Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Meeting the moderate and high risk-based pathway application requirements

Information Sheet: March 2014

Overview

Purpose

This document guides the preparation of applications for permits to remove native vegetation that are in the moderate and high risk-based pathways, as defined by *Permitted clearing of native vegetation – biodiversity assessment guidelines* (the Guidelines). The document details what is required to meet the additional application requirements for moderate and high risk-based pathway applications. This document should be used by applicants (and anyone assisting them) when preparing a moderate or high risk-based pathway application for a permit to remove native vegetation.

Use of this document

Before using this document please ensure that:

- the vegetation proposed to be removed meets the definition of native vegetation in the Guidelines
- a permit is required to remove the native vegetation
- a *Biodiversity assessment report* using the online Native Vegetation Information Management (NVIM) tool has determined that the application falls in the moderate or high risk-based pathway.

Contents

Application requirements for moderate and high risk-based pathway permit applications

The application requirements for moderate and high risk-based pathway applications to remove native vegetation are detailed in Clause 52.16 and Clause 52.17 of planning schemes in Victoria and the Guidelines. In addition to the general application requirements, applications in the moderate and high risk-based pathways must include the following additional application requirements:

- A habitat hectare assessment of the native vegetation to be removed.
- A statement outlining what steps have been taken to minimise the impacts of the removal of native vegetation on biodiversity.
- An assessment of whether the proposed removal of native vegetation will have a significant impact on Victoria's biodiversity, with specific regard to the proportional impact on habitat for any rare or threatened species.
- An offset strategy that details how a compliant offset will be secured to offset the biodiversity impacts of the removal of native vegetation.

The *Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Biodiversity assessment handbook* (the Handbook) details how an application for a planning permit to remove native vegetation is assessed.

Habitat hectare assessment
The habitat hectare assessment is a site-based assessment of native vegetation condition with reference to the benchmark for the vegetation's Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC). The assessment is completed by a qualified native vegetation assessor and generates a condition score of the native vegetation that falls between 0 and 1. Any scattered tree on site is assigned a standard condition score of 0.2.

This assessment must be done in accordance with the current habitat hectare methodology available on the DEPI website.

Minimisation statement
The minimisation statement describes the steps taken to minimise impacts on biodiversity from the removal of native vegetation and includes information on how further minimisation would compromise the proposed use or development. Minimisation should be targeted to ensure loss is minimised in areas of native vegetation that make a significant contribution to Victoria's biodiversity. Native vegetation condition, strategic biodiversity score map and habitat importance maps for rare or threatened species are sources of information to inform minimisation.

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Assessment of biodiversity impact
The assessment should indicate whether the proposed removal of native vegetation will have a significant impact on Victoria's biodiversity, with specific regard to the proportional impact on habitat for any rare or threatened species. The *Biodiversity impact and offset requirements report* provides relevant information to meet this application requirement.

Offset strategy
The offset strategy details how offsets for the proposed removal of native vegetation are going to be delivered. Offsets can be purchased as native vegetation credits, or secured on land either in the same ownership as the permit applicant (first party offset) or owned by a third party (third party offset).

Key steps when compiling a planning permit application

Step 1: Confirm that the application is in the moderate or high risk-based pathway and that the use of this document is appropriate for the proposed native vegetation removal.

Step 2: Prepare a statement outlining the steps that have been taken to ensure that impacts on biodiversity from the removal native vegetation have been minimised and finalise the extent of native vegetation to be removed.

Step 3: Complete a habitat hectare assessment and submit GIS data to DEPI native vegetation support via nativevegetation.support@depi.vic.gov.au.

Step 4: Use the *Biodiversity impact and offset requirements report* provided by DEPI to prepare the impact statement.

Step 5: Prepare an offset strategy.

Step 6: Prepare any other relevant information requirements set out in Clause 52.16 or Clause 52.17 and the Guidelines.

Step 7: Complete the application checklist and lodge the application with the local council

Steps to prepare moderate and high risk-based pathway permit applications

This section provides more detail for each of the steps listed above. Further information can be found at www.depi.vic.gov.au/nativevegetation

Step 1: Confirm that the application is in the moderate or high risk-based pathway and that the use of this document is appropriate for the proposed native vegetation removal.

