



MEDIA RELEASE

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Southern Gulf Catchments and ACTFR prioritise the waterbodies of the region enabling more targeted management

Waterbodies provide essential terrestrial and aquatic habitat throughout the Southern Gulf. They comprise of rivers and creeks, reservoirs, farm dams, swamps and shallow ephemeral wetlands and are used as a water source for cattle, thus forming an important component of any land or property management regime. They are also highly valued for recreational purposes such as camping and fishing. During the wet season there are thousands of waterbodies across the Southern Gulf region, and by the end of the dry season there will still be hundreds, although some of these may have shrunk to small isolated waterholes. The large number of waterbodies and the limited resources available to manage them necessitate some form of prioritisation process to determine which waterbodies are of high priority. The more important ecological criteria used to identify waterbody types and prioritise them for on-ground works include knowledge of their permanence (how often and for how long water remains present), turbidity dynamics (how clear or dirty the water is) and the extent of the surrounding terrestrial and aquatic vegetation as different types of waterbodies will have different ecology and responses to disturbance and require different types of management.

Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research (ACTFR) scientists Leo Lymburner and Damien Burrows scoped these aspects in their 'Prioritisation of Waterbodies in the Leichhardt Catchment' project. The project was such a great achievement for the Southern Gulf region that SGC funded an expansion of the project using the techniques developed for the Leichhardt catchment to the remaining catchments of the Southern Gulf region (Flinders, Gregory-Nicholson, Settlement Creek and Morning Inlet). In addition to the remote sensing approach, this project included the use of Google Earth to review evidence of cattle tracks to the waterbodies to provide further insight into the behaviour of waterbodies across the Southern Gulf. Through these projects, SGC has a wider understanding of the range of waterbody types thus enabling more targeted management of individual prioritised waterbodies.

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