracted are actually achieved when in reality there is a broad spectrum of small project success and effectiveness.
- It is difficult to roll out a single M & E strategy for the different scales of MER required for effective NRM.
- "Project Journal" is a program developed in the HCRCMA to provide a methodology/strategy for landholders and project groups to develop, keep track of and evaluate their small projects. It clearly outlines the expectations of the CMA on the project manager in relation to monitoring and reporting of their small project. The journal provides a clear pro-forma for the project manager to provide the required information to the CMA. The prescriptive format will enable qualitative evaluation of the information provided to help inform strategies for future similar projects, what worked and what didn't, what grew and what didn't. The journal leads project managers through the M & E minefield by suggesting techniques to use and what to monitor (eg. photo points, veg survey tools). The final payments for projects will be tied to the supply of a completed project journal to the CMA.
- Other processes running from other States include a project tracking database in SA and another in ACT. These databases will be online and provide public access to reports generated from the database. These will be used to inform MAT's rather than in any small project M & E program.

Community Monitoring

Queensland is in the process of rolling out a series of monitoring kits that cover the theme areas of Biodiversity, Pasture & Soil, and Water Quality. This process will provide data at the MAT level. While the expectation is that community members will be doing the monitoring there is a large investment required initially to train up people in using the tools developed.

SA have developed a program to monitor the condition of bushland. Again a significant resource input to the process has been identified to roll the project out through the development of local species lists and training.

M&E without RC&T (adaptive management without sufficient broad-scale resource condition data & information)

Convenor Rachel Eberhard, 55 Park Rd West, Dutton Park, Qld., 4102, 0432 683 598, Rachel@eberhardconsulting.com.au

Participants Carolyn Raine;.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Lack of broad-scale resource condition data and information

NRM planning and implementation is based on the adaptive management cycle (plan, do, monitor, review). M&E is focussed on the monitor/review step (but actually informs the full cycle). The planning model suggests that regions review existing information and this will tell them what the issues are, where they are, what the processes are and how to manage them.

In reality there is rarely adequate and appropriate data and information to provide this. The lack of this information is currently the basis of an impasse with the States, and the need for them to commit to the provision of this data and information. However, even if the resources were found to address this today, there will be many years before that will generate useful information. Realistically the scale and complexity of the NRM issues we face will never be adequately served by monitoring systems. So the question is posed, how do regions plan, implement, monitor and evaluate without adequate broad-scale resource condition information?

Using knowledge rather than waiting for data

Regions have the opportunity to access existing knowledge to inform their planning and implementation. Knowledge is held by technical experts, indigenous communities, landholders and other stakeholders. How do we access and apply this knowledge in a robust and defensible way? Use conceptual models of biophysical processes to build a common understanding, underpin action planning, inform M&E and communicate strategies. Biophysical conceptual models can support the development of program activities and logic. Some question of the acceptance of this approach by funding agencies etc (versus 'hard science').

Conceptual models could/should be:

- Not just a technical exercise
- Built by diverse stakeholders (widen knowledge base and develop shared models)
- Could bring in additional expertise as required
- Be explicit about assumptions
- Be explicit about uncertainty
- Use formal expert elicitation-type techniques to maintain credibility
- Be embedded within the planning/adaptive management framework (not a once-off exercise)

Actions to support

There is a lot of interest in using this sort of strategy. A variety of tools exist. Undertaking this exercise is not trivial, and requires a particular set of skills to undertake. Using a formal tool and process will improve credibility. A skills and training need is identified. The National Knowledge Brokering project could support this.

Recommendation/action

That a small group develop a proposal to provide skills/training/resources to support the application of conceptual models for regional NRM planning and implementation.

Volunteers to progress this:

Rachel Eberhard, Catherine Murdoch, Deb Scott, Melissa Morley, Patrick O'Connor & James McKee

And you (write name here)?

M&E for NRM Practice Change

Convenor Ian Gaze, Australian Government NRM Team, (02) 6272 4970, ian.gaze@deh.gov.au

Participants Jess Dart, Mark Fenton, Barry Lincoln, Matt Bartlett, Justine Graham, Linda Soteriou, Susan Stovell, Deirdre Maher, Phil Pritchard, Mellissa Jess, Lucy Larkin, Les Russell, Melissa Morley, Gerry Maynes, Michael Miller, John Herpen, Lorraine Rosenberg, Greg Cock, Shaaron Stevenson.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Previous Phase 1

Objectives of the first phase of the project:

- How do regions understand and engage with regional stakeholders?
- How do they use that information to develop strategies/investments for NRM practice change?
- How are they learning about the effectiveness of those strategies?

Approach

- Four regional case studies during February – June 2005

Some findings of the first phase

- Lack of estensive stakeholder analysis
- Focus on already engaged/low hanging fruit
- Could be more diverse and targeted stakeholder engagement processes
- One-on-one resource intensive
- Learning an expanded portfolio of strategies
- Could be better links between R. C. targets and investments in practice change
- Need for improved M&E for measuring effectiveness of investments in practice change

Proposed next phase: Purpose

- Build regional capacity for:
- Investing effectively in practice change
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of investments to achieve practice change
- What works and why
  1. Effectiveness of practice change in achieving R. C. outcomes

Phase 2 proposed approach

- Work with/in regions

Recommendation/action

1. Terminology- recognise phases and principles of participation rather than simply referring to engagement
2. Need to consider both community and regional aspirations- e.g value surveys undertaken in Swan region in Phase 1 considered useful.
3. It may be useful to look at the EMS pilots when establishing phase 2 project.
4. Can the Phase 2 project link to particular industries eg broad acre?
5. Consider a range of regions such as those that manage economic and non-economic land uses, indigenous managed lands, statutory and non-statutory, NAP and NHT
6. M&E could be difficult due to issues of attribution

Making M&E relevant to non-M&E realms

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Participants David Jan, Di Patterson, Bernard Morrison, Keith Ferdinand, Heather Percy, Ross Bigwood, Greg Cock, Phil Pritchard, Noeline (rangelands), Don Defenderfer, Rachael Eberhard, Chris Penna, Les Russell

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

- If they haven't been along for the ride they will find it hard to grapple with (including language)
- Something is better than nothing for engaging the community (ie. Draw the line in the sand for feeding back to the community and just do it)
- Assessment of data validity/suitability and acknowledging the weaknesses allows for some reporting. Could use a stoplight approach or fire danger gauge graphic for illustration of data value.
- Approach engagement from the perspective of not knowing (KISS).
- Communications role needs to be considered as high value for this engagement.
- Alternative name of the M&E coordinator may make them more approachable.
- It's how you do the story telling around the results that influences engagement:
    - eg. SAMDB RCT fact sheets/Gippsland report card – took 6 weeks to draw from other peoples experiences so can be quite simple
    - relate it to the particular experiences of the audience (ie. Landholders/wind erosion)
- Recognise that there are different actions/responses for different audiences.
- Fundamental link M&E to communications plan
- Ensure that third party contracts clearly set out M&E requirements and don't allow data for data's sake in projects.
- Start with narrative information from the community so that you are engaging them first rather than "telling" them in the traditional presentation manner.
- One on one narrative info can overcome collective memory loss and is a form of monitoring
- Absence of feedback loop to data collectors (landholders) has caused a loss of momentum of people collecting data
    - Two way movement of information (data up/results back) is fundamental in engaging stakeholders
    - Need to honour the contract to the community and get the question right at the outset.
    - Allow capacity to negotiate data interpretation/value adding for this feedback
- Hesitation to engage due to inconsistency/uncertainty of time frames of targets (don't want to create false expectations)
    - Use broader NRM issues to communicate/engage rather than targets and jargon to increase relevance.
    - Use examples that relate to peoples thinking (most significant change technique) eg. Seeing your feet when you stand in the Murray River as
- Finding social surrogates as indicators for biophysical targets
- Neil Barr's papers re. sustaining regional communities (Victoria)

Identifying targets/indicators for soil condition

Convenor Chris Grose, DPIWE, PO Box 46, Kings Meadows, Tasmania, 7249 03 63365325
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Participants Lucy Larkin, Dugaln Wallace, Ross Bigwood, Neil McKenzie, Heather Percy, Megan McFarlane, Bernard Morrison, Don Cummins, Bob Nulsen, Liz Dellries, Geof Park, Gavin Doyle, Marc Thompson.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Soil condition is an identified matter for target but do we really understand what we need to measure to assess soil condition and can we really identify thresholds for the various indicators that might be monitored?

I began this session with a summary of the soil condition project currently underway in Tasmania, the issues and problems that have had to be considered. Following dot points are a summary of the project.

- Project aims to initiate a programme to collect baseline data on soil condition and facilitate the development of thresholds and trends in soil condition through on-going monitoring.
- Limited survey coverage means difficult to undertake statistically valid sampling. Sites have to be located through fieldwork and trial and error – leads to bias in sampling? And makes extrapolation of results difficult.
- Aim to identify and sample 300 sites around Tasmania, based on priority soil - land use combinations, measuring a suite of physical and chemical characteristics.
- Numerous issues in developing a sampling methodology that could be applied consistently and meaningfully and could be repeated in years to come. Need to monitor at exactly the same location as baseline data site.

General discussion followed that ranged across a variety of topics.

- Monitoring soil condition is a real balance between cost and benefit. Benefits can be long term but costs are likely to be high. Time frame for detectable change to occur in some soil properties can be decades
- Tassie project is not looking at all national indicators – those for erosion by wind and water were considered to difficult to implement or not appropriate to Tasmania. Modelling erosion by wind requires good topsoil texture and veg cover maps – the former are certainly not available for Tasmania.
- How to address changing land use or sites lost for other reasons?
- In assessing soil condition should we consider fitness for a particular use, comparison with natural condition or suitability for ecosystem service?
- Issue of soil condition is becoming more important, particularly at the individual property level. Raises questions as to whether declining condition is simply a result of poor management and should therefore remain the responsibility of individual managers to put right (private v. public good).
- Bundaburg, oil condition is identified as a major environmental issue but concern lies more with management to ensure sustainability (eg fertilizer efficiency, lime use, water use efficiency) rather than on measuring individual soil properties. Have we identified the right indicators? What is it we are monitoring for?
- Do we need to engage farmers in long-term monitoring? If so, how?

- How can we make best use of privately collected data? And what is the role of private industry in soil condition monitoring? Problems with sampling bias. May enable identification of broadscale pattern of degradation but of little value for identifying trends.

Recommendation/action

No firm conclusions or recommendations were discussed except that soil condition is particularly difficult to assess and yet the collection of baseline data is exceedingly useful and is likely to have benefits beyond the original purpose.

Rangelands Monitoring and Evaluation

Convenor Noeline Gross, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group PO Box 63 Georgetown Qld 4871, 07 4062 1330, coordinator.ngrmg@bigpond.com

Participants Richard Mills, Jeanette Stanley, Ron White, Gerry Maynes, Cathy Robinson, Charles Curry, Lorraine Rosenberg, Colin McDonald, Mike Lee, Phil Pritchard, Blair Wood, Keith Ferdinands, Les Russell, Mellissa Jess, Sharon Stevenson, John Gavin, Suzanne Hoverman, Sandy Gunter, Mike Digby, Mike Grundy, Luke Bayley, Bruce Rampton, Bob Frazer, Dan Lynch, Lynne Turner, Michael Miller.

Discussion outcomes

Regions within the Rangelands have some commonality in terms of on-ground needs for sustainable management as well as limited social and economic capital (they all have vast expanses of land with remote populations). These regions discussed what monitoring and evaluation is occurring in their regions in order to determine how these activities may contribute to a larger scale 'Rangelands' monitoring and evaluation program.

- It was determined that monitoring and evaluation 'investments' in regions with rangelands is focussed on 'proving' and 'improving' **regional** on-ground projects, adaptive planning and management, and regional 'institutional' processes.
- It was determined that regions in the Rangelands have limited capacity (human resources and finances) for monitoring and evaluation – particularly regarding large scale State and Nationwide resource condition programs. Most regions do not have dedicated staff or budgets for monitoring and evaluation, as the 'on-ground' needs of their small budgets are so significant and have taken priority.
- Programs within Rangelands are similar and range from grazing land management and monitoring programs, property monitoring guides, remote sensing and mapping programs, photo point and other land condition monitoring programs, arid land information systems, fire scar monitoring and reporting, studies establishing biological and land condition baselines etc
- A common theme across most of the Rangelands regions is that management and monitoring 'projects' are aimed at building tools and assisting the ability of the 'manager' to monitor, evaluate and adapt management at the property scale.
- It was generally felt that if monitoring and evaluation of land condition can be proven to be of commercial benefit to the manager (and programs are already beginning to demonstrate commercial as well as public benefits), then monitoring and evaluation of resource condition state and trend will be long term, sustainable and driven at the property level.

Recommendation/action

- That an audit or assemblage of existing programs with monitoring and evaluation outcomes in the rangelands needs to be put together to better develop linkages with regional on-ground projects. This is basically about reducing overlap, improving efficiencies through sharing and also sharing ideas and expertise for future projects and methodologies for the Rangelands.
- Regions in the Rangelands need to get together again (perhaps at a future Rangelands function) with greater detail of the M&E data being generated per region, to begin building common indices that can be aggregated for larger scale Rangelands M&E. Regional contributions to larger scale M&E programs must be time and cost efficient for regions due to limited human and financial capacity.

- Property scale M&E programs supported by regions in the Rangelands need a 'profoundly simple' framework/ system to coordinate and aggregate data for long term resource condition monitoring and evaluation of the Rangelands. The existing ACRIS (via the National Land and Water Resources Audit website or on the DEH website) system should be scrutinised by regions and managers, and potentially extended for this purpose.

National M&E Framework: Where are we going?

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Participants Jo Caminiti, Mike Lee, Jens Light, Chris Cleary, Matt Bartlett, Hugh Wilson, Fred Stedler, Michael Miller, Bob Nulsen, Karen Cody, Bruce Male, Dan O'Neill, Rob Richards, Janita Mathieson, Margie Parmenter, Ron White, Marc Thompson, Russel Flavel, Bob Frazer, Dermot McKane, Les Rowell, Rob Thorman, Holly Hanlon, Carol Jeffs, Don Cummins, David Brereton, Dugal Wallace, Alice Roughley, Damian Crilly, Noel Ainsworth, Alan Haig, Greg Pinkard, Ros Waldron, Shaaron Stevenson.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

National Indicators
The national indicators that have been recommended for use with the National M&E framework were examined in general terms, with particular reference to how they were developed, their current status and the particular issues associated with their use.

- Indicators are not set in concrete.
- They are not necessarily usable, as they were developed by technocrats and do not always have relevance or applicability to the regional level.
- The assumptions that underlie the indicators have not always been tested at a regional level.
- We should be conscious that the National framework has been nationally agreed. It is not an Australian Government framework. All states agreed to it.

Rationale for nationally consistent indicators
- On an international front, we need to present a compelling case to rebut the argument that our agricultural production is unsustainable, and that we are in fact subsidising our agricultural industries by allowing the degradation of our natural capital. We must have an indication of regional health at an appropriate scale.
- Treasury needs to know if the program is worth funding. However, the evidence required to do this may not be the same as the evidence needed by the regions to make their investment decisions.
- NHT1 was a tale of 10,000 projects. NHT2 could be a tale of 56 regions: this could generate a powerful story if done properly.
- A national picture would assist us to assess the magnitude of national issues (eg Salinity) and provide justification for national programs.

NLWRA view

"The Audit has an interesting challenge" (B. Wood).

- The indicators should have regional relevance, and in an ideal world would at least be modelled in the regions.
- These should be able to generate agreed information sets that can be used at a range of levels. However, these are not necessarily tested. The Audit Advisory Council makes the call as to the usefulness of the product.
- In the development of both the indicators and associated information products (from the Audit's perspective), there was an assumption that the indicators that they were

handed by the MEWG were actually agreed and that the state reps communicated the messages that were being generated.

The Regional/ State View

Liaison at the state / regional levels has been constrained by tight timeframes. This has not been helped by changes in the implementation of the framework – there is now a much less prescriptive approach.

