Wildlife Trade Management Plan for the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia

2026 - 2030



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Wildlife Trade Management Plan for the saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia 2026 - 2030

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This is a Wildlife Trade Management Plan prepared under *the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Plan Approval

Approved Wildlife Trade Management Plan under subsection 303FO of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 by the Delegate on ……..

Approval of this program is valid until ……..

https://nt.gov.au/environment/animals/wildlife-in-nt/crocodiles

Front cover: Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*). Photo taken by Robby McLeod

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1. Introduction

This Wildlife Trade Management Plan (WTMP) covers the management of the sustainable use of the saltwater crocodile in the Northern Territory (NT) including the export of legally sourced products under international wildlife trade rules and procedures. Saltwater crocodiles are recognised as a valuable commercial resource, generating revenue and employment which promotes conservation of both the species as well as its natural habitat. The tourism value of crocodiles, both in the wild and in captivity, generates significant economic activity. Economic benefits from the crocodile industry are reaped by landowners, indigenous communities, farmers, tourism operators, harvesters and managers.

1.1. Purpose, objectives and principles

The purpose of this WTMP is to ensure the sustainability of commercially harvested crocodiles in the NT, and specifically to fulfil the requirements under Part 13A, Section 303FO of the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and requirements of relevant international agreements, notably the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The objective of the WTMP is to balance sustainability with industry growth, maximizing economic benefits to all stakeholders whilst promoting long-term species conservation, including the protection of habitat. It focuses on the maintenance of a sustainable and viable crocodile industry that meets global best practice standards in sustainable wildlife use. This occurs within the framework of the NT's broader Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) in the Northern Territory of Australia 2024-2034 (Management Program), and its five principal objectives:

- To maintain the species at appropriate densities across its range within the Top End of the NT.
- To enhance public safety through the identification and management of problem saltwater crocodiles and reduction of crocodile densities in selected areas.
- To enable a robust and profitable crocodile industry through a sustainable harvest, that facilitates its economic growth and ensures that landholders receive real benefits.
- To enhance Aboriginal livelihoods through active participation in the crocodile industry and development of new, culturally appropriate economic opportunities.
- To improve community awareness of the risks posed by saltwater crocodiles through appropriately targeted education programs.

Implementation of this WTMP is founded on these two principles:

i. Management and regulatory decisions should be evidence-based, supported by high-quality scientific data and robust monitoring.

ii. The treatment of saltwater crocodiles must be humane and in accordance with the requirements of animal welfare legislation and relevant codes of practice.

1.2. Species Background

The saltwater crocodile is the largest of the extant crocodilian species, with a wide distribution throughout the Indo-Pacific region (Webb *et al*., 2010). It is an apex predator and co-existence between crocodiles and humans present challenges for the NT community. Crocodiles also provide significant economic opportunities, are culturally significant to many Aboriginal people in northern Australia and are an icon for tourism within the Top End of the NT.

The role of crocodilians within an ecosystem is unclear with some research claiming the usefulness of crocodilians as ecological indicators and their role as apex predators regulating prey populations is largely untested (Somaweera *et al*., 2020) whilst other research suggests that the Australian saltwater crocodile specifically, generates top-down pressure upon invasive hooved feral ungulates and increases the subsidy of biomass limiting nutrients into the environment (Campbell *et al*., 2025).

Within the NT, the saltwater crocodile inhabits both tidal and freshwater river systems and swamps, and often travels around the coastline but can also be found in rivers and billabongs some 300km from the coast. The male saltwater crocodile reaches maturity at approximately 3.1m in length and can reach lengths in excess of 5m. The females mature at approximately 2.1m in length and rarely exceed 3m.

In the NT, where the greatest proportion of Australian saltwater crocodile numbers occur (Fukuda *et al*., 2007, 2011 & 2021), a lucrative and uncontrolled trade in saltwater crocodile skins between 1945 and 1971 led to intensive hunting that depleted the wild populations to the point of near extinction. Consequently, the species became protected in 1971 in the NT (Webb *et al*., 1984, Webb & Manolis 1989, Webb *et al*., 2010). Protection in the NT was preceded by Western Australia, who implemented it in 1970, with Queensland following suit in 1974.

In the early 1980s, following a series of crocodile attacks and an increase in other negative interactions with people, there were calls for an end to the ongoing recovery of the crocodile population and widespread culling was actively promoted. At this time the population had increased from an estimated minimum of 5,000 to around 30,000 (Webb *et al*., 1984). The recent estimate of population size in the NT is of the order of 90,000 - 100,000 individuals, not including hatchlings (Fukuda *et al*., 2021).

The recovery of the saltwater crocodile in the NT has been a success story in incentive-based conservation. Threats to the conservation of crocodiles in Australia are largely anthropogenic such as deliberate unsustainable population reduction as a risk reduction strategy, over harvesting, illegal poaching and habitat loss. Egg and hatchling survival is naturally low, but once the crocodile reaches approximately 90cm in length, it no longer has any natural predators apart from humans and infrequently, larger crocodiles. Heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding can cause high mortality of eggs (Webb and Manolis 1989, Webb *et al*., 1984, Fukuda & Saalfeld 2014). Hatchlings are much more susceptible to predation and are preyed on by birds, large fish, monitor lizards, snakes, turtles and other crocodiles (Somaweera *et al*., 2013, Webb and Manolis 1989). Climate change may shift rainfall patterns and impact sea levels, maximum and minimum temperatures as well as average temperatures (Fukuda *et al*., 2022). These factors could all have an impact on incubation and egg survival, as well as sex ratios due to crocodiles exhibiting temperature dependent sex determination (González *et al*., 2019). Greater rates of embryo death can be caused by prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures.

