

SHEET 3: CONDITION ASSESSMENT - NATIVE VEGETATION

For native bushland and grassland sites and paddocks containing scattered shade trees.

Site or paddock number or name:	Monitoring date:
Assessment questions	Answer Yes, No or N/A
1. Is the area fenced to manage stock access and grazing? <i>Healthy bush should be rested for long periods to allow regeneration. To achieve this, it should be fenced off.</i>	
2. Is there regeneration of native trees and shrubs, or if in grassland, regular germination of native herbs eg perennials such as lilies or orchids and annuals such as daisies? <i>Regeneration of trees and shrubs is necessary for the bush to maintain health, diversity and a range of habitats. An understorey of shrubs encourages small insect eating birds and other native animals.</i>	
3. Is there a diverse range of tree and shrub species present, eg more than 20 (coast), 15 (tablelands), 10 (western slopes and plains)? (Note: healthy river red gum forest may have only one tree and 5-10 shrub species present). <i>Diversity encourages a range of native animals and helps the bush withstand attacks of insects and other adverse conditions.</i>	
4. If grassland, is there a diverse range of grasses and broad leaf herbs present?	
5. Is there adequate ground cover, eg leaves, bark and twigs, or litter (dead grasses)? <i>Ground cover indicates whether the area is being disturbed by stock and is a measure of tree canopy density and the domination of exotic grasses and weeds.</i>	
6. Are mosses or lichens on rocks, fallen branches and the ground surface, or are these species, along with liverworts, forming a crust on bare soil?	
7. Are weeds uncommon, sparsely scattered, absent, or mainly around edges of the area? <i>The understorey may have exotic weeds present. Too many are undesirable and you may need a management plan for their control. Weeds compete with native plants for light, space, water and nutrients.</i>	
8. Is there a very low incidence of pest animals, eg foxes and rabbits? <i>Remnant bush can be a refuge for pest animals as well as natives. The feral animals should be controlled.</i>	
9. Is the patch shape a block or part of a corridor more than 30 metres wide rather than a thin strip? <i>Blocks of native vegetation have less edge area than strips, so they are less influenced by changes in levels of weeds, predators, noise and climatic effects.</i>	
10. Is the area greater than 1 ha (coast), 5 ha (tablelands), 10 ha (western slopes), 20 ha (plains), 50 ha (Western Division)?	
11. Is the remnant linked to other remnants by corridors, eg. roadside vegetation, or scattered trees no more than 50 m apart ? <i>Corridors provide shelter and pathways for native organisms (other than birds) to move over the landscape for feeding, breeding, roosting and expanding territory.</i>	
12. Is there a mix of tree ages present, ie saplings through to old growth with hollows? <i>A range of ages and conditions means the bush is regenerating itself and each stage of growth is suitable habitat for native organisms.</i>	



SHEET 3: CONDITION ASSESSMENT - NATIVE VEGETATION (CONT)

13. If trees are present is an understorey also present? <i>An understorey of shrubs encourages small insect eating birds and other native animals.</i>	
14. Is the understorey mostly comprised of native shrubs and / or grasses and broad leaf herbs?	
15. Are there standing trees (alive or dead) with hollows, present in the remnant or paddock? <i>Dead trees with hollows are essential for roosting and nesting of a large range of native birds such as parrots and of bats.</i>	
16. Are the trees mainly healthy, with little or no dieback? <i>Dieback is apparent if there are bare twigs at the outer part of the tree canopy. It is usually a sign of severe insect attack.</i>	
17. Are there less than 20 % of trees affected by mistletoe? <i>Mistletoe is a parasite that invades trees and causes them to lose vigour. Where many trees in an area are affected it is likely to indicate that the area of vegetation is under severe stress.</i>	
18. Are there logs and fallen timber on the ground? <i>Logs and dead material are essential habitat for smaller native organisms. But they can also be a harbour for pest animals.</i>	
19. If scattered paddock trees are unfenced, are stock camps absent? <i>Bare ground, bare tree roots or the