



Habitat Hectare Assessment

Fact sheet

What is the habitat hectare method?

The habitat hectare method is a site based assessment which measures the condition of native vegetation with reference to a benchmark for the same vegetation type. The condition combines with the area, to determine the amount of habitat hectares in a patch of vegetation.

The method is the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) approved method of assessing native vegetation, for the purposes of regulation and investment. Qualified assessors undertake habitat hectare assessments to determine losses from clearing native vegetation and gains available at offset sites.

Which habitat method is currently required to be used?

The method described in the Vegetation Quality Assessment Manual – Guidelines for applying the habitat hectare scoring method. Version 1.3. (DSE 2004). This methodology, continues to be applied for the purposes of Native Vegetation Regulation decisions. The method should be applied as described in the manual, including the assessment of Landscape Context which constitutes 25 percent of the condition score.

What is habitat hectare version 2?

The habitat hectare method is currently being reviewed and modified to better represent vegetation condition, reduce assessor bias and improve consistency and repeatability in the method. A draft method was released and feedback is being incorporated into the manual to improve its application and usability. Habitat hectare version 2 will include significant changes to the field assessment approach and to the way vegetation condition is scored.

Version 2 will be released as part of a package of native vegetation information tools, following a period of training anticipated for the end of 2014.

Who can do a habitat hectare assessment?

Generally habitat hectare assessments are undertaken by qualified ecologists. For the purposes of the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations, assessments must be carried out by qualified assessors. This includes those who are registered on DEPI's Vegetation Quality Assessment Competency Register. Other experienced ecologists familiar with the method may undertake the assessment. The quality and accuracy of assessments is routinely checked by DEPI as a referral authority for applications for permits to remove native vegetation.

Habitat hectare assessments cannot be carried out by inexperienced people with limited ecological knowledge.

What is involved in undertaking a habitat hectare assessment?

The assessor must be able to define and map the relevant Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) within an area and delineate any areas of observable differences in condition. They will then assign the species observed to their appropriate life form categories. They must be able to reasonably estimate the cover and health of plants, over sometimes large areas. Assessors must also be able to identify weeds species and the threat they pose at that location.

Is training available?

DEPI is currently developing a range of new native vegetation assessment and information tools. This will lead to changes to the way vegetation is assessed. Due to the significant changes that will result as part of this review, training in the current range of tools will no longer be available.

Training and information will be available on the application of these new tools prior to their release, anticipated for the end of 2014. Assessors who are currently registered on DEPI's Vegetation Quality Assessment Competency

Register have had their competency extended until the release of the new version.

Where can I get further information?

Further information can be sought by emailing:
habitat.hectares@depi.vic.gov.au

Other information regarding native vegetation, including DEPI's native vegetation permitted clearing regulations and associated fact sheets can be found at:

www.depi.vic.gov.au/nativevegetation

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