

Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project

Annual Report

1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

Department of Parks and Wildlife



Department of
Parks and Wildlife



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1. Executive Summary

This annual report for the Dirk Hartog Island (DHI) National Park Ecological Restoration Project (the project) covers the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.

A total of \$1,931,978 of Net Conservation Benefits (NCB) funds was expended against the \$2,274,721 NCB budget available for the project in 2014/15, leaving a budget surplus of \$342,743; of which \$32,350 was retained as project contingency. The budget surplus has been reallocated over 2015/16 with \$93,655 carried over to when committed expenditure will be processed and when rescheduled and additional works will be implemented, with the remaining \$249,088 being retained as project contingency.

Ten of the 13 milestones scheduled for completion in 2014/15 were completed. The focus during 2014/15 was on milestones and activities / actions relating to removing feral animals and stabilising and recovering fauna habitat on the island, which is essential for success of future fauna reintroductions. These actions included; construction of the cat fence, intensive cat monitoring and trapping programs south of the cat fence; completion of infrastructure and monitoring preparation works north of the cat fence prior to the second aerial cat baiting program, goat and sheep monitoring and eradication and weed monitoring and control. Other key activities included desktop, field and analysis work for evaluation of vegetation recovery, monitoring of four extant threatened fauna species on DHI, biosecurity and community engagement.

Three of the 13 milestones scheduled for completion in 2014/15 were partially completed and finalisation of these has been rescheduled to 2015/16. The partial completion of these milestones, being 'complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite for the cat eradication team', 'completion of the extant threatened fauna on DHI (three bird and one reptile species) monitoring surveys', and 'completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts' in 2014/15 is unlikely to impact on overall project delivery.

In 2015/16 the milestones / actions will continue to build on those from 2014/15 and include; deploying specialist detector dogs and their handlers, south of the fence, to detect the presence and location of cats so they can be destroyed and/or further independently verifying the absence of cats; intensive monitoring and trapping programs north of the fence to determine presence or absence of cats, with control implemented as required; confirmation of the eradication of sheep from the island and goat monitoring, with control implemented if required. Other key activities will include: completion of a black rat survey; weed control, eradication and monitoring works; acquisition of satellite imagery and field verification and completion of the statistical analysis report on vegetation change. There will also be monitoring and taxonomic work on four extant threatened fauna species on DHI and further ongoing community engagement.

The cat eradication program is progressing well. Only one set of cat tracks was recently detected south of the cat fence and it is believed approximately 15 cats remain north of the fence, as determined by recent sign searches and camera information. These cats will be removed during 2015/16 as per the strategy used in 2014/15. The Department is confident that the island will be declared cat free by 30 June 2018 and therefore seeks the NCB Advisory Board's preliminary support for and advice of submission requirements to enable implementation of Stage 2 of the project. In addition, the project requests financial support for the unfunded Stage 1, Group B activity 'monitor source populations' in 2016/2017 and 2017/18 to enable fauna reconstruction to proceed in the year following confirmation of cat eradication.

No significant occurrences that may affect the Department's ability to complete the project are anticipated. Consideration of provision of the first portion of the 2015/16 funding (being \$809,409) is therefore being sought.

2. Introduction

The Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project (the project) is funded by the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefit Trust Account. The then Department of Environment and Conservation (now Department of Parks and Wildlife) sought the Gorgon Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits (NCB) Advisory Board's endorsement for the project in late 2011. The NCB Advisory Board endorsed the project based on the project summary and budget provided in the *Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project Summary (November 2011)*. On 9 February 2012 the Minister for Environment approved funding of \$8,545,162 over seven years (2011/12 to 2017/18) for the first stage of the project.

The November 2011 proposal included a statement that *"A more detailed submission will be provided to the Board in November 2012 outlining budgets, timeframes and milestones for each of the project elements for 2012/13 to 2017/18. The Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project Revised Funding Submission from 2013 (November 2012) was endorsed by the NCB Advisory Board and on 5 February 2013 the Minister for Environment approved the resubmission with additional funding of \$2,991,947 for 'Group A elements'.*

As requested by the Minister, the August 2012 project plan was updated to reflect the additional works and increased budget. The revised project plan was endorsed by the NCB Advisory Board in May 2013.

On 15 June 2014, the Director Science and Conservation approved the 2014/15 Detailed Work Plan, which outlines the implementation of 10 NCB funded project elements in accordance with the November 2012 revised funding submission and the May 2013 revised project plan. Project elements to be implemented include Management and Coordination, Reporting and Auditing, Cat Eradication, Impact Assessment, Sheep and Goat Eradication, Black Rats, Weed Management, Vegetation Restoration, Fauna Reconstruction and Community Engagement. Table 1 below shows the modified NCB budget for 2014/15 to 2017/18 taking into account the 2011/12 to 2013/14 budget variance.

To meet reporting requirements for the project, an annual report detailing performance of the project shall be submitted to the NCB Advisory Board via the Director General, acting as the NCB Account Administrator, following the close of each financial year of the project term. In addition, three quarterly updates will be submitted to the NCB Account Administrator in the month following each quarter (October, January and April) for prompt transmission to the NCB Advisory Board.

This report fulfils the annual reporting requirements for the 2014/15 financial year.

