

**Progress Report CF 2018-066**

**Ecological communities conservation and  
recovery**

**BCS Species and Communities**

**Project Core Team**

X X **Supervising Scientist** Val English  
**Data Custodian** Val English

**Project status as of June 29, 2023, 10:44 a.m.**

X X Completed and closed

**Document endorsements and approvals as of June 29, 2023, 10:44 a.m.**

X X  
**Project Team** granted  
**Program Leader** granted  
**Directorate** granted



# Ecological communities conservation and recovery

V English, R Luu, M Hunter, J Chick, K Grogan, S Woodman, J Pryde, P Robertson

## 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 evidence-based 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 in status of ecological communities, ensures that the most recent ecological information is available to stakeholders. The team facilitates the Threatened Ecological Communities Scientific Committee (TECSC) and implements the provisions of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) that relate to TECs. The group also coordinates recovery programs, including developing interim recovery plans and supporting recovery teams, to guide conservation activities for TECs and PECs.

## Aims

- Implement the provisions of the BC Act that relate to TECs.
- Undertake assessments of conservation status based on all available data and prepare nominations for TECs and PECs for consideration by the TECSC.
- 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 is available within and outside of the department.
- Provide technical advice for 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.

## Progress

- At 30 June 2022, 65 extant ecological communities were listed under the Western Australian Environmentally Sensitive Areas list (20 critically endangered, 17 endangered and 28 vulnerable), and four were listed as collapsed. Another 390 ecological communities were on the PEC list.
- Two meetings of the TECSC were held to provide comments on draft assessment reports of the threat rank for 65 extant and three collapsed ecological communities in preparation for consideration for listing under the BC Act.
- The six week public consultation process for nominations to list of the 65 extant ecological communities under the BC Act was initiated. Letters were sent to land owners, holders of mineral tenements, managers of indigenous protected areas, and pastoral leases where a TEC is recorded and emails were sent to external stakeholders including government departments, inviting comment on the 65 listing nominations.
- New occurrence information was added and edits to existing spatial information on the TEC database were completed for 548 occurrences of 37 TEC and PEC occurrences distributed across the state.
- On-ground survey was undertaken for 61 occurrences of TECs and PECs throughout the state to support conservation decision making. A total of 650ha of vegetation supporting one TEC and three PECs on private land was surveyed for potential consideration for inclusion in the reserve system.
- Advice was provided in relation to 56 clearing permit application, and land use planning, mining and development proposals to improve conservation outcomes for 19 TECs and 18 PECs across the State.
- Current TEC and PEC locational data were provided in response to 547 requests from a range of stakeholders to help ensure that up to date information was available for proposal documents. Specialist TEC or PEC advice was also provided with many of these requests.

- Draft survey and identification methods were compiled for 65 TECs and released for public comment for three months on the department's website.
- Data were compiled from 141 quadrats for inclusion in a review of the Swan Coastal Plain floristic community types.
- Monitoring data and other information about 12 TECs and three PECs was utilised to assess the sensitivity and exposure of ecosystems to multiple fire-related threats for a publication in *Global Ecology and Biogeography*.
- Instruction and training were provided to 20 University of Western Australia Master of Biological Science students and resulted in evaluation and improved mapping of seven areas of Banksia woodland TEC.

## Management implications

- Maintenance of up to date data on the TEC and PEC database assists in resolving the threat status of ecological communities.
- Enhanced data sets for TECs and PECs support improved advice for environmental impact assessments, land use planning, and conservation management.
- TEC and PEC data and advice support determinations of priority areas for reservation.
- Listing of TECs under the BC Act supports increased legislative protection.
- Inclusion of ecological communities on the PEC list identifies them as requiring investigation to clarify status and threats.
- Recovery plans and management advice support the department and other land managers in maintaining the conservation values of TECs and PECs.

## Future directions

- Complete the process for listing 65 nominated TECs under the BC Act.
- Prepare nominations for consideration by the TECSC for other high priority ecological communities.
- Pursue improvements in TEC and PEC data, and data migration into the new corporate database.
- Continue to provide data and advice for the protection, conservation and management of TECs and PECs.
- Continue to develop standard procedures and thresholds for modification of TECs, and process applications to modify TECs under the BC Act.