

NOOSA SHIRE COUNCIL (QUEENSLAND)

Biodiversity priorities guiding development in the Noosa Shire

Queensland:

Region: South East Queensland

Affiliated Regional NRM Group: The Burnett-Mary and the Eastern South East Queensland Regional Groups

Background

South East Queensland is a region of high biological diversity and of significant endemism. Noosa Shire sits within this region and is an area of approximately 81,000ha, 62% of which is private freehold tenure and 17% is protected as Conservation Reserves (National Parks or Conservation Parks).

91% of the native vegetation in the Shire, which is classified as an “endangered regional ecosystem” and 48% of vegetation classified as “of concern”, is outside of the Conservation Reserves.

Significant areas of land have been cleared in the Noosa Shire and pressure on the natural environment is increasing as the population continues to grow.

Achievements to Date:

- ❖ Noosa Shire Council is actively engaged in biodiversity conservation across the Shire and supports a number of activities that aim to engage the broader community in nature conservation.
- ❖ Within a state based legislative framework that includes the Nature Conservation Act (1999) and the Integrated Planning Act (1997), Noosa has initiated a range of activities that will make it easier to meet regional, state and national biodiversity targets through local activities. Of particular interest is the Shire’s inclusion of locally based biodiversity research outcomes into its Planning Scheme.



Photo acknowledgment: Noosa National Park, Noosa Shire Council

Information Used:

National data sets:

- ❖ IBRA
- ❖ Rare and threatened species

State data sets:

- ❖ Regional Ecosystem Mapping developed by the Queensland Herbarium and used by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to assess development applications. This mapping also supports the Vegetation Management Act (1999).
- ❖ Threatened species under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act (1999).

INTEGRATION OF BIODIVERSITY INTO REGIONAL NRM PLANNING

- ❖ Environmental Protection Agency, Wildnet records for Noosa Shire.
- ❖ Queensland Museum data.

Regional data sets:

- ❖ Refined version of the State Regional Ecosystem Mapping, at a scale more relevant to the Shire scale (1:25,000 vs 1:100,000), which has allowed the Shire to identify 120 regional ecosystem types.
- ❖ Noosa Shire Fauna Study.
- ❖ Data from a range of local research projects.

Market and Non-Market Mechanisms for Biodiversity Conservation:

Regulatory mechanisms:

- ❖ The outcomes of a Shire funded fauna study and vegetation mapping work have been used to identify biodiversity conservation priorities throughout the Shire. These priorities are being used to inform the Shire's Planning Scheme.
- ❖ Introduction of a Vegetation Management Local Law that aims to conserve the Shire's natural resources (biodiversity is clearly identified).
- ❖ Conservation covenants under the Lands Act.
- ❖ Negotiating with private land managers to establish Nature Refuges under the Nature Conservation Act.

Economic instruments (financial mechanisms):

- ❖ Annual devolved grants scheme that supports a range of conservation related activities throughout the Shire.
- ❖ Acquisition of environmentally significant land through a conservation levy program. The objectives of the conservation levy program are to:
 - protect environmentally significant land as part of a wider strategy for habitat protection;
 - manage acquired land for existing and future generations such that the environmental significance of the land is protected in the short and long term; and
 - maximise the use of available funding in terms of the ultimate cost of the land, the community benefits gained by the purchase, the environmental significance of, and associated threats to, the site.
- ❖ Supporting the adoption of farm forestry using local native species. Council has amended its Planning Scheme to ensure the security of harvest of trees planted on previously cleared land, for the purposes of timber production.

Community measures (motivational mechanisms):

- ❖ Land for Wildlife: Noosa Council has made a long term commitment to supporting the Land for Wildlife program through the employment of a Land for Wildlife Officer.
- ❖ Leading by example: the Shire actively manages Council owned or managed bushland reserves.
- ❖ Noosa Council works in partnership with seven independent community based conservation groups throughout the Shire and has established 12 community bush care groups, within local communities across the Shire.

- ❖ Vegetation Property Planning Management Kit: the Council can provide a range of resources to land managers to assist in the preparation of management plans. These include:
 - a recent aerial photograph of the property;
 - to-scale base map showing contour intervals, cadastral boundaries, water courses and existing vegetation; and
 - information about soil types, vegetation types and potential land degradation on the property or a property visit to identify the soil and vegetation types.
- ❖ An excellent website, maintained by the Council, that highlights the environmental services provided by the Council and contains a significant amount of local biodiversity information.
- ❖ Noosa Shire Council produces a 'State of the Environment' report for the Shire.
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluation mechanism to monitor the response of native vegetation to adopted strategies and management policies.

Critical Success Factors:

- ❖ Shire investment in making broader databases relevant at the Shire scale, eg: the Regional Ecosystem Data refinement.
- ❖ Clear support of measures to increase capacity for improved decision making at the property scale.
- ❖ Mix of mechanisms used to achieve biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Accessibility of locally relevant information about the natural resources of the Shire, via the website.
- ❖ State legislative framework guiding conservation activities, specifically the Integrated Planning Act (1997), which provides a framework for the planning and assessment of development. It is a framework for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to catchment management in relation to regional and local Planning Schemes. Nature conservation is a key element of Planning Scheme guidelines.
- ❖ Biodiversity is well and truly on 'the agenda' within the Shire. It is a proactive Shire that is actively involved in the South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SEQROC). SEQROC provides a vehicle for regional scale consideration of issues, including natural resource management, and is a driver of biodiversity conservation.

Further Reading:

- Noosa Council website: www.noosa.qld.gov.au
- Burrows, D.M. (2002). *Vegetation Management Strategy Implementation*. Case Study Report. Environmental Services Section, Noosa Council. Available on the Noosa Council website.

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