There may be good reasons for a region to not wish to paint too positive a picture when they report, as this may lead to a reduction in funding if it creates a perception that investment is not needed.

There is a real need to lose the self interest that currently exists in regions and to raise the issues to a national level. "Fence post pissing" and other territorial behaviours are not constructive in contributing to an accurate national picture.

The Challenges

Do we really need a national product? To what extent should the national product shape or influence what is being monitored or what information is being gathered?

The trick is to roll up regionally relevant and available evidence to form a cohesive national picture. This may not be possible. Scalability of data / info is a real issue. Data ranges between micro scale to highly generalised state level.

Each state has a different impression about who should count (monitor) what. Roles and responsibilities are unclear and still up for discussion.

State data can answer the questions that are relevant at a regional level – if we know what the questions are. The regions need to ask the questions.

The crunch will come when it is time to demonstrate evidence of resource condition change.

Recommendation/action

There is a clear need to involve the regions more in the ongoing development of the National indicators.

While all parties concurred with this sentiment, no consideration was given to how it might happen (out of time).

Tools and Techniques for M&E of Social & Economic Issues

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Participants Eric Wright, Sean Swyer, Mike Schultz, Bill Currans, Trudie Stanley, Keith Ferdinands, Josie Kelman, Patrick O'Connor, Jeanette Stanley, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Surveys – Standards, Handy Hints and Cautions

The discussion began by considering the proposal that people were suffering an overload of surveys and interviews. Example was given of a commissioned research that came with instructions not to use either surveys or interviews, which presented the researcher with a quandary. The group discussed a range of issue surrounding interview overload and proposed some creative solutions including:

- Few people will turn down an opportunity to answer questions which are relevant to themselves or their business, so the challenge is to be sure your survey is relevant, well crafted and well targeted.
- Think carefully about how most efficiently to collect your data --
    - Turn up at the pub
    - Use a "snowball technique" to choose the most efficient sample size and composition – this involves asking people who should best participate in the survey, and then asking those people who should best participate in the survey, and when you start getting the same names reappearing, you have your sample.
    - Nothing says you have to use a paper-based survey. Use a telephone survey/discussion with your carefully selected sample group – again controlling for relevance.
    - On-line surveys are becoming popular. There are a few programs around to help you.
- Small incentives, or a chance at one, to return a survey are always helpful
- Good if there is some control over the number and quality of surveys – either on an institutional or geographic basis. We have a responsibility to not pester people with lots of bad surveys.
- Try out your survey on a few people – (pilot the survey) – ask a critical friend to assess these survey results and see if their assessment coincides with your assessment – if you interpret the responses differently, there is going to be confusion over exactly what information/insights your survey is going to deliver. Then ask the people who did the survey to discuss their experience of answering the survey – find out what was confusing or unclear and reframe the questions so they're clearer. (Alternatively video them answering the survey and look at response times and body language to see where there's confusion.)
- Surveys and questionnaires should be part of a deliberative process which delivers positive learning outcomes to the participants. This means as a bare minimum you need to give feedback on the results of the survey. And if relevant the survey should be part of an ongoing inquiry / learning process – eg. If you're trying to determine the 'key support needed' then feedback is required, and as a result of providing that key support, an evaluation of the effectiveness/ relevance of that key support, etc.

- Baseline surveys need to be just that – an independent assessment to understand the situation, not influenced by conflicting queries or other agendas. This is to identify the range of issues and current positions on those, which is then taken further by a different mechanism.
- There are lots of conventions around that should be considered/investigated in the development of your survey. Things like standard income groupings, standard ways about asking about family composition, etc. Do your homework.
- Wherever possible pinch questions that are relevant to your search from other well constructed, reputable surveys – ABARE, BRS, FarmBIS, etc.
- Lots of good techniques and good materials exist that have already been developed to assist community group/ organisation develop up their own instruments, either as pre-existing questions or guidelines:– one such website is: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evaldocs.html
- Some groups – Indigenous, regional bodies, etc. are heavily overloaded with investigations – and are beginning to engage "engagement managers" to assist them – ABS Adelaide have been asked to coordinate Indigenous surveys.
- Collecting valid social and economic data to set baselines and track change is not scary. There are a lot of resources and people to help but it is a purpose-specific exercise.
- There are ethical and legal issues associated with social surveys. Universities have ethical committees who oversee their construction; most Government Departments will have a standards committee or guidelines. Check first. Legal privacy issues surround the use of data collected and its use only for its designated purpose. Check this out.
- Also, asking confronting questions may mean no one returns your survey. Think carefully about what might offend people. Seek advice.

Interesting alternative measures

- *Language change –*

Language change can be used as a marker of behaviour/understanding change. Analysing "column-inches in local/ state newspapers devoted to an issue" is one technique. Careful listening for when certain people use new phrases in a different way – eg. Biodiversity when talking about soil biota rather than warm and fuzzy critters in the trees is one revealing indicator of a change in understanding about what biodiversity really means.

- *Most Significant Change* – aka *Significant Moments*

This is a way to track real turning points in progress toward an desired outcome. A bit hard to describe but it's those moments when you realise a significant event has just happened – eg. When you come out of a Board meeting where everyone has spent the meeting working toward a common objective rather than pushing their own individual interests; when regional agency science people and regional body science people complete the next quarters planning session working together for mutual advantage; etc. At the very least, record this event in your diary, date it, explain what lead up to it, why you see it as a significant event and what it means. A group of these 'significant moments' can later be used to tell a powerful story of how you got from there to here. Remember: "Well kept diaries have significance/legitimacy both in verifying scientific research and in making travel claims with the ATO".
Most Significant Change (MSC)is a bit more complex than this but still has some powerful uses – To access a newly available manual on MSC – written by Jessica Dart and Rick Davies, type in "Most Significant Change" into Google and up will come the

manual. It makes good reading and there is a network email group on MSC if you're interested.

- *Evaluating Community Engagement; Running Focus Groups; Item bank for end-of-project/program questionnaires; Logical Frameworks*
  Some good guidelines exist to assist in these. A website address sheet will be distributed in response to requests.

Recommendation/action

There should be a resource exchange point for M&E of social and economic issues -- for example, a Regional NRM link page on the Knowledge Broker Website or alternatively we should develop a Community of Practice for exchange of methods of inquiry, support materials, and results.

We need an inventory of the types of socio-economic data that could contribute to or provide context to regional investigations. We believe some work may already have been done on this and we invite the jurisdictions to contribute.

Can we align SoE and NRM Reporting .... Please?

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Participants Dianne Patterson, Sean Dwyer, Georgie Luckock, Lynne Turner, Rob Richards, Aidan Smith, Kate Lumb, David Bolard, Debra Harrison, Patricia Fitzsimons, Neil Ainsworth, Blair Wood, Dugal Wallace

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Victoria
What is the relationship between VCMC State of Catchment report & SoE Reporting in Victoria? They seem similar but VCMC seems to be a subset of SoE information.

In Victoria, there is an opportunity to use SoE process to shape the relevance for NRM/Catchment reporting, due to close proximity of timing. Where can we combine/partner resources, information?

Queensland
In Qld SoE, trying to influence the national agenda, but difficult because the national committee is independent and is deciding own indicators – not connected to ANZECC or National Matters for Target.

Can we get some alignment between regional reports and State SoE Reporting?
In Qld – have done this by information system – SoE Online – data, interpretive text and data linking (meta data and data directory)

New South Wales

Compulsory SoE reporting for local government every 2 years, but not aligned with State SoE. Varies with local government area and budget, but in general the reports are a statement of intent/outcome of the council itself, the success of actions is implied and reports do not speak to targets.

Other regional efforts should learn from NSW experience – some councils went in hard and got burnt, better to have a smaller, robust process and keep up the work.

National
Does SoE Reporting parallel with National Matters for Targets and Indicators? National Land and Water Resources Audit has completed a study/paper on the correlation between the two – 71% alignment. Audit has a project to supply information to the National SoE system – collect data once that dcan be used for both processes

Not all MfT indicators apply to all regions. – Wet Tropics for eg and acid sulphate soils – there is opportunity to change/add to these, but need Australian Government signoff.

Broader strategic context –
what is SoE reporting on or to? Broader strategy or targets. SoE too backward looking – potential to be reporting on broader ecological sustainable development trends – ecological footprint, ecosystem health index, ecotender – salinity, biodiversity, water quality.

Global reporting initiative has some interesting methodology that could be applied

Purpose is to raise debate in non-threatening way. Might lead to us questioning our indicators

Alignment

- where is the level of commitment to alignment? Seems not to be a the top level
- takes energy and creativity to get commitment to alignment
- difficult in Victoria because VCMC report and SoE report under 2 separate parliamentary frameworks

SoE could be the umbrella process, NRM report feeds in – key area
Can we have a joint SoE and NR report? SoE is broader than our definition of NRM. There is a contextual issue: NRM is about targets (action oriented) , SoE is not (but could be) (statement of fact – recommendations are not usually noticed – except WA)

Is it about linking reports or linking information and data? Can we get efficiencies from interpreted data? SoE might be the right vessel to develop integrated systems and mechanisms.

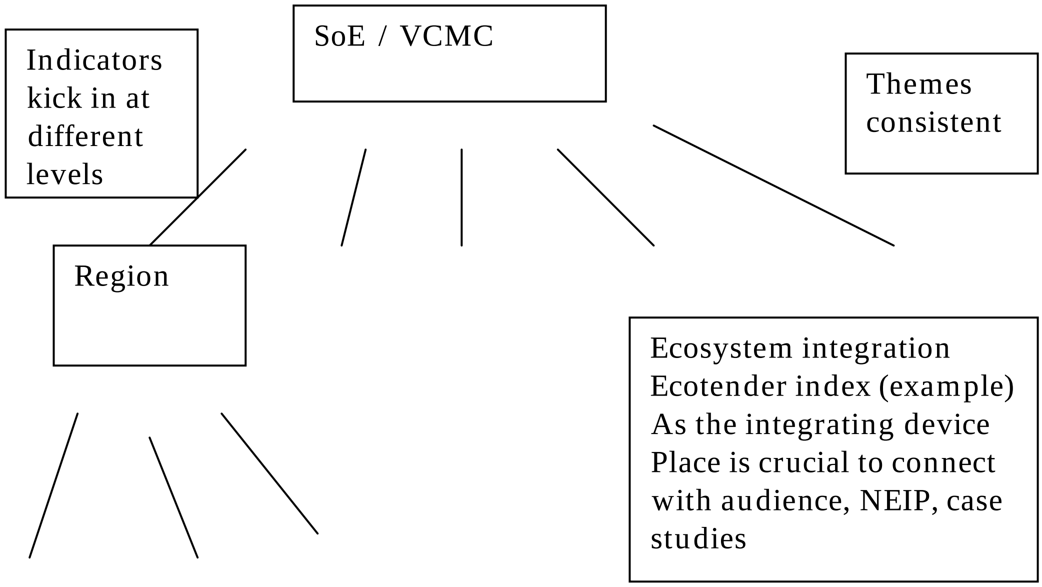
Audience/s

- don't want VCMC report to be a shelf sitter – needs to have connection to communities and self – this might manifest by talking about matters of local/regional importance as case studies, or by a geographical asset division, or a web based system
- SoE is written for 3 year term Ministers to be used as ready reckoners, format not suitable for community,

Need a sense of ecosystem health – value based language that connects with people. Theme based reporting (land, water etc) doesn't seem to provide that connection.

Need to target parliament for resources for NRM – need to use the language of voters.

S



Recommendation/action

Explore alignment by

- bringing together NRM as a key aspect of SoE Reporting
- influence SoE reporting to be have a more sustainability focus
- using the pressure, state, response, issues model as a common method

Share learnings from Qld work and NSW experience

Victoria – some serious talks with Ian McPhail (Commissioner) about how this all fits together.

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Do the National NRM Frameworks (RCTs, MATs, NM4Ts etc) apply to State Strategies

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Participants David Lambert, Lynne Turner, Dermot McKane, Luke Bayley, Sean Dwyer, Laura Chant, Les Russell, Geoff Penton.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

In Victoria, we have a history of existing State Strategies dealing with aspects of NRM (eg. Salinity, WQ, pest plants & animals, river health, native vegetation etc). CMA are then required to develop regional action plans/substrategies that relate to the particular State Strategies, in order to access State funding to implement actions. The State, or rather individual silos within the State, control the 'guidelines' for these plans/substrategies and requirements for endorsement. Our Regional Catchment Strategies are informed by these regional action plans/substrategies – they are where our RCTs & MATs come from. There seems to be the impression at state level that the National NRM Frameworks are only applicable to NAP-NHT programs and is questionable how far the frameworks are penetrating into the State 'silos'. This presents a logistical nightmare for regions with respect to alignment of targets, investment planning and reporting.

In South Australia, there is a Draft NRM Framework out for discussion but it doesn't use "RCTs", and is not specifically set up to meet NM4Ts (but generally aligns), and doesn't go down to MATs. The National Frameworks are influencing State strategies.

Aust Govt participant questioned whether it was important if State Strategies don't use the Nat. Framework. Bilateral agreements make sure that state strategies/plans do not place barriers or impediments to regional plans/strategies aligning with the National Framework and were at least consistent. Is there really a need to use exact terminology in State Strategies (RCTs)? The decision of how many RCTs & their format a region has is up to the region.

But what happens when the state requirements direct the setting of multiple targets for eg. Individual river reaches? Are these each RCTs, or do we take a subset or aggregate of these to present to Aust Government – how does this fit with the program logic? It appears that some of these questions arise from unclear expectations and/or interpretations of what RCTs are.

If State strategies do not apply or closely align with the Nat. Framework, it puts regions in an untenable position between differing State & National requirements/expectations. This is a logistical nightmare for target setting, investment planning and MER. If a translation of targets in regional strategies/plans is required to meet National Framework requirements, then it potentially disrespects the stakeholder engagement that has occurred leading to disengagement and lack of ownership, resulting in lack of implementation and reduced outcomes.

In NSW, the NRC didn't accept the National Framework, but came up with their own which is quite similar anyway. At one stage NSW went down the track of developing regional strategies just to meet the National requirements, only for Aust Govt investment. This approach is not recommended as it skewed NRM.

Issue of scale, state strategies wouldn't go down to MATs.
The only agreement between States & Aust Govt on Nat. Frameworks is in NHT&NAP bilateral agreements, so it might not have been communicated through other channels (therefore impression that frameworks are only for NAP-NHT & not State). COAG process has to take some responsibility for this institutional disfunctionality.

In Queensland, timing is an issue between State/National planning (target setting) requirements – do you stop and wait, or do you adopt & translate?

Recommendation/action

How do we resolve this issue?

- Initiate discussions with State via CMAs CEOs/Chairs forum (Victoria) to JSC or DSE about the need for better alignment OR processes/systems that accommodate the lack of alignment (so Victorian regions don't go mad)
- Opportunity to provide briefings back to Ministerial Councils perhaps through JSC via Aust Govt & State delegates
- Most probably need to gain a better understanding of what the National Framework is really about and its expectations at regional and state levels –need dialogue and engagement to achieve this.

Standardisation of monitoring to extract maximum benefit especially at a community group and landholder level

Convenor Josie Kelman, Burnett Mary Regional Group, PO Box 921, Gympie Qld 4570, Ph: 0427 044 700

Participants Lucy Larkin, Aidan Smith, Eric Wright, Geoff Penton, Shaaron Stevenson, Susan Stovell, Mike Grundy, Russell Flavel and Lorraine Rosenberg

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Is a standard approach important?

Yes, however to date, due to the short term nature of funding and project based funding, a consistent approach has not been agreed upon. Currently the National Audits framework provides a way of reporting on the same indicators, but there is not a standard approach on data capture. Also a lot of activity and on-ground works through Envirofund and the like aren't captured in the regional reporting process.