1.3. Conservation and Management Context

To ensure that the conservation program, which was aimed at rebuilding the wild population back to carrying capacity, was maintained, the NT Government implemented an "incentive-driven conservation" strategy. This strategy promoted crocodile conservation by informing the public of the environmental and economic benefits of crocodile conservation. Positive incentives were created through commercial activity (tourism, crocodile farming and ranching) and negative impacts addressed by an active 'Problem Crocodile' control program and community education.

Ranching of eggs (the commercial collection of eggs from the wild and rearing hatchlings in a controlled environment) is the most sensible strategy for sustainable use of saltwater crocodiles, as the egg stage is an abundant but naturally vulnerable part of the life cycle (Fukuda *et al*., 2021). This approach resulted in nesting habitat becoming a commercial asset worth protecting.

There is no evidence to date that suggests the current levels of egg harvesting is decreasing crocodile numbers, nor has it impeded the ongoing recovery of populations from the era of unregulated harvest prior to 1971 (Fukuda & McLeod 2025).

The incentive-driven wildlife program has been a major conservation success, with the saltwater crocodile no longer a threatened species in the NT. Populations have recovered to levels of near natural carrying capacity in monitored rivers (Fukuda *et al*., 2021).

1.4. Legislative Framework

1.4.1. International

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Australia is a signatory to CITES and the saltwater crocodile is listed in CITES Appendix II, which categorises it as a "*Species not currently threatened with extinction but may become threatened if trade is not regulated"*. In all populations except for the Australian, Indonesian, Papua New Guinean and Malaysian populations, saltwater crocodiles are listed on Appendix I, which is *"Species that are threatened with extinction and are, or may be, affected by trade"*. A CITES export permit is required for all commercial export of products derived from saltwater crocodiles from Australia and can only be issued if it has been determined that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild and that the specimen was legally obtained. Exported skins must be tagged in accordance with a tagging system that complies with the provisions of CITES Resolution Conference 11.12.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Australia is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. There are plans of management of all three of the Ramsar listed areas of the Northern Territory (Stages One and Two of Kakadu National Park and Garig Gunak Barlu National Park) which seek to protect wetlands and their dependent fauna, including the saltwater crocodile. The convention's broad aims are to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain. Kakadu National

Park, which is governed by the Commonwealth Government does not allow for the commercial harvest of crocodiles or their eggs. Coburg Peninsula, which is home to Garig Gunak Barlu National Park, allows for a relatively small proportion of eggs to be harvested, with the aim of incentivising the protection of the wetland through economic benefits.

1.4.2. Commonwealth

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)

The EPBC Act regulates import and export of crocodile products. Australia, as a signatory party to CITES, is required to meet specific conditions for the commercial export or import of CITES species under the EPBC Act. For export of CITES Appendix II species, the specimen must be sourced from an appropriate captive breeding or artificial propagation program, an approved wildlife trade operation, or an approved WTMP. Commercial export permits for crocodiles are issued under section 303CG of the Act.

Under the EPBC Act, the saltwater crocodile is listed as a marine species under s248, listed as a migratory species under s209 and may be considered as a Matter of National Environmental Significance.

This WTMP complies with the requirements for an approved Commonwealth Wildlife Trade Management Plan under Section 303FO of the EPBC Act. The EPBC Act requirements are documented in Appendix A.

Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALRA)

The ALRA establishes the Land Councils within the NT. One function of a Land Council is to confirm that the correct landholders (traditional owners) have given their permission for any commercial wildlife harvest. This approval occurs via Section 19 Land Use Agreements which must be in place for commercial crocodile or egg harvesting from Aboriginal land. These agreements provide the condition of access to land for the purpose of harvesting and royalty payments.

1.4.3. Northern Territory

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976 (TPWC Act)

The saltwater crocodile, or parts of, including reproductive material (eggs), whether dead or alive, its progeny in embryonic form or otherwise, are classified as protected wildlife throughout the NT under section 43 of the TPWC Act. The TPWC Act prohibits the taking or interfering with, the keeping of, or the import or export of protected wildlife in the NT without authority. Authority is either a permit issued by the Director of the Parks and Wildlife Commission or their delegate under section 56 of the EPBC Act, or a product label which, depending on circumstances can be issued by the Parks and Wildlife Commission or generated by the permit holder or authorised producer of crocodile products.

The taking of protected wildlife by Aboriginal people for traditional purposes, including food, is provided for under Section 122 of the TPWC Act. Aboriginal people are not bound by hunting regulations or seasons when taking animals for food or other traditional purposes.

Animal Protection Act 2018

Crocodiles are captured within the meaning of “animal” under the Animal Protection Act 2018. The objectives of this Act are to ensure that animals are treated humanely, to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote community awareness about the welfare of animals. Persons owning, managing or handling crocodiles have a “duty of care”, and must treat them humanely.

Under the NT’s current animal welfare legislation, codes of practice are adopted under supporting regulations. Adopted codes provide a defence to a prosecution for an offence under the Acts, if the defendant establishes that the act or omission constituting the offence, or an element of the offence, was in accordance with an adopted code of practice.

Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles

Animal welfare standards for wild and farmed crocodiles are detailed in the Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles. All permits issued under the TPWC Act are conditioned that the permit holder, authorised persons and nominees of the permit, must carry out the permitted activity in accordance with this code.

Meat Industries Act 1996

Farmed crocodiles may be slaughtered in abattoirs licensed for the slaughter of crocodiles for human consumption, as they are classified under this act as an abattoir animal. The Meat Industries Act 1996 provides for the safety and suitability of food for human consumption. The saltwater crocodile was also declared as a game animal under the Meat Industries Act 1996 on 10 June 2004 (G24), which enables crocodiles killed in the wild to be slaughtered. This is strictly monitored by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and requires approval of the Northern Territory’s Chief Inspector (Meat).

Livestock Act 2008

Farmed crocodiles are identified as livestock under the Livestock Act 2008 which provides for disease surveillance, disease control, identification and tracing of animals, and the regulation of movement of animals and animal products for the purpose of disease control.

2. Management Arrangements

The NT crocodile farming industry is based on the harvest of eggs and live animals from the wild to supply crocodile farms and other crocodile processors. The ranching component of the industry is supplemented by captive breeding on some farms, but captive breeding has substantially less input to production than ranching. Provided the cost of wild egg harvesting doesn't become prohibitive it is likely to remain the cornerstone of the NT crocodile farming industry into the future; its importance and relevance as described in the Northern Territory Crocodile Farming Industry Strategic Plan 2024-33.

To achieve the aims of this WTMP, NT Government agencies in conjunction with the crocodile industry and land managers will implement a range of management practices to regulate the harvest, farming and trade of saltwater crocodiles in accordance with the TPWC Act and the EPBC Act.

The actions and performance measures for the life of this WTMP are tabulated in section 2.9.

2.5. Commercial harvest from the wild

2.5.1. Harvest Ceiling

Commercial harvest of saltwater crocodiles has two components: the egg harvest and the harvest of live animals from the wild. All harvest components must be sustainable – that is, not threaten the long-term conservation of the species or its habitat.

The harvest ceilings for eggs and live animals in previous management programs were based initially on implementation of a conservative harvest, monitoring of the impact of that harvest and subsequent adjustment of the harvest. More recently, a population model underpinned by empirical data has been used to set these ceilings (Fukuda *et al*., 2021). The model indicates that the NT saltwater crocodile population (across the entire Northern Territory) can sustain an annual harvest of up to 120,000 total eggs and 1,200 crocodiles larger than 60cm in length.

The full harvest ceiling may not be allocated in any year where there is insufficient demand from industry. When assessing an application for wild harvesting, even though the quota is set for the entirety of the NT, the proposed number of eggs, or live crocodiles to be harvested by the permit applicant is assessed with consideration of the impact to both the local population as well as the entire population across the NT.

The live harvest ceiling is set at 1,200 in the Management Program and includes all animals taken for commercial use and for non-commercial reasons (such as problem crocodile removal). This ceiling is the same as for the previous plan and is well above the annual reported take from all sources. It represents less than two percent of the estimated NT saltwater crocodile population. Historically, the actual number of live crocodiles removed represented approximately 50% of the live harvest ceiling, with many of those crocodiles removed from areas of public recreation and pastoral properties. These areas are not typically considered desirable or suitable nesting habitat. Any detectable impact on the habitat or relevant ecosystems, would be highly unlikely. It should be noted that the live harvest ceiling does not limit the ability to respond to or remove problem crocodiles that pose a risk to human safety even if the ceiling has already been met.

The egg harvest ceiling is set at 90,000 viable eggs (which is conservatively equivalent to

120,000 total eggs) in the Management Program, for each annual nesting season during the life of this WTMP. The egg harvest ceiling represents less than 50% of the total number of eggs laid each year (Fukuda *et al*., 2021). As a very low percentage (less than 25%) of eggs would normally survive to later age classes in the wild (Webb & Manolis 1993), the egg harvest mostly represents a displaced mortality rather than additional mortality as indicated by consistent increase of the population (Fukuda et al., 2011, Fukuda & McLeod 2025). Due to the egg harvest representing a displaced mortality, any detectable impact on the habitat or relevant ecosystems as a result of this activity, would also be highly unlikely. In addition, there is no evidence that the number of eggs collected over the period of the previous WTMP were unsustainable, with monitored populations either increasing or stable (Fukuda & McLeod 2025).

