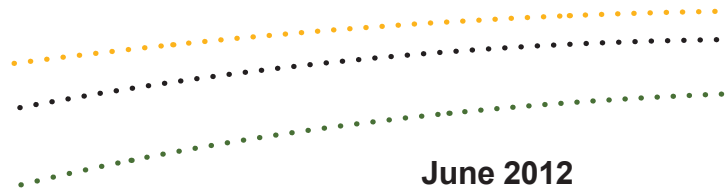




Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities



June 2012

Nationally protected Broad leaf tea-tree (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) woodlands in high rainfall coastal north Queensland – does it affect you and your land?



Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands, Photo Neisha Burton DSEWPaC

Since European settlement, a large amount of the Broad leaf tea-tree (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) woodlands in high rainfall coastal north Queensland (broad leaf tea-tree woodlands) ecological community has been cleared, or degraded by heavy grazing and incursion of weeds. The relatively small amount that remains in good condition is now protected under Australia's national environment law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), as an endangered ecological community.





Myrmecodia beccarii (Ant plant) growing as an epiphyte on broad leaf tea-tree, Photo Neisha Burton DSEWPaC

What does national protection of broad leaf tea-tree woodlands mean for you as a landholder?

The national environment law is not about stopping landholder activities or related business, such as horticulture; rather, it is about protecting Australia's unique native plants and animals and the ecosystem services they provide.

You may need Australian Government approval if:

- the protected woodland (or other protected matters) occur on your property, and
- a new, intensified or changed activity could have a significant detrimental impact on the ecological community.

If you are not sure whether your activity requires Australian Government approval, you can get free advice from the environment liaison officer at the National Farmers' Federation on 1800 704 520 or email: environment@nff.org.au

or from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
Telephone: 1800 803 772
email: ciu@environment.gov.au
Mail Community Information Unit
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
GPO Box 787
Canberra 2601.

Where are the broad leaf tea-tree woodlands?

The broad leaf tea-tree woodlands ecological community is found in tropical north Queensland in the Wet Tropics and Central Mackay Coast bioregions. It occurs mainly within 20km of the coast and on floodplains in areas that receive high rainfall. Known occurrences are mostly found between the localities of Mossman to the north and Yeppoon to the south with gaps in the range where the Brigalow Belt North bioregion meet the coast.

A distribution map for the Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands is available at: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/122-distribution-map.pdf





Melaleuca viridiflora. Photo Matt White, DSEWPaC.

What are the key characteristics of the broad leaf tea-tree woodlands?

The Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands represent occurrences of woodland where *Melaleuca viridiflora* (broad leaf tea-tree) is dominant in the canopy and a diversity of native grasses, sedges and forbs occupy the ground layer. The ecological community is typically a woodland but can have a more dense forest structure in some areas. Epiphytes (a plant growing on another plant for support) are often clearly seen in the canopy of broad leaf tea-trees. Shrubs may be present but are generally sparse although some sites have an obvious layer of *Xanthorrhoea* spp. (grass trees).