The reporting against expenditure of public monies is essential but not the crux of the issue. We need to go beyond compliance to record whether our activities are actually making a collective difference. Not to use the Matters for Target structure would be crazy! However the way we collect information does not allow for integration such as when spatially non compatible systems are used or technical collection of data uses non-compatible variables. The problem is there are so many different ways to record information and little consensus on a standard approach across regions.

The question is how to apply the resource condition monitoring to inform the Regions and feed up to State and Commonwealth requirements?

There are no defined rigour requirements at a regional level and technical input at the project level is often absent. We need guidelines at a State level with input from the appropriate technical experts. The State is the most appropriate to drive this as they have been involved in long-term asset monitoring and have a strong connection and history in this area.

However in developing these guidelines we need to be conscious of having a process that is cost effective and workable. "We don't need or want a Rolls Royce." Also not every project needs to have an extensive M&E assessment. State Government has displayed a lack of trust in monitoring completed outside the government process. This needs to be overcome.

It is important that data is useful to the collector not just to the powers of be, especially for ongoing monitoring.

Ideally the State would complete an audit of the current regional monitoring techniques. Collate that information and collate a manual in a language understandable to the broader community. It also needs to address the issues of how the user wants the data to look.

An example: LUMIS

In the Northern Territory BRS are running the Land Use Management Information System (LUMIS) project to be accessible to all stakeholders with land holder input into the system made possible. Often the problem with State and National based projects is that the information is not useful at the property scale. The LUMIS project is working to overcome the issue of scale working with landholders, landcare groups and other relevant stakeholders. LUMIS is asking these people what do you need and why do you need the information. They will also be running a series of pilot to assess the effectiveness of their approach.

We can use this example in developing a standard for monitoring techniques by running a workshop to assess the level of needs. This can also help to provide justification on how to measure progress against targets.

Target audience variability

In some regions the MATs are the primary focus for reporting due to the importance of justifying the regional bodies funding. However this often translates to a commonwealth audience level of information. The biggest challenge is that the target audience is very varied and the information needs to be useful to one and all. Perhaps it is the interpretation that should be flexible rather than the data collected. We need to be able to communicate outcomes not just outputs.

Benchmarking

The idea of benchmarking was raised with the potential of communicating in a district average format as was originally done with concepts such as dry sheep equivalents. This type of analysis using a current initial assessment and a periodic assessment would allow for assessment of the effects of change in practice. This would be communicable at all levels.

Recommendation/action

Create a set of State wide monitoring guidelines/ manual.

How to make it work?

The regions/CMAs need to collectively lobby our appropriate State governments to help drive this process.

Regional bodies and CMAs also need to be involved in the process, as well as the appropriate stakeholders so that the range of requirements is represented. The end product needs to be workable.

In addition existing monitoring processes such as Quality Assurance type programs should be incorporated to capture current active data collection already in process where possible.

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Cross regional and Agency relationship building

Convenor Lucy Larkin, Tel: 07 4620 0115, email: lucy.larkin@condaminealliance.com.au

Participants Bob Frazer, Paul Francis, Melissa Jess, James McKee, Carolyn Raine, Richard Barratt, Jens Light, Lucy Schapel, Geoff Penton

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

A Queensland case study

Queensland Murray-Darling Basin groups (South-West NRM, QMDC and Condamine Alliance) showcased their Cross-Regional and Agency Monitoring and Evaluation Review (CRAMER) group as a case study for forming good partnership relationships between Agencies and Regional groups for the purpose of improving coordination and efficiency of monitoring of resource condition across the Queensland portion of the Basin.

- Queensland situation aided by formation of Regional Coordination Group by the different State Agencies as part of the regional arrangements process.
- Important to get the right people in the room (ie. Strategic enough to have influence on their Agency's monitoring programs, but technical enough to discuss details of monitoring issues/programs).

The barriers to good working relationships

Barriers to achieving good relationships between regions and States include:

- Tensions due to different expectations of responsibilities, boundaries and outcomes.
    1. State Agencies monitor for State-level reporting on condition rather than regional-scale.
    2. State Agencies have responsibility for property-scale licensing/ permits but require extra data from landholders if required to process applications at that scale.
- Some sections of Agencies feel outside the regional planning process and resist discussions with regional bodies.
- In general, neither State Agencies nor regional bodies have sufficient resources (funds/staff) to do all of the monitoring they require.
- At what stage do we bring in other stakeholders (eg. Industry) without complicating relationships past manageable levels?
- Current lack of 'dialogue' between State and regions in some areas.
- Change in thinking sometimes required by Agencies to get to 'trend' monitoring focus.

Options on the approach to monitoring

Some options discussed (other than the collaborative approach on ways to achieve the required monitoring include:

- Regional group taking all responsibility for monitoring and seeking funding from the relevant groups as required (doesn't necessarily allow for building on/ enhancing current monitoring programs).
- Regional groups funding State Agencies to undertake the monitoring (fraught with problems associated with the State's core business and the possible funding conflicts from 'above').

Recommendations/actions

- Work with those people within the Agencies who are already on-side and get them to work within their department to promote cooperation.
- Try to build on existing programs where possible to promote efficiencies of cost.
- Future reviews of Plans could aim to include those players who were not actively engaged in the first round.
- ‘Remind’ Ministers of the issues facing your regional body in developing these relationships.
- Publicise the good news stories in relationships with Agencies.

Long Term Monitoring from Short Term Investment

Convenor Lucy Larkin, Tel: 07 4620 0115, email: lucy.larkin@condaminealliance.com.au

Participants Melissa Jess, Alan Haig, Ross Bigwood, Jens Light, Marcos Strudwicke, Dugal Wallace, Carolyn Raine, Lucy Schapel, Paul Francis, Richard Barratt, Josie Kelman, Collin Wilson, Mike Schultz, Sandy Gunter, Lynne Robertson, Eric Wright, Mike Digby, Dan Lynch, Richard Ingram, Laura Chant, Mark Siebentritt, Shaaron Stevenson.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The barriers to data use

The main barrier to the use of data for multiple purposes (eg. by State, region and landholder) is the level of rigour desired by different potential users.

Ideas to improve longevity of monitoring

A range of ideas were discussed to improve the interest/ownership of the monitoring process/program to improve the longevity of monitoring in areas of short term investment.

- Data from landholders need to be fed back to them after analysis.
- Data needs to be seen as being used and useful or interest will wane.
- Promote data use by multiple groups by:
    1. Including potential users of the data in the development of methodologies for collection (ie. How much rigour do we need? – Fit for purpose).
    2. Identify and implement simple, cost-effective methods to improve Quality Assurance/Quality Control for community monitoring programs
- The use/development of tools to help ensure that community groups are monitoring the right indicators for their ‘question’.
- Provide basic evaluation tools to project managers to collect qualitative data and use case studies to promote good news stories.
- Give responsibility for monitoring to community groups rather than individuals.
- Highlight the commercial value of monitoring for landholders.
- Attach monitoring to property planning process (possible link to EMS?)
- Address the question of who owns the data before collection starts.
- Use reminders to busy landholders for monitoring events, recognising that monitoring is not their highest priority.
- Work monitoring locations/events into the landholder’s daily business so that they don’t have to go out of their way to monitor.

RCTs as the basic value proposition

Convenor Mike Lee

Participants Megan McFarlane, Wayne Tennant, Ian Morgans, Jo Caminiti, Alan haig, Ron White, Janette Hill-Tonkin, Bruce Male, Georgie Luckock, Janita Mathieson, Ken Harrison, Deb Scott, Chris Penna, Dr Bunny, Carolyn Raine, Sonia Mahoney, Ruth Temple-Smith, Ria Pryce, Eric the Viking, Ross Bigwood

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The session started with a brief recap (Mike Lee) of the précised information set presented to Australian Government Ministers when they consider/approve regional investments.

This was followed by a short presentation (Megan MacFarlane) about Goulbourn Broken CMA's process for appraising progress against targets, including the region/board's scorecard, and an analysis of their outputs against targets (coded as "ahead", "on-track", "behind"). This allows <u>some</u> reality checking of the progress and the original targets/outcomes. The CMA Board is using this an analysis and decision tool to appraise the investment mix. The process is informed by time based evidence gathered in the region, eg depth to ground water. This allows the CMA to think about why the answers might not be as expected, eg wrong targets? Seasonal factors? investment focus?

- Integrity of systems (particularly funding programs) depends on showing progress against time.
- Dependent on assumptions and collection of standardised output and other region data
- Also need to accept that you will be measuring some externalities (to your investments) as well as your own actions

Some regions are need to invest in collecting baseline/benchmark data that don't of themselves make a measurable contribution to targets, but underpin proper monitoring of the targets. Sometimes establishing a baseline is all that is needed as it may reveal there is now problem and does not need to monitored as regularly as others.

GBCMA has identified some fundamental problems in some elements of their plan and investments and it using the review to reconsider the direction and approach. It would not had that insight without the review of target progress.

GB CMA was asked how many MATs/RCTs now in ideal plan given their experience of their MER feedback loop. Answer, currently 30, may bit large but around the right scale for the GB catchment and regional NRM issues.

GB expressed the view that MATs are not particularly useful and that they have found setting MATs challenging, mostly just outputs.

Comment from Qld/Tas perspective: MATs are fine but need thought and good design and linkages back to RCTs. Provides a pragmatic approach to measuring progress against RCTs.

Recommendation/action

Establish a regional working group to clarify the concepts of MATs and intermediate targets.

Sharing knowledge - minimising reinvention of the wheel

Convenor Melissa Morley, Land and Water Australia, 86 Northbourne Ave Canberra , (02) 6263 6000 melissa.morley@lwa.gov.au

Participants Helen Watts, Sarah Lewis, Amy Paparella, Bernard Morrison, Tricia Gowdie, Les Rowell, Laura Chant, Dermot MacKane, Heather, Felicity Bunny, Ian Gaze, Chris Penna, Suzanne Hoverman, Barry Lincoln, John Harkin, Gerry Maynes, Alice Renton etc

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Handout was given on barriers faced by regional NRM bodies in relation to knowledge exchange.

Discussion explored the information that could or should be shared, some barriers to doing that and some possibilities or mechanisms for helping to share knowledge in the future. It also looked at examples of where this is happening.

Knowledge/information that should be shared and possible mechanisms

- Knowledge gaps in the regions – these could and should be seen as opportunities to work together with other regions, pool resources and develop partnerships.
- Sharing lessons learnt. There are numerous lessons being learnt in the planning, implementation and evaluation process. Some are positive stories of success, others of things that did not work out. It is from the later that great lessons can be taken. Mistakes are important learning points.
- Products and tools that are developed by regions should be shared where possible. This may be through workshop events or by placing on websites – maybe a national one.
- Difficulty with ongoing data capture. Maybe a need for a central custodian. Perhaps the development of a model or principals about how this could best be done.
- Integration of social and biophysical. Being able to map spatially information maybe even the social aspects e.g. networks.
- Linkage or use of Communities of Practice to capture and share knowledge.
- Register of experience for MER and particularly components within.
- Events that provide “think time”, discussion and exploration are invaluable
- Dialogue versus reading documentation. Most people prefer to gain knowledge by talking rather than reading.
- Register of contacts and maybe mapping of people within a region, through different positions etc. Allow for access to background, history etc. Assist in not losing the knowledge. Maybe develop plans to ensure ongoing legacy of knowledge is retained through mentoring or adequate hand over procedures and periods.

Examples of what is occurring?

- At a national level the AANRO (Australian Agriculture and Natural Resources Online) database provides a searchable system of research projects across Australia. Website is www.aanro.net
- TAS is looking at two-way data flows
- SLIP projects in WA and TAS – databases of land information
- WA has been undertaking work that captures project data spatially – SGSL
- Centre for NRM in SA

- SA Resource Information Centre. It's product driven as opposed to data. Private-public partnership for sharing information and access rights. Building trust was a large component. Works as a hub. Maybe a formal evaluation of how this process went and lessons learnt would be useful.
- Vic has a project focussing on a regional data network
- Australian Govt – NRM website. www.nrm.gov.au
- The Corangamite is developing a searchable research database based on AANRO
- The Gippsland process found that a long-term effort to get people to come on board and the concerted effort to coordinate end benefit meant data was more freely available. Building relationships led to building the technology to manage information.

Issues and barriers

- Overcoming the idea of knowledge as power – develop and promote a culture of sharing.
- 'Siloing' of information products
- Institutional and cultural change can take a long time and the NRM field has a lot of both happening. Success often comes back to trust and relationships. How to build trust is a difficult and often asked question.
- There is a fear within most people of making mistakes or not getting things absolutely right. Tackle the issue of overcoming fear associated with mistakes and sharing those as a learning opportunity.
- Developing a true culture of adaptive management – evaluation of work and processes is an important step in this. Develop a culture that embraces the learnings in planning and implementation.
- Intellectual Property creates complications in information sharing and is linked to knowledge as power.
- Time issues – collective events, thinking smarter may overcome this.

Recommendation

Explore the idea of mentoring, national forums, inter-regional workshops, focus groups or other events that assist in increasing the opportunity for exchanges of knowledge and chances to learn between regions.

Setting Achievable Targets: How big is your arrow?
(or, Do we know how much money & work is required to achieve the targets we set?)

Convenor Patrick O'Connor, O'CONNOR NRM Pty Ltd, South Australia (mob. 0427770385)

Participants Jens Light, Tricia Gowdie; Anne Fordham, David Jan, Justine Graham, Grant Ebert, Lucy Schapel, Sean Dwyer, Ken Harrison, Richard Mills, Bob Nulsen, Sharon Stevenson, Colin Macdonald, John Herpen, Liz Quinn, Chris Grose, Colin Wilson, Peter Reynolds, Josie Kelman, Lorraine Rosenberg, Rachel Eberhard, Mark Seibentritt

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Achievable targets, stretching targets or aspirations targets?

The discussion covered the differences between individuals representing different regions in how attainable their targets are. There was some agreement that were targets are unachievable the community, regional board and State agencies have low levels of ownership of the targets. Different regions have set:

- Very achievable targets – board members want to be sure they can see the achievement in the life of the board
- Achievable MATs but unachievable RCTs
- Slightly stretching but not 'quantum stretching' targets
- "somewhat aspirational" RCTs

There was not consensus between regions on how 'big' or 'far' targets should be and whether or not regions are actually trying to achieve RCTs or simply 'head in the right direction'. It was agreed that information about target setting needs to be documented and accessible with the targets. This includes:

- Purpose of the target
- Who is supposed to achieve the target (ie. managed streams of investment or contributions from all sources)
- The starting point for the target (includes the baseline or current knowledge and understanding)
- The assumptions behind the target and actions to achieve the target

Discussion on whether current information collection processes will assist the setting of SMART[1] targets (particularly MATs) in the future?

Discussion centred on issues of how output reporting (particularly Standard Outputs for National reporting) is assisting or hindering the ability to improve the SMARTness of MATs. Differences of opinion were expressed by individuals from different regions. Some regions want Standard Outputs to be:

- rationalised to produce a higher-level set of outputs
- communicated with caveats on their use as the sole source of information on the products and services of investment and on outcomes from investment
- understood as designed for aggregated reporting and not necessarily for regional reporting – "they go up but don't go down"

A number of areas of risk arising from the use of Standard Outputs were also discussed.

[1] Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time referenced

- RISK 1: Many regions are not reporting the ‘rich picture’ and context of products & services and outcomes at the regional level but are limiting reporting to the limited set of information required for Standard Output reporting. The lack of reporting of the colour and texture of project activities and achievements could limit enthusiasm and encouragement in NRM programs
- RISK 2: The collection of data on project products and services is being dominated by the requirements for aggregation of Standard Outputs. A proportion of regional representatives believe that the data collection process instituted to collect Standard Outputs will not lead to an improvement in knowledge of the resources required to achieve MATs – MATs will not become SMARTer. Knowledge which could make MATs SMARTer is largely tacit knowledge of project officers and managers.
- RISK 3: There is a risk that inadequate output reporting may lead to misleading evidence for determining and costing future projects. The question was asked “Could the neighbouring region look at your reports and cost their own projects on the basis of the information provided?”
- RISK 4: There is some evidence that project proponents are orienting their projects to fit Standard Outputs. This may potentially lead to conservative or confined projects and a loss of the diversity, innovation, courage and experimentation required to make quantum leaps and larger gains in NRM

Recommendation/action

Regional NRM Boards should be encouraged/supported to produce regional reports with the ‘rich picture’ of achievement, assumptions and context of programs and investments.

