

4. CONCEPT PLAN

By adopting design and planning principles identified through the analysis of the Rapid Creek catchment above, a detailed plan can be developed that accurately reflects both immediate opportunities and long term responsibilities in the protection and rehabilitation of the creek.

Although the area of the creek catchment is relatively small, the extent of principles that must be respected and the breadth of issues which must be matched with management underlines the complexity of an urban creek system. It is necessary, and helpful, in such cases to express the intent of the management plan as a simple concept prior to considering the strategies required to bring it into effect.

The **Concept Plan** for Rapid Creek envisages a central corridor of rehabilitated bushland that is legible from surrounding areas. The creek will retain its natural character and ecological roles, and become a valuable natural asset in its urbanized catchment. (Refer Figure 4.1).

Opportunities to optimise recreational activities in the creek, will be pursued. The type of activities to be catered for will be low key and passive in keeping with the natural character of the creek and the sentiment of the local community. The corridor should be viewed as a single open space resource and with varying levels of use and access depending on the capability of the natural systems. The linear nature of the creek corridor will be emphasised and the provision of a secure, all weather pathway linking the headwaters at Marrara Swamp with the creek mouth will be an important component.

The concept promotes effective management and maintenance that is directed primarily at protecting and enhancing the natural systems, and secondly at providing for compatible recreation. The local community will be encouraged to participate in the management and maintenance of the creek.

Beyond the creek corridor the Plan relies on strategies related to planting, water quality and runoff management, community education and development control to extend the direct strategies for protection and rehabilitation.

In all this, the Concept Plan is seen as a consideration of three fundamental criteria in planning, namely **feasibility**, **desirability** and **affordability**, but remains a challenging and exciting proposal that will contribute to the landscape quality of Darwin.

CONCEPT PLAN

Figure 4.1

GENERAL NOTES

1. UNDERTAKE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND TO PROTECT THE CREEKS SOLE IN FLOOD CONTROL.
2. PROTECT AND ENHANCE ALL REMNANT VEGETATION OPPORTUNITIES. PULSE STRATEGIES IN ACQUIRING SITES TO EXTEND HABITAT VALUES THROUGH REVEGETATION AND THE REMOVAL OF WEEDS.

WATER GARDENS

UNDERTAKE A REVEGETATION PROGRAMME TO EXTEND THE SEASONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ENHANCE THE VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE RESERVE.