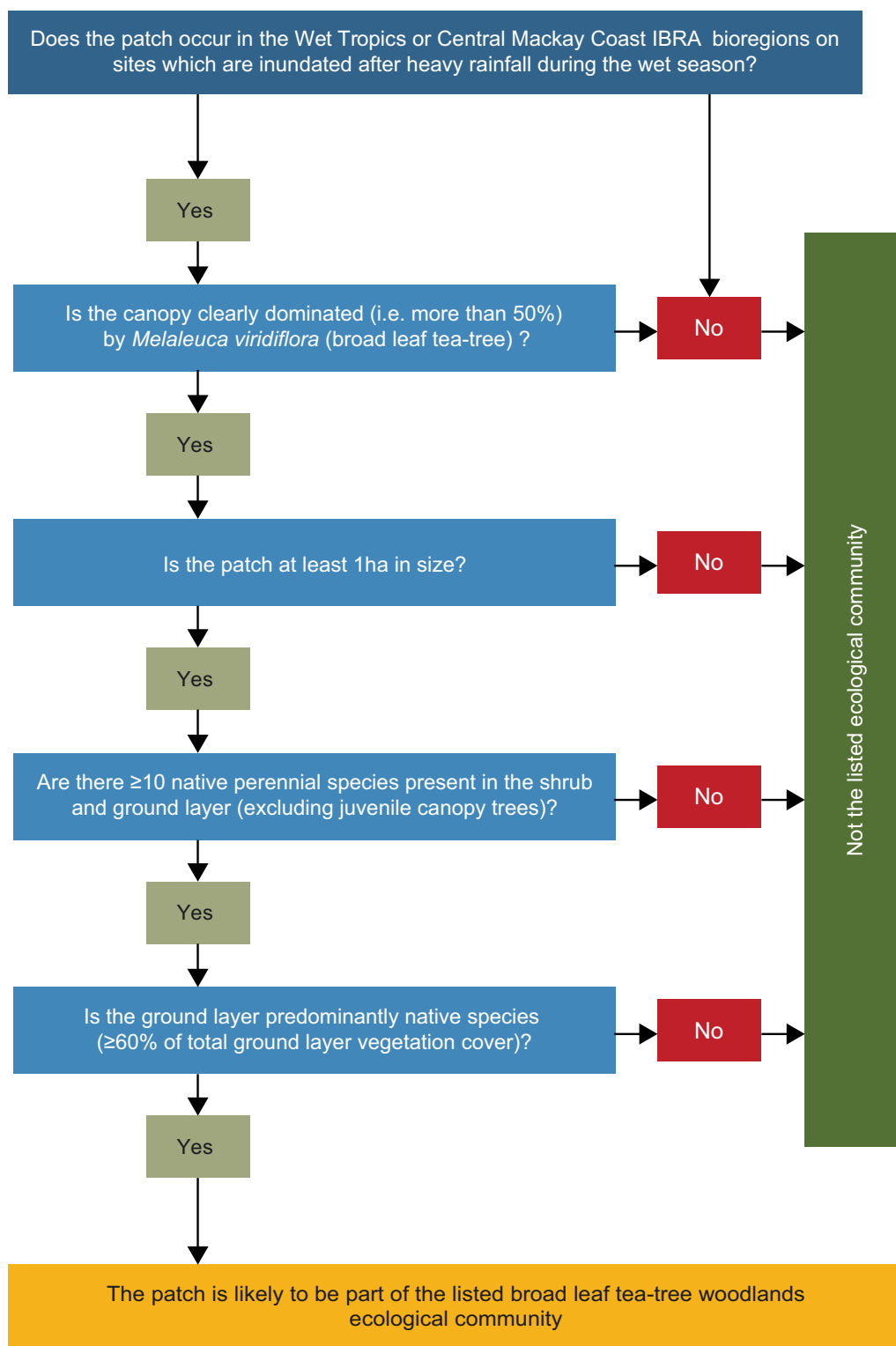
The ground layer of this ecological community supports the majority of plant species diversity, with species composition varying due to differences in soil type and duration, timing and degree of inundation during the wet season. *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass) or *Eremochloa bimaculata* (poverty grass) are usually dominant on slightly elevated or drier sites. Wetter sites are often dominated by the grasses *Ischaemum australe* (large bluegrass), *I. fragile*, or by sedges and rushes. The ecological community is seasonally inundated for short periods during the wet season, which supports an abundance of annual species in the ground layer.

For more detail on the broad leaf tea-tree woodlands refer to the listing advice at: www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicshowcommunity.pl?id=122&status=Endangered



How do I know whether the Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands on my property is protected?

The broad leaf tea-tree woodlands ecological community is only protected under national environment law where it remains in relatively good condition. The flowchart below helps to determine if the ecological community is present and meets the condition thresholds for the ecological community.