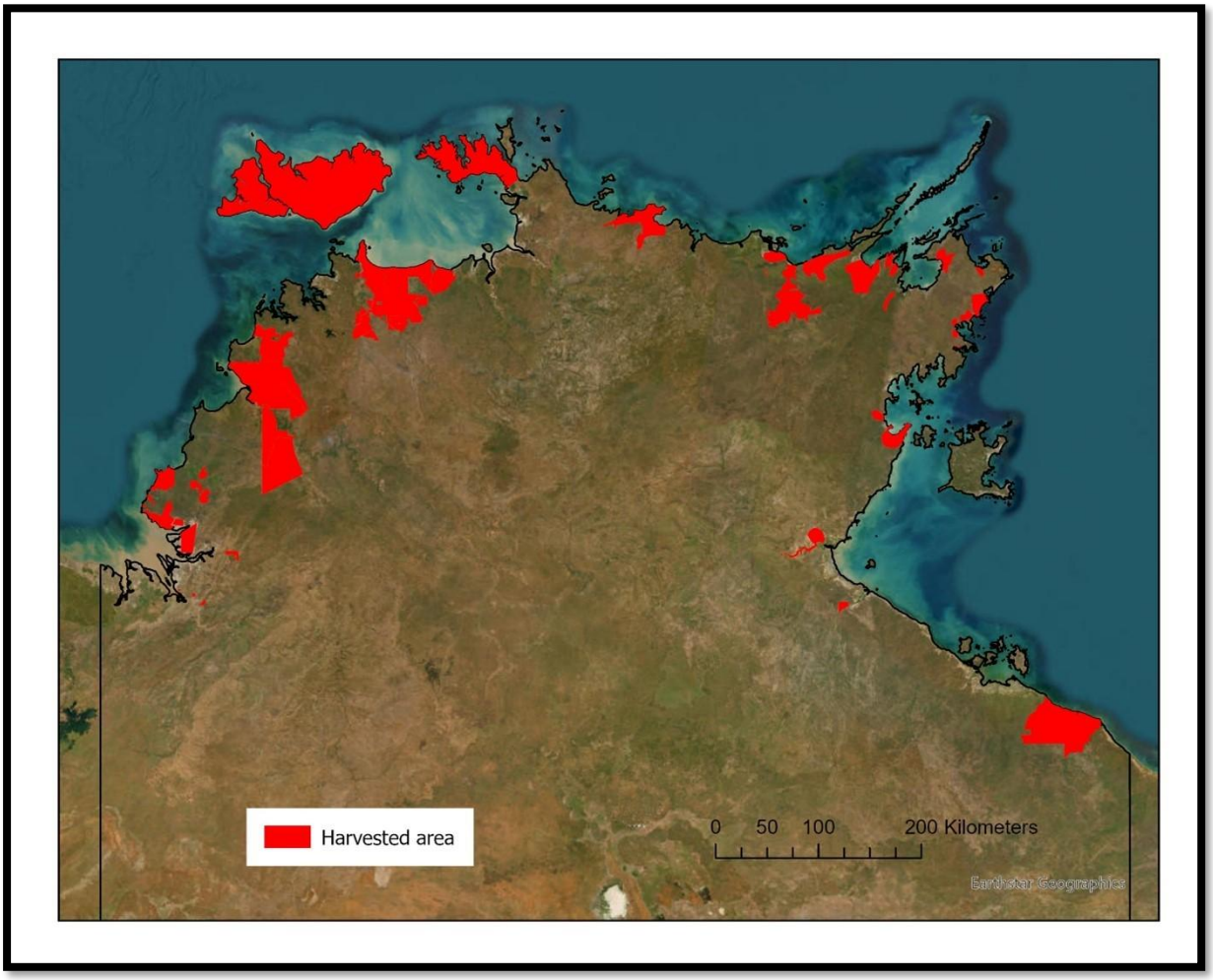


Figure 1: Egg collection areas for 2023/2024 (locations vary slightly year to year).

2.5.2. Harvest review

Maximum harvest ceilings have been set within the Management Program, for the period of this WTMP and can accommodate projected industry growth over the next five years. Both harvest levels and population trends will be monitored during the life of the WTMP. Should monitoring detect catastrophic decline (50% or greater decline in density in a single river system in a single year) or a clear trend of population decline across multiple years, then the need for harvest restrictions will be assessed (see section 2.9). The population trend must be distinguishable from natural fluctuation due to environmental conditions such as rainfall and

the seasonal availability and quality of breeding habitat (Fukuda *et al*., 2007, 2011 & 2021). Monitoring to date has not indicated any such decline (Fukuda & McLeod 205).

2.5.3. Population monitoring

To ensure the sustainability of the program, regular population surveys of 12 river systems across the NT (including 4 from Kakadu) are conducted. With additional resources there is an aim to add additional rivers to the survey schedule in future.

Survey Methodology

Surveys are conducted at night and when there are minimum water levels (i.e. at low tide, during the dry season), with maximized exposure of the bank to ensure the highest probability of sighting the greatest number of crocodiles. During the wet season the crocodiles can (and do) migrate onto the flood plains which are logistically much harder to access, and it disperses the crocodiles over a greater area. Once the flood waters have receded, they return to the major water bodies. Surveying at low tide also increases the likelihood that the crocodiles will not be hidden by vegetation. Surveys are conducted at night as crocodiles are a cryptic species which have a higher rate of detection in the dark. Crocodiles have an adaptation in their eyes, called a tapetum, which amplifies low light, improving their night vision. This tapetum reflects light allowing them to be easily detected with a spotlight from a distance.

The survey team usually consists of 3 people, a boat driver, an observer and a navigator/data recorder. In more recent times, with improved navigation and data recording equipment, the driver can also act as the navigator, and observer as data recorder which means a 2-person team can conduct the work.

The vessel maintains course down the middle of the river at low speed and once a crocodile is spotted by the observer, they signal to the driver where the crocodile is. The driver navigates the vessel toward the crocodile until the observer can confirm the species and make a size estimation of the crocodile. Once this information is recorded digitally, a GPS location and time stamp is assigned to that sighting. The vessel immediately returns to the center of the river and continues until the next crocodile is spotted.

In long rivers where factors such as tides and fatigue management need to be accounted for, such as the Adelaide and Daly Rivers, a typical survey would consist of 30km-50km of river each night with the end point becoming the start point for the following nights surveys. Other surveyed areas where these conditions don't need to be accounted for, are completed in one night as independent sections.