State governments have a role in maintaining consistency in reporting between regions (at least within States). State governments need to help regions compare and contrast their costs, activities, intermediate and ultimate outcomes with those of neighbouring regions

How do we monitor and evaluate vegetation condition?

Convenor Elizabeth de Vries, Southern Rivers CMA NSW phone (02) 42249700
elizabeth.devries@cma.nsw.gov.au

Participants Patrick O'Connor, Lucy Larkin, Josie Kelman, Liz Quinn, Noel Ainsworth, Jeanette Stanley, Miles House, Richard Mills, Ruth Temple-Smith, Geoff Park, Hugh Wilson, Richard Ingram, David Jan, Mike Digby, Mellissa Jess, Lucy Schapel

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Questions for vegetation monitoring

- What is it about condition that is being measured?
- What methods are being developed & used across the country?
- What spatial scale of monitoring is required - at the project or investment level, reference sites, general condition etc?

Differences in approach, methods, purpose and issues for different regions and States

The discussion covered issues driving vegetation monitoring programs and approaches across the country. There was clear evidence of a number of methodologies being developed and implemented in different parts of the country. These methods were based around indicators of vegetation condition and employed a mix of ground-based measures and remote sensing techniques. Points arising from the discussion

- The experience in QLD has been that community empowerment and capacity building has successfully led to a comprehensive monitoring program developed and maintained by the landholders – this is one of the M&E Miracles because it comes out of and drives changes in land management and is possible because of modern technology (remote sensing etc.)
- Examples of different regional approaches included
    1. Burnett Mary Region (QLD) expert panel developed proforma approach using consultants to design system and collect and enter data. Specifically to check the integrity of the Regional Ecosystems Data developed by QLD State Government.
    2. Habitat Hectares (Victoria) – including 'half-monty' version for use by landholders etc.
    3. Modified Habitat Hectares (Tasmania)
    4. GLM (QLD outback regions) – using spatial data, remote sensing & local knowledge
    5. Bushland Condition Monitoring Methodology NCSSA (SA) – based on community monitoring of indicators of structure, function and composition of remnant vegetation
- Different State & regions have different vegetation management and use issues and different monitoring methods have been designed and preferred depending on land use and the public:private benefit.
- Issues of data access were raised, including issues where landholders are the data collectors and other parties want access to that privately-funded data
- Discussion of the use/benefit of reference or benchmark sites to compare changes in vegetation condition over time and evaluate management actions, externally driven changes (eg. Climate) and provide a reliable dataset for regional/State/National reporting.

- Not enough exchange of knowledge of who is doing what. Some sub-State level exchange is well developed eg:
  1. North Victoria (4 CMAs) developing an interoperable vegetation condition web-site.
  2. Inter-regional collaboration in North QLD with spatial data acquisition and project design & implementation.

Recommendation/action

- There was discussion of the need for an audit of vegetation condition issues facing NRM regions across the country
- There is acceptance that a National vegetation condition standard methodology is unlikely to emerge or be taken up. However, for consistency, some elements of vegetation condition could be collected consistently across the country

What level /type of community involvement is needed to develop meaningful Resource Condition Targets?

Convenor Heather Percy, Department of Agriculture, PO Box 1231, Bunbury 6230, hpercy@agric.wa.gov.au (South West Catchments council PO Box 5066 Bunbury, 6230)

Participants Eric Wright, Don Cummins, Deidre Maher, Susan Stovell, Bob Frazer, Di Patterson, Don Defenderfer

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

South West NRM, WA, Heather Percy

RCTs for Lands still need to be set for the South West NRM region, WA. The SWCC commissioned the Department of Agriculture to manage a gap project to set RCTS for Lands in the low to medium zones of the region, with the focus on land salinity. For example:

LRCT1: Total area of land affected by dryland salinity no more than X times the 2004 area at 2020 (targets to be developed with the community for specified catchments using MAT LT1 by December 2005)

The steps we are planning to use include:

- Technical assessment of baseline and trends
- Consultation with reference group including community reps about priority areas/catchments to set targets
- Workshops to set targets with landholders and broader community using modelling of Recovery, Containment and Adaptation scenarios.

The purpose of the session is to learn from other regions about the process of community engagement to set RCTs and MATs.

Avon NRM Region, WA, Don Cummins

- RCTs and MATs were developed by technical working group which included scientists and NRM community members. At the end of the process, some community people had burnt out or were no longer contributing.
- Don Cummins has set up a steering group for the Sustainable Industries Program. They sought a broader representation/constituency than the TWG. It includes landholders not previously involved in NRM, agronomists and agricultural consultants. To get this broader representation Don used existing networks, drawing to some extent from the project managers. For example, UWA lead to GRDC lead to landholder involvement. Other industry groups such as WA No Till Association (WANFA) who were sitting outside the NRM planning process but had indicated they wanted to be involved.
- The Sustainable Industries program plan to involve the Indigenous Group in their steering group. The Avon has a specific Indigenous Working Group.
- Members of the steering committee get paid a sitting fee of $220 per day plus travel costs, to encourage participation for giving up their time.
- Avon will not be revisiting RCTs in the short term but may re-look at some MATs.
- Suggest you invite community to be involved at the start of the process to avoid criticism.

Eyre Peninsula, SA, Susan Stovell

- Regional group is largely managed by landholders.

- RCTS and MATs were set at focus meetings which involved landholders, industry, government agencies at 2 day workshops run by SKM Consulting as facilitators.
- The Eyre Peninsula may SMARTen their MATS (without changing their intent) but are holding off reviewing RCTS as the regional groups and statutory bodies are being restructured in SA. The review is likely to involve the immediate team with relevant authorities to provide feedback and comments on proposed changes.
- Extensive consultation is not required for SMARTening targets.
- Some of the RCTs are more aspirational and some MATs are not linked to RCTs. There are no MATs /RCTs for some areas.
- RCTs developed for region as a whole.

Burdekin Dry Tropics Board, QLD, Bob Frazer

- RCTs developed for agricultural land along coast (sugar cane) and rangelands.
- The plan was developed over a two year period and involved a range of stakeholders (15 Landcare groups, local government, interested groups).
- Community involvement used existing groups and networks, newspaper ads and, in one area, a group was established with funding for 2 years to be involved in the consultation process.
- The first round of consultation involving gathering relevant data and identifying the issues.
- RCTs and MATs developed by technical people. (technical working group) which involved CSIRO, CRCs and Universities.
- The community were consulted about these targets and again about the regional investment strategy.

Other key points from discussion:

- Risk of over-consultation (eg SA, Tasmania)
- Consultation can results in expectation for action which may not be realised if people with appropriate skills are not available.
- Community consultation can involve local people (“local think tank”), not necessarily technical experts (risk of silos developing).
- Risk with local think tank is that development of RCTs requires high level of understanding.
- Need to involve the people who are going to implement the changes in setting the target to make it work (eg farmers for land salinity)
- Involve broader range of people and technical /scientists in reference group to guide process and select priority catchments
- Involve landholders in catchment - provide with background to baseline, trends and Recovery, Containment and Adaptation scenarios
- At workshops identify tradeoffs with community (eg social impact of target).
- Include Indigenous Community in main stream steering /reference groups as well as at separate meetings.
- Involve local government in process of setting RCTs.

Identifying National NRM Resource Condition Indicators for Coastal, Estuarine and Marine Habitat Integrity – A Tasmanian Pilot Project

Convenor: Chris Rees, DPIWE, GPO Box 44, Hobart, TAS 7001, (03) 6233 3963, Chris.Rees@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

Participants: Nicole Middleton, Rob Thorman, Liz Devries, Bernard Morrison, Gavin Doyle, Colin Wilson, Chris Grose, Richard Ingram, Liz Quinn, etc.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Most of this session was a presentation by Chris Rees on the work of the Tasmanian Coastal Estuarine and Marine Indicator Working Group established to make progress on indicators for this matter for target.
The working group consists of over 30 specialists and other interested people from organisations including:
State, Commonwealth DEH, Audit, DPIWE, Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, CSIRO, National Oceans Office, NRM Regions, Industry.
A brief report on the pilot project or the PowerPoint presentation is available from Chris Rees at the contact email address above.

Discussion Points

- How do we get to a viable set of indicators
- It is important that the indicators chosen will enable NRM regions to measure change relating to their MAT
- Tasmania is far ahead of other States in defining relevant indicators
- QLD is making headway in a similar exercise
- We need to ensure that choices made are appropriate for the type of estuary each region possesses (huge variation across Australia)
- Need to build partnerships to trial indicators
- Regions do not have the resources to measure resource condition change. There needs to be joint investment.
- Who takes the data and tells the story about RC change. This requires the definition of roles and responsibilities.

Next Steps

- Tasmanian Working Group to finalise Pilot by early November
- Similar exercises to run in each State
- Proposed national forum in February to work on agreeing a national indicator framework for this MAT

M&E and Indigenous / tacit knowledge

Convenors Cathy Robinson (Cathy.Robinson@nrm.qld.gov.au)
Rachel Eberhard (Rachel@eberhardconsulting.com.au)

Participants Richard Mills, Sonia Mahony, Luke Bayley, David Jan, Mike Schiltz, Campbell Clark, Chris Chinn, Alice Renton, Wayne Tennant, Lorraine Resenberg, Jeanette Stanley, Rachel Eberhard, Cathy Robinson, Noeline Goss, Bruce Rampton, Margie Parmenter, Mike Lee, Colin McDonald … and more.

Two key actions arose out of this open space discussion

1. Initiate a forum that focuses on sharing strategies and discussing issues surrounding Indigenous participation in M&E of natural resource management programs

2. Improve Commonwealth reporting frameworks so that local knowledge (including IEK) can be incorporated into the evaluation of resource condition change and NRM program progress.

Discussion

This session focused on M&E issues and strategies that value, liberate and integrate local stakeholder knowledge with a focus on Indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK). Key issues that emerged included:

Healthy country needs healthy people

There is a need to integrate issues that promote healthy people with NRM issues needed to achieve healthy country. ***Holistic strategies and innovative processes are needed***, especially given that IEK encompasses a range of environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions that are not recognised by NAP/NHT investment programs. Indigenous priorities and aspirations also include a range of issues, including heath, education, and responsibilities for country and people. Government funded research (e.g BRS) and forums such as Indigenous Coordination Centres might offer useful approaches to this issue.

Depression and burn-out are serious and ongoing issues for local stakeholders (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in remote regions and this is a key challenge to maintain community-ownership and involvement in regional NRM. An important issue that was repeatedly made was that an appreciation that ***local landholder feelings are a critical motivation to them getting involved in all NRM activities,*** including learning and evaluation. This includes local people feeling good about seeing healthy country and ensuring that different knowledge systems and values are acknowledged and valued.

Innovative processes are needed to engage with local stakeholders (including Indigenous people)

A range of effective strategies that have been used around Australia were discussed. This included ***employing Indigenous facilitators*** to help translate and explain issues for discussion; ***contracting professionals*** (e.g anthropologists) who were knowledgeable about the issues and consultation protocols required to engage with appropriate people; appropriate use of ***GIS and maps*** that ensured Indigenous people could own, contribute and distribute spatial information through culturally appropriate protocols; ensuring

meetings are done frequently enough and provide enough time for Indigenous people to canvas all the issues they wish to raise and discuss. It is also important to provide opportunities to ***get out on country together*** to discuss and negotiate key NRM issues. Those involved should be focused on long-term relationships and commitment to the region.

Use of relevant indicators and narratives

The effective use of narratives and the development of indicators that are relevant to local stakeholders and for other use (scientific information, performance reporting, etc) were keenly discussion. Key ideas and issues that were raised included:

- Many regions found **narratives a useful strategy for M&E.** This included narratives to
    - enable Traditional Owner to articulate NRM aspirations and issues of concern and
    - help clarify and resolve different stakeholder views about resource condition and change.
- There are a ***range of tools available to help collect and analyse narratives*** including the 'Most significant change storytelling tool' and 'participatory rural appraisal tool'.
- Challenge of ***using local information and knowledge for regional / state/ Cwth reporting needs***. Issues raised included
    - Often difficult to aggregate local evidence to State / Cwth level. One suggestion was to collect three examples of compatible anecdotal information to 'prove' resource condition change / evidence of project success.
- Local stakeholders also value ***the use of appropriate indicators to ensure they can prove and improve NRM projects***. Initiatives in regions of South Australia, for example, have implemented various reporting processes to integrate quantitative and qualitative information to monitor areas (e.g waterholes) and report on project progress.

Innovative M&E initiatives that draw on local stakeholder knowledge

A number of examples were offered, including:

- Traditional Knowledge Fire Project in Cape York – this includes the integration of IEK with scientific knowledge about fire behaviour and management issues
- Wet Tropics Aboriginal NRM plan that provided a forum and process for Indigenous Traditional Owners to develop their priorities and engage with the wider regional NRM process on key issues of concern
- Northern Gulf Regional Body work with Traditional Owners – which included NRM material offered to and used in local schools and GIS cultural mapping owned and controlled by local Traditional Owners
- Decision-making tools to set and evaluate goals – includes a knowledge building project with Northern Gulf graziers using "Nettica" software (Bayesian network).
- Capturing Indigenous knowledge project in the NT – a large project that is about to begin.
- Incorporation of Indigenous values and aspirations for water planning and allocation in the Murrumbidgee River, NSW.

Identifying mechanisms to ensure M&E informs decision making

Convenor Mark Siebentritt; Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 15 Moore St, Canberra Civic, ACT, 2601; 02 6279 0535; mark.siebentritt@mdbc.gov.au

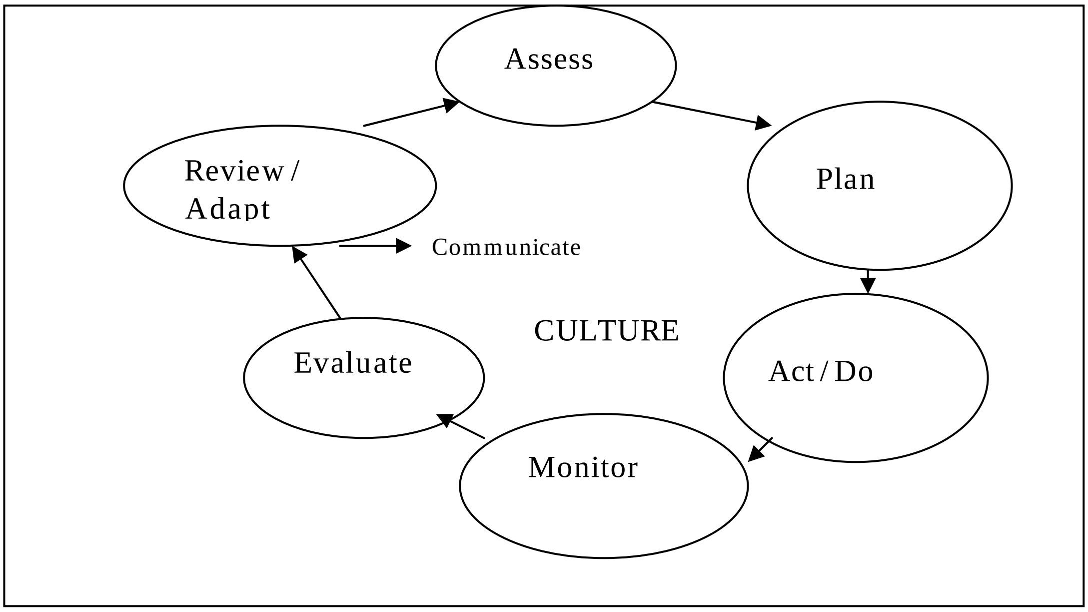
Special thanks to Josie Kelman for assisting with recording the session and preparing this summary.

