



Priorities & Actions

Biodiversity

Strategy 2020

2025

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FOREWORD

Human impact on the natural environment is having detrimental effects worldwide, with the decline of plants, animals and even insects at unprecedented levels. The Clarence Valley local government area remains a stronghold for a diverse range of plants and animals and with targeted programs, Council is working towards halting this trend of biodiversity decline.

The 2020 Biodiversity Strategy will help guide Council's actions to protect and enhance biodiversity - now and into the future.

What is biodiversity? Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms — the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems they form. Biodiversity is usually considered at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

ABOUT THE PLAN

This plan sets out what Council and the community would like to see for the Clarence Valley in terms of biodiversity conservation.

It outlines the vision for the future and the priorities that we need to focus on to make that vision a reality.

It also details the key actions we need to undertake to achieve our vision.

The goals and actions in this plan will guide Council's decision making and on ground actions over the next 5 years. It will be regularly reviewed to check progress.

This plan was approved by Clarence Valley Council at the July 2020 Council meeting.

Developing the plan

This plan has emerged from reviewing and updating the actions in the Clarence Valley Council's *2010 Biodiversity Management Strategy*, and keeping the strategy in line with community attitudes, legislation, approaches to conservation and land use.

A web page and questionnaire was developed for the community to find out about draft actions and give their views, here www.clarenceconversations.com.au/biodiversity. Additionally, a working group was formed to ensure stakeholder involvement. The survey results showed;

- There were 530 visitors to the page, and 92 completed the survey
- 52% of the respondents were female
- 90% of people consider the protection of habitat and fauna corridors to be extremely important
- 84% of respondents consider the major issue facing biodiversity conservation in the Clarence is land clearing

Working together

This plan has been developed to align with other regional plans including;

- The North Coast Regional Plan 2036 – the NSW Department of Environment's 20 year blue print for the region.
- CVC's Community Strategic plan 2027
- Australia's Strategy for Nature 2018-2030
- Northern Rivers Regional Biodiversity Management Plan 2010
- Australian Department of Energy & Environment Recovery Plans
- NSW Department of Primary Industry & Environment Saving our Species Programs

- Regional State of the Environment 2016 - North Coast Region of NSW
- NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme
- NSW Marine Estate Management Strategy
- Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Strategic Regional Priorities 2019-2022
- Draft Clarence Valley Local Strategic Planning Statement

Council will work with other agencies including

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
- Community groups
- Local Aboriginal Councils and Traditional Owner Corporations
- Local Land Services
- Northern Rivers Joint Organisation of Councils
- Private Landholders
- Landcare
- Environment groups
- Marine Estate Management Authority
- Forestry Corporation NSW

OUR VISION

For Council and the community it represents to understand and value biodiversity, working together to implement policy and actions, so biodiversity can be protected and enhanced for future generations.

Why is this important?

The Clarence Valley community places a high value on the natural environment and biodiversity. This is not surprising given that the natural environment underpins many of the region's key industries and the well-being of its residents.

What will success look like?

- A collaborative approach between Council, the community, landholders and other government agencies to manage biodiversity now and into the future
- Increase in the amount of effective connectivity in habitats
- Increase in landowner involvement in biodiversity conservation programs
- Improved recognition of the importance of the role of biodiversity across the LGA
- Maintained and improved populations of threatened species
- Improved water quality and overall river health

How are we going to make a difference?

The number one threat to biodiversity in the Clarence is loss of vegetation and fragmentation of habitat, therefore we will work towards;

- a. an overall net gain in vegetation,
- b. an emphasis on connectivity,
- c. adequate design for development of land within remnant vegetation that protects and maintains a significant portion of that site,
- d. provision for the protection of endangered ecological communities and vegetated corridors.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following tables are the actions we will undertake to achieve the vision. The table includes a “who” for who is responsible and the estimated cost of the action.

This document is a framework for an approach to biodiversity management. The strategy has seven tables of actions, not all of which can be achieved in the next 5 years, with the focus to be on prioritising actions as need and funding allows. A variety of actions involve multi stakeholder involvement, including landholder support, to be achieved.

