

Progress Report CF 2018-066

Ecological communities conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

Project Core Team

Supervising Scientist	Val English
Data Custodian	Val English
Site Custodian	

Project status as of Oct. 10, 2019, 4:36 p.m.

Approved and active

Document endorsements and approvals as of Oct. 10, 2019, 4:36 p.m.

Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

Ecological communities conservation and recovery

V English, C Harding, R Luu, S Martin, K Nilsson, J Pryde, P Robertson

Context

The ecological communities team collates and manages biodiversity information, and provides a range of science based support for the management, protection and recovery of threatened ecological communities (TECs) and Priority ecological communities (PECs). Maintaining and managing the TEC database enables the department to provide accurate technical and scientific advice on the protection and management of ecological communities to decision makers in land use planning and environmental impact assessment processes. Undertaking conservation status assessments, including nominations for listing/delisting and changes of status, ensures that the most recent ecological information is available to stakeholders. The team facilitates the Western Australian Threatened Ecological Communities Scientific Committee (TECSC) and coordinates recovery programs, including developing interim recovery plans and supporting recovery teams, to guide conservation activities for TECs and PECs.

Aims

- Provide evidence-based advice for the management, protection and recovery of TECs and PECs.
- Collate, manage and interpret information on the distribution, conservation status and recovery of TECs and PECs, and deliver a data provision service to ensure data are available within and outside of the department.
- Contribute to the assessment of environmental impact on TEC and PEC conservation values for development and vegetation clearing proposals in accordance with relevant policy and legislation.
- Undertake on ground assessments to support conservation management and advice for environmental impact assessments and land use planning proposals affecting TECs and PECs.
- Guide strategic and coordinated recovery programs for TECs, including the preparation of recovery plans.
- Undertake assessments of conservation status based on all available data and prepare nominations for TECs and PECs for consideration by the TECSC.
- Implement the sections of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) that relate to TECs.

Progress

- At 30 June 2019, there are 65 ecological communities listed by the department as TECs (20 critically endangered, 17 endangered and 28 vulnerable) and four as 'collapsed'. Another 393 ecological communities are on the PEC list.
- One recovery plan for a TEC was adopted under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Interim recovery plans were drafted for two TECs.
- Three hundred and thirty two data search requests for TECs and PECs were processed for a range of stakeholders. Specialist TEC advice was also provided with a number of these requests.
- New occurrence information was added and edits to existing spatial information on the TEC and PEC database completed for 229 occurrences distributed across the state.
- On ground survey and monitoring was undertaken for 33 occurrences of TECs and PECs throughout the state.
- Support and specialist input was provided, and meetings attended, for the Threatened Flora and Communities Recovery Teams in the Swan and Warren Regions, and the Albany, Esperance, Central Wheatbelt and Geraldton Districts.
- Environmental impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 109 clearing permit applications, land use planning, mining and development proposals.
- Specialist advice was provided to the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy regarding their proposal to list a Western Australian TEC under the *EPBC Act*, and comment provided on the draft Conservation Advice.

- Two meetings of the TECSC were held to reassess 69 threatened ecological communities against current ranking criteria for the first TEC listing under the BC Act.
- Information and expert advice was provided for a Supreme Court case regarding a TEC occurrence.
- Preparation of TEC Notifications to Landholders under the BC Act commenced.
- Field survey, and a draft report on the vegetation, threats and future management of the Nimalarragan wetland complex PEC near Broome were completed.
- A flora and vegetation report was completed for a coastal salt marsh TEC in Ashfield, to assist future management of the site.
- Draft assessments against the new ranking criteria - the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems, were prepared for 16 TECs.
- Documentation and processes were developed to support assessment of applications to modify TECs under the BC Act, and three preliminary applications were processed.

Management implications

- Enhanced datasets for TECs and PECs facilitate improved environmental impact assessments, land use planning, and conservation management.
- Maintenance of up to date data on the TEC and PEC database assist in resolving the status of ecological communities.
- Recovery plans, and management advice, assist the department and other land managers in maintaining the conservation values of TECs and PECs.
- TEC notification letters assist with landowner knowledge about TEC management.

Future directions

- Continue to maintain the TEC and PEC database.
- Continue to provide data and advice for the protection, conservation and management of TECs and PECs.
- Complete re-assessment of 65 existing TECs against the Ministerial Guideline No. 4 using the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems criteria, and prepare nominations for the TECSC.
- Using Ministerial Guideline No. 4, prepare nominations for the TECSC for high priority ecological communities.
- Complete the two draft, and one additional interim recovery plan for TECs.
- Continue to develop standard procedures and thresholds for 'Modification' of TECs, and process applications to modify TECs under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.
- Provide letters to owners and managers of private and public lands to notify them of their responsibilities under the BC Act regarding TECs on their land.