This document should be used in cases where:

- the proposed vegetation to be removed meets the definition of native vegetation in the Guidelines
- a permit is required to remove the native vegetation
- the proposed removal has been determined to be in the moderate or high risk-based pathway by the online Native Vegetation Information Management (NVIM) tool found at www.nvim.depi.vic.gov.au

Native vegetation definitions

A **remnant patch** is either:

- an area of vegetation where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understorey plant cover is native
- any area with three or more native canopy trees where the canopy foliage cover is at least 20 per cent of the area.

A **scattered tree** is a native canopy tree that does not form part of a remnant patch.

A **canopy tree** is a mature tree that is greater than three metres in height and is normally found in the upper layer of the relevant ecological vegetation class.

A **mature tree** is one that is able to set seed.

Foliage cover is determined by the proportion of the ground that is shaded by vegetation foliage when lit from directly above.

The risk-based pathway is determined by combining the extent of native vegetation removal (extent risk) and location risk as described in the Guidelines. Location risk is determined from the *Native vegetation location risk map*. Extent risk is determined from the native vegetation proposed to be removed.

Extent risk

- Extent is the area of a remnant patch or the number of scattered trees proposed to be removed.
- Where scattered trees and remnant patches are being removed, the scattered tree(s) are converted to a circular area with a radius of 15m. The area of the scattered trees is then added to the area of the remnant patch(es) and this combined extent is used as the extent risk.
- When determining the risk-based pathway of an application, extent risk includes the extent of any clearing that has taken place or could still take place under any permit that has been granted, for the same property with the same ownership, in the five years before the application was lodged.

Step 2: Prepare a statement outlining what steps have been taken to ensure that impacts on biodiversity from the removal of native vegetation have been minimised and finalise extent of proposed removal.

Moderate and high risk-based pathway applications require a statement outlining what steps have been taken to ensure that impacts on biodiversity from the removal of native vegetation have been minimised. The steps taken should have regard to the contribution the native vegetation to be removed and the native vegetation to be retained makes to Victoria's biodiversity. Minimisation efforts should be proportionate to the risk to biodiversity.

Impacts can be minimised through regional or landscape scale strategic planning exercises or at the site level.

a) Check if the property was subject to appropriate strategic planning process

Applicants should determine if the property has been subject to a DEPI supported (participated in, reviewed, or provided comments that have been incorporated) regional or landscape scale strategic planning process that resulted in minimising biodiversity impacts.

Strategic planning must comply with the following criteria:

- Include an assessment of the contribution made by native vegetation to Victoria's biodiversity, using up to date DEPI landscape scale information in addition to any site-based information.
- The strategic plan has been incorporated or is reflected in the relevant planning scheme.
- Development and land use has been directed to areas of native vegetation that makes the least contribution to Victoria's biodiversity.
- Native vegetation that makes a significant contribution to Victoria's biodiversity is protected and conserved
- Development and land use is planned in a way that ensures that the retained native vegetation can continue to make a significant contribution to Victoria's biodiversity in the future by ensuring that the land use and development is compatible with the remaining biodiversity values (e.g. siting developments that are likely to have offsite impacts away from sensitive or high value native vegetation).
- Offsets to address any native vegetation that will be removed are available and secured.

If this has occurred minimisation has been addressed and site based minimisation is not required. Include details of the strategic planning process in the application.

If the property was not subject to an acceptable strategic planning exercise, then site-based minimisation should be undertaken, complete stages b) and c) below.

b) Explain any site based minimisation actions
Minimisation efforts should target areas of native vegetation that makes the greatest contribution to Victoria's biodiversity. Native vegetation condition, rare or threatened species habitat and the strategic biodiversity score are all relevant when determining the contribution that native vegetation make to Victoria's biodiversity. Whether the biodiversity value of retained native vegetation can be maintained given the surrounding land-use should also be considered.

Understanding the contribution of native vegetation to Victoria's biodiversity

- A native vegetation assessor may assist in this process by assessing the condition of the native vegetation proposed to be removed and advising what areas should be the focus of minimisation efforts. The DEPI *Native vegetation condition map* may also be of assistance.
- The DEPI *Strategic biodiversity score map* gives an indication of the strategic importance of a location for Victoria's biodiversity, relative to other locations across the state. The strategic biodiversity score is a modelled layer that prioritises the importance of locations on the basis of rarity and level of depletion of vegetation type, rare and threatened species habitats, and condition of native vegetation.
- DEPI *Habitat importance maps* indicate whether a location is suitable habitat for a rare or threatened species and how important a location is for that particular species relative to other locations across the state. The mapped habitats are divided into two groups, highly localised habitats and disperse habitats. Highly localised habitats for rare or threatened species are very limited in extent and typically are highly restricted geographically, with less than 2,000 hectares of habitat remaining. Dispersed habitats are less limited in extent and less restricted than highly localised assets.
- The information referenced here can be obtained in GIS format by emailing data.vsdl@depi.vic.gov.au and can be viewed on the Biodiversity Interactive Map at www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/biodiversity/biodiversity-interactive-map