Once all the surveys have been completed for the year, the key indexes calculated for reporting are:

- Total number of crocodiles sighted;
- Total biomass (kg) of crocodiles sighted;
- Mean total length (m) of crocodiles sighted;
- Abundance density (sightings/km) of crocodiles sighted; and
- Biomass density (kg/km) of crocodiles sighted.

An analysis is also completed of the size distribution of crocodiles sighted in each local population, represented by graphing the abundance in each size class.

The methodology and equipment remain constant each year to ensure standardisation, and follows the methods originally used when the monitoring program began in the 1970s.

For a more detailed description of these methods, please refer to “Standardised methods of spotlight surveys of crocodiles in the Northern Territory, Australia” (Fukuda *et al*., 2013).

Population Modelling

Using statistical computer programs to build a series of matrix population models, predictions of the absolute abundance of saltwater crocodiles in the NT are made each year based on variables that we can ascertain from survey results, historical data and existing knowledge of crocodilian biology. Parameters include fecundity, natural mortality, growth rates at each life stage, environmental stochasticity, changes in population structure over time and density dependence. Simulations can then be run with either no harvest, the current rate of harvest, or theoretical rates of harvest, which allow us to predict impact on the wild population. These simulations are used to determine the harvest ceilings for wild crocodiles and their eggs.

This method of modelling was first used for this program in 2017 and used the previous 40 years of survey data to calculate an estimate of absolute abundance of non-hatchling (>0.6m) crocodiles of ~100,000 individuals.

For a more detailed description of these methods, please refer to Harvesting predators: simulation of population recovery and controlled harvest of saltwater crocodiles Crocodylus porosus (Fukuda, 2021).

2.6. Permits

As a protected species, the take (harvest) of or interference with any saltwater crocodile from the wild, the keeping of and/or trading in saltwater crocodile, and the import or export of saltwater crocodile in the NT requires a permit issued under s.56 of the TPWC Act.

Permitting is managed by the Department of Tourism and Hospitality (DTH) in accordance with the Management Program, which is a statutory plan under s.32 of the TPWC Act.

2.6.1. Crocodile Farm Enterprise permits

Crocodile farms require a Permit to Keep Protected Wildlife to authorise the keep and trade of saltwater crocodiles and saltwater crocodile products. Permit(s) to Import and Export Protected Wildlife to import or export saltwater crocodiles from the NT are also a requirement. A Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit combines all three permits in a single permit document. The Crocodile Farm Enterprise permit is valid for a period of up to 10 years and authorises the permit holder (crocodile farm) to keep, trade, import and export saltwater crocodiles and saltwater crocodile products, subject to terms and conditions of the permit.

Farm records are administered by both DTH and the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE). The holder of the Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit is required to provide an annual permit return to DTH detailing stock gains/losses (i.e. transfers, sales, mortality, etc.) and production. This information is used to compare farm holdings with wild harvest permit returns and ensure compliance with wild harvest permits. The annual permit return is also provided to the DLPE who take carriage of the Management Program, conduct the population monitoring studies, review all permit applications for their sustainability and ecological impact, and determine the quotas based on wild population trends.

The Crocodile Farm Enterprise permit authorises the permit holder to import or export saltwater crocodiles and saltwater crocodile products without the need to apply for individual permits for each shipment.

Individuals or companies trading products derived from saltwater crocodiles taken under this WTMP are required to hold either a Permit to Keep Protected Wildlife, a Permit to Take or Interfere with Protected Wildlife or a Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit. It is a condition of permit that the permit holder maintains detailed records, and to mark certain products with a product label in accordance with the DTH product label guidelines. DTH issues product labels on a cost recovery basis or producers can print the required information on their own labelling and packaging. The minimum requirement for an approved product label is that the label:

- states that this product is produced in accordance with an approved Management Program;
- shows the permit holder name and permit number that the product was produced under; and
- shows the date that the product label was affixed to the product.

These labels provide the means to identify products as originating from a legitimate source.

2.6.2. Live Harvest

The taking of live crocodiles for commercial purposes or to deal with a Problem Crocodile requires either a Take or Interfere with Protected Wildlife for Commercial Purposes permit or a Take or Interfere with Protected Wildlife permit depending on the circumstances. Permits are issued for up to 5 years. In the case of ongoing problems of stock loss, discussions are held with the landholder regarding alternative mitigation measures. To be issued with a permit the following conditions must be met:

- Relevant landholder approval regardless of tenure;
- Demonstrated expertise/experience in handing crocodiles;
- Reason for the take consistent with the Management Program (e.g. removal of a problem crocodile).

2.6.3. Egg Collection

Collection of crocodile eggs for commercial purposes requires a Take or Interfere with Protected Wildlife for Commercial Purposes permit. Permit applications must include details on the purpose, method, extent and location of the proposed harvest. All permits for harvesting require the written consent of the landholder, regardless of tenure.

Permits are valid for up to 5 years, and subject to terms and conditions including identification of who may carry out activities authorised by the permit; how, when and where those activities may be undertaken; the maximum quantity of Protected Wildlife that may be taken; and the requirement to provide returns for activities authorised by the permit. The returns include details on the number of eggs taken, and a GPS location of the harvest site (nest).

