

Progress Report CF 2018-057

Flora conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

Project Core Team

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Approved and active

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Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

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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 Ministerial Authorisations 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 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

- One hundred and ninety two threatened flora authorisations were issued. Of these, 91 were issued for herbarium specimen collections for identification purposes, nine were issued for scientific/research purposes and 92 were issued for land management and operational purposes.
- One hundred and fourteen new records were added to the TPFL database, of which 75 were records of new populations.
- A total of 475 data search requests for threatened and priority flora were processed (26 DBCA, 102 other government departments, 321 consultants/mining sector, and 26 other organisations).
- Conservation status assessments resulted in 47 additions to the priority flora list, change in category of 21 taxa, and delisting of five taxa after survey and taxonomic review clarified their conservation status.
- Nine nominations for threatened flora were reviewed, five for addition to the threatened flora list, two for a change in category and criteria and two for a change in criteria only.
- Conservation status was reviewed for taxa described in four draft *Nuytsia* manuscripts.
- Interim recovery plans were approved for two species of threatened flora, the first recovery plans to be made under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act). Significant new legislative requirements for public consultation, approval and publication were negotiated and met.
- Translocation proposals were approved for six internal DBCA and two external projects.
- Impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 60 clearing permit applications, 24 other mining or development projects (53 separate advice requests) and 19 land use planning proposals with the potential to affect threatened and priority flora.

- Advice was provided on flora licenses including bio-prospecting licenses and on issues relating to the management of the Western Australian flora industry.
- 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 40 threatened and priority orchid species, with 138 populations monitored and 32 new populations discovered.
- Representation continued on the national working group for implementing the MoU on a Common Assessment Method for assessing threatened species. Two flora species were endorsed by the Federal Minister for formal listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- Training was provided to Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety staff on the use and interpretation of threatened and priority flora data for desktop assessments of clearing permits.
- Contributed to the development of the Disturbance Approval System Phase 2 – GIS Integration by being part of the project team. Ongoing support to be provided to this project team in 2020-2021 regarding the use and provision of spatial data for threatened species and communities.
- Drafted flora fire response guidelines as part of the documentation being prepared on best practice mitigation and management actions to protect biodiversity during bushfire mitigation activities. Participated in first stage of testing of the Threatened Species and Communities database.
- Organised and presented at a workshop for Adopt an Orchid volunteers to improve data provision and strengthen community partnerships.
- Provided input into the State Native Vegetation Strategy including administrative supporting in organising and hosting a workshop for DWER to undertake departmental consultation on the issues paper.
- Provided input and advice on 14 threatened flora species' profiles for the National Action Plan for Australia's Most Imperilled Plants, coordinated by the NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub.

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 deliver strategic direction and coordination of the conservation, management, protection and recovery of flora in an efficient manner.
- Continue to assess the conservation status of flora and prepare nominations for listing and recovery plans where necessary.
- Prepare high quality technical flora advice to internal and external stakeholders as required.
- Transition to the new Threatened Species and Communities database and ensure high quality data is maintained and shared.
- Continue to implement the BC Act, through issuing of Ministerial Authorisations and ensure processes and guidelines are in place as required.