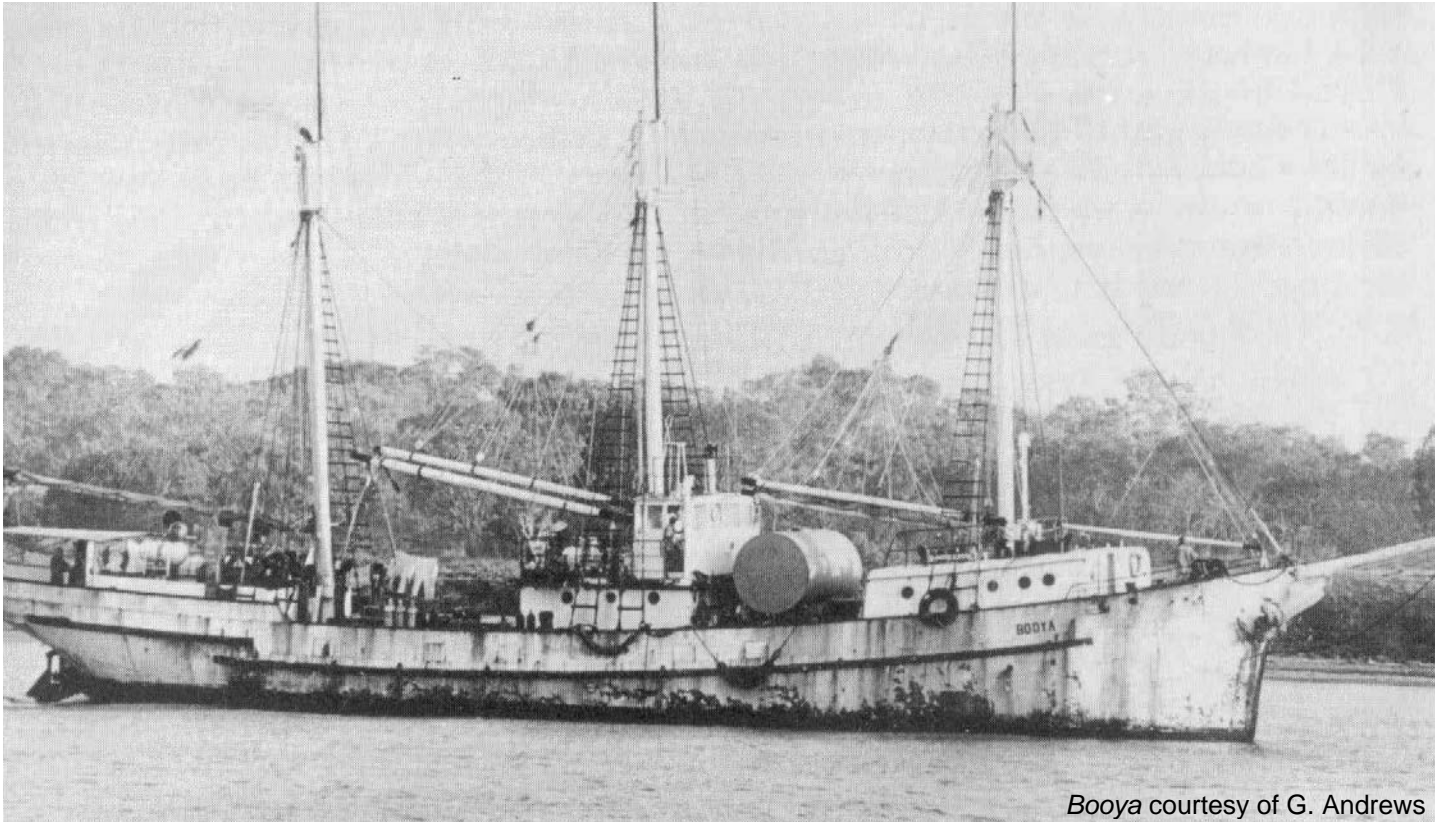




Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND THE ARTS



Booya courtesy of G. Andrews

updated

Interim Management Plan for the Wreck of the *Booya*

Submissions

You are invited to comment on the updated Interim Management Plan for the Wreck of the *Booya*.

