

Progress Report CF 2018-057

Flora conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

Project Core Team

Supervising Scientist	Melanie Smith
Data Custodian	Melanie Smith
Site Custodian	

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Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

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M Smith, C Bourke, T Llorens, J Donaldson, B Richards, J Jackson

Context

The flora conservation team collates and manages biodiversity information and provides a range of science based support for flora conservation and recovery. Maintaining and managing the Threatened and Priority Flora database (TPFL) allows the department to provide accurate technical and scientific advice on threatened and priority flora to decision makers in land use planning and environmental impact assessment processes. Undertaking conservation status assessments, including nominations for listing/delisting and change of status, ensures that the most recent biological and ecological information is available to stakeholders. The department facilitates the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) and coordinates recovery programs, including developing interim recovery plans and supporting recovery teams, to guide translocations and conservation activities involving threatened and priority flora.

Aims

- Provide evidence-based advice for the management, protection and recovery of flora.
- Collate, manage and interpret information on the distribution, conservation status and recovery of threatened and priority flora.
- Provide a data provision service to ensure threatened and priority flora data is available within and outside of the department.
- Contribute to the assessment of environmental impact on flora conservation values for development and vegetation clearing proposals in accordance with relevant policy and legislation.
- Prepare permits to take threatened flora in a timely manner and within acceptable limits of impact to ensure the conservation of threatened flora.
- Guide strategic and coordinated recovery programs for threatened flora, including the preparation of interim recovery plans and threatened flora translocations.
- Undertake assessments of conservation status based on all available data and prepare nominations for the TSSC.
- Develop, inform and influence policy and strategic direction relating to flora.

Progress

- Preparation for the threatened species provisions of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) were made to ensure compliance with the new BC Act and Regulations, including transition from Declared Rare Flora (DRF) permits to threatened flora authorisations.
- 166 permits to take DRF/threatened flora authorisations were issued. Of these, 74 were issued for herbarium specimen collections for identification purposes, 20 were issued for scientific/research purposes and 72 were issued for land management and operational purposes.
- 556 new records were added to the TPFL database, of which 116 were records of new populations.
- 420 data search requests for threatened and priority flora were processed (15 internal, 70 other government departments, 313 consultants/mining sector, and 22 other organisations).
- Conservation status assessments resulted in 83 additions to the priority flora list, change in category of 35 taxa, and de-listing of 19 taxa after survey and taxonomic review clarified their conservation status.
- Administered changes to the Rare Flora Notice were published including one addition and the down grading of three species to a lower category of threat, criteria change for two species and ten name changes.
- Conservation status was reviewed for taxa described in 15 draft *Nuytsia* manuscripts.
- A recovery plan was published for one species, and interim recovery plans were published for another five species of threatened flora. Interim recovery plans were drafted for an additional ten species of threatened flora.
- Translocation proposals were approved for ten internal and three external projects.

- Impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 71 clearing permit applications, 31 other mining or development projects (73 separate advice requests) and nine land use planning proposals with the potential to affect threatened and priority flora.
- Support was provided for the meeting of Threatened Flora Recovery Teams representing the South Coast, Goldfields, Swan and Warren Regions, and the Albany, and Esperance Districts.
- Volunteers in the Swan, Wheatbelt and Warren regions, and Albany and Geraldton districts assisted in conducting surveys for many threatened and priority flora species. Volunteers from the department and the Western Australian Native Orchid Study and Conservation Group collaborated on the Adopt an Orchid project to survey and monitor 36 threatened and priority orchid species, with 163 populations monitored and 34 new populations discovered.
- Information and advice was provided to the Department of the Environment and Energy to support threatened species listing and recovery plan decisions for flora taxa.
- Representation continued on the national working group for implementing the MoU on a Common Assessment Method for assessing threatened species. Nineteen flora species were endorsed by the Federal Minister for formal listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in 2019-2020.

Management implications

- Enhanced data sets and lists for threatened and priority flora facilitate improved assessment and conservation.
- Updates to the TPFL database assists in resolving the status of flora and provides improved information for land use planning and management.
- Management advice, and assessment of applications to take or translocate threatened flora, assists the department and other land managers to maintain the conservation status of threatened and priority flora.
- Industry management programs and threatened flora recovery plans guide conservation outcomes.
- Provision of input into the environmental impact assessment and land use planning processes maximises the potential for positive conservation outcomes.

Future directions

- Continue to assess the conservation status of flora and prepare six flora recovery plans.
- Make available the Threatened Flora Management Course for departmental staff.
- Transition to the new threatened species database and test the database for operational use, and train regional staff in the use of the new database.
- Continue to revise threatened flora operational procedures as required under the BC Act.