2.6.4. Permits to export and import

The overseas export of live crocodiles and commercial shipments of crocodile skins, products or by-products from Australia requires a CITES permit from the Australian CITES

Management Authority (through the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). DLPE provides CITES skin tags to the permit holders on behalf of the Australian Government for commercial shipments of skins from crocodile farms. Other international exports require an export permit from DTH prior to a CITES permit being issued on a cost-recovery basis.

Under CITES provisions and EPBC Act requirements, up to four crocodile products can leave Australia within a passenger's personal, accompanied luggage without a CITES permit if they are personally owned, non-commercial and legally acquired. Some countries do not recognise this exemption and require CITES permits, so enquiries should be made with the importing country prior to travel.

2.7. Compliance and monitoring

The Parks and Wildlife Commission within DTH, in conjunction with DLPE, monitors the compliance with the Management Program, and any other relevant legislation and Codes of Practice by:

- inspecting crocodile farms, commercial crocodile harvesters, wild egg harvesters and problem crocodile removalists.
- responding to reports from members of the public or other government departments on matters of alleged non-compliance.
- investigating open-source data, such as newspaper reports or legal cases involving the legal entity.
- collecting information on the movement of crocodiles into and out of the state using an import/export report linked to the farm permit.
- investigating alleged breaches of NT legislation in relation to the commercial take, keep and use of crocodiles in the NT.

The holder of a Crocodile Farm Enterprise permit for processing crocodile products must maintain records in an approved form (hard copy or an electronic record system) and submit annual return data in an approved form (i.e. Permit Return as defined in the permit).

Failure to lodge a permit return or insufficient or incorrect information in the permit return may result in the issue of a warning letter, caution notice or infringement notice and could also result in cancellation of the current permit, refusal to issue any further permits, or prosecution.

Allegations with respect to animal cruelty or a failure to provide a minimum level of care to crocodiles will be reported to the Animal Welfare Branch of NT Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), which has agency responsibility for administering animal welfare legislation.

The movement of crocodiles (including eggs) into and out of the NT will be monitored and any apparent anomalies will be investigated in conjunction with relevant jurisdictions.

The NT Government will implement the following actions to help ensure compliance in respect to egg collection:

- checks on eggs and farm stock to ensure compliance with permit conditions and reporting;
- field inspection of crocodile nests in known locations;
- collaboration with other jurisdictions and agencies (Kakadu National Park,

Queensland, Western Australia, Australian Governments, tanneries etc.) to help eliminate illegal trade of eggs, animals or products between states; and
- investigation of alleged illegal activity and response where sufficient evidence is obtained.

The NT Government has the capacity to develop and introduce permit conditions on an as needs basis. The NT Government may vary or cancel a permit if information becomes available that indicates conservation management measures may be required to protect a saltwater crocodile (sub) population.

2.7.1. Skins & Backstraps (International)

Each whole skin, whole belly skin, whole horn-back skin or trophy skin entering international trade must be marked with a non-reusable skin tag issued by the Australian CITES Management Authority in compliance with the provisions of CITES Resolution Conf. 11.12 (Rev. CoP15). Excised back-straps are to be packaged into a carton and the skin tag attached to the carton. The permit issued for back-straps states that the tag is attached to the box and records the total number of back-straps in the carton.

Each farm completes a Specimen Export Record (SER) for each export shipment which states the skin tags have been attached to either whole skins or cartons of back-straps and returns it to the Australian CITES Management Authority. Each skin tag is uniquely numbered, and the number serves as an identification number for all subsequent record keeping related to the skin of that specific animal. DLPE is responsible for issuing skin tags on a cost-recovery basis, and skin tags are issued annually.

2.7.2. Flesh

Flesh will be packed in cartons that are marked to show that the enclosed product is a farmed product. Producers can use pre-labelled cartons which state that the contents are perishable and need to be kept frozen. Alternatively, flesh may be sealed in standard cartons using specially marked green tape printed with “contents are perishable and need to be kept frozen”. This labelling requirement applies to both domestic and international shipments.

2.7.3. By-products

Product labels are required for parts derived from animals under 2.3 metres in length. This includes whole dead animal, taxidermied heads, skulls, whole skins, belly skins, horn-back skins and back-straps. A Permit to Keep is required for parts derived from animals over 2.3 metres in length. Eligible products to which a Product Label has been affixed do not require either a Permit to Keep or an import/export permit for movement into/out of the NT as the Product Label is the authority to keep and import/export.

2.7.4. Manufactured items

Product Labels are not required for a range of finished manufactured products such as bags, belts, wallets, back scratchers, hat bands, necklaces, bracelets, key fobs, drink coasters, book covers and leather trimmings. While Product Labels are not required for these items they can be affixed at the permit holder’s discretion. Manufactured items which do not require a Product Label do not require an import/export permit for movement into/out of the NT as the NT Government has exempted these items from the provisions of the TPWC Act through the Management Program.

The Crocodile Farm Enterprise Permit has been introduced to streamline the permit process and reduce the regulatory burden associated with multiple or duplicate permit conditions across the different permits.

2.7.5. Animal Welfare

The Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles (the Code) recommends methods for handling, capture and euthanasia of wild and farmed crocodiles. Wild harvest, capture of Problem Crocodiles and farming of saltwater crocodiles must be in accordance with the Code.

The Code is an adopted code of practice under the NT's Animal Protection Regulations 2022. Compliance with the Code is a condition applied to all permits issued for the take or interfering with, keeping, and movement of farmed or wild saltwater crocodiles. Non-compliance with the Code may result in the issue of a warning letter, caution notice or infringement notice and could also result in cancellation of the current permit, refusal to issue any further permits, or prosecution under the TWPC Act.

