

**Caring for our Country Monitoring, Evaluation,
Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Plan**

NACC Weed Treatment Project (2yrs)



Document review details

Keep track of your continuous project quality management by using the box below

Date Established August 2009

Key Lessons and modifications

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

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1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the NACC Weed Treatment Project MERI Plan

The continuous and integrated cycle of **monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement** is referred to as **MERI** in the Australian NRM context.

A project MERI plan articulates all the different aspects of MERI that will be needed and how they will be implemented over the life of the project.

This project MERI plan:

- Guides MERI for the NACC Weed Treatment project of Caring for our Country in accord with the stated Caring for our Country outcomes and targets (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>) and consistent with the Caring for our Country MERI Strategy (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>)
- Provides a base from which to review the progress the project is making towards the agreed Caring for our Country targets and outcomes and from which to learn about successful implementation strategies and to adapt in response to lessons learnt.

1.2 Broader MERI Context

This plan is nested within:

- The NRM MERI framework (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>)
- The Caring for our Country Outcomes 2008-2013 (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/index.html>)
- The Caring for our Country Business Plan 2009-10 (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/index.html>)
- The MERI Strategy for Caring for our Country Strategy 2009-13 (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>)

2: Scope

2.1 Project description

The project operates in a larger environment but must have boundaries that align with the Caring for our Country outcomes and targets as well as within the project budget and resources. The project context is included in the box below.

Write a brief project description in the box. (Guidance on this scoping exercise is available at Step 1 in the Developing and Using Program Logic in Natural Resource Management User Guide)

The Australian Weeds Strategy indicates five WoNS in the Northern Agricultural Region which require different control programs dictated by location, type and size of infestation. There are two outlier WoNS populations: boneseed and mesquite, in the region which will be targeted for with an incentive based program aimed at encouraging farmers to integrate WoNS management into their ongoing business planning.

2.2 Project methodology

The methodology including the rationale for investing in this project is summarized in the box below.

Insert description of project methodology into the box below.

Once the exact spread and location of the outlier populations has been established, a program and timeline for reduction will be established.

A two year plan will see the identification of locations and extent of mesquite and boneseed populations followed by control as indicated below:

- Mesquite – Control treatment applied for outlier infestation at northern end of NAR, (remove existing plants and put in place ongoing management as possible within time frame) in liaison in Rangelands NRM.
- Boneseed – Control treatment applied to known infestation in central coastal region, and outlier monitoring for long term containment - remove existing plants and put in place ongoing management plans.

Once infected land areas have been identified, land managers will be contacted and encouraged to take up the incentives scheme to treat the infestation and maintain weed control into the future. Appropriate training in identification, removal, handling, and disposal will be offered in conjunction with other agencies.

Community awareness about athel pine, bridal creeper and lantana will be undertaken, including organising a region-wide community “Pull a Weed Day” which will mobilise the entire community and focus on the participation of landowners, community groups, schools and Indigenous groups.

Bridal creeper will also be targeted for opportunistic treatment when possible, while information will encourage community recognition of athel pine and Lantana as weeds. Any treatment programs will require substitutes for athel pine where it is currently being used for erosion control and lantana which is found extensively in landscaping.

The community will be kept informed about the program through email, the website, media and direct contact; including workshops and activity days at infested sites.

WoNS found in any of the five areas identified for rabbit control will be targeted concurrently.

2.3 Caring for our Country targets and outcomes

Table 1 illustrates the specific Caring for our Country outcomes and targets the Weed Treatment project contributes to.

Using the Caring for our Country Business Plan and the relevant information from project proposal and/or funding agreement complete the details in the table below.

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets to which the Weed Treatment project will contribute

Caring for our Country Target/s	Funded Activity to be undertaken	Expected contribution of project
Reduce impact of weeds of national significance	Control treatment applied for 30ha of outliers infestation of Boneseed and Mesquite Control treatment applied for Lantana, Athel pine, bridal creeper where appropriate	30 ha of Boneseed or Mesquite controlled. Additional control of WoNS
Regional bodies support access to knowledge and skills	Implement schools NRM project Weed identification and best practice management training workshop focused on Boneseed held in the Central Coastal area of the region. Weed identification and best practice management training workshop focused on Mesquite held in the Northern half of the region. Workshop for volunteers on weed identification and other skills necessary for participating in Weed Pulling events	Increased awareness will contribute to the target Increased awareness will contribute to the target Increased awareness will contribute to the target Increased awareness will contribute to the target
Regional bodies supporting community groups in local projects	Design project in consultation with community and school.	

