

# Procedural guide

## Natural Resource Management

### Assessing applications for grazing authorities on QPWS managed areas

*The purpose of this document is to provide a standard procedure for assessing applications for the issue and renewal of grazing authorities on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) managed areas.*

#### Applications

An application to renew or instigate a stock grazing permit on QPWS managed area under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or *Forestry Act 1959* is made using the *Application form – Stock Grazing Permit* and will be forwarded to the relevant QPWS regional office for processing.

Applications involving term leases under the *Land Act 1994* require a separate application available from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NRM) to be made to the regional NRM office. NRM will forward the application to QPWS regional office for recommendation.

Either QPWS or the applicant may initiate a pre-lodgement meeting.

#### Procedure

##### Application assessment process

The eight steps outlined below provide a decision support tool based on risk assessment to be followed when assessing applications for a grazing authority on QPWS managed areas.

The steps are:

1. assess if the tenure is appropriate;
2. assess if there are any issues relating to previous authority conditions or commitments;
3. assess the values of the estate and likely threat(s) from grazing to those values, i.e.:
  - biodiversity values;
  - cultural heritage values;
  - landscape values; and
  - water values;
4. assess lessee's/applicant's performance;
5. assess the current condition of the block;
6. assess management implications;
7. evaluate/analyse findings from above assessment; then
8. make decision and consider conditions.

A decision on an application for a grazing authority must not take longer than two months from receipt of the application. However, assessment of the condition, values and likely impacts of grazing on the reserve will be initiated by QPWS staff where an application has not been received within 12 months of the expiry of a renewable authority.

## Assessment steps

### Tenure

Appendix 1 of the *Operational policy - Grazing on QPWS managed areas* provides the basis for determining if grazing is an appropriate land use for the tenure.

### Commitment to renew a grazing authority

There are cases where Government has committed to renewing a grazing authority. Examples of this are:

- some “schedule VI” term leases under the *Land Act 1994*; and
- commitments through forest transfer processes.

### Values and threats to those values

#### Biodiversity

Using information available from Biodiversity assessment and mapping methodology (BAMM), Wildnet, Regional Ecosystem mapping, species management profiles, regional ecosystem profiles and other sources, identify values which may be threatened by grazing and if exclusion or reduced grazing is the preferred management strategy (Appendix 1).

These data sets may either be too coarse for practical application in the assessment of a particular authority area or may be incomplete.

#### Cultural heritage

The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003* establishes a duty of care that requires all land users to take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure their activities do not harm Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. This Act is administered by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP). Guidelines setting out measures for meeting the duty of care are available on the DATSIP website.

Records of significant sites are kept in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Database and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Register, which are administered by the DATSIP. Search requests are available via the online portal from the DATSIP website.

Grazing livestock on an area where livestock are currently grazed is generally considered a category 2 activity under the *NRM Cultural Heritage Duty of Care Guidelines* (paragraph 4.4). Where an activity causes “no additional surface disturbance” (category 2) of an area, it is generally unlikely that the activity will harm Aboriginal cultural heritage or could cause additional harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage to that which has already occurred, and the activity will comply with these guidelines.

#### Landscape

Assess the grazing activities to ensure that it does not compromise high scenic, visual or landscape values.

Grazing can be considered appropriate to the setting if it does not unacceptably change the characteristics of the place. For example, building a road in a setting already impacted by a rural vista and a power line has an insignificant effect on the overall setting compared to the impact the same activity would have on a semi-wilderness setting.

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Breaking the area to be assessed down into smaller units, based on landform, forest type and anticipated productivity, allows for the grazing authority to be assessed and managed on operational scale rather than as a single entity.

### Water

Catchment management issues, such as runoff should be considered within a regional context.

Watering point placement and construction can be assessed to ensure that they do not encourage the congregation of stock in such a way as to lead to soil compaction or loss of vegetation.

The location of watering points should:

- avoid highly erosive soils; and
- be placed in such a way as to spread grazing pressure.

### Waterways

The assessment of the impact of stock on waterways can include:

- disturbance to physical structure of the creek bed;
- increases in sediment load;
- loss of aquatic habitat; and
- water contamination.

### Authority holder performance

Review the files associated with the previous authority holder to reveal the historical performance of the authority holder in relation to meeting their authority conditions and cooperating with this department and other authorities responsible for management of the land over time (refer to existing authority conditions and obligations under any other relevant legislation). Whether local government rates have been paid and their compliance with the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) are valid considerations. See also appendix 2 for assessment of an authority holder/applicant's performance in managing the site.