Table 1: 2014/15 to 2017/18 NCB budget taking into account the 2011/12 to 2013/14 budget variance

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
Total NCB Budget (Nov 2012 resubmission)	\$1,515,438	\$1,906,564	\$1,550,897	\$1,785,844	\$1,628,548	\$1,589,627	\$1,560,191	\$11,537,109
Sheep and Goat Eradication, implement the sheep and goat eradication plan as outlined in the Nov 2012 resubmission.		-\$245,000	\$245,000					
Impact Assessment, employ botanist during the establishment of the cat monitoring tracks and barrier fence as outlined in the Nov 2012 resubmission (reallocation of 11/12 variance).			\$50,000					
Weed Management, complete weed control/eradication and monitoring works identified in the weed management plan as outlined in the Nov 2012 resubmission (reallocation of 11/12 variance).			\$30,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	
2011/12 variance carried over into 2012/13 to meet rescheduled milestones as detailed in the 2012/13 annual report.		\$1,127,285						
Fauna Reconstruction, implement Group B activity 'Undertake monitoring of extant threatened fauna on DHI' (reallocation of 12/13 variance).			\$21,300	\$22,000	\$22,660	\$23,360	\$24,000	
2012/13 variance carried over into 2013/14 to meet rescheduled milestones as detailed in the 2012/13 annual report.			\$1,322,313					
Total NCB budget including 2011/12 to 2012/13 reallocated variance		\$2,788,849	\$3,219,510	\$1,822,844	\$1,666,208	\$1,627,987	\$1,599,191	
Expenditure	\$248,153	\$1,353,216	\$2,070,924					
Variance	\$1,267,285	\$1,435,633	\$1,148,586					
Reallocation of 2013/14 variance:								
Management and Coordination, reallocation of project contingency for the installation of three moorings at DHI, spare propellers and wash down ramp.			-\$249 ¹	\$58,520				(\$58,520 ²)
Reporting and Auditing, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for additional budget requirement in 2014/15.			-\$4,000 -\$3,664 ¹	\$4,000				
Cat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for the rescheduled milestones, installation of the cat fence and northern camp construction, as detailed in the second quarter update (Dec 13).			-\$210,000	\$210,000				
Cat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to complete the unmet 2013/14 works.			-\$40,000 -\$302,655 ¹	\$40,000				
Impact Assessment, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for the rescheduled milestone, Aboriginal site monitoring, as detailed in the second quarter update (Dec 13).			-\$15,000	\$15,000				
Sheep and Goat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for expenditure made late in the financial year.			-\$32,396	\$32,396				

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
Sheep and Goat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to fund a detector dog contract to detect the presence and location of goats and/or further independently verify the absence of goats.			-\$200,000			\$70,000	\$130,000	(\$200,000)
Black Rats, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for expenditure made late in the financial year.			-\$621	\$621				
Weed Management, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to complete the unmet 2013/14 works.			-\$15,000 -\$14,831 ^{*1}	\$15,000				
Vegetation Restoration, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for additional budget requirement in 2014/15.			-\$1,191	\$1,191				
Fauna Reconstruction, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for additional budget requirement in 2014/15.			-\$5,530	\$5,530				
Community Engagement, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to meet unmet project works.			-\$19,450 -\$13,985 ^{*1}	\$19,450				
Management and Coordination, reallocation of project contingency to employ a local Aboriginal trainee as a full time crew member and to assist with on ground project work.				\$38,737	\$71,240	\$75,172	\$77,427	(\$262,576 ^{*2})
Community Engagement, reallocation of project contingency for the continuation of the element 2015/16 to 2017/18; pending review of the community engagement strategy.					\$87,960	\$92,865	\$92,045	(\$272,870 ^{*2})
Project contingency			-\$270,014	\$11,432				
Total of 2013/14 reallocated variance				\$451,877	\$159,200	\$238,037	\$299,472	\$1,148,586
Total NCB Budget (including variance)				\$2,274,721	\$1,825,408	\$1,866,024	\$1,898,663	\$7,864,816
Total NCB budget including 2011/12 to 2013/14 expenditure								\$11,537,109

^{*1} Element savings identified late in the financial year were returned as project contingency

^{*2} Activity funded from 2013/14 project contingency

3. Commentary

3.1. Dirk Hartog Island Ecological Restoration Project Operating Account

The Dirk Hartog Island Ecological Restoration Project Operating Account (the Operating Account) was created in August 2012. In 2014/15 the fourth instalment of \$1,746,520 was journalled into the Operating Account from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account over two progress payments (December 2014 and May 2015). Additionally, interest of \$69,335 was accrued in the Operating Account in 2014/15.

For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 the project expended \$1,931,978.08 of NCB funds and on 30 June 2015 revenue was transferred from the Operating Account to refund actual costs within the Department's accounts.

The payment of the first half of the 2015/16 instalment of \$809,409, from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefit Account, is due to be made on 1 October 2015 subject to approval from the Director General, acting as Account Administrator, following receipt of advice from the NCB Advisory Board.