A breach of the Animal Protection Act 2018 with respect to animal cruelty or a failure to provide a minimum level of care, may result in the issuing of a direction notice, warning letter, infringement notice or a prosecution.

2.8. Reporting

DLPE will submit an annual report to the Australian Government for each year that the plan is in operation. The report will be based on the previous calendar year and will be submitted by 30 June in the succeeding year. The report will provide a summary of:

- Progress against performance indicators (see below);
- Harvest statistics including:
  - Total number of saltwater crocodile eggs taken from the wild;
  - Number of viable saltwater crocodile eggs taken from the wild;
  - Number of problem saltwater crocodiles taken from the wild ;
  - Number of saltwater crocodiles taken from the wild for commercial purposes;
- Number of permits issued for commercial wild harvest and problem crocodile removal;
- Number of saltwater crocodile eggs and live animals exported from, and imported into the NT;
- The number of saltwater crocodiles and saltwater crocodile eggs held by each crocodile farm;
- The number of saltwater crocodile eggs hatched by each crocodile farm;
- The number of natural and euthanasia mortalities of saltwater crocodiles and saltwater crocodile eggs at each crocodile farm; and
- Industry compliance indicators.

2.9. Management Actions Summary

To implement this WTMP a range of management actions will be undertaken by the NT Government (Table 1). Responsibilities of NT Government Departments and crocodile industry stakeholders are provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Management Actions to be undertaken under the WTMP and their relevant Timeline and Performance indicators.

Management Action	Timeline	Performance Indicator
Review population trends and determine cause of any significant changes.	Annual	• Results published in annual report to Commonwealth Government • Changes to permitted egg harvest allocations if required.
Investigate all alleged breaches of the TPWC Act and Code of Practice (see Section 2.7) by permit holders.	Ongoing	• 100% of allegations investigated
Ensure annual commercial harvest does not exceed the approved quota.	Annual	• 100% of annual returns received from permit holders and accurate data management from DTH with Problem Crocodile removal numbers
Monitor and audit harvest operations and returns.	Annual	• Compare annual returns with assigned quotas • All discrepancies investigated and resolved • One nest audit operation per year
Ensure all permit applications have correct landholder approval.	As required	• No permits to be issued without documentation of landholder approval provided to DLPE
Conduct inspections on eggs and farm stock numbers.	Annual	• Three Farm inspection per year (all farms inspected within the 5-year WTMP)
Ensure compliance with all permit terms and conditions, including lodgment of annual returns, prior notification of import/export shipments, and any other term or condition.	Ongoing	• Reminders sent to all permit holders requesting required documentation to be submitted on time (import/export, annual returns, notification of permitted activity, etc.) • All allegations of permit breaches investigated
Continue population survey program as described in Management Program.	Annual	• Results published in annual report to Commonwealth Government
Investigate and take appropriate action on any suspected breaches of the Animal Protection Act 2018.	As required	• All allegations of breaches investigated or reported to responsible agency
Submit annual report to the Australian Government and provide a summary on the NT Government website. To include audit against performance measures.	Annual	• An annual report for 1 January to 31 December is submitted to the Australian Government by the 30 June the succeeding year

Table 2: Responsibilities of NT Government Department and industry stakeholders in the Saltwater Crocodile Wildlife Trade Management Program.

Department / Stakeholder	Responsibilities
Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (Flora and Fauna Division)	• Assess applications. • Undertake annual population monitoring surveys. • Collate annual report to the Australian Government. • Compare wild egg collection data with farm hatchling data each year. • Issue CITES skin tags on behalf of DCCEEW. • Review of the Management program for the Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) in the Northern Territory of Australia when required.
Department of Tourism and Hospitality (Wildlife Operations)/Parks and Wildlife Commission	• Remove and dispose of problem crocodiles from agreed intensively managed areas. • Issue permits as appropriate • Ensure compliance with permit conditions. • Ensure compliance with all relevant NT legislation, Codes of Practice and by-laws.
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	• Investigate under animal welfare/protection legislation allegations of animal cruelty or a failure to provide a minimum level of care.
Northern Land Council	• Coordinate consultation process with Traditional Owners for land access and benefit sharing for any proposed harvest. • Provide Land Use Agreements for Aboriginal Land prior to any Egg or Live Harvest Permit being issued for commercial use.
Northern Territory crocodile farming industry / NT Crocodile Farmers Association	• Comply with all permit conditions. • Submit annual returns to DTH and DLPE by the specified dates. • Ensure animal welfare standards are being met in accordance with the Code and animal welfare/protection legislation. • Submit applications for permits to import/export crocodile shipments both domestically and overseas to DTH, at least two business days before the date needed. • Ensure that a CITES permit has been issued and that CITES permit numbers are available for overseas shipments of crocodile skins and products. • Ensure all activities are appropriately permitted.

2.10.Consultation and Review

This WTMP has been prepared in consultation with key stakeholder groups in the NT including the NT Crocodile Farmers Association. It will be subject to public review prior to its finalisation in accordance with Commonwealth EPBC Act requirements.

The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment will review the implementation of this Wildlife Trade Plan no later than 12 months prior to the expiry of this plan to assess its success in meeting its goals and objectives.

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4. Definitions and Acronyms

ALRA
Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, Commonwealth legislation.

