

Submission Form for Comments and Feedback

Environmental Quality Report: Biodiversity of the Howard Sand Plains SOC; and Recommendations

Submissions close: Monday 25 May 2015, 5pm

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	<p>1.0 Flora and Fauna</p> <p>The Howard Sand Plains are a site of Conservation Significance to the Northern Territory. Located approximately 30km east of Darwin within the Howard River region, the sand plains cover a total area of 264 kilometres – the largest and most continuous stretch of this significant habitat. Rarely encountered wildlife exists here including the Howard River Toadlet <i>Uperoleia daviesae</i> (-/VU), discovered in 2000, is only known from the Howard and Elizabeth River catchments confined to the seasonally flooded sandy plains within this site as seen in figure 1.1. Sandsheet pockets occur throughout and interlink different unique vegetation types on the Howard River floodplain. These include heathlands or wet herbfield areas which are highly restricted and have been identified as ecosystems at risk within the Darwin coastal bioregion. The Emu <i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i> (-/VU), Northern Quoll <i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i> (EN/CR), Yellow-spotted Monitor <i>Varanus panoptes</i> (-/VU) have also been identified as wildlife at risk. There are a total of 58 plants and four vertebrate species recorded from this site which are endemic to the NT.</p>

Please complete the form and send it via one of the following by no later than *Monday 25 May 2015, 5pm*:

Email: NTEPA.Consult@nt.gov.au

Post: NT EPA, GPO Box 3675, Darwin NT, 0801

Privacy: Your personal information will be used for the purpose of collecting and collating comments received on the NT EPA draft guidelines. The NT EPA is subject to the *Information Act* and its Regulations. Information will not be disclosed to a third party, unless required by law or otherwise stated.

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	 <p>Figure 1.1 Howard River Toadlet – Threatened by effects of sand mining</p>
	<p>2.0 Water</p> <p>Approximately 50% of the catchment area within the sandplains has moderately to severely water logged soils. After heavy rains, the wetlands that form during the wet season will gradually dry up as shallow groundwater drains. Deep dolomite aquifers feed perennial springs in the areas of Howard Springs and Berry Springs as seen in figure 1.2. These are important water sources, recreational swimming areas and wildlife refuges.</p>

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	<div> <p>The map shows the Howard Sand Plains Region with the Howard River flowing through it. Key locations marked include Gunn Point, Howard Springs, Melacca Creek, and Black Jungle Swamp. Major roads shown are Stuart Highway and Arnhem Highway. The Howard River is shown flowing from the south towards the north, with Melacca Creek and Black Jungle Swamp as tributaries or wetlands along its course.</p> </div> <p>Figure 1.2– Underground dolomite aquifer located in the Howard Sand Plains Region</p> <p>Compared to the undeveloped areas, the groundwater levels at the end of the dry season in the developed rural area have lowered 6 to 10 metres over the last 20 years. This has been attributed to higher levels of rural development and urbanisation tapping into these water sources. River flow in the area is predominantly seasonal and relies on annual rainfall.</p> <p>Power and Water Corporation are in the process of equipping four of the Howard East Bore Field’s bores to provide additional emergency water supplies for Darwin. The Power and Water Corporation is licenced to abstract up to 8 420 ML/yr from the six bores in the area. These water sources are of great importance to the entire community and surrounding residents.</p> <p>These combined pressures are enough strain on the catchments in the area and risk contamination, degradation of rivers and bank erosion. The removal of sand and other destructive processes can lead to the enlargement of river mouths and coastal inlets risking intrusion of seawater with freshwater.</p>

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	<p>Large portions of the catchment have already been cleared, mined for sand and gravel, disturbed by roads, or planted with exotic trees and crops. The site is also increasingly impacted by intensifying urban growth with Humpty Doo and parts of Howard Springs and Coolalinga being cleared at present. It is recommended that better protection is put in place to protect this pristine habitat with a wide variety of flora and fauna, most have of which have not been properly studied or understood how their habitat could be affected.</p> <p>I am a qualified scientist, environmentalist and have grown up in the rural area of Howard Springs. I do not want to see a part of my family home be destroyed due to development which could be avoided. This land needs to be preserved for future generations.</p>

GENERAL COMMENTS (delete if not applicable)
<p>Click here and press the TAB key to add extra rows to this table.</p>