A summary of the Operating Account for 2011/12 - 2014/15 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of the Dirk Hartog Island Ecological Restoration Project Operating Account Activity 2011/12 -2014/15

	Income	Expenditure	Closing balance (30 June 15)
2011/12 instalment from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account	\$1,267,285 ^{*1}		
2012/13 instalment from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account	\$2,294,288		
Interest 2012/13	\$26,166.26		
Expenditure 2012/13		\$1,353,216.13	
2013/14 instalment from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account	\$1,609,634		
Interest 2013/14	\$75,141.33		
Expenditure 2013/14		\$2,070,923.94	
2014/15 instalment from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account	\$1,746,520		
Interest 2014/15	\$69,334.94		
Expenditure 2014/15		\$1,931,978.08	
Total	\$7,088,369.53	\$5,356,118.15	\$1,732,251.38

^{*1} The 2011/12 instalment less the 2011/12 expenditure of \$248,153. The Account Administrator approved the recoup of 2011/12 NCB expenditure from the Barrow Island Net Conservation Benefits Account as the transfer of the 2011/12 instalment, dependent on finalisation of the initial project plan, was not expected until August 2012.

3.2. Financial performance 2014/15

A summary of the project's financial performance for 2014/15 is provided in Table 3. Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed NCB expenditure and Appendix 2 for detailed in-kind expenditure.

3.2.1. NCB expenditure

For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 the project expended \$1,963,916 in the Departmental account created specifically for the project, of which \$31,938 was

recouped from the Department (\$16,920 for Government Regional Officer Housing and \$15,018 for hire of the project barge) and \$1,931,978 was refunded from the Operating Account.

The total NCB budget available for 2014/15 was \$2,274,721 as verified within Table 1.

The project reported a NCB budget surplus of \$342,743 for 2013/14, a variation of 15%; of which \$32,350 was retained as project contingency. The remaining budget surplus of \$310,393 is a result of expenditure committed late in the financial year that was not able to be processed before financial deadlines (\$25,730); unmet project works including the purchase of cat eradication equipment (\$36,925); and the achievement of savings late in the financial year (\$247,738).

The \$342,743 budget surplus has been reallocated over 2015/16. \$93,655 was carried over into 2015/16 when committed expenditure will be processed (\$25,730), rescheduled project works will be met (\$36,925), and when additional works will be implemented in Management and Coordination (\$30,000 for barge maintenance) and Community Engagement (\$1,000 for publication costs). The remaining budget surplus of \$249,088 has been retained as project contingency. Table 4 shows the modified NCB budget for 2015/16 to 2017/18 taking into account the 2014/15 budget surplus.

Table 3 shows that NCB project funding to the end of the current financial year (2011/12-2014/15) has a variance of \$1,154,472. This includes an additional variance of \$811,729 to that shown in the 2014/15 NCB funding as project savings were carried into 2015/16-2017/18 to implement additional activities including the continuation of weed management works (\$45,000), implementation of the fauna reconstruction activity (\$70,020), funding a dog detector contract to confirm goat eradication (\$200,000) funding employment of an Aboriginal trainee primarily to assist the Operations Officer (\$223,839) and continuation of the Community Engagement element (\$272,870). Table 1 shows the reallocation of 2011/12-2013/14 variance over 2014/15 to 2017/18.

3.2.2. In-kind expenditure

For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 the Department contributed \$420,298 in-kind funds to the project against an anticipated budget of \$502,065, a variation of 16%. This included \$121,332 for assistance with overall project works, improving island infrastructure, ranger patrols, island clean-up activities, rubbish removal and logistical support for the aerial goat eradication program; \$83,549 for construction of district accommodation/operation base and \$215,417 for implementation of the cat eradication and fauna reconstruction elements. The variation resulted from unrealistic budgeted salary contributions in the funding submission of \$100,000 per year with a similar annual variation anticipated for the remaining years of the project.

Table 3 shows that in-kind funding to the end of the current financial year (2011/12-2014/15) has a variance of \$1,609,985. This includes an additional variance of \$1,528,218 to that shown in the 2014/15 in-kind funding. This primarily relates to the \$1,000,000 budgeted to construct the proposed operations base (budgeted 2012/13) that will not eventuate in the foreseeable future due to agency budget adjustments from Government as outlined in the 2012 resubmission. Furthermore, the \$132,000 budget proposed to be carried into 2013/14 for the operations base and island infrastructure planning works is no longer available to the project due to financial constraints affecting the Department's overall budget situation as outlined in the first quarter update (September 2013); and the \$312,969 for salary and associated staff cost expenditure (budgeted 2011/12) did not occur as the project started later than anticipated.

3.2.3. Interest accrued in the Operating Account

\$170,643 of interest has accrued in the Operating account during the period 1 August 2012 to 30 June 2015 (refer to Table 2). The project has retained this interest to fund Stage 1, Group B activity 'Monitor source populations of founder animals' in

2016/17; budgeted at \$338,600 (this figure has been reviewed and increased to that provided in the November 2012 submission). Monitoring source populations of founder animals in 2016/17 and 2017/18 is considered essential to enable fauna translocations in Stage 2 of the project to proceed in the year following confirmation of cat eradication; confirmation is anticipated by 30 June 2018. Excluding any major unforeseen expenditure the Department is confident that additional savings and interest will be obtained over 2015/16 to fully fund this activity in 2016/17. Additional budget will most likely be required to fund the activity in 2017/18 (estimated at \$347,100, this figure also reviewed and increased to that provided in the November 2012 submission), as defined in section 4 of the report.

