



Australian Government

**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**



**IMPROVING ECONOMIC ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN USING DECENTRALISED,
COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS**

A project funded by the Australian Government's
Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities (CERF) program.

BULLETIN NO. 4

August 2009

Trialing a method for economic evaluation of asset-focused investments under community-based environmental governance

The previous project bulletin reported on a review of methods for maintaining economic accountability in natural resource management (NRM). Various methods were reviewed, including those in the categories of benefit-cost analysis, multi-criteria analysis, and deliberative methods. The recently-developed Investment Framework for Environmental Resources (INFFER) was also reviewed because it was designed to be applied by community-based NRM organisations and it has found significant support from relevant government agencies.

Based on this literature review, a recommendation was made to the Project Reference Committee and to the three Regional Working Groups¹ that a method building on INFFER be developed and trialed in this project for evaluating investments focused on natural assets (i.e., 'asset-focused' investments, as opposed to 'capacity-focused' investments). INFFER would be built upon to account for important capacity considerations in NRM investment decision-making that are not addressed in the current version of this framework. This recommendation was accepted in all cases. A two-day training session was held in Armidale over 10-11 August 2009 to provide staff from each of the partner CMAs a deeper understanding of the method to be trialed in this project.

Trials of the method are currently underway in the three regions. Since the method is asset-based, the Catchment Management Authority in each region was asked to nominate two or three specific natural assets within their region upon which the trials would focus. The natural assets nominated from each region are:

Border Rivers – Gwydir NRM Region:

- Smooth-barked apple communities on the Siliceous Sands;
- Myall woodlands of the Border Rivers – Gwydir NRM region; and
- Ramsar wetlands within the Gwydir wetlands.

Namoi NRM Region:

- Pilliga to Mt. Kaputar Conservation Corridors; and
- Boorolong Frog.

Northern Rivers NRM Region:

- Nymboida water quality at take-off point during high flows;
- Lord Howe Island flora and fauna; and
- Richmond River Floodplain Wetlands.

Contact

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¹ One each for the three regions where NSW Catchment Management Authorities agreed to participate in the project: Border Rivers – Gwydir NRM region; Namoi NRM region; and Northern Rivers NRM region.