

Coastal saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

Final Determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list the Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is the name given to the ecological community occurring in the intertidal zone on the shores of estuaries and lagoons including when they are intermittently closed along the NSW coast. Coastal saltmarsh has been recorded from sites along the NSW coast. (NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions).

2. Characteristic vascular plant species of Coastal Saltmarsh are:

<i>Baumea juncea</i>	<i>Isolepis nodosa</i>
<i>Juncus kraussii</i>	<i>Samolus repens</i>
<i>Sarcocornia quinqueflora</i>	<i>Selliera radicans</i>
<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>	<i>Suaeda australis</i>
<i>Triglochin striata</i>	<i>Zoysia macrantha</i>

The total list of species is larger, with many species present in low abundance or at few sites. A more extensive list of species is provided by Adam *et al.* (1988). The sediment surface may support a diversity of both micro-algae and macro-algae.

3. Communities with similar floristic composition, but with a different fauna, are found supratidally on exposed headlands (Adam *et al.* 1988). These headland communities and those of inland saline areas are not included within this Determination of the Coastal Saltmarsh Ecological Community.

4. Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions provide habitat for a diverse invertebrate fauna, which includes both marine (crabs and molluscs) and terrestrial (insects and spiders) elements. During tidal flooding a number of fish species utilise saltmarsh habitats. Grazing by macropods may occur between tidal events. Some coastal saltmarshes provide important high tide roosts for migratory wading birds, and a range of other birds also utilise coastal saltmarsh as habitat. Diversity of macrofauna in mangrove forests adjacent to saltmarsh has been found to be greater than in mangroves that do not border saltmarsh (Yerman & Ross 2004)

5. Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is frequently found as a zone landward of mangrove stands. Occasional scattered mature *Avicennia marina* trees occur through saltmarsh at some sites, and *Avicennia* (and less frequently *Aegiceras corniculatum*) seedlings may occur throughout saltmarsh. In brackish areas dense stands of tall reeds (*Phragmites australis*, *Bulboschoenus* spp., *Schoenoplectus* spp., *Typha* spp.) may occur as part of the community.
6. West *et al.* (1985) estimated the total area of coastal saltmarsh in NSW was approximately 5700 hectares distributed in fragmented patches mostly less than 100 hectares. Since this estimate, further reduction and fragmentation have occurred.
7. Species composition within Coastal Saltmarsh varies with elevation. *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* dominates at lower, and hence more frequently flooded, levels than *Sporobolus virginicus* which dominates the mid saltmarsh, while *Juncus kraussii* and *Baumea juncea* are upper saltmarsh species. There is also geographic variation, with much more extensive stands of *Sporobolus virginicus* being found in northern NSW, and conversely more extensive *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* stands in the south. Coastal Saltmarsh in southern NSW is generally more species rich than further north, with *Austrostipa stipoides*, *Gahnia filum*, *Limonium australe* and *Sclerostegia arbuscula* forming a characteristic southern suite of species. A number of other species with restricted distribution in Coastal Saltmarsh include *Distichlis distichophylla* (endangered), *Halosarcia pergranulata* subsp. *pergranulata*, *Wilsonia backhousei* (vulnerable) and *Wilsonia rotundifolia* (endangered).
8. Saltmarshes are globally threatened, and many of the threatening processes identified by Adam (2002) operate in NSW including infilling, modified tidal flow, weed invasion, damage by domestic and feral animals, human disturbance, altered fire regimes and climate change.
9. Historically, substantial areas of saltmarsh have been infilled for roads and aerodromes and for residential, recreational, waste disposal, industrial and agricultural purposes. With increased recognition of the ecological value of saltmarshes, the threat of further large-scale reclamation is less, but smaller scale infilling still occurs (Harty and Cheng 2003).
10. Patterns of tidal flow have been restricted by artificial structures in many NSW saltmarshes (Williams and Watford 1997), while discharge of stormwater alters salinity regimes, increases nutrient levels and facilitates the spread of *Phragmites* and weeds.
11. In recent decades there has been widespread invasion of saltmarsh in southeast Australia by mangroves (Mitchell and Adam 1989, Saintilan and Williams 1999, 2000). The factors driving mangrove invasion are still unclear. The mangrove invasion limits the use of saltmarshes by birds that would normally make use of this habitat and has been a factor in their decline (Saintilan 2003, Straw 1999, 2000).
12. A large number of weed species occur in NSW saltmarshes (Adam 1981, Adam *et al.* 1988). In terms of change to the community structure and function, the most serious weed is *Juncus acutus*; other major weeds include *Baccharis halimifolia*, *Cortaderia selloana* and *Hydrocotyle bonariensis*. The upper saltmarsh zone may be dominated by introduced annuals or shortlived perennials, including *Parapholis incurva*, *Plantago coronopus* and *Polypogon monspeliensis*.
13. Damage to saltmarshes by recreational vehicles, including four wheel drives, is widespread, and deep wheel ruts persist for many years even after exclusion of vehicles. Use of BMX and mountain bikes is increasing, and even saltmarshes within conservation reserves have been seriously damaged (Adam 2002).
14. Grazing and trampling by domestic stock and feral herbivores occurs at a number of sites. Stock grazing has been shown to substantially change the vegetation composition and structure (Adam 1990), while on muddy substrates trampling can cause loss of plant cover and modify

drainage patterns.

15. Saltmarshes have frequently been used for casual rubbish dumping and are at risk from waterborne pollution – including oil and chemical spills, both from shipping and road accidents, and catchment runoff of nutrients and agricultural chemicals.

16. Upper saltmarsh stands dominated by *Juncus kraussii* and *Baumea juncea* have high flammable fuel loads. While the natural incidence of fire in saltmarshes is likely to have been low, a number of saltmarshes have been burnt in recent years. The recovery of these sites is relatively slow and the long-term impacts of burning are uncertain.

17. Global warming and increased relative sea level are likely to pose an increasing threat to the survival of many areas of Coastal Saltmarsh (Adam 2002, Hughes 2003).

18. Coastal Saltmarsh occurs in a number of conservation reserves including the Ramsar listed sites at Towra Point and Kooragang Island Nature Reserves. Reserve status, however, does not confer protection from mangrove and weed invasion, recreational vehicles, pollution, fire or sea level rise without active management.

19. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival cease to operate.

Dr Lesley Hughes
Deputy Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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Freshwater wetlands on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is the name given to the ecological community associated with periodic or semi-permanent inundation by freshwater, although there may be minor saline influence in some wetlands. They typically occur on silts, muds or humic loams in depressions, flats, drainage lines, backswamps, lagoons and lakes associated with coastal floodplains. Floodplains are level landform patterns on which there may be active erosion and aggradation by channelled and overbank stream flow with an average recurrence interval of 100 years or less (adapted from Speight 1990). Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains generally occur below 20 m elevation in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The structure of the community may vary from sedgeland and reedlands to herbfields, and woody species of plants are generally scarce. Typically these wetlands form mosaics with other floodplain communities, and often they include or are associated with ephemeral or semi-permanent standing water (e.g. Goodrick 1970).

The composition of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains is primarily determined by the frequency, duration and depth of waterlogging and may be influenced by the level of nutrients and salinity in the water and substrate. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species:

<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i> var. <i>rubra</i>
<i>Azolla pinnata</i>	<i>Baumea articulata</i>
<i>Baumea rubiginosa</i>	<i>Bolboschoenus caldwellii</i>
<i>Bolboschoenus fluviatilis</i>	<i>Brasenia schreiberi</i>
<i>Carex appressa</i>	<i>Centipeda minima</i>
<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>	<i>Cyperus lucidus</i>
<i>Eclipta platyglossa</i>	<i>Eclipta prostrata</i>
<i>Eleocharis acuta</i>	<i>Eleocharis equisetina</i>
<i>Eleocharis minuta</i>	<i>Eleocharis sphacelata</i>
<i>Fimbristylis dichotoma</i>	<i>Gratiola pedunculata</i>
<i>Hemarthria uncinata</i>	<i>Hydrilla verticillata</i>
<i>Hydrocharis dubia</i>	<i>Juncus polyanthemus</i>
<i>Juncus usitatus</i>	<i>Leersia hexandra</i>
<i>Lemna</i> spp.	<i>Lepironia articulata</i>
<i>Ludwigia peploides</i> subsp. <i>montevidensis</i>	<i>Marsilea mutica</i>
<i>Maundia triglochoides</i>	<i>Myriophyllum crispatum</i>
<i>Myriophyllum latifolium</i>	<i>Myriophyllum propinquum</i>
<i>Myriophyllum variifolium</i>	<i>Najas marina</i>
<i>Najas tenuifolia</i>	<i>Nymphaea gigantea</i>

<i>Nymphoides geminata</i>	<i>Nymphoides indica</i>
<i>Ottelia ovalifolia</i>	<i>Panicum obseptum</i>
<i>Panicum vaginatum</i>	<i>Paspalum distichum</i>
<i>Persicaria attenuata</i>	<i>Persicaria decipiens</i>
<i>Persicaria hydropiper</i>	<i>Persicaria lapathifolia</i>
<i>Persicaria strigosa</i>	<i>Philydrum lanuginosum</i>
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	<i>Potamogeton crispus</i>
<i>Potamogeton ochreatus</i>	<i>Potamogeton perfoliatus</i>
<i>Potamogeton tricarlinatus</i>	<i>Pseudoraphis spinescens</i>
<i>Ranunculus inundatus</i>	<i>Schoenoplectus litoralis</i>
<i>Schoenoplectus mucronatus</i>	<i>Schoenoplectus validus</i>
<i>Spirodella</i> spp.	<i>Triglochin procera</i> sensu lato
<i>Typha orientalis</i>	<i>Utricularia australis</i>
<i>Vallisneria</i> spp.	<i>Wolffia</i> spp.

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought conditions and by its disturbance history (including grazing, flooding, land clearing and pollution in the catchment). The number and relative abundance of species will change with time since flooding or significant rainfall, and may also change in response to changes in grazing regimes and land use in the catchment. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented.

3. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is known from parts of the Local Government Areas of Tweed, Byron, Lismore, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Hastings, Greater Taree, Great Lakes, Port Stephens, Maitland, Newcastle, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Penrith, Fairfield, Liverpool, Wollondilly, Camden, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley but may occur elsewhere in these bioregions. Bioregions are defined in Thackway and Creswell (1995). Examples include Swan Bay, Gundurimba wetland, Bungawalbin Swamp, Dyraaba Creek and Tuckean Swamp on the Richmond floodplain; Southgate wetlands and Trenayr Swamp on the Clarence floodplain; Seven Oaks Swamp, Swan Pool, Kinchela Creek and Upper Belmore Swamp on the Macleay floodplain; Great Swamp on the Manning floodplain; Wentworth Swamp, Hexham Swamp, Wallis Creek and Ellalong Lagoon on the Hunter floodplain; Bushells, Pitt Town, Long Neck and Broadwater Lagoons on the Hawkesbury floodplain; Coomonderry Swamp on the Shoalhaven floodplain; Pedro and Old Man Bed Swamps on the Moruya floodplain; and Jellat Jellat Swamp on the Bega floodplain (Goodrick 1970).

4. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is dominated by herbaceous plants and have very few woody species. The structure and composition of the community varies both spatially and temporally depending on the water regime (Yen and Myerscough 1989, Boulton and Brock 1999). Wetlands or parts of wetlands that lack standing water most of the time are usually dominated by dense grassland or sedgeland vegetation, often forming a turf less than 0.5 metre tall and dominated by amphibious plants including *Paspalum distichum* (water couch), *Leersia hexandra* (swamp rice-grass), *Pseudoraphis spinescens* (mud grass) and *Carex appressa* (tussock sedge). Wetlands or parts of wetlands subject to regular inundation and drying may include large emergent sedges over 1 metre tall, such as *Baumea articulata*, *Eleocharis equisetina* and *Lepironia articulata*, as well as emergent or floating herbs such as *Hydrocharis dubia* (frogbit), *Philydrum lanuginosum* (frogsmouth), *Ludwigia peploides* subsp. *montevidensis* (water primrose), *Marsilea mutica* (nardoo) and *Myriophyllum* spp. (milfoils). As standing water becomes deeper or more permanent, amphibious and emergent plants become less abundant,

while floating and submerged aquatic herbs become more abundant. These latter species include *Azolla filiculoides* var. *rubra*, *Ceratophyllum demersum* (hornwort), *Hydrilla verticillata* (water thyme), *Lemna* spp. (duckweeds), *Nymphaea gigantea* (giant waterlily), *Nymphoides indica* (water snowflake), *Ottelia ovalifolia* (swamp lily) and *Potamogeton* spp. (pondweeds). The threatened aquatic plants, *Aldrovanda vesiculosa* and *Najas marina*, also occur within this community. The composition and structure of the vegetation is also influenced by grazing history, changes to hydrology and soil salinity, catchment runoff and disturbance, and may have a substantial component of exotic grasses and forbs. Artificial wetlands created on previously dry land specifically for purposes such as sewerage treatment, stormwater management and farm production, are not regarded as part of this community, although they may provide habitat for threatened species.

5. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has a distinctive fauna that includes frogs, fish, freshwater tortoises, waterbirds and a diversity of micro- and macro-invertebrates. The frog families represented are Myobatrachidae (southern frogs) and Hylidae (tree frogs), including the threatened Green and Golden Bell Frog (*Litoria aurea*). Waterbirds include Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*), Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), Australian Grey Teal (*Anas gracilis*), Pacific Heron (*Ardea pacifica*), White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*), Great Egret (*Ardea alba*), Intermediate Egret (*Ardea intermedia*), Little Egret (*Ardea garzetta*), Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*), Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopica*), Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*), Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*), Japanese Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*), Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*), Comb-crested jacana (*Jacana gallinacea*) and Purple swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*).

6. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions forms part of a complex of forested wetland and treeless wetland communities found throughout the coastal floodplains of NSW. A recent analysis of available quadrat data from these habitats identified several types of forested wetlands that are distinct from this treeless wetland community (Keith and Scott 2005). The combination of features that distinguish Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains from other endangered ecological communities on the coastal floodplains include its scarcity or complete absence of woody plant species and the presence of amphibious, emergent, floating or submerged aquatic forbs, grasses or sedges. It generally occupies low-lying parts of floodplains, alluvial flats, depressions, drainage lines, backswamps, lagoons and lakes; habitats where flooding is periodic and standing fresh water persists for at least part of the year in most years. The community also occurs in backbarrier landforms where floodplains adjoin coastal sandplains (e.g. Pressey and Griffith 1992). However, it is distinct from Sydney Freshwater Wetlands, which may include a component of woody plant species and are associated with sandplains in the Sydney Basin bioregion.

7. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities, which collectively cover all remaining native vegetation on the coastal floodplains of New South Wales. These include Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion, Subtropical Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal River-flat Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest Complex in the Sydney Basin bioregion) and Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. For example, Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains are sometimes fringed by trees, such as *Casuarina glauca* (swamp oak) and *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (paperbark), indicating transitional zones to forested communities of the floodplains. The boundaries between these communities are dynamic and may shift in response to changes in hydrological regimes, fire regimes or land management practices (e.g. Johnston *et al.* 2003, Stevenson 2003). In addition, Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains may adjoin or intergrade with Coastal Saltmarsh of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions and Sydney Freshwater Wetlands

of the Sydney Basin bioregion. The Determinations for these communities collectively encompass the full range of intermediate assemblages.

8. A number of vegetation surveys and mapping studies have been conducted across the range of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. This community includes 'Fresh meadows', 'Seasonal fresh swamps', 'Semi-permanent fresh swamps', and 'Open fresh waters' in the general coastal wetlands classification of Goodrick (1970). In the Tweed valley lowlands, this community includes '*Eleocharis equisetina* tall closed sedgeland' (E2) and '*Triglochin procera* tall forbland to tall open forbland' (E3) of Pressey and Griffith (1992) and parts of the 'Floodplain Wetland Complex' (FL) that are dominated by herbaceous plants (Pressey and Griffith 1992). In the lower Hunter valley, 'Freshwater Wetland Complex' (map unit 46) of NPWS (2000) falls within this community. In the Sydney region, this community includes 'Freshwater wetlands on the floodplains' of Benson and Howell (1990); 'Freshwater reed swamps' (map unit 28a) of Benson (1992) and Ryan *et al.* (1996) in the Penrith-St Albans district; '*Lepironia* freshwater swamp' (map unit 75 and part of map unit 79) of NPWS (2002a) in the Warragamba area; and 'Freshwater wetlands' (map unit 36) of Tozer (2003) on the Cumberland Plain. On the Illawarra plain, this community includes 'Floodplain Wetland' (map unit 54) of NPWS (2002b). In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of southern New South Wales (Thomas *et al.* 2000), this community includes 'Coastal alluvial valley floor wetlands' (map unit 189). This community also includes those parts of 'Coastal freshwater lagoon' (map unit 313) of Tindall *et al.* (2004), on the south coast of NSW, and parts of 'Floodplain Wetlands' (map unit 60) of Keith and Bedward (1999), in the Eden region, that are dominated by herbaceous aquatic plants. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is included within the 'Coastal Freshwater Lagoons' vegetation class of Keith (2002, 2004). There may be additional or unmapped occurrences of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains within and beyond these surveyed areas.

9. The extent of the Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions prior to European settlement has not been mapped across its entire range. Estimates of wetland area also vary, depending on the scale of mapping (coarse scale maps may exclude many small wetlands), wetland definition and the occurrence of recent flooding. Mapping carried out by Kingsford *et al.* (2004), for example, focused on areas of open water and thus excluded many wetlands attributable to this community. One estimate based on a compilation of regional vegetation maps suggests that Coastal Freshwater Lagoons, which include Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains, currently cover 90-160 km², representing less than 60-90% of the original extent of this broadly defined vegetation class (Keith 2004). However, the remaining area of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains is likely to represent much less than 60-90% of its original range, because this combined estimate for the Coastal Freshwater Wetlands class (Keith 2004) is likely to include a considerable area of freshwater wetlands on coastal sandplains, which are excluded from this Determination. Goodrick (1970) estimated that approximately 21 700 ha of 'Fresh meadows', 'Seasonal fresh swamps', 'Semi-permanent fresh swamps', and 'Open fresh waters' remained on NSW coastal floodplains in 1969, representing less than 39% of their original area. Continued clearing and drainage works in the 35 years since Goodrick's (1970) survey are likely to have resulted in a substantial diminution of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains. More detailed surveys have identified the following areas attributable to Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains: less than 150 ha on the Tweed lowlands in 1985 (Pressey and Griffith 1992); about 10 600 ha on the lower Clarence floodplain in 1982 (Pressey 1989a); about 11 200 ha on the lower Macleay floodplain in 1983 (Pressey 1989b); about 3500 ha in the lower Hunter – central Hunter region in 1990s (NPWS 2000); less than 2700 ha on the NSW south coast from Sydney to Moruya in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), including about 660 ha on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003) and about 100 ha on the Illawarra Plain in 2001 (NPWS 2002); and less than 1000 ha in the Eden region in 1990 (Keith and Bedward 1999). The wetlands included in these estimates exist in various states of modification.

10. Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has been extensively cleared and modified. Large areas that formerly supported this community are occupied by exotic pastures grazed by cattle, market

gardens, other cropping enterprises (e.g. sorghum, corn, poplars, etc.) and, on the far north coast, canefields. On the Tweed lowlands, Pressey and Griffith (1992) estimated that less than 3% of the original Floodplain Wetlands remained in 1985. Similar estimates are likely to apply to Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains in other parts of the NSW North Coast bioregion (Pressey 1989a, 1989b). In the lower Hunter – central coast region, about two-thirds was estimated to have remained during the 1990s (NPWS 2000), while approximately 40% remained on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003). In the Sydney – South Coast region, about 70% was estimated to remain in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), in the Eden region about 30% was estimated to remain during the 1990s (Keith and Bedward 1999).

11. Land clearing continues to threaten Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. A small minority of the remaining area occurs on public land (e.g. Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992), with most occurring on productive agricultural land or in close proximity to rural centres. The remaining stands are severely fragmented by past clearing and are further threatened by continuing fragmentation and degradation, flood mitigation and drainage works, filling associated with urban and industrial development, pollution and eutrophication from urban and agricultural runoff, weed invasion, overgrazing, trampling by livestock, soil disturbance by pigs, activation of 'acid sulfate soils' and rubbish dumping (e.g. Goodrick 1970; Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992; Boulton and Brock 1999, Johnston *et al.* 2003). The native fauna of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains is threatened by predation, particularly by mosquito fish and cane toads. Anthropogenic climate change may also threaten Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains if sea levels rise and future flooding regimes change as predicted (IPCC 2001; Hughes 2003). Clearing of native vegetation; Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands; Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses; Predation, habitat destruction, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs; and Anthropogenic climate change are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995).

12. Large areas of habitat formerly occupied by Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains have been directly drained by construction of artificial channels (e.g. Pressey 1989a, Boulton and Brock 1999). By the early 1900s, drainage unions or trusts were formed on the major floodplains to enable adjacent landholders to arrange for co-ordinated drainage systems, which were designed and constructed by the former NSW Department of Public Works. Additional areas that have not been directly drained may have been altered hydrologically by changed patterns of flooding and drainage following flood mitigation works, particularly the construction of drains, levees and floodgates (Pressey and Griffith 1992). On the north coast of NSW, expansion of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and *Casuarina glauca* into open floodplain swamps has been attributed to artificial drainage and shortening of the hydroperiod (Johnston *et al.* 2003, Stevenson 2003). These changes appear to be closely associated with enhanced acidity, altered ionic ratios, increased dissolved organic carbon and sulfide oxidation in the soil profile (Johnston *et al.* 2003). Conversely, alteration of tidal flows may have led to decreased soil salinity and localised expansion of Freshwater Wetland into areas that previously supported Coastal Saltmarsh or mangroves (Stevenson 2003). Re-instatement of tidal flows and other natural hydrological processes may therefore lead to contraction of Freshwater Wetlands. In addition, sedimentation and eutrophication of wetlands is associated with development of their catchments for intensive agriculture or urban or industrial infrastructure. Harmful runoff from developed catchments may include herbicides, pesticides, fertilisers, sewerage, industrial waste and polluted stormwater. The widespread degradation of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains has led to regional declines in their dependent fauna including Magpie Geese (*Anseranas semipalmata*), Cotton Pygmy Geese (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), Hardhead (*Aythya australis*), Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), and Wandering Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*).

13. Very few examples of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains remain unaffected by weeds. The causes of weed invasion include physical disturbance to the vegetation structure of the community; the dumping of landfill, rubbish and garden refuse; eutrophication and polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas; construction of roads and other utilities; soil disturbance by feral pigs and grazing by domestic livestock. In addition, mechanical and

chemical methods of controlling aquatic weeds may threaten native components of the flora. The principal weed species affecting Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains include *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (alligatorweed), *Baccharis halimifolia* (groundsel bush), *Echinochloa crus-galli* (barnyard grass), *Eichhornia crassipes* (water hyacinth), *Hygrophila costata* (glush weed), *Ludwigia longifolia*, *L. peruviana*, *Nymphaea capensis* (Cape waterlily), *Panicum repens* (torpedo grass), *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu) and *Salvinia molesta*, (Sainty and Jacobs 1981).

14. Small areas of Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions are contained within existing conservation reserves, including Ukerebagh, Tuckean, Tabbimoble Swamp, Hexham Swamp, Pambalong and Pitt Town Nature Reserves and Bungawalbin, Scheyville and Seven Mile Beach National Parks, although these are unevenly distributed throughout the range and unlikely to represent the full diversity of the community. In addition, wetlands within protected areas are exposed to hydrological changes that were, and continue to be initiated outside their boundaries. Some Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains are protected by State Environmental Planning Policy 14, although this has not always precluded impacts on wetlands from the development of major infrastructure.

15. Given the dynamic hydrological relationship between Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains, Coastal Saltmarsh and other endangered ecological communities on coastal floodplains, future management of water and tidal flows may result in the expansion of some communities at the expense of others. Proposals for the restoration of natural hydrological regimes and for the rehabilitation of acid sulfate soils may also result in changes to the distribution and composition of floodplain communities. Co-ordinated planning and management approaches across whole catchments will be required to address and resolve priorities between different management objectives.

16. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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Hunter lowland redgum forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list the Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions is the name given to the ecological community found on gentle slopes arising from depressions and drainage flats on permian sediments of the Hunter Valley floor in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions and characterised by the following assemblage of species:

- *Angophora costata*
- *Austrodanthonia monticola*
- *Billardiera scandens*
- *Breynia oblongifolia*
- *Brunoniella australis*
- *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi*
- *Corymbia maculata*
- *Cyanthillium cinereum*
- *Cymbopogon refractus*
- *Daviesia ulicifolia*
- *Desmodium varians*
- *Dichondra repens*
- *Digitaria parviflora*
- *Echinopogon caespitosus* var. *caespitosus*
- *Entolasia stricta*
- *Eragrostis brownii*
- *Eragrostis leptostachya*
- *Eucalyptus crebra*
- *Eucalyptus moluccana*
- *Eucalyptus punctata*
- *Eucalyptus tereticornis*
- *Glycine clandestina*
- *Imperata cylindrica* var. *major*
- *Jacksonia scoparia*
- *Lagenifera stipitata*
- *Leucopogon juniperinus*
- *Lomandra longifolia*
- *Lomandra multiflora* subsp. *multiflora*
- *Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides*

- *Panicum simile*
- *Paspalidium distans*
- *Persoonia linearis*
- *Pomax umbellata*
- *Pratia purpurascens*
- *Solanum prinophyllum*
- *Themeda australis*

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present in only one or two sites or in very small quantity. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought condition and by its disturbance (including fire) history. The number of species, and the above ground relative abundance of species will change with time since fire, and may also change in response to changes in fire regime (including changes in fire frequency). At any one time, above ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented.

3. Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions has been recorded from the local government areas of Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens (in the Sydney Basin Bioregion) and Muswellbrook and Singleton (in the NSW North Coast Bioregion) but may occur elsewhere in these bioregions.

4. The Community is described and discussed in NSW NPWS (2000) as MU 19 – Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest.

5. The Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions is generally an open forest with most common canopy trees species being *Eucalyptus tereticornis* and *Eucalyptus punctata* although other frequently occurring canopy species are *Angophora costata*, *Corymbia maculata*, *Eucalyptus crebra* and *Eucalyptus moluccana*, with a number of other eucalypts being less frequently recorded. The mid stratum is characterised as open with sparse shrubs of *Breynia oblongifolia*, *Leucopogon juniperinus*, *Daviesia ulicifolia* and *Jacksonia scoparia*. There is consistently a ground layer of grasses and herbs, characterised by *Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides*, *Cymbopogon refractus*, *Echinopogon caespitosus* var. *caespitosus*, *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi* and *Pratia purpurascens*.

6. Currently only a small area (less than 2% of total) of Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions is included in NPWS estate in the Lower Hunter (Wereketa) National Park. The majority of the remainder of the community is not on public land.

7. Modelling included in NSW NPWS (2000) shows that much of the pre-1750 extent of the community has been cleared. Only about 27% (less than 500 ha) of the original distribution survives and this is highly fragmented.

8. Although much of the clearing occurred early in European settlement, clearing still continues at a high rate. Between 1988 and 2001 approx 2380 ha were approved for clearing (advice from Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources August 2001). In addition to clearing and fragmentation other threats include grazing, weed invasion, altered fire frequency and, locally, rubbish dumping.

9. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or

evolutionary development cease to operate.

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NSW NPWS (2000) *Vegetation Survey and Mapping – Lower Hunter and Central Coast Region*. Report prepared for the Lower Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environment Management Strategy, Version 1.1 April 2000. 178pp

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Littoral rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act, and as a consequence, to omit reference to the Sutherland Shire Littoral Rainforest from Part 3 of Schedule 1 (Endangered Ecological Community) of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is generally a closed forest, the structure and composition of which is strongly influenced by proximity to the ocean. The plant species in this ecological community are predominantly rainforest species with evergreen mesic or coriaceous leaves. Several species have compound leaves, and vines may be a major component of the canopy. These features differentiate littoral rainforest from sclerophyll forest or scrub, but while the canopy is dominated by rainforest species, scattered emergent individuals of sclerophyll species, such as *Angophora costata*, *Banksia integrifolia*, *Eucalyptus botryoides* and *E. tereticornis* occur in many stands. Littoral Rainforest in NSW is found at locations along the entire NSW Coast in the NSW North Coast Bioregion, Sydney Basin Bioregion and South East Corner Bioregion. The areas mapped for inclusion in State Environmental Planning Policy 26 Littoral Rainforest are examples of the Littoral Rainforest ecological communities, but the mapping for SEPP 26 is not exhaustive and stands of the Littoral Rainforest ecological community occur at locations not mapped under SEPP 26. Some stands may be regrowth or in the process of regenerating. The Sutherland Shire Littoral Rainforest Endangered Ecological Community which was previously listed as an endangered ecological community is included within this Community.