Table 3: Summary of expenditure against the Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project

Item	Budget	YTD actual expenditure	Variance	Percentage variance
Overall project funding (NCB)	\$11,537,109	\$5,604,271		
Overall project funding (in-kind)	\$5,227,643	\$1,900,718		
Project funding to end of current financial year 2011/12-2014/15 (NCB)	\$6,758,743	\$5,604,271	\$1,154,472	17%
Project funding to end of current financial year 2011/12-2014/15(in-kind)	\$3,510,730	\$1,900,718	\$1,609,985	46%
2014/15Funding (NCB)	\$2,274,721 ^{*1}	\$1,931,978	\$342,743	15%
2014/15 Funding (in-kind)	\$502,065	\$420,298	\$81,767	16%

^{*1} 2014/15 budget takes into account the 2011/12 to 2013/14 reallocated budget variation as verified in Table 1.

Table 4: 2015/16 to 2017/18 NCB budget taking into account the 2014/15 budget variance

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
Total NCB Budget (Nov 2012 resubmission)	\$1,515,438	\$1,906,564	\$1,550,897	\$1,785,844	\$1,628,548	\$1,589,627	\$1,560,191	\$11,537,109
Sheep and Goat Eradication, implement the sheep and goat eradication plan as outlined in the Nov 2012 revised submission.		-\$245,000	\$245,000					
Impact Assessment, employ botanist during the establishment of the cat monitoring tracks and barrier fence as outlined in the Nov 2012 revised submission (reallocation of 11/12 variance).			\$50,000					
Weed Management, complete weed control/eradication and monitoring works identified in the weed management plan as outlined in the Nov 2012 revised submission (reallocation of 11/12 variance).			\$30,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	
2011/12 variance carried over into 2012/13 to meet rescheduled milestones as detailed in the 2012/13 annual report.		\$1,127,285						
Fauna Reconstruction, implement Group B activity 'Undertake monitoring of extant threatened fauna on DHI' (reallocation of 12/13 variance).			\$21,300	\$22,000	\$22,660	\$23,360	\$24,000	
2012/13 variance carried over into 2013/14 to meet rescheduled milestones as detailed in the 2012/13 annual report.			\$1,322,313					
Sheep and Goat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to fund a detector dog contract to detect the presence and location of goats and/or further independently verify the absence of goats (reallocation of 13/14 variance).						\$70,000	\$130,000	
Management and Coordination, reallocation of project contingency to employ a local Aboriginal trainee as a full time crew member and to assist with on ground project work (reallocation of 13/14 variance)				\$38,737	\$71,240	\$75,172	\$77,427	
Community Engagement, reallocation of project contingency for the continuation of the element 2015/16 to 2017/18 (reallocation of 13/14 variance).					\$87,960	\$92,865	\$92,045	
2013/14 variance carried over into 2014/15 to meet rescheduled milestones as detailed in the 2013/14 annual report				\$413,140				
Total NCB budget including 2011/12 to 2012/13 reallocated variance		\$2,788,849	\$3,219,510	\$2,274,721	\$1,825,408	\$1,886,024	\$1,898,663	
Expenditure	\$248,153	\$1,353,216	\$2,070,924	\$1,931,978				
Variance	\$1,267,285	\$1,435,633	\$1,148,586	\$342,743				
Reallocation of 2014/15 variance:								
Management and Coordination, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for additional barge maintenance costs in 2015/16.				-\$30,000 -\$78,747 ^{*1}	\$30,000			
Reporting and Auditing, the element's budget surplus was returned to project contingency.				-\$5,893 ^{*1}				

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
Cat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus to purchase cat eradication equipment unable to be purchased in 2014/15 due to lack of suitable storage.				-\$36,925	\$36,925			
Impact Assessment, increase budget from project savings to cover genuine over expenditure.				\$49 ^{*2}				
Sheep and Goat Eradication, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for expenditure made late in the financial year.				-\$13,000 -\$94,441 ^{*1}	\$13,000			
Weed Management, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for expenditure made late in the financial year.				-\$12,730	\$12,730			
Vegetation Restoration, the element's budget surplus was returned to project contingency.				-\$554 ^{*1}				
Fauna Reconstruction, the element's budget surplus was returned to project contingency.				-\$12,958 ^{*1}				
Community Engagement, reallocation of the element's budget surplus for additional budget requirement in 2015/16.				-\$1,000 -\$24,194 ^{*1}	\$1,000			
Project contingency				-\$32,350	\$249,088			
Total of 2014/15 reallocated variance					\$342,743	\$0	\$0	\$342,743
Total NCB Budget (including variance)					\$2,168,151	\$1,866,024	\$1,898,663	\$5,932,838
Total NCB budget including 2011/12 to 2014/15 expenditure								\$11,537,109

^{*1} Element savings identified late in the financial year were returned as project contingency

^{*2} Activity to be funded from 2014/15 project contingency

3.3. Milestone performance 2014/15

Table 5 provides summary information of the milestone performance for the project for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. The table shows that of the 13 milestones scheduled for completion in 2014/15, as specified in the May 2013 revised project plan or as rescheduled in previous updates, 10 milestones were completed, and there were three milestones that were unable to be completed. The uncompleted milestones were 'complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite for the cat eradication team', 'completion of the extant threatened fauna on DHI (three bird and one reptile species) monitoring surveys, and report' and 'completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts.'

