

## Natural resources are managed by people

Understanding the needs, capacities and motivations of land managers is critical to designing sound policies and programs and evaluating their impact at a national and regional scale.

Social and economic information plays an important role in natural resource management (NRM) by:

- ▶ providing context to regional planning by identifying the baseline social and economic conditions and processes which impact upon a region's and landholders' capacity to adopt sustainable management practices
- ▶ enhancing understanding of the social and economic impacts of policies, noting that impacts can be positive or negative and unevenly distributed in the community
- ▶ informing the assumptions which underpin major policy initiatives, in relation to the decision making behaviour of individuals, families and firms
- ▶ contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) initiatives.

The National Natural Resource Management Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (NM&EF) identifies the need for socio-economic indicators to monitor community and social processes relevant to or affected by NRM programs, as well as measures of the adoption of sustainable development and production techniques.<sup>1</sup>

Socio-economic indicators are also required for:

- ▶ the National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets
- ▶ the National Guidelines for Accreditation of Integrated Catchment/Regional NRM Plans
- ▶ assessments against management action targets.

### The Focus

The Socio-Economic Workplan<sup>1</sup> is focused on improving the availability of coordinated and consistent information on the:

- ▷ condition and trend of Australia's natural resources and its interaction with the social and economic environment
- ▷ factors affecting landholders decisions that should be considered by policy makers when promoting the adoption of sustainable management practices through initiatives like the NAP and NHT.

### Project aims

The project will support natural resource policy development and program management, through the provision of:

- ▷ a clear conceptual framework in which to use and interpret social and economic data
- ▷ relevant social and economic indicators for the NAP and NHT initiatives relating to
  - the capacity of land managers to adopt sustainable management practices
  - the capacity of regional groups to make NRM decisions
  - community vitality and viability in response to land degradation or declines in access to resources

<sup>1</sup> Socio-Economic Workplan—[www.nlwra.gov.au](http://www.nlwra.gov.au)

*continued overleaf*



### Project aims (continued)

- ▷ documented links between natural resource condition, land use, farm management practices and the social and economic factors that influence their adoption
- ▷ enhanced coordination of social and economic data collection and infrastructure
- ▷ reporting products which integrate social, economic and natural resource condition information.

### The Socio-Economic Workplan will:

- ▷ develop the underpinning conceptual frameworks and models which integrate the social and economic dimensions of natural resource management
- ▷ identify quantitative and qualitative indicators for tracking the achievement of NRM program outcomes
- ▷ develop standardised approaches for measuring the indicators
- ▷ identify and collate existing information pertaining to land managers and their capacity to change and adopt sustainable management practices
- ▷ identify new and additional data collection needs
- ▷ report on the status of socio-economic information infrastructure
- ▷ support reporting via:
  - a Regional Reporting Framework that provides collated information on the socio-economic indicators supporting NAP/NHT monitoring and evaluation
  - Integrative Resource Condition Reports which provide information on the condition and trend of natural resources and their interaction with the social and economic environment.

### Clients

The Socio-Economic Workplan aids natural resource management decision-makers at the national, State and in some instances regional scale by:

- ▷ improving access to existing national data collections for regional planning and trade-off analysis
- ▷ enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of national collections, particularly in the area of current management practices and the impact of government programs
- ▷ promoting the standardisation of socio-economic metadata.

### Links with existing data and information projects/initiatives

The workplan outcomes will be linked to the collation of data and information into the:

- ▷ Audit's Regional Reporting Framework for National Monitoring and Evaluation
- ▷ Audit's Integrative Resource Condition reports for the Intensive Landuse Zone, Rangelands and Coasts
- ▷ Signposts for Australian Agriculture report
- ▷ Australian Natural Resources Atlas and Data Library.

### Further Information

Go to: [www.nlwra.gov.au](http://www.nlwra.gov.au)

#### Contact:

**Karen Cody**

National Land & Water Resources Audit

Tel. (02) 6263 6072

Email: [karen.cody@nlwra.gov.au](mailto:karen.cody@nlwra.gov.au)

### Key activity areas

The National Land & Water Resources Audit has six key areas of activity all of which involve national coordination of data:

1. developing a consistent national reporting mechanism for collating natural resource information collected under the National Natural Resource Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
2. collating information to support the National State of the Environment (SoE) Report (2006)
3. developing nationally consistent, but regionally relevant integrated resource condition reports
4. facilitate reporting on the ongoing collection of natural resource information for key theme areas including those related to the National Natural Resource Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
5. reporting on National Data and Information Management (in collaboration with ANZLIC—the Spatial Information Council)
6. developing national resource assessments (as requested by clients).

This project specifically addresses activity areas one, three, four and five.