Integrated vertebrate pest management program – maintaining Cape York’s resource base for sustainable management and use

Project summary

Proponent: Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd

Value: $990,000

Project duration: 1 October 2013 – 30 June 2016

Project description

The primary objective of this project is to reduce feral pig numbers to increase the hatching success of three endangered turtle species and improve the land condition of Western Cape York Peninsula. This project will deliver integrated aerial and on-ground feral pig management involving shooting, trapping and baiting. The goal is to reduce feral pig populations by 70% each year over three years over an area of more than 820,000 hectares, and monitor these populations.

Feral pigs in Cape York Peninsula pose a significant environmental threat, increase the risk of disease transmission, and impact agricultural livelihoods. Feral pigs damage crops and pastures, increase the spread of weeds, severely degrade wetlands, impact on aquatic habitats and fauna (such as migratory birds and freshwater turtles), cause soil erosion, prey on a wide variety of native wildlife, and threaten endangered marine turtles by preying on nests and hatchlings.

Sustained 70% control measures have been shown to reduce the population to manageable levels (below replacement levels). In doing this the project will improve agricultural productivity, reduce the spread of disease and weeds, and reduce the direct and indirect impacts of feral pigs on the environment.

This project will involve integrated pest management in partnership with four west coast Cape York Peninsula communities (i.e. Napranum, Mapoon, Injinoo and Pormpuraaw), covering an area of approximately 820,000 hectares. Expert marksmen trained in platform shooting will complete aerial shooting. Licensed shooters trained specifically in this method will complete ground shooting. Baiting will be done according to practices established in the Feral Pig Control Manual (Mitchell 2008). The project will extend opportunities for feral animal abatement to Aurukun and Kowanyama as their interest and commitment to required actions are confirmed during the course of the project.

The project involves the following activities:
- targeted feral pig abatement at strategic locations, with a focus on turtle nesting beaches - control measures include aerial and ground shooting, trapping and baiting
- targeted support to stakeholders to identify priorities and program of works, including culls and awareness raising
- support for development of regional monitoring systems for feral animal abatement and turtle nesting.

Project outcomes

Long-term outcomes (5-10 years)
- Increase hatching success of three endangered turtle species and improve land condition of Western Cape York Peninsula.

Intermediate outcomes (3-5 years)
- In partnership with Indigenous ranger groups and other land managers, reduce feral pig numbers by 70% each year over three years and monitor the populations.

Further information

For further information on the ‘Integrated vertebrate pest management program – maintaining Cape York’s resource base for sustainable management and use’ project, please contact Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd.
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