The milestone 'complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite' is mainly complete with the flooring to be laid and a fit out undertaken prior to it being used as a secondary field base.

The milestone 'completion of the extant threatened fauna on DHI (three bird and one reptile species) monitoring surveys, and report' was partially completed with the threatened bird and reptile surveys being completed in September 2014 and April 2015 respectively. The threatened bird preliminary report was completed in July 2015 with the threatened reptile report to be completed by 31 October 2015.

The milestone 'completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts' has been rescheduled to 30 June 2016 as further sampling and analysis is required to clarify relationships and conservation status of each species.

In accordance with the May 2013 revised project plan, the Director General, acting as Account Administrator, retains the right to pay all or part of an instalment notwithstanding that a milestone has not been completed. In exercising this discretion, the Director General shall consider any advice received from the Department and the NCB Advisory Board in relation to the milestone that has not been achieved. The Department recommends that the first half of the 2015/16 annual instalment is paid on the 1 October 2015 (\$809,409) as the three milestones rescheduled for completion during 2015/16 are close to completion or will be completed by 30 June 2016 and will not adversely affect the Department's ability to complete the project.

Table 5: Summary of milestone performance, during 2014/15, by project element

Project element	2014/15 Milestone	Completion date	Date milestone achieved
Management and Coordination	Installation of three barge moorings at DHI (originally a 2013/14 milestone).	31 Dec 13; rescheduled to 31 Aug 14	23 Aug 14
Reporting and Auditing	Submission of the 2013/14 annual report to the Director General, for prompt transmission to the NCB Advisory Board.	31 Aug 14	12 Aug 14
	Presentation of three quarterly updates to the Director General, for prompt transmission to the NCB Advisory Board.	31 Oct 14 31 Jan 15 30 Apr 15	22 Oct 14 20 Jan 15 24 Apr 15
	Preparation of a detailed work plan for 2015/16 to be approved by the Director Science and Conservation.	30 Jun 15	30 Jun 15
Impact Assessment	Completion of an Aboriginal site monitoring survey prior to ground disturbance on the cat fence alignment.	31 Mar 14; rescheduled to 30 Sep 14	11 July 14

Project element	2014/15 Milestone	Completion date	Date milestone achieved
Cat Eradication	Construction of cat fence completed (originally a 2013/14 milestone).	31 Mar 14; rescheduled to 30 Sep 14	2 Sep 14
	Complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite for the cat eradication team (originally a 2013/14 milestone).	30 Jun 14; rescheduled to 30 Apr 15	Rescheduled to 31 Dec 15; no risk to the project.
Sheep and Goat Eradication	Confirmation of eradication of sheep from the island (originally a 2013/14 milestone, rescheduled to 31 Dec 2014 in the 2013/14 annual report). Rescheduled to 30 June 2016 in the first quarter update (September 2014).	30 Jun 14; rescheduled to 30 Jun 16	On target
Black Rats	Completion of a black rat survey.	30 Jun 15	The 2015 survey was cancelled.
Weed Management	Complete annual weed control/eradication works and monitor Weed Surveillance Areas for 'new to island' weed species.	30 Jun 15	30 Jun 15
Vegetation Restoration	Acquisition of remote sensing monitoring for vegetation restoration.	30 Jun 15	30 Jun 15
Fauna Reconstruction	Completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts.	30 Jun 15	Rescheduled to 30 Jun 16; no risk to the project.
	Completion of the monitoring surveys, and report on the extant threatened fauna on DHI (three bird and one reptile species).	30 Jun 15	Rescheduled to 31 Oct 15; no risk to the project.
Community Engagement	Review the community engagement strategy.	30 Jun 15	30 Jun 15

3.4. Outputs reporting 2014/15

Major outputs and outcomes achieved for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 include:

Management and Coordination

- Two steering committee meetings were held on 11 August 2014 and 25 February 2015.
- Two management committee meetings were held on 4 September 2014 and 4 February 2015.
- Three environmentally sensitive moorings were installed on DHI, at Herald Bay, Tetrodon Loop and Turtle Bay, using the project barge on 23 August 2014.
- One presentation made to the NCB Advisory Board on 21 August 2014, discussing project implementation and issues encountered during 2013/14.
- Two ABC radio interviews were conducted on the 16 October 2014 and 25 June 2015, outlining the overall project and detailing achievements to date.
- Cyclone rated tie-down points were installed at the Shark Bay recreation centre in January 2015 to secure the barge during storm events. They successfully secured the barge during cyclone Olwyn in March 2015.
- The Aboriginal trainee, based in Denham, commenced on the 9 March 2015.
- The DHI biosecurity implementation plan was forwarded to stakeholders and made available to the community on 17 March 2015.

- The Regional Lifestyle Magazine (Autumn 2015 edition), which was inserted into a local south-west newspaper, mentioned the project in an article promoting the Dirk Hartog Island Eco Lodge.

Reporting and Auditing

- 2013/14 annual report submitted to the Director General's office on 12 August 2014.
- Three quarter updates submitted to the Director General's office on 22 October 2014, 20 January 2015 and 24 April 2015.
- 2015/16 Detailed Work Plan was endorsed by the Director Science and Conservation on 30 June 2015. The plan demonstrates that all milestones as committed in the May 2013 project plan will be achieved and budget expended.