Participants Josie Kelman, Don Defenderfer, Alan Haig, Laura Chart, Jess Dint, Tricia Gowdie, Janette Hill-Tonkin, John Harkin, Deirdre Maher, Liz Quinn, Chris Penna, Alistair Kay, Richard Ingram, Dianne Patterson, David Boland, Ros Wladson, Georgie Luckock, Sonia Mahony, Lucy Shapel, Peter Reynolds, Bill Currans,Margie Parmenter, Rob Thorman, Rcihard Barrat, Danny O'Neill, Wayne Tennant, Dermat McKane, Paul Francis, Felicity Bunny, Alice Roughley, Alice Renton, Bruno Maler, Matt Bartlett, Mike Schultz, Ria Pryce, Amy Paparella, Mark Fenton, Linda Soteriou, Janita Mathieson, John Herden, Aidan Smith, Mark Howard, Fred Stedter, David Brereton, Debra Harrison

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Introductory text

Various models for adaptive management are used across natural resource management agencies (one example if provided below).



While the above model suggests that adaptive management is an easy step wise process, there is a real challenge in ensuring that information collected through monitoring and evaluation is used to inform decisions making.

Issues that arose in the discussion include:

- Focus discussions on key success factors (may be identified as flagship indicators).
- There is a danger that people become too reliant (and accept) limited sources of information, which can ultimately bias management practices.
- Rather than just presenting the data to stakeholders, the data needs to be interpreted and incorporated into a story. The connection of a story allows for cultural change and identification with the issues.

- A common problem is that those involved in monitoring are often separate to those involved in the planning and implementation process. Once again the issue of imbedding M&E into the organisational process was identified. To address this project managers need to build and be better trained about M&E.
- A South Australian example was also put forward where a M&E framework was developed separately, with limited input from organisational members. This framework is now being adapted, but suggests that when M&E is developed separately from those implementing actions it is easy to lose direction. In this case the regional body information requirements where not fully met.
- The vast majority of monitoring is done by the community officers and there is a need to have better data control and consistency. A lot of community collected data is wasted and not stored or used well. South Australia is data rich but often the data is not appropriate for the requirements of resource condition assessment (therefore, to inform decision making).
- Another useful tool is stakeholder review of projects in a qualitative process which looks at the success of activities.
- There is a perceived need for independent thinking and the courage to go against the norm. This has arisen due to lack of knowledge and gaps in information associated with natural systems. This is part of the problem we face as decision can not be based solely on business principles.
- Evaluation needs to challenge the assumptions built into decision making frameworks.
- When recommendations are made from the evaluation process there needs to be a coordinated approach between evaluators, project personnel and other stakeholders. This ensures that recommendations are workable.
- Program Logic is a good tool to use in the evaluation process.
- There was also recognition that politics influence decisions and evaluation information is frequently disregarded (thus diminishing the opportunities to inform future management decisions)

Recommendation/action

1. Stocktake workshops on an annual basis are valuable for evaluating management and outcomes. A scoring system can be used to assess the effectiveness of various program techniques/actions. This process has and can be used to inform investment planning as well as on-ground management actions.
2. Ensuring that planning people and monitoring people are organisationally integrated.
3. Create an organisational culture that supports evaluation and values this information in the decision making process

Optimising investment in monitoring

Convenor Mark Siebentritt; 15 Moore St Canberra Civic, ACT 2601; 02 6279 0535; mark.siebentritt@mdbc.gov.au

Participants (apologies for any incorrect spellings) Sonia Mahony, Eric Wright, Sandy Gunter, Helen Watts Deirdre Maher, Mellissa Jess, Gerry Moyres, Felicity Burny, Colin Wilson, John Gavin, Josie Kelman, Wayne Tennant, Lucy Schapel, Peter Reynolds, David Boland, Sarah Lweis, Lucy Larkin, Lorraine Rsosenberg, Trudie Stanley, Richard Ingram, Ruth Temple Smith, David Lambert, Ian Morgans.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Opening premise: We all have limited budgets to invest in monitoring and evaluation – so how do we optimise our investment?

It emerged early on that there is no agreed or commonly used process for optimising investment in monitoring and evaluation.

The group identified a range of issues to consider, including:

- Consider the **frequency of monitoring that is required**, which needs to consider response times e.g. if the response time is five years, there may be no need for quarterly monitoring
- It **isn't necessary to invest in monitoring every indicator** – only select those that are relevant to targets, or that can be directly used to inform management
- It is necessary to **be cognisant of changing information needs**
- Some agencies **apply a rule of thumb** to determine how much money is invested in monitoring. In some NSW agencies the figure is 5%. Other agencies are up to 10%.
- Need to find a balance between investing in **resource target versus management action target monitoring**
- Regions need to look at **piggy backing on existing monitoring programs** – seeking complementarity
- **Are there any non-negotiable types of monitoring** and evaluation across RCTs and MATs (i.e. that you wouldn't subject optimisation)?
- There is a need to **identify market based tools** to assist with optimisation
- Should monitoring and evaluation be seen as **a corporate overhead**?
- In identifying how much to invest in monitoring, can we identify **the cost of not making the investment**

Recommendation/action

1. A checklist be developed of key issues to consider ("suite of ideas") when optimising monitoring and evaluation programs (how to prioritise different M&E demands/needs).
2. Investigate whether private industry models exist for determining the level of investment e.g. pharmacy industry.
3. Develop greater clarity in how to invest in RCT vs. MAT vs. activity monitoring.
4. Develop a central support mechanism where the techniques for developing and optimising monitoring and evaluation frameworks can be accessed (one for National Land and Water Audit???!!)
5. Facilitate the development of networks to communicate different approaches

Capturing the catalytic role of regional NRM groups in M&E

Convenor Linda Soteriou, 80 Gt Northern Hwy Middle Swan WA, (08) 9374 3302, linda.soteriou@environment.wa.gov.au

Participants name, name, name.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

- NRM strategies are about what needs to happen in a region to protect natural assets. Aust Govt reporting appears to focus on what the outcomes from NHT/NAP funding are. The major benefit of Regional Groups as opposed to other methods of delivery is their ability to form partnerships with a multitude of stakeholders and to leverage considerable investment and broker change across the spectrum

  Unless we can capture this ability to effect change in the M & E reporting we will undersell the effect of Regional groups enormously. There was concern that the evaluation of the Regional process in 2008m will not have asked the right questions and will not have the right data to be able to do effective evaluation.

  How are we able to report influenced practice change and leveraged investment in a meaningful way for this evaluation? There are apparently 10 evaluation studies happening Nationally on aspects of Regional processes. The State M & E Coordinators have this info and could be asked to distribute this to Regional groups. It would be great if one of these was to look at the ability of regional groups to achieve change outside of the NHT/NAP dollars

Recommendation/action

The importance of qualitative evaluation

Convenor Campbell Clarke, WTMA, PO Box 2050, Cairns QLD 4870, 07 4052 0542, campbell.clarke@epa.qld.gov.au

Participants Michael Schultz, Miles Howe

Discussion

- NRM evaluation often focuses on developing performance indicators (what's happening). Valuable qualitative information (what's happening and why and what needs to be done) can often be lost in the process.
- It is also important to acknowledge that quantitative data represents a particular set of values and assumptions.
- Qualitative evaluation is vital for recording and applying the intimate knowledge of many stakeholders such as scientists, farmers, Aboriginal groups and the local community.
- Collection of qualitative information, narratives and stories can be an important way to develop ownership of NRM monitoring and evaluation.
- The participants all gave examples of reliable expert opinions of those with a long history or close association in a particular area. For instance Norfolk Island locals perceive that there is a steady deterioration in the condition of the Norfolk Island pines. Canberra Park Carers would be able to give reliable information about the diversity or abundance of species and ecosystem health.
- Examples were also given where qualitative evaluation may not be reliable. It is important to corroborate such information within the community.
- Qualitative evaluation by a group of experts in various fields can often be the quickest, most effective means to reach conclusions about resource condition. Quantitative data can be difficult and expensive to collect and still not provide conclusive answers.
- Qualitative evaluation can often be the stimulus for further quantitative studies.

Recommendation

The NRM reporting and evaluation processes should ensure that qualitative evaluation is included as a valid means of evaluation.

Whose responsibility (and $$) is it to monitor and evaluate resource condition?

Convenor Charles Curry, Southern Gulf Catchments, Qld ph: (07) 47431888, email ccurry@southerngulfcatchments.com.au

Noeline Gross, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, Qld ph: (07) 40621330

Participants Forty plus, including; David Lambert, Debra Harrison, Colin McDonald, Richard Mills, Liz Quinn, David Boland, Les Russell, Keith Ferdinands, Chris Grose, Jens Light, Shaaron Stevenson, Ruth Temple-Smith, Sarah lewis, Tricia Goudie, Richard Ingram, Alice Roughley, Chris Rees, Rob Thorman, Lucy Schapel, Janita Mathieson, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Ros Waldron, Ria Pryce, Sean Dwyer, Geoff Penton, Anne Fordham, Ron White, Ross Bigwood, Bob Frazer, Peter Reynolds

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Introduction

1. Regions not expected to collect data, but to facilitate such collection
2. Agreed that regional bodies assist/coordinate stakeholders such as State/Science to provide data for Resource Condition M&E
3. Agreed that regions need mechanisms to feed regional data into 'larger scale' M&E.
4. Need to ensure resource condition is benchmarked.

Regional roles in M&E

- To prove and improve
- Demonstrate progress towards regional targets
- Only use indicators under matters for targets where it is cost effective and/or relevant
- Develop partnerships with other organisations/stakeholders for long term M&E, to provide information to landholders and decision makers.

State Government M&E Roles

- Long term data collection is State's responsibility; Regions set and own the targets
- Develop partnerships for long term M&E
- Commit to making own M&E efforts progressively more focussed, relevant, useful/used
- Support analysis /use by regional bodies of 'State' data, according to capacity / circumstances of those bodies; barriers to data availability should not exist
- Review of existing data collection and monitoring programs.

Australian Government M&E Roles

- Flexibility in use of proxy or surrogate measures
- Develop partnerships for long term M&E if existing national indicators are not locally relevant
- Confirmation that can use 'best available' evidence, which may not be 'standard' indicator
- Support search for new sources of funding, e.g. National Water Initiative.

Other possible collectors of relevant data include landholders, industry, local government and research organisations.

Need better networking of all these collectors and two-way flows between them – regional NRM bodies can facilitate this.

M&E from go to woe – moving from now to a self sustaining mindset (ie content of framework)

Convenor Justine Graham, PO Box 173 Streaky Bay SA 5608, (08) 86261108, meo@epnrm.com

Participants Trudie Stanley, Susan Stovell, Russell Flavel, Heather Percy, Colin Wilson, Lucy Larking , Di Patterson, Ian Morgans, Aiden Smith.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

Who is the framework for?

- Project proponents
- Data custodians
- Wider community
- NRM Boards
- Investors

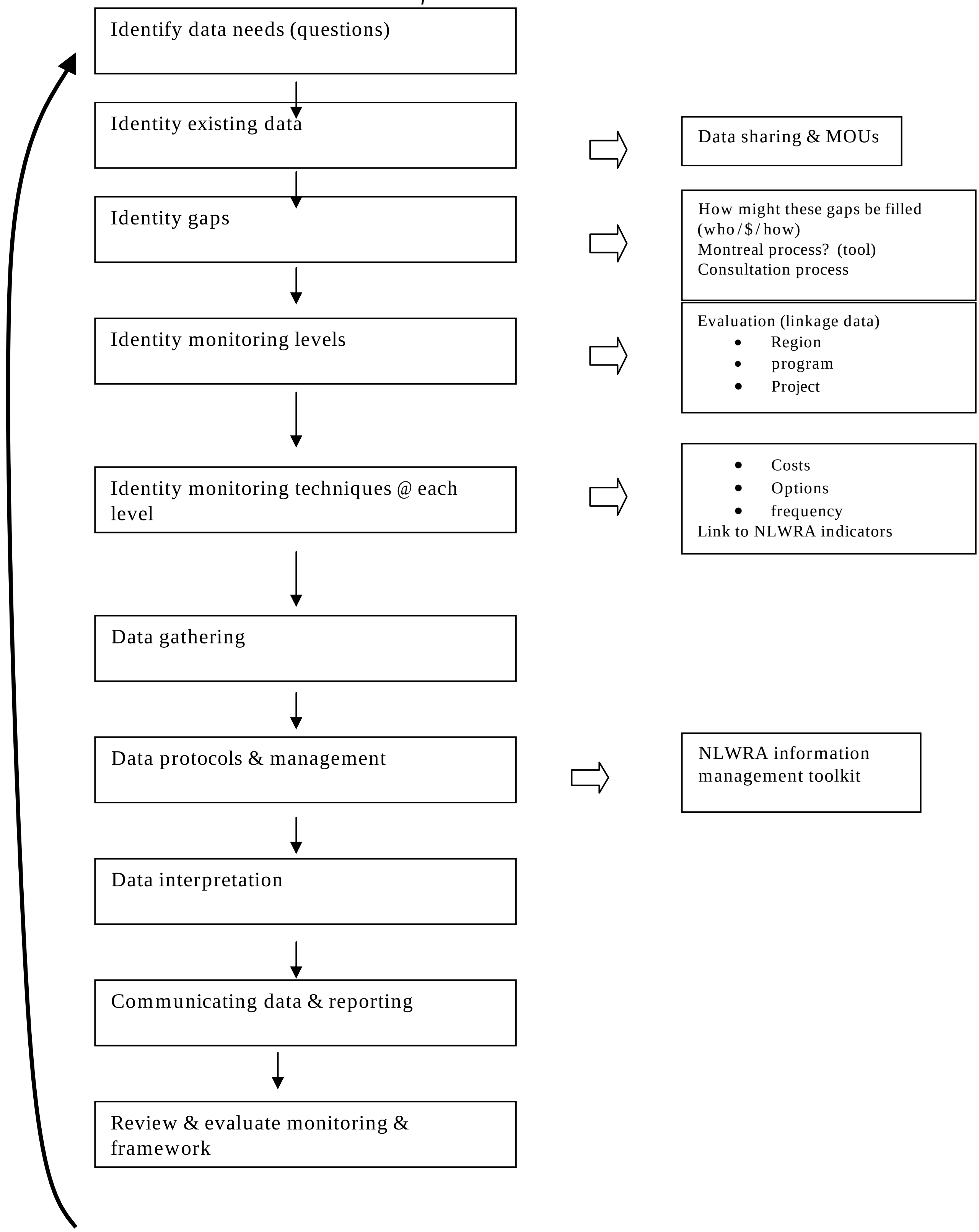
What are the barriers to its uptake

- Simplicity of an A3 flow chart is required to capture some people ie some people need the clarity of the whole map before they can take the first step.
- "Profound simplicity"
- Run draft past other (pilot groups or communicator) for usefulness
- Test web version

Evaluation should be considered concurrently and in a similar process

Recommendation/action

Framework model / flow chart developed



Bringing spatial analysis and data management capacity into infrastructure and skills poor regions.

Convenor Justine Graham, PO Box 173 Streaky Bay SA 5608, (08) 86261108, meo@epnrm.com

Participants Neil McKenzie, Trudie Stanley, Liz Quin, Mike Digby, Dan Lynch, David Boland, Keith Ferndinands, John Harkin, Richard Ingram, High Wilson, Marcus Strudwicke, Les Rowell, Noeline Gross, David Jan, Karen Cody, Vanessa Elwell – Gavins, Margie Parmenter, Geoff Park, Fred Stadter.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

- All regions WANT and NEED the capacity to use, produce and manipulate spatial data.
- Developing this capacity is a huge issue for remote and low population areas, especially with infrastructure, budget and staffing issues.
- Regions who employ a GIS officer and “silo” the expertise may not build the capacity of the region and may run a risk of losing it all with staff turn over.
- Small Vs large regions have different needs and issues.
- Some regions have developed cooperative data hubs called Resource Information Centres

Data availability

- Spatial information and its use is on the brink of becoming “simple” through the convergence of data supply on-line (eg. www.asris.csiro.au)
- This still doesn’t solve the problem for regions without decent web infrastructure.
- Long term limits will be lack of field teams collecting updated data.

