

# Star kayaker to brave crocs for Kimberley

DALE MILLER

Battling whitewater rapids and braving saltwater crocodiles in a kayak during the Kimberley's cyclone season would seem like madness rather than an adventure to the ordinary person.

But for Australian world champion whitewater kayaker Tanya Faux, who today leads a team of four into the uncharted waters of the region's Moran and Mitchell rivers, the trip is a chance to not only explore the unknown but also encourage others to save the wilderness area from industrialisation.

The team will spend 24 days covering about 400km of the remote area by kayak and foot, taking in sites such as the Mitchell River Falls while recording footage to be used for the Save the Kimberley campaign.

The campaign was launched last year to protect the Kimberley from the threat of multi-billion dollar gas projects and other large-scale industrial development.

Faux said she was inspired to support the campaign after spending time on a couple of remote cattle stations in the Kimberley and completing a seven-day kayaking trip along the region's King Edward River last year.

The team will sleep under a tarpaulin and mosquito nets and carry head cameras and hand-held digital video cameras to record the trip. A satellite phone will be used to give daily updates of their progress with each report to be posted at [www.feedtherat.com](http://www.feedtherat.com).

"Many people do not know this land exists in our backyard and we have a chance to save it," Faux said.

Viewing "phenomenal Aboriginal rock art" and 300m-high cliffs, and tackling seasonally rough waters, will be among the highlights of Faux's trip.

She said public support was necessary to secure heritage status for the region and urged others to get behind the cause.

"I think people believe the Kimberley is this place with lots of rocks and crocs and that it is beautiful but they don't understand the size of it ... they don't

know it's under threat and will probably be mined," she said.

Australian TV personality and crocodile hunter Malcolm Douglas has been the public face of the Save the Kimberley campaign and is among those who have called for parts of the region such as the Horizontal Waterfalls to be added to the World Heritage List.

Campaign supporters have opposed plans by Japanese giant Inpex to build a liquefied natural gas plant on the Maret Islands, off the far north Kimberley coast. Inpex has threatened to take the project to Darwin because of frustration over regulatory delays in WA.

Kimberley Land Council executive director Wayne Bergmann said a logical consequence would be that indigenous people in the region would miss out on direct benefits from Inpex's project if it was moved to the NT. The KLC was due to meet Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett this week to discuss the involvement of traditional owners.



Whitewater whiz: Tanya Faux kayaks in the Kimberley's King Edward River in 2006. Today, she starts a new mission designed to protect the remote area.