The draft Program is open for public comment until **Monday 30 July 2007**.

Written submissions can be sent to:

Mr David Steinberg
Heritage Conservation Services
Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts
PO Box 496
Palmerston NT 0831
Email: david.steinberg@nt.gov.au

For further information:

- visit www.nt.gov.au/consult, or
- phone **08 8924 4141**

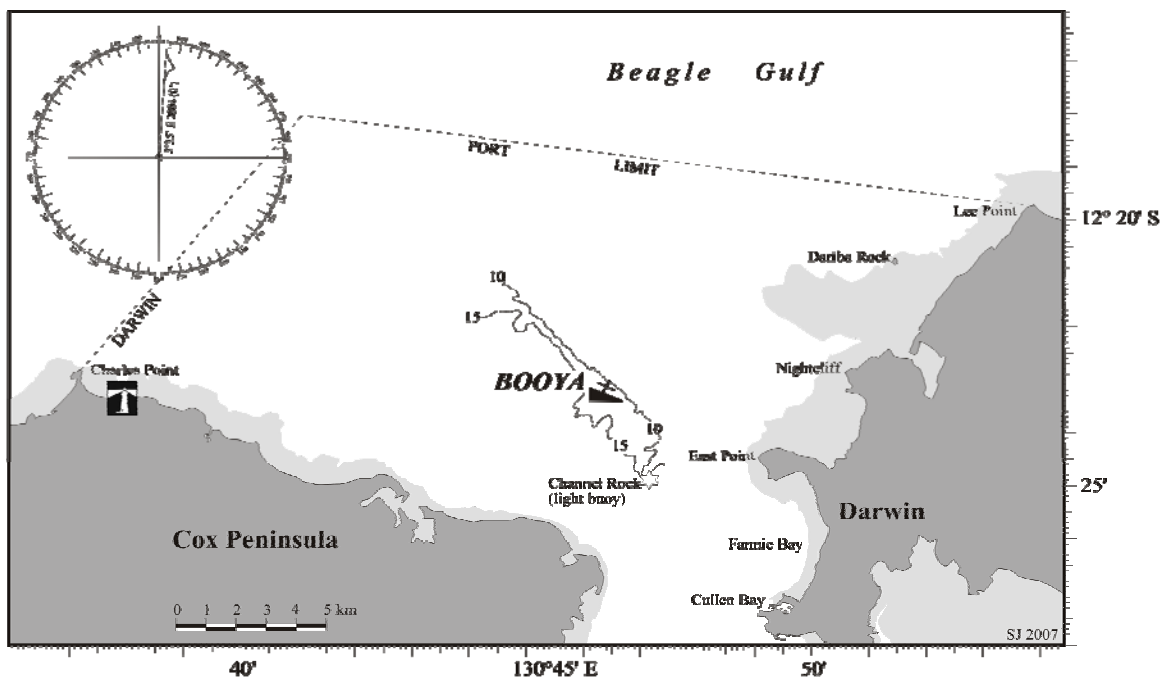
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide a current framework for managing the wreck of the *Booya*, located in Darwin Harbour, until such time as a long-term management plan can be prepared.

A long-term management plan will be prepared once the update of the NT *Heritage Conservation Act* and the development of the Marine Protected Area Strategy have been completed. This will then allow the long term tenure and access regimes to be determined.



Location of the *Booya* shipwreck
Map courtesy of S. Jung

2. Interim Management Plan 2004

The Interim Management Plan 2004 was endorsed by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage in May 2004. The purpose of the plan was to respond to immediate management issues. At that time police divers were still investigating the site under the direction of the coroner. The site had not been inspected by archaeologists, nor had marine biologists provided an assessment. The site at this time had not been declared a heritage place under the *Heritage Conservation Act* 1991, although an Interim Conservation Order was in place. A number of questions remained unanswered including ownership of the wreck.