Increase volunteer involvement in managing natural resources

Community pull a weed day held with organised events at strategic locations in the NAR. Increased awareness will contribute to the target.

Call for schools across the region to implement a weeds project and partner with local organisation.

School weed program implemented. 1 school undertaking weed control measures.

2.4 Users of the Plan

Table 2 shows the primary users or the key people who will use this MERI plan to organise data collection, analysis and reporting. The Secondary users are people who may benefit from understanding and being aware of this MERI plan.

Enter the primary and secondary users of your MERI Plan in the space provided.

Table 2: Key users for this MERI plan

<p>Primary users: who will reflect and adapt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NACC CEO, IPM and Biodiversity Program Manager and Biodiversity Project Officer. The Biodiversity Program Leader is responsible for reflecting, implementing and improving the plan.
<p>Secondary users: who need to be aware of this plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land managers that implement actions on their land. • Australian Government • The Northern Agricultural Region Community

2.5 Key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions are explicit questions to be answered for the purposes of reporting or improvement as illustrated in Table 3.

After completing your program logic hierarchy in step 3 below, your assumptions and developing your key evaluation questions (KEQs) (For a stepwise guide on how to develop the hierarchy, assumptions and the KEQs go to the Developing and Using Program Logic In Natural Resource Management User Guide), enter the KEQs in the table below.

Table 3: Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluation purpose	KEQ	The question relates to: Caring for our Country target
<u>Impact</u>	<p>To what extent has the WoNS been reduced in the Northern Agricultural Region?</p> <p>To what extent has this project assisted local community to access knowledge and skills?</p> <p>What projects were supported by the regional body?</p> <p>How many volunteers attended workshops/ field days or training days?</p> <p>Were there any other unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes that have resulted?</p>	<p>Reduce the impact of weeds of National Significance.</p> <p>Regional bodies support access to knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Regional bodies supporting community groups in local projects.</p> <p>Increase volunteer involvement in managing natural resources.</p>
<u>Effectiveness</u>	<p>To what extent have the planned activities achieved? Why or why not?</p> <p>What other activities/strategies might be more effective in applying control treatment to Boneseed and Mesquite?</p>	<p>Reduce the impact of weeds of National Significance.</p> <p>Regional bodies support access to knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Regional bodies supporting community groups in local projects.</p> <p>Increase volunteer involvement in</p>

		managing natural resources.
<u>Appropriateness</u>	<p>To what extent are the investment strategies proving useful in engaging and influencing the targeted stakeholders?</p> <p>Were incentives the best method of engaging and influencing stakeholders?</p>	<p>Reduce the impact of weeds of National Significance.</p> <p>Regional bodies support access to knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Regional bodies supporting community groups in local projects.</p> <p>Increase volunteer involvement in managing natural resources.</p>
<u>Efficiency</u>	<p>To what extent did investment strategies prove useful in engaging and influencing the targeted stakeholders?</p>	<p>Reduce the impact of weeds of National Significance.</p> <p>Regional bodies support access to knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Regional bodies supporting community groups in local projects.</p> <p>Increase volunteer involvement in managing natural resources.</p>

2.6 Workplan and budget

MERI workplan and budget for Weed Treatment project.

After completing your MERI plan summarise the different aspects into the tables below to provide a consolidated and concise picture of how it will be implemented, what MERI activities are to be undertaken and costing for the MERI activities.

Attach the workplan to the MERI plan.