MONSOON RAINFOREST

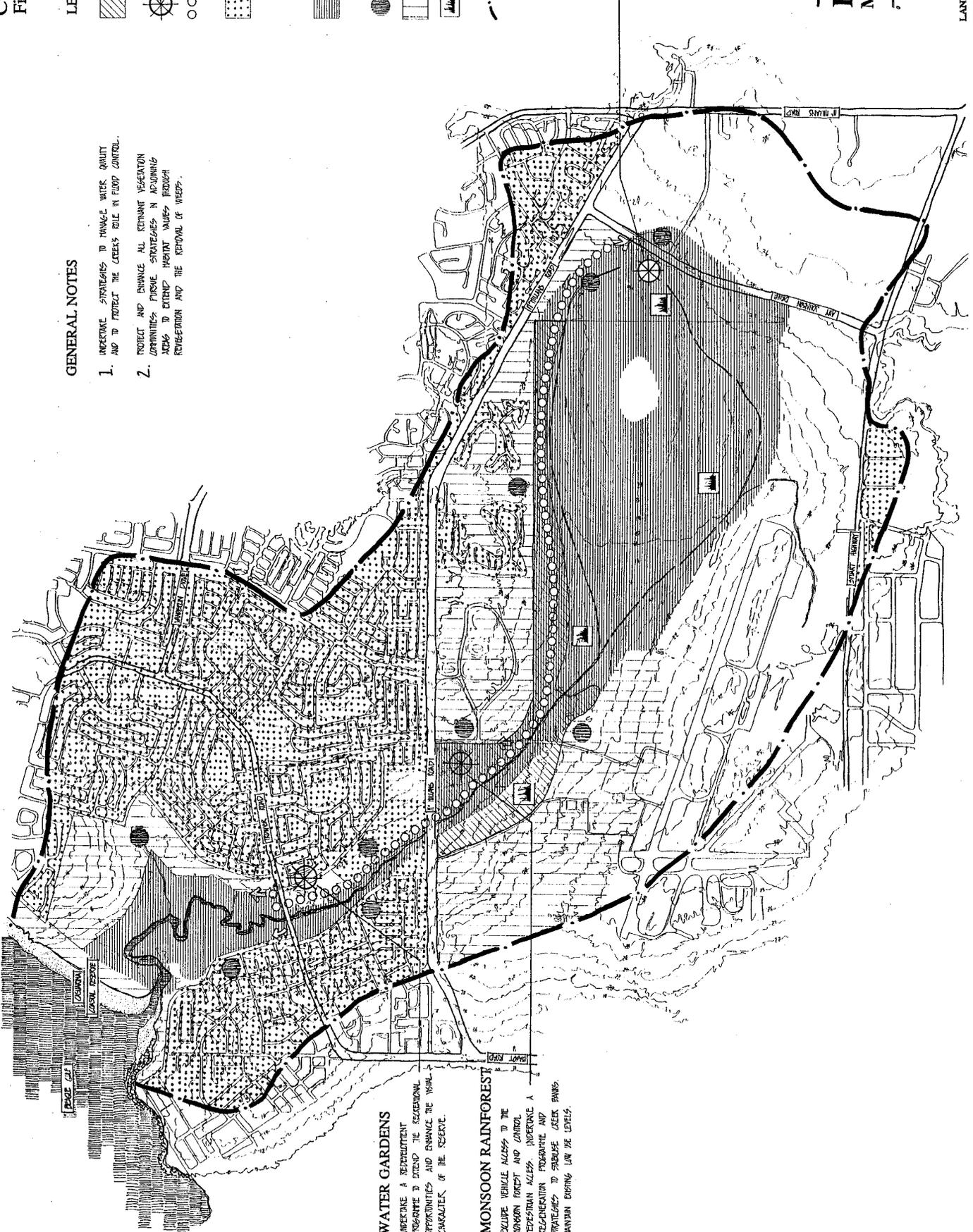
EXCLUDE VEHICLE ACCESS TO THE MONSOON FOREST AND CONTROL PEDESTRIAN ACCESS. UNDERTAKE A REVEGETATION PROGRAMME AND STRATEGIES TO STABILISE CREEK BANKS. MAINTAIN EXISTING LOW TREE LEVELS.

LEGEND

-  REVIEW SCHEME OF EXISTING OWNERSHIP WITH THE AID OF INCREASING PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND IMPROVE COMPATIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.
-  SPECIFIC RECREATION / MANAGEMENT AREA. REFER NOTES ON PLANNING.
-  SHARED PATHWAYS / CYCLEWAYS. STRONG LINK UP WITH EXISTING PATHWAYS.
-  UNDERTAKE A COMMUNITY UPGRADE PROGRAMME AND PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CREEK AND ITS NATURAL SYSTEMS. INQUIRY RESPONSES AS TO HOW THEY CAN REDUCE NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON THE CREEK. PROMOTE POSITIVE ACTIONS AND APPROPRIATE USE OF THE LANDSCAPE.
-  CENTRAL CORRIDOR OF REMNANT VEGETATION TO BE RECONSTRUCTED IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE VISUAL PERCEPTION OF THE CREEK AS A VALUABLE ECOLOGICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL NATURAL ASSET.
-  STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY.
-  ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STATUS AND VISUAL VALUES OF RESERVES AND SPECIAL USE AREAS.
-  DEVELOP A FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE WADLOP VEGETATION OPPORTUNITIES GIVING CONSIDERATION TO THE ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF FIRE.
-  CATCHMENT BOUNDARY.

MARRARA SWAMP

EXCLUDE PUBLIC ACCESS FROM THE SWAMP. EXCEPTING EXISTING WAYS, FORMULATE STRATEGIES TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND PROMOTE REGENERATION OF THE PASTURE.