Cat Eradication

- The construction of the cat fence was completed on 2 September 2014.
- Seven cats were removed south of the cat fence and two along the northern side of the fence during the period 1 September 2014 to 13 October 2014. No feral cats have been located on the 61 monitoring cameras set south of this fence since this period to 30 June 2015. The monitoring cameras and access tracks will continue to be routinely monitored over 2015/16.
- Only one set of cat tracks was detected south of the fence, during the mid-June 2015 aerial goat shoot operation, since the last cats were removed in mid-October 2014. This site and surrounding area will be extensively searched by departmental staff and the detector dogs and their handlers to ensure identification and removal. Additionally, extra cameras will be added to the network to maximise detection probability.
- The monitoring points and connecting access tracks north of the cat fence were completed in April 2015.
- The second aerial cat baiting operation was conducted in the last week of May 2015.
- Only one of the five radio-collared cats, present prior to the second baiting program, died following bait consumption. Post-baiting data from the 103 camera traps is still being collated and will be used in conjunction with radio-collared returns to determine baiting impact. The 2015 baiting result was likely influenced by the cyclonic rainfall which resulted in seed set on buffel grass and spinifex which resulted in significant increases in mouse and other invertebrate abundance immediately prior to the baiting program. However, due to the success of the May 2014 aerial baiting program, it is believed that a limited number of cats (a population of approximately 15 cats) remain north of the cat fence as determined by recent sign searches and camera information. These cats will be removed during 2015/16 as per the strategy used in 2014/15.
- The intensive monitoring program, of the 103 monitoring cameras and visual cat sign along the access tracks and beaches (footprints and scats), commenced north of the cat fence in mid June 2015.
- Six specialist detector dogs and their handlers arrived at DHI on 20 June 2015 and commenced training and familiarisation with the local environment and conditions unique to the island. The 22,000 hectare area south of the cat fence will be systematically searched for wind-borne or ground cat scents during July 2015.
- The northern campsite has been constructed with finishing touches to be completed prior to it being used as a secondary field base.
- Two manuscripts published and two in press:
 - Koch, K., Algar, D. and Schwenk, K. (2014), Population structure and management of invasive cats on an Australian island. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 78: 968-975. doi: 10.1002/jwmg.739.

- Deller, M. (2013). The role of marine species in the diet of the feral cat, *Felis catus*, on Dirk Hartog Island: a dietary analysis. Bachelor of Science (Conservation Biology and Management) SCIE4501-4 FNAS Research Thesis Faculty of Science, University of Western Australia.
- Deller, M., Mills, H.R., Hamilton, N. and Algar, D. (in press). Diet of feral cats, *Felis catus*, on Dirk Hartog Island. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia*.
- Algar, D. and Johnston, M. (in press). Eradication of feral cats from Western Australian islands: success stories. National Feral Cat Workshop, Canberra 21-22 April 2015.
- Two media articles have been published summarising the genetic analysis work to determine the feral cat's population structure on the island, one on the internet site ScienceNetwork Western Australia (November 2014) and the other in the Midwest Times (January 2015).

Impact Assessment

- The Aboriginal site monitoring survey, prior to ground disturbance on the cat fence alignment was completed on 11 July 2014.

Sheep and Goat Eradication

- Three aerial monitoring/shoot operations were conducted, each over five full days of aerial observation. In total, 25 non-Judas goats were removed; 19 goats were removed in October/November 2014, 5 goats were removed in February 2015 and 1 goat was removed in June 2015. It is important to note that no Judas goats were pregnant or had offspring in the last two aerial operations. The entire island was covered during each aerial monitoring operation, using a grid formation, to ensure efficacy, in addition to radio tracking the collared 'Judas' goats. In addition, no sheep were observed for the sixth consecutive aerial operation since the last two were shot (February 2013).
- No goats or sheep were detected on the motion sensing cameras, or their tracks or scats observed on tracks set-up for the cat eradication program south of the cat fence.
- No un-collared goats or sheep were observed on the motion sensing cameras at the goat monitoring watering points since the last five were photographed in February 2015 (all five goats were confirmed as removed in the February 2015 aerial shoot program).

Black Rats

- The 2015 black rat survey was cancelled as black rats had not been found on the island in 2011 and 2013 or the adjacent mainland in 2014. They are known to reside at Kalbarri and Carnarvon but no populations have been recorded between these localities. The surveys will be conducted biennially, as proposed in the original submission, due to the unlikely possibility that black rats are introduced to and become established on the island. The next survey is planned for May 2016.

Weed Management

- All weed management areas for the five eradicate (six locations) and three control species (eleven locations) were inspected in August/September 2014 and June 2015 with control implemented as required.
- No 'new to the island' weed species were identified in the 25 weed surveillance areas identified across the island.