Project timeline for activities			
Immediate project outcomes			
Activity	Achievement towards Caring for our Country Target	By when	Quantity of Target to be achieved
Activity 1	<i>10 land managers or farmers have signed incentive agreements to apply control treatments to boneseed or mesquite on their property</i>	<i>March 2010</i>	
Activity 2	<i>10 land managers or farmers have applied control treatment for boneseed or mesquite via incentive agreements</i>	<i>June 2010</i>	
Activity 3	<i>Land managers or farmers who received incentive to remove weeds, surveyed to determine effectiveness of control measures</i>	<i>June 2010</i>	<i>10hectares</i>
Activity 4	<i>MERI plan and survey information used to determine whether there are additional requirements for future weed control</i>	<i>June 2010</i>	
Activity 5	<i>Weed identification and best practice management training/ workshop focused on boneseed held in Central Coastal area of the region</i>	<i>July 2010</i>	<i>10 participants</i>
Activity 6	<i>Weed identification and best practice management training/ workshop focused on mesquite held in the northern half of the region</i>	<i>July 2010</i>	<i>15 participants</i>
Activity 7	<i>"Pull a weed" day held with organised events at strategic locations in the NAR</i>	<i>August 2010</i>	<i>20volunteers</i>
Activity 8	<i>School weed program implemented</i>	<i>December 2010</i>	<i>40 participants</i>
Activity 9	<i>30 Land managers or farmers have signed incentive agreements to apply to control treatments to boneseed or mesquite on their property</i>	<i>March 2011</i>	
Activity 10	<i>Design project in consultation with community and school</i>	<i>March 2011</i>	
Activity 11	<i>30 land managers or farmers have</i>	<i>June 2011</i>	<i>20 hectares</i>

	<i>applied control treatment for boneseed or mesquite via incentive agreements</i>		
<i>Activity 12</i>	<i>Land managers or farmers who received incentive to remove weeds, surveyed to determine effectiveness of control measures</i>	<i>June 2011</i>	
<i>Activity 13</i>	<i>Implement schools NRM project</i>	<i>July 2011</i>	
<i>Activity 14</i>	<i>One workshop held for volunteers on weed identification and other skills necessary for participating in Weed Pulling events</i>	<i>July 2011</i>	

Project MERI activities and budget				
Monitoring				Cost \$ per annum
Measure	Method of collection	Frequency of collection	Responsibility	
1. <i>Number of land managers or farmers that have signed incentive agreements to apply control boneseed or mesquite</i>	<i>NACC incentive database</i>	<i>When agreement is signed</i>	<i>Project coordinator Incentives manager</i>	\$16 000
2. <i>Number of land managers or farmers that have applied control treatment for boneseed or mesquite via incentive agreements</i>	<i>NACC incentive database</i>	<i>When survey is sent to land managers</i>	<i>Project coordinator Incentives manager</i>	\$16 000
3. <i>Area (ha) of control measures on mesquite or boneseed populations</i>	<i>NACC incentive database</i>	<i>When survey is sent to land managers</i>	<i>Project coordinator Incentives manager</i>	\$16 000
4. <i>Number of surveys sent out to & returned from land managers or farmers.</i>	<i>Surveys sent to land managers</i>	<i>Surveys sent to and returned from land managers</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	8000
5. <i>Number of awareness raising events such as field</i>	<i>When each event occurs and recorded in the project annual report</i>	<i>July 2010 July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	2000

<i>days or workshops</i>				
6. <i>Number of attendees at workshops or field days</i>	<i>When each event occurs and recorded in the project annual report</i>	<i>July 2010 July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	2000
7. <i>Number of volunteers at "pull a weed" day</i>	<i>When the event occurs and recorded in the project annual report</i>	<i>July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	2000
8. <i>Number of schools contacted & those that have responded to implement a weed project</i>	<i>Project coordinator records contact and responses and presents the information in the project annual report</i>	<i>July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	2000

Evaluation

Key evaluation question	Methodology for addressing this question	Timeframe	Responsibility	
<i>To what extent has the WoNS been reduced in the Northern Agricultural Region?</i>	<i>Record area of control in NACC database including GIS location information of populations.</i>	<i>Every management agreement</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	\$16 000
<i>To what extent? has this project assisted local community to access knowledge and skills?</i>	<i>Project officer to record contact with land managers or farmers.</i>	<i>Each contact</i>	<i>Project coordinator</i>	2000
<i>What projects were supported by the regional body?</i>	<i>Record number of projects supported by the region.</i>	<i>Each time projects are supported</i>	<i>Project coordinator</i>	2000
<i>Were there any other unanticipated positive or negative</i>	<i>Project officer to record anecdotal information throughout the project.</i>	<i>Throughout the project</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	3000

