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Your ref: SSD-9351535

Ms Megan Fu

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Dear Ms Fu

John Hunter Hospital Health and Innovation Precinct Project (SSD-9351535 MOD 2) – Vegetation Clearing

I refer to your request for advice on the Major Projects Portal, dated 19 August 2022 in which the Planning and Assessment Division (P&A) of the Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) invited Biodiversity and Conservation Division (BCD) to provide advice in relation to the John Hunter Hospital Health and Innovation Precinct Modification 2 Tree Clearing Project (SSD-9351535 MOD 2).

BCD makes 15 recommendations in relation to the biodiversity assessment of which the key issues are:

- the BAM calculator file needs to be submitted to BCD for review
- further information is required about the assessment of *Corybas dowlingii*, and
- further information is required about how threatened species surveys meet BCD's survey requirements, and
- that details of adaptive management strategies are provided,

BCD's recommendations are provided in **Attachment A** and detailed comments are provided in **Attachment B**. If you have any questions about this advice, please contact Robert Gibson, Senior Regional Biodiversity Conservation Officer, via huntercentralcoast@environment.nsw.gov.au or 02 4927 3154.

Yours sincerely

STEVEN CRICK
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2 September 2022

Enclosure: Attachments A and B

BCD's recommendations

John Hunter Hospital Health and Innovation Precinct – Vegetation Clearing (SSD-9351535 MOD 2) – Review of the BDAR

1. BCD recommends the accredited assessor allocates the BAM-C file to the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Team so it can be reviewed.
2. BCD recommends further details are provided of the new local record of *Corybas dowlingii* in relation to the Subject Land and what this means for the assessment.
3. BCD recommends that details of proposed adaptive management strategies are provided.
4. BCD recommends that measures to mitigate or manage impacts on biodiversity values for which there is a risk of failure are identified and described to meet the requirements of the BAM 2020
5. BCD recommends that existing maps are revised, or new maps are prepared that show all features required by the BAM.
6. BCD recommends the accredited assessor provides the GIS shapefiles used for maps in the BDAR.
7. BCD recommends the accredited assessor provides copies of the vegetation plot data sheets cited in the BDAR.
8. BCD recommends that the relevant experience of all staff involved in the production of the BDAR is provided in order to meet the requirements of the BAM 2020.
9. BCD recommends that the BDAR includes a definition of the 'subject land' as per the BAM 2020.
10. BCD recommends a map showing the extent of native vegetation is provided that is at no more than 1:10,000 scale in order to meet requirements of the BAM 2020.
11. BCD recommends a map showing the extent of native vegetation is provided that is at no more than 1:10,000 scale in order to meet requirements of the BAM 2020.
12. BCD recommends that additional information is provided about candidate species so that the BDAR meets the requirements of the BAM 2020.
13. BCD recommends that Table 5.1 is updated to include weather data for the surveys conducted on 29 June 2022.
14. BCD recommends that BAM vegetation field plot data is presented in MS-Excel format to meet the requirements of the BAM.
15. BCD recommends all maps from the BDAR are provided as jpeg files.

BCD's detailed comments

John Hunter Hospital Health and Innovation Precinct – Vegetation Clearing (SSD-9351535 MOD 2) – Review of the BDAR

1. The Accredited Assessor should allocate the BAM-C to BCD for review

BCD is unable to access the Biodiversity Assessment Method Calculator (BAM-C) file for this project. To change this the accredited assessor will need to add the Hunter Central Coast Planning Team as a case party to the file in the Biodiversity Offset and Agreement Management System (BOAMs).

Recommendation 1

BCD recommends the accredited assessor allocates the BAM-C file to the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Team so it can be reviewed.

2. Describe the location of the new *Corybas dowlingii* site in relation to the Subject Land

Section 5.2 'Results' in the BDAR does not indicate where the new local record of the *Corybas dowlingii* is in relation to the Subject Land. This detail could explain, along with the targeted surveys, why the species did not generate credits to be offset for this project. BCD recommends that Figure 5.2 'Threatened Species Records' is revised to show the approximate location of the new local record of the *Corybas dowlingii* in relation to the Subject Land and that Section 5.2 describes the site in relation to the Subject Land.

Recommendation 2

BCD recommends further details are provided of the new local record of *Corybas dowlingii* in relation to the Subject Land and what this means for the assessment.

3. Details of adaptive management strategies to mitigate and manage impacts on biodiversity values are required

The BDAR does not describe adaptive management strategies to mitigate and manage impacts on biodiversity values that are uncertain. This is required to meet Section 8.5 of the BAM.

Recommendation 3

BCD recommends that details of proposed adaptive management strategies are provided.

4. Identify measures to Mitigate and manage impacts for which there is a risk of failure

Chapter 6 'Avoidance and Minimisation' of the BDAR does not identify measures to mitigate or manage impacts on biodiversity values for which there is a risk of failure. These details are required as per Sections 8.4 'Mitigate and manage impacts on biodiversity values' of the BAM 2020.

