



Bioregional guidance planning and spatial conservation analyses – Interpretation and uses

MAY 2026

Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet is intended to help stakeholders understand what the spatial conservation analyses show and how to appropriately interpret and apply them. Another fact sheet explains the methods used for the spatial conservation analyses and can be accessed [on our website](#).

It should be read in conjunction with other information about bioregional guidance planning:

www.environment.qld.gov.au/management/planning-guidelines/bioregional-planning

What do the spatial conservation analyses do?

Spatial conservation analyses support the development of bioregional guidance planning. It also provides guidance to improve decision-making.

Bioregional guidance planning is a strategic approach established under Australia's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) which guides how cumulative impacts to the environment should be managed in an area of economic importance. EPBC Act decision-makers must have regard to the Plan when making a relevant decision, including project decisions and landscape-scale approaches.

Bioregional guidance planning considers the impacts of possible development on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) under the EPBC Act. Bioregional guidance planning has a specific focus industry: urban development in south-eastern Queensland, minerals mining in north-western Queensland and wind farm developments in northern Queensland.

The spatial conservation analyses are developed specifically to inform the pilot bioregional guidance planning, however, the robust scientific method means that they could have broader applicability as guidance tools for a range of users. This includes developers, regulators, strategic planners, conservation groups, and natural resource management groups.

Spatial conservation analyses contributes to bioregional guidance planning by producing analyses linked to three objectives:

- Important conservation areas
- High restoration potential areas
- Representative protection areas.

To support implementation of the draft bioregional guidance plans, the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has shared a draft [Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool](#), available on our website. This tool shows:

- The Spatial Conservation Analysis, which identify areas important for MNES and the reasons they are significant
- The results of the cumulative impact assessment, such as interactive information on protected matters, their sensitivity to impacts, and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

1. Important conservation areas

The important conservation area analysis identifies areas that contain important MNES values that are difficult or impossible to recreate or restore, such as old growth forests. They also show critical bottlenecks or 'pinch points' between important conservation areas that, for example, native animals need to pass through. These areas need to be investigated further to determine the specific location of features that have been identified as difficult or impossible to recreate or restore.

Impacts in these areas may cause irreversible biodiversity loss. Examples of important MNES values include:

- habitat that takes a long time to recover or cannot be re-created, such as old-growth forests, hollow bearing trees or mudflats
- critically endangered and endangered ecological communities
- stable habitat for species under changing climate conditions.

Pinch points do not always contain values that are difficult or impossible to recreate for MNES; however, landscape connectivity is critical for maintaining functionality within important conservation areas.