2. Littoral rainforest occurs on both sand dunes and on soils derived from underlying rocks (McKinley *et al.* 1999). Stands on headlands exposed to strong wind action may take the form of dense windpruned thickets (for example the Bunga Head Rainforest illustrated by Keith & Bedward 1999, or MU5 Littoral Windshear Thicket in NPWS 2002). In more sheltered sites, and in hind dunes, the community is generally taller, although still with wind pruning on the windward side of stands. Floristically there is a high degree of similarity between stands on different substrates. Most stands of Littoral Rainforest occur within 2 km of the sea, but may occasionally be found further inland, but within reach of maritime influence.

3. Littoral Rainforest comprises the *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* – *Acmena* spp. alliance of Floyd (1990). This alliance as described by Floyd includes five sub-alliances – *Syzygium leuhmannii* – *Acmena hemilampra*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Lophostemon confertus*, *Drypetes* – *Sarcomelicope* – *Cassine* – *Podocarpus* and *Acmena smithii* – *Ficus* – *Livistona* – *Podocarpus*. The distribution of some of these sub-alliances is geographically restricted – the *Syzygium leuhmannii* – *Acmena hemilampra* sub-alliance is restricted to the north coast, while the most widespread sub-alliance *Acmena smithii* – *Ficus* – *Livistona* – *Podocarpus* is the only one present on the coast south of Sydney. The *Lophostemon confertus* suballiance, synonymous with Forest Type 25 Headland Brush Box (Forestry Commission of NSW 1989) is restricted to exposed headlands in the North Coast Bioregion. There is considerable floristic variation between stands and in particular areas localised variants may be recognised (for example on

the south coast a number of variants within the *Acmena smithii* – *Ficus* – *Livistona* – *Podocarpus* sub-alliance have been described, see Mills 1996, Mills & Jakeman 1995; Keith & Bedward 1999, NCC 1999, NPWS 2002). Small, depauperate stands may be difficult to assign to sub alliances. A number of species characteristic of Littoral Rainforest in NSW reach their southern limits at various places along the coast (for example *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* reaches its southern limit between Sydney and the Illawarra) but a number of temperate species are restricted to the south coast, and the total Littoral Rainforest flora declines from north to south. Characteristic species of littoral rainforest include:

<i>Acacia binervata</i>	<i>Acmena hemilampra</i>
<i>Acmena smithii</i>	+ <i>Acrorychia imperforata</i>
<i>Acrorychia oblongifolia</i>	+ <i>Alpinia caerulea</i>
<i>Alectryon coriaceus</i>	<i>Alyxia ruscifolia</i>
+ <i>Aphananthe philippinensis</i>	+ <i>Archontophoenix cunninghamiana</i>
<i>Arthropteris tenella</i>	+ <i>Arytera divaricata</i>
<i>Asplenium australasicum</i>	+ <i>Baloghia marmorata</i>
<i>Banksia integrifolia</i> subsp. <i>integrifolia</i>	+ <i>Beilschmiedia obtusifolia</i>
<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>	+ <i>Bridelia exaltata</i>
+ <i>Calamus muelleri</i>	<i>Canthium coprosmoides</i>
+ <i>Capparis arborea</i>	<i>Cayratia clematidea</i>
<i>Celtis paniculata</i>	<i>Cissus antarctica</i>
<i>Cissus hypoglauca</i>	<i>Cissus sterculiifolia</i>
<i>Claoxylon australe</i>	+ <i>Cordyline congesta</i>
+ <i>Cordyline stricta</i>	<i>Cryptocarya glaucescens</i>
<i>Cryptocarya microneura</i>	+ <i>Cryptocarya triplinervis</i>
<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	<i>Cynanchum elegans</i>
<i>Dendrocnide excelsa</i>	+ <i>Dendrocnide photinophylla</i>
<i>Dioscorea transversa</i>	<i>Diospyros australis</i>
<i>Diospyros pentamera</i>	<i>Doodia aspera</i>
<i>Duboisia myoporoides</i>	+ <i>Dysoxylum fraserianum</i>
<i>Ehretia acuminata</i>	+ <i>Elaeocarpus obovatus</i>
+ <i>Elattostachys nervosa</i>	<i>Endiandra discolor</i>
<i>Endiandra sieberi</i>	<i>Eucalyptus botryoides</i>
<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>	<i>Eupomatia laurina</i>
<i>Eustrephus latifolius</i>	<i>Ficus coronata</i>
<i>Ficus obliqua</i>	<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>
+ <i>Ficus watkinsiana</i>	<i>Flagellaria indica</i>
<i>Geitonoplesium cymosum</i>	<i>Glochidion ferdinandi</i>
<i>Glycine clandestina</i>	+ <i>Gossia bidwillii</i>
<i>Guioa semiglauca</i>	+ <i>Ixora beckleri</i>

+ <i>Jagera pseudorhus</i>	+ <i>Lepidozamia peroffskyana</i>
<i>Litsea reticulata</i>	<i>Livistona australis</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	+ <i>Lophostemon confertus</i>
<i>Maclura cochinchinensis</i>	+ <i>Mallotus philippensis</i>
<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	<i>Melicope micrococca</i>
+ <i>Melicope vitiflora</i>	+ <i>Mischocarpus pyriformis</i>
+ <i>Monococcus echinophorus</i>	+ <i>Morinda jasminoides</i>
+ <i>Mucuna gigantea</i>	<i>Myoporum acuminatum</i>
<i>Notelaea longifolia</i>	+ <i>Olea paniculata</i>
<i>Oplismenus imbecillis</i>	+ <i>Pandanus pedunculatus</i>
<i>Pandorea pandorana</i>	<i>Pararchidendron pruinose var. pruinose</i>
<i>Parsonsia straminea</i>	+ <i>Pentaceras australis</i>
<i>Piper novae-hollandiae</i>	+ <i>Pisonia umbellifera</i>
<i>Pittosporum multiflorum</i>	<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>
<i>Platycerium bifurcatum</i>	<i>Podocarpus elatus</i>
<i>Pollia crispata</i>	<i>Polyscias elegans</i>
<i>Pouteria australis</i>	<i>Pouteria cotinifolia var. cotinifolia</i>
+ <i>Pouteria myrsinoides</i>	<i>Rapanea variabilis</i>
<i>Rhodamnia rubescens</i>	+ <i>Rhodomyrtus psidioides</i>
<i>Ripogonum album</i>	<i>Ripogonum discolor</i>
<i>Sarcomelicope simplicifolia</i>	<i>Scolopia braunii</i>
<i>Smilax australis</i>	<i>Smilax glycyphylla</i>
+ <i>Sophora tomentosa</i> subsp. <i>australis</i>	<i>Stephania japonica</i> var. <i>discolor</i>
<i>Synoum glandulosum</i>	<i>Syzygium australe</i>
+ <i>Syzygium luehmannii</i>	<i>Syzygium oleosum</i>
<i>Syzygium paniculatum</i>	+ <i>Tetrastigma nitens</i>
<i>Trophis scandens</i> subsp. <i>scandens</i>	<i>Viola banksii</i>
<i>Wilkiea huegeliana</i>	

Those species marked '+' are found in littoral rainforest north of Sydney, with some restricted to the north coast or in only a few sites south of the North Coast Bioregion. The other species are geographically more widespread.

Given the small size of many stands and the history of fragmentation, the number of characteristic species in any stand is likely to be smaller than this list. In addition, the total richness of stands declines with increasing latitude and a number of the species listed above are absent or rare in the south.

4. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present in only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought condition and by its

disturbance (including fire) history. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented but the assemblage in individual stands will depend on geographic location, size of stand, degree of exposure, history of disturbance and, if previously disturbed, stage of regeneration.

5. Threatened species and populations for which Littoral Rainforest is known or likely habitat include:

<i>Acronychia littoralis</i>	<i>Cryptocarya foetida</i>
<i>Archidendron hendersonii</i>	<i>Macadamia tetraphylla</i>
<i>Cynanchum elegans</i>	<i>Hicksbeachia pinnatifolia</i>
<i>Fontainea oraria</i>	<i>Syzygium moorei</i>
<i>Senna acclinis</i>	<i>Xylosma terrae-reginae</i>
<i>Syzygium paniculatum</i>	
<i>Amaurornis olivaceus</i>	Bush-hen
<i>Coracina lineata</i>	Barred Cuckoo-shrike
<i>Lichenostomus facioocularis</i>	Mangrove Honeyeater
<i>Monarchia leucotis</i>	White-eared Monarch
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	Powerful Owl
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey
<i>Ptilinopus magnificus</i>	Wompoo Fruit-dove
<i>Ptilinopus regina</i>	Rose-crowned Fruit-dove
<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>	Superb Fruit-dove
<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Sooty Owl
<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>	Spotted-tailed Quoll
<i>Kerivoula papuensis</i>	Golden-tipped Bat
<i>Mormopterus beccarii</i>	Beccari's Freetail-bat
<i>Mormopterus norfolkensis</i>	Eastern Freetail-bat
<i>Myotis adversus</i>	Large-footed Myotis
<i>Nyctimene robinsoni</i>	Eastern Tube-nosed Bat
<i>Potorous tridactylus</i>	Long-nosed Potoroo
<i>Pteropus alecto</i>	Black Flying Fox
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Flying Fox
<i>Syconycteris australis</i>	Eastern Blossom Bat
<i>Thylogale stigmarica</i>	Red-legged Pademelon
<i>Coeranoscincus reticulatus</i>	Three-toed Snake-tooth Skink

Hoplocephalus bitorquatus

Pale-headed Snake

Thersites mitchellae

Mitchell's Rainforest Snail

Emu, *Dromaius novaehollandiae*, population in the NSW North Coast Bioregion and Port Stephens Local Government Area

Menippus fugitivus (Lea), a beetle population in the Sutherland Shire

Most of the species included in this list are found at only some sites, or vary in occurrence and abundance. As such they are not regarded as part of the characterisation of the community. Nevertheless, they are of conservation significance and need to be considered in recovery planning.

6. Littoral Rainforest occurs in numerous, small stands and in total comprises less than 1% of the total area of rainforest in NSW. The largest known stand occurs in Iluka Nature Reserve, which is approximately 136 ha. Many, but not all, stands of Littoral Rainforest have been included in mapping for State Environmental Planning Policy 26 Littoral Rainforest, but degradation of the ecological community is still occurring.

7. Weed species that threaten the integrity of particular stands include *Ambrosia artemisifolia*, *Anredera cordifolia*, *Arecastrum romanzoffianum*, *Asparagus* spp., *Cardiospermum grandiflorum*, *Chrysanthemoides monilifera*, *Coprosma repens*, *Ehrharta* spp., *Gloriosa superba*, *Ipomoea* spp; *Impatiens walleriana*, *Lantana camara*, *Macfadyena unguis-cati*, *Rivina humilis*, *Pennisetum clandestinum*, *Schefflera actinophylla*, *Senna septemtrionalis*, *Solanum mauritianum* *Thunbergia alata* and *Tradescantia fluminensis*.

8. Other threats include loss of canopy integrity arising from salt and wind damage as a result of clearing or damage to stand margins; clearing of understorey (including for firewood collection); grazing and physical disturbance of understorey including by feral deer; inappropriate collection of a range of plant species (including, but not restricted to, epiphytes); fire, particularly fire incursion along boundaries: visitor disturbance including soil compaction, soil disturbance, erosion from foot, cycle, trail bike and 4 wheel drive tracks, introduction of pathogens, and disturbance from creation of new planned and unplanned tracks; increased visitation and resulting increased demand for and use of, visitor facilities such as walking tracks, viewing platforms, toilet blocks, picnic areas etc; dumping of garden waste causing weed infestation; car and other rubbish dumping. Loss of fauna due to predation by feral animals, road kill, loss of habitat and feeding resources, disturbance from human visitation (faunal elements are essential to the ecological functioning of littoral rainforest and loss, or reduction, in pollinators and seed dispersal agents will adversely affect long term vegetation health); fragmentation resulting in loss of connectivity and possibly reduced genetic exchange between populations. For stands not protected by State Environmental Planning Policy 26, clearing and development remains a possibility. (Adam 1987, 1992; Floyd 1990; Mills 1996).

9. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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[About the NSW Scientific Committee](#)

Lowland rainforest on floodplain in the NSW North Coast Bioregion - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list the Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the New South Wales North Coast bioregion as an Endangered Ecological Community on Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Lowland Rainforest, in an undisturbed state, is a closed canopy forest characterised by its high species richness and structural complexity. In disturbed stands the canopy continuity may be broken, or the canopy may be smothered by exotic vines.
2. Lowland Rainforest on floodplains covers less than 1000 hectares in NSW and remaining stands are small and isolated. Stands occur in the New South Wales North Coast bioregion.
3. Historically, the major cause of loss of rainforest on floodplains was clearing for agriculture.
4. Subsequent to clearing the disturbed and exposed edges of remnant stands were vulnerable to invasion by exotic plant species; nearly all surviving remnants are subject to this threat.
5. The effects of clearing, fragmentation and isolation on the functional ecology of the remnant stands has been little studied, but impacts on plant regeneration (including pollination and seed dispersal) are likely. Many of the tree and shrub species are obligate outbreeders so that disruption to pollinator systems could have long term, deleterious consequences.
6. Other threats, although not all are experienced at all sites, include fire, grazing, rubbish dumping, clearing for competing land uses (including clearing of understorey for recreational facilities) and dissection by vehicular and foot tracks.
7. Although very few sites have been subject to detailed fauna survey, it is known that some sites possess an extremely rich insect fauna (documented in the case of Lansdowne Reserve by Williams GA (1993) Hidden Rainforests: subtropical rainforests and their invertebrate biodiversity. UNSW Press/Australian Museum, Sydney.) It is probable that other sites have comparable invertebrate diversity.
8. Although every stand of rainforest is unique in terms of biota, the similarity in structure and the presence of a core assemblage of species permit the definition of lowland floodplain rainforest as a distinct ecological community. This list of plants has been compiled to include species which are characteristic of NSW rainforest communities which occur on floodplains, although not all species occur in every stand, and individual species may be found in other communities. These include all or part of ten of Floyd's Suballiances shown in Point 10.
 - *Aphananthe philippinensis*
 - *Araucaria cunninghamii*
 - *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*
 - *Arthropteris* spp.

