

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

DRAFT

Scope:

This policy establishes WPSQ's view on major issues relating to vegetation management. It sets out goals, actions and guiding principles to provide effective management of vegetation.

Context

WPSQ acknowledges that Queensland has the largest area of natural vegetation of any State of Australia. Effective management of this vegetation will protect this world class natural heritage, provides a strong platform for the presentation and enjoyment of nature and also ensures conservation outcomes are achieved and are consistent with sustainable production.

There exists a plethora of legislation that regulates vegetation management in Queensland that not only involves State legislation, but also Commonwealth and local authority legislation. In terms of State legislation, the clearing of trees on State and freehold land is now regulated principally under *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004*. Marine plants are defined and protected under the *Fisheries Act, 1994*. This legislation provides little protection to grasslands unless captured on protected areas, principally under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Bluegrass the brigalow communities are also protected under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. A number of local governments, particularly in South East Queensland have also used their planning powers and bylaws to protect areas of bushland or other vegetation types.

It is only relatively recently that the breath of legislative controls have been adopted. However, mining and land use for infrastructure remain exempt from most of these State and local government controls.

WPSQ seeks to work towards a convergence of the interests of land-holders, developers, governments and miners with the wider public interest to ensure that planned and rational development will achieve effective conservation outcomes as well as provide for sustainable production.

WPSQ considers it is imperative that there is no further loss or erosion of the fauna diversity of Queensland. This can only be achieved through the conservation of the State's remaining natural vegetation and the rehabilitation of key areas.

Goals/Objectives

- Broad scale clearing of remnant vegetation cease.
- Broad scale clearing resulting in significant fragmentation of riverine and riparian communities does not occur.
- Conserve all remnant endangered and of concern regional ecosystems in Queensland

- Clearing of not of concern regional ecosystems is such as the extent of the ecosystem does not fall below 30% of its pre-clearing extent or 10 000 ha
- Clearing does not reduce the extent of remnant vegetation in a Bioregion to less than 30% but preferably to not less 50%
- Clearing does not cause land degradation
- Remnant areas should be sufficiently large to allow functioning ecosystems (including fauna) to continue without human intervention
- Clearing does not occur in an area defined as essential habitat for wildlife listed as vulnerable, rare, near threatened or endangered under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- The representativeness and variation of regional ecosystems is maintained throughout their distribution.
- The viability and resilience of core ecological areas are maintained
- The conservation status of regional ecosystems is maintained
- The decline in the biodiversity status of some regional ecosystems is reversed
- Identified areas of special biodiversity value are maintained

Actions

WPSQ seeks and advocates the following actions:

- Vegetation management legislation must apply to all users (including mining and infrastructure) not just the rural sector and limited urban/rural residential enterprises.
- Appropriate guidelines be approved for “routine management” ie for necessary fencing, roads and firebreaks to ensure ‘management’ does not result in clearing.
- Management practices such as fodder harvesting and thinning be permitted only in situations where a clearing permit may be issued and only in accordance with appropriately approved guidelines. These practices must:
 - maintain the regional ecosystem conservation status
 - maintain the floristic and structural diversity and not prevent the regenerative capacity of the regional ecosystem
 - maintain mature seed and habitat trees
 - not result in the total removal of under-storey and mid-storey species
 - not introduce non endemic pasture species.
- Thinning or strip clearing of trees must be carried out by selective chemical or mechanical treatment or a combination of both.
- Rehabilitation of selected areas of regrowth with high conservation value.
- Retention, protection and management of key habitats for specified wildlife.
- Land owners and managers adopt property planning to manage vegetation not only for productive uses, but also for conservation. An integrated landscape approach should be used in the preparation of these plans.
- Land owners and managers recognise and accept that there is a duty of care for management of their land and the costs associated with that level of performance should be met by the landholder. If performance is required above and beyond that level for general community benefit then compensation may be in order.

- Land managers have regard to wildlife ensuring that development strategies do not impact significantly on wildlife and their habitat.
- Government agencies enforce compliance with the legislation and regulations.
- Government agencies charged with such responsibilities are adequately resourced.
- Enhanced mapping of regional ecosystems at appropriate scales and completion of regional ecosystem mapping across the whole State.
- Extension of the mapping of the conservation values of remnant vegetation across the State that takes into account not only the scarcity of vegetation types, but also its value as habitat, connectivity, maturity, and other attributes.
- Continued education of land owners and managers of vegetation management actions for conservation.
- Increase community awareness and improve education on the role and value of native vegetation, not only for scenic and amenity purposes, but also for the maintenance of biodiversity and in many areas, sustainability of the tourism industry.