What routine landholder activities do not need approval?

This ecological community was officially protected under national environment law on 19 May 2012. Lawful activities that began before the EPBC Act came into effect on 16 July 2000 can continue without further Australian Government approval.

The following activities will not need approval:

- maintaining existing fence lines, tracks, roads or fire breaks
- replacing or maintaining existing sheds, other property buildings and yards
- maintaining existing grazing regimes, if relevant (i.e. type of livestock, stocking rates, timing of grazing, etc.)
- ongoing horticultural or cropping activities
- controlling weeds (if applied with minimal disturbance, or by selective spot spraying)
- small-scale and existing tourism activities

What activities on my land might need approval?

Any activities that are new or intensified and are likely to have a significant, irreversible or long-term detrimental impact on the ecological community may need Australian Government approval. These include:

- land clearing or substantial lopping of trees, and/or clearing of understorey vegetation
- drainage of land or alterations to land which affect natural hydrological regimes
- changing or intensifying ongoing grazing or horticulture/ cropping activities
- substantially changing or intensifying methods of weed control or fertiliser use that may have an adverse affect on native vegetation
- introducing grazing to an area that has not been previously grazed or has not been grazed for some time
- introducing pine plantations into patches of the ecological community or adjacent areas
- new or altered burning regimes
- improving pasture by introducing exotic plant species, fertilisers, herbicides, mechanical disturbance or cultivation, addition of irrigation, etc.

If you are uncertain of your legal responsibility, you can contact the environment liaison officer at the National Farmers' Federation for help or go to the EPBC Act website:

www.environment.gov.au/epbc



What is a buffer zone?

The inclusion of a 40 metre minimum buffer zone is included to help protect a patch from activities surrounding it. It also provides guidance for determining significant impacts. Activities within this zone do not necessarily trigger the EPBC Act. However, a change to a landholder practice or activity within the 40 metre buffer zone may require referral if it is likely to have a significant impact directly on the patch of the ecological community. Examples of activities undertaken within the buffer zone that may affect the ecological community include: chemical sprays (that drift into the patch) and infrastructure or clearing that may change drainage patterns or other functional processes in or near to a patch of the ecological community.

How does the listing of broad leaf tea-tree woodlands affect Indigenous land management and traditional practices?

Listing of the ecological community is unlikely to impact on traditional use of land on which the ecological community occurs. Land management practices such as maintaining traditional fire regimes are likely to benefit the ecological community. The routine landholder activities mentioned on the previous page as well as traditional activities, such as harvesting of bushfood and use of country, will not require approval. Activities which may need approval include those likely to have a significant impact on the ecological community. Some of these are noted under the section on landholder activities.

Can I get help to improve or restore broad leaf tea-tree woodlands?

There may be natural resource management projects funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative which can help you manage protected woodland.

For more information on local projects go to www.nrm.gov.au or contact your:

- local NRM regional body — www.nrm.gov.au/nrm/region.html or
- Caring for our Country Regional Officers — www.nrm.gov.au/contacts/index.html





Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands with grasstrees (*Xanthorrhoea johnsoni*) in understorey Neisha Burton, DSEWPaC.

Where can I get more information?

More information on this ecological community, its condition thresholds, threats and priority conservation actions is contained in the comprehensive listing advice and the shorter conservation advice for this ecological community, at: www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicshowcommunity.pl?id=122&status=Endangered.

For free advice on whether or not an activity may need Australian Government approval contact the Australian Government's Environment Liaison Officer at the National Farmers' Federation (NFF).

Phone: 1800 704 520

Email: environment@nff.org.au

Web: www.environment.gov.au/farming

Or

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Photo credits (L-R) *Byblis* spp. (sundew). Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands with fern understorey. *Thysanotus* spp. (fringe lily). Photos Neisha Burton, DSEWPaC.