Impacts on biodiversity can be minimised at the site by:

- identifying different locations for the project footprint
- redesigning the project to reduce the extent of the footprint
- using alternative construction techniques that minimise impacts.

Describe the opportunities taken to locate, design and manage the proposed use or development to minimise impacts on biodiversity from the removal of native vegetation. Locating the footprint of native vegetation to be removed on areas that make the least contribution to Victoria's biodiversity (lower condition score, lower strategic biodiversity score, no rare or threatened species requiring a specific offset) will result in lower offset obligations and reduced costs.

c) Demonstrate the impacts of further minimisation
Once applicants have undertaken steps to minimise, they are required to demonstrate with evidence that further minimisation will undermine the objectives of the project or materially increase its cost.

d) Finalise the extent
Following the minimisation steps the final area of native vegetation proposed to be removed is identified and mapped. If the area of clearing is different to that originally proposed and mapped in the NVIM tool, it is advisable to re-determine the risk-based pathway. If the application is now in the low risk-based pathway, complete your application using the NVIM tool. If it is still in the moderate or high risk-based pathway, continue using this guide.

Step 3: Complete habitat hectare assessment and submit GIS data to DEPI native vegetation support

a) Undertake a habitat hectare assessment
The habitat hectare assessment is done by a competent native vegetation assessor. It determines the condition scores of the identified habitat zones in the native vegetation proposed to be removed. Scattered trees are not subject to a habitat hectare assessment and are assigned a standard condition score of 0.2.

The habitat hectare assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the current manual, available at www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/biodiversity/native-vegetation/native-vegetation-permitted-clearing-regulations/biodiversity-information-tools

Partial clearing

Bushfire protection and other factors may require clearing of some vegetation from a patch of native vegetation. Where this is the case, determine and record the condition of the patch. Then,

- if clearing of only native understorey vegetation is proposed, the assessed condition score is halved when determining the habitat hectare loss amount for these areas
- if removal of native canopy trees is proposed from a patch while leaving the understorey intact, each tree is mapped as a scattered tree (circle with radius of 15 metres) to determine the area of loss. They are assigned the assessed condition score of the patch
- if removal of canopy trees and native understorey vegetation is proposed, canopy trees and native understorey vegetation are treated as above and added together with the total combined extent loss not exceeding the loss of completely clearing the patch. Refer to Appendix C.

Unable to asses condition score of native vegetation

In circumstances of severe short term change in native vegetation condition (this includes during a declared drought, following fire, flooding, slashing, unusually intense grazing or during the dry phase of a wetland), the *Native vegetation extent map* should be used to determine if vegetation is native and the condition score is taken from the *Native vegetation condition map*.

b) Map the proposed clearing site using a Geographic Information System (GIS) package

Map the native vegetation to be removed using a GIS package that is capable of producing a GIS shapefile[1]. Appendix A defines the specific data standard for mapping proposed native vegetation removal. Appendix C gives information for mapping when partial clearing is proposed.

All remnant patches are mapped as a polygon. There is no longer a requirement to map individual large trees within a remnant patch. Remnant patch polygons must not be multi-part and must not overlap.

Scattered trees are mapped as a circular polygon with a 15 metre radius. Scattered trees may overlap one another, but must not be multi-part or self-intersect. Where only canopy trees are being removed from a remnant patch these are mapped as scattered trees.

Populate the attribute table in accordance with the data standard and ensure that the data is in an accepted projection.

Properties with a permit granted to remove native vegetation in the past five years

Any native vegetation that has been removed or could still be removed under any permit that has been granted, on the same property with the same ownership, in the five years before the proposed application is lodged must also be mapped in the GIS data and included in the application. Map the extent and location of this native vegetation and use the condition score from the habitat hectare assessment undertaken when that application was prepared.

