

Progress Report CF 2018-066

Ecological communities conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

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Project Team

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Program Leader

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Directorate

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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 2020, 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.
- Public consultation was completed for a draft interim recovery plan for a TEC and PEC.
- Interim recovery plans were drafted for three TECs.
- Two meetings of the TECSC were held and Ministerial Guideline 4 was revised.
- The level of threat to 65 ecological communities was assessed against IUCN ranking criteria in preparation for consideration for listing under the BC Act.
- New occurrence information was added and edits to existing spatial information on the TEC and PEC database completed for 1,790 occurrences distributed across the state.
- On-ground survey was undertaken for 28 occurrences of TECs and PECs in the south-west of the State to support conservation decision making.
- Forty two TEC fact sheets including description, indigenous interests and threatening processes were prepared and placed on the department's website.
- 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, and the Sedgeland in Holocene dune swales and thrombolites of Lake Richmond recovery teams.
- Environmental impact assessment advice was provided in relation to 103 clearing permit applications, land use planning, mining and development proposals.

- Eleven assessments for applications to modify a TEC in anticipation of listing under the BC Act were completed and proponents notified of preliminary outcomes.
- Three hundred and ninety-five 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.
- A report about biological survey and mapping of selected organic mound springs TECs and PECs of the Kimberley Region was completed.
- Two reports recommending TEC or PEC areas for purchase were completed and supported acquisition of 384 hectares of land in the Swan and South West Regions containing two Western Australian and one federally listed TEC for conservation.
- Instruction and training were provided to 11 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 23 new reserves proposed under Plan for our Parks proposals.
- Versions of the proposed web-based Threatened Species and Communities database (TSC) were tested, reviewed and advice provided about its capabilities, structure and content.

Management implications

- Enhanced data sets 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 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.
- Prepare 23 TEC fact sheets including description, indigenous interests and threatening processes and place on the department's website.
- 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.
- 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.