



Media release

5 August 2011

Rebuilding begins on cyclone-hit nature refuges

Landholders with nature refuges in North Queensland are set to receive valuable funds to repair extensive environmental damage caused by Cyclone Yasi.

A total of 29 nature refuges in cyclone-devastated areas will receive \$170,000 from the Australian Government.

Natural resource management groups NQ Dry Tropics, Terrain, and the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group are working together to support landholders by providing financial grants to assist with repair and restoration work on their refuges. NQ Dry Tropics will administer and co-ordinate the funds.

NQ Dry Tropics Grants Administrator Mark Tarttelin said nature refuges are areas of land voluntarily protected by landholders for conservation purposes.

"Nature refuges are some of the highest value environmental assets we have in north Queensland, benefiting wildlife, the land and the community," Mark said.

"When cyclonic winds swept through, they caused extensive damage, not least the loss of vital and expensive fencing that protects the biodiversity within nature refuges."

The owners of Litoria Springs at Japoonvale near Silkwood, Graham and Sue Yeoman, are planning to use their \$2,300 grant to build new walking trails in the 12 hectare nature refuge to access parts which were cut off by fallen trees.

"All our walking trails are currently blocked, so weeds and vines are starting to grow in areas that we haven't been able to access, and our irrigation pipelines are either completely bent or buried under masses of trees," Sue said.

"This money will go a long way to helping us buy materials for new walking trails, such as steps, stones, wood, and steel. It will also mean we can install new irrigation which is desperately needed at this time of year."

Mark Tarttelin said he expects the vast bulk of the funding would be used by landholders to repair fencing in order to protect refuges, in addition to restoring firebreaks and access tracks, and weed removal.

"Without this type of monetary assistance, landholders would find it very difficult to preserve the biodiversity and environmental values that nature refuge covenants seek to protect," Mark said.

"Generally, nature refuge landholders cover their own conservation costs, but in many circumstances the extent of the damage is so great that it would be unrealistic and unreasonable to expect property owners to bear all of the cost, given the environmental benefit of these areas to the wider community. As NRM groups we are pleased to be able to offer this funding support."

Funds provided for nature refuges in North Queensland will also aid in the clean up of fallen trees. The heavy loss of trees on some properties is posing a risk of fire threatening sensitive habitats such as rainforests, vine thickets and river bank vegetation.

NQ Dry Tropics' region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays. **Media contact:** Sara Lando 4722 5729 or 0466 014 728. Email: sara.lando@nqdrytropics.com.au

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