Recommendation 4

BCD recommends that measures to mitigate or manage impacts on biodiversity values for which there is a risk of failure are identified and described to meet the requirements of the BAM 2020.

5. Additional features are required to be shown on maps

The BDAR does not fully meet the requirements of the BAM with respect to features required to be shown on maps. These requirements are described in Appendix K of the BAM. BCD recommends that either existing maps are revised, or new maps are produced (and shapefiles) with the following features:

- cadastre
- IBRA bioregion and IBRA subregion
- NSW (Mitchell) landscape(s)

Recommendation 5

BCD recommends that existing maps are revised, or new maps are prepared that show all features required by the BAM.

6. Copies of GIS shapefiles should be provided

GIS shapefiles of the maps in the BDAR have not been provided. The GIS shapefiles are required to help with the assessment of the BDAR. Their provision is a requirement under the BAM (2020, see Appendix K).

Recommendation 6

BCD recommends the accredited assessor provides the GIS shapefiles used for maps in the BDAR.

7. Copies of vegetation plot data sheets should be provided

Copies of vegetation plot data sheets in the BDAR have not been provided. Table A-1 provides the vegetation integrity data for plots V102, V103 and V104. However, the raw data on which those scores are based are also required, as per Appendix K of the BAM 2020.

Recommendation 7

BCD recommends the accredited assessor provides copies of the vegetation plot data sheets cited in the BDAR.

8. Relevant experience of the staff who helped create the BDAR are required

Table 1.2 'Accredited BAM Assessors and their Role on this Project' lists the staff involved in creating the BDAR. However, it does not state their relevant experience for the tasks they undertook. This does not meet the requirements of Table 24 in the BAM 2020.

Recommendation 8

BCD recommends that the relevant experience of all staff involved in the production of the BDAR is provided in order to meet the requirements of the BAM 2020.

9. The 'subject land' needs to be defined as per BAM 2020 (page 165)

The BAM 2020 requires assessment of the biodiversity values of the 'subject land' (e.g., Section 2.0.1 'Introduction to Stage 1'). However, the BDAR does not define the 'subject land' of the project, but this could be done by linking it to the development footprint.

Recommendation 9

BCD recommends that the BDAR includes a definition of the 'subject land' as per the BAM 2020.

10. A map of native vegetation extent is required at no more than 1: 10,000 scale

Figure 2.1 'Landscape Features' shows the mapped extent of native vegetation and is presented at a scale of 1: 24,000. However, Section 4.1 of the BAM 2020 requires that mapped native vegetation extent is presented at no more than 1:10,000, so that it is clearer for the

reader to see. BCD therefore recommends that either Figure 2.1 is redrawn to be at no more than 1:10,000 scale, or that a new map at no more than 1:10,000 is produced showing the extent of native vegetation.

Recommendation 10

BCD recommends a map showing the extent of native vegetation is provided that is at no more than 1:10,000 scale in order to meet requirements of the BAM 2020.

11. Provide more information on the species habitat polygons

Section 5.2.2.1 'Species Habitat Polygons' state the Unit of Measure (count or area) of the species-credit species impacted by the project. For any species measured by count state the number present on the Subject Land, the method to estimate counts, and the justification for the use of that technique. This detail is required as per Section 5.2.5 and Table 24 of the BAM 2020.

Recommendation 11

BCD recommends that more details are provided of the species habitat polygons so they meet the requirements of the BAM 2020.

12. Further details about the candidate species are required

Table D-1 'Species-credit Species Survey Methods' of the BDAR does not state which candidate species were assumed to be present. Or state which candidate species were considered present due to important habitat mapping. Or state which candidate species were to be checked by targeted survey. These details are required as per Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 of the BAM 2020. BCD recommends that Table D-1 is updated to include these details, or that a new table is prepared with this information so that it meets the requirements of the BAM 2020.

Recommendation 12

BCD recommends that additional information is provided about candidate species so that the BDAR meets the requirements of the BAM 2020.

13. Include weather data for the surveys conducted on 29 June 2022

Table 5.1 'Weather Conditions for Species-credit Surveys' does not include weather details for the survey conducted on 29 June 2022. BCD recommends that Table 5.1 is updated to include daily and monthly data for that survey.

Recommendation 13

BCD recommends that Table 5.1 is updated to include weather data for the surveys conducted on 29 June 2022.

14. BAM vegetation field plot data in MS-Excel format is required

The BDAR does not fully meet the requirements of the BAM with respect to plot field data. Plot field data (plant species by BAM plot) is required as per Table 24 in Appendix K of the BAM 2020. BCD recommends that this data is provided to meet the requirements of the BAM.

Recommendation 14

BCD recommends that BAM vegetation field plot data is presented in MS-Excel format to meet the requirements of the BAM.

15. Copies of all BDAR report maps as separate jpeg files are required

Copies of all maps in the BDAR are required to be provided as separate jpeg files. This is a requirement of Appendix K of the BAM 2020. Those files are used when reviewing a BDAR and their provision will speed up the assessment process.

Recommendation 15

BCD recommends all maps from the BDAR are provided as jpeg files.