

Commonwealth of Australia

Inclusion of ecological communities in the list of threatened ecological communities under section 181 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

I, IAN CAMPBELL, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, pursuant to section 184(1) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, hereby amend the list referred to in section 181 of that Act by:

including in the list in the critically endangered category:

- White Box–Yellow Box–Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland, as described in the Schedule to this instrument.

deleting from the list in the endangered category:

- Grassy White Box Woodlands.

Dated this.....20th.....day of.....December,.....2005.

Ian Campbell

Minister for the Environment and Heritage

SCHEDULE

White Box–Yellow Box–Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland

White Box–Yellow Box–Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (Box–Gum Grassy Woodlands and Derived Grasslands) are characterised by a species-rich understorey of native tussock grasses, herbs and scattered shrubs, and the dominance, or prior dominance, of White Box, Yellow Box or Blakely’s Red Gum trees. In the Nandewar Bioregion, Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa* or *E. moluccana*) may also be dominant or co-dominant. The tree-cover is generally discontinuous and consists of widely-spaced trees of medium height in which the canopies are clearly separated.

The Box–Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland ecological community occurs in an arc along the western slopes and tablelands of the Great Dividing Range from Southern Queensland through NSW to central Victoria. It occurs in the Brigalow Belt South, Nandewar, New England Tableland, South Eastern Queensland, Sydney Basin, NSW North Coast, South Eastern Highlands, South East Corner, NSW South Western Slopes, Victorian Midlands and Riverina Bioregions.

This ecological community generally occurs in areas where rainfall is between 400 and 1200 mm per annum, on moderate to highly fertile soils at altitudes of 170 metres to 1200 metres.

The Box–Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland ecological community intergrades with Western Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) woodlands in the west. Sites dominated by Western Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*) or Coastal Grey Box (*E. moluccana*) without Yellow Box, White Box or Blakely’s Red Gum as co-dominants are not considered to be part of the ecological community, except in the Nandewar Bioregion.

Shrub cover in this ecological community is naturally patchy, and shrubs may be dominant only over a very localised area. Shrub cover should therefore be assessed over the entire remnant, not just in a localised area. A remnant with a significant ground layer of tussock grasses, and where the distribution of shrubs is scattered or patchy, is part of the ecological community. In shrubby woodlands, the dominance of native tussock grasses in the ground layer of vegetation is lost. Therefore, a remnant with a continuous shrub layer, in which the shrub cover is greater than 30%, is considered to be a shrubby woodland and so is not part of the listed ecological community. Remnant attributes, such as shrubiness, should be measured on a scale of 0.1 hectares or greater.

Areas in which an overstorey exists without a substantially native understorey are degraded and are no longer a viable part of the ecological community. Although some native species may remain, in most of these areas the native understorey is effectively irretrievable.

In order for an area to be included in the listed ecological community, a patch must have a predominantly native understorey.

In order to be the listed ecological community, an understorey patch, in the absence of overstorey trees, must:

- be a minimum of 0.1 hectares in size; and
- have native species dominating the perennial vegetation of the ground layer; and
- contain at least 12 native, non-grass understorey species (such as forbs, shrubs, ferns and sedges); and
- contain at least one important species (this includes listed threatened species, rare or regionally significant species, and species sensitive to grazing or disturbance).

Areas with both an overstorey and understorey present are also considered of sufficiently good condition to be part of the listed ecological community if the understorey meets any of the conditions above, or they:

- are a minimum of 2 hectares in size; and

- have native species dominating the perennial vegetation of the ground layer; and
- contain either 20 or more mature trees per hectare or natural regeneration of the overstorey species.

The condition criteria outlined above are the minimum level at which patches are to be included in the listed ecological community. Such minimum conditions do not represent the ideal state of the ecological community.

Definitions

Ground layer – the structural layer closest to the ground containing grasses, forbs and sub-shrubs.

Patch – a patch is a continuous area containing the ecological community (areas of other ecological communities such as woodlands dominated by other species are not included in a patch). In determining patch size it is important to know what is, and is not, included within any individual patch. The patch is the larger of:

- an area that contains five or more trees in which no tree is greater than 75 m from another tree, or
- the area over which the understorey is predominantly native.

Patches must be assessed at a scale of 0.1 ha (1000m²) or greater.

Regeneration of dominant overstorey species – the patch contains eucalyptus saplings of 5 cm diameter at breast height or greater.

Predominantly native understorey – at least 50% of the perennial vegetation cover in the ground layer is made up of native species.