

Section 9

Nitmiluk National Park

9.1 Existing Condition and Conservation Values

The southern-most point of Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park is located approximately one kilometre to the north east of the existing Maud Creek open-cut pit (Figure 2-2). The section along Maud Creek is separate from the main Park (see Figure 1-2) and is not visited by tourists. This area is reserved for traditional Jawoyn cultural activities and the protection of significant sacred sites. The Park covers an area of 292,008 ha and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the NT (CCNT 2002). Park visitors from 2000 to 2005 averaged 249,769 per annum (NT Parks and Wildlife Service, *personal communication*, Nov 2006).

The Park is owned by the Jawoyn Aboriginal Land Trust and managed jointly by the Jawoyn and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT. This management structure is at the forefront of the movement towards recognition of Aboriginal ownership, tradition and culture in Australia's national parks system. The Park is widely regarded as a model of successful joint management and, since coming under Aboriginal ownership in 1989, it has continued to provide high levels of public enjoyment. It is now accepted that the character of the Park and its appeal to visitors has been substantially enhanced by the active involvement of its traditional owners in all aspects of the Park's operation and management (CCNT 2002).

Conservation of the Park's biodiversity has been advanced by programs focusing on fire management, native flora and fauna conservation, feral animal and weed control, and visitor management, all taking into account traditional land management practices and involving Aboriginal Rangers. Considerable emphasis is given to the management of cultural resources and the promotion of Aboriginal interests, including the development of employment and training opportunities for the Jawoyn people. A recent milestone has been the achievement of a majority of Aboriginal staff at the Park (CCNT 2002).

9.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigation

Development of the gold mining project at Maud Creek will not have a direct impact on the conservation, cultural or tourism values of Nitmiluk National Park. The mine site is located approximately one kilometre from the boundary of the southern section of the Park (at its closest point), and all mine haulage will be directed south of the mine site, away from the Park and access roads utilised by Park visitors. The underground nature of mining activities and the absence of processing facilities on site mean that impacts of noise, vibrations and dust will not extend to the Park boundary.

However, land management for fire, feral animal control and weed control at the Maud Creek mine site could potentially impact on biodiversity values inside the park boundary. Terra Gold has consulted with the Jawoyn Association and the Nitmiluk National Park Board during the development of this EIS. No management issues have yet been identified concerning any anticipated impacts of the proposed mining operation on cultural values within the Park.

Mitigation of potential impacts on the biodiversity and cultural values of the park will require ongoing consultation with the Nitmiluk National Park Board with reference to land management plans for the park and any issues associated with the mine. Terra Gold will implement fire management, feral animal control and weed control plans (Section 19) in the operational area and more broadly across the mine lease area as part of the Environmental Management System (Section 18).

Section 9**Nitmiluk National Park****9.3 Commitments**

Terra Gold commits to ongoing, regular consultation with the Nitmiluk National Park Board, to ensure that any potential impacts of the mining operation on the Park's natural, cultural or tourism values are identified and managed as appropriate.

Terra Gold commits to preventing access by company employees to the detached area of Nitmiluk National Park across Maud Creek .