<i>changes or other outcomes that have resulted?</i>				
To what extent have the planned activities achieved? Why or why not?	<i>Record effectiveness of site management through photo points</i>	<i>Encourage the land managers to update their management plan with photo point data.</i>	<i>Land manager supported by Project coordinator.</i>	3000
What other activities/strategies that might be more effective?	<i>Feedback form at workshops/ field days.</i>	<i>Every training day.</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	3000
<i>To what extent are the investment strategies proving useful in engaging and influencing the targeted stakeholders?</i>	<i>Feedback form at workshops/ field days.</i>	<i>Every training day.</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	3000
<i>To what extent has the program attained the highest value out of available resources?</i>	<i>Consultation with weed specialists</i>	<i>June 2011 July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	3000
<i>What other ways could we invest for greater return?</i>	<i>Consultation with weed specialists</i>	<i>June 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator</i>	3000
Reporting				
Report	Information sources	Timeframe	Responsibility	
<i>Report to the NACC board</i>	<i>Information sources</i>	<i>Bimonthly through the course of the project</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator Program Manager</i>	1800
Improvement				
Activity 1	Methodology	Timeframe	Responsibility	
<i>Survey</i>	<i>Land managers or farmers who received incentive to remove</i>	<i>June 2010 July 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI</i>	1800

	<i>weeds, surveyed to determine effectiveness of control measures</i>		<i>coordinator</i>	
<i>Annual review of project plan and MERI plan</i>	<i>Review of all immediate outcomes reports, financial reports, KEQ results and program logic.</i>	<i>Annually 2010-2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator Program manager</i>	<i>\$16 000</i>
<i>Final project evaluation</i>	<i>Final report results of all project outcome reports, financial reports and KEQ results</i>	<i>June 2011</i>	<i>Project coordinator MERI coordinator Program Manager</i>	<i>\$16 000</i>
Total MERI cost				\$137,600

2.7 Reports

The Australian Government (AG) reporting requirements and timeframes as specified in the funding agreement for this project.

Table 4 below sets out an example of the reporting requirements for the project and reports to be provided for other key recipients e.g. community based stakeholders, internal organisation, board of management, co-funders etc.

The blank boxes at the bottom of the table allow for you to enter any additional reports required, such as internal reports or reports to other funding bodies. (See MERI Strategy Section 3.5, 3.6 and Appendix 2 for further detail on reporting requirements)

Table 4: reporting requirements

Type of report	Requirements	Recipient	Timeframe
MANDATORY CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY REPORTS			
Interim progress report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results to date against targets using Caring for our Country reporting template ▪ Summary of expenses ▪ For the period July to 30 November of each year that the project is funded 	AG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With in 60 days of the 30 November for each year of the project
Annual progress report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results to date against targets using Caring for our Country reporting template ▪ For the period December to 30 June of each year that the project is funded ▪ Financial year funding acquittal for period July to June for each year that the project is funded 	AG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With in 60 days of the 30 June each year of the project
Final project performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final compilation and assessment of all the Project data/results <i>(May include information from mid-year reports, annual reports, and other research reports)</i> ▪ Summative conclusion on achievements biophysical and /or social, cultural economic or environmental change that has occurred. ▪ Final project financial acquittal for the whole of the projects life 	AG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With in 60 days of the specified completion date for the project
Milestone report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandatory report specified against a milestone 	AG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As specified in Deed of Agreement
OTHER REPORTS			
	<i>Other reports(s) required by project proponents for communications purposes or to co funders of a project</i>		

3. Program Logic

Program Logic is a key element of an evaluation process as it shows a series of expected consequences, not just a series of events, at different outcomes levels within the logic. The program logic describes the relationships between activities and desired outcomes.