### Current condition of the block

A field inspection should be conducted to assess the condition of the land particularly with respect to standard conditions. The table in appendix 2 outlines issues to assess against.

### Management implications

The practicality of excluding stock from the land in question requires consideration. If boundary rationalisation, fencing and other issues such as the removal of watering facilities are to occur before stock can be excluded, then renewal or issuing of an authority provides a mechanism to manage stocking rates.

Many leases issued under the *Land Act 1994* for the purposes of grazing contain conditions regarding compensation of the lessee if a grazing authority is not renewed or the lessee chooses not to apply for renewal.

The compensation is generally limited to improvements and does not apply to the unexpired term of the lease. If an assessment deems the renewal of a lease to be inappropriate, a valuation of the approved improvements, that are owned by the lessee, not able to be removed or are required for future management of the area (i.e. boundary fencing) and are deemed by the conditions to be subject to compensation, will need to occur. In these circumstances, contact must be made with central office to discuss and arrange this process. Suitable arrangements are then required to provide for compensation.

### Analysis of findings from assessment

Determine suitability of the QPWS managed area to be subject to a grazing operation by combining the results of all the above assessments. If tenure and commitment to renew Grazing authority have been satisfied, the table in Appendix 2 should be used in the analysis of the information collected in items 3 to 6 above.

In the near future, a simple model will be developed similar to the Forest Evaluation System (FES) to help with this process.

In the medium term, the monitoring program being developed under the Grazing Land Management Project (DAF/NRM) will be available for use to provide further rigour in this assessment process.

### Decision and delegation

Appendix 4 contains an assessment report template to document findings in the assessment.

Dependent on the tenure and authority to be issued, the relevant agency (QPWS, DAF or NRM) issues the authority. Local governments, State Valuation Service (NRM) and DAF Animal Biosecurity are advised of the issuance of the grazing authority. Where DAF Forestry is an involved party, it is also advised of the decision.

The Principal Ranger should:

- use the proforma in Appendix 4 to approve an application for a grazing authority under the relevant Act; or
- for a term lease under the *Land Act 1994*, use the proforma in Appendix 5 to notify NRM of QPWS concurrence and conditions.

The relevant Regional Director should:

- use the proforma in appendix 6 to refuse an application for a grazing authority under the relevant Act; or
- for a term lease under the *Land Act 1994*, use the proforma in Appendix 8 to notify NRM of QPWS's recommendation to refuse an application.

Agreement is also required with the outgoing authority holder in regards removal of stock from the expired or surrendered grazing authority. The removal of, or compensation for, the approved improvements also needs to be addressed following notification of a refusal of a renewal.

All matters relating to the issuance, renewal and management of the grazing authority requires appropriate recording on regional or central office files including the listing of infrastructure on SAMS.

### Conditions of approval

Standard conditions to be attached to any approval are given in Appendix 8. Only those conditions applicable to the particular authority need to be applied. Conditions may also be applied that address issues identified through the assessment process such as land condition impacts (e.g. erosion or weeds) that require remedial action or the development of a resource management plan.

### Plan of Authority/plan showing improvements

A plan is also required for each grazing authority. This is developed according to best method available at the time. See the procedural guide for development of plans and site plans for the standard required. This plan of the authority is required to provide the relevant Property Identification Code (PIC) by DAF for NLIS. This plan together with a detailed plan showing current improvements, vegetation clearing and/or modifications should be produced for recording on SAMS, ParkInfo and the grazing authority file.

**Disclaimer**

While this document has been prepared with care it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

**Approved By**

Alan Feely

Signature

Executive Director  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

1 December 2005

Date

Strategy and Policy  
[parkspolicy@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:parkspolicy@des.qld.gov.au)

**Appendix 1 – Application form for Stock Grazing Permit**

(available from QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base)

## Appendix 2 – Accessing, Using and Storing Biodiversity Assessment Information

**NOTE:** Ecomaps is no longer available for use. The information outlined in this appendix is now available through the following systems:

- QSpatial,
- Mud Maps,
- Queensland Globe, and
- ArcGIS.

### Introduction

To assist in accessing information regarding biodiversity assessment on Ecomaps, use the following instructions.

Credible data from this and various other sources should also be progressively loaded onto ParkInfo by configurers using the Data Extract Tool to build a sequential and continuously improving dataset of the best available information for a particular reserve.