Guiding Principles

- All Australians have a responsibility to support the conservation of vegetation and its effective management. The burden should be shared evenly.
- The recommendations contained in the Regional Vegetation Management Plans prepared in 2002-04 should be a starting point for the development of the necessary codes. Modifications will be necessary in order to satisfy the goals of this policy.

Approved Council

Date / / 2004

DEFINITIONS

Biodiversity: The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, and includes diversity within species and between species and diversity of ecosystems.

Biodiversity Status: The biodiversity status of a regional ecosystem is used for conservation and biodiversity planning based on the remaining extent in the bioregion together with its condition and the presence of threatening processes. The categories are:

Endangered. <10 % pre-European extent remains; or contracted to < 10% of former range; or severe degradation over an extensive area; or rare regional ecosystem subject to a threatening process; or naturally restricted regional ecosystem reduced to 10 –30 % of former range and subject to a threatening process.

Of Concern. 10-30 % pre-European extent remains; or moderate degradation over an extensive area; or naturally restricted ecosystem subject to a threatening process; or rare not subject to a threatening process.

No Concern at Present. > 30 % pre-European extent remains; and little or no degradation.

Rare, is based on pre-European extent < 1000ha or patch size < 100ha and of limited total extent across its range.

Naturally Restricted: is based on pre-European extent < 10000 ha.

Threatening Process: is one that threatens the survival of the ecosystem or a constituent species within it, or affects the capacity of the area or ecosystem to sustain ecological processes.

Bioregion: Bioregions are based on broad landscape patterns that reflect the major structural geologies and climate as well as changes in floristic and faunistic assemblages

Broad scale Clearing: means tree clearing that is not tree clearing declared under the regulation to be for routine management, routine rural management purposes or other stated purposes.

Clearing vegetation: means remove or cut down, ringbark, push over, poison or destroy the vegetation in any way but does not include destroying standing vegetation by stock, or lopping a tree and removing or cutting down, ringbarking, pushing over, poisoning or destroying the vegetation in any way as a forest practice.

Conservation status: Defined in the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* which classifies a regional ecosystem as :

Endangered if less than 10% of the pre-clearing extent remains, or 10-30 % of the pre-clearing remains(if the area of remnant vegetation is less than 10 000 ha) Of concern if 10-30% of the pre-clearing extent remains, or more than 30% of the pre-clearing extent remains(if the area of remnant vegetation is less than 10 000ha) Not of concern if more than 30 % of the pre-clearing extent remains and the area of remnant vegetation is more than 10 000ha.

Ecological processes: Any process that plays an essential part in maintaining ecosystems integrity. There are four fundamental components; cycling water, cycling nutrients, flow of energies and biodiversity. Ecological processes include both biotic and abiotic elements.

Ecosystem: A dynamic complex of plant, animal, fungal and micro organism communities and the non-living environmental interacting as an ecological unit

Marine plants: a plant that usually grows on, or adjacent to, tidal land whether it is living, dead, standing or fallen; material of a tidal plant or other plant material on tidal land; a plant, or material of a plant, prescribed under a regulation or management plan to be a marine plant. A marine plant does not include a declared plant under the *Rural Lands Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*.

Regional Ecosystem: The vegetation community that is consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, landform and soil.

Regrowth: means vegetation that is not remnant vegetation.

Remnant Vegetation: The vegetation that forms the predominant canopy layer covering more than 50 % of the undisturbed predominant canopy and averaging more than 70 % of the vegetation's undisturbed height and composed of species characteristic of the undisturbed canopy. Where regional ecosystems have been mapped, remnant vegetation is shown on regional ecosystems maps. For the rest of the State it is shown on remnant maps.

Vegetation a native tree or plant other than a grass or mangrove.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Fisheries Act 1994. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Integrated Planning Act 1997. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Land Act 1994. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Local Government Act 1993. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Nature Conservation Act 1992. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Vegetation Management Act 1999. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel

Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2004. Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.