

Case Study CMP - CCNet Adaptive Management Case Study Template

Title: Evaluation of the Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Project in Australia's Kimberley

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Location: North-west Western Australia

Summary:

<Provide a brief 2-3 sentence summary of what the case study covers>

The Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Plan was first developed in 2010 and outlined a 10 year vision and associated actions to restore and protect the Wunambal Gaambera peoples' land and culture. In 2015 a mid-term evaluation noted measurable progress on several key strategies, including "right way fire" which has carbon reduction, ecological and cultural benefits, as well as rapid development of natural resource management capacity through the Indigenous Ranger program. The mid-term evaluation assessed effectiveness of both the process and the plan; this case study focusses mostly on evaluation of the process; refer to the forthcoming publication for more details on evaluation of effectiveness of the plan.

Public Overview of Case Study:

<Provide a link to a succinct web page, video, PDF file, overview of the case study>

2012 overview of Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Project [ABC TV report](#)

Detailed case study - Forthcoming publication:– "Evaluating the Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Plan: Intercultural Governance of a Land and Sea Management Program in the Kimberley, Australia."

Authors: B.J. Austin, T. Vigilante, S. Cowell, I.M. Dutton, D. Djanghara, S. Mangolomara, B. Puermora, A. Bundamurra and Z. Clement. Ecological Management & Restoration journal.

Abbreviated case study, see [Bush Heritage 2015-16 Annual Report](#) (page 15)

Setting the Scene:

<Provide a description of the situation and the adaptive management work that was or is being undertaken.>

The Wunambal Gaambera People have lived on Uunguu (their ancestral estate) for over 50,000 years and have maintained continuous occupation and connection to their ancestral estates throughout this time. In 2010, the Wunambal Gaambera People were the first to use Healthy Country Planning (HCP), a process modelled on the Open Standards and focused on achieving cultural and biodiversity outcomes through indigenous land and sea management. The initial planning took place over two years involving numerous workshops with Traditional Owners representing all 12 graa (family groups), the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation (WGAC), investors, partners and participatory planning facilitators.

In 2015, the Wunambal Gaambera HCP mid-point was reached; embedded in the HCP was the commitment to a mid-term evaluation. The reasons for conducting the evaluation were to enable adaptive management through the assessment of the effectiveness of the HCP's strategies, to appraise the need for adaptation due to any major shifts in context, to contribute to the evidence base concerning Wunambal Gaambera Country, and to report on achievements to both Traditional Owners and external stakeholders in the plan.

The review collected data and information from four sources, each tasked with enquiring about the effectiveness of both the process and the plan:-

1. Work plan and monitoring reports from the Healthy Country Team and Uunguu Rangers

The Healthy Country team and Uunguu Rangers provide an annual report to UMEC showing evidence of progress against the objectives (% complete), strategies (complete/on track/minor issues/major issues/abandoned) and actions, and also whether intermediate results and threat reduction results have been met. The same reporting was provided for the evaluation but a

greater level of evidence was presented across the 5 years of work. Where present, the Healthy Country Team also gave evidence about the change in status of targets and threats based on the results of monitoring and research results.

2. A Traditional Owner evaluation of the Healthy Country Project.

The Traditional Owner component of the evaluation involved training 16 Wunambal Gaambera people in two participatory evaluation tools. The first tool used structured surveys with 50 Traditional Owners to identify their satisfaction with the work of the Unguu Rangers and WGAC in implementing the Healthy Country Plan. The second tool used a matrix ranking exercise with 38 Traditional Owners to measure the change in the HCP target status over 4 time-periods identified by the Traditional Owners as being appropriate for checking the status of these targets (Old People Time (pre-1930s); When aboriginal community corporations were established independent of missions (1970s); Start of the 'Healthy Country work' (1990s); and Now (2015)).

3. An independent review.

An external consultant, Nautilus Impact Investing, was tasked with undertaking a 360-degree review of key external partners involved in the WGHCP process to date.

4. A self-assessment conducted by the Unguu Monitoring & Evaluation Committee (UMEC).

This involved use of a self-assessment tool by committee members, and a review in the change in condition of the Targets in the HCP.

The diverse evidence produced from these four sources was presented, discussed and synthesised during the UMEC Annual Workshop on the Mitchel Plateau in 2015. The recommendations from this workshop have been presented to the Directors of the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation, who then presented them to an Annual General Meeting of Traditional Owners for consideration.