Vegetation Restoration

- The 2013/14 remote sensing monitoring report was completed in September 2014. Changes in vegetation cover across the island were assessed using Landsat satellite imagery captured between 1988 and 2013, then validated in the field over 27 sites in April 2014. A map identifying areas of vegetation cover change since destocking (using the baseline period 1988-2008) was created. Results suggest that 20% of DHI had experienced an increase in vegetation cover, 74% of DHI experienced no change and 2% of DHI recorded a decrease (bare ground at 4%); with field validation indicating that the increase is mainly attributed to an increase density of buffel grass due to reduced grazing pressure, but that increases in cover from native species were also evident.
- The 2015 Rapideye imagery and the 2014 Landsat imagery was obtained in March 2015, statistical analysis of the vegetation cover change post destocking and goat control continued and field validation was conducted in May 2015. The statistical analysis report will be completed in August 2015. Preliminary results suggest that 28% of DHI had experienced an increase in vegetation cover, 66% of DHI experienced no change and 3% of DHI recorded a decrease (bare ground at 4%).

Fauna Reconstruction

- The threatened bird survey on DHI, including the collection of genetic material for DNA analysis, was completed in September 2014; with the preliminary report produced in July 2015. The report summarised that a portion of the sites (15 of 34) established in 2013 were resurveyed with threatened birds found in proportions broadly comparable to the 2013 survey. Additionally, genetic material was collected from two species with preliminary results indicating that the Dirk Hartog Island field wren may not be genetically distinct from mainland populations of the species, however further analysis is required to clarify relationships and conservation status of each species.
- The threatened reptile survey on DHI was completed in April 2015. The accompanying report will be completed by 31 October 2015.

Community Engagement

- Seven articles were published in the Shark Bay local newsletter 'The Inscription Post' between July 2014 and April 2015 increasing local knowledge, appreciation and support for the project including information on the project barge, cat eradication program, aerial goat shoot operations, the 2014 black rat survey, information on the DHI celebration day and the May 2014 beach clean-up.
- The Shark Bay World Heritage Area website www.sharkbay.org was updated with the inclusion of biosecurity and weed messages, three updates on the goat and cat eradication programs, inclusion of the new Dirk Hartog Island National Park and island biosecurity brochures, the provision of links to four published reports and one internal report on the project.
- An interpretive flyer with updated project information was produced and distributed in September 2014.
- One presentation was made to the Malgana Working Group in September 2014, updating the group on the project.
- The second community open day in partnership with the Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation was held on the project barge (Denham foreshore) on 1 November 2014. About 130 people attended the event, with more than half being Shark Bay locals. This was a good turnout for Denham and the event was considered successful in achieving the objectives of fostering awareness and support for the project and improving relationships with the Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation.

- The project's biosecurity sign was installed at the Denham boat ramp in November 2014.
- The Shark Bay World Heritage Area brochure which included a summary of the project was produced in December 2014.
- An electronic information pack was developed in February 2015 which is emailed to DHI visitors with their camping permit and receipt.
- The new Dirk Hartog Island and island biosecurity brochures were printed and distributed in March 2015.
- Shark Bay World Heritage signs that incorporate Dirk Hartog Island biosecurity messages were installed at the Denham airport in March 2015.
- A photo book detailing the project's achievements since commencement in February 2012 was produced in May 2015. It has been distributed to the Dirk Hartog Island Lodge, the DPaW Denham office, Bush Heritage Hamelin Station Stay, Steep Point rangers, Shark Bay Community Resource Centre, Shire of Shark Bay office, Discovery Centre and Monkey Mia.
- The project's community engagement strategy (2012/13-2014/15) was revised in June 2015, as committed in the November 2012 revised funding submission. The revised strategy identifies critical key activities to be implemented from 2015/16 to 2016/17 to improve or maintain community and stakeholder support for the project, and to ensure willing compliance with biosecurity measures. Community engagement remains a vital part of the project with the strategy to be implemented each year of the project through to 30 June 2018. The project has set aside project contingency to fund the community engagement element from 2015/16 to 2017/18 as budgeted in the November 2012 revised funding submission.

3.5. Planned activities 2015/16

The following rescheduled milestones from 2014/15 will be achieved:

- Complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite for the cat eradication team (31 December 2015).
- Completion of 2014/15 report on the extant threatened fauna (reptile) on DHI (31 October 2015).
- Confirmation of eradication of sheep from the island (30 June 2016).
- Completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts (30 June 2016).

In addition, the following activities are proposed for 2015/16:

- Management, coordination and reporting of the project will continue to be facilitated with project supervisors, Steering Committee and the Management Committee ensuring that the project's goal, objectives, timelines, milestones and budgets are achieved on time and to a high standard.
- Deployment of specialist detector dogs and their handlers south of the cat fence, to detect the presence and location of cats so they can be destroyed and/or further independently verify the absence of cats.
- Continuation of the intensive monitoring program both north and south of the cat fence to determine the presence or absence of cats; trapping or hand baiting programs will be implemented as required.
- The goat and sheep monitoring work will continue with aerial surveillance programs planned for spring 2015, summer 2016 and autumn 2016. Additionally, motion sensing cameras will be used to detect the presence or otherwise of goats, one at each of the three watering points and the cat camera network.