Management issues raised in the Interim Management Plan 2004:

- An appropriate statutory framework to manage the site
- Damage caused by large ship traffic
- Damage or disturbance caused by uncontrolled diving or fishing
- Fuel that may still be on board the ship
- Ownership of the wreck
- Conservation of artefacts raised by police divers
- Archaeological and marine survey of the wreck
- Making the site 'diver safe' for potential future recreational access

Initiatives in place at the release of the interim management plan 2004:

- An Interim Conservation Order (ICO) under the *Heritage Conservation Act*
- A prohibited area of 150 metre radius around the site declared indefinitely by the Harbourmaster under the *Darwin Port Corporation Act*
- Prohibition on diving with the exception of scientific diving and diving related to the coroner's investigation
- Control of access to the wreck site through the former Office of Environment and Heritage and the Harbourmaster
- Statutory protection for the site through the Harbourmaster and the ICO whilst ownership issues were resolved. With the determination of ownership, consideration would then be given to permanent protection by declaring the site a heritage place

3. Events since May 2004

3.1 Ownership

The question of ownership has been resolved with confirmation that the owner of the *Booya* is the Australian Security and Investment Commission (ASIC). This is because the ship was an asset of a company which was deregistered in July 1992. According to the *Corporations Act* ASIC became the owner at that time.

3.2 Heritage Listing

The *Booya* shipwreck was declared a heritage place under the *Heritage Conservation Act* on the 15th June 2005. There remains a 150 metre exclusion zone around the site declared under the *Darwin Port Corporation Act*. Any consideration of protecting the site under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Corporation Act* has been deferred until the completion of the Marine Park Protected Area Strategy, and amendments to the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

A Statement of Heritage Value, that summarises the values of the site, was produced as part of the wreck's assessment for heritage listing. This statement, which guides conservation and management policy, is provided below:

The 'Booya' was a three-masted schooner with a steel hull built in the Netherlands in 1917. She was originally named 'De Lauwers'. The ship was last seen anchored off Fort Hill in Darwin Harbour on 24th December 1974, the night Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin. Her fate was unknown until the wreck was discovered in the northern reaches of Darwin Harbour in October 2003, lying in about 20 metres of water. Five people are believed to have gone down with the ship.

The wreck of the 'Booya' has considerable significance for both its natural values, and for its cultural significance. A marine ecosystem of exceptional diversity and richness has developed around the wreck site. The fact that this ecosystem has been unaffected by human activity and lies so close to a major city is unique in the Northern Territory and Australia. The site has considerable potential as a valuable research and teaching site,

and as a reference area which can be compared to similar sites which have been affected by human intervention.

The cultural significance of the wreck site has a number of dimensions. The 'Booya' was one of the last of its kind, a merchant sailing ship which still operated in Australian waters long past the great age of sail had passed. As the 'Argosy Lemal' it served in World War Two as a communications ship in the Pacific Theatre, under the flag of the United States. It is associated with the catastrophic events of Cyclone Tracy in 1974, in particular the loss of life at sea which occurred as a result of the cyclone. The wreck site also has strong symbolic significance as the place where several people lost their lives in tragic circumstances.

3.3 Coronial Inquiry and raised artefact collection

Police diving on the *Booya* as part of the coronial investigation was completed in December 2004. The findings of the coronial inquiry were handed down on 17 March 2005.

The artefacts that were raised by the police dive team were first offered to the family of those that were aboard the vessel at the time of its loss. Out of those items that remain, the Museums and Art Gallery of the NT (MAGNT) will accession a selection into its collection.