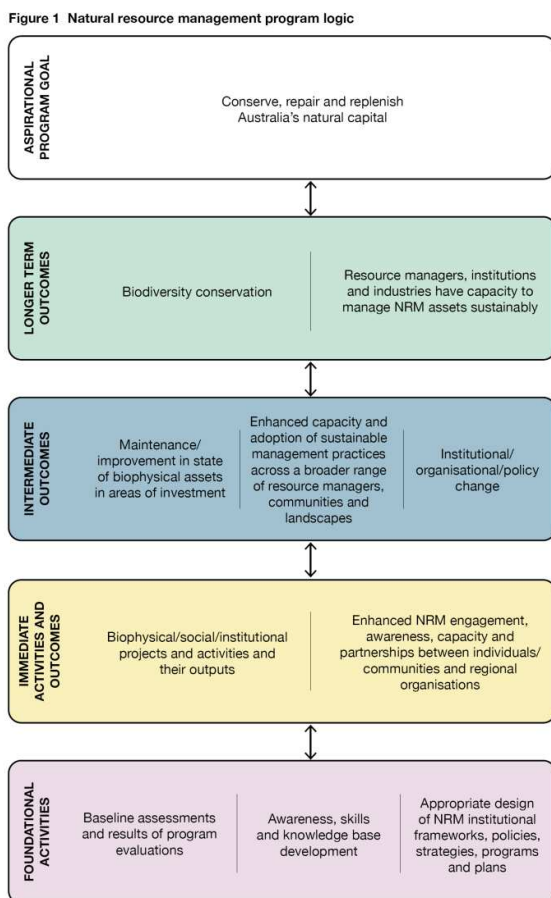
The overarching Caring for our Country MERI Strategy is underpinned by program logic, against which the key evaluation questions about the initiative can be clearly articulated. The outcomes range in type and timing from immediate through to longer-term outcomes, and build on foundations such as plans, frameworks, systems, and agreements for knowledge, communication and partnerships.

A typical program logic hierarchy for a natural resource management project is illustrated at figure 1

Figure 1: Example of Project Logic hierarchy

Program logic(s) for this MERI plan should be included at Attachment 1

(See *Developing and Using Program Logic in Natural Resource Management User Guide*)



3.1 Assumptions within the logic and managing risk

The hierarchy at figure 1 and the rationale rest on some particular assumptions about how change will occur throughout the levels of outcomes over time. The assumptions are listed at the relevant level of the logic model along the right hand side.

Table 5 shows the assumptions that need to be tested to ensure that the logic model is rigorous.

Insert information into table 5 from your program logic and assumptions after completing steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Developing and Using Program Logic In Natural Resource Management User Guide)

Table 5: Managing risk

Assumptions	Likelihood of assumption being wrong 1–5 (1 = rare, 5 = almost certain)	Consequences for longer-term outcomes if assumption is wrong 1–5 (1 = extreme, 5 = insignificant)	Key evidence to support this	Assumption will be tested
We assume that site data is correct and accessible	1	3	DAFWA database	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
We assume that land managers that are contacted will accept a site visit and happy to communicate.	2	4	Monitor response from land manager contact	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
We assume that management plans contain sound site management advice.	2	4	Monitor control measures undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
We assume that incentive levels are set correctly to encourage uptake.	2	4	Number of land managers applying for incentives	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
We assume that incentives are the best method of engagement?	2	4	Monitor location data through DAFWA database	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

<p>We assume that active participation of volunteers in field days and workshops and on ground works will increase understanding of WoNS.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Number of participants in field day/ workshops and on ground works</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Evaluation questions

Table 6 below illustrates the key evaluation questions and the other evaluation questions that relate to them.

Key evaluation questions are the high-level questions that the evaluation wants to answer. I.e. the Caring for our Country targets.

Other questions are questions that will be asked and data that will be monitored i.e. the accuracy of program logic assumptions and implementation strategies for the funded project activities.

The key evaluation questions will be addressed through evidence from various sources, such as:

- Commissioned Studies (evaluations, research, benefit-cost analysis, performance story reports etc)
- Reviews of existing data and project management strategies and processes.
- Mandatory project progress reports

Not all evaluations will require specially commissioned studies.

