

Northwest Highlands Biodiversity Planning Assessment (BPA) Version 1.1

INFORMATION SHEET

The Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) has completed a Biodiversity Planning Assessment (BPA) for the Northwest Highlands (NWH) bioregion using the Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Methodology (BAMM). Completion of this assessment has achieved a statewide coverage of BPAs.

The Northwest Highlands bioregion, covers approximately 7.3 million hectares, extending south west from the Queensland/Northern territory border capturing the major towns of Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Selwyn in the south to its border with the Mitchell Grass Downs bioregion. With less than 0.5 per cent of the original native vegetation cover lost since European settlement, the bioregion is relatively intact.

Overall, 55 per cent of remnant vegetation in the NWH was assessed as having biodiversity values of State significance. Regional significance was attributed to 9 per cent, with the remaining 36 per cent of remnant vegetation assigned Local or Other Values. A contributing factor for the high overall assignment of areas of local significance (comparative to other bioregions), is due to the relative intactness of the landscape. Comparative to other Queensland bioregions subject to greater levels of threats and disturbance, Criteria A and B (threatened species habitat and ecosystem value) contributed less to the overall biodiversity designation of State or Regional significance.

The Expert Panel identified 39 per cent of the remnant vegetation as having State or Regional significant biodiversity values. Values attributed included the identification of important refugia, areas of high species richness, concentrations of endemic species, important habitat for priority taxa, the presence of intact wild landscapes, as well as landscape connections (terrestrial and riparian).

Despite the lack of broadscale clearing in the region, the condition of much of the remnant vegetation has been impacted from agriculture, mining, weeds and feral animals lowering the habitat value. The panel considered that changes to the fire regime and grazing are the two main drivers of loss of habitat condition.

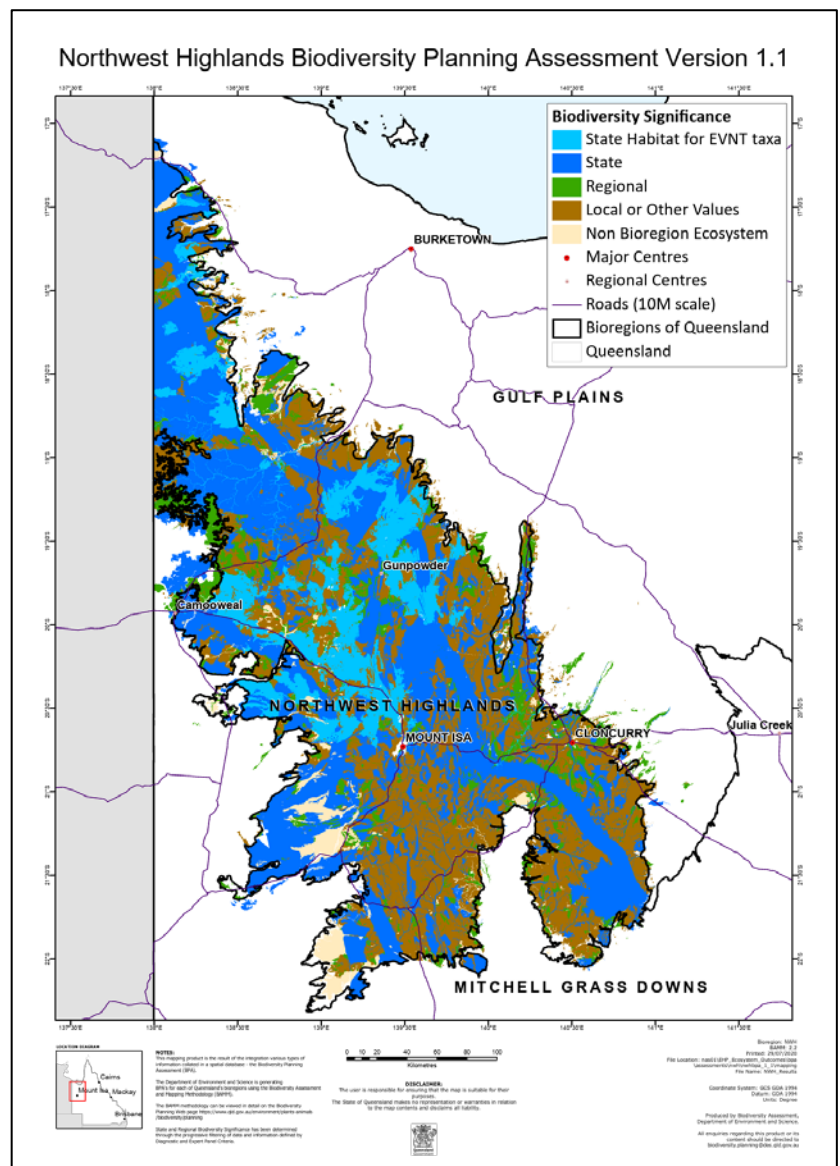


Figure 1 NWH BPA

What is BAMB?

The Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Methodology (BAMB) has been developed to provide a consistent approach for assessing biodiversity values at the landscape scale in Queensland. It is being used by DES to generate Biodiversity Planning Assessments (BPAs) for each of Queensland's bioregions.

The methodology (Figure 2) has application for identifying areas with various levels of significance solely for biodiversity reasons. These include threatened ecosystems or species, large tracts of habitat in good condition, ecosystem diversity, landscape context and connection, and buffers to wetlands or other types of habitat important for the maintenance of biodiversity or ecological processes.

The methodology:

- provides a consistent approach for assessing relative biodiversity values at the landscape scale
- presents raw and synthesised spatial information about biodiversity to a broad range of potential users
- aims to optimise the use of existing data and information
- uses existing regional ecosystem (vegetation) mapping created by the Queensland Herbarium
- generates BPAs for each bioregion.

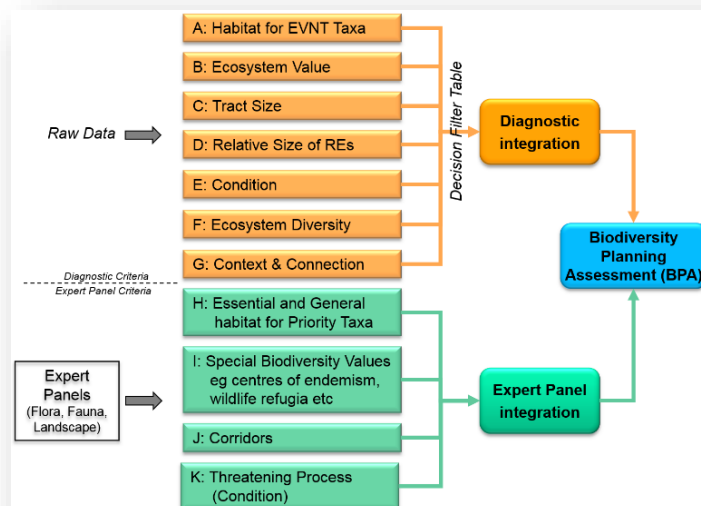


Figure 2 BAMB

BPA applications

A BPA is the result of applying BAMB to a particular bioregion. BPAs can be used by DES staff, other government departments, local governments, NRM bodies or members of the community to advise a range of planning and decision-making processes. For example:

- Matters of State Environmental Significance (MSES)
- determining priorities for protection, regulation, or rehabilitation of terrestrial ecosystems
- development assessment
- local and regional planning processes
- contributing to impact assessment of large-scale development.

Assessments conducted to date

BAMB was initially developed in 2002. Since then, it has been used to assess biodiversity values for all Queensland bioregions. Refer to Figure 3.

Accessing BPA results (related links)

Assessment of biodiversity values at the bioregional scale.

<http://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/biodiversity/planning/>

Search for Biodiversity Planning Assessment at QSpatial.

<http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au>

BPA results can be viewed through the Queensland Globe.

<https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/>

The results are also available through Biomaps.

<http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/biomaps/>

Queries to biodiversity.planning@des.qld.gov.au

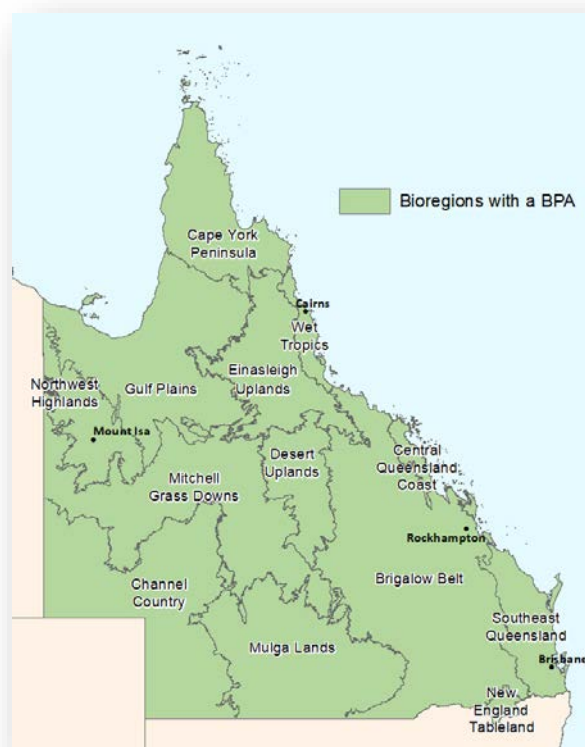


Figure 3 BPA assessment and release status