

Approved Conservation Advice for the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain

(s266B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

This Conservation Advice has been developed based on the best available information at the time this conservation advice was approved; this includes existing plans, records or management prescriptions for this ecological community.

Description

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain is a type of eucalypt woodland that is restricted to Quaternary basalt soils. It occurs on flat to gently undulating plains and associated stony knolls, generally at elevations up to 500 metres above sea level. The ecological community lies within a rainfall zone of 500-800 mm per annum.

The tree canopy is typically dominated by *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) though other eucalypt species may become prominent at wetter or drier sites. The understorey comprises a sparse shrub layer and a species-rich ground layer of grasses and herbs. The ecological community includes patches of derived grassland where the tree canopy is known to have been removed but a native ground layer remains. Stony knolls and rocky outcrops within a woodland may give rise to localised shrubland or non-eucalypt woodland and these are also included within the ecological community.

A more detailed description is available in the listing advice for this ecological community at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publiclookupcommunities.pl>. The description is based upon consultation with experts at a technical workshop and subsequent discussions.

Conservation Status

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain is listed as **critically endangered**. This ecological community is eligible for listing as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) because it has undergone a very severe decline in extent, has a very restricted geographic distribution coupled with demonstrable threat and has undergone a reduction in community integrity that is very severe. The Minister considered the Threatened Species Scientific Committee's (TSSC) advice under section 189 of the EPBC Act and amended the list under section 184 to include the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

A part of the ecological community is also listed as threatened under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* as *Floristic Community 55-04 Western Basalt Plains (River Red Gum) Grassy Woodland* (Scientific Advisory Committee, 2004). The Victorian listing only relates to occurrences of the ecological community in the Whittlesea-Craigieburn-Epping region north of Melbourne.

Distribution

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain occurs in south-western Victoria, from Melbourne to the Hamilton region and is endemic to that State. It is restricted to the Victorian Volcanic Plain (VVP1) bioregion. This ecological community occurs within the Port Philip and Westernport, Corangamite, and Glenelg-Hopkins Natural Resource Management Regions.

The ecological community provides habitat for several EPBC Act-listed threatened species. These are detailed in Table 1 of the listing advice for the ecological community.

Threats

The main identified threats to the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain are vegetation clearance for agriculture and urban development, fragmentation of remnants, weed invasion and management regimes (fire, grazing, mowing) that are inappropriate to long-term conservation of biodiversity.

The main potential threat to the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain is climate change.

Research Priorities

Research priorities that would inform future regional and local priority actions include:

- Undertake survey work in suitable and potential sites to locate additional remnants or confirm their presence, and to identify threatened flora and fauna that may require specific conservation measures.
- Continue to build upon existing research efforts into the impacts of various management regimes, the restoration of ground layer species and the regeneration of trees and shrubs in the ecological community.

Priority Actions

The following priority recovery and threat abatement actions can be done to support the recovery of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

Habitat Loss, Disturbance and Modification

- Monitor known sites to identify key threats.
- Monitor the progress of recovery, including the effectiveness of management actions and the need to adapt them if necessary.
- Implement appropriate management regimes to maintain the biodiversity, including threatened species, of the ecological community.
- Liaise with local councils and State road authorities to ensure road widening, maintenance activities or other development activities involving substrate or vegetation disturbance in areas where the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain occurs do not adversely impact on known remnants.
- Investigate formal conservation arrangements, management agreements and covenants on private land, and for crown and private land investigate inclusion in reserve tenure if possible.
- Liaise with planning authorities to ensure that planning for growth zones in urban and peri-urban areas takes the protection remnants into account, with due regard to principles for long-term conservation.

Invasive Weeds

- Ensure chemicals or other mechanisms used to manage weeds do not have a significant adverse impact on the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.
- Manage sites to prevent introduction or further spread of invasive weeds, which become a threat to the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, using appropriate methods.

Trampling, Browsing or Grazing

- Ensure that livestock grazing uses an appropriate management regime and density that does not detrimentally affect remnants of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

- Manage known sites on private property to ensure appropriate stock grazing regimes are conducted to maintain and enhance native biodiversity.

Fire

- Identify circumstances under which an ecological burn may be required for the conservation of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, and develop and implement suitable ecological fire management strategies.
- Where appropriate provide maps of known occurrences to local and state Rural Fire Services and seek inclusion of mitigative measures in bush fire risk management plan(s), risk register and/or operation maps.
- Negotiate appropriate standing procedures with local fire brigades.

Conservation Information

- Raise awareness of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain ecological community within the local community and particularly with farmers, e.g. through active Conservation Management Networks, Landcare groups and other groups.
- Maintain liaisons with private landholders and land managers of land on which populations occur.

Enable Recovery of Additional Sites

- Investigate options to maintain and improve connectivity of remnants, including the protection of paddock trees, where possible.

This list does not necessarily encompass all actions that may be of benefit to the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, but highlights those that are considered to be of highest priority at the time of preparing the Conservation Advice.

Existing Plans/Management Prescriptions that are Relevant to the Ecological Community

The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment is preparing an Action Statement for this ecological community.

Barlow T (1999). Grassy Guidelines. How to Manage Native Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands on your Property. Trust for Nature, Victoria. Melbourne.

Available on the Internet at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/land/publications/grassguide.html>

Department of Sustainability and Environment (2004a). Action Statement No. 182. Central Gippsland Plains Grassland, Forest Red Gum Grassy Woodland, Northern Plains Grassland, South Gippsland Plains Grassland, Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland. Department of Sustainability and Environment. Melbourne.

Available on the Internet at:

[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/E8DE47BBCA88B00DCA2570ED001BFCCE/\\$File/182+five+lowland+temperate+grassland+and+grassy+woodland+communities+2003.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/E8DE47BBCA88B00DCA2570ED001BFCCE/$File/182+five+lowland+temperate+grassland+and+grassy+woodland+communities+2003.pdf)

Dorrough J, Stol J and McIntyre S (2008). Biodiversity in the Paddock: a Land Managers Guide. Future Farm Industries CRC, Canberra.

Available on the Internet at:

http://www.futurefarmcrc.com.au/documents/Biodiversity_in_the_Paddock.pdf

Langford C, Simpson P, Garden D, Eddy D, Keys M, Rehwinkel R and Johnston W (2004). Managing Native Pastures for Agriculture and Conservation. NSW Department of Primary Industries.

McIntyre S, McIvor JG and Heard KM (eds) (2002). Managing and Conserving Grassy Woodlands. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.

These prescriptions were current at the time of publishing; please refer to the relevant agency's website for any updated versions.

Information Sources

Scientific Advisory Committee (2004). Final Recommendation on a Nomination for Listing. Floristic Community 55-04 Western Basalt Plains (River Red Gum) Grassy Woodland. Nomination no. 706. Flora and Fauna Guarantee Scientific Advisory Committee, Melbourne.