

Press Release

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New research partnership to study water quality impact on marine habitats near Exmouth Gulf

The impact of cyclones and other weather events on water quality and the marine ecosystem is the subject of ground-breaking research to be conducted under a \$350,000 partnership between The University of Western Australia (UWA) and K+S Salt Australia, the subsidiary of German resources company K+S.

The project will see researchers, led by PhD student Paula Cartwright of UWA's Oceans Graduate School, measure water quality and map marine habitats across the Exmouth Gulf and the Urala Creek coastline over an 18-month period.

"By conducting long-term studies of water quality we can assess, and therefore create a model to predict, the impact of seasonal changes and other weather events on marine habitat formation, including coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves," Ms Cartwright said.

"For example, increased sediment due to a storm surge can reduce light in water, stunting coral and sea grass growth.

"Declining marine water quality is recognised as one of the most significant threats to the long-term health and resilience of nearshore marine habitats."

The water quality will be analysed using a combination of laboratory analysis and in-situ analysis, to measure salinity, temperature, pH levels, turbidity, chlorophyll-a and dissolved organic matter.

K+S Salt Australia Managing Director Gerrit Gödecke said he was pleased to be partnering with the University of Western Australia.

"K+S is delighted to support leading research taking place in Western Australia," said Mr Gödecke.

"Ms Cartwright's research will help to fill the current knowledge gap on how fluctuating water quality affects coastal habitats.

“As well as forming part of K+S Salt Australia’s environmental analysis for the Ashburton Salt project development, we look forward to results contributing to greater scientific knowledge of the region for the benefit of the community.”

As part of the partnership, K+S Salt Australia is providing funding towards Paula’s research including 18 field trips, laboratory costs and the purchase several monitoring instruments including an EXO Sonde (which can measure salinity, temperature, pH, turbidity, chlorophyll-a and dissolved organic matter) and a dissolved oxygen meter.

The research team will consist of staff and post-graduate students from both The University of Western Australia and Curtin University, and will be overseen by Dr Mick O’Leary and Dr Nicola Browne.

The research project will begin this month and run to 1 February 2020.

Ends

About K+S

K+S considers itself as a customer-focused, independent minerals company for the segments of Agriculture, Industry, Communities and Consumers and wants to grow the EBITDA to € 3 billion in 2030. Our over 14,000 employees enable farmers to provide nutrition for the world, provide solutions that keep industries going, improve daily life for consumers and provide safety in the winter. We continually meet the growing demand for mineral products from production sites in Europe, North and South America as well as a worldwide sales network. We strive for sustainability because we are deeply committed to our responsibilities to people, environment, communities and economy of the regions in which we operate. Learn more about K+S at www.k-plus-s.com.

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