Results and Lessons Learned:

<Provide a brief outline of what was accomplished as well as any challenges faced and how these were addressed. If possible, please comment on how your adaptive management work contributed to your overall project or programmatic work. >

1. Results from the Healthy Country Team and the Unguu Rangers

The Unguu Rangers presented their report to UMEC on progress against the HCP, organised into 10 operations and corresponding results chains. Right Way Fire achieved a high degree of implementation with annual fire operations being conducted across the full extent of Wunambal Gaambera Country and a significant reduction in wildfires achieved. The operation had enabled Traditional Owners to make decisions and participate in operations (with 32 participants in 2015) and a carbon abatement project had been registered that generated carbon credits through fire operations. Other operations had achieved some degree of implementation but further work was required. Significantly, cultural programs relating to cultural education had not reached capacity. Land Use Planning was identified as having major issues relating to the need to negotiate with State Government.

2. Traditional Owner evaluation

Wunambal Gaambera Traditional Owners responded positively regarding the HCP process. Most Traditional Owners interviewed said that either they or their families were involved in the development of the Healthy Country Plan. Most respondents believed that the plan was progressing well, the rangers are doing a good job and there was no need for significant change. The survey results identified 5 key themes where there had been positive impact, and a further four key themes where improvements could be made.

The Traditional Owner assessment of changes in target health over the four time periods created a useful baseline and insight into how each target had been impacted differently over time. As the management capacity of the WGAC has grown, the health of several HCP Targets such as Right Way Fire and Cultural Sites have increased dramatically, while other targets continue to be impacted by pressures such as over-harvesting of fish, increased tourism, and invasive animal species. Of most concern is the continued decrease in the practice of Law and Culture; the primary threats being a lack

of access to Country and education of new generations of Traditional Owners.

3. Independent review

Overall, external informants were enthusiastic about the approach and direction of the WGHP process. There was consistent appreciation of the planning process which was described by several as “the gold standard” for Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) management planning, particularly the high level of community engagement in the process and dual emphasis on cultural and ecological targets. While highlighting the many achievements, several areas for improvement were identified (including communication with others, sustainability of funding, and narrower priority setting).

“My overall assessment of the HCP process is that something quite remarkable on a global scale is happening on Wunambal Gaambera country” Ian Dutton, Nautilus Impact Investing LLC

4. UMEC self-assessment

The members of UMEC were content with the format and process being used to manage their meetings, and committed to continuing their role. The group was content with the improvements in the condition of most Targets at this mid-point review, and understood the key reasons where improvement hadn't been as great as they initially hoped.

Overall conclusion -

The role of UMEC as an intercultural committee for integrating western scientific and local Indigenous knowledge for adaptive management is highly innovative and has proven to be very successful. UMEC allows for the synthesis of diverse knowledge of Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts, creating space for input of Traditional Owner-generated knowledge and affording it equal legitimacy to that of western science.

UMEC is the result of patient investment in M&E over a long period of time. The Wunambal Gaambera People and their HCP partners have been successful in completing an adaptive management cycle – a feat which is rarely achieved, most often due to time and resource constraints. UMEC has enabled WGAC to be disciplined in its undertaking of monitoring and evaluation, and the annual UMEC meetings have become an institution that ensures progress. The WGAC Directors are proud of what they have been able to achieve through UMEC and of the positive feedback they have been given by their partners.

Scalability and Transferability:

<Comment on the potential for the work done and the lessons learnt in this case study to be applied in other situations.>

The HCP approach has now spread across the Australian Indigenous estate with over 30 Indigenous groups employing the process covering a total area of around 65 million hectares. The UMEC model provides a useful case study for other Traditional Owner groups to learn about growing and implementing a locally-owned, participatory and integrated approach to measuring the effectiveness of Indigenous land and sea management.

Further Information:

<Please feel free to provide links to other key materials related to the case-study such as websites, publications, presentations, or testimonials.>

[Summary of Wunambal Gaambera project](#) on the Bush Heritage website

[Wunambal Gaambera Healthy Country Plan](#) and associated reports

Additional information will become available after publication of the article in the Ecological Management & Restoration journal

Table of Key Words for Tagging Case Studies

These tags will be used to help other people find your case study on the web.

Key Words <i>(select all that are relevant)</i>	Put x if Relevant
Stages in Adaptive Management Cycle	
- Conceptualize the situation	
- Plan actions and monitoring	x
- Implement actions and monitoring	x
- Analyze, use, adapt	x
- Capture and share learning	x
- Full cycle adaptive management	x
- Other _____	
Case Study Scale	
- Project-level	x
- Program-level	
- Organizational-level	
- Other _____	
Specific Tools/Approach Used	
- Evaluation / audit	x
- Evidence-based conservation	x
- Spatial conservation planning	
- Structured decision making	
- Status measures	
- Effectiveness measures	x
- Passive adaptive management	
- Active adaptive management	x
- Other _____	
Specific Topics Addressed:	
- Human wellbeing	x
- Climate change	
- Community-based conservation	x
- Marine conservation	
- Freshwater conservation	x
- Terrestrial conservation	x
- Other _____	