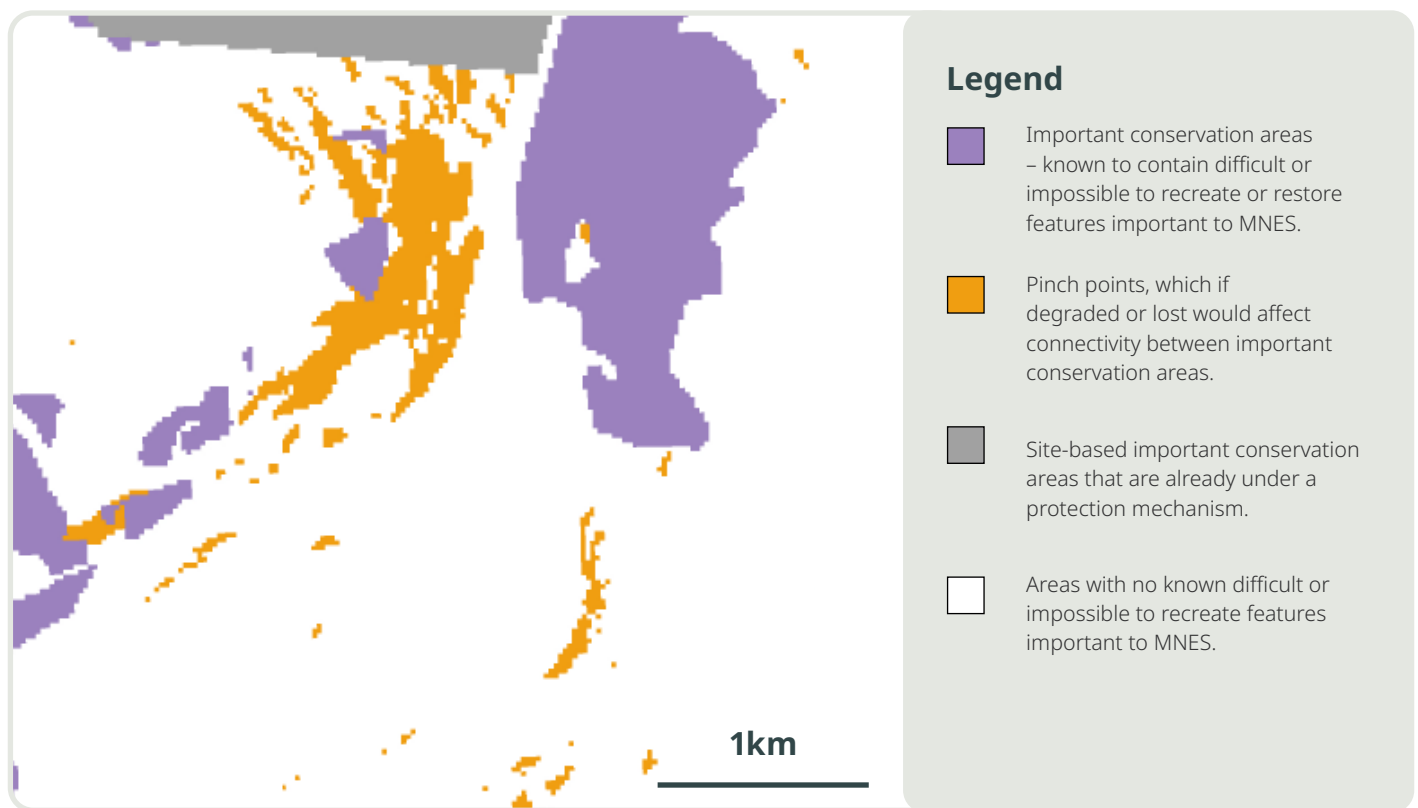


Figure 1. Sample area of spatial conservation analysis for important conservation areas.

Uses of important conservation areas

Important conservation areas could be used to:

- Allow proponents to make informed choices about whether to include these areas in their development proposals, as EPBC Act approval is likely to be lengthy and costly. This is because there is a higher risk of impacting on values that are unable to be offset, and proponents are likely to need advice of suitably qualified experts (e.g. ecologists, engineers).
- Help proponents identify areas less likely to have important MNES values that are difficult or impossible to recreate or restore, and which may result in a more straightforward pathway to approval.
- Help target on-ground work to investigate the specific location of the features that are difficult or impossible to recreate or restore.

2. High restoration potential areas

The restoration potential analysis identifies the areas with the highest restoration potential in the landscape, especially through improving vegetation condition. This analysis shows the top 30% of areas for restoration of MNES values. The restoration potential analysis aligns with Australia's national restoration targets and the Global Biodiversity Framework target to have at least 30% of degraded ecosystems under effective restoration by 2030.