Data management

- Storage and collection protocols for data need to be established to fit within spatial industry standards if they are to be applicable for multiple purposes (ie. Regional needs, contribute to state and national databases)
- NLWRA Toolkit provides some guidance was delivered to regions about 18 months ago. Many were not “ready” for this thought process at the time and would now benefit greatly from it.

Software

- ESRI or mainstream high end software is expensive, though cheap alternatives are not always worthwhile
- NGO or Not for Profit groups can get an international conservation grant from ESRI (initial licence $280, additional licences $700)
- Training can be developed locally for these programs instead of paying the price of full training.

Examples of regions that have overcome the hurdle:

- NW Tassie has formed a group to look at the issues (starting with what, where, who from and how much) (Contact Richard Ingram)
- Resource Information Centres in QLD (Herbarton), SA (Mt Gambier, SAMDB)
- SLIP (State Land Information Platform) in Southern WA (Contact David Jan) and state atlas online (www.walis.wa.gov.au)
- Victoria has developed a Regional Data Network for regions to progress issues.

- QLD has NRM GIS working group established out of a state spatial information crises forum (Contact Mike Digby – Northern Gulf).
- FBAR - Web-based farm/catchment planning (Contact Geoff Park, NCCMA)

Recommendation/action

1. Opportunity for a project at the national level to examine existing state models for providing support for the regions and documenting potential options for regions with small versus large budgets. (Eg. Case studies of some existing regional initiatives)
2. NLWRA revisit each region and their use and understanding of the Information management Toolkit.

Simple information formats – brightening up, not dumbing down

Convenor	Carol Jeffs, C/- West Gippsland CMA PO Box 1374 Traralgon 3844, 0351 757800, carol.jeffs@ginrf.org.au
Participants	Alistair Kay, Alan Haig, Carolyn Raine, Gerry Maynes, Ken Harrison, Debra Harrison, Campbell Clark, Miles Howe, Bernard Morrison, Chris Cleary, Les Russell

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The Gippsland Report Card example: giving emphasis to communication, simplicity, with underlying data and rigour. Understanding that it is easier for people to communicate when they have material that they can interpret easily. Main audience is community (and ministers). Managers might need more detail (although managers tend to use it as a tool as well)
Understanding audience and presenting information well is key to what M & E practitioners do.
Bringing the science through to an easily understandable format
Rangelands example – simple, developed by farmers, helps people to understand the issues and communicate well
One page helps mental manoeuvrings
Professional design and editing input has been vital to the Report Card's success. A lot of the messages are embedded in the design
Does the Report Card fit with other CMA reporting requirements? Not yet but next step – working on it.
Wonder if the format would be suitable for statewide purpose – perhaps not, need to consider the audience.
Condition indicator process? Need explanation to give confidence.
Maybe need something in between 1 pager and detailed report for boards etc – more data rich but not overwhelming.
Good to acknowledge that there is value judgement involved and be up front about it.
Promotes discussion – can start to have the conversations necessary to set direction
Making a web resource would allow people to dig down to detail and extract a level of information that suits them. – This is the planned next stage – watch this space.
Is the level of independence important in deciding ratings and producing such a report? Maybe not – tool for community communication.

What do we do with all the databases

Convenor James McKee, 0412 704229 James.mckee@nrmnorth.org.au

Participants Blair Wood, Mike Grundy and others…

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

A number of main issues:

- Issue about knowledge of data existence, communication of what exists and in what form
- Issue about access to data
- Issue about methods, understanding the back ground to the data collection including quality assurance control

Need for overarching framework and protocols to provide linkage for orphaned databases (Focussing on standards of info collection but allowing flexibility of collection and storage systems by having a core of expertise to bring quality and consistency to data collection)

Need to treat data as a corporate asset and provide it with a lifecycle management strategy

An acknowledged tension between central databases as opposed to central standards. Brings up issues of ability to transfer info between scales

Rationalisation of data based on long term value, reuse value and valuableness.

Issues of extent that investor does own the data. Issues of privacy of data collected at a property level meaning that likely need regional scale data collection which is aggregated for further distribution.

Institutional issues regarding access to data including controls and caveats for organisational protection. Need to streamline access for access to save frustration and often resulting duplication of data collected. Data bases will continue to proliferate while access to data is difficult or slow or restricted

Need to attach an ability to interpret data as a requirement to data collection.

Recommendation/action

Look at National Geoscience mapping accord as an example of a way forward

Look at differing models such as WA where clear roles and responsibilities are defined and funded accordingly

NSW model of lightweight regional databases with standardised set of rules

Look at other players eg industry and opportunities with them

Organisational Evaluation

Convenor James McKee, 0412 704229 James.mckee@nrmnorth.org.au

Participants Geoff Penton, Ruth Temple-Smith, Alister Kay, Shaaron Stevenson and others…

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

The level and complexity of the organisational evaluation is determined by the purpose that we are doing it for. This will also determine whether the style of evaluation is more or less formal. It can range from a more formal audit based around something like the Australian Business excellence framework to an informal workshop reflecting on where people are at with their place in the organisation and something like a client satisfaction and staff happiness review.

There is also the opportunity to have multiple outcomes from any one form of organisational evaluation including capacity building, program review, business report card, team bonding and building, and so on.

There is also the opportunity to use a series of program/project evaluations which when aggregated provide an overall program delivery performance from an organisational function point of view.

Opportunities that exist include a collaborative approach with Government to organisational performance review, sharing of processes and techniques for organisational review.

Organisation evaluation is also an opportunity to think laterally about investment of staff time, resources, and what strategic thinking needs to occur. An opportunity to instil a learning culture in an organisation, workload of staff and potential burnout issues. An opportunity demonstrate needs to function as an organisation and show value for money with overheads and operational costs.

Review of governance procedures and policies to meet statutory and legal obligation.

Opportunity to show transaction costs of differing types of details required in RIP's. Ask the question of JSC, What delegations do you have, what are the thresholds and what are the risk triggers.

Also important to build confidence and trust with partners and investors.

Need to evaluate organisational operations within the broader operating environment. Evaluating risk management strategy and business planning.

Need to do this to think about the future.

Management Action Targets (MATs) – what should they target?

Convenor Laura Chant, PO Box 18 Huntly, Victoria, 3551, (03) 5440 1833, laura.chant@nccma.vic.gov.au

Participants Mike Lee, Danny O'Neil, Richard Barratt, Janette Hill-Tonkin, Les Russell, Bruce Rampton, Bernard Morrison, John Herpen, Don Defenderfer, Luke Bayley, Ros Waldron, Megan McFarlane, Les Rowell, Fred Stadter, Gavin Doyle, Alan Haig, Dugal Wallace, Jo Caminiti, Lynne Turner, Lynne Robertson.

Discussion outcomes/recommendation

North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) perspective

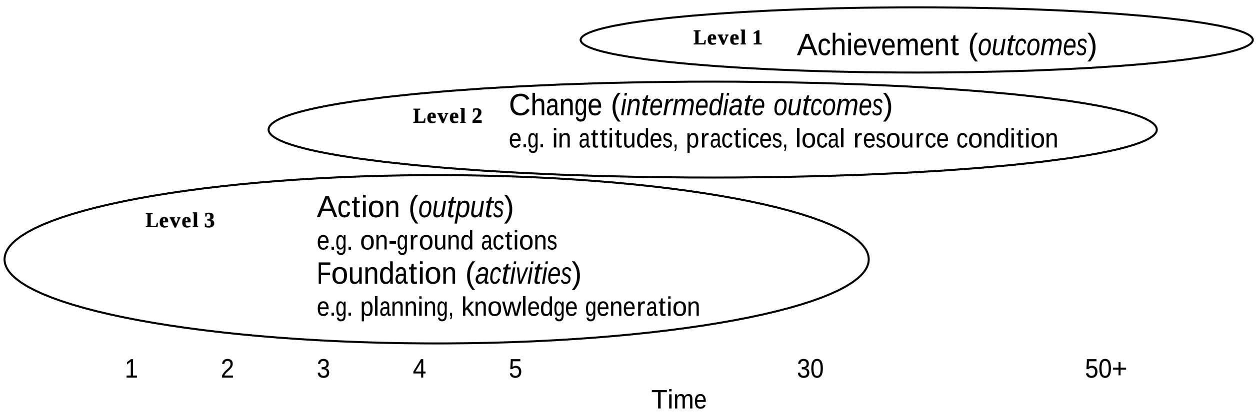
The North Central CMA is currently developing a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) Plan for the implementation of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). As part of this process, regional workshops are being conducted to define the program logic behind the 'key result' areas under each of the primary assets of land, water, biodiversity and climate.

During the roll out of these workshops, existing standard outputs, MATs and RCTs are being populated against this logic model. A key insight so far has been that our existing list of outputs and MATs are measures of performance expectations across the entire model from projects, activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes to resource condition.

Also as the MATs within our Regional Catchment Strategy were developed prior to the use of standard outputs, either our existing MATs duplicate outputs/aggregated outputs or there is a major gap in targets to measure intermediate change. Assessing intermediate change is important in avoiding miracle leaps in faith between outputs and ultimate outcomes.

Current visions of the level at which MATs should reside stems from the understanding that MER activities within the North Central (and North East) region are directed at three levels:
Level 1 – Changes in resource condition (ultimate outcomes)
Level 2 – Intermediate changes (intermediate outcomes)
Level 3 – Projects (activities and outputs)

This is supported by Attachment A of the National NRM Framework:



Current thinking within the North Central region, is that although MATs currently cover Level 3 (activities/outputs), to inform adaptive management and link Levels 1 & 3 they should describe performance expectations at Level 2 (intermediate outcomes).

General discussion

- Clarity on the definition of MATs is the biggest gap within the National NRM Framework
- There is general confusion amongst regional bodies about the intent and use of MATs
- Interpretations of MATs differs significantly between and amongst regions and states
- MATs were initially intended to measure intermediate outcomes
- MATs in Tasmania are generally outputs but sometimes intermediate RCTs
- In NSW, MATs are output bundles
- Some believe outputs measure MATs just as indicators measure RCTs
- MATs need to include a mix of outputs and measures of practice change
- Some aggregated outputs can show changes in practice
- The definition of MATs will depend on the type of program logic (extension vs. on-ground works) that they are intending to describe
- The quality and availability of data to inform the setting of RCTs impacts on the strength of individual MATs (i.e. broad RCTs result in vague MATs)
- Two key questions emerge.
    1. What level of the outcome hierarchy should MATs relate to?
    2. What should be the scope of MATs (e.g. should they apply just to projects under investment plans or everything under regional catchment strategies)

  The answer to these questions will impact on the level at which MATs fit within the outcome hierarchy.
- Are MATs just a vehicle to buy outcomes??
- What is the purpose of MATs, to show investment or contribution to RCTs

Recommendation/action

As the MEWG no longer exists it is up to the regions to resolve this issue. A working group needs to be established to explore the issue.

While we may like to change the MATs now, there needs to be an agreed process of endorsement for variations. In the meantime we may need to report on MATs as they are. One suggestion was to reconsider our existing MATs under two headings; deliverables versus intermediate outcome targets. The latter, would be the key to adaptive management and show whether we are on track to achieve resource condition change (i.e. the most important aspect).
It was also suggested that it would be useful to distribute a generic program logic model for each of the key resource condition themes (e.g. use North Central work). This generic logic model could be used as a foundation for other regions to adapt based on their regional approach to NRM.

The time is now to clarify what we mean by MATs so that we improve them for the next cycle of regional strategies and the interim development of action plans.

Actions

Table of Contents

Integrating M&E Strategies

Convenor	Ross Bigwood, ross.bigwood@nrm.qld.gov.au, Natural Resources and Mines, 80 Meiers Rd Indooroopilly Qld 4068, 07 38969267.
Participants	Mike Grundy, Deb Scott, Bruce Rampton, Chris Chinn, Neil McKenzie, Josie Kelman, Tricia Gowdie, Deb Harrison, Lucy Larkin, Holly Hanlin, Rob Ritchards, Campbell Clarke, Rachel Eberhard.

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Invite regional body reps to identify relevant players in M&E in the regions
- Discover what relevant info these players may contribute
- Identify what needs to be understood in terms of M&E
- Identify what info is useful and currently available / being collected
- Identify what else needs to be done to complete our understanding
- Hold workshops in the regions to establish the above

Who we will bring in

- State agencies, Local Gov, Industry, Community groups, research orgs, etc

Date of First Activity

Workshops with QMDC and Condamine and on September 20 and October 19
Workshop with Burnett Mary October 20 and 21
Cape York, Northern Gulf and Southern Gulf being planned for late October
South West NRM being planned for November

Note: The first workshop has been conducted (Sep 20) and the outcomes are currently being collated. Many actions arose from the meeting which will initiate progress toward a more holistic strategy for assessing resource condition change in relation to land salinity and soil condition.

Opportunities for dialogue & engagement – regions, states/territories, Australian government

Convenor Jo Caminiti, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, 16 Hotham Street, Traralgon, Vic, 3844, joannec@wgcma.vic.gov.au, (03) 5147 2302

Participants John Harkin, Barry Lincoln, Mike Lee, Alan Haig, Carol Jeffs, Alistair Kay, Di Patterson, Eric Wright, Don Cummins, Sean Dwyer, Melissa Morley, Heather Perry, Michael Miller, Sarah Lewis, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Gerry Maynes, Karen Cody, Patricia Fitzsimmons, Chris Cleary, David Bolands, Les Rowell, Hugh Wilson, Deirdre Maher, Margie Parmenter, Richard Barratt, Felicity Bunny, Keith Ferdinands, Colin Wilson, Jens Light, Peter Reynolds, Ros Waldron, Lindsay Jolley, Paul Francis, G Fenton, Ria Pryce, Richard Mills, Ian Morgans, Ruth Temple-Smith, Carolyn Raine, Russell Flavell

Related Topics/Issues – common theme throughout many topics

This session followed on from the MATs action session and used 'clarifying MATs' as a case study for dialogue and engagement

Key points

- Genuine engagement is required of regions to engender ownership in regional plans, so that they will be implemented to achieve NRM outcomes. Genuine engagement is needed at national level to engender ownership of National NRM Frameworks, so that they will be implemented to achieve NRM outcomes.
- Regions and State/Territories are the stakeholders of the Nation that need to be engaged at a national level
- Engagement doesn't just happen, it must be planned, resourced and facilitated
- This is a tripartite exercise we are involved in for M&E for NRM – regions, state/territories, nation
- We need dialogue, not communication
- Web based discussion forums and emails have a role in communication but are not sufficient for engagement
- Some regional representation on key national committees/working groups is probably necessary – it may be horses for courses for different States/Territories. This needs further consideration
- There are some time imperatives for clarifying MATs – 12 to 18 months to inform review of regional strategies/plans (Vic & SA) – clarify purpose of MATs (what they are for and how they are to be used) so that we can clarify what they are.
- Need to pick up on understanding the diversity within and between States/Territories, in order to engage appropriately

What we will do

- Explore regional representation on key national committees/working groups – consider in State discussions after lunch & feed this to State M&E representative/coordinator to take to the National Business Model Working Group (BMWG)
- State groups (after lunch) to come up with best way to engage with regions regarding clarifying MATs & feed this to State M&E representative/coordinator to take to the National BMWG
- State groups (after lunch) to map out key M&E players in State/regions & identify existing communication mechanisms necessary for clarifying MATs

- National BMWG need to do some initial planning to work out a process to clarify MATs based on above actions (including timeframes and processes for engagement and communication
- Janita will email reps on BMWG to organise next meeting

Who we will bring in

- Regional M&E coordinators, State M&E coordinators, Bruce Male's Australian Govt M&E team, Mike Lee, other key people in States & Regions who need to be involved in clarification of MATs.