- *Austromyrtus bidwillii*
- *Castanospermum australe*
- *Ceratopetalum apetalum*
- *Cryptocarya obovata*
- *Cyathea cooperi*
- *Dendrocnide excelsa*
- *Dysoxylum molissimum*
- *Elaeocarpus grandis*
- *Elaeocarpus obovatus*
- *Elatostemna reticulatum*
- *Ficus coronata*
- *Ficus macrophylla*
- *Ficus obliqua*
- *Ficus superba* var. *henneana*
- *Ficus watkinsiana*
- *Flindersia schottiana*
- *Flindersia xanthoxyla*
- *Grevillea robusta*
- *Heritiera trifoliata*
- *Linospadix monostachyus*
- *Livistona australis*
- *Microsorium scandens*
- *Piper novae-hollandiae*
- *Polia crispata*
- *Pothos longipes*
- *Randia chartacea*
- *Sloanea australis*
- *Sloanea woollsii*
- *Streblus brunonianus*
- *Syzygium australe*
- *Syzygium francisii*
- *Toona ciliata*
- *Tristaniopsis laurina*
- *Waterhousea floribunda*

9. The total species assemblage is much larger with many species restricted to one or a few sites, or present only in very low abundance. Not all the characteristic species are present at every site.

10. For particular purposes it may be appropriate to recognise categories within the lowland floodplain rainforest. The most widely used classification of rainforest types in NSW is that of Floyd, A.G. (1990) *Australian Rainforests in New South Wales*. Surrey Beatty and Sons, Chipping Norton. In this classification the major rainforest Suballiance within the nominated community is Suballiance 3: *Cryptocarya obovata* - *Dendrocnide excelsa* - *Ficus* spp - *Araucaria*. Elements of of Suballiance 1: *Heritiera trifoliata*, Suballiance 2: *Toona* - *Flindersia*, Suballiance 4: *Elaeocarpus grandis*, Suballiance 5: *Castanospermum* - *Dysoxylum mollissimum*, Suballiance 6: *Archontophoenix* - *Livistona*, Suballiance 23: *Ficus*-*Streblus*-*Dendrocnide*-*Cassine*, Suballiance 24: *Castanospermum* - *Grevillea robusta*, Suballiance 25: *Streblus* - *Austromyrtus*, Suballiance 26: *Waterhousea floribunda* - *Tristaniopsis laurina* and Suballiance 33: *Ceratopetalum*/*Schizomeria* - *Heritiera*/*Sloanea* also occur. These alliances are not restricted to lowland floodplains.

11. In any individual stand more than one Suballiance may be represented, and separation of Suballiances may, in some instances, be difficult as complex intergradations occur.

12. The following vertebrate species occur in, but are not restricted to, lowland rainforest on floodplains.

Birds

- *Ailuroedus crassirostris* - Green Catbird
- *Alectura lathamii* Brush - Turkey
- *Colluricincla megarrhyncha* - Little Shrike-thrush
- *Ptilinopus magnificus* - Wompoo Fruit Dove
- *Sericornis citreogularis* - Yellow-throated Scrubwren
- *Tregellasia capito* - Pale Yellow Robin

Mammals

- *Dasyurus maculatus* - Spotted-tailed Quoll
- *Kerivoula papuensis* - Golden-tipped Bat
- *Nyctimene robinsoni* - Eastern Tube-nosed Bat
- *Potorous tridactylus* - Long-nosed Potoroo
- *Pteropus* spp. - Flying-foxes
- *Syconycteris australis* - Eastern Blossom Bat
- *Thylogale stigmatica* - Red-legged Pademelon
- *Thylogale thetis* - Red-necked Pademelon

Reptiles

- *Hypsilurus spinipes* - Southern Angle-headed Dragon
- *Saiphos equalis* - Three-toed Skink

13. A number of stands of the Community are found within the formal conservation reserves in the National Parks and Wildlife Service estate listed below, however the size of individual stands is small (only a few hectares). These stands are only a small proportion of the total distribution of the Community.

- Andrew Johnston Big Scrub Nature Reserve
- Boatharbour Nature Reserve
- Brunswick Heads Nature Reserve
- Coocumbac Island Nature Reserve
- Coramba Nature Reserve
- Hortons Creek Nature Reserve
- Moore Park Nature Reserve
- Stotts Island Nature Reserve
- Susan Island Nature Reserve

14. The small and fragmented nature of these sites places them, as with stands outside NPWS estate, at risk of loss of integrity from weed invasion and other disturbances.

15. In the light of 2,3,4,5,6 and 14 the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain within the New South Wales North Coast bioregion is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

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River-flat eucalypt forest on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act, and as a consequence to omit reference to Sydney Coastal River-Flat Forest from Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is the name given to the ecological community associated with silts, clay-loams and sandy loams, on periodically inundated alluvial flats, drainage lines and river terraces associated with coastal floodplains. Floodplains are level landform patterns on which there may be active erosion and aggradation by channelled and overbank stream flow with an average recurrence interval of 100 years or less (adapted from Speight 1990). River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains generally occurs below 50 m elevation, but may occur on localised river flats up to 250 m above sea level in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The structure of the community may vary from tall open forests to woodlands, although partial clearing may have reduced the canopy to scattered trees. Typically these forests and woodlands form mosaics with other floodplain forest communities and treeless wetlands, and often they fringe treeless floodplain lagoons or wetlands with semi-permanent standing water (e.g. Goodrick 1970).

The composition of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains is primarily determined by the frequency and duration of waterlogging and the texture, nutrient and moisture content of the soil. Composition also varies with latitude. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species:

<i>Acacia floribunda</i>	<i>Acacia parramattensis</i>
<i>Acmena smithii</i>	<i>Adiantum aethiopicum</i>
<i>Angophora floribunda</i>	<i>Angophora subvelutina</i>
<i>Austrostipa ramosissima</i>	<i>Backhousia myrtifolia</i>
<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>
<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i> subsp. <i>cunninghamiana</i>	<i>Casuarina glauca</i>
<i>Cayratia clematidea</i>	<i>Centella asiatica</i>
<i>Cheilanthes sieberi</i> subsp. <i>sieberi</i>	<i>Clematis aristata</i>
<i>Clematis glycinoides</i>	<i>Commelina cyanea</i>
<i>Cymbopogon refractus</i>	<i>Desmodium varians</i>
<i>Dichelachne micrantha</i>	<i>Dichondra repens</i>
<i>Digitaria parviflora</i>	<i>Doodia aspera</i>
<i>Echinopogon caespitosus</i> var. <i>caespitosus</i>	<i>Echinopogon ovatus</i>
<i>Einadia hastata</i>	<i>Einadia trigonos</i>
<i>Entolasia marginata</i>	<i>Entolasia stricta</i>
<i>Eragrostis leptostachya</i>	<i>Eucalyptus amplifolia</i>
<i>Eucalyptus baueriana</i>	<i>Eucalyptus benthamii</i>

<i>Eucalyptus botryoides</i>	<i>Eucalyptus elata</i>
<i>Eucalyptus grandis</i>	<i>Eucalyptus longifolia</i>
<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i>	<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>
<i>Eucalyptus saligna</i>	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>
<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>	<i>Euchiton sphaericus</i>
<i>Eustrephus latifolius</i>	<i>Galium propinquum</i>
<i>Geitonoplesium cymosum</i>	<i>Geranium solanderi</i>
<i>Glycine clandestina</i>	<i>Glycine microphylla</i>
<i>Glycine tabacina</i>	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>
<i>Hydrocotyle peduncularis</i>	<i>Hymenanthera dentata</i>
<i>Hypolepis muelleri</i>	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> var. <i>major</i>
<i>Livistona australis</i>	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Lomandra multiflora</i> subsp. <i>multiflora</i>
<i>Melaleuca decora</i>	<i>Melaleuca linariifolia</i>
<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	<i>Melia azedarach</i>
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i> var. <i>stipoides</i>	<i>Opercularia diphylla</i>
<i>Oplismenus aemulus</i>	<i>Oxalis perennans</i>
<i>Ozothamnus diosmifolius</i>	<i>Pandorea pandorana</i>
<i>Paspalidium distans</i>	<i>Persicaria decipiens</i>
<i>Phyllanthus gunnii</i>	<i>Plectranthus parviflorus</i>
<i>Poranthera microphylla</i>	<i>Pratia purpurascens</i>
<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	<i>Rubus parvifolius</i>
<i>Sigesbeckia orientalis</i> subsp. <i>orientalis</i>	<i>Solanum prinophyllum</i>
<i>Stephania japonica</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	<i>Themeda australis</i>
<i>Trema aspera</i>	<i>Tristaniopsis laurina</i>
<i>Vernonia cinerea</i>	<i>Veronica plebeia</i>
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	<i>Wahlenbergia gracilis</i>

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought conditions and by its disturbance (including fire, grazing, flooding and land clearing) history. The number and relative abundance of species will change with time since fire, flooding or significant rainfall, and may also change in response to changes in grazing regimes. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented.

3. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is known from parts of the Local Government Areas of Port Stephens, Maitland, Singleton, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Parramatta, Penrith, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Holroyd, Liverpool, Bankstown, Wollondilly, Camden, Campbelltown, Sutherland, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven, Eastern Capital City Regional, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley but may occur elsewhere in these bioregions. Bioregions are defined in Thackway and Creswell (1995). Major examples once occurred on the floodplains of the Hunter, Hawkesbury, Moruya, Bega and Towamba Rivers, although many smaller floodplains and river flats also contain examples of the community.

4. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has a tall open tree layer of eucalypts, which may exceed 40 m in height, but can be considerably shorter in regrowth stands or under conditions of lower site quality. While the composition of the tree stratum varies considerably, the most widespread and abundant dominant trees include *Eucalyptus tereticornis* (forest red gum), *E. amplifolia* (cabbage gum), *Angophora floribunda* (rough-barked apple) and *A. subvelutina* (broad-leaved apple). *Eucalyptus baueriana* (blue box), *E. botryoides* (bangalay) and *E. elata* (river perppermint) may be common south from Sydney, *E. ovata* (swamp gum) occurs on the far

south coast, *E. saligna* (Sydney blue gum) and *E. grandis* (flooded gum) may occur north of Sydney, while *E. benthamii* is restricted to the Hawkesbury floodplain. Other eucalypts including *Eucalyptus longifolia* (woollybutt), *E. moluccana* (grey box) and *E. viminalis* (ribbon gum) may be present in low abundance or dominant in limited areas of the distribution. A layer of small trees may be present, including *Melaleuca decora*, *M. styphelioides* (prickly-leaved teatree), *Backhousia myrtifolia* (grey myrtle), *Melia azaderach* (white cedar), *Casuarina cunninghamiana* subsp. *cunninghamiana* (river oak) and *C. glauca* (swamp oak). Scattered shrubs include *Bursaria spinosa* subsp. *spinosa* (blackthorn), *Solanum prinophyllum* (forest nightshade), *Rubus parvifolius* (native raspberry), *Breynia oblongifolia* (coffee bush), *Ozothamnus diosmifolius*, *Hymenanthera dentata* (tree violet), *Acacia floribunda* (white sally) and *Phyllanthus gunnii*. The groundcover is composed of abundant forbs, scramblers and grasses including *Microlaena stipoides* (weeping grass), *Dichondra repens* (kidney weed), *Glycine clandestina*, *Oplismenus aemulus*, *Desmodium gunnii*, *Pratia purpurascens* (whiteroot), *Entolasia marginata* (bordered panic), *Oxalis perennans* and *Veronica plebeia* (trailing speedwell). The composition and structure of the understorey is influenced by grazing and fire history, changes to hydrology and soil salinity and other disturbance, and may have a substantial component of exotic shrubs, grasses, vines and forbs.

5. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions provides habitat for a broad range of animals, including many that are dependent on trees for food, nesting or roosting (Law *et al.* 2000a, b). These include cormorants (*Phalacrocorax* spp.) and egrets (*Ardea* spp. and *Egretta* spp.), the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*), White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), as well as the Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*), Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*), Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*) (Law *et al.* 2000a), Sugar Glider (*Petaurus breviceps*) and Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). The fauna of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest also includes a number of species of frogs in the families Myobatrachidae and Hylidae, particularly *Litoria* spp., and many species of forest birds including honeyeaters, kingfishers, cuckoos, owls, doves, whistlers and fantails.

6. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions forms part of a complex of forested wetland and treeless wetland communities found throughout the coastal floodplains of NSW. A recent analysis of available quadrat data from these habitats identified a distinct grouping of vegetation samples attributable to this community (Keith and Scott 2005). The combination of features that distinguish River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains from other endangered communities on the coastal floodplains include: its dominance by either a mixed eucalypt canopy or by a single species of eucalypt belonging to either the genus *Angophora* or the sections *Exsertaria* or *Transversaria* of the genus *Eucalyptus* (Hill 2002); the relatively low abundance or sub-dominance of *Casuarina* and *Melaleuca* species; the relatively low abundance of *Eucalyptus robusta*; and the prominent groundcover of soft-leaved forbs and grasses. It generally occupies central parts of floodplains and raised levees; habitats where flooding is periodic and soils are rich in silt, without deep humic horizons and show little or no influence of saline ground water.

7. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions includes and replaces Sydney Coastal River-Flat Forest Endangered Ecological Community. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities, which collectively cover all remaining native vegetation on the coastal floodplains of New South Wales. These include Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion, Subtropical Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion, Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions and Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. For example, northwards from the Hunter valley, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains may intergrade with, or be replaced by, Subtropical Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion. As soil salinity increases, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest

may adjoin or intergrade with Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The boundaries between all of these communities are dynamic and may shift in response to changes in hydrological regimes, fire regimes or land management practices. The Determinations for these communities collectively encompass the full range of intermediate assemblages in transitional habitats.