The extent and location of this past permitted clearing will be used to confirm the risk-based pathway of the proposed application and to undertake the specific -general offset test to determine if a specific offset is required. It is not used to determine the amount of offset required, which only takes into account the current clearing proposal.

c) Email the GIS data to DEPI native vegetation support

Send the mapped extent of native vegetation to be removed and any native vegetation that was permitted to be removed in the past five years to DEPI native vegetation support via email: nativevegetation.support@depi.vic.gov.au. This data must be included in a single GIS shapefile and must be to the standard and format described in Appendix A. Data that does not meet these requirements cannot be processed and will be returned for amendment.

Step 4: Use the *Biodiversity information and offset requirement* report provided by DEPI to prepare the biodiversity impact statement

DEPI processes the GIS data provided and provides the *Biodiversity impact and offset requirements report* (BIOR) to the person who submitted the data for processing via email.

This BIOR report must be lodged with the permit application and includes:

- a confirmation of the risk-based pathway
- the strategic biodiversity score of the native vegetation to be removed
- the habitat hectares for each habitat zone
- a list of the rare or threatened species that require a specific offset as a result of the specific-general offset test including the proportional impact of the clearing on each of the species' habitat and the habitat importance score(s)
- the offset requirements in general biodiversity equivalence units and/or specific biodiversity equivalence units, and the required offset attributes
- a list of the rare or threatened species habitats that are mapped at the site.

The BIOR report is sufficient to meet the application requirement to describe the proportional impact of the proposed removal of native vegetation on habitat for rare or threatened species.

[1] The GIS shapefile is compatible with the ArcMap

Step 5: Prepare an offset strategy

Moderate and high risk-based pathway applications for permits to remove native vegetation must include an offset strategy. The BIOR report provided in Step 4 includes the offset requirements.

The purpose of the offset strategy is to provide assurances that the offset requirements can be met, should a permit be granted. The offset strategy explains how the offset requirements are intended to be met and should identify potential offsets that can be bought or secured if a permit is granted to remove that native vegetation. Offsets can be provided by purchasing an existing native vegetation credit, or securing a new first party or third party offset site.

a) Existing native vegetation credit
For applicants proposing to use native vegetation credits to meet their offset requirements provide evidence that native vegetation credits are available. A credit statement(s) with evidence that a trade is pending is desirable.

b) New first party general offset sites to be secured
For applicants proposing to generate a general offset on their own land (first party) see the *First party general offset kit* and calculator at www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/biodiversity/native-vegetation/native-vegetation-permitted-clearing-regulations/native-vegetation-offsets for details.

The offset strategy for first party general offset site must include the following information:

- map of the property showing the proposed offset site
- a statement detailing how the site(s) meets the offset eligibility criteria set out in the *First party general offset kit*
- a statement noting agreement to and understanding of the required management actions and security agreement
- the calculated gain resulting from the management and security commitments using the *First party general offset gain calculator*
- the attributes of the offset site(s) determined using the *First party general offset kit.*

c) New first party specific offset sites or third party offsets not on yet on credit register to be secured
The offset strategy for applicants proposing to generate a specific offsets on their own land or any offset on third party's land (but not native vegetation credits) must include the following information:

- map of the property showing the proposed offset site
- a statement detailing how the site(s) meets the offset eligibility criteria set out in the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual*
- where the offset is a proposed third party offset(s) then include a statement from the landowner(s) that indicates they are willing to register the offset site(s) in the Native Vegetation Credit Register, and commit to the required management actions
- the calculated gain resulting from the management and security commitments using the native vegetation gain calculator
- the attributes of the offset site(s) determined using *Offset site report* (see box below).

Useful information

Offset site eligibility

The proposed offset site(s) must meet the eligibility criteria in the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual*. Offset sites cannot increase bushfire risk to dwellings. In areas under a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) offset sites should not be located within 150 m of any dwellings. On properties not covered by a BMO offset sites should not be located within 50 metres of any dwellings.

Biodiversity equivalence units at offset site

To determine the biodiversity equivalence units that are provided by a potential offset site(s), it must be mapped and a habitat hectare assessment must be done to determine the condition scores. The site gain is then determined based on the offset site landowners' management and security commitments. A GIS shapefile in accordance with the data standard in Appendix B should be submitted to DEPI. DEPI uses this data to determine the specific and/or general biodiversity equivalence units available at the offset site and provides this an *Offset site report*.

