# Application for research endorsement

Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement in research in the

Wet Tropics World Heritage Area of Queensland

*Nature Conservation Act 1992*

*Forestry Act 1959*

*Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*

Important information for applicants:

Under the objects of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) is required to ensure that in the conservation of nature we allow for the involvement of First Nations people in management of the protected areas in which they have an interest under Aboriginal tradition. Such interests pertain to research conducted in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). This is because DES is party to the *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area* *Regional Agreement* (Regional Agreement) with the Rainforest Aboriginal people, Wet Tropics Management Authority, and the Queensland Government. This Application for Research Endorsement form implements the Scientific Research Protocol detailed in the Regional Agreement which requires applicants to ensure that the right people who speak for the right country provide their endorsement to conduct the research on their land, prior to lodging a permit application with DES.

Additionally, the *Human Rights Act 2019* requires DES to act and make decisions compatible with human rights, specifically the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their identity and cultural heritage, including their traditional knowledge, distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs and teachings.

Purpose

All research conducted in the WTWHA has the potential to impact the rights and interests of the Rainforest Aboriginal people. The purpose of this Application for Research Endorsement is to assist researchers to achieve mutually beneficial partnerships with the Rainforest Aboriginal people of the Area. This will enable scientific research conducted in the Wet Tropics bioregion to benefit from inclusion of traditional science and knowledge held by Rainforest Aboriginal people, ensuring acknowledgement of their important role in the Area’s management.

Who to contact

This Application for Research Endorsement form is to be completed and provided with your application to DES if you propose to undertake research for scientific or educational purposes within the WTWHA on a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships managed area. As per the Scientific Research Protocol in the Regional Agreement, researchers are required to contact the appropriate Rainforest Aboriginal peoples to facilitate involvement of the right people, and codes of research conduct, for the right country prior to a research permit application being decided by DES.

The online [mapping tool](https://culturalheritage.datsip.qld.gov.au/achris/public/public-registry/home) and user guide located on the DES website assists in identifying the appropriate Rainforest Aboriginal people to contact. If there are no contacts for the area you are interested in, or there is an issue with contact details available, please contact the Wet Tropics Management Authority on (07) 4241 0500, for further advice. For further guidance on what researchers are encouraged to discuss and resolve with Rainforest Aboriginal people refer to - Attachment 1 Guidelines - of this form.

Information to be provided on this application for research endorsement form

**NOTE:** The information provided on this form should be prepared in a culturally sensitive, clear and direct ‘plain English’ style of writing (refer to Attachment 1 – Guidelines).

1. Research applicant details

| NAMES OF PROJECT LEADER AND OTHERS WORKING ON THE PROJECT (add rows as needed) | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | TITLE | FIRST NAME | SURNAME | ORGANISATION |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |

1. Title of research project

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| MAXIMUM 20 WORDS  EXAMPLE: Animal monitoring survey to determine trends of animal populations. |

1. Describe the research project.

Provide specific detail on what will be “Taken, Used, Kept or Interfered” with on this project.

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| MAXIMUM 300 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: Animal surveys will be conducted to monitor populations, particularly of mammals, as a response to management actions. Surveys have been previously conducted to determine a baseline of animals on the study sites (species list attached). Monitoring is now required to assess the population trends over time. Animals will be trapped using cameras and with cages by using food lures (peanut butter, rolled oats, honey, vanilla and sardines). The study design and location of the cages and cameras are detailed in the attached map. This study design will capture the most rigorous and representative data for this ecosystem. The animals will be bagged and handled in order to weigh, measure, assess their health, determine their sex and reproductive status. Photographs (from cameras), small tissue samples (required for DNA analysis), fur and scats (for diet studies) and data will be kept but the animals will be released back into the wild. All methodology will follow strict animal ethical guidelines. The data on the number of species and number of individuals will be used to determine the population size for ongoing monitoring and management. Plant and fungi material (expected species list provided) will be gathered on the same line that the cage and cameras are set to determine the plant community present in the area which indicates animal resource availability and habitat health. Plant and fungi material, (may include leaves, branches, roots, flowers and/or fruit or fungal fruiting bodies) will be collected including up to 10 standard herbarium specimens from any one plant/fungus. Plants and fungi will be dried, preserved and stored at the Australian Tropical Herbarium and the Brisbane Herbarium and made available to others for research and educational purposes. A species list of all collections (animal, plant and fungi) will be provided at the completion of this project. |

1. What is the purpose of the research project?

Please specify expected outcomes and mutual benefits for both knowledge and community.

