

Information Sheet 04

South Eastern

Management and vegetation information

Participants in *South Eastern BushBids* will be provided with a management plan and a report on the condition of the native vegetation at their site/s. The vegetation condition report and management plan will help landholders understand their native vegetation and the management actions to protect and improve it.

Management plans and vegetation condition reports will be provided to all eligible participants who receive a site visit, regardless of whether they are successful in bidding for funds to undertake management.

Management information

What information will I receive to help me manage my native vegetation?

South Eastern BushBids management plans are written for each eligible site and are based on information collected at the site and in discussion with the landholder. The management plan contains three main sections:

Section A: Site description

The site description section documents any past or current management plans or agreements relevant to the site, and any relevant legal requirements or responsibilities of the landholder relating to the site. Existing or proposed applications for a Heritage Agreement or other type of conservation covenant are recorded here.

Information on any known threatened species, threatened communities or threatened species habitat at the site is also recorded. This information will come from site assessments, previous survey data or management plans, and/or from relevant State Government databases.

Section B: Objectives for management of the site

To help landholders and *South Eastern BushBids* to achieve conservation outcomes from investment in native vegetation management, a set of objectives and targets for management will be described for each site.

These will include some broad objectives about improving the condition of native vegetation at the site as well as some specific targets for weed control.

Section C: Management actions

Landholder management actions and exclusions are agreed by the landholder and documented in the management plan. The types of management actions and commitments are listed on the *South Eastern BushBids* 'Management services' information sheet. Detailed management actions and the timing for undertaking the actions are listed for each year of the management agreement. Plant species appropriate for supplementary planting and revegetation are also listed where appropriate.

Conditions on management to ensure the management plan success will be documented. This will include requirements for fencing, fire management and annual reporting.

Site map

A map showing the location of the site/s is included with the management plan.

Guidelines and minimum standards for management

Minimum standards for management actions are included as an appendix to the management plan, consistent with the standards listed on the *South Eastern BushBids* 'Management Services-Guidelines and Standards' information sheet.

Best practice principles for bushcare weed management, feral animal control and supplementary planting/revegetation are outlined in a supporting document to assist landholders to achieve the best possible results from these management actions.

Plant species lists

Lists of the native and introduced (weed) plant species present at the assessment site will be provided¹.

Vegetation information

Apart from the vegetation information listed above (threatened species, native plant and introduced plant species lists), landholders will receive a Bushland Condition Rating for each site assessed.

What is a Bushland Condition Rating?

A Bushland Condition Rating is derived from assessments undertaken at your site using the Bushland Condition Monitoring method developed by the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia². This method examines a number of aspects of the bush as a living system, including the key environmental indicators presented below. Condition indicators are rated on a five point scale from excellent, through good, moderate and poor, to very poor³.



Photo: P. G. Tucker



Photo: C. Dixon



Photo: S. Bourne

Plant Species Diversity: As a general rule, the greater the number of species found at a site the better the condition. Variety in plants provides habitat for a variety of animals.

Weed Abundance and Threat: Weed invasion is one of the greatest and most common threats to bushland health and ecological integrity. Weeds displace native plants and therefore reduce the amount of good habitat for animals and other native plants. An 'excellent' rating for weed abundance and threat indicates a site with few or no weeds.

Structural Diversity A - Ground Cover: In most healthy plant communities in South Australia the ground is protected by a layer or crust of mosses, lichens and leaf litter and there is very little bare ground or exposed soil. The living crust and litter help maintain a living soil, prevent soil erosion, provide a seed germination bed and help to recycle nutrients. Bare ground will decrease as plant cover, mosses and lichens and leaf litter increase.

Structural Diversity B - Plant Life Forms: In healthy plant communities there will be a wide variety of native plant life forms present. In degraded communities weed species tend to dominate the cover of one or more vegetation layers. Weeds also reduce the diversity of other life forms in the layers below, leading to a reduction in the overall rating.

Regeneration of Native Trees: A 'poor' or 'very poor' rating for tree regeneration indicates that very few individuals of the tree species present are either germinating or surviving through to seedling establishment. A low regeneration rating would be expected in bushland that has previously had long-term, high levels of disturbance but may also occur when the plant community requires relatively uncommon episodic events for plant recruitment.

Tree Health - Dieback: In most ecosystems, some level of stress and/or insect attack on trees is a normal component of a healthy ecosystem. Dead trees still have high habitat value and play a role in the nutrient cycle. However, high incidence of tree dieback may be a sign of native vegetation condition decline.

Tree Health - Lerp Damage: Lerp is a natural part of plant communities and normally their numbers will fluctuate both throughout the year and between years. Healthy trees will recover well from lerp damage; however prolonged heavy damage is a symptom of general stress in the ecosystem.

Tree Health - Mistletoe: Mistletoe is a native plant that attaches to trees or shrubs, using them as a source of water and nutrients. Mistletoes are a vital link in the life cycle and survival of many native animal species such as butterflies and birds. A healthy tree can support, outlive, and shed the occasional mistletoe during its lifetime with no adverse effects; however, trees with many mistletoes may become stressed if their ability to supply the mistletoes with water and nutrients is overstretched. This may contribute to a decline in tree health with a significant loss of foliage and vigour.

Tree Habitat: In a healthy community, most adult trees should have a nearly complete canopy. Ideally, a scattering of trees should be old enough to contain hollows. There should be a range of tree sizes including some large individuals as well as seedlings and saplings. All these factors contribute to the availability of tree habitat for fauna.

Fallen Logs and Trees: Because the number of fallen logs or trees will vary between tree species, age of trees, and climate factors, it is not possible to say how many fallen trees or logs is "natural" for your plant community. However, in general, the more fallen logs or trees the higher the habitat value of your bushland because animals such as echidnas, small reptiles and insects use fallen timber for food and/or shelter.

Total Grazing Pressure: Unnaturally high grazing levels in bushland may be the result of domestic stock grazing, feral animals and/or if they are present in unnaturally high densities, native herbivores. Heavy or inappropriate grazing may damage or remove individual plants and change the understorey composition, leading to the removal or partial removal of plants that form the natural shrub and ground layers.

Call 1300 847 450

for more information or to register
an Expression of Interest

1. The species list contains the species recorded in the *South Eastern BushBids* assessment quadrat and may not include all species which may occur within the site or property.
2. Croft SJ, Pedler JA, and Milne TI (2009) *Bushland Condition Monitoring Manual: Murray Darling Basin*. Nature Conservation Society of South Australia.
3. Some condition indicators will not be relevant for some types of native vegetation.

