



Floods and Biodiversity Roundtable

13 May 2022

Communique

In the wake of the recent devastating floods in New South Wales and Queensland, Threatened Species Commissioner Dr Fiona Fraser chaired a Floods and Biodiversity Roundtable of experts and management agencies on 13 May 2022, to better understand flood impacts on native plants, animals and habitats. Dr Fraser acknowledged that impacts of the floods are ongoing and some communities are facing a continuing humanitarian crisis.

The roundtable brought together members of the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, representatives from regional natural resource management (NRM) groups, biosecurity and species experts, state governments and Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment data and policy leads, to share information on flood impacts, identify knowledge gaps and start prioritising recovery actions.

Roundtable participants were generous in sharing their experience and expertise. It was clear that bringing together on-ground managers, researchers and governments to collaborate is an important step in planning and prioritising recovery action, with potential to build new partnerships that will underpin future landscape restoration activities.

Insights and examples of impacts were provided from flood-affected regions and states, and by experts in management of threatened ecological communities, plants, terrestrial animals, freshwater habitats and their fish, frogs and crayfish, and marine and coastal habitats and the species that depend on them.

Key issues identified at the roundtable:

- The **cumulative impacts** on native plants, animals and habitats, and on natural resource managers, from consecutive, recurrent and over-lapping natural disasters need to be better understood.
- **Preparedness** for future disasters needs to be prioritised alongside urgent recovery action for native plants, animals and habitats.
- **Data and information gaps** on the exposure and sensitivity of Australian biodiversity to floods continue to constrain the capacity of all sectors to respond to impacts.
- The **role of communities and landholders** is invaluable in providing information about impacts, undertaking recovery activities and building landscape resilience.

Roundtable participants committed to ongoing information sharing, scoping research to address information needs, and cooperation to prioritise recovery action. The six most heavily flood impacted NRM organisations, including all coastal-adjacent regions from the Burnett Mary in Queensland to New South Wales South East, are undertaking regional impact assessments which will feed into further discussion and collaboration to identify flood affected species of plants and animals, threatened ecological communities, and protected landscapes.

A focus on strategic and pro-active planning for responses to disaster impacts on biodiversity assets and building ecosystem resilience were agreed as the overarching priorities, while recognising that urgent interventions will continue to be important given expectations about future extreme weather frequency and intensity.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment thanks the following external participants and their colleagues.

Rachel Gallagher	Threatened Species Scientific Committee
Sarah Legge	Threatened Species Scientific Committee
Colin Simpfendorfer	Threatened Species Scientific Committee
Rhonda Butcher	Threatened Species Scientific Committee
Nick Whiterod	Aquasave-Nature Glenelg Trust
Jodi Rowley	Australian Museum/University of NSW
Trevor Daly	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Gabrielle Pietrini	NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Kirstin Kenyon	QLD Department of Environment and Science
Tiggy Grillo	Wildlife Health Australia
Mark Kennard	NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub
Sheila Charlesworth	Burnett Mary Regional Group
Julie McLellan	Healthy Land and Water
Louise Orr	North Coast Local Land Services (LLS)
Lyndel Wilson	Hunter LLS
Paul Bennett	Greater Sydney LLS
Rebecca Bradley	South East LLS