

Report of the Allan Savory week in the Kimberley (North-Western Australia):

Kachana meeting with local land managers in the presence of Dr Paul Novelty (Kimberley Regional Head of AGWEST) and Dr Tony Start (representing CALM [Conservation And Land Management]) to brief Allan Savory on local issues and to view results of practical applications of some principles of Holistic Management relating to the effects of “animal impact” and “partial resting of country”.

- Dry-land salinity in local water catchment areas was viewed and discussed
- The deterioration of remaining hillside swamps was viewed and discussed
- The difference between “native species” and “introduced species” were discussed
- The effects of fire were viewed and discussed
- Allan gave a summary of: his back-ground, Holistic Management, the organization he is involved with
- Workshopping: Can we make Holistic Management fail?
- Indicators of environmental health were discussed
- Total measured rainfall vs. rainfall effectiveness; which one do we influence and how?
- Soil-building: physical processes vs. biological processes were debated
- A focus on Australian environments and their history (debated)
- Biodiversity? (macro-organisms, micro-organisms, living soil, dead soil, salinity)
- Where are the problems? (problem as opposed to symptom, scale of landscapes, fuel load build up, topographical hurdles, permitted animal numbers, departmental advice, research projects, expenditure of tax-payer contributions, justification of departments, incentives for producers and more were discussed)
- The potential of Kimberley ranges and hillsides and other rough country was debated
- The use of animals to stabilise slopes and/or create fire breaks was viewed and discussed
- What happens after Spinifex has fulfilled its ecological function was viewed and discussed
- The results of managed “animal impact” and “grazing” in “non-brittle” tending areas and in very “brittle” areas were viewed

All the above lead to much further discussion and/or debate.

Some of the main take-home messages were:

- Why are we so obsessed with fire? Man has used fire for much longer in other parts of the world and fire simply does what fire does: rapid oxidation of organic matter and it exposes bare ground; it is a tool we can choose to use or not to use; fire is neither good nor bad; if we choose to deal with it we can influence some of the ultimate effects; great when the meal is being cooked, not so great when the house we are in burns down.
- Animals used for the purpose of managing landscapes can be viewed similarly: great if they improve our rainfall effectiveness, not so great when they role onto our laps over the top of a bull-bar

- There is no ceiling on animal numbers permitted if the manager can demonstrate that the country is improving
- Our “problem” begins at the higher end of the water catchment
- The simplest indicator to monitor change is looking at the water coming off the lowest point of a given area
- Land cannot be managed on its own; the whole situation can only be managed and that includes the people; would be like trying to manage water by only learning about hydrogen and ignoring the oxygen

Report:

The “**Day with Allan Savory**” at El Questro was for the benefit of locals and the general public. It was out in the field and an opportunity for people of all walks of life to meet up with and workshop with an international authority on eco-system function and holistic decision making.

People who were not there may get some sort of indication of what it was all about by reading some of the following:

1. [Allan Savory](#)

([http://www.rangemagazine.com/stories/fall99/allan_savory.htm#Allan Savory](http://www.rangemagazine.com/stories/fall99/allan_savory.htm#Allan_Savory))

2. [The New Agriculture](#)

(http://www.holisticmanagement.org/art_newag.cfm?cfid=397220&cftoken=53576659)

3. [The Matetsi Project](#)

(http://www.holisticmanagement.org/rp_matetsi.cfm)

Some of the main take-home messages were:

- “If you want to know what healthy soil looks like go and ask the ladies in the gardening club, they know more about it than your scientists.”
- An improving water-cycle improves your rainfall effectiveness.
- Soil can/should be made on site through biological processes
- Soil made through erosive physical processes can aggravate a salinity “problem”
- Human impact: an omnivorous primate turned predator who had command of fire, technology and language; the effect was simply “mind-blowing” wherever he went; other species simply did not have the capacity to adapt fast enough.
- The holistic approach alone will not work A holistic decision making process is required as well....
- Holistic Management is not about land management, but about making management decisions that are simultaneously ecologically sound, socially acceptable and financially viable.

Presentations by Allan Savory at the “Fire forum”

The main take-home message was:

- “At the end of the day....How do you make your decisions?... because that is what has to change.”