Estimated scores

It is adequate for the purposes of the offset strategy to provide estimated site condition and gain scores when submitting data to DEPI native vegetation support. However, once the offset site is to be secured and registered accurate condition scores, determined by a habitat hectare assessment and an agreed management plan and security agreements will be required.

Step 6: Prepare any other relevant information requirements set out in the Clause 52.16 or Clause 52.17 and the Guidelines.

More detailed information on how to meet other application requirements is set out below.

Recent dated photographs of the native vegetation to be removed
All photographs must be clear and show whether the vegetation is a remnant patch or scattered tree(s). Provide photos of the native vegetation proposed to be removed and provide photos taken from different locations. If the area of native vegetation is large provide photos that are indicative of the variation in vegetation. Where practical, to assist scattered tree identification, include close-up photographs of leaf, bark, flower and fruit.

Topographic information including saline discharge areas and areas of existing erosion
Topographic information, highlighting ridges, crests and hilltops, streams and waterways, slopes of more than 20 per cent, drainage lines, low lying areas, saline discharge areas, and areas of existing erosion must be included in the permit application. DEPI native vegetation support does not provide guidance on how to meet this application requirement for the purposes of the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations, but it will be considered by the responsible authority when considering other matters under Clause 52.16-6 or Clause 52.17-5. The native vegetation assessor may be able to assist and the GeoVic website may also help www.energyandresources.vic.gov.au/earth-resources/maps-reports-and-data/geovic. Once at the map layer, zoom to your area of interest and add required data layers.

Property vegetation plan if one applies to the site
If an approved property vegetation plan (PVP) applies to your property submit this with the application. A PVP is a voluntary agreement between DEPI and a landowner which considers all the vegetation on their property and how it is to be managed over the next ten years. A permit application on a property with an approved PVP will not be objected to if the removal is in accordance with the PVP and the permit will be granted for ten years.

Statement if clearing is for defendable space
Where the purpose of removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation is to create defendable space, supply a statement that explains why removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation is necessary. The statement must have regard to other available bushfire risk mitigation measures. This requirement does not apply to the creation of defendable space in conjunction with an application under the Bushfire Management Overlay.

Detail of past permitted clearing on the same property with the same ownership in the last five years
Include details of any other native vegetation that was permitted to be removed on the same property with the same ownership in the five year period before the application for a permit to remove native vegetation is lodged. This includes any clearing that has taken place or could still legally take place under a granted permit.

This information is taken into account when determining the risk-based pathway of the application, and the type of offset required. It is not taken into account when determining the amount of offset required.

Only under Clause 52.16 – Statement responding to the Native Vegetation Precinct Plan (NVPP)
Include a statement which explains how the proposal responds to the precinct plan considerations in 52.16-6. These include:

- the purpose and objective of the NVPP
- the effect on native vegetation identified for protection in the NVPP
- the potential for the effectiveness of the NVPP to be undermined
- the potential for the proposed development to lead to the loss or fragmentation of native vegetation identified for protection in the NVPP
- offset requirements in the NVPP.

Step 7: Complete the checklist below and lodge the application with the local council.

Use the permit application checklist on page 8 to ensure your application contains all required information. Compile and lodge your application with your local council.

Application consistency

It is important to ensure the information submitted in your application for a planning permit is consistent. The extent of native vegetation removal depicted in the BIOR report must be the same as the extent of native vegetation proposed in the permit application. If the extent of proposed removal changes after receiving your BIOR report, amended GIS shapefiles will need to be submitted so that new offset requirements can be determined. This may also require an amendment to the offset strategy.

Permit application checklist – moderate and high risk-based pathway

Application requirement	Met by
Location of native vegetation to be removed	BA Report
Description of native vegetation to be removed (area of patch, number of scattered trees)	BA & BIOR Reports
Maps and plans of the native vegetation to be removed	BA Report
The risk-based pathway of the application	BA & BIOR Reports
Recent dated photographs of native vegetation to be removed	Applicant
Topographic information , saline discharge areas and areas of existing erosion	Applicant
Copy of property vegetation plan **(only if one has been prepared)**	Applicant
Defendable space statement **(only if applicable)**	Applicant
Details of other native vegetation that was permitted to be cleared on the same property with the same ownership in the five year period before the application is lodged **(only if applicable)**	Applicant
Strategic biodiversity score of the native vegetation to be removed	BA & BIOR Reports
Offset requirement if removal is permitted	BIOR Report
Habitat hectare assessment	Applicant appointed native vegetation assessor
Statement outlining how impacts on biodiversity have been minimised	Applicant
Assessment of whether the removal will have a significant impact on Victoria's biodiversity, with specific regard to the proportional impact on rare or threatened species	BIOR Report
An offset strategy detailing how offset will be secured	Applicant

