

Case Study

Supporting the Kimberley Land Council



Background

Jawun first started working alongside the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) in August 2012. Since then, a range of projects across a wide portfolio have been supported by 8 Jawun secondees. One of the key projects involved secondees working with the Land and Sea Management Unit (LaSMU) to support their proposed move into carbon farming. Through the North Kimberley Fire Abatement Project, traditional knowledge combined with current government policy is being leveraged to create sustainable jobs and increase skills.

Wildfires release toxic smoke into the air, increasing pollution from greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Management through controlled burns allows for country to burn at the right time of year, therefore reducing the amount of smoke and gasses released into the environment. The North Kimberley Fire Abatement Project involves controlled burning of country to reduce emissions and generates carbon offsets.

However, KLC needed a clearer understanding of the cost / benefit of a transition to carbon farming and the various compliance and operating procedures required to attract purchasers for the carbon credits.

Approach

Jawun deployed two secondees to work with the LaSMU to evaluate the commercial viability of carbon farming in some defined parts of the Kimberley. Lachlan Rose, a manager from NAB, brought skills in business development and Therese O'Brien, a policy advisor from the APS, utilized her policy and modelling skills to develop and analyse the business case.

After discussing the social requirements for such a program, they identified that based on a conservative financial analysis the project would break even or better, based on the price of carbon at any particular time. Most importantly there was the potential to create at least 60 viable new employment opportunities with aerial burning and about 20 to 40 seasonal jobs with on the ground activities during the burning season, plus ongoing training opportunities for the local community. The various operating models underpinning the business case, were clearly defined and articulated by Therese and Lachlan as well as the associated risks and benefits of each of these models. After consultation with KLC Board and Traditional Owners, an informed decision was made to go ahead with the carbon project.

Crucial to a successful transition into the carbon farming business was the need to create sustainable and compliant standard operating procedures to govern all aspects of the business. It was essential for future purchasers to feel comfortable that they are buying a quality and compliant product and not "cowboy" credits. Many activities which had been practised informally would now require a high standard of compliance. Jawun responded by seconding Diane Nolan, a Sales & Operations Manager from NAB, to the LaSMU. With a background in compliance, Diane drafted and delivered an operations manual for aerial ignition burning. This document identified legislative requirements with FESA and DEC (WA Government) and CASA regulations. It also allowed LaSMU to mitigate risks and obtain insurance for personnel undertaking these activities.

The next group of operating procedures that needed to be developed concerned the safe use of equipment, such as guns, quad bikes and chainsaws. Jawun seconded John Armitage, a Project Manager from Wesfarmers-Bunnings, and Anthony Luppino, a Business Improvement/Project Manager from NAB, to work on the next phase of the requirements. John and Anthony spent most of their time 'on country' with the Wilinggin, Uungguu, Dambimangari and Balangarra Ranger groups to understand how they currently undertake these type of activities and how they could be improved. It became obvious that there would be many operating procedures required and they needed to be accessible by people for whom English is a second language. So John and Anthony went about setting up a generic occupational health and safety template to manage all future activities, as well as delivering two specific procedures and a firearms policy.

Without the active arms and legs and quick minds provided by the secondees I would still be wishing I had the time and space to bring to fruition ambitions for policy and procedural development. It is very satisfying to see this journey for an accessible field manual for rangers started, and I look forward to working with more secondees who will have to maintain a high standard set by Anthony and John. Big thanks to them" – Will Bennett, Ranger Groups Manager, LaSMU

Outcomes

Secondees built the business case which enabled the KLC and Traditional Owners to make an informed commercial decision to build a carbon credits business. The potential social and economic benefits to the community were identified and factored into the decision making process. Continued secondee support enabled the KLC to work through and document the various compliance and procedural requirements which were critical to success.

Anna Pickford, Senior Project Officer, "The North Kimberley Fire Abatement Project is a massive project with little resources but huge potential to have significant benefits to biodiversity and Indigenous people of the North Kimberley. Jawun has assisted this project in some important ways and continued assistance from Jawun will help progress this important project."

Next Steps

Jawun will continue to support the LaSMU as they move to market with the carbon farming business. Future support will be required in setting up a monitoring and evaluation process, helping with the negotiation of price and conditions; and engaging a significant client base for long-term carbon credit sale