CITES
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Crocodile Products and By-products
Includes all parts from a crocodile except for skins as defined below.

Crocodile Skins
Includes raw or tanned belly skins (cut along the back), horn-back (cut along the belly) and whole skins.

DLPE
Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Northern Territory Government.

Designated Management Areas
Management zones and designated swimming areas as described in the NT Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus).

DCCEEW
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of Australia, Australian Government.

DTH
Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Northern Territory Government.

Egg Harvest
The physical removal of an egg from its natural location in the wild and transportation to another location.

Eggs
Unless otherwise stipulated includes all eggs regardless of whether fertile or infertile, or with a live or dead embryo.

Eggs - dead
Eggs that contain a dead embryo.

Eggs – infertile
Eggs that have been laid, but not fertilised by a male.

Eggs - live
Eggs that contain a live embryo.

Eggs - viable
Eggs that produce a normal hatchling surviving for at least one day outside the egg.

EPBC Act
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, Commonwealth legislation.

Harvest Ceiling
Under this WTMP, the annual maximum number of individuals that can be harvested in each of the defined life stages.

Live Harvest
The physical removal of a hatchling, juvenile or adult crocodile from its natural location in the wild and transport to another location, excluding the relocation of an animal from one location in the wild to another location in the wild.

Management Program
The Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus) in the Northern Territory of Australia 2024-2034.

NLC
Northern Land Council.

Ranching
As used in the context of CITES, is the rearing in a controlled environment of animals taken as eggs or juveniles from the wild, where they would otherwise have had a very low probability of surviving to adulthood.

TPWC Act
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976, Northern Territory legislation.

5. Appendix A: Requirements of a Wildlife Trade Management Plan

303FO Approved wildlife trade management plan

1. The export of a specimen is an export in accordance with an approved wildlife trade management plan if the specimen is, or is derived from, a specimen that was taken in accordance with a plan declared by a declaration in force under subsection (2) to be an approved wildlife trade management plan.
2. The Minister may, by instrument published in the *Gazette*, declare that a specified plan is an ***approved wildlife trade management plan*** for the purposes of this section.
3. The Minister must not declare a plan under subsection (2) unless the Minister is satisfied that:
    a) the plan is consistent with the objects of this Part; and
    b) there has been an assessment of the environmental impact of the activities covered by the plan, including (but not limited to) an assessment of:
        (i) the status of the species to which the plan relates in the wild; and
        (ii) the extent of the habitat of the species to which the plan relates; and
        (iii) the threats to the species to which the plan relates; and
        (iv) the impacts of the activities covered by the plan on the habitat or relevant ecosystems; and
    c) the plan includes management controls directed towards ensuring that the impacts of the activities covered by the plan on:
        (i) a taxon to which the plan relates; and
        (ii) any taxa that may be affected by activities covered by the plan; and
        (iii) any relevant ecosystem (for example, impacts on habitat or biodiversity); are ecologically sustainable; and
    d) the activities covered by the plan will not be detrimental to:
        (i) the survival of a taxon to which the plan relates; or
        (ii) the conservation status of a taxon to which the plan relates; or
        (iii) any relevant ecosystem (for example, detriment to habitat or biodiversity); and
    e) the plan includes measures:
        (i) to mitigate and/or minimise the environmental impact of the activities covered by the plan; and
        (ii) to monitor the environmental impact of the activities covered by the plan; and
        (iii) to respond to changes in the environmental impact of the activities covered by the plan; and
    f) if the plan relates to the taking of live specimens that belong to a taxon specified in the regulations—the conditions that, under the regulations, are applicable to the welfare of the specimens are likely to be complied with; and
    g) such other conditions (if any) as are specified in the regulations have been, or are likely to be, satisfied.
4. In deciding whether to declare a plan under subsection (2), the Minister must have regard to:
    a) whether legislation relating to the protection, conservation or management of the specimens to which the plan relates is in force in the State or Territory concerned; and
    b) whether the legislation applies throughout the State or Territory concerned; and
    c) whether, in the opinion of the Minister, the legislation is effective.
5. A declaration under subsection (2) ceases to be in force at the beginning of the fifth anniversary of the day on which the declaration took effect. However, this rule does not apply if a period of less than 5 years is specified in the declaration in accordance with subsection 303FT (4).
6. If a declaration ceases to be in force, this Act does not prevent the Minister from making a fresh declaration under subsection (2).

7. A fresh declaration may be made during the 90-day period before the time when the current declaration ceases to be in force.
8. A fresh declaration that is made during that 90-day period takes effect immediately after the end of that period.

Part 13A—International movement of wildlife specimens

Division 1—Introduction

303BA Objects of Part

(1) The objects of this Part are as follows:

(a) to ensure that Australia complies with its obligations under CITES and the Biodiversity Convention;
(b) to protect wildlife that may be adversely affected by trade;
(c) to promote the conservation of biodiversity in Australia and other countries;
(d) to ensure that any commercial utilisation of Australian native wildlife for the purposes of export is managed in an ecologically sustainable way;
(e) to promote the humane treatment of wildlife;
(f) to ensure ethical conduct during any research associated with the utilisation of wildlife;
(g) to ensure that the precautionary principle is taken into account in making decisions relating to the utilisation of wildlife.

Note: CITES means the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species—see section 528.

(2) In order to achieve its objects, this Part includes special provisions to conserve the biodiversity of Australian native wildlife.