Springvale Station Erosion Management Plan, Cape York

Background

Springvale Station is a 56,000ha property in Cape York, purchased by the Queensland Government in May 2016 to add to the State’s protected area network.

Springvale Station, in Far North Queensland.

The State’s vision for the property is ‘to manage and conserve Springvale Station’s biophysical values and to contribute to improved water quality within the Normanby River catchment — a significant catchment draining to the northern Great Barrier Reef.’ The Springvale Station Statement of Management Intent is available online at <www.qld.gov.au>.

Springvale Station is comprised of a complex mosaic of vegetation types described across 52 regional ecosystems. It provides important habitat for endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna including the Cooktown orchid, ghost bat, northern quoll, red goshawk, spectacled flying-fox, spotted-tailed quoll and two bat species (the Semon’s leaf nosed bat and large eared-horseshoe bat).

The Cooktown Orchid (Dendrobium bigibbum).

The property forms part of a significant tract of protected areas including the adjoining Ngalba Bulal National Park and Kings Plains–Alkoomie Nature Refuge. It is also connected via remnant vegetation to the nearby Black Mountain National Park, Annan River (Yuku Baja-Muliku) National Park, South Endeavour Nature Refuge and Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land).

The Normanby River runs through Springvale Station, and the Normanby catchment flows into Princess Charlotte Bay and the Great Barrier Reef. As described in the State’s vision for the property, it is the government’s aim to reduce the loss of sediment from the property and the transport of sediment to the catchment.

Sediment management on Springvale Station

Wider property planning and operational activities such as road and track management, fire management and pest (plant and animal) management will support improvement of the values on the property and will reduce the risk of sediment leaving the property.

The destocking of cattle from the property by the end of 2017 directly supports improved sediment management.

There are some large areas with significant early onset and established gully erosion occurring, particularly down the central alluvial river valley. This is a major source of sediment leaving the property, which scientists estimate as contributing up to 40% of sediment loads from this catchment to the Great Barrier Reef. Further research is ongoing to confirm this.
Gully prevention and management on Springvale Station will require focused attention and additional investment. Through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program, the government is exploring opportunities to work with experts and external investors to trial gully management responses.

**What is the project about?**

The Springvale Station Erosion Management Plan will provide recommendations to guide future erosion control activities for priority gully areas on Springvale Station. The Plan will provide a framework to manage sub-catchments above priority gully areas and recommend how established alluvial gullies could be managed in the future. Examples of management options include earthworks and revegetation to restore eroded gullies and fencing to exclude cattle from gullies.

The Plan will be one of a suite of operational plans that support station management e.g. fire management.

**What will the project team be doing?**

The project team will undertake a review of existing plans, maps, and remote sensing and spatial datasets to broadly assess the current land condition and identify key sediment sources on the property. They will talk to key stakeholders such as previous station managers, Indigenous people and experts to document their knowledge.

Based on this, a draft plan will be developed with guidance from experts. This will recommend which gullies need immediate attention on Springvale Station, and which gullies are likely to be priority ‘hotspots’ for future action. It will also consider appropriate approaches to erosion management and future sediment monitoring programs.

The department plans to run an information session in May 2017 for neighbours and key stakeholders in the Normanby catchment.

**For further information**

For further information please contact:

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Springvale Station depicting areas of gully erosion (derived from data presented in Brooks et al. (2013.)

**Who is involved?**

The department has contracted Cape York Natural Resource Management to work with Indigenous partners through the Yalanji Joint Venture; Griffith University; Department of Agriculture and Fisheries; Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation; and erosion, water quality and vegetation scientists, to develop the Springvale Erosion Management Plan.
Photos

West Normanby River

Volcanic scree around edge of basalt plateau

View over Springvale to Kings Plains and Alkoomie