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| MAXIMUM 200 WORDS  EXAMPLE: Animals across the region have declined at an alarming rate since European settlement. These declines in distributions and populations are due to changes to the environment, including fire regimes, pest animals, weeds, feral predators, cattle grazing and climate change. Some of these changes can be managed, including fire management appropriate to biodiversity needs; control of cattle grazing in important areas for biodiversity conservation; reduction of weeds to revert country to native species; and control of pest animals like pigs and feral cats where desirable. These surveys will provide the monitoring evidence to demonstrate results of management, and to help guide future management interventions. The survey results will also provide support for future funding and community engagement on country. |

1. What type and/or level of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement is proposed for participation in the research project?

letter of support with annual reporting (minimum requirement)

research agreement (detailing full involvement)

presentation of research findings

participation in field work

exchange of contemporary and traditional field skills or knowledge

participation in workshop(s)

fees associated with Elder’s time

fees associated with Ranger services

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| MAXIMUM 200 WORDS. Provide a description of the involvement.  EXAMPLE: The work was invited by the Aboriginal Corporation, as part of their on-going monitoring of their activities on country. A research agreement has been signed for this project (attached). Aboriginal rangers and staff will work with the researchers on field work, including advising on site selection, traditional and contemporary animal searching methodology, setting up and managing traps, doing bird surveys and active searches, managing remote cameras (camera traps) and reviewing images.. Where possible, rangers will also enter, archive and analyse data. The report from the fieldwork will be a cooperative exercise, and rangers and others involved directly in the research surveys will be invited to be co-authors and/or to be acknowledged for their contributions. The draft report on the surveys will be offered for review and comment. Aboriginal Rangers are employed under the Land & Sea program, and also have access to vehicles, fuel and logistics for their work. |

1. What methods are being used for data collection, access and storage?

How will this benefit Rainforest Aboriginal peoples?

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| MAXIMUM 200 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: Field data will be collected on iPads and notebooks by the principal investigator and Aboriginal Rangers. Data will be entered into spreadsheets and field note document files as soon as possible during and after fieldwork. All data collected on digital platforms will be immediately backed up to another hard drive storage device. On return to base, all data and field notes will be archived to servers and backup drives. Analysis of the field data will be done according to statistical and modelling needs of the project. Training will be provided to Aboriginal rangers in scientific field data collection, storage and handling in the field. Methodology for ongoing monitoring will be shared as well as training in data analysis to allow long term monitoring of animals to be autonomously conducted by the Aboriginal corporation’s rangers in this area. |

1. What methods are being used for data reporting and presentation?

How will this benefit Rainforest Aboriginal peoples? Detail co-branding, co-authoring and   
co-presentation agreements.

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| MAXIMUM 200 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: This is a one year project. This small project is expected to lead to co-funded ongoing monitoring and collaborative research at this location, mutually benifiting the Aboriginal Corporation as well as the researchers in the long term. Interim and final reports will be prepared by the principal investigator and distributed for review and approval (prior to public release) to the Aboriginal co-authors and other Indigenous authorities. The draft report will be revised subsequent to comments being received. The co-branded final report will be submitted to the funding body for comment prior to publication. The principal investigator will co-present the main findings back to the Aboriginal corporation and other community members using a one page co-branded visual summary of the outcomes and in a seminar presentation after the report has been finalised. |

1. Is there existing intellectual and cultural property informing this research?

If so, free, prior, informed written consent for its use prior to release of information (e.g. media, publication) must be included with this form (refer to Attachment a).

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| MAXIMUM 100 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: There is cultural intellectual property informing this research. The proposal has been approved by the Rainforest Aboriginal people. The approvals process will be followed as detailed in the attached research agreement to ensure free, prior and informed consent is given prior to the release or publication of any intellectual property and/or culturally sensitive information. |
| WRITTEN CONSENT INCLUDED WITH THIS FORM:  Yes  No |

1. What procedures do you have in place if there is, or there arises, a need to present culturally sensitive information?

Detail the approvals process in your agreement with Rainforest Aboriginal peoples.

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| MAXIMUM 200 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: The project proposal includes species of animals and plants that are culturally important to the Rainforest Aboriginal people of the area. Free, prior and informed consent for using culturally sensitive information will be obtained before public dissemination of the results. To ensure this, Rainforest Aboriginal people are asked to provide consent and approval, as detailed in the research agreement, prior to the release of any information for media, publication or any other planned communication. |
| WRITTEN CONSENT INCLUDED WITH THIS FORM:  Yes  No |

1. Have you negotiated an exchange of financial, technical and/or educational resources that will be provided to allow Rainforest Aboriginal people to be involved in this research project?

This may include honoraria for Elder and/or Ranger time and travel allowance, as well as any in-kind support provided by any parties. If no, please explain why (e.g. small budget, small student project). Is there potential for future co-designed projects?

