

## Progress Report CF 2018-066

# Ecological communities conservation and recovery

## Species and Communities

### Project Core Team

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### Project status as of June 23, 2021, 4:15 p.m.

Update requested

### Document endorsements and approvals as of June 23, 2021, 4:15 p.m.

Project Team	required
Program Leader	required
Directorate	required

## Ecological communities conservation and recovery

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### Context

The ecological communities team collates and manages biodiversity information, and provides a range of science-based support and advice 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

- As at 30 June 2021, there were 65 extant ecological communities listed under the Western Australian Minister Environmentally Sensitive Areas list in policy (20 critically endangered, 17 endangered and 28 vulnerable), and four listed as collapsed. Another 391 ecological communities were on the PEC list.
- Three meetings of the TECSC were held and Ministerial Guideline 4 was revised and approved by the Minister.
- Evaluation of threat rank for 39 ecological communities was revised and updated, and assessed by the Threatened Ecological Community Scientific Committee in preparation for consideration for listing under the BC Act.
- Nominations were developed for three collapsed ecological communities, and assessed by the TECSC.
- New occurrence information was added and edits to existing spatial information on the TEC and PEC database completed for 260 TEC and PEC occurrences distributed across the state.
- On-ground survey was undertaken for 79 occurrences of TECs and PECs throughout the State to support conservation decision making.
- Twenty three TEC fact sheets including description, indigenous interests and threatening processes were prepared and placed on the department's website.
- Fire response and fire risk information for TECs and PECs based on 14 risk factors and best practice fire management was also compiled for 65 TECs. Basic fire response information compiled for 391 PECs.
- Support and specialist input were provided, and meetings attended, for the Threatened Flora and Ecological Communities Recovery Teams in the Swan and Warren Regions, the Albany, Esperance, Central Wheatbelt and Geraldton Districts.

- Environmental impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 85 clearing permit applications, land use planning, mining and development proposals to improve conservation outcomes for 35 TECs and 11 PECs across the state.
- Current TEC and PEC locational data were provided in response to 451 requests were processed for a range of stakeholders to help ensure up to date information was available for proposal documents. Specialist TEC or PEC advice was also provided with many of these requests.
- New occurrence information was added to the Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities database for 261 occurrences of Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC) and Priority Ecological Communities (PECs) distributed across the State, helping resolve the status of the PECs and providing improved information for land use planning.
- Five assessments for applications to modify a TEC in anticipation of listing under the BC Act were completed.
- Two reports were completed for 1600 hectares of land in the Swan and Midwest Regions including five TECs on nine areas of private land for potential areas for consideration for inclusion in the reserve system.
- Instruction and training were provided to 20 University of Western Australia Master of Biological Science students and resulted in evaluation and improved mapping of six areas of a Banksia woodlands TEC.
- Detailed technical information and advice were provided about TECs and PECs to support proposed boundaries for 29 new reserves proposed under Plan for our Parks proposals.

## Management implications

- Enhanced data sets for TECs and PECs facilitate improved environmental impact assessments, land use planning, and conservation management.
- Listing of TECs under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* provides them with legislative protection
- Inclusion of ecological communities for the Priority ecological community list identifies them as requiring investigation to clarify status and threats.
- Maintenance of up to date data on the TEC and PEC database assists in resolving the threat 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 and PEC data and advice support determinations of priority areas for reservation.

## Future directions

- Continue to provide data and advice for the protection, conservation and management of TECs and PECs.
- Continue to review and provide advice about the proposed TSC database so that it becomes fit for purpose.
- Continue to improve TEC and PEC data.
- Continue to facilitate the TECSC.
- Continue to improve guidance material for best practice burning of TECs and PECs
- Undertake public consultation processes for listing of up to 65 TECs under the BC Act.
- Prepare nominations for the TECSC for high priority ecological communities.
- Update TEC fact sheets as required including description, indigenous interests and threatening processes and place on the department's website
- Complete three draft TEC interim recovery plans.
- Publish one interim recovery plan in the Western Australian Government Gazette.
- Continue to develop standard procedures and thresholds for 'modification' of TECs, and process applications to modify TECs under the BC Act.
- 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.