8. A number of vegetation surveys and mapping studies have been conducted across the range of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of the north-eastern NSW (NPWS 1999), areas that were mapped on coastal floodplains of the Manning River as 'Forest Ecosystem 47, Escarpment Red Gums' are included within this community. In the lower Hunter valley, 'Central Hunter Riparian Forest' (map unit 13), 'Wollombi Redgum-River Oak Woodland' (map unit 14) and 'Redgum Roughbarked Apple Swamp Forest' (map unit 38) of NPWS (2000) fall within this community. On the Cumberland Plain, 'Riparian Forest' (map unit 12) of Tozer (2003) and parts of 'Alluvial Woodland' (map unit 11) that are dominated by eucalypts (Tozer 2003) are included within this community. Benson's (1992) 'Camden White Gum Forest' (map unit 6d) and those parts of 'River Flat Forest' (map unit 9f) dominated by eucalypts also fall within this community, as do parts of the 'River-flat forests' of Benson and Howell (1990) and Benson *et al.* (1996) that are dominated by eucalypts. In the Warragamba catchment, small areas of 'Burraborang River Flat Forest' (map unit 88b) and 'Oakdale Alluvial Rough-barked Apple Forest' (map unit 88c) of NPWS (2002) are included within this community. On the south coast of NSW, this community includes those parts of 'Ecotonal Coastal Swamp Forest' (forest ecosystem 27) of Thomas *et al.* (2000) dominated by eucalypts, those parts of 'Coastal Lowlands Riparian Herb/Grass Forest' (forest ecosystem 48) and 'Southern Hinterland Shrub/Herb/Grass Riparian Forest' (forest ecosystem 49) of Thomas *et al.* (2000) mapped on alluvial soils, and those parts of 'Cumberland River Flat Forest' (map unit 33) and 'Floodplain Swamp Forest' (map unit 105) of Tindall *et al.* (2004) that are dominated by eucalypts. In the Eden region, this community includes forested parts of 'Floodplain Wetlands' (map unit 60) that are dominated by eucalypts and parts of 'Bega Wet Shrub Forest' (map unit 19) that are mapped on floodplains (Keith and Bedward 1999). River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is included within the 'Coastal Floodplain Wetlands' vegetation class of Keith (2002, 2004). There may be additional or unmapped occurrences of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains within and beyond these surveyed areas.

9. The extent of the River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions prior to European settlement has not been mapped across its entire range. However, one estimate based on a compilation of regional vegetation maps suggests that Coastal Floodplain Wetlands, which include Temperate Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains, currently cover 800-1400 km², representing less than 30% of the original extent of this broadly defined vegetation class (Keith 2004). Compared to this combined estimate, the remaining area of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains is likely to be considerably smaller and is likely to represent much less than 30% of its original range. Major occurrences include: about 2000 ha in the lower Hunter region in 1990s (NPWS 2000); less than 10 000 ha on the NSW south coast from Sydney to Moruya in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), of which up to about three-quarters occurred on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003); and less than 1000 ha in the Eden region in 1990 (Keith and Bedward 1999).

10. River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has been extensively cleared and modified. Large areas that formerly supported this community are occupied by exotic pastures grazed by cattle, market gardens and other cropping enterprises (e.g. turf). In the lower Hunter region, about one-quarter of the original extent was estimated to have remained during the 1990s (NPWS 2000), while less than one-quarter remained on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003). In the Sydney – South Coast region, less than one-fifth was estimated to remain in the late 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), in the Eden region about 30% was estimated to remain during the 1990s (Keith and Bedward 1999).

11. Land clearing continues to threaten River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. A small minority of the remaining area occurs on public land (e.g. Benson and Howell 1990), with most occurring on productive agricultural land or in close proximity to rural centres. The remaining stands are severely fragmented by past clearing and are further threatened by continuing fragmentation and degradation, flood mitigation and drainage works, landfilling and earthworks associated with urban and industrial development, pollution from urban and agricultural runoff, weed invasion, overgrazing, trampling and other soil disturbance by domestic livestock and feral animals including pigs, activation of 'acid sulfate soils', removal of dead wood and rubbish dumping (e.g. Benson and Howell 1990, Boulton and Brock 1999, Johnston *et al.* 2003). Anthropogenic climate change may also threaten River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains if this affects future flooding regimes (IPCC 2001, Hughes 2003). Localised areas, particularly those within urbanised regions, may also be exposed to frequent burning which reduces the diversity of woody plant species. Clearing of native vegetation; Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands; Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses; Predation, habitat destruction, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs; Anthropogenic climate change; High frequency fire; and Removal of dead wood and dead trees are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995).

12. Very few examples of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains remain unaffected by weeds. The causes of weed invasion include physical disturbance to the vegetation structure of the community, dumping of landfill rubbish and garden refuse, polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas, construction of roads and other utilities, and grazing by domestic livestock. The principal weed species affecting River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains include *Anredera cordifolia* (madeira vine), *Araujia sericiflora* (moth plant), *Asparagus asparagoides* (bridal creeper), *Axonopus fissifolius* (narrow-leaved carpet grass), *Bidens pilosa* (cobble's peg), *Cardiospermum grandiflorum* (balloon vine), *Cirsium vulgare* (spear thistle), *Conyza bonariensis* (flaxleaf fleabane), *C. sumatrensis* (tall fleabane), *Gleditsia triacanthos* (honey locust), *Hypochaeris radicata* (catsear), *Ipomoea* spp. (morning glories), *Lantana camara* (lantana), *Ligustrum lucidum* (large-leaved privet), *L. sinense* (small-leaved privet), *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), *Macfadyena unguis-cati* (cat's claw creeper), *Olea europea* subsp. *cuspidata* (African olive), *Plantago lanceolata* (plantain), *Rubus fruticosus* agg. (blackberries), *Senecio madagascariensis* (fireweed), *Senna pendula* var. *glabrata*, *Setaria parviflora* (slender pigeon grass), *Sida rhombifolia* (paddy's lucerne), *Sonchus oleraceus* (common sowthistle), *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering jew), *Verbena bonariensis* (purpletop), *Paspalum dilatatum* (paspalum), *P. urvillei* and *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu) (Tozer 2003, Keith and Scott 2005, J. R. Hosking, pers. comm.).

13. Small areas of River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions are contained within existing conservation reserves, including Blue Mountains, Cattai, Dharug, Georges River, Marramarra, Morton, Deua and Wadbilliga National Parks, and Gulguer and Mulgoa Nature Reserves, and these are unevenly distributed throughout the range and unlikely to represent the full diversity of the community. The reserved examples are on localised, sheltered river flats between hills, rather than the large open floodplains that comprised the majority of the original habitat (Keith 2004).

14. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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Subtropical coastal floodplain forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion is the name given to the ecological community associated with clay-loams and sandy loams, on periodically inundated alluvial flats, drainage lines and river terraces associated with coastal floodplains. Floodplains are level landform patterns on which there may be active erosion and aggradation by channelled and overbank stream flow with an average recurrence interval of 100 years or less (adapted from Speight 1990). Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest generally occurs below 50 m, but may occur on localised river flats up to 250 m elevation in the NSW North Coast bioregion. The structure of the community may vary from tall open forests to woodlands, although partial clearing may have reduced the canopy to scattered trees. Typically these forests and woodlands form mosaics with other floodplain forest communities and treeless wetlands, and often they fringe treeless floodplain lagoons or wetlands with semi-permanent standing water (e.g. Pressey 1989a).

The composition of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest is primarily determined by the frequency and duration of waterlogging and the texture, nutrient and moisture content of the soil. Composition also varies with latitude. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species:

<i>Acacia concurrens</i>	<i>Acacia disparrima</i> subsp. <i>disparrima</i>
<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i>	<i>Alphitonia excelsa</i>
<i>Angophora paludosa</i>	<i>Angophora subvelutina</i>
<i>Angophora woodsiana</i>	<i>Aristida vagans</i>
<i>Brachychiton populneus</i> subsp. <i>populneus</i>	<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>
<i>Brunoniella australis</i>	<i>Callistemon salignus</i>
<i>Callistemon viminalis</i>	<i>Callitris columellaris</i>
<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i> subsp. <i>cunninghamiana</i>	<i>Casuarina glauca</i>
<i>Centella asiatica</i>	<i>Cheilanthes sieberi</i> subsp. <i>sieberi</i>
<i>Cissus hypoglauca</i>	<i>Commelina cyanea</i>
<i>Commersonia bartramia</i>	<i>Commersonia fraseri</i>
<i>Cordyline congesta</i>	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i>
<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	<i>Cupaniopsis parviflora</i>
<i>Cymbidium suave</i>	<i>Cymbopogon refractus</i>
<i>Cyperus enervis</i>	<i>Desmodium rhytidophyllum</i>
<i>Desmodium varians</i>	<i>Dianella caerulea</i>
<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	<i>Dichelachne micrantha</i>
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	<i>Digitaria parviflora</i>
<i>Drypetes australasica</i>	<i>Echinopogon caespitosus</i> var. <i>caespitosus</i>
<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>	<i>Entolasia marginata</i>
<i>Entolasia stricta</i>	<i>Eragrostis leptostachya</i>

<i>Eucalyptus acmeniodes</i>	<i>Eucalyptus amplifolia</i>
<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i>	<i>Eucalyptus propinqua</i>
<i>Eucalyptus resinifera</i> subsp. <i>hemilampra</i>	<i>Eucalyptus robusta</i>
<i>Eucalyptus seeana</i>	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i>
<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>	<i>Eustrephus latifolius</i>
<i>Ficus macrophylla</i> subsp. <i>macrophylla</i>	<i>Ficus obliqua</i>
<i>Ficus superba</i> var. <i>henneana</i>	<i>Gahnia aspera</i>
<i>Gahnia clarkei</i>	<i>Geitonoplesium cymosum</i>
<i>Glochidion ferdinandii</i>	<i>Glycine clandestina</i>
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	<i>Hibbertia scandens</i>
<i>Hibiscus diversifolius</i>	<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>
<i>Hovea acutifolia</i>	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> var. <i>major</i>
<i>Kennedia rubicunda</i>	<i>Lagenifera stipitata</i>
<i>Laxmannia gracilis</i>	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Lomandra multiflora</i> subsp. <i>multiflora</i>
<i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i>	<i>Maclura cochinchinensis</i>
<i>Mallotus philippensis</i>	<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i>
<i>Melaleuca decora</i>	<i>Melaleuca nodosa</i>
<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i> var. <i>stipoides</i>	<i>Morinda jasminoides</i>
<i>Notelaea longifolia</i>	<i>Oplismenus aemulus</i>
<i>Oplismenus imbecillis</i>	<i>Panicum simile</i>
<i>Parsonsia straminea</i>	<i>Persoonia stradbrokeensis</i>
<i>Phyllanthus virgatus</i>	<i>Pimelea linifolia</i>
<i>Pittosporum revolutum</i>	<i>Pratia purpurascens</i>
<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	<i>Sigesbeckia orientalis</i>
<i>Smilax australis</i>	<i>Smilax glycyphylla</i>
<i>Stephania japonica</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	<i>Themeda australis</i>
<i>Tricoryne elatior</i>	<i>Vernonia cinerea</i>
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	<i>Wikstroemia indica</i>

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought conditions and by its disturbance (including fire, grazing, flooding and land clearing) history. The number and relative abundance of species will change with time since fire, flooding or significant rainfall, and may also change in response to changes in grazing regimes. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. Some of these components of the community are poorly documented.

3. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion is known from parts of the Local Government Areas of Tweed, Byron, Lismore, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Hastings, Greater Taree, Great Lakes and Port Stephens, but may occur elsewhere in this bioregion. Bioregions are defined in Thackway and Creswell (1995). Major examples once occurred on the floodplains of the Tweed, Richmond, Clarence, Macleay, Hastings and Manning Rivers, although smaller floodplains would have also supported considerable areas of this community.

4. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion has a tall open tree layer of eucalypts, which may exceed 40 m in height, but can be considerably shorter in regrowth stands or under conditions of lower site quality. While the composition of the tree stratum varies considerably, the most widespread and abundant dominant trees include *Eucalyptus tereticornis* (forest red gum), *E. siderophloia* (grey ironbark), *Corymbia intermedia* (pink bloodwood) and, north of the Macleay floodplain, *Lophostemon suaveolens* (swamp turpentine). Other trees may be scattered throughout at low abundance or locally common at few sites, particularly where there is an influence from lithic substrates upslope. These include

Eucalyptus moluccana (grey box), *E. propinqua* (grey gum), *E. seeana* (narrow-leaved red gum), *Angophora subvelutina* (broad-leaved apple), *E. robusta* (swamp mahogany), *Eucalyptus resinifera* subsp. *hemilampra* (red mahogany), *E. acmenoides* (white mahogany), *Angophora woodsiana*, *A. paludosa* and rainforest trees such as *Ficus* spp. (figs) and *Cupaniopsis* spp (tuckeroos). A layer of small trees may be present, including *Allocasuarina torulosa* (forest oak), *Alphitonia excelsa* (red ash), *Glochidion ferdinandi* (cheese tree), *Callistemon* spp. (bottlebrushes), *Melaleuca* spp. (paperbarks) and *Casuarina glauca* (swamp oak). Scattered shrubs include *Breynia oblongifolia* (coffee bush), *Acacia concurrens* (curracabah), *Commersonia* spp., and *Hibiscus* spp. Occasional vines include *Eustrephus latifolius* (wombat berry), *Parsonia straminea* (common silkpod) and *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (scrambling lily). The groundcover is composed of abundant forbs, scramblers and grasses including *Imperata cylindrica* var. *major* (blady grass), *Themeda australis* (kangaroo grass), *Vernonia cinerea*, *Dianella caerulea* (blue flax lily), *Pratia purpurascens* (whiteroot), *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi*, and *Dichondra repens* (kidney weed). The composition and structure of the understorey is influenced by grazing and fire history, changes to hydrology and soil salinity and other disturbance, and may have a substantial component of exotic grasses, vines and forbs.

5. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion provides habitat for a broad range of animals, including many that are dependent on trees for food, nesting or roosting (Law *et al.* 2000). These include species of Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax* spp.) and Egret (*Ardea* spp. and *Egretta* spp.), the Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*), Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*), White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), as well as the Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*), Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*), Common Blossum Bat (*Syconycteris australis*) (Law 1994) and Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). The fauna of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest also includes several species of southern frog (family Myobatrachidae) and tree frog (family Hylidae), such as the threatened *Litoria brevipalmata*, and many species of forest birds including honeyeaters, kingfishers, cuckoos, owls, doves, whistlers and fantails.

6. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion forms part of a complex of forested and treeless wetland communities found throughout the coastal floodplains of NSW. A recent analysis of available quadrat data from these habitats identified a distinct grouping of vegetation samples attributable to this community (Keith and Scott 2005). The combination of features that distinguish Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest from other endangered ecological communities on the coastal floodplains include: its dominance by a mixed eucalypt canopy, often with *Lophostemon suaveolens*; the presence of rainforest elements as scattered trees or understorey plants; the relatively low abundance or sub-dominance of *Casuarina* and *Melaleuca* species; the relatively low abundance of *Eucalyptus robusta*; and the prominent groundcover of soft-leaved forbs and grasses. It may occupy central or marginal parts of floodplains and sandy flats, including Pleistocene back-barrier flats (Pressey and Griffith 1992); habitats where flooding is periodic and soils are rich in silt and sand, sometimes humic, and show little influence of saline ground water.

7. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities, which collectively cover all remaining native vegetation on the coastal floodplains of New South Wales. These include Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal River-flat Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions and Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. For example, south from the Manning valley, Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion may adjoin or intergrade with River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. As soil salinity increases Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest may intergrade with, and be replaced by, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the

NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. As soils become sandier and more waterlogged, Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest may intergrade with, and be replaced by, Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The boundaries between all of these communities are dynamic and may shift in response to changes in hydrological regimes, fire regimes or land management practices. The Determinations for these communities collectively encompass the full range of intermediate assemblages in transitional habitats.

8. A number of vegetation surveys and mapping studies have been conducted across the range of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion. In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of the north-eastern NSW (NPWS 1999), areas mapped as 'Forest Ecosystem 46, Eastern Red Gum', and those parts of areas mapped as 'Forest Ecosystem 73, Lowland Red Gum' on coastal floodplains are included within this community. On the Tweed lowlands, this community includes *Eucalyptus tereticornis*-*E. intermedia*-*Lophostemon suaveolens* tall to very tall open forest' (F5) of Pressey and Griffith (1992) and parts of the 'Floodplain Wetland Complex' (FL) dominated by eucalypts or *Lophostemon suaveolens* (Pressey and Griffith 1992). Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion is included within the 'Coastal Floodplain Wetlands' vegetation class of Keith (2002, 2004). There may be additional or unmapped occurrences of Subtropical Floodplain Forest within and beyond these surveyed areas.

9. The extent of the Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion prior to European settlement has not been mapped across its entire range. However, one estimate based on a compilation of regional vegetation maps suggests that Coastal Floodplain Wetlands, which include Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest, currently cover 800-1400 km², representing less than 30% of the original extent of this broadly defined vegetation class (Keith 2004). Compared to this combined estimate, the remaining area of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest is likely to be considerably smaller and is likely to represent much less than 30% of its original range. For example, there were less than 350 ha of native floodplain vegetation on the Tweed lowlands in 1985 (Pressey and Griffith 1992).

10. Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion has been extensively cleared and modified. Large areas that formerly supported this community are occupied by exotic pastures grazed by cattle, market gardens, other cropping enterprises (e.g. sorghum, corn, poplars, etc.) and, on the far north coast, canefields and tea-tree plantations. On the Tweed lowlands, Pressey and Griffith (1992) estimated that less than 3% of the original Floodplain Wetlands and Floodplain Forest remained in 1985. Similar estimates are likely to apply to Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest in other parts of the NSW North Coast bioregion (Goodrick 1970, Pressey 1989a, 1989b, NPWS 1999).

11. Land clearing continues to threaten Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion. Little of the remaining area occurs on public land (e.g. Pressey and Griffith 1992), with most occurring on productive agricultural land or in close proximity to rural centres. Conversion of grazing farms to cropping often involves removal of isolated paddock trees and disturbed patches of vegetation, which locally may be the only remnants of the community. The remaining stands are severely fragmented by past clearing and further threatened by continuing fragmentation and degradation, flood mitigation and drainage works, landfilling and earthworks associated with urban and industrial development, pollution from urban and agricultural runoff, weed invasion, inappropriate grazing, trampling and other soil disturbance by domestic livestock and feral animals including pigs, activation of 'acid sulfate soils' and rubbish dumping (e.g. Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992, Boulton and Brock 1999). Anthropogenic climate change may also threaten Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest if future flooding regimes are affected (IPCC 2001, Hughes 2003). Localised areas, particularly those within urbanised regions, may also be exposed to frequent burning which reduces the diversity of woody plant species. Clearing of native vegetation; Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands; Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses; Predation, habitat destruction, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs; Anthropogenic climate change; High frequency fire and Removal of dead wood and dead trees are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Threatened Species Conservation Act

(1995).

12. Large areas of habitat formerly occupied by Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest have been directly drained by construction of artificial channels (e.g. Pressey 1989a, Boulton and Brock 1999). By the early 1900s, drainage unions or trusts were formed on the major floodplains to enable adjacent landholders to arrange for co-ordinated drainage systems, which were designed and constructed by the NSW Department of Public Works. Additional areas that have not been directly drained may have been altered hydrologically by changed patterns of flooding and drainage following flood mitigation works, particularly the construction of drains, levees and floodgates (Pressey and Griffith 1992). On the north coast of NSW, expansion of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and *Casuarina glauca* has been attributed to artificial drainage and shortening of the hydroperiod (Johnston *et al.* 2003). These changes appear to be closely associated with enhanced acidity, altered ionic ratios, increased dissolved organic carbon and sulfide oxidation in the soil profile (Johnston *et al.* 2003).

13. Very few examples of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest remain unaffected by weeds. The causes of weed invasion include physical disturbance to the vegetation structure of the community, dumping of landfill rubbish and garden refuse, polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas, construction of roads and other utilities, and grazing by domestic livestock. The principal weed species affecting Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest include *Araujia sericiflora* (moth plant), *Asparagus asparagoides* (bridal creeper), *A. plumosus* (climbing asparagus fern), *Axonopus* spp. (carpet grasses), *Baccharis halimifolia* (groundsel bush), *Bidens pilosa* (cobbler's peg), *Cinnamomum camphora* (camphor laurel), *Conyza* spp. (fleabanes), *Hypochaeris radicata* (catsear), *Ipomoea* spp. (morning glories), *Lantana camara*, *Ligustrum sinense* (small-leaved privet), *L. lucidum* (large-leaved privet), *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), *Olea europaea* subsp. *cuspidata* (African olive), *Paspalum dilatatum* (paspalum), *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu), *Rubus fruticosus* agg. (blackberries), *Senecio madagascariensis* (fireweed), *Setaria parviflora* (slender pigeon grass), *Sida rhombifolia* (Paddy's lucerne), *Solanum mauritianum* (wild tobacco bush), *S. nigrum* (black-berry nightshade), *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering jew) and *Verbena bonariensis* (purpletop) (Keith and Scott 2005).

14. Small areas of Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion are contained within existing conservation reserves, including Stotts Island, Ukerebagh and Limeburners Creek Nature Reserves and Bundjalung and Myall Lakes National Parks, and these are unevenly distributed throughout the range and unlikely to represent the full diversity of the community.

15. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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[About the NSW Scientific Committee](#)

Swamp oak floodplain forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is the name given to the ecological community associated with grey-black clay-loams and sandy loams, where the groundwater is saline or sub-saline, on waterlogged or periodically inundated flats, drainage lines, lake margins and estuarine fringes associated with coastal floodplains. Floodplains are level landform patterns on which there may be active erosion and aggradation by channelled and overbank stream flow with an average recurrence interval of 100 years or less (adapted from Speight 1990). Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest generally occurs below 20 m (rarely above 10 m) elevation in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The structure of the community may vary from open forests to low woodlands, scrubs or reedlands with scattered trees. Typically these forests, woodlands, scrubs and reedlands form mosaics with other floodplain forest communities and treeless wetlands, and often they fringe treeless floodplain lagoons or wetlands with semi-permanent standing water (e.g. Pressey 1989a).

The composition of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest is primarily determined by the frequency and duration of waterlogging and the level of salinity in the groundwater. Composition also varies with latitude. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species:

<i>Acmena smithii</i>	<i>Alphitonia excelsa</i>
<i>Alternanthera denticulata</i>	<i>Baumea juncea</i>
<i>Blechnum indicum</i>	<i>Callistemon salignus</i>
<i>Carex appressa</i>	<i>Casuarina glauca</i>
<i>Centella asiatica</i>	<i>Commelina cyanea</i>
<i>Crinum pedunculatum</i>	<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	<i>Dianella caerulea</i>
<i>Entolasia marginata</i>	<i>Enydra fluctuans</i>
<i>Flagellaria indica</i>	<i>Gahnia clarkei</i>
<i>Geitonoplesium cymosum</i>	<i>Glochidion ferdinandi</i>
<i>Glochidion sumatranum</i>	<i>Hypolepis muelleri</i>
<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> var. <i>major</i>	<i>Isolepis inundata</i>
<i>Juncus kraussii</i> subsp. <i>australiensis</i>	<i>Juncus planifolius</i>
<i>Juncus usitatus</i>	<i>Lobelia alata</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i>
<i>Maundia triglochinosoides</i>	<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i>
<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>
<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	<i>Myoporum acuminatum</i>
<i>Oplismenus imbecillis</i>	<i>Parsonsia straminea</i>
<i>Persicaria decipiens</i>	<i>Persicaria strigosa</i>

Phragmites australis
Smilax australis
Viola banksii

Selliera radicans
Stephania japonica var. *discolor*

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought conditions and by its disturbance (including fire, grazing, flooding and land clearing) history. The number and relative abundance of species will change with time since fire, flooding or significant rainfall, and may also change in response to changes in grazing regimes. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented.

3. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is known from parts of the Local Government Areas of Tweed, Byron, Lismore, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Hastings, Greater Taree, Great Lakes, Port Stephens, Maitland, Newcastle, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Pittwater, Warringah, Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills, Hornsby, Lane Cove, Blacktown, Auburn, Parramatta, Canada Bay, Rockdale, Kogarah, Sutherland, Penrith, Fairfield, Liverpool, Bankstown, Wollondilly, Camden, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley but may occur elsewhere in these bioregions. Bioregions are defined in Thackway and Creswell (1995). Major examples once occurred on the floodplains of the Clarence, Macleay, Hastings, Manning, Hunter, Hawkesbury, Shoalhaven and Moruya Rivers.

4. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has a dense to sparse tree layer in which *Casuarina glauca* (swamp oak) is the dominant species northwards from Bermagui. Other trees including *Acmena smithii* (lilly pilly), *Glochidion* spp. (cheese trees) and *Melaleuca* spp. (paperbarks) may be present as subordinate species, and are found most frequently in stands of the community northwards from Gosford. Tree diversity decreases with latitude, and *Melaleuca ericifolia* is the only abundant tree in this community south of Bermagui (Keith and Bedward 1999). The understorey is characterised by frequent occurrences of vines, *Parsonsia straminea* (common silkpod), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (scrambling lily) and *Stephania japonica* var. *discolor* (snake vine), a sparse cover of shrubs, and a continuous groundcover of forbs, sedges, grasses and leaf litter. The composition of the ground stratum varies depending on levels of salinity in the groundwater. Under less saline conditions prominent ground layer plants include forbs such *Centella asiatica* (pennywort), *Commelina cyanea*, *Persicaria decipiens* (slender knotweed) and *Viola banksii*; graminoids such as *Carex appressa* (tussock sedge), *Gahnia clarkei* (a saw-sedge), *Lomandra longifolia* (spiny-headed mat-rush), *Oplismenus imbecillis*; and the fern *Hypolepis muelleri* (batwing fern). On the fringes of coastal estuaries, where soils are more saline, the ground layer may include the threatened grass species, *Alexfloydia repens*, as well as *Baumea juncea*, *Juncus kraussii* subsp. *australiensis* (sea rush), *Phragmites australis* (common reed), *Selliera radicans* and other saltmarsh species. The composition and structure of the understorey is also influenced by grazing history, changes to hydrology and soil salinity and other disturbance, and may have a substantial component of exotic grasses, vines and forbs.

5. Unlike most other coastal floodplain communities, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions are not a significant habitat for waterbirds (Goodrick 1970). However, they do sometimes provide food resources for the Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami lathamii*), and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) (Marchant and Higgins 1990). The fauna of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest also includes the Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*) and several species of frogs in the families Myobatrachidae (southern frogs) and Hylidae (tree frogs).

6. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions forms part of a complex of forested wetland and treeless wetland communities found throughout the coastal floodplains of NSW. A recent analysis of available quadrat data from these habitats identified a distinct grouping of vegetation samples attributable to this community (Keith and Scott 2005). The combination of features that distinguish Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest from other endangered ecological communities on the coastal floodplains include: its dominance by a tree canopy of either *Casuarina glauca* or, more rarely, *Melaleuca ericifolia* with or without subordinate tree species; the relatively low abundance of *Eucalyptus* species; and the prominent groundcover of forbs and graminoids. It generally occupies low-lying parts of floodplains, alluvial flats, drainage lines, lake margins and fringes of estuaries; habitats where flooding is periodic and soils show some influence of saline ground water. This latter habitat feature sets it apart from other floodplain communities.

7. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities, which collectively cover all remaining native vegetation on the coastal floodplains of New South Wales. These include Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion, Subtropical Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal River-Flat Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion) and Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. For example, in less saline habitats, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities including River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions and Subtropical Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast bioregion. The most saline forms of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions may adjoin or intergrade with Coastal Saltmarsh of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The boundaries between these communities are dynamic and may shift in response to changes in hydrological regimes, fire regimes or land management practices (e.g. Johnston *et al.* 2003). The Determinations for these communities collectively encompass the full range of intermediate assemblages in transitional habitats.

