

Submission regarding the effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities' protection in Australia

Tweed Shire is recognised nationally and internationally for the high conservation value biodiversity within the World Heritage National Parks and private lands of the Wollumbin/Mt. Warning Caldera.

The valley has many State and Federally listed threatened flora and fauna species and endangered ecological communities; with more species of fish, birds, amphibians and mammals than Kakadu. The high diversity of ecosystems includes sub-tropical rainforests, littoral rainforests, sclerophyll forests, wetlands, heathlands and riparian corridors. It is in an area where temperate and sub-tropical climates overlap, the Macleay–McPherson Overlap, so many species occurs at either their southern or northern distribution limits.

The Northern Rivers Regional Biodiversity Management Plan in association with the Border Ranges Rainforest Biodiversity Management Plan (DECCW 2010) provides a regional approach to the delivery of recovery actions necessary to ensure the long-term viability of threatened species and ecological communities in the Region. The Border Ranges Rainforest Biodiversity Management Plan identifies the major stresses on biodiversity as habitat loss, habitat modification, loss of individuals and loss of genetic integrity.

The recently released Australian Government document “One Land – Many Stories: Prospectus of Investment” focuses investment on this Target Area as part of the Greater Border Ranges Region in recognition of the high level of vulnerability and importance of biodiversity.

Despite this recognition and proposed investment, the protection of threatened species and ecological communities is greatly reduced under the draft Tweed Local Environment Plan 2012. The NSW State Government has refused Tweed Shire Council any increase in the amount of land designated as an Environment Protection Zone, however in the years since Tweed Local Environment Plan 2000 significant areas of the Shire have been identified as State and/or Federally Endangered Ecological Community and threatened species habitat.

Long term conservation planning, scientific assessment and data sharing by Councils, Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW and community has provided the knowledge that validates an increase in the natural areas to be given an Environment Protection zoning. Despite the long term planning for protection of threatened species and ecological communities, the reality is not reflected in the draft Tweed Local Environment Plan 2012 through application of the appropriate landuse zone.

I ask that the Australian Government does everything possible to increase the effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities' protection by retaining control at a federal level and ensuring that landuse zoning at a local level truly reflects the environment protection needed.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Masters