Key to the tables

Key to priorities	High	Medium	Ongoing
Key to costs	High H >\$50 000	Medium M \$10 000 - \$50000	Low L <\$10000

Table 1. Protect habitat and wildlife corridors

Objectives

- Protect the habitats of native flora and fauna and existing habitat/wildlife corridors
- Retain habitat areas in land parcels that will enable the long-term survival of existing plant and animal communities
- Establish a network of habitat corridors linking areas of native vegetation
- Protect the recreational and educational value of areas of native vegetation

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
1. Protect fauna corridors and linkages	1.1	Identify 'gaps' in habitat corridors and formulate strategies to encourage revegetation and management of these areas	NRM	L-H
	1.2	Identify a range of funding opportunities and landholder incentives for the establishment and maintenance of habitat corridors	NRM	L

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
	1.3	Incorporate mapping of shorebird roost and foraging habitats in Clarence estuaries into Council's mapping system, and implement relevant actions for habitat management.	NRM	L
	1.4	Identify and develop links with habitat areas outside of the Clarence Valley LGA in consultation with Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (DPIE) and adjoining local councils, community groups, and organisations such as the Great Eastern Ranges	NRM	L
	1.5	Manage roadside vegetation to maintain biodiversity values, by developing a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan	Civil Services	M
2. Train relevant staff to support and implement the <i>Biodiversity Management Strategy</i>	2.1	Develop a training package for induction of new development and other relevant staff (e.g. design engineers, plant operators etc.) to explain local policies and controls, and raise awareness of the LGA's unique biodiversity attributes	NRM	L
	2.2	Design an assessment and audit process to review compliance with the <i>Biodiversity Management Strategy</i> across all relevant areas of Council, including development applications and civil works.	NRM	L
3. Develop management policies and practices that promote the conservation and restoration of a range of habitat types	3.1	Review the "Biodiversity and habitat protection requirements – information for applicants" (BIFA) and associated environmental controls for relevant sections in the Development Control Plans for adherence to the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016	Planning	M
	3.2	Review the environmental controls in the relevant DCP's to ensure adherence to the Biodiversity Strategy	Planning	L
	3.3	Prepare native planting guides for new and existing developments, which encourages planting of local endemic (local provenance) plant species to encourage local biodiversity	NRM	M
	3.4	Update Council's mapping layers as new vegetation mapping becomes available	Planning	L
	3.5	Develop an LGA wide Koala Plan Of Management, based on the controls of the Ashby, Iluka, Woombah Koala Plan of Management, and implement the recommended actions	NRM	M
	3.6	Develop an LGA wide Flying-fox Plan of Management in conjunction with OEH's <i>2018 Flying-fox Camp Management Code of Practice</i> and the <i>2018 Maclean Flying-fox Camp Management Strategy</i> , and implement the recommended actions	NRM	M
	3.7	Prepare vegetation management plans for Council managed lands. Include the use of wildlife infrastructure such as nest boxes, gliding poles, underpasses and rope crossings to increase landscape connectivity	NRM	M
	3.8	Review the <i>Biodiversity Offset Policy</i> which seeks to counterbalance impacts on biodiversity from development when all other options have been considered	NRM	L
	3.9	Support research students in the study of the local environment and ecological processes	NRM	L
	3.10	Investigate the development of a policy to prioritise the local offsetting of credits generated from the Biodiversity Offset Scheme	NRM/ Planning	L
	4.1	Provide ongoing training for development assessment and compliance staff. Ensure all appropriate Council staff are trained in the use of Council's	Planning	L

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
4. Ongoing actions to protect habitat & wildlife corridors		mapping system and that this information is used in the development assessment process		
	4.2	Continued employment of a dedicated Biodiversity Officer with an annual budget to implement projects	General Manager	H

Table 2. Clearing controls and vegetation management

Objectives

- Protect areas of native vegetation
- Reduce the loss of native vegetation to facilitate a net gain in vegetation in the LGA
- Revegetate riparian zones
- Encourage the protection and management of regrowth in identified corridors