8. A number of vegetation surveys and mapping studies have been conducted across the range of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. This community includes 'Sheoak Swamps' in the general coastal wetlands classification of Goodrick (1970). In the Tweed valley lowlands, this community includes '*Casuarina glauca* tall to very tall open to closed forest' (F10) of Pressey and Griffith (1992) and parts of the 'Floodplain Wetland Complex' (FL) that include *Casuarina glauca* with *Melaleuca* spp. (Pressey and Griffith 1992). In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of the north-eastern NSW (NPWS 1999), areas mapped as 'Forest Ecosystem 143, Swamp Oak', fall within this community. In the lower Hunter valley, 'Swamp Oak – Rushland Forest' (map unit 40) and 'Swamp Oak Sedge Forest' (map unit 41) of NPWS (2000) fall within this community. On the Cumberland Plain, 'Riparian Woodland' (map unit 5) of Tozer (2003) and parts of 'Alluvial Woodland' (map unit 11) dominated by *Casuarina glauca* (Tozer 2003) are included within this community, while those parts of Benson's (1992) 'River Flat Forest' (map unit 9f) dominated by *C. glauca* also fall within this community, as do parts of the 'River-flat forests' of Benson and Howell (1990) and Benson *et al.* (1996) that are dominated by *C. glauca*. On the Illawarra Plain, 'Coastal Swamp Oak Forest' (map unit 36) of NPWS (2002) occurs within this community. In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of southern New South Wales (Thomas *et al.* 2000), this community includes 'Coastal Wet Heath Swamp Forest' (forest ecosystem 24), 'South Coast Swamp Forest' complex (forest ecosystem 25) and those parts of 'Ecotonal Coastal Swamp Forest' (forest ecosystem 27) dominated by *Casuarina glauca*. In the Sydney - South Coast region, this community includes parts of 'Floodplain Swamp Forest' (map unit 105) dominated by *Casuarina glauca*, 'Estuarine Fringe Forest' (map unit 106) and 'Estuarine Creek Flat Scrub' (map unit 107) of Tindall *et al.* (2004). In the Eden region, this community includes 'Estuarine Wetland Scrub' (map unit 63) of Keith and Bedward (1999) and parts of 'Floodplain Wetlands' (map unit 60) that include *Casuarina glauca* or *Melaleuca ericifolia* (Keith and

Bedward 1999). Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest South East Corner is included within the 'Coastal Floodplain Wetlands' vegetation class of Keith (2002, 2004). There may be additional or unmapped occurrences of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest within and beyond these surveyed areas.

9. The extent of the Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions prior to European settlement has not been mapped across its entire range. However, one estimate based on a compilation of regional vegetation maps suggests that Coastal Floodplain Wetlands, which include Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, currently cover 800-1400 km², representing less than 30% of the original extent of this broadly defined vegetation class (Keith 2004). Compared to this combined estimate, the remaining area of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest is likely to be considerably smaller and is likely to represent much less than 30% of its original range. Major occurrences include: less than 350 ha on the Tweed lowlands in 1985 (Pressey and Griffith 1992); less than 650 ha on the lower Clarence floodplain in 1982 (Pressey 1989a); less than 400 ha on the lower Macleay floodplain in 1983 (Pressey 1989b); less than 3200 ha in the lower Hunter – central Hunter region in the 1990s (NPWS 2000); less than 5200 ha in the Sydney - South Coast region in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), including up to 4700 ha on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003) and less than 250 ha on the Illawarra Plain in 2001 (NPWS 2002); and less than 1000 ha in the Eden region in 1990 (Keith and Bedward 1999).

10. Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has been extensively cleared and modified. Large areas that formerly supported this community are occupied by exotic pastures grazed by cattle, market gardens, other cropping enterprises (e.g. sorghum, corn, poplars, etc.) and, on the far north coast, canefields. On the Tweed lowlands, Pressey and Griffith (1992) estimated that less than 3% of the original Floodplain Wetlands and Floodplain Forest remained in 1985. Similar estimates are likely to apply to Swamp Oak Floodplain Forests in other parts of the NSW North Coast bioregion (Pressey 1989a, 1989b, NPWS 1999). In the lower Hunter – central coast region, less than 30-40% was estimated to have remained during the 1990s (NPWS 2000), while approximately 13% remained on the Cumberland Plain in 1998 (Tozer 2003). In the Sydney – South Coast region, less than 20% was estimated to remain in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), in the Eden region about 30% was estimated to remain during the 1990s (Keith and Bedward 1999).

11. Land clearing continues to threaten Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. A small minority of the remaining area occurs on public land (e.g. Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992), with most occurring on productive agricultural land or in close proximity to rural centres. The remaining stands are severely fragmented by past clearing and further threatened by continuing fragmentation and degradation, flood mitigation and drainage works, landfilling and earthworks associated with urban and industrial development, pollution from urban and agricultural runoff, weed invasion, overgrazing, trampling and other soil disturbance by domestic livestock and feral animals including pigs, activation of 'acid sulfate soils' and rubbish dumping (e.g. Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992, Boulton and Brock 1999, Johnson *et al.* 2003). Anthropogenic climate change may also threaten Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest if sea levels rise as predicted or if future flooding regimes are affected (IPCC 2001, Hughes 2003). Localised areas, particularly those within urbanised regions, may also be exposed to frequent burning which reduces the diversity of woody plant species. Clearing of native vegetation; Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands; Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses; Predation, habitat destruction, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs; Anthropogenic climate change and High frequency fire are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995).

12. Large areas of habitat formerly occupied by Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest have been directly drained by construction of artificial channels (e.g. Pressey 1989a, Boulton and Brock 1999). By the early 1900s, drainage unions or trusts were formed on the major floodplains to enable adjacent landholders to arrange for co-ordinated drainage systems, which were designed and constructed by the NSW Department of Public Works. Additional areas that have not been directly drained may have been altered hydrologically by changed patterns of flooding and

drainage following flood mitigation works, particularly the construction of drains, levees and floodgates (Pressey and Griffith 1992). On the north coast of NSW, expansion of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and *Casuarina glauca* into open floodplain swamps has been attributed to artificial drainage and shortening of the hydroperiod (Johnston *et al.* 2003, Stevenson 2003). There have also been anecdotal reports of recruitment by *Casuarina glauca* in pastures during extended dry periods, though not necessarily by other components of the community. These changes appear to be closely associated with enhanced acidity, altered ionic ratios, increased dissolved organic carbon and sulfide oxidation in the soil profile (Johnston *et al.* 2003). Alteration of tidal flows may have lead to decreased soil salinity and localised expansion of *Casuarina glauca* into areas that previously supported Coastal Saltmarsh or mangroves (Stevenson 2003).

13. Very few examples of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest remain unaffected by weeds. The causes of weed invasion include physical disturbance to the vegetation structure of the community, dumping of landfill rubbish and garden refuse, polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas, construction of roads and other utilities, and grazing by domestic livestock. The principal weed species affecting Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest include *Araujia sericiflora* (moth plant), *Asparagus asparagoides* (bridal creeper), *Baccharis halimifolia* (groundsel bush), *Cyperus eragrostis* (umbrella sedge), *Cinnamomum camphora* (camphor laurel), *Conyza* spp. (fleabanes), *Hydrocotyle bonariensis* (American pennywort), *Ipomoea cairica*, *I. purpurea* and *I. indica* (morning glories), *Lantana camara*, *Paspalum dilatatum* (paspalum), *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu), *Rubus fruticosus* agg. (blackberries), *Solanum pseudocapsicum* (Madeira winter cherry), *S. nigrum* (black-berry nightshade), *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering jew) and *Verbena bonariensis* (purpletop), (Tozer 2003, Keith and Scott 2005). In general, remaining examples of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest from the most saline environments are in better condition, while those from less saline habitats are generally more degraded.

14. Small areas of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions are contained within existing conservation reserves, including Stotts Island, Ukerebagh, Tuckean, Pambalong, Wamberal, Towra Point and Cullendulla Creek Nature Reserves and Bongil Bongil, Myall Lakes and Conjola National Parks. These occurrences are unevenly distributed throughout the range and unlikely to represent the full diversity of the community. In addition, wetlands within protected areas are exposed to hydrological changes that were, and continue to be initiated outside their boundaries. Some areas of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest are protected by State Environmental Planning Policy 14, although this has not always precluded impacts on wetlands from the development of major infrastructure.

15. Given the dynamic hydrological relationship between Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, Coastal Saltmarsh and other endangered ecological communities on coastal floodplains, future management of water and tidal flows may result in the expansion of some communities at the expense of others. Proposals for the restoration of natural hydrological regimes and for the rehabilitation of acid sulfate soils may also result in changes to the distribution and composition of floodplain communities. Co-ordinated planning and management approaches across whole catchments will be required to address and resolve priorities between different management objectives.

16. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
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Swamp sclerophyll forest on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act, and as a consequence to omit reference to Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion from Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is the name given to the ecological community associated with humic clay loams and sandy loams, on waterlogged or periodically inundated alluvial flats and drainage lines associated with coastal floodplains. Floodplains are level landform patterns on which there may be active erosion and aggradation by channelled and overbank stream flow with an average recurrence interval of 100 years or less (adapted from Speight 1990). Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains generally occurs below 20 m (though sometimes up to 50 m) elevation, often on small floodplains or where the larger floodplains adjoin lithic substrates or coastal sand plains in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The structure of the community is typically open forest, although partial clearing may have reduced the canopy to scattered trees. In some areas the tree stratum is low and dense, so that the community takes on the structure of scrub. The community also includes some areas of fernland and tall reedland or sedgeland, where trees are very sparse or absent. Typically these forests, scrubs, fernlands, reedlands and sedgelands form mosaics with other floodplain forest communities and treeless wetlands, and often they fringe treeless floodplain lagoons or wetlands with semi-permanent standing water (e.g. Pressey 1989a).

The composition of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains is primarily determined by the frequency and duration of waterlogging and the texture, salinity nutrient and moisture content of the soil. Composition also varies with latitude. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species:

<i>Acacia irrorata</i>	<i>Acacia longifolia</i>
<i>Acmena smithii</i>	<i>Adiantum aethiopicum</i>
<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>	<i>Banksia oblongifolia</i>
<i>Banksia spinulosa</i>	<i>Baumea articulata</i>
<i>Baumea juncea</i>	<i>Blechnum camfieldii</i>
<i>Blechnum indicum</i>	<i>Breynia oblongifolia</i>
<i>Callistemon salignus</i>	<i>Calochlaena dubia</i>
<i>Carex appressa</i>	<i>Casuarina glauca</i>
<i>Centella asiatica</i>	<i>Dianella caerulea</i>
<i>Dodonaea triquetra</i>	<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>
<i>Entolasia marginata</i>	<i>Entolasia stricta</i>
<i>Eucalyptus botryoides</i>	<i>Eucalyptus longifolia</i>
<i>Eucalyptus resinifera</i> subsp. <i>hemilampra</i>	<i>Eucalyptus robusta</i>
<i>Ficus coronata</i>	<i>Gahnia clarkei</i>

<i>Gahnia sieberiana</i>	<i>Glochidion ferdinandi</i>
<i>Glycine clandestina</i>	<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>
<i>Hydrocotyle peduncularis</i>	<i>Hypolepis muelleri</i>
<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> var. <i>major</i>	<i>Isachne globosa</i>
<i>Leptospermum polygalifolium</i> subsp. <i>polygalifolium</i>	<i>Livistona australis</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i>
<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>	<i>Melaleuca linariifolia</i>
<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>	<i>Melaleuca sieberi</i>
<i>Melaleuca styphelioides</i>	<i>Morinda jasminoides</i>
<i>Omalthus populifolius</i>	<i>Oplismenus aemulus</i>
<i>Oplismenus imbecillis</i>	<i>Parsonsia straminea</i>
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	<i>Polyscias sambucifolia</i>
<i>Pratia purpurascens</i>	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>
<i>Stephania japonica</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	<i>Themeda australis</i>
<i>Villarsia exaltata</i>	<i>Viola banksii</i>
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	

2. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites or in low abundance. The species composition of a site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall or drought conditions and by its disturbance (including fire, grazing, flooding and land clearing) history. The number and relative abundance of species will change with time since fire, flooding or significant rainfall, and may also change in response to changes in grazing regimes. At any one time, above-ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in the soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse fauna, both vertebrate and invertebrate. These components of the community are poorly documented.

3. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is known from parts of the Local Government Areas of Tweed, Byron, Lismore, Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Hastings, Greater Taree, Great Lakes and Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Hornsby, Pittwater, Warringah, Manly, Liverpool, Rockdale, Botany Bay, Randwick, Sutherland, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven but may occur elsewhere in these bioregions. Bioregions are defined in Thackway and Creswell (1995). Major examples once occurred on the floodplains of the Tweed, Richmond, Clarence, Macleay, Hastings and Manning Rivers, although smaller floodplains would have also supported considerable areas of this community.

4. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has an open to dense tree layer of eucalypts and paperbarks, which may exceed 25 m in height, but can be considerably shorter in regrowth stands or under conditions of lower site quality. For example, stands dominated by *Melaleuca ericifolia* typically do not exceed 8 m in height. The most widespread and abundant dominant trees include *Eucalyptus robusta* (swamp mahogany), *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (paperbark) and, south from Sydney, *Eucalyptus botryoides* (bangalay) and *Eucalyptus longifolia* (woollybut). Other trees may be scattered throughout at low abundance or may be locally common at few sites, including *Callistemon salignus* (sweet willow bottlebrush), *Casuarina glauca* (swamp oak) and *Eucalyptus resinifera* subsp. *hemilampra* (red mahogany), *Livistona australis* (cabbage palm) and *Lophostemon suaveolens* (swamp turpentine). A layer of small trees may be present, including *Acacia irrorata* (green wattle), *Acmena smithii* (lilly pilly), *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* (blueberry ash), *Glochidion ferdinandi* (cheese tree), *Melaleuca linariifolia* and *M. styphelioides* (paperbarks). Shrubs include *Acacia longifolia* (Sydney golden wattle), *Dodonaea triquetra* (a hopbush), *Ficus coronata* (sandpaper fig), *Leptospermum polygalifolium* subsp. *polygalifolium* (lemon-scented tea tree) and *Melaleuca* spp. (paperbarks). Occasional vines include *Parsonsia straminea* (common silkpod), *Morinda jasminoides* and *Stephania japonica* var. *discolor* (snake vine). The groundcover is composed of abundant sedges, ferns, forbs, and grasses including

Gahnia clarkei, *Pteridium esculentum* (bracken), *Hypolepis muelleri* (batswing fern), *Calochlaena dubia* (false bracken), *Dianella caerulea* (blue flax lily), *Viola hederacea*, *Lomandra longifolia* (spiny-headed mat-rush) and *Entolasia marginata* (bordered panic) and *Imperata cylindrica* var. *major* (blady grass). The endangered swamp orchids *Phaius australis* and *P. tankervillei* are found in this community. On sites downslope of lithic substrates or with soils of clay-loam texture, species such as *Allocasuarina littoralis* (black she-oak), *Banksia oblongifolia*, *B. spinulosa* (var. *collina* or var. *spinulosa*) (hairpin banksia), *Ptilothrix deusta* and *Themeda australis* (kangaroo grass), may also be present in the understorey. The composition and structure of the understorey is influenced by grazing and fire history, changes to hydrology and soil salinity and other disturbance, and may have a substantial component of exotic grasses, vines and forbs.

5. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions provides habitat for a broad range of animals, including many that are dependent on trees for food, nesting or roosting (Law *et al.* 2000). The blossoms of *Eucalyptus robusta* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia* are also an important food source for the Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) and Common Blossom Bat (*Sycoyncotis australis*) (Law 1994), as well as the Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*), Sugar Glider (*Petaurus breviceps*), Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*) and Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*). Other animals found in this community include the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*), Large-footed myotis (*Myotis adversus*), *Litoria olongburensis* and Wallum Froglet (*Crinia tinnula*).

6. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions forms part of a complex of forested and treeless wetland communities found throughout the coastal floodplains of NSW. A recent analysis of available quadrat data from these habitats identified a distinct grouping of vegetation samples attributable to this community (Keith and Scott 2005). The combination of features that distinguish Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains from other endangered ecological communities on the coastal floodplains include: its relatively dense tree canopy dominated by *Eucalyptus robusta*, *Melaleuca quinquenervia* or *E. botryoides*, the relatively infrequent occurrence of other eucalypts, *Casuarina glauca* or *Lophostemon suaveolens*; the occasional presence of rainforest elements as scattered trees or understorey plants; and the prominence of large sedges and ferns in the groundcover. It generally occupies small alluvial flats and peripheral parts of floodplains where they adjoin lithic substrates or coastal sandplains. The soils are usually waterlogged, stained black or dark grey with humus, and show little influence of saline ground water.

7. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains includes and replaces Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion. It may adjoin or intergrade with several other endangered ecological communities, which collectively cover all remaining native vegetation on the coastal floodplains of New South Wales. These include Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain in the NSW North Coast bioregion, River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions (including the formerly listed Sydney Coastal River-Flat Forest in the Sydney Basin bioregion), Subtropical Floodplain Forest, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions and Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. For example, as soils become less waterlogged, Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions may adjoin or intergrade with River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. As soil salinity increases Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains may intergrade with, and be replaced by, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. The boundaries between these communities are dynamic and may shift in response to changes in hydrological regimes, fire regimes or land management practices (e.g. Johnston *et al.* 2003, Stevenson 2003). The Determinations for these communities collectively encompass the full range of intermediate assemblages in transitional habitats.

8. A number of vegetation surveys and mapping studies have been conducted across the range of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. This community includes the *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany) community identified on coastal alluvium by Douglas and Anderson (2002) and the Coastal Alluvium Swamp Forest complex defined by Anderson and Asquith (2002). In the Comprehensive Regional Assessment of the north-eastern NSW (NPWS 1999), those areas on floodplains mapped as 'Forest Ecosystem 112, Paperbark', and those areas on floodplains mapped as 'Forest Ecosystem 142, Swamp Mahogany' are included within this community. On the Tweed lowlands, this community includes '*Eucalyptus robusta* mid-high to very tall closed forest' (F7), '*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*-*Melaleuca quinquenervia* very tall feather palm swamp forest' (F9), those parts of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* tall to very tall open to closed forest' (F8) on alluvial soils and parts of 'Floodplain Wetland Complex' (FL) dominated by *Eucalyptus robusta* or *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Pressey and Griffith 1992). In the lower Hunter district, this community includes 'Swamp Mahogany-Paperbark Swamp Forest' (map unit 37), Riparian *Melaleuca* Swamp Woodland (map unit 42) and *Melaleuca* Scrub (map unit 42a) of NPWS (2000). In the Sydney-Gosford region, this community includes those parts of 'Freshwater Swamp complex' (map unit 27a) dominated by *Eucalyptus robusta* or *E. botryoides* (Benson 1986, Benson and Howell 1994) and parts of the 'Freshwater wetlands – on the floodplains' of Benson and Howell (1990) and Benson *et al.* (1996). In the Illawarra, this community includes 'Alluvial swamp mahogany forest' (map unit 35) of NPWS (2002). On the south coast, this community includes 'Northern Coastal Lowlands Swamp Forest' (forest ecosystem 175) of Thomas *et al.* (2000) and 'Coastal Sand Swamp Forest' (map unit 45) of Tindall *et al.* (2004). Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is included within the 'Coastal Floodplain Wetlands' and 'Coastal Swamp Forest' vegetation classes of Keith (2002, 2004). There may be additional or unmapped occurrences of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains within and beyond these surveyed areas.

9. The extent of the Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions prior to European settlement has not been mapped across its entire range. However, one estimate estimate based on a compilation of regional vegetation maps suggests that Coastal Floodplain Wetlands, which include Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Floodplains, currently cover 800-1400 km², representing less than 30% of the original extent of this broadly defined vegetation class (Keith 2004). Compared to this combined estimate, the remaining area of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains is likely to be considerably smaller and is likely to represent much less than 30% of its original range. For example, there were less than 350 ha of native vegetation attributable to this community on the Tweed lowlands in 1985 (Pressey and Griffith 1992), less than 2500 ha on the Clarence floodplain in 1982 (Pressey 1989a), less than 700 ha on the Macleay floodplain in 1983 (Pressey 1989b), up to 7000 ha in the lower Hunter – central coast district during the 1990s (NPWS 2000), and less than 1000 ha in the Sydney – South Coast region in the mid 1990s (Tindall *et al.* 2004), including less than 40 ha on the Illawarra plain in 2001 (NPWS 2002) and about 450 ha on the South Coast in the 1990s (Thomas *et al.* 2000).

10. Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions has been extensively cleared and modified. Large areas that formerly supported this community are occupied by exotic pastures grazed by cattle, market gardens, other cropping enterprises (e.g. sorghum, corn, poplars, etc.) and, on the far north coast, canefields. On the Tweed lowlands, Pressey and Griffith (1992) estimated that less than 3% of the original Floodplain Wetlands and Floodplain Forest remained in 1985. Similar estimates are likely to apply to Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains in other parts of the NSW North Coast bioregion (Goodrick 1970, Pressey 1989a, 1989b). In the lower Hunter – central coast district, about 30 % of the original area of Swamp mahogany – paperbark forest was estimated to remain in the 1990s (NPWS 2000).

11. Land clearing continues to threaten Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions. A small minority of the remaining area occurs on public land (e.g. Pressey and Griffith 1992, NPWS 2000), with most occurring on productive agricultural land or in close proximity to rural centres. The remaining

stands are severely fragmented by past clearing and further threatened by continuing fragmentation and degradation, flood mitigation and drainage works, landfilling and earthworks associated with urban and industrial development, pollution from urban and agricultural runoff, weed invasion, overgrazing, trampling and other soil disturbance by domestic livestock and feral animals including pigs, activation of 'acid sulfate soils', removal of dead wood and rubbish dumping (e.g. Pressey 1989a, b; Pressey and Griffith 1992, Boulton and Brock 1999, Johnston *et al.* 2003). Anthropogenic climate change may also threaten Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains if future flooding regimes are affected (IPCC 2001, Hughes 2003). Localised areas, particularly those within urbanised regions, may also be exposed to frequent burning which reduces the diversity of woody plant species. Clearing of native vegetation; Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands; Invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses; Predation, habitat destruction, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs; Anthropogenic climate change; High frequency fire and Removal of dead wood and dead trees are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Threatened Species Act (1995).

12. Large areas of habitat formerly occupied by Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains have been directly drained by construction of artificial channels (e.g. Pressey 1989a, Boulton and Brock 1999). While much of the early drainage works were associated with agricultural development, more recently they are associated with urban expansion. Additional areas that have not been directly drained may have been altered hydrologically by changed patterns of flooding and drainage following flood mitigation works, particularly the construction of drains, levees and floodgates (Pressey and Griffith 1992). On the north coast of NSW, expansion of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* into open floodplain swamps has been attributed to artificial drainage and shortening of the hydroperiod (Johnston *et al.* 2003, Stevenson 2003). These changes appear to be closely associated with enhanced acidity, altered ionic ratios, increased dissolved organic carbon and sulfide oxidation in the soil profile (Johnston *et al.* 2003).

13. Relatively few examples of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains remain unaffected by weeds. The causes of weed invasion include physical disturbance to the vegetation structure of the community, dumping of landfill rubbish and garden refuse, polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas, construction of roads and other utilities, and grazing by domestic livestock. The principal weed species affecting Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains include *Andropogon virginicus* (whiskey grass), *Anredera cordifolia* (Madeira vine), *Ageratina adenophora* (crofton weed), *Baccharis halimifolia* (groundsel bush), *Cinnamomum camphora* (camphor laurel), *Lantana camara* (lantana), *Ligustrum sinense* (small-leaved privet), *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle) and *Ludwigia peruviana* (Keith and Scott 2005).

14. Small areas of Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions are contained within existing conservation reserves, including Bungawalbin, Tuckean and Moonee Beach Nature Reserves, and Hat Head, Crowdy Bay, Wallingat, Myall Lakes and Garigal National Parks. These occurrences are unevenly distributed throughout the range and unlikely to represent the full diversity of the community. In addition, wetlands within protected areas are exposed to hydrological changes that were, and continue to be initiated outside their boundaries. Some areas of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest are protected by State Environmental Planning Policy 14, although this has not always precluded impacts on wetlands from the development of major infrastructure.

15. Given the dynamic hydrological relationship between Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains, Coastal Saltmarsh and other endangered ecological communities on coastal floodplains, future management of water and tidal flows may result in the expansion of some communities at the expense of others. Proposals for the restoration of natural hydrological regimes and for the rehabilitation of acid sulfate soils may also result in changes to the distribution and composition of floodplain communities. Co-ordinated planning and management approaches across whole catchments will be required to address and resolve priorities between different management objectives.

16. In view of the above the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Associate Professor Paul Adam
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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[About the NSW Scientific Committee](#)

Themeda grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions - endangered ecological community listing

NSW Scientific Committee - final determination

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list *Themeda* grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. *Themeda* grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in NSW is an ecological community described by Adam *et al.* (1989). The community is found in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions, on seacliffs and coastal headlands. The structure of the community is typically closed tussock grassland, but may be open shrubland or open heath with a grassy matrix between the shrubs. The community belongs to the Maritime Grasslands vegetation class of Keith (2004).

2. The community is characterised by the following assemblage of species.

<i>Acacia sophorae</i>	<i>Banksia integrifolia</i> subsp. <i>integrifolia</i>
<i>Commelina cyanea</i>	<i>Glycine clandestina</i>
<i>Glycine microphylla</i>	<i>Hibbertia scandens</i>
<i>Isolepis nodosa</i>	<i>Kennedia rubicunda</i>
<i>Lepidosperma</i> spp.	<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Monotoca elliptica</i>
<i>Opercularia aspera</i>	<i>Pimelea linifolia</i>
<i>Poranthera microphylla</i>	<i>Sporobolus virginicus</i>
<i>Themeda australis</i>	<i>Viola banksii</i>
<i>Westringia fruticosa</i>	

3. The total species list of the community is considerably larger than that given above, with many species present at only one or two sites, or in low abundance. The species composition of the site will be influenced by the size of the site, recent rainfall and drought conditions and by its disturbance history (including fire, grazing and land clearing). At any one time, above ground individuals of some species may be absent, but the species may be represented below ground in soil seed banks or as dormant structures such as bulbs, corms, rhizomes, rootstocks or lignotubers. The list of species given above is of the vascular plant species, the community also includes micro-organisms, fungi, cryptogamic plants and a diverse flora. These components of the community are poorly documented.

4. *Themeda australis* is the dominant species in the community. *Themeda australis* is an extremely widespread species, but in this community may have a distinctive appearance, being prostrate and having glaucous leaves. These features are retained in cultivation and the form is

believed to be genetically distinct (SWL Jacobs, pers. comm.). Scattered shrubs occur in many stands, most frequently *Pimelea linifolia*, *Banksia integrifolia* and *Westringia fruticosa*. These and other woody species often have dwarf growth forms. Although a number of woody species are listed as part of the community, these are usually sparsely distributed and may be absent from some stands. Tussocks of *Poa poiformis* may be found in some stands of the community, but *Poa poiformis*-dominated tussock grassland is generally found lower on cliffs (closer to the sea and more exposed to spray) and on steeper slopes.

5. A number of threatened species occur in some stands of the community, including *Diuris* sp. aff. *chrysantha*, *Pultenaea maritima*, *Rutidosus heterogama*, *Thesium australe* (Cohn 2004) and *Zieria prostrata* (Hogbin 2001). The endangered population of the low growing form of *Zieria smithii* at Diggers Head is found in this community. The community is the major habitat for a number of other species, including *Chamaecrista maritima*, *Plectranthus cremnus* and *Stackhousia spathulata*. The presence of threatened species is a matter which will need to be addressed, on a stand by stand basis in management plans, but the presence of threatened species is not required for definition of the community.

6. The community is found on a range of substrates, although stands on sandstone are infrequent and small. Larger stands are found on old sand dunes above cliffs, as for example at Cape Banks and Henry Head in Botany Bay National Park (Adam *et al.* 1989), and on basalt headlands, as for example at Dameral's Head in Moonee Beach National Park. Occurrences of the community in northern NSW are discussed by Griffith *et al.* (2003).

7. Individual stands of the community are often very small, a few square m, but at some sites larger stands of up to several hectares or tens of hectares occur. Overall, the community therefore has a highly restricted geographic distribution comprising small, but widely scattered patches.

8. *Themeda* grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands has been affected by pasture improvement to accommodate livestock grazing to varying degrees throughout its range (e.g. in the Coffs Harbour and Shellharbour-Kiama districts). More recently, the distribution has been depleted by coastal development. While some stands are protected from further land use change, a major threat to the community is posed by invasion by shrubs, both introduced species such as *Chrysanthemoides monilifera* and *Lantana camara*, and native species including *Acacia sophorae*, *Banksia integrifolia* and *Westringia fruticosa*. Although native shrubs are a feature of the community, invasion and conversion to dense shrubland has occurred at a number of sites in recent years and this may threaten the persistence of grassland elements in the community. This may reflect changed fire regimes and reduced grazing pressure (including by rabbits). A further major threat is associated with recreational use, with weed invasion and erosion occurring adjacent to footpaths and from use of off-road vehicles. Collectively, these processes may result in a large reduction of the ecological function of the community.

9. In view of the highly restricted distribution, small patch size and ongoing threats to the community, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that *Themeda* grassland on seacliffs and coastal headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival cease to operate.

Dr Lesley Hughes
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

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