Table 6 presents the data sources/evidence that will be gathered to address questions and the monitoring methods and frequencies.

Complete Table 6 by referring to your hierarchy and evaluation questions. You should also refer to Table 7 of the Caring for our Country MERI strategy.

Table 6: Data sources and methods to address evaluation questions

KEQs	Other-evaluation questions	Method	Frequency
IMPACT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the WoNS been reduced in the Northern Agricultural Region? ▪ In what way has this project assisted local community to access knowledge and skills? ▪ What projects were supported by the regional body? ▪ How many volunteers attended workshops/ field days or training days? ▪ Were there any other unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes that have resulted? 	What area of control measures have been undertaken for mesquite or boneseed?	Record area of control in NACC database including GIS location information.	Every management agreement
	How many land managers or farmers did the project contact?	Project officer to record contact with land managers or farmers.	Each contact
	How many fact sheets were distributed to land managers or farmers?	Record number of fact sheets distributed.	Each time fact sheets are distributed
	How many people attended workshops/ field days or community participation days?	Record the number of people attending.	Every training day
EFFECTIVENESS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the planned activities achieved? Why or why not? ▪ What other activities/strategies that might be more effective? 	Was the site management effective?	Record effectiveness of site management through photo points	Encourage the land managers to update their management plan with photo point data.
	Is there a more effective way to engage land managers to control WoNs?	Feedback form at workshops/ field days.	Every training day.
	Is there a more effective way to engage community members to control WoNs?	Feedback form at workshops/ field days.	Every training day.
APPROPRIATENESS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent are the investment strategies proving useful in engaging and influencing the targeted stakeholders? ▪ Who adopted what in what situations and why? 	Did the program strengthen the capacity of land managers and community members to control WoNs?	Feedback form at workshops/ field days.	Every training day.
	Was the information supplied appropriate?	Measure effectiveness of management.	Encourage the land managers to update their management plan with

			photo point data.
EFFICIENCY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the program attained the highest value out of available resources? ▪ What other ways could we invest for greater return? 	Was the program efficient in delivery best practice control of WoNS?	Consultation with weed specialists	June 2011 July 2011
	Was there a more efficient way to control WoNs?	Consultation with weed specialists	June 2011
	Was the project budget completed?		

5. Improvement

5.1 Reviewing the MERI plan

Regular reflection on data, strategies, management processes and progress informs an adaptive management approach for continuous quality improvement of the project.

Table 7 provides a model for the review of the MERI plan, associated program logic(s) and for recording changes to achieve improvements in project implementation.

Table 7 MERI Plan Review Schedule

Date	Participants	Type of review	Resources/materials required	Agreed adaptive management strategy	Communicate results
July 2010 June 2011	NACC biodiversity staff, project staff, NACC program Manager	Annual meeting	Program MERI plan, Database information, Program logic, Biodiversity strategy	<p>Program performance monitored through the NACC program management.</p> <p>Data collected will be analysed by project staff and NACC Program manager.</p> <p>If required improvements will be made to increase project effectiveness.</p>	Key outcomes will be communicated with stakeholders as indicated in the communications strategy.

5.2 The feedback cycle

The feedback cycle documents how the project influences the project plan and informs key users of the plan and other stakeholders whether the assumptions, targets, investment approaches including partnerships, were correct and appropriate and whether a good job was done in managing any particular risks

- Annually (i.e. 31 July of each year of the project), the WoNS project coordinator, MERI coordinator, Incentive program manager, program manager, SEO will meet, review and adjust (if necessary) the Program Logic, WoNS project assumptions, project workplan, MERI plan, MERI workplan.
- In August for each year of the project, lessons learnt will then be communicated to key stakeholders and feedback used to improve the WoNS project MERI plan.

5.3 Communicating results

Where appropriate develop strategies to communicate evaluation results to maximise learning and improvement within the project and more broadly within the community.

Key results from the annual review will be communicated according to the communications strategy. Stakeholders would include:

- Northern Agricultural Catchments Council Board and Staff
- Project participants
- Australian Government
- The Northern Agricultural Region Community

Attachment 1

Attach project program logic

Attachment 2

Attach MERI workplan and budget.