RAPID CREEK MANAGEMENT STUDY



4.1 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR RAPID CREEK

In other States of Australia, management plans of this type would be prepared for, adopted, administered and implemented by Local Government as identified in the relevant Local Government Act. Such legislation is not available in the Territory, and the Local Government has minimal planning powers. Given the existing situation and the diversity of landholders, stakeholders and other groups with an interest in or responsibility for open space within the catchment, it would appear that the preferred direction, in a planning context, would be the establishment of a management body, comprising representatives from NT Government, Darwin City Council, the general community and landowners. Such a body may take various forms. One possible model, which is worthy of detailed investigation is that of a Catchment Advisory Committee. A fuller description of a possible structure and terms of reference for such an follows. It is based on Total Catchment Management as prepared and used by the New South Wales Government (Refer Appendix 4).

RAPID CREEK CATCHMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Catchment management is concerned with providing management direction for a catchment and having everybody within a catchment consider the impact of their activities on others and on the catchment itself. The important features of catchment management that will assist in sustainable use of resources and protect and rehabilitate Rapid Creek are:

- Co-operation between government and the community
- A co-ordinated approach to natural resource management
- Consideration of the impacts activities have on the creek
- An understanding of the ecosystems within the catchment
- Community involvement in identifying priorities, developing programmes, and implementing strategies and actions

The Rapid Creek Catchment Advisory Committee would be responsible for adopting and implementing the Plan as described here. The Committee will use this guidance to set up a 10 year programme for actions defined in these strategies, based on the level of urgency, the opportunity, achievability and a financial strategy. This programme would then be reviewed annually to assess progress and any required amendments.

The Catchment Advisory Committee would be established under the appropriate Legislation. The Committee would be established at the recommendation of the Minister for Conservation and Tourism and would act as a corporation which can raise revenue. The formation of the Committee must have the clear support of the various land holders, management authorities and the community.

The Catchment Advisory Committee would consist of trustees, appointed by the Chief Minister on the recommendation of the responsible Minister. The trustees will include:

- landholders or landusers within the catchment area, who are to constitute the majority of the trustees;

- persons from the community and environmental groups who in the responsible Minister's opinion have an interest in environmental matters within the catchment area;
- persons who are officers of government departments or authorities having responsibility for natural resource use or management within the catchment area.

The Catchment Advisory Committee would be responsible for the total catchment management of the creek. The Committee may:

- provide, construct, operate, manage and maintain works and buildings;
- purchase, exchange, take on hire or lease, hold dispose of, manage, use or otherwise deal with real or personal property;
- enter into contracts, including consultancy contracts;
- enter into cost sharing or other arrangements in connection with the carrying out of works;
- exercise any other functions that relate to the purpose of protecting and managing the natural resources of the catchment.

As described above the Catchment Advisory Committee will prepare a Corporate Plan, based on this Management Plan, to guide the implementation the catchment management strategies and programmes.

An option for generating revenue may be via a levying system applied to all landowners within the catchment. Such an approach is likely to be controversial and would clearly require further analysis and public consultation. The Committee would levy a catchment contribution on any land within the catchment area. All such monies would be available for funding programmes under the approved Corporate Plan. It is important to ensure that the rates levied equitably reflect the degree of benefit likely to accrue to land within the catchment area. The basis for the levy catchment contributions may be one or more of the following:

- land value of the land;
- the area of the land;
- the degree of benefit that accrues to land as a result of the Trust's programmes.

Ownership of the land would remain with the landowner, apart from particular instances where the Trust may assume control of Crown Land where this would rationalise management operations (Refer Section 5.3). Day to day maintenance and management of the land resource would remain with the property owner.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

The alternative to the Catchment Advisory Committee would be the establishment of a Management Committee to Council, as provided for under the Local Government Act. While such a committee would have a similar role to that of the Trust, their terms of reference would be restricted. The Management Committee would not have the authority to raise revenue, or allocate funds and resources to particular programmes or projects. The integrity of the Management Plan and implementation of the proposed strategies requires continuity and commitment over many years. Changes within Council (Councillors, Council staff, resources and priorities) have the potential to seriously compromise the long term implementation programme.