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| MAXIMUM 100 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: The budget available allows for the conduct of the surveys, for two scientist investigators for a period of 10 days in total, plus two Aboriginal Rangers for five days work in the field. For this project, the budget is otherwise limited. Aboriginal rangers will be working with the two scientists to contribute to the studies with travel and time paid for as well as providing in-kind support through their Aboriginal Corporation funding including vehicle hire and their expertise in finding and identifying species. Training will be provided to increase their scientific survey skills to allow monitoring to continue in subsequent years. This small project is expected to lead to co-funded ongoing monitoring and collaborative research at this location. |

1. Please provide the date(s) and method(s) of contact made with the Rainforest Aboriginal people for the research area.

Please provide copies of relevant correspondence where appropriate.

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| MAXIMUM 100 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: Members of the Aboriginal Corporation, including Elders and Rangers, and the principal investigator met in person to discuss the project in detail, to plan logistics and travel, participant’s involvement and to finalise the research agreement. Maps (attached)) were used to identify culturally important places that will be avoided during the project, the general location of the cage and camera trapping and access routes. Target animal and plant species have been identified that require special protocols to ensure cultural laws and lore are abided by. All field trips will include two Rangers in attendance to ensure site safety and cultural protocols are followed. |

1. What will the key outcomes be for Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement on the proposed research project?

Explain how this project aligns with Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ aspirations and/or research priorities.

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| MAXIMUM 100 WORDS.  EXAMPLE: The Aboriginal Rangers will gain field experience in conducting animal surveys, and the methods that direct these surveys. This will allow Rangers to continue best practice monitoring and management on their country, which is an aspiration of this Aboriginal Corporation. The final report will provide information to fulfil some of the Aboriginal Corporations Plan of Management commitments. The study and report will provide a better understanding of the status of animal populations on the land and how best to conserve them for future generations. |

1. Privacy Statement

DES will use the information included on this completed form to undertake its assessment of a permit application in accordance with legislation. This information may be disclosed to Indigenous organisations relevant to the area. Your personal information will not be disclosed to any other parties without your consent unless authorised or required by law, such as under the *Right to Information Act 2009* or the *Evidence Act 1977*. Further information about privacy is available on the DES website: <http://www.des.qld.gov.au/legal/privacy.html>.

Declaration

* I do solemnly and sincerely declare that the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true.
* I understand that all information supplied on or with this application form may be disclosed publicly in accordance with the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Evidence Act 1977*.

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| --- | --- |
| APPLICANT’S FULL NAME | |
| IF THE APPLICANT IS A CORPORATION, PLEASE INDICATE YOUR POSITION IN THE CORPORATION. | |
| *APPLICANT’S SIGNATURE* | *DATE* |
| Note: If you have not told the truth on this form, you may be liable for prosecution under the relevant Acts or Regulations | |

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| **Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ endorsement of proposed research** | | | |
| I/we attest that the right people, who speak for the country on which this research is being conducted, have been engaged in this proposal and agree to its endorsement, subject to the negotiated outcomes as detailed herein. | | | |
| Signature(s): |  | Date: |  |
|  |  |  |  |

How to submit

Once you have completed this form, please attach it to your [research permit application form](https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/parks/permits/science-education) to be lodged with DES.   
If this form is not provided with your permit application it will delay the application decision. Information provided as a result of this engagement process will be considered by DES in deciding your permit application. Please note that permit applications can either be granted with conditions, or refused based on relevant legislative and policy grounds.

Attachment 1: Application for endorsement guidelines

These guidelines provide suggestions for how to reach a research agreement with Rainforest Aboriginal people to ensure that endorsement is given for conducting research on their country. Researchers are encouraged to meet and negotiate an informal (e.g. a letter of support) or preferably formal research agreement with Rainforest Aboriginal people prior to the completion of the Application for endorsement form and lodgement of your permit application. The research agreement should detail the level of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement possible within existing resources, and the cultural protocols that will be followed when working on their country. The following matters are to be discussed where the research pertains to an interest under Aboriginal tradition.

Have you (please check the boxes):

Identified the researcher(s) and assistant(s) who will be carrying out the research and participating in field work   
on country?

Defined and outlined clearly the proposed the research activity, the purpose and nature of the need for Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement? i.e. the work will take place on their country.

Comprehensively explained your research aspirations to the relevant Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, and then come to a mutual agreement regarding methods of information collection, storage, access, presentation and communication?

Named the species, that may be totems or otherwise culturally significant, likely to be impacted by your research?

Asked if you will need assistance in finding certain species on country?

Provided a map showing the geographic extent of the project and justified the need for research at each specific location referred to on the map?

Identified cultural locations that must be excluded from your study area preferably on a map?

Provided visual aids to help communicate your research question(s) to Rainforest Aboriginal peoples?

