

## Media Release **No. 419**

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# MangroveWatch comes to Torres Strait

The successful MangroveWatch program is being rolled out to Land and Sea Rangers in the Torres Strait.

Eleven rangers from the Torres Strait Regional Authority recently attended a three-day training course held in the Land and Sea Discovery Centre at Tagai College on Thursday Island. Scientists from James Cook University led the training and provided practical activities at nearby mangrove areas. Lead scientist, Dr Norm Duke, explained how enormous mutual benefits will be gained with this program.

“Rangers will now be able to make recordings at their own islands and have all the equipment they need, including digital video and still cameras, GPS units and field guide books,” said Dr Duke.

TSRA chairman Toshie Kris said it was great to see mangroves getting the attention they deserve as they are so important to the Torres Strait fishery.

Mr Kris also said that although mangroves were a focus of the program it was not just restricted to monitoring mangroves. Any type of shoreline – sandy, or rocky – were all worthy of regular monitoring.

“The video recording, which can be done from sea or land, and data logging and reporting back process can encompass the whole shoreline, which makes it relevant for all islands in the Torres Strait, not just islands like Boigu or Saibai, which are surrounded by mangroves,” Mr Kris said.

Rangers send in their raw videos, photos and notes to researchers at James Cook University who analyse them and return a summary report.

The observers don't need to have expert scientific knowledge. The aim of MangroveWatch is to promote better management and conservation of tidal wetlands. It also has close links to a new three-year research project in Torres Strait that is looking at tidal and freshwater wetlands.

It provides a way of collecting frequent information across a large scale at low cost. Rangers can fit the work in with other activities like beach clean ups, patrols and weed control.

Once the rangers become familiar with the process, there may be opportunities for them to teach community members how to do the surveys.

The program will enable the TSRA to build a long-term visual record with scientific and cultural assessment data of mangroves and other island shorelines.

**ENDS**

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