### What is Ecomaps and how do I find it?

Ecomaps is a GIS-based tool used by the Department to present environmental and related information in a user-friendly way to assist analysis and decision-making on natural resource management issues. To access Ecomaps, open the intranet, then click on the “Applications” heading, then click “Ecomaps”. The Help page outlines the functions of the various buttons on Ecomaps.

### Locating QPWS estate on Ecomaps

To locate the QPWS estate on which the grazing activity is occurring via Ecomaps:

Click the “Locate” button at the top of the Ecomaps screen (with the binoculars as an icon).

Select the “QPWS interests” and then the “QPWS estate” heading from the list.

Type the name of the relevant area and click on the “find QPWS estate” button.

Note, you do not have to type in the whole name of the area, for example, Crediton State Forest can be shortened to “Crediton” and the locate function will find all areas with this name and list them.

Select the correct area from the list and click OK. Ecomaps will then display the area nominated with a red outline showing the boundary.

### Accessing WildNet records on Ecomaps

Click on the “update layers” button located at the bottom right of the Ecomaps screen. From the list that appears, click on “WildNet data” heading, then click on the boxes beside the subheadings “WildNet Conservation Significant Animal Records” and “Wildnet Conservation Significant Plant Records”, then click “Close” and tick the boxes against these new layers in the column on the left of the Ecomaps screen.

Note if the text is purple in colour, you will need to zoom in to a closer scale before the records will become visible. Finally, click the “refresh map” button on the bottom left of the Ecomaps screen. Wildlife icons will appear which can be selected to obtain the specific record information. To do this, click on the “Info” button at the top of the Ecomaps screen, then click on the “Point select” link, you can then click on any of the WildNet icons appearing and bring up the records associated with this icon.

### Accessing biodiversity assessment information.

Click on the “update layers” button located at the bottom right of the Ecomaps screen. This will bring up a list of headings from which you will be able to select the required information to be displayed. In this case a number of information layers will be selected.

#### 1. Biodiversity planning assessment information

Biodiversity planning assessments, which provide a broad statement of biodiversity, have been completed for the following bioregions:

- South East Queensland;
- New England Tableland;
- Brigalow Belt;
- Mulga Lands;
- Central Queensland Coast; and
- Desert Uplands.

From the list, click on “Biodiversity Planning Assessments”, and then tick on the relevant assessment area, e.g. “Central Queensland Coast”, then tick the “Central Queensland Coast Biodiversity Significance” box using the mouse. Click on the “Biodiversity Planning Assessments” heading again to close.

#### 2. Cadastral information

From the list, click on “Administrative”, and then tick the “Cadastre” box using the mouse. Click on the “Administrative” heading again to close.

#### 3. Topographical information

From the list click, on “Images”, and then tick the “Topographic map 100k images” box using the mouse. Click on the “Images” heading again to close.

Exit the “update layers” box by clicking on the green “close” button at the bottom of the box. Then make the three information layers active by clicking in the boxes located on the right hand side of the Ecomaps screen. Finally, click the “Refresh map” button at the bottom right of the Ecomaps screen.

Biodiversity assessments are comprised of two sets of data; the diagnostic data and the expert panel data. To access these data sets, use the “Info” tool, the button for which is located along the tops of the Ecomaps screen. After clicking on the info button, click on either the “point”, “rectangle” or “polygon select” links, then using the mouse, click on the area of the estate you are interested in. From the resulting table, click on the “View diagnostic data” and “View expert panel data” links to access this information.

The representativeness of regional ecosystems within the protected estate is required to be considered i.e. regional ecosystems not well represented on other *QPWS estate not subjected to grazing* should be protected from grazing.

The underlying information that contributes to the overall biodiversity rating for an area is useful for identifying biodiversity values at a finer scale.

Where a grazing authority occurs over an area of land contained within one of these bioregions, the relevant biodiversity planning assessment can be accessed through the Ecomaps application to collect the specific underlying biodiversity information associated with a particular land area.

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In the remainder of the bioregions, the latest available information should be used to help in this process. Ongoing contact with your regional biodiversity group will provide you with this latest data.

In addition to the biodiversity planning assessment data on Ecomaps, summary biodiversity information detailing endangered and of concern regional ecosystems, and endangered, vulnerable or rare wildlife (including flora) can be accessed through Ecoinfo.

The spatial distribution of known endangered, rare and threatened flora and fauna records can be viewed by accessing the relevant Wildnet records on Ecomaps.

More detailed ecological interpretation can be made to determine whether grazing activities would impact adversely on the maintenance of the identified biodiversity values.