- The black rat survey will be continued on DHI with an ongoing awareness program for the communities of Monkey Mia, Denham and Useless Loop.
- The weed control, eradication and monitoring program will continue in accordance with the Weed Action Plan.
- Landsat imagery for 2015 will be acquired with field validation to occur in April 2016. Statistical analysis of the vegetation cover change from high resolution (2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015) and Landsat imagery (1988-2015) will continue with the report to be produced in August 2016. The statistical analysis report for the 2014/15 work will be produced in August 2015.
- Completion of baseline distribution maps for four extant threatened fauna species on DHI (including the rufous field-wren, southern emu-wren, white-winged fairy-wren and the western spiny-tailed skink) with genetic work to facilitate resolution of the taxonomic uncertainty surrounding three of these species.
- Collation and analysis of 30 years of threatened mammal abundance data on Bernier and Dorre islands to determine population abundance and factors that may affect population fluctuations of potential founder animals for Dirk Hartog Island.
- Continued implementation of the revised community engagement strategy.

4. Conclusion

A total of \$2,352,276 was expended against the Dirk Hartog Island National Park Ecological Restoration Project for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015; including \$1,931,978 of NCB funds and \$420,298 of in-kind funds.

The project reported year to date expenditure of NCB funds at 15% of the year to date budget, a variance of \$342,743 in under expenditure; of this \$32,350 was retained as project contingency. The budget surplus has been reallocated over 2015/16 leaving project contingency of \$249,088.

Ten of 13 milestones scheduled for completion in 2014/15 were completed, and three of the 13 milestones scheduled for completion in 2014/15 - 'complete construction of temporary accommodation at the northern campsite for the cat eradication team', 'completion of the extant threatened fauna on DHI (three bird and one reptile species) monitoring survey and report' and 'completion of the report on the level of genetic divergence of the extant threatened fauna from mainland counterparts' - were unable to be met and have been rescheduled to 2015/16. The northern campsite has been constructed with flooring to be laid and a fit out undertaken by 31 December 2015; the outstanding threatened fauna (reptile) report will be completed by 31 October 2015, and the report on the extant threatened fauna genetic report will be completed by 30 June 2016. The incomplete milestones are unlikely to adversely affect the Department's ability to complete the project as they will be completed prior to the milestones that are dependent on their completion.

The cat eradication program has been successful to date, with likely eradication south of the cat fence and a limited number of cats existing north of the fence (a population of approximately 15 cats). On-ground feral cat eradication is on track to be achieved by 30 June 2016 with the dog detector contract, to independently verify cat eradication north of the fence, to be completed in July 2016. The program will then enter the two year surveillance period to be able to confirm that the island is cat free. The Department is confident that cat eradication will be confirmed by 30 June 2018 and therefore seeks preliminary support for and advice of submission requirements from the NCB Advisory Board to fund stage 2 'fauna reconstruction' of the project. This would enable the primary project goal, being "to re-establish up to 10 terrestrial native mammal species on the island, and to establish up to two native mammal species that may have previously occurred there, along with healthy vegetation and ecosystem processes to sustain the

islands biodiversity” to be fulfilled. Additionally, the Department requests financial support for the November 2012 revised funding submission Stage 1, Group B activity ‘monitor source populations’ in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to enable fauna reconstruction to proceed in the year following confirmation of cat eradication; \$685,700 is budgeted for this activity with \$338,600 and \$347,100 required in 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively. The Department is holding aside the Operating Trust interest currently at \$190,293 for this purpose, and excluding any major unforeseen expenditure, the Department is confident that additional savings and interest will be obtained over 2015/16 to fully fund this activity in 2016/17. However, additional budget is likely to be required from the NCB Fund to fund the activity in 2017/18.

No significant occurrences that may adversely affect the Department’s ability to complete the project, in accordance with the November 2012 revised funding submission and the May 2013 revised project plan, are anticipated. Consideration of provision of the first portion of the 2015/16 funding (being \$809,409) is therefore being sought.

Appendix 1: Detailed NCB expenditure against the Dirk Hartog Island National Park
Ecological Restoration Project 2014/15, by project element

Project element	NCB budget 2014/15	NCB expenditure 2014/15	Variance	Carry over to 2015/16	Return to project contingency
Management and Coordination	\$606,888	\$498,141	\$108,747	\$30,000	\$78,747
Reporting and Auditing	\$81,049	\$75,156	\$5,893		\$5,893
Cat Eradication	\$1,120,522	\$1,083,597	\$36,925	\$36,925	
Impact Assessment	\$4,500	\$4,549	-\$49		-\$49
Sheep and Goat Eradication	\$232,195	\$124,754	\$107,441	\$13,000	\$94,441
Black Rats	\$8,829	\$8,829	\$0		
Weed Management	\$30,000	\$17,270	\$12,730	\$12,730	
Vegetation Restoration	\$30,091	\$29,537	\$554		\$544
Fauna Reconstruction	\$27,530	\$14,572	\$12,958		\$12,958
Community Engagement	\$100,767	\$75,573	\$25,194	\$1,000	\$24,194
Total	\$2,242,371	\$1,931,978	\$310,393	\$93,655	\$216,738
Project contingency 2014/15	\$32,350		\$32,350		\$32,350
Total	\$2,274,721	\$1,931,978	\$342,743	\$93,655	\$249,088

Appendix 2: Detailed in-kind expenditure against the Dirk Hartog Island National Park
Ecological Restoration Project 2014/15, by project element

Project element	In-kind budget for 2014/15 (as per funding submission)	DPaW expenditure 2014/15
Management and Coordination	\$502,065	\$121,332
Cat Eradication		\$205,120
Fauna Reconstruction		\$10,297
Operations Base infrastructure		\$83,549
Total	\$502,065	\$420,298