Agreed on the expected outcomes and mutual benefits of this research?

Discussed and mutually agreed on the kind and level of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ involvement during the life of the proposed research?

Explained on the form how you have understood Rainforest Aboriginal peoples’ cultural requirements, aspirations and research priorities on their country, where you would like to work.

Assumed that any natural heritage is also cultural heritage and obtained written consent for the use of any culturally sensitive information?

Asked whether anyone has already registered any intellectual and/or cultural property that should be protected, and if so obtained prior, informed, written consent for its use?

Detailed the approvals process that will be followed, concerning the release of culturally sensitive information, throughout the project?

Mutually agreed on a process for reporting results of the permitted activity, including ensuring that communication of knowledge feeds back to Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and the community?

Detailed any financial or technical resources that may be available for Rainforest Aboriginal peoples to be involved in, or that could result from, the proposed permitted activity?

Provided an offer to meet if requested? Noting that relationship building and collaboration is always best in person.

Exchanged contact details for both Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and the permit applicant(s) and detailed a communication plan?

Advised Rainforest Aboriginal peoples that they may provide feedback and/or seek advice from WTMA or DES about this process, if required?

Outlined that Rainforest Aboriginal peoples have up to 28 days from the meeting day to provide any further advice to the applicant that will be added to this form, prior to its lodgment with DES?

Understood that further information provided by Rainforest Aboriginal peoples and the researcher can also be updated to DES throughout the permit assessment process (up to 40 business days post lodgement).

Ethical research readings

Researchers and research institutions associated with the WTWHA should consistently undertake their projects within the following best practice guidelines:

1. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) - requires good faith engagement and cooperation with Indigenous peoples through their own representative institutions in order to gain their free prior and informed consent (article 19) before undertaking projects that affect Indigenous peoples rights to land and resources, including exploitation of resources (article 32) (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf>).
2. The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) – guides institutions and researchers in responsible research practices; and promotes integrity in research and explains what is expected of researchers by the community (<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2007>).
3. The Convention on Biological Diversity (1993) (https://www.cbd.int/intro/) and the Nagoya Protocol (2010) – creates greater legal certainty and transparency for both providers and users of genetic resources (article 6) by establishing more predictable conditions for access to genetic resources; and helping to ensure benefit-sharing when genetic resources leave the country providing the genetic resources (<https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/import/downloads/short_paper___article_6.pdf>).
4. The AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012) - recognises that Indigenous people are also researchers, and all participants must be regarded as equal partners in a research engagement (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies>).
5. National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines Keeping Research on Track II (2017) - provides guidance on ethical conduct for research involving Indigenous people; and Keeping Research on Track provides a checklist of eight important steps in the research process, for researchers and community/organization involvement (<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/keeping-research-track>).

Attachment 2: Application for Research Endorsement feedback

Thank you for participating in our trial of the Application for Research Endorsement form and associated process. We will be using information that you provide below to help us improve the quality of the form and the outcomes of the process for all parties. This confidential feedback will be collated and actioned by both the DES and the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

The purpose of this Application for Research Endorsement is to assist researchers to achieve mutually beneficial partnerships with First Nations Peoples, the Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, of the Area. This will enable scientific research conducted in the Wet Tropics bio-cultural region to benefit from inclusion of traditional science and cultural knowledge held by Rainforest Aboriginal peoples, ensuring acknowledgement of their important role in the Area’s management.

The aim is to provide a process that encourages collaboration and involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal peoples in research that is conducted on their ancestral lands.

Please provide your answers in the spaces below

**Researcher**

**Rainforest Aboriginal Person/Group**

1. Prior to completing this process, were you involved in scientific research in the Area?

**Y  N**

1. If yes, was there collaboration with Rainforest Aboriginal peoples? What level of involvement?
2. [Contact and access]
3. [Working together on country]
4. [Full research agreement]
5. [Traditional knowledge incorporated into the science and/or applications.]
6. Please explain how the science was benefited by including this traditional knowledge.
7. Please explain how involvement in the research benefitted Rainforest Aboriginal peoples.
8. Did you encounter any barriers during the engagement/negotiation process? Relating to,
   1. [The ability or effort to contact of the right people for right country?]
   2. [Respectful communication?]
   3. [Resources to allow involvement, financial or otherwise?]
   4. [Cultural differences?]
   5. [Time pressures?]
9. What are some suggested solutions to problem(s) you might have encountered?
10. What resources did you access to help you to complete the form?
    1. [Mapping tool provided.]
    2. Advice from the Wet Tropics Management Authority, DATSIP and/or DES? (please circle).
    3. [Other resources, e.g. available through a research institution (please provide details).]
11. What other resources would help to support the gathering of information for this form?
12. Do you have any suggestions that will improve the form and/or process overall?