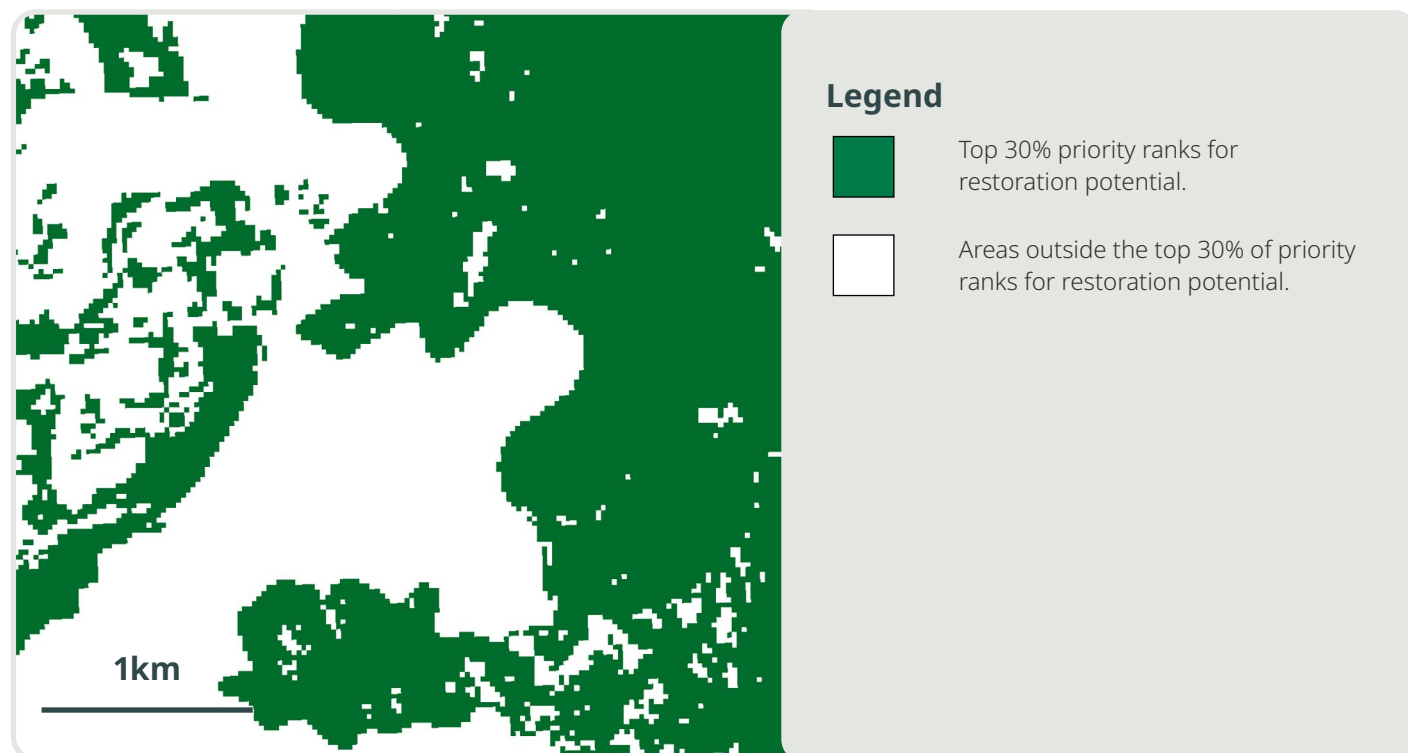


Figure 2. Sample area of spatial conservation analysis for high restoration potential areas.

Restoration is crucial for re-establishing critical or threatened ecosystems, improving the connections between fragmented ecosystems to support the movement of animals and spread of plants between areas, and improving degraded land to benefit multiple MNES.

If areas of high restoration potential are lost, it is likely to increase the future cost of offsets and other restoration actions to achieve net positive outcomes and could mean that, for some values, net positive outcomes cannot be achieved.

Uses of high restoration potential areas

High restoration potential areas could be used to:

- Provide guidance about the extent that restoration efforts, particularly vegetation restoration, could benefit MNES.
- Highlight opportunities for offsets based on vegetation restoration, as a starting point for proponents' investigations. Proponents can refine their offset opportunities by considering existing land uses (not reflected in this analysis).
- Support consideration of strategic or advanced offsets by highlighting those areas in the landscape that provide restoration opportunities for multiple MNES.

3. Representative protection areas

The representative protection analysis identifies areas where protection of existing habitat could most benefit MNES. This protection could be given through, for example, planning schemes, covenant, or protected areas such as national parks. This analysis shows the top 30% of areas that are representative of MNES values outside existing protection. The representative protection analysis aligns with Australia's national target to conserve 30% of the landmass by 2030, with representative protection areas covering 30% of the remaining land in each subregion after excluding existing protected areas.



Figure 3. Sample area of spatial conservation analysis for representative protection areas.

Uses of representative protection areas

Representative protection areas could be used to:

- Allow proponents to make informed choices about avoiding and/or minimising impacts to these areas to enable more efficient EPBC Act assessments. This is because impacts to areas of representative protection may require significant mitigation efforts before offsets can be considered, and offsets may be difficult due to the number or significance of protected matters present in these areas.
- Help proponents identify areas less likely to be of high protection value for multiple MNES, and which may result in a more straightforward pathway to approval.
- Highlight opportunities for offsets based on undertaking conservation management (such as pest and weed removal), as a starting point for proponents' investigations. Proponents can refine their offset opportunities by considering existing land uses (not reflected in this analysis).
- Highlight opportunities to protect existing habitat, which is likely to be the most cost-effective method of achieving outcomes for some MNES.
- Highlight opportunities for conservation management and private land protection, such as Nature Refuges.

4. Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool

To ensure that the spatial conservation analyses are considered at the appropriate scale, coverage of each objective has been summarised as a percentage in a gridded format in the [Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool](#). This allows for quick assessment of the relative importance of areas and enables extraction of information that about what MNES values may occur in that area.