Date of First Activity

TODAY! after lunch in State groups

Conceptual Models

Convenor Rachel Eberhard, 55 Park Rd West, Dutton Park, Qld 4102, Rachel@eberhardconsulting.com.au

Participants Melissa Morley, Patrick O'Connor, Lorraine Rosenberg, Helen Watts, Deb Scott, James McKee, Carol Jeffs, Patricia Fitzsimons, Chris Chinn, Michael Schultz, Miles Howe, Catherine Murdoch, Richard Mills & others.

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)
What we will do

Develop a proposal for how to support the building and use of conceptual models for regional NRM. Proposal could include

- Review existing tools and processes
- Identify additional needs e.g. tools, protocols, training, resources, support
- Develop a proposal to meet these needs, fund and implement!

Initial actions to commence by

- Start email network
- Collectively develop some suggestions for how to proceed (by email)
- Develop project proposal and
- Finalise project proposal and agree funding strategy by teleconference of network

Who we will bring in

Rachel Eberhard to initiate discussions
Melissa Morley & National Knowledge Brokering Project to support teleconference etc
Interested parties so far (initial email network):
Rachel Eberhard, Melissa Morley, Chris Chinn, Carol Jeffs, Michael Schultz, Mike Howe, Richard Mills, James McKee, Patricia Fitzsimons, Patrick O'Connor, Deb Scott, Catherine Murdoch and Helen Watts
And others? Group to consider who may have an interest
Links to network/discussion surrounding use of tacit knowledge

Date of First Activity

Rachel Eberhard & Melissa Morley to develop a draft project proposal and circulate to email network of interested parties. Then a teleconference to finalise the project proposal and agree a strategy to seek funding for implementation.

ACTIONS for Rangelands M&E progress

Convenor Noeline Gross, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, PO Box 63 Georgetown Qld 4871, phone 07 4062 1330, email : coordinator.ngrmg@bigpond.com

Participants Dan Lynch, Mellissa Jess, Lorraine Rosenberg, Shaaron Stevenson, Bob Frazer, Charles Curry, Les Rowell, Ken Harrison

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)
Rangelands Monitoring and Evaluation (page 26, 27)

What we will do
- Project Audit
  - Shaaron Stevenson to organise (through Desert Knowledge CRC) a forum website for Rangelands regions
  - Each Rangelands region to document a short summary of projects in the Rangelands (on-ground, R&D, capacity etc) and a contact.
- Rangelands Get Together in Adelaide (late February or early March)
  - Noeline to put together a contact list of Rangelands Regions and send an introductory email regarding the outcomes of this conference and the proposed get together
  - Lorraine Rosenberg to determine suitable date and location in Adelaide for the get together
  - The get together is to show case projects undertaken by regions in the Rangelands, compare regional monitoring and evaluation (data and techniques), and develop a framework in which regions can easily provide data into a larger scale model for Rangelands M&E.
- Preparation for the Get Together
  - Each region to prepare for show case, and bring along to the get together example data and techniques of their M&E
  - Each region to have a look at the ACRIS website, and have a look at other potential 'large scale M&E' systems (eg. MLA)
  - The Audit will contact ACRIS and seek endorsement for the Regional get together in Adelaide.

Who we will bring in
- All regions with Rangelands

Date of First Activity
Steps 1 and 3 start now; step 2 - Get Together in Adelaide Feb-March 2006

Devices strategies / structures to assist with capacity building

Convenor John Harkin, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
Marine board Building Franklin Wharf Hobart Tas, 6233 5439
john.harkin@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

Participants Barry Lincoln, Keith Ferdinands, Michael Miller, Alistair Kay, Jo Caminiti, Ken Harrison, Carolyn Raine, Tricia Gowdie, Laura Chant, Bruce Male, Deirdre Maher, Lynn Robertson.

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Use NRM website / chat space
- Hunt down individuals in states involved in Nat M&E coordination group
- Put details of those people on the website and maintain. AG to maintain their details – states likewise
- Review coordination and dissemination method of info coming out of M&E coordination group.
- Contact Ian Gaze re Nat NRM Facilitator's forum (Jo to do)
- AG Capacity Building and M&E to explore $$ for training in engagement – focus on AG Strategic Regional Facilitators.
- States to put pressure on their agencies to provide engagement training to their officers.
- Pursue annual National forum concept. Must provide a practical focus to connect with on-ground practice.
- Do this also at a state level. States to invite other states when they hold their m&e forums. States to circulate proceedings of their forum to other states.
- All states to contact their Strategic Regional Facs to explore possibilities of their involvement in M & E capacity building activities.

Who we will bring in

- Strategic Regional Facs
- AG Capacity Building + AG M&E
- State – state contact.
- Gerry Mayne for website / chat room.

Date of First Activity

today

Clarifying the proper nature of outputs in Investment Strategies

Convenor Suzanne Hoverman, Qld Dept NR&M, ph.(07) 3239 3884
Suzanne.Hoverman@nrm.qld.gov.au

Participants Janette Hill Tonkin, Jens Light, Sonia Mahony, Rod Waldron, Alan Haig, Cathy Robinson, Danny O'Neill, Geoff Penton, Les Rowell

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Put together a position paper for endorsement/agreement which tries to achieve a nationally consistent position on the role of outputs in reporting on investment strategy progress.
- (In some jurisdictions, outputs are (in theory) the sole/principal financial control point; in other regions agreed outputs form part of the contractual arrangements between State/Territory and regions but there is discretion (perhaps residing within the State M&E team) to accept variations. In some jurisdictions, there are strict controls (both stated and enacted) about the amount of variability from contracted outputs that can be accepted; in others the meaning of 10% has proven controversial and remains unresolved. Mike Lee's presentation appears to detach output reporting from contractual obligations, but many Investment Strategies actually contain lists of outputs, not just in their proposals but also in their contract schedules with the State/Territory).

Who we will bring in

- This group brought to the discussion a quite diverse set of conflicting understandings and experience. However, it probably needs to start the creation of the discussion paper (leading to an agreed position paper) with aspects of the draft AG paper for feedback provided in our symposium packets which seems to capture Mike Lee's view of where outputs sit.
- We welcome others' input to the early version of the discussion paper (which might just be an expanded version of the large paragraph above) but which then sets out an initial preferred compromise position.

Date of First Activity

Circulation of first draft to the discussion group that assembled and any others who signal an interest today (1 Sept) by 16 September. Suzanne will take a stab at that first draft.

Reporting at National, State and Regional Level that connects with people (audience)

Convenor Carol Jeffs, C/- West Gippsland CMA PO Box 1374 Traralgon 3844 03 51757800, Carol.Jeffs@ginrf.org.au

Participants Gerry Maynes, Margie Parmenter, Lynne Turner, Di Patterson, D. Lambert, Debra Harrison, Lynne Robertson, Chris Chinn, Colin Macdonald, Aidan Smith, Miles Howe, Josie Kelman, Alistair Kay, Georgie Luckock, Alice Roughley, Sonia Mahony Caroline Raine Les Rowell.

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

Focusing on audience oriented reporting rather than scientific, data, silo and not just to meet requirements. Data shouldn't drive the reporting, need to support information and decision making should drive the reporting.

Examples we can use: Qld state of region reporting – working on creating a rich picture that speaks to regional audiences - which links to existing reporting.

WA – want to include reporting as part of communication and engagement processes – develop a process for community involvement in reporting.

Good reports need to inform decisions – need to identify what decision and who is making it.

Who is the audience for national reporting ?

What we will do

- All take away the need to:
    1. have active discussions at all levels about who the audiences are and what decisions we are trying to inform, support. Take time to think about what the regional reporting needs actually are rather than just meeting the next reporting requirement required by others. Regional communities are the No 1 audience for regions.
    2. include reporting in communications and engagement plans, both as tools and as outcomes – for example on small scale, using newsletters more systematically to report on the success of local on ground/Landcare activity (case studies) – for example using the Gippsland report card as a discussion/engagement starter. For example – inviting community people to contribute to reporting with anecdotes about experiences and successes.
- Within the next 3 months, National Land and Water Resources Audit will notify participants of this symposium of the web site containing the 7 national case studies of regional environmental reporting. Showcasing best practise.
- State grouping discussions need to:
    1. Flag the need for communication and engagement to be integral to M & E and Reporting
    2. Keep alive the dialogue about what questions do we want our reporting to answer – use the NLWRA reports as springboards to explore the different roles of reporting, information needs and audiences.
    3. Create a map of who is who in M & E across Australia – State M & E officers to co-ordinate this

- Provide feedback to the Australian Government NRM Communications Team that the links between the reporting requests and communications plan are not clear to regions and in some cases we didn't even know that a comms plan existed.
    - Involve the strategic NRM co-ordinators in communications and reporting between AG NRM and regions
- Use the NAP/NHT Regional Programs report as a starting point for National Reporting on NRM to the community.

Improving access to information on soil condition and trend across Australia

Convenor Neil McKenzie, CSIRO Land and Water, GPO Box 1666, Canberra, ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6246 5922 Email: neil.mckenzie@csiro.au

Participants Neil McKenzie, Chris Grose, Bob Nulsen, Don Cummins, Damian Crilly, Heather Percy, Mike Grundy, Vlad Dokuchaev

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Ask the National Committee on Soil and Terrain Information to identify the individuals in each region responsible for projects on soil condition and monitoring
- Obtain feedback from these individuals and identify how the Australian Soil Resource Information System can more effectively integrate and deliver information on soil. Consider the possibility of a workshop for interested regional groups.
- Use the NCSTI and the regional network to prepare practical guidelines on the Matters for Target relating to soil condition

Who we will bring in

- Individuals in regions with responsibilities relating to soil condition
- National Committee on Soil and Terrain Information
- National Land and Water Resources Audit
- Experts on soil acidification, soil carbon, soil erosion by wind, and soil erosion by water.

Date of First Activity

- 14 October – Request to the NCSTI to identify key individuals

Clarifying underlying logic to improve MATs

Convenor Russell Flavel, DWLBC, flavel.russell@saugov.sa.gov.au

Participants Lindsay Jolley, Ruth Temple-Smith, Sandy Gunter, Chris Penna, Richard Mills, Keith Ferdinand, Colin Wilson, Janette Hill-Tonkin, Anne Fordham, Linda Soteriou, Hugh Wilson, Richard Barratt, David Jan, Alan Haig, Peter Reynolds, Janita Mathieson, Ken Harrision, David Bowland, Karen Cody, Suzanne Hoverman, Dougal Wallace, Laura Chant, Fred Stadter, Deirdre Maher, Les Russell, Sean Dwyer, Luke Bayley, Jo Caminiti, Gavin Doyle, Liz deVries, Rya Pryce, John Harkin, Mike Lee, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Deb Scott, Mark Seibentritt, Shaaron Stevenson

Related Topics/Issues (p52 – Setting achievable targets)

What we will do

Establish a discussion forum to discuss experiences and understanding of the logic underlying target setting. The discussion is aimed at learning about approaches and innovations to setting good targets from experiences across the country. The discussion is aimed at:

- Clarifying and improving the logic underlying target setting
- Sharing examples of MATs which are being achieved and successful in orienting projects/investment
- Discussing processes for setting MATs without prejudice
- The State NRM M&E coordinators group to synthesise the discussions and feed them back into the ongoing discussion.

The proposed tool for the discussion is the use of a web-based discussion forum (list-serve) tool sponsored by the National Knowledge Brokering for Regional NRM.

Who we will bring in

Mel Morley and Gerry Maynes (sp?) from the National Knowledge Brokering for Regional NRM have been asked to act as sponsors for the list-serve (probably under nrm.gov.au

Date of First Activity

5th November 2005

Establishing a network to progress Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Resource Condition Indicators

Convenor Chris Rees, Coastal and Marine Branch, DPIWE,
GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania 7001 Phone (03) 6233 3963
Chris.Rees@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

Participants Lynne Turner, Mike Digby, David Jan, Catherine Murdoch, Miles Howe, Sonia Mahony, Gavin Doyle, Lynne Robertson, Linda Sotemou, Aidan Smith, Liz deVries, Anne Fordham, Rob Thorman, James McKee, Mark Siebentritt

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Chris Rees will send out a brief summary of the Tasmanian Pilot Project to participants
- Participants agreed that their email addresses could be forwarded to the person or group coordinating this project in each State to assist establish State based networks around this issue. (Others interested in being added to the network please email to Chris on address above).
  NB: This is being managed through the Intergovernmental Coastal Advisory Group (ICAG) representative in each State (or nominee). ICAG reports to the NRM Ministerial Council through the Marine and Coastal Committee (MACC).
- Regions and States are invited to circulate questions, ideas, information, case studies to the network.
- ICAG will have this initiative on its agenda for the 22/23 September meeting in Adelaide. ICAG will clarify how this project will be run in each State as there seem to be some quite varied approaches emerging. ICAG outputs will be conveyed to the participants.
- This State based process is building towards a national workshop scheduled for February 2006 to be organised by the Audit. The forum outputs will assist regions in identifying estuarine, coastal and marine indicators relevant to their needs and regional characteristics, as well as helping to establish a national reporting framework.

Date of First Activity

ICAG meeting 22 September

In the absence of "real" data (!): Using community knowledge

Convenor Cathy Robinson, Queensland Dept of Natural Resources and Mines, Cathy.Robinson@nrm.qld.gov.au, mob: 0437 170 024

Rachel Eberhard, Eberhard Consultants, Rachel@eberhardconsulting.com.au

Participants Mike Lee, Bruce Rampton, Campbell Clarke, Jeanette Stanley, Michael Miller, Lorraine Rosenburg, Charles Curry, Cathy Robinson, Rachel Eberhard, Catherine Murdoch, Bob Frazer, Lucy Larkin, Mike Grundy, Noeline Gross

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

- Initiate a forum that focuses on **sharing strategies and discussing issues surrounding Indigenous participation in the M&E** of natural resource management programs
- Improve **Commonwealth reporting frameworks** so that local knowledge (including IEK) can be incorporated into the evaluation of resource condition change and NRM program progress Who we will bring in

* Indigenous land management Facilitators
* Scientists
* Other keen Commonwealth / State / regional / local representatives

Provided one and all are happy with these actions, can I propose a forum where we present and share strategies / initiatives that value, liberate and integrate local knowledge and people in the M&E of resource condition change and NRM program progress.

The <u>outcome of such a gathering could include</u>

- A report / document that contains a collection of strategies being used around the country, including some reflections on the challenges / opportunities of integrating local knowledge and IEK with other "data" (e.g. with scientific information, between stakeholders)

- A series of recommendations / agreements on the use of IEK and other local knowledge / narratives for government M&E reporting.

Date of First Activity

Using Community Knowledge email to canvas ideas and plan date / format for a forum. ASAP.

Actions to progress Monitoring and evaluation Framework Model (Page 73-74)

Convenor Heather Percy, Department of Agriculture, PO Box 1231, Bunbury, WA 6230, (08) 9780 6262, hpercy@agric.wa.gov.au

Participants Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Di Patterson, Eric Wright, Sean Dwyer, Don Cummins, Georgie Luckock, Chris Grose, Alice Roughley, Les Rowell, Richard Barratt, Peter Reynolds, Chris Penna, Grant Ebert, Janita Mathieson, Ruth Temple-Smith, Lindsay Jolley, Colin Wilson, Neil McKenzie, Anne Fordham

Related Topics/Issues (by number as per index)

What we will do

Discussion about how program logic would enhance the model. Ideas to increase knowledge of program logic include:

1. A useful website for program logic is the AusAid website. http://www.ausaid.gov.au/
2. Another idea is hold training courses for Program Logic (Jess Dart)
3. Some other useful references to the process include:
   - http://nnlm.gov/libinfo/community/overview.php
   - http://www.insites.org/documents/logmod.htm
   - http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

Communicate existing frameworks to the group – at least how to access existing M/E frameworks (recognising there is no one “model”). This will be done using the Australian Government Natural Resource Management Monitoring and Evaluation webpage http://www.nrm.gov.au/monitoring/index.html.

