

There's more where that came from: future directions in NRM information tools for the tropical savannas

Peter Jacklyn

Tropical Savannas CRC, Darwin

Correspondence, email: Peter.Jacklyn@cdu.edu.au

Over the last thirteen years the Tropical Savannas CRC (TS-CRC) has developed a range of Natural Resource Management (NRM) Information resources that are now valued tools used across northern Australia, including the *NAFI* website and the *Savanna Links* newsletter. This talk will outline the plans we have to continue maintaining and developing these resources after the TS-CRC winds up later this year.

After the Tropical Savannas CRC?

Our information tools have characteristics that came directly from the TS-CRC environment and that have often contributed to their success: they arose from projects in which end users decided what information tools to develop; they can be used right across northern Australia by a range of land managers and planners so they add value to what our partners do; and the tools are responsive to user feedback once they are in use. What will happen to these NRM Information tools and the knowledge base behind them once the Tropical Savannas CRC winds up? Strategies for maintaining these processes and the knowledge base and supporting resources they sustain will be outlined. Proposed institutional arrangements and networks with research users and researchers will also be discussed.

New web tools

Another priority is to continue to develop our existing NRM information tools to meet emerging NRM needs. For example we are looking at new features on the *NAFI* website: an improved map viewer; quicker fire scar mapping; new satellite sources to improve fire detection in cloudy conditions; new ways of visualizing fire spread; maps that display carbon emissions and other greenhouse-related data.

We have also developed another site for NT NRM Board that builds on the *NAFI* experience: a mapping website that provides planning resources for NT land managers. This site meets an important emerging need as many people, from pastoralists who have to develop property management plans, to Indigenous Ranger groups who have to monitor progress on their projects, will need to have easier access to information that profiles the natural and cultural assets on their lands, along with the threats and shows how these may be changing. This information might maps of natural resources or fire history or lists of threatened species, weeds and feral animals likely to be found on their land together with information on how to manage these species. The *InfoNet* project is putting the finishing touches to a web application that provides these resources and allows people to walk away with useful printed maps and species identification booklets. The site relies on an extension of the *NAFI* web-mapping technology as well as the database of information on our Land Manager website, but more importantly it relies on the same emphasis on end user input from a range of sectors and disciplines used by CRC sites. While the site is focused on the NT, we have been talking with various NRM groups about applications of this technology in Queensland.

If we are successful in securing funding for the NAFI site and the other NRM websites we should be able to continue operating the *Savanna Explorer* website, the TS-CRC legacy website as well as selling and distributing the TS-CRC's remaining publications and producing *Savanna Links*.

Our future role

The NRM websites and many of our publications play a similar role: they are practical NRM tools that draw on data largely from Government agencies or research institutions, and make this data useful for practical tasks to a range of end-users associated with north Australian NRM. The websites do this via easy-to-use interfaces, the design of which is open to input from the end-users. State and Territory Governments in particular have a key role as custodians of much of the NRM data but the development and maintenance of our website interfaces is well suited to a user-driven body with good networks and a strong knowledge base that is perceived to be independent.