Where:

BA Report = *Biodiversity assessment report* generated by the Native Vegetation Information Management (NVIM) tool

BIOR Report = *Biodiversity impact and offset requirements report* generated by native vegetation support at DEPI following processing of GIS data provided by applicant

Applicant – may choose to seek assistance from specialist consultants as required

Appendix A: Data standards for clearing sites

The following specifies the standards that site assessment data must meet when submitting to DEPI native vegetation support. Email address: nativevegetation.support@depi.vic.gov.au

Where data meets the required clearing data standards set out in this document, DEPI can provide *a Biodiversity information and offset requirements* BIOR report with the following information:

- Confirmation of the risk-based pathway.
- The strategic biodiversity score of the native vegetation to be removed.
- The names of species that require a specific offset as a result of the specific-general offset test (species ID, scientific and common name).
- The proportional impact of the clearing on each of the species that require a specific offset as a result of the specific-general offset test.
- The offset requirements, including the offset amount specified in biodiversity equivalence units, and the required offset attributes.

Note: Data that does not meet the required data standards will be returned to the applicant for amendment.

Required data standards for clearing sites:

General:

- GIS data is saved as ESRI shapefiles
- GIS data is in the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 **AND** projection VICGRID94, MGA54 or MGA55
- Projection is included in the file name, for example: PP-123_Coburn_GDA94.shp
- Submitted files include the .prj file
- Shapefiles do not contain M or Z values

Areas mapped:

- Shapefiles include spatial data of only the clearing sites (the actual areas of native vegetation that are proposed to be removed) and any clearing that has been permitted in the previous five years
- All areas to be removed within the proposal area (contained in a single permit application) are included in one shapefile, including both remnant patches and scattered trees
- Remnant patches are depicted with polygons
- All scattered trees are represented by a single circular polygon with a radius of 15 metres. This can be achieved by mapping scattered trees as points and then applying a buffer of 15 metres in the GIS program
- Partial clearing sites appear in full in the shapefile where only understorey clearing is proposed
- Where only canopy trees are to be removed from a remnant patch map them as scattered trees

Data integrity

- Polygons are not multi-part and contain no self-intersects
- Remnant patch polygons do not overlap (all adjoining zones are ‘snapped’ to one another with no gaps occurring)
- Scattered trees can overlap with each other and can overlap portions of remnant patches as required
- Polygons do not cross property boundaries unless the project area does

Data attributes

- The .dbf file must contain fields specified in Table 1:
    - The combination of site ID (HH_SI) and habitat zone ID (HH_ZI) creates a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile
    - Past clearing areas must include “Past” in the HH_ZI field
    - Fields containing area and condition values are numeric fields, not string fields
    - Where partial clearing is proposed two condition fields are populated – one with original score from the habitat hectare assessment (HH_H_S) and another with the adjusted scores as required (HH_H_SP)
    - Scattered trees are assigned a default condition score of 0.20 and this is included in the HH_H_S field
    - Canopy trees mapped as scattered trees are assigned the condition score of the remnant patch that they are being removed from.