Where there is reasonable suspicion of harm, lack of scientific certainty or consensus about the potential impact of grazing on the identified biodiversity values the precautionary principle should be applied.

Where specific significant species have been identified as occurring, the species management profiles should be used as an additional source of information.

### Interpreting the diagnostic data

The diagnostic data are generally made up of nine criteria. Any combination of these criteria may result in a certain value for biodiversity significance. By clicking on the “criteria rating” link, an explanation of the factors considered to give the particular rating can be obtained. Additionally each criterion has individual components that contribute to the rating. While this information is not specific in relation to a particular land parcel, it will often provide an indication for seeking further information. For example, a “Very High” rating for Criteria A – Habitat for EVR taxa, with associated values indicating core habitat for a vulnerable species, indicates that further investigation into what vulnerable species are present in the area is required and consideration given to the potential impacts of grazing on this species.

### Interpreting the expert panel data

The expert panel data is made of 13 criteria and an expert panel report for the bioregion. The criteria highlight areas of significance, and the expert panel report provides more detailed information, often noting species-specific conservation values in particular locations. The expert panel reports therefore provide a valuable source of biodiversity information for particular areas. To access the report click on the link, usually found adjacent to “Landscape Expert Panel ID” criteria heading.

### WildNet - Generating a list of species present in a QPWS managed area

To generate a list of all species recorded in a particular area, open Wildnet. Click on the “Species list for an area” link, then in the “Area name” field type the name of the reserve (e.g. Crediton) and click on the LOV link. The search results will list all reserves fitting the name entered; select the correct reserve from the list and the full name will be displayed in the “Area Name” field. Click on the “Find” button and a species list for the reserve will be generated

### Wildnet – Accessing species management profiles

To access a species management profile for a particular species, open Wildnet. Select the “Find taxon by name” link and enter the name of the species (scientific or common name) and click the “Find button”. Select the species you are interested in from the list generated, and a page entitled “Taxon details for xxxx sp.” will appear. In addition to this information a Species Management Profile may have been prepared. To access it, scroll to the bottom of the “Taxon details” page and click on the “Multimedia” link that can be found as a dot point at the bottom of this page. If a species management profile has been prepared, it will appear on the Multimedia page – to access it click on the “Species Profile” link under the “Category” heading and a PDF of the

species management profile will appear, providing information on the biology, ecology, threats and management actions relevant for the species.

### **Ecoinfo – Generating summary information for a particular area**

From the Ecoinfo website click on the “Reserves” link in the menu on the left hand side of the screen. Enter the name of the area you are interested in into the “Reserve name” field (e.g. Crediton) and click on the “Search” button. A list of reserves matching the name entered will then be listed – select the relevant reserve by clicking on it using the mouse. A page will then appear providing general information on the selected reserve, accompanied by a series of drop down menus. From the drop down menus, information is accessible regarding EVR wildlife, summary wildlife (separated into taxa) records, threatened ecosystems and a summary of all ecosystems recorded in the reserve. Click on the menu item of interest to display the lists.

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**Appendix 3 – Assessment of area to be grazed**

No.	Site condition	Level of impact/ Status	Likely impact on decision <sup>1</sup>	Additional specific condition to authority <sup>1</sup>
<b>A. Impacts of grazing on the site</b>				
1.	<b>Impacts on biodiversity, e.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition of representative natural communities (i.e. Regional ecosystems)</li> <li>• EVR – REs or individual species</li> </ul> (Related standard conditions: 8.7, 8.8, 8.11)	High	No authority/renewal issued	
		Medium	Issue authority/ renewal but apply specific condition/s	If grazing is found to not be ecologically unsustainable, it must be made sustainable or be terminated as soon as practicable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify source/s of impact and instigate remedial actions.</li> <li>• Create exclusion zones or special management areas if required.</li> <li>• Reduce long-term carrying capacity.</li> </ul>
		Low	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific condition/s	As above, to the level required.
2.	<b>Impact of overgrazing and any changes to vegetation structure, ground vegetation, the litter layer and soils.</b>  (Related standard conditions: 8.7 and 8.8)	High	Issue authority/ renewal with specific condition/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and set a lower long term carrying capacity.</li> <li>• Or set short-term stocking rates dependant on season.</li> <li>• And/or create exclusion zones or special management areas if required.</li> </ul>
		Medium	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific condition/s	As above, to the level required
		Low	Issue authority/ renewal	Continue to monitor

