

## **Progress Report CF 2018-066**

# **Ecological communities conservation and recovery**

**Species and Communities**

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### **Project status as of May 6, 2021, 1:20 p.m.**

Approved and active

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**Project Team**

granted

**Program Leader**

granted

**Directorate**

granted

## 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 for the management, protection and recovery of Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC) and Priority Ecological Communities (PEC). Maintaining and managing the TEC data base allows 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 change of status, ensures that the most recent ecological information is available to stakeholders. The department facilitates the Threatened Ecological Communities Scientific Committee and coordinates recovery programs, including developing interim recovery plans and supporting recovery teams, to guide conservation activities in 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 TECs and PECs conservation values for development and vegetation clearing proposals in accordance with relevant policy and legislation.
- Undertake on ground assessment and provide conservation advice in regard to 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 of the TECSC.

### Progress

- The Minister approved one change to the conservation status of a TEC during the year.
- At 30 June 2018, there were 65 extant ecological communities listed by the department as TECs (20 critically endangered, 17 endangered and 28 vulnerable) and four listed as 'presumed destroyed'. Another 391 ecological communities are on the PEC list.
- An interim recovery plan was approved for one TEC and four interim recovery plans were drafted.
- 375 data search requests for TECs and PECs were processed for a range of stakeholders including departmental staff, other government departments, consultants, commercial interests and community groups. Specialist TEC advice was also provided in conjunction with a number of these search requests.
- New occurrence information was added as well as edits to existing spatial information on the TEC and PEC data base for 42 occurrences distributed across the State.
- On ground survey and monitoring was undertaken for 27 occurrences of TECs and PECs throughout the State.
- Support and specialist input was provided, and where possible meetings attended, for the Threatened Flora and Communities Recovery Teams representing the Swan and Warren Regions, and the Albany, Esperance, Central Wheatbelt and Geraldton Districts.
- Environmental impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 110 clearing permit applications, land use planning advice, mining and development proposals. Specialist advice was provided to the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy on the listing of TECs and input into the Approved Conservation Advice under the *EPBC Act*.
- One meeting of the TECSC assessed the nominations for listing three ecological communities.
- Information and expert advice was provided for a case in the Supreme Court of Western Australia involving an occurrence of a TEC.

## Management implications

- Enhanced data sets for TECs and PECs facilitate improved assessment and conservation.
- Updates to the TEC and PEC data base assists in resolving the status of ecological communities and provides improved information for land use planning and management.
- Management advice assists the department and other land managers to maintain the conservation status of TECs.
- Provision of input into the environmental impact assessment and land use planning processes maximises the potential for positive conservation outcomes.

## Future directions

- Continue to maintain the TEC and PEC data base.
- Continue to provide data and advice for the protection, conservation and management of TECs and PECs.
- Commence re-assessment of existing TECs against the Ministerial Guidelines, using the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems criteria and prepare nominations where the threat category changes under these criteria.
- Prepare nominations for additional TECs using the Ministerial Guidelines.
- Finalise the four draft interim recovery plans.