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
5. Control clearing of native vegetation	5.1	Develop factsheets on 1) reasons to avoid and minimise clearing and 2) delineating allowable activities and decision pathways for clearing of native vegetation regulations and acts for landholders and developers based on the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and regulations, LLS Act and the EP&A Act	NRM	L
	5.2	Investigate the development of a Tree Preservation Order or similar under the <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017 (Veg SEPP)</i> to protect areas of vegetation in urban areas, and environmental protection zones	NRM/ Planning	L
	5.3	Promote education and awareness of the statutory legislation and landholder responsibilities with respect to the clearing of native vegetation	NRM	L
6. Develop	6.1	Identify areas where revegetation/regeneration is required and is achievable across all land tenures and seek grant funding to develop bush regeneration programs	NRM	L

management policies and practices that protect and increase the amount of land covered by native vegetation	6.2	Offset the removal of trees for infrastructure and maintenance works according to the <i>Biodiversity Offset Policy</i> and associated guidelines. Plantings of endemic species with local provenance to be undertaken on identified wildlife corridors areas to ensure a net gain of vegetation across the LGA	Planning	L
7. Ensure that Council's operational works minimise soil disturbance and loss of native vegetation	7.1	Ensure that Council's operations staff are made aware of the importance of retaining dead trees for their habitat and nesting value	NRM	L
	7.2	Within council managed lands, ensure walking tracks and paths away from sensitive and/or threatened species, and mowing regimes are appropriate for the vegetation where appropriate	Civil Services	L
8. Ongoing actions	8.1	Respond to information on any illegal clearing in a timely manner to halt any unauthorised clearing	NRM	L
	8.2	Where clearing is undertaken without approval, or has been undertaken contrary to Council's LEP or approvals, provide sufficient resources to gather evidence and instigate prosecution or other appropriate action	NRM	L
	8.3	All alleged breaches of the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> reported to Council shall be reported to <i>NSW Enviro Line</i>	NRM	L
	8.4	Alleged breaches of the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> shall be reported to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water & the Environment	NRM	L
	8.5	Continue to lobby and work with State and Federal Government agencies to ensure native vegetation and biodiversity conservation legislation is enforced and appropriate action is taken to correct breaches	Council / General Manager	L
	8.6	On the expiration of any lease on Council-managed land, and prior to the renewal of such leases, continue to ensure that land is being managed in accordance with the <i>Biodiversity Management Strategy</i> and the 'Riparian Action Strategy'. This is particularly important for lands within riparian zones and identified wildlife corridors	NRM	L

Table 3. Biosecurity management

Objectives

- Protect the Clarence Valley LGA from the impact of pests
- Encourage community participation in reducing the impacts of introduced species on biodiversity
- Protect the Clarence Valley from the impact of weeds

Goal		Action	Who	Cost
9. Effectively manage pest animals in the Clarence Valley	9.1	Instigate pest species controls in identified wildlife corridors to enhance corridor value and function, including such things as fencing, and targeted pest species management	NRM	L
	9.2	Support relevant actions in the <i>North Coast Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan 2018– 2023</i> , and the <i>Local Pest Management Plans</i> .	NRM	L
10. Reduce the impact of existing weeds	10.1	Undertake an audit of work practices and provide training to Council staff (including open space, road works staff and contracted roadside slashing operators) on equipment hygiene in order to minimise the accidental spread of weeds	NRM Weeds	L
	10.2	Undertake a staged removal of woody weeds and trees, including Camphor Laurel, Coral tree and other emerging threats	NRM Weeds	M
11. New and emerging weeds are prevented from establishing	11.1	Conduct training and awareness for field staff in the identification of weeds, and alert staff to potential new incursions	NRM Weeds	L
12. Continuing actions for biosecurity management, funded through the Weeds Action Plan (WAP)	12.1	Continue to encourage development applications in land containing key habitat areas to include restrictions on dogs and cats, i.e. promote dog/cat free environments, by way of restrictive covenants being a condition of consent	Development Control	L
	12.2	Continue to work with Local Land Services in the control of pest species such as wild dogs, foxes, feral cats, deer and wild horses through the Local Pest Predator Plans	NRM	L
	12.3	Continue to support actions within the <i>Northern Coast Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2017-2023</i>	NRM Weeds	H
	12.4	Continue to support integrated programs through regional weed advisory committees.	NRM Weeds	L