3.4 Mooring buoys for safe boat access

The Harbourmaster installed two mooring buoys on the site in early May 2006. The Harbourmaster maintains the buoys which are lit at night and have signs clearly identifying the exclusion zone; making it clear to the public that they have entered a restricted area. As mooring buoys they facilitate dive vessels which under special circumstances may be permitted to enter. They make access to the site safer for divers and prevent damage to the wreck by boat anchors. A trail of star pickets for divers to follow leads from the mooring blocks to the wreck.

3.5 Natural significance

The *Booya* shipwreck was included on the NT Heritage Register for its cultural and natural significance. A report produced by NT Government marine biologists titled *Ecological and Natural Heritage significance of the 'Booya' Shipwreck: a preliminary*

assessment measures the *Booya* against the natural significance criteria and confirms that it meets this benchmark.

3.6 Support for no fishing policy

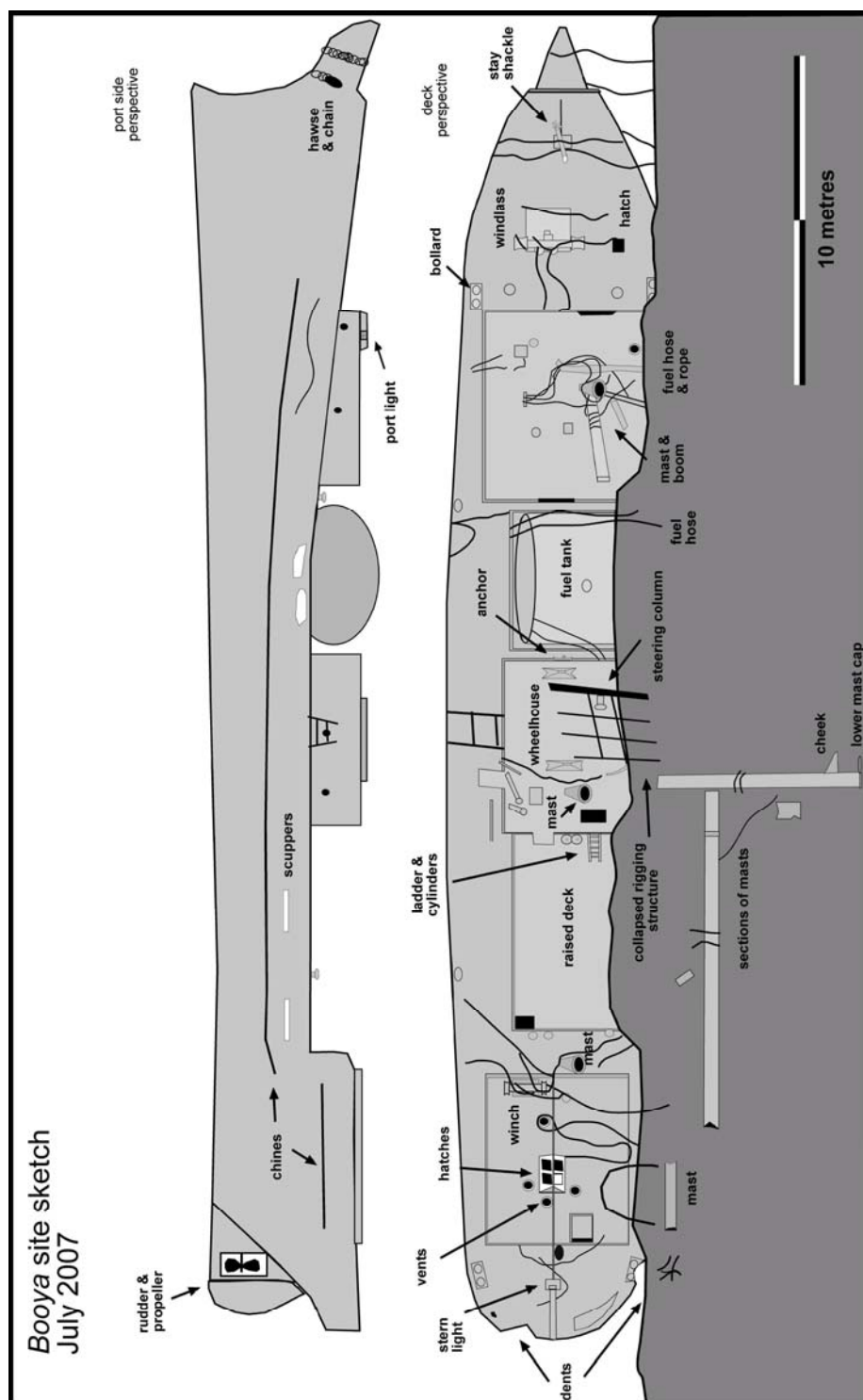
From the discovery of the *Booya* the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT) has appreciated the scientific value of the *Booya* and supported a 'no take' fishing policy. This policy is clearly outlined in a media release issued by AFANT on the 28 April 2004. Since then AFANT has continued to support this policy and provided advice regarding appropriate educational initiatives.

