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Attention: Gerard Crutch  
Natural Resource Management Policy Branch  
Department of the Environment and Heritage

GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601

**RE: COMMENTS FOR NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

**Q4: Current natural resource planning and management processes:**

I would like to link my comment to the Catchment Management Blueprint process in NSW. A number of the Blueprints specifically address habitat connectivity in their Prioritised Management Actions. For example, within the Warragamba Catchment Blueprint BMA1/a:

“Support planning, management and monitoring of native vegetation and wildlife by:

- Identifying the value of habitat links including assessment of the habitat value of the link/corridor as a support for habitat and biodiversity movement”

Flora and fauna mobility is identified as a significant impact of climate change. I am not aware of any Catchment Blueprints in NSW that specifically address climate change, but many address landscape conservation issues such as wildlife movement and habitat connectivity that link closely with climate change impacts. Not all Catchment Blueprints in NSW specify habitat connectivity studies as Management Actions. A number of catchment regions are undertaking or planning to undertake investigations to identify regionally (and in some cases locally) important links and corridors. Information from these studies can be used to prioritise areas to protect existing vegetation through various means, and to prioritise revegetation works to strengthen the connectivity values.

**I would recommend that the following actions be included in the National Action Plan:**

- Actively ensure that all Catchment Blueprints appropriately address climate change issues.
- Actively ensure that all Catchment Blueprints appropriately address landscape conservation issues such as habitat connectivity and wildlife movement, and appropriately prioritise and implement projects that meet the related Management Actions.
- Actively ensure habitat connectivity and wildlife movement Management Actions are included in Blueprint reviews/revisions where they have not been included in original Catchment Blueprints.
- Provide appropriate resources (financial/skills/information/support etc) towards Catchment Blueprint implementation to progress landscape conservation projects.

**I would recommend the following processes for habitat connectivity and wildlife movement projects:**

1. Develop a scientifically rigorous methodology for assessing landscape connectivity on varying scales and for a large variety of flora and fauna species. Include scientific information available through the National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.
2. Use developed methodology to identify regional and locally significant landscape connections, principally via desktop studies of available threatened species research and satellite imagery, for example.
3. Make the results of this research available on the Internet, via interactive mapping (see NE NSW wildlife corridor project on NPWS website).
4. Instigate public lands conservation management programs in high priority landscape connectivity areas
5. Instigate private land conservation projects that protect existing priority corridor vegetation firstly, and secondarily revegetate priority areas to enhance identified priority corridors.
6. Design and implement scientific monitoring programs to assess the use of the identified connections and assess climate change impacts.

Ensuring that Catchment Blueprints give appropriate attention to biodiversity and climate change issues is currently a challenge for inland catchments. Currently the majority of funding (and subsequently project activities) is resulting from National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality funding, directed primarily to sustainable agriculture. Biodiversity conservation programs must be given appropriate levels of funding for related projects to be implemented.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Action Plan and look forward to seeing its development and implementation.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Schabel  
Regional Bushcare Facilitator