Goal		Action	Who	Cost
	12.5	Ensure that weed eradication projects consider and include, where appropriate, funding for primary, secondary and follow-up weed control to manage long-term reinfestation	NRM Weeds	M
	12.6	Regularly update Council's mapping system to prioritise and map noxious weeds, property inspections, identify Council control activities and priority weed infestations	NRM Weeds	L
	12.7	Continue to undertake inspections and control of biosecurity matter across the Clarence Valley LGA	NRM Weeds	H
	12.8	Undertake assessment and, where possible, rapid response to eradicate any emerging weeds as defined in the North Coast Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2017-2022	NRM Weeds	M
	12.9	Undertake inspection of nurseries and market stalls on at least an annual basis to reduce the dispersal of weeds	NRM Weeds	L
	12.10	Support the ongoing work of Council's weeds team and community groups, in effective weed control for all biosecurity matter	NRM Weeds	M

Table 4. Bushfire management

Objectives

- Manage fire within Clarence Valley LGA in a way that maintains, or does not compromise, the ecological integrity of areas of native vegetation
- Where possible, all actions should be consistent with management strategies detailed in the Clarence Valley Bush Fire Risk Management Plan

Goal		Action	Who	Cost
13. Manage fire within Clarence Valley LGA in a way that maintains, or does not compromise, the ecological integrity of areas of native vegetation.	13.1	Where undertaking hazard reduction burns and other fire management tools, ensure a variety of fire intensities and seasonality are employed, and burn frequency is compatible with vegetation type, this includes roadside vegetation that is under Council control	NRM	L
	13.2	Ensure that when the Clarence Valley Bush Fire Risk Management Plan is reviewed, that Council's <i>Biodiversity Management Strategy</i> is taken into account	Open Spaces & Facilities	L
	13.3	Promote recognition of biodiversity as an asset to be considered in bushfire risk management plans	NRM	L
	13.4	Work in with other agencies to achieve positive outcomes for fire and biodiversity	NRM	L
14. Continuing actions	14.1	Continue to prevent burning of cleared vegetation associated with subdivision, and require chipping of vegetation for re-use	Planning	L

Goal		Action	Who	Cost
	14.2	Develop and apply bushfire mitigation works (slashing, burning etc.) using bushfire threshold criteria detailed in the Clarence Valley Bush Fire Risk Management Plan	NRM	L
	14.3	Undertake Bushfire Risk Information Management System (BRIMS) assessment prior to any hazard reduction work on Council land	NRM	L
	14.4	Continue to ensure that asset protection zones are contained within the development proposal area and do not impact on, or require clearing of, adjoining native vegetation, and Council conditions of consent include vegetation management plans for APZ's	Planning	L

Table 5. Improve aquatic habitat

Objectives

- Clean and healthy rivers, creeks and estuaries that enhance habitat values
- Wetlands are protected and managed to maintain ecological diversity and function

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
15. Remove fish barriers	15.1	Investigate options to remove barriers to fish passage or to provide structures such as fish ladders that allow fish movement around essential infrastructure that creates a barrier as sites that do not have management plans as identified in "Updated Assessment of Floodgated Watercourses & Drains"	Water-cycle	H
	15.2	Update and upgrade structures as technological advances occur for high priority sites concerning removal or modification of barriers to natural flows and restoration of over-drained landscapes on the floodplain	Water-cycle	H
16. Implement actions in adopted plans	16.1	Implement actions in adopted estuary management plans (including the Clarence, Wooli, Sandon and Lake Cakora estuaries) which contribute to protection, enhancement and promotion of biodiversity	Various	L-H
	16.2	Implement actions in existing coastal zone management plans (CZMP)	Various	L-H
	16.3	Develop a Coastal Management Program in line with the Coastal Management Act 2016	Water-cycle	L-H