<sup>1</sup> Any processes put in place are subject to monitoring by the authority holder (see standard condition no. 10)

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No.	Site condition	Level of impact/ Status	Likely impact on decision <sup>1</sup>	Additional specific condition to authority <sup>1</sup>
3.	<b>Impact of stock on watering points and their surrounds</b>  (Related standard condition: 13)	High	Identify sources of impact and issue authority, with specific condition/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate remedial actions (e.g. fence out critical stream areas, additional watering points).</li> <li>• Create exclusion zones or special management areas if required.</li> <li>• Review and set a lower long term carrying capacity.</li> </ul>
		Medium	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific condition	As above, to the level required.
		Low	Issue authority/ renewal (no change)	Continue to monitor.
4.	<b>Impacts on water quality</b>	High	No authority/ renewal issued	
		Medium	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific condition/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create exclusion zones or special management areas if required.</li> <li>• Review and set a lower long term carrying capacity.</li> </ul>
		Low	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific conditions	As above, to the level required.
<b>B. Management performance of authority holder/ applicant</b>				
5.	<b>Fence conditions</b>  (Related standard condition: 8.6)	Poor track record	No authority/ renewal issued if in-conjunction with other poor ratings	
		Satisfactory	Issue authority/ renewal, with specific conditions	Repair where necessary.
		Good	Issue authority/renewal	Continue to monitor.
6.	<b>Pest animal and weed infestation</b>  (Related standard condition: 10)	Poor track record	No authority/renewal issued if in-conjunction with other poor ratings	
		Satisfactory	Issue authority/renewal, with specific conditions	Revisit pest management plan and undertake remedial actions.
		Good	Issue authority/renewal	Continue to monitor.
7.	<b>Protracted use of fertilizer or other pasture enhancing works</b>	Yes	No authority/renewal issued if in-conjunction with other poor ratings.	
		No	Issue authority/renewal.	Monitor for invasive perennials.

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No.	Site condition	Level of impact/ Status	Likely impact on decision <sup>1</sup>	Additional specific condition to authority <sup>1</sup>
8.	<b>Protracted incorrect use of chemicals</b>	Yes	No authority/renewal issued if in conjunction with other poor ratings	
		No	Issue authority/renewal	Monitor
9.	<b>Fire management</b>  (Related standard: 9)	Poor track record	No authority/renewal issued if in conjunction with other poor ratings.	
		Satisfactory	Issue authority/renewal, with specific condition/s	Review compliance with Fire Management Strategy or fire management statement for the reserve.
		Good	Issue authority/renewal	Continue to monitor.
10.	<b>Road/track maintenance, including firelines</b>  (Related standard condition: 12)	Poor	Issue authority/renewal, with specific condition/s	Construct/repair where necessary.
		Good	Issue authority/renewal	Continue to monitor.

**Appendix 4 – Assessment report table**

Reserve name:

Lot on plan:

Type of authority:

Authority holder:

Management intent for reserve:

**Biodiversity assessment**

BAMM rating:

Significant diagnostic criteria:

Significant expert panel data:

Ecoinfo data table:

Rare and threatened Wildnet record assessment:

Other relevant information:

**Cultural heritage assessment**

Indigenous cultural heritage sites information (attach map printout):

European heritage sites information (attach map printout):

**Native title assessment**

Confirm Native Title Assessment notification completed and no further notification action is required.

**Authority holder performance**

Assessment of the authority holder's performance/compliance.

**Inspection of the site**

Condition of the site (include an assessment of erosion, weeds, condition of fencing, fire regime, grazing pressure and general land condition).

**Final assessment**

Provide a final assessment of the potential for impacts from grazing on the values identified.

**Recommendation**

Provide a recommendation based on the assessment in relation to issuing/renewal of the grazing authority.

**Plan**

Including:

- current improvements,
- vegetation clearing and/or
- vegetation modification

**Appendix 5 – Notice of decision**

**Approval of application for grazing authority**

Available on the QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base

**Appendix 6 – Notification to NRM**

**Agreement of application/renewal for grazing authority under term lease *Land Act 1994***

Available on the QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base

**Appendix 7 – Notice of decision**

**Refusal of application for grazing authority**

Available on the QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base

**Appendix 8 – Notification to NRM**

**Advice of recommendation for refusal of application for grazing authority on QPWS managed areas**

Available on the QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base

**Appendix 9 – Standard conditions for grazing**

Available on the QPWS policy pages on Ranger Base