Table 1: Required format and inputs of GIS data attribute table

Name of attribute	Short name	Field type	Description	Domain	Example
Project ID	HH_PAI	VarChar(30)	Project ID: Unique Identifier for Project	Text or Numbers	PP-123_Coburn
Site ID	HH_SI	Number (no decimals)	Unique site identification number Note: The combination of site ID and zone ID must create a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile.	0,1,2,3,4…	1
Zone ID	HH_ZI	Character (4)	Zone identification number Note: The combination of site ID and zone ID must create a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile. Any area of past clearing to be labelled “Past”	Text or Numbers	HZ1
Vegetation type	HH_TY	VarChar(2)	Remnant patch or Scattered tree Canopy tree	RP for Remnant patch ST for Scattered tree CT for Canopy tree picking	RP
Assessors	HP_CP	VarChar(60)	First and Last Name of Data Collector	FirstName LastName	John Smith
Date	HP_YMD	VarChar(10)	Date	DD-MM-YYYY	
Habitat/ Condition score	HH_H_S	Number (decimal places)	Final habitat/condition score form the habitat hectare assessment Scattered trees are assigned the default condition score of 0.2 Canopy trees being removed from a patch are assigned the condition score of the patch	A number between 0.00 and 1.00	0.42
Habitat/ Condition score partial	HH_H_SP **(only include if partial clearing is proposed)**	Number (decimal places)	Adjusted habitat/ condition Score – Where only some understorey vegetation is being removed from a patch, the condition score is halved and recorded. For polygons of full clearing this should be populated with the original condition score Tree scores remain the same Refer to Appendix C for more details on how to account for partial clearing	A number between 0.00 and 1.00	0.21
Area (hectares)	HH_A	Number (three decimal places)	Area of the polygon	#.###	2.334

Appendix B: Data standards for offset sites

The following specifies the standards that proposed offset site data must meet when submitting to DEPI native vegetation support. Email address: nativevegetation.support@depi.vic.gov.au

Where data meets the required offset data standards set out in this document, DEPI can provide a *Offset site report* with the following information:

- The general biodiversity equivalence units available in each biodiversity class area.
- Where applicable the specific biodiversity equivalence units available in each biodiversity class area and the name of each species for which the site can provide offsets (species ID, scientific and common name).
- The strategic biodiversity score of each biodiversity class area.

The biodiversity class area (BCA) is the organisational unit of an offset site. BCAs are determined by the unique combination of general and specific biodiversity equivalence units calculated at each location across the offset site.

Note: Data that does not meet the required data standards will be returned to the applicant for amendment.

Required data standards for offset sites:

General

- GIS data is saved as ESRI shapefiles
- GIS data is in the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 **AND** projection VICGRID94, MGA54 or MGA55
- Projection is included in the file name, for example: PP-123_Coburn_GDA94.shp
- Submitted files include the .prj file
- Shapefiles do not contain M or Z values

Areas mapped:

- Shapefiles only include the proposed offset site (the actual areas of native vegetation that are to be secured or have been secured as an offset)
- All areas proposed to be secured at the offset site must be included in one shapefile, including remnant patches and revegetation as applicable.
- Remnant patches and revegetation areas are depicted with polygons

Data integrity

- Polygons are not multi-part and contain no self-intersects
- Remnant patch and revegetation polygons do not overlap. All adjoining zones are ‘snapped’ to one another with no gaps between adjoining polygons
- Polygons do not cross property boundaries unless the project area does

Data attributes

- The .dbf file must contain fields specified in Table 2
    - The combination of site ID (HH_SI) and habitat zone ID (HH_ZI) must create a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile
    - Fields containing area, condition and gain per hectare values are numeric fields, not string fields.

Table 2: Required format and inputs of GIS data attribute table

Name of attribute	Short name	Field type	Description	Domain	Example
Project ID	HH_PAI	VarChar(30)	Offset ID: Unique Identifier for the proposed offset site	Text or Numbers	PP-123_Coburn
Site ID	HH_SI	Number (no decimals)	Unique site identification number Note: The combination of site ID and zone ID must create a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile.	0,1,2,3,4…	1
Zone ID	HH_ZI	Character (4)	Zone identification number Note: The combination of site ID and zone ID must create a unique identifier for each polygon within the shapefile.	Text or Numbers	HZ1
Vegetation type	HH_TY	VarChar(2)	Remnant patch Revegetation or	RP for Remnant patch RV for Revegetation	RP
Assessors	HP_CP	VarChar(60)	First and Last Name of Data Collector	FirstName LastName	John Smith
Date	HP_YMD	VarChar(10)	Date	DD-MM-YYYY	
Habitat/ Condition score	HH_H_S	Number (decimal places)	Final Habitat/ condition Score – Sum of Condition Score and Landscape Context Score as determined by the habitat hectare assessment	A number between 0.00 and 1.00	0.42
Gain per hectare	HH_G_HA	Number (decimal places)	Gain per hectare – Note: the total gain achievable per polygon, measured in habitat hectares is divided by the area (in hectares) of the polygon	A number between 0.00 and 1.00	0.240
Area (hectares)	HH_A	Number (three decimal places)	The area proposed to be registered on title and in the security agreement	#.###	2.334