3.7 Surveillance and compliance of site

Heritage Conservation Services (HCS) has been working closely with the Harbourmaster to coordinate an effective surveillance program. Fisheries Enforcement and other agencies conduct regular visits to the site to detect illegal entry into the exclusion zone. HCS keeps a detailed spreadsheet of all evidence of fishing deposited on the site for example anchors, line and hooks.

3.8 Research

Over the 2006 Dry season HCS ran a research project with the assistance of volunteers. The project resulted in a marine survey and a site plan of the wreck. A draft of the plan is shown below.



3.9 Territory Diving Services

In 2005 Territory Diving Services (TDS) produced a report on the *Booya* providing a risk assessment analysis covering issues such as recreational diving and residual fuel and recommending mitigative measures. Two recommendations were to prohibit penetration diving by recreational divers and to remove compressed gas from three cylinders located on the wreck.

3.10 Conservation monitoring strategy

HCS has established a monitoring program to monitor the condition of the wreck site. The monitoring program is based on repeated visits by divers. The purpose of the monitoring is to identify significant changes or issues promptly, so that if necessary mitigative measures can be implemented. It also will provide valuable data about long term wreck site evolution.

The monitoring program measures predominantly human impacts such as the removal of artefacts, interference to the structure by divers (either accidental or deliberate), disturbance of the seabed and damage caused by boat anchors. Possible impacts to the wreck site by divers is discussed in greater detail elsewhere. Also visible signs of corrosion and structural deterioration are recorded. The possible appearance of marine pests is also recorded. There is the ability for the monitoring program to be adapted to respond to new issues.

On each visit divers engaged in monitoring fill in a pre-prepared data sheet. Key areas of the site are recorded with video and/or photography.

4. Remaining Management Issues and Management Intent

4.1 Residual fuel

Residual fuel was considered in the TDS report which suggested that the tanks within the hull may still contain some liquid fuel and that three compressed gas cylinders found on site may retain compressed gas. A large deck fuel tank is open to the environment and so is no longer an issue.

The tanks within the hull comprise the vessel's own fuel tanks and cargo tanks. The three gas cylinders are twin LP gas cylinders and a single acetylene tank.

The three gas tanks present a possible threat to diver safety. Therefore these tanks will either be emptied in-situ or removed.

The liquid fuel tanks present no threat to diver safety as they are not explosive, and if leakage of remaining diesel occurs (through gradual corrosion of the tanks) it would result in a slow stream that would rise to the surface. It is also possible that this fuel has already escaped from the wreck. TDS recommends that no action can be taken regarding the residual fuel without causing considerable damage to the hull.

4.2 Surveillance (and compliance)

The *Booya* shipwreck is protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act* and the site is enclosed within an exclusion zone declared under the *Darwin Port Corporation Act*. The current surveillance and compliance strategy should be maintained and supported.