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
	16.4	Investigate the appropriateness of environmental zonings under council's LEP to protect identified important wetlands and shorebird habitat/roosts	Strategic Planning	L
	16.5	Update Council's 'Riparian Action Strategy' (2010) to improve riparian buffers in intensive agricultural and horticultural areas in order to provide improved water quality and habitat	NRM	L
	16.6	Work with Department of Primary Industries & Environment and commercial and recreational fishing groups to reduce impacts on migratory shorebirds and waders within estuaries and beaches	NRM	L
	16.7	Review actions in the Sustainable Water Requirements – Information for Applicants (currently part of the Development Application approval process)	Planning	L
17. Continuing actions	17.1	Continued water quality monitoring throughout the region's aquatic systems	Water-cycle	L
	17.2	Continue to implement the CVC Integrated Water Cycle Strategy and implement actions	Water-cycle	L-H
	17.3	Implement the recommendations in Council's report 'Shorebird values and threats in the Clarence Estuary – A guide for Clarence Valley Council Staff'	NRM	L
	17.4	Continue to ensure actions to reduce sediment run off and improving water quality in Review of Environmental Factors are implemented on project sites	Civil Works	L
	17.5	Continue to audit on-site sewerage management systems in accordance with Council's 'On-site Wastewater Management Strategy 2019'	NRM	L
	17.6	Implement the recommendations in Council's report 'Shorebird values and threats in the Clarence Estuary – A guide for Clarence Valley Council Staff'	NRM	L
	17.7	Continue to support volunteer floodgate operators	Water-cycle	L

Table 6. Community education

Objectives

- Encourage and promote community involvement and cooperation in the management of biodiversity
- Raise awareness of the importance of our biodiversity and how to protect it
- Provide on-ground extension services
- Increase the area of land managed for conservation or managed in a sustainable manner
- Monitor effectiveness of education programs
- Educate the community on the benefits of biodiversity, and enforce legislation aimed at protecting native flora and fauna values

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
18. Develop & deliver biodiversity education projects	18.1	Educate builders, developers and Council's works staff to control run-off and sedimentation derived from development and maintenance sites	Planning	L
	18.2	Encourage landholders to uptake incentives or other land conservation mechanisms targeting the best practice management of wetlands, including fencing and strategic stocking, re-establishment of natural hydrological regimes, weed control and provision of buffers	NRM	L-H
	18.3	Investigate and implement incentives to promote revegetation on private land within important habitat areas	NRM	L
	18.4	Investigate opportunities for landholders to enter into conservation agreements through a range of mechanisms including the Biodiversity Conservation Trust	NRM	L
	18.5	Promote landholder awareness on the benefits of retaining fallen timber, hollow logs, older hollow-bearing trees and standing dead trees, especially those with hollows	NRM	L
	18.6	Promote the use of nest boxes by landholders, and the erection of nesting boxes where natural tree hollows or hollow logs have been removed	NRM	L
19. Educate and support the community on weeds and their control	19.1	Undertake assisted removal programs to remove weed threats from the landscape, with priority given to properties adjacent to high conservation value assets such as National Park estate	NRM Weeds	M
	19.2	Promote the use of endemic plants with local provenance to the community, plant wholesalers and retailers, and in Council's landscape guidelines, development control plans and policies	NRM / NRM Weeds	M