Appendix C: Partial Clearing

Partial clearing is the removal of part but not all of the native vegetation from a remnant patch in one location. It can be the removal of canopy trees from a patch of native vegetation or the removal of understorey vegetation only from a patch or a combination. Examples of partial clearing include:

- removing canopy trees within a patch of native vegetation e.g. for selective harvesting
- removing some or all understorey vegetation e.g. around new dwellings for bushfire protection or to improve sight lines at road intersections
- removing some or all understorey vegetation as well as some canopy trees e.g. bushfire protection

Determining the risk-based pathway for partial clearing

Removing some canopy trees from a patch of native vegetation
When only some canopy trees are to be removed from a patch of native vegetation, the trees are treated as if they are scattered trees. The location and number of trees to be removed determines the risk-based pathway.

Removing some or all understorey native vegetation

When removing some or all understorey vegetation from a remnant patch the full extent (in hectares) of where the native vegetation will be removed is used to determine the risk based pathway of the application. For example, the total area of a residential development where a Bushfire Management Overlay applies, including the inner and the outer zones, is used to determine the risk-based pathway.

Removing some or all understorey native vegetation and some canopy trees
When removing some or all understorey vegetation as well as some canopy trees from a patch the full extent (in hectares) of where the native vegetation will be removed is used to determine the risk based pathway of the application.

Calculating offset requirement for partial clearing

As only part of the native vegetation is being removed the offset requirement is adjusted accordingly:

Removing some canopy trees from a patch of native vegetation
The offset for removing some canopy trees is calculated using the standard extent and the condition score of the remnant patch they are being removed from.

Removing some or all understorey native vegetation
The offset amount is determined by halving the condition score of the native vegetation to be removed and combining this with the area of impact.

Removing some or all understorey native vegetation and some canopy trees
Removing native vegetation from all structural layers of a remnant patch has a significant impact on the ecological integrity of the remnant patch. Offset requirements for the understorey is determined as above, this is added to the offset requirement for the canopy trees, up to a maximum. The maximum offset requirement for this form of clearing will be equivalent to complete clearing of the remnant patch.

GIS shapefiles including partial clearing

An application in the moderate or high risk-based pathway requires that GIS shapefiles meeting the required data standard are submitted to DEPI native vegetation support for offset determination. This section details the adjustments and additional information requirements if the clearing includes partial clearing.

Data including partial clearing requires an additional field in the GIS attribute table, HH_H_SP, that contains the adjusted condition scores as applicable.

Removing some canopy trees from a patch of native vegetation
Each canopy tree that is being removed from a remnant patch is mapped as a circle with a 15 metre radius. The condition score for canopy trees within a remnant patch is the condition score of the patch and this score should be included in the HH_H_S field and the HH_H_SP field (as applicable).

Removing some or all native understory vegetation

The total area where the understorey native vegetation is being removed is mapped as a polygon. The site assessed condition score is included in the field HH_H_S, this score is then halved and included in the field HH_H_SP.

Removing some or all understory vegetation and some canopy trees from the same remnant patch
There are three stages for this scenario

1) **Identify the area where understorey native vegetation will be removed**
   The total area where the understorey native vegetation is being removed is mapped as a polygon. The site assessed condition score is included in the field HH_H_S, this score is then halved and included in the field HH_H_SP.
2) **Mark the canopy trees to be removed from within the same patch**
   Each canopy tree that is being removed from the remnant patch is mapped as a circle with a 15 metre radius. The condition score for canopy trees within a remnant patch is the condition score of the patch and this score should be included in the HH_H_S field and the HH_H_SP field.
3) **Check the combined area of the canopy trees and the remnant patch**
   If the area of the canopy trees adds up to or exceeds the area of the remnant patch they are being removed from, then they should be excluded from the data submitted for processing and the condition score of the patch should not be halved. Such a situation will be treated as complete clearing of the remnant patch.

Removing a combination of complete and partial clearing on a site
All areas where native vegetation will be removed are included in one GIS shapefile complying with the clearing data standard. This data will include two condition fields HH_H_S and HH_H_SP. Field HH_H_S will contain the site assessed condition score as determined by the habitat hectare assessment. Field HH_H_SP will include the adjusted condition score (for areas of partial clearing) or the site assessed condition score (for areas of complete or assumed complete clearing). This HH_H_SP field will be used by DEPI when determining the offset requirements.

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