4.3 Public Access

Following recent research in which baseline data was collected, the government's understanding of the *Booya* shipwreck, both in terms of the cultural remains and its natural attributes, has developed considerably. It is now possible for the government to implement a program which provides for **controlled non-destructive public access**.

Fishing on the *Booya* will remain prohibited because of the impact this would have on the natural and cultural values of the site. However controlled recreational diving will be permitted.

A list of possible human threats associated with recreational diving are listed below. These must be considered in the development of a recreational diving access program.

- Damage to the wreck through the use of anchors
- Disturbance, damage and removal of material remains through looting
- Disturbance and damage caused to material remains by the use of tools, the scraping of the wreck's surface, attempts to penetrate the hull or similar aggressive dive practices
- Disturbance of the surrounding seabed through probing, hand fanning or use of tools
- The disturbance of marine life through spearing, catching or disturbance of the surface layer of the wreck
- Disturbance or damage caused to the material remains through poor dive skills (eg. poor buoyancy control)
- Disrespectful behaviour (e.g. deposition of beer cans or rubbish onto the site)

It is proposed to allow access to the *Booya* for the purpose of recreational diving through a special exemption of the Harbourmaster's exclusion zone. Businesses and incorporated associations based in the Northern Territory will be eligible to apply for the exemption. Each exemption will be reviewed on a case by case basis at the end of each year. It should also be made clear that this access program is a trial and will be assessed after the first year.

For the preservation and continuation of the surveillance program only a small number of exemptions will be issued. Parties provided an exemption will accept full liability for any injury or death that may occur. Based on recommendations in the TDS report no penetration diving will be permitted.

A series of conditions will apply. Each holder of an exemption will on the day communicate their intentions to enter the exclusion zone to the Darwin Port Corporation (call sign Darwin Harbour) on VHF Channel 10 or by phone on 8999 3974 or 8947 7214. These numbers and VHF Channel are monitored continuously by the Darwin Port Corporation. On departure the party will again notify Darwin Harbour. These times will be logged by the Darwin Port Corporation.

Each visit to the site will be documented by the visitor on a form, prepared by HCS, which will detail information such as the vessel, skipper, dive-master and number of divers. Significant incidents or observation will also be detailed. These forms will be sent to HCS at the end of each year or on request.

The responsibility of co-ordinating visitation between the holders of an exemption rests with these parties themselves. Two boats can be facilitated at one time as there are two mooring buoys. It is agreed that the wreck can only facilitate a finite number of divers at one time, and so a maximum number of divers will be set.

The holders of an exemption will abide by these and further conditions that will be outlined to them. A failure to abide by these conditions will see the immediate retraction of the exemption.

4.4 Maintenance of the mooring system

The mooring system supports the conservation of the site by eliminating the need to use anchors, and supports safer diving by providing a known route from the surface to the wreck. The buoys will be maintained by the Harbourmaster.

4.5 Provide diver related interpretation

A laminated dive card specific to the *Booya* will be produced and distributed free of charge to parties permitted to access the site. The cards will enhance the diver's experience by identifying dominant marine life and providing a map of the wreck. This will be produced by HCS.

An underwater sign such as a plinth will be installed at the wreck site in the future. The text should focus on the fact that the site is the last resting place of five people and therefore should be suitably respected. This will be done in consultation with the families of those that died. This will be produced and installed by HCS.

4.6 Provide public orientated interpretation

An A4 brochure on the *Booya* for general public circulation will be produced. It will communicate the protective status of the site and the exclusion zone. This will be produced by HCS.

5. Recommendations

1. Trial a recreational diver access program by providing a finite number of exemptions to the Harbourmaster's *Booya* exclusion zone.
2. Commission a consultant to release compressed gas in deposited cylinders.
3. Maintain the surveillance and compliance program.
4. Maintain the mooring system.
5. Maintain the monitoring program.
6. Produce laminated diver cards and distribute to the parties permitted to access the site.
7. Produce and install an underwater plinth or similar.
8. Produce and distribute a brochure on the site.