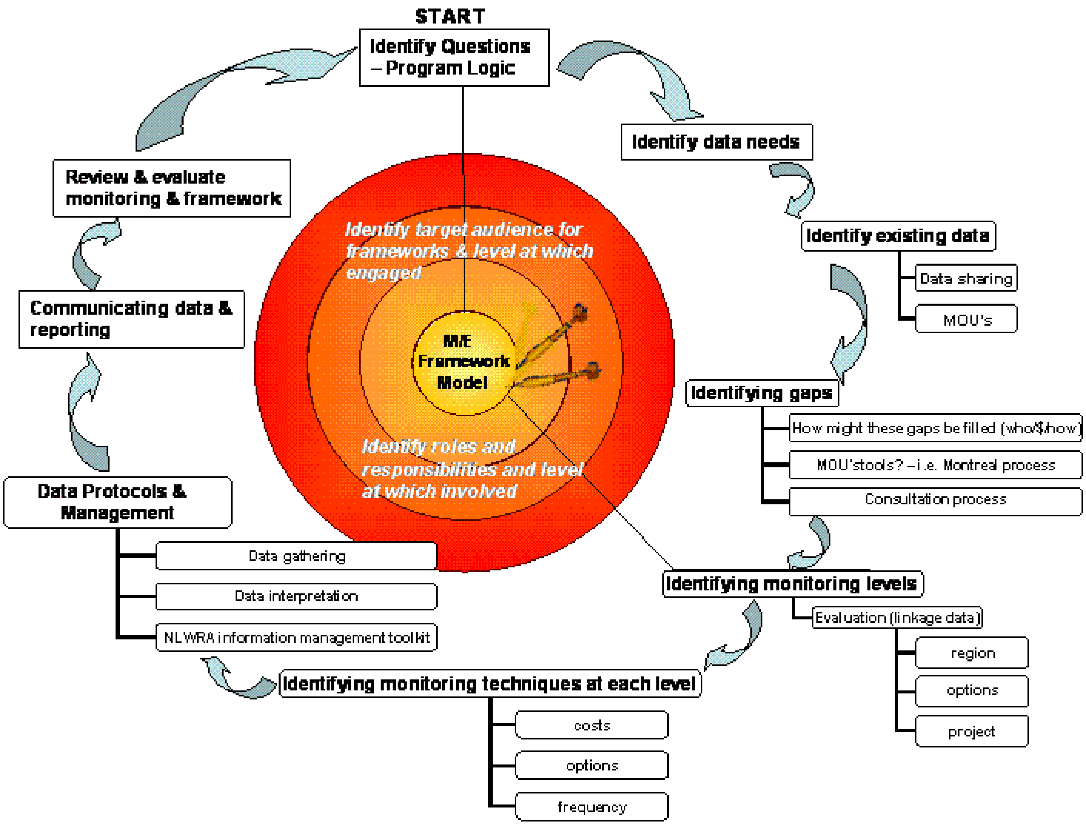
Links to regional M&E plans will be provided from this site and those regions who would like to contribute should contact Alice Renton on (02) 6263 6043 or alice.renton@lwa.gov.au. A permission form for publication of this material can be obtained from Alice and should be signed by the executive officer or general manager. This may include the following examples or links:

- Include examples from overseas (eg Eastern Great Lakes , Canada)
- Monitoring and evaluation manual for projects from the International Fund for Agricultural Development which may be useful for developing monitoring/evaluation frameworks at http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm

The flow chart has been revised as follows (correct one is below)

1. Program logic at “Identify data needs (questions)” as a method to assist with this. Add in “Identify and clarify roles and responsibilities” to process
2. Include identify target audience (expand on **Who is the framework for**?) as part of the Communicating data and reporting and also required for data needs analysis. Program Logic may be useful process for this

3. Modify diagram to be a circular process (Di Patterson, Sharon Hu and Heather Percy)

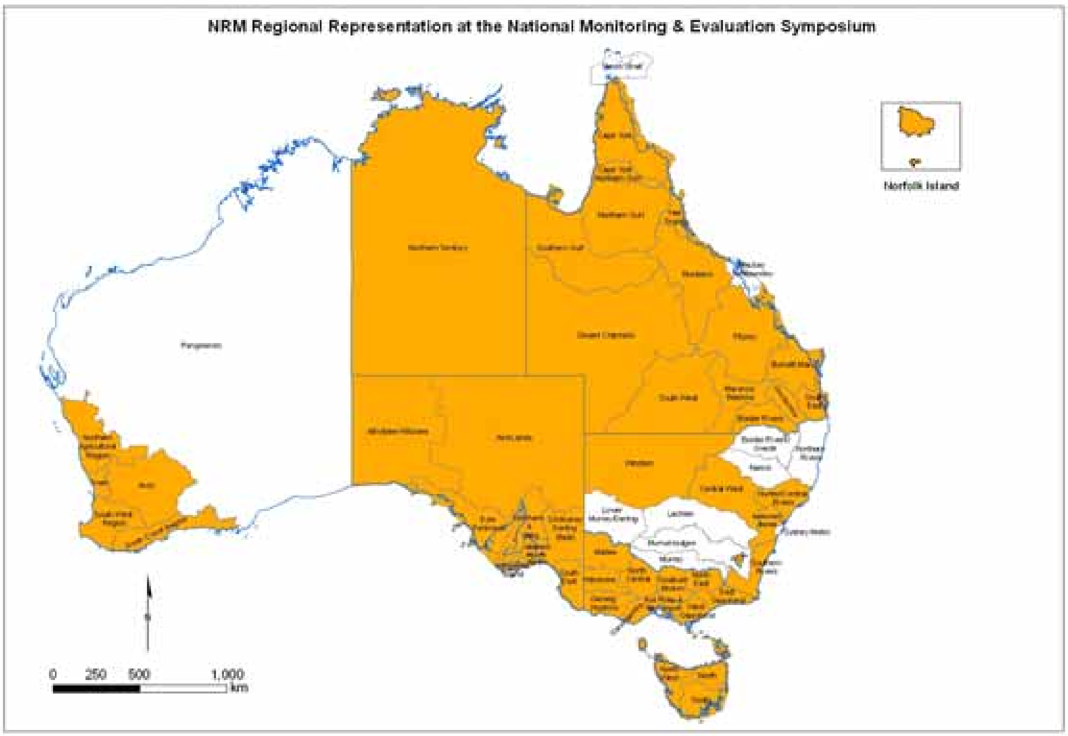


Attachment A - Regional Questionnaire

Part of the registration process for the National Monitoring and Evaluation Symposium involved completing the following questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to help stimulate thinking prior to the Symposium and provide topics for discussion with work colleagues so that participants were better able represent their whole organisation. The questionnaire was also intended to help inform the conference organisers of key issues that were likely to arise and to help inform the National Land & Water Resources Audit in the preparation of presentations and reports that they were making on natural resource M&E over the next few months.

Results

Where did participants come from?



Regional bodies	72
State agencies	35
National agencies	29
Other: consultants/CSIRO	9
Total	**145** (around 80 responses to questions)

Q1 Are the roles and responsibilities for resource condition monitoring clear? (between regional groups & state agencies)

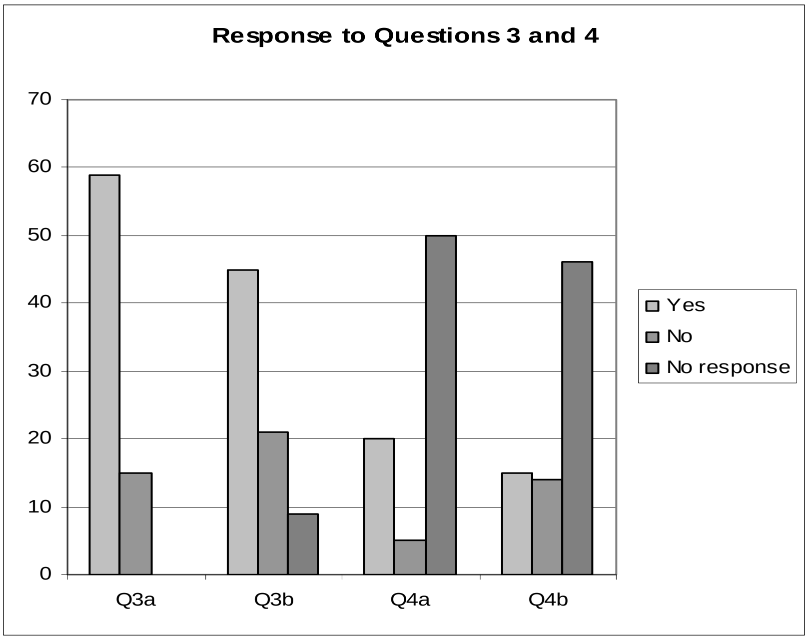
- Generally NO!
- General view - it's a State agency role
- BUT – State resources are decreasing
- Variation between states:
  - Very new process in some states (eg NT, Tas)
  - Qld – Regions feel State is backing off
  - Vic - regional bodies do contract monitoring (to State agencies or another party)

Q2 Does your region currently report on resource condition?

- Generally NO or Not yet (eg Tas, WA)
- It is a requirement in some states (Vic, SA)
- Some examples: Vic - Gippsland NR report card
- Resource condition targets are long term & the focus has been reporting on MATs (link not clear)

Q3 Are you familiar with: a) the NM&EF and indicators?
b) your State/Territory framework?

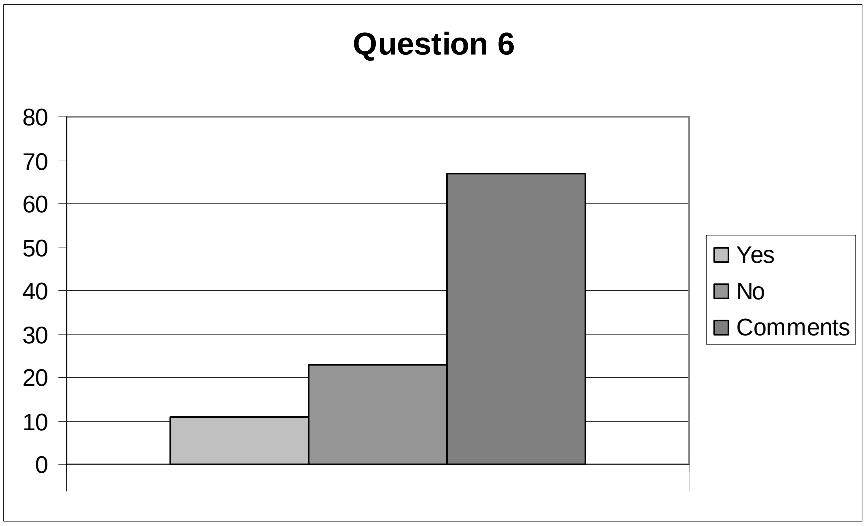
Q4 Will you report against: a) the NM&EF matters for target?
b) the specific indicators?



Q5 Do you know what resource condition data you need and where the gaps are?

- Generally No – Varies between issues
- Some states / regions have done or are doing gap analysis (eg Vic SA MDB)
- Severe shortage of data in remote / rangelands areas

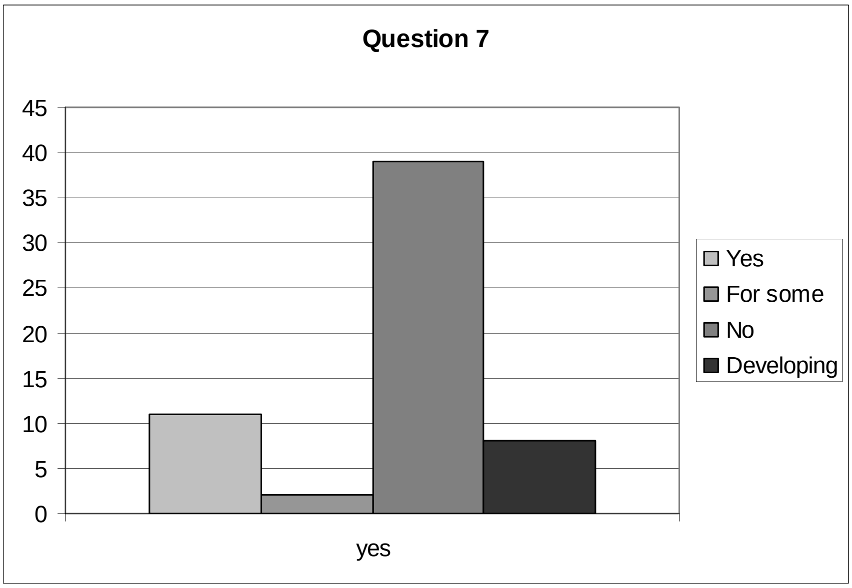
Q6 Do you have access to appropriate data?



Q6 Access to appropriate data – Comments

- Variation between states – some Vic regions have access arrangements - but slow process (eg WA, Qld, SA)
  - Limits to data (issue / spatial)
  - Difficult / time consuming to obtain from state agencies / cost recovery can be a barrier
  - Data may not be in a suitable format and requires analysis / capacity
- Some State agencies (eg Qld) say they are working on data access arrangements
- Remote areas - lack of data / capacity to access/ attend workshops

Q7 Do you know how you will report against your resource condition targets?



Q7 (cont) Do you know how you will report against resource condition targets?

Some comments:

- This is the common missing link
- Many regions are in the very early days of thinking about this
- The issue of timeframes - RCTs were set for 10 -20 years any changes may not be evident for 10 years
- Maybe possible for some issues eg water quality in Goulburn Broken in Vic

Q8 Will you use output reporting to assess progress towards RCTs?

- Range of responses -Many NO / early days & links still being established
- Regions that will use it to report on MATs & RCTs
- Some regions (eg MDB) establishing systems to report cumulative outputs and link to catchment condition reports
- The connection is assumed / subjective – evidence based reporting the preference (although many other influences)
- Statewide frameworks being developed in NSW and Vic

Q 9 What other ways will you use output reporting?

- Reporting on standard outputs – widget counting

BUT

- Only solid information on what has been done in a year
- Internal assessment of progress (continuous improvement / priorities for funding /coordinating works)
- Public relations (Promote achievements by regional body to partners / community /Board)
- Annual reports
- State of the regions report

Q10 M&E wins

- Too early to tell / you have got to be joking
- Recognition that it is good project management practice
- Acceptance that target setting and tracking progress is required
- Better use of integrated systems / program logic / linking outputs and outcomes
- M&E framework in one region being rolled out (NSW)
- Active networks of M&E officers (eg SA) / partnerships with State agencies
- Networks established with community monitoring
- Data requirements established

Q 11 M&E challenges

"Teasing out the baffling tangle of government bureaucracy, unintelligible jargon, reporting requirements and multi layer documents that surround NRM and M&E in particular"

Challenge 1 Frameworks

- NRM culture to include M&E as integral – not after the fact

- MER Frameworks for regional bodies / understanding
- Setting appropriate targets and measuring progress towards RCTs
- Integrating data on resource condition and current projects –
- (Shift focus from output reporting to resource condition monitoring?)

- Realistic timeframes to report change within current planning & accreditation processes (complexity of systems & separating impact)

- Identify questions to be answered before indicators and reporting templates
- Modifying indicators to be useful to region / provide meaningful data

Challenge 2 Data, skills and support

- Adequacy of Data - limited long term broadscale rc monitoring / benchmarks.
- Limited skills within CMAs and declining in State agencies
- Very small skill pool to recruit from
- IT support / data management / GIS

Challenge 3 Roles and responsibilities

- Uncertainty of roles and responsibilities AG / state / regions
- Within agencies and across agencies
- Streamlining the multiple and parallel reporting requirements
- Need for clear leadership

Challenge 4 Funding

- Securing adequate budgets for M&E / ensuring state agencies do not dilute their responsibilities
- Resistance from some to M&E vs works on the ground
- Remote areas poor infrastructure

What does it all mean?

- This is not an easy task
- But we can't just keep saying its too hard
- There are positive developments in many regions
- We're all on this journey together – it needs to be a partnership

For more information please contact Rob Thorman, Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator National Land & Water Resources Audit, (02) 6263 6000 rob.thorman@nlwra.gov.au