

Vegetation management framework

The clearing of native vegetation in Queensland is regulated by the vegetation management framework. It protects the State's biodiversity by conserving native vegetation, and addressing land degradation problems such as salinity, soil degradation, erosion and declining water quality.

Under the framework, the Queensland Government phased out broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation in December 2006. In October 2009, new arrangements were introduced to regulate the clearing of certain types of regrowth vegetation.

This fact sheet explains some of the framework's key components including what vegetation is protected, an introduction to vegetation maps and how certain clearing activities can be carried out.

What vegetation is protected?

The vegetation management framework, through the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA), regulates the clearing of native vegetation mapped as either:

- remnant vegetation on a regional ecosystem map or remnant map
- regulated regrowth vegetation identified on a regrowth vegetation map.

The framework also protects native woody vegetation on state lands.

Remnant vegetation

The term 'remnant' refers to the vegetation remaining in a bioregion, which has not been cleared in the past or has regrown to a certain density and height. Regional ecosystems, which are communities of vegetation that are consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, land form and soil in a bioregion, are assigned a conservation status based on the extent of remnant vegetation remaining.

Areas of remnant vegetation are shown on the regional ecosystem map or the remnant map. Clearing of remnant vegetation can only occur under a permit or if an exemption applies.

Regulated regrowth vegetation

Certain types of regrowth vegetation are now protected under the vegetation management framework. Regulated regrowth vegetation includes vegetation that is either:

- identified on the regrowth vegetation maps as high value regrowth vegetation

- located within 50 m of a watercourse identified on the regrowth vegetation map as a regrowth watercourse in priority reef catchments.

Clearing this regrowth can only occur if it is for an exempt activity or the clearing is done in accordance with the regrowth vegetation code. No permit is required for clearing regrowth under the code. Landholders only need to notify the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and comply with the code.

What vegetation is not protected?

The vegetation management framework does not apply to State forests, national parks, forest reserves and other tenures defined under the *Forestry Act 1959* and *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

It also does not apply to mangroves, grasses, non-woody vegetation, or plants within some grassland ecosystems.

Vegetation mapping

The vegetation management framework uses maps to determine what vegetation is regulated under the VMA, and where clearing may or may not take place. All of the maps work in conjunction to determine assessable areas. They include a regional ecosystem map, remnant map, regrowth vegetation map and property maps of assessable vegetation. All vegetation maps can be downloaded for free from the DERM website <www.derm.qld.gov.au>.

Regional ecosystem and remnant maps

Regional ecosystem maps (RE maps) describe the extent and conservation status of remnant vegetation as regional ecosystems. They will show areas of remnant vegetation that are 'endangered', 'of concern' and 'least concern' regional ecosystems.

Remnant maps show areas of remnant and non-remnant vegetation.

Regrowth vegetation map

The regrowth vegetation map identifies areas of high-value regrowth vegetation, and particular watercourses in the Burdekin, Mackay, Whitsunday and Wet Tropics catchments as regrowth watercourses. This map can be used to identify areas of regulated regrowth vegetation.

Property maps of assessable vegetation

Property maps of assessable vegetation (PMAV) are property-scale maps showing location, boundary and status of vegetation.

There are two types of PMAVs:

- PMAVs prepared by DERM. DERM may prepare a PMAV for a range of situations to keep vegetation assessable e.g. when an area has been illegally cleared or it has become a declared area.
- PMAVs proposed by landholders. These PMAVs can provide landholders with a map identifying assessable vegetation at a greater scale and provides certainty of where clearing can occur. Landholder PMAVs include detailed PMAVs or 'lock it in' PMAVs.

Declared areas

Under the framework, DERM may declare an area as either:

- high nature conservation value
- vulnerable to land degradation

A declaration may be made by DERM or requested by a landowner (a voluntary declaration). A management plan must be prepared for a declared area detailing management actions to conserve the high-nature conservation value of the area and/or to prevent land degradation.

Exemptions

Most routine clearing like fence lines, yards, firebreaks and buildings are exempt—as is burning off and can be carried out without requiring approval from DERM. Exemptions depend on the tenure of the land, purpose of the clearing, status of the vegetation to be cleared, and extent of the proposed clearing. Some exempt clearing activities (e.g. native forest practice or areas of regulated regrowth) must be carried out in accordance with the relevant code. Notification to the department is also required for these exemptions before any clearing can occur.

Prior to any clearing, check with other local, state, and Commonwealth legislation because these may also regulate clearing activities. Also, read fact sheet—*What to consider before clearing vegetation* on the DERM website for further information on other considerations.

Applying for a permit

To clear remnant vegetation that isn't exempt, landholders must submit an application to DERM but only if the clearing is for one of the following relevant purposes listed in the VMA:

- encroachment management
- fodder harvesting
- ensuring public safety
- building a fence, firebreak, road or other built infrastructure, and the clearing cannot be avoided
- constructing a state-significant project
- thinning vegetation
- managing pests or weeds where necessary

- conducting an extractive industry
- clearing regrowth on freehold land, or Indigenous land, in a wild river high preservation area
- special Indigenous purpose.

Before accepting an application, DERM must be satisfied that the clearing is for one of these relevant purposes. Applications are assessed by vegetation management staff against regional vegetation management codes, which set out a number of performance criteria that must be met.

Preparing an application

To apply for vegetation clearing, you must submit relevant application forms along with a property vegetation management plan, including:

- the location and extent of the area you propose to clear
- the purpose of the application—including sufficient information about what you intend to do
- how the proposed clearing meets the performance requirements of the relevant assessment code.

Material change of use or reconfiguring a lot

Applications for a material change of use or to reconfigure a lot must be submitted to the relevant local shire council.

If the proposed development involves clearing native vegetation, the local government will refer the application to DERM.

Further information

For further information on the vegetation management framework contact your nearest departmental business centre, or read the following documents available from the DERM website <www.derm.qld.gov.au>:

- *Guide to exemptions from the vegetation management framework*
- Fact sheet: V16—*What to consider before clearing vegetation*
- *Landholders' guide to vegetation clearing applications*

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For general enquiries contact the
Queensland Government call centre 13 13 04
or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au