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
	19.3	Promote landholder awareness of the benefits of retaining in-stream habitat features (e.g. fallen timber) within riverine systems	NRM	L
20. Encourage community participation in the protection, restoration and conservation of habitat areas and corridor links	20.1	Investigate the introduction of a differential rating scheme for lands managed for biodiversity conservation purposes	Finance	L
	20.2	Promote private land conservation mechanisms, such as incentives or differential rating, to target the protection and restoration of threatened ecological communities on the coastal floodplain	NRM	L
	20.3	Develop training programs for Council staff and Councillors to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity protection and rehabilitation	NRM	L
	20.4	Investigate the formation of a Natural Resource Management group, with members from the community, CVC and other agencies, to help promote and prioritise actions from this strategy	NRM	L
21. Minimise the impacts on species and ecological communities caused by human-induced disturbance across the region	21.1	Ensure road design and traffic management incorporates measures to reduce the threat of road kill to native fauna, especially in identified 'black spots' and in key corridor areas	Planning/ Development Services	H
	21.2	Promote the importance of retaining different 'layers' of vegetation on private land, and discourage the practice of underscrubbing which removes important habitat for a range of species	NRM	M
22. Recognise and acknowledge individuals or group	22.1	Proactively recognise and acknowledge land managers who are managing their properties in a sustainable manner using biodiversity protection and enhancement. Opportunities for recognition include Australia Day Citizen Awards, Living Sustainably Awards and World Environment Day.	NRM	L
23. Continuing actions	23.1	Continue the development and delivery of biodiversity-related educational materials	NRM	L
	23.2	Continue to implement biodiversity related education programs through field days, social media newspaper articles and community groups	NRM	L
	23.3	Continue to inform the community on various environmental issues via council webpage, social media and Clarence Conversation pages	NRM	L
	23.4	Continue with the community education program promoting responsible pet ownership	Rangers	L
	23.5	Continue to support Clarence Valley Conservation in Action (CVCIA) and the community to monitor and trap Common (Indian) Myna birds, and control cane toads	NRM	L
	23.6	Run field days, promote websites and attend displays at events such as agricultural shows, to distribute information regarding weeds and their control	NRM weeds	L

Goals		Actions	Who	Cost
	23.7	Continue to support the implementation of Council's Market Policy (eg. no plastic bags/compostable packaging) as a direct action in protecting habitat	NRM	L
	23.8	Continue to support Clean Up Australia Day	NRM	L
	23.9	Continue to deliver litter education and awareness programs	NRM	L

Table 7. Climate change

Objectives

- Minimise potential climate change impacts on biodiversity by increasing the resilience of natural ecosystems and landscapes

Goals		Action	Who	Cost
24. Minimise potential climate change impacts on biodiversity by increasing the resilience of natural ecosystems and landscapes.	24.1	Promote the role of councils, local business and individuals in the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change	NRM	L
	24.2	Adapt weed, pest and fire management plans and actions as required, taking into account climate change influences	NRM	L
	24.3	Promote habitat and vegetation restoration in priority areas to allow for species adaptation and migration in response to potential climate change impacts. This includes using local species that are resilient to climate change where revegetation is needed	NRM	L
	24.4	Promote the management of estuarine wetlands and salt marshes, adjoining freshwater wetlands and adjacent terrestrial areas at low elevations to allow for adaptation to potential climate change impacts	NRM	L
	24.5	Promote community and rural landowner awareness of climate change-related threats to biodiversity and the need to adapt land management in the short and long term	NRM	L
	24.6	Work with the community and local landholders to implement an appropriate response to help restore vegetated areas post fire and flood	NRM	L

SUGGESTED PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE FIRST 12 MONTHS

The suggested priority actions to undertake in the first 12 months are:

1.2. Identify a range of funding opportunities and landholder incentives for the establishment and maintenance of habitat corridors

1.4 Identify and develop links with habitat areas outside of Clarence Valley LGA in consultation with DPIE and adjoining local councils, community groups, and organisations such as the Great Eastern Ranges

1.5 Manage roadside vegetation to maintain biodiversity values, by developing a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

2.2 Design an assessment and audit process to review compliance with CVC *Biodiversity Management Strategy* across all relevant areas of Council, including development applications and civil works.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following supporting information can be found on the Clarence Conversations Biodiversity page;

1. Results of the biodiversity survey
2. Changes to the biodiversity legislation
3. List of threatened species, endangered ecological communities and endangered populations in the Clarence Valley LGA
4. Actions achieved from the 2010 Biodiversity Strategy
5. Clearing Controls and compensatory planting required (CVC's offset policy)