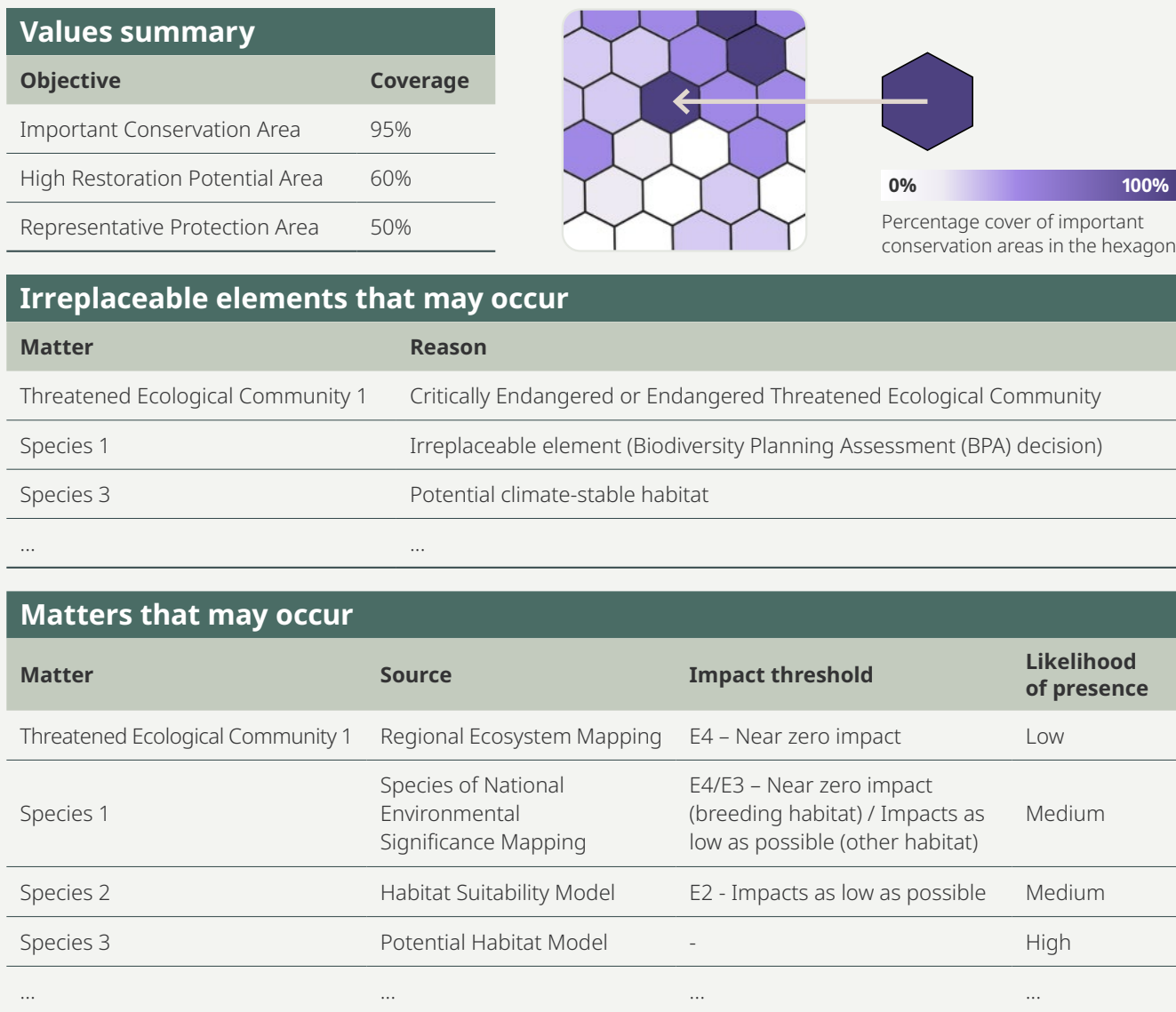


Figure 4. Example Bioregional Planning Interactive Tool interface, demonstrating the information that can be extracted at the grid level.

Further information

For information about bioregional guidance planning in Queensland visit [DETSI](#) website or contact us at bioregional.planning@detsi.qld.gov.au.

For information about Australian Government bioregional planning visit [Bioregional planning: Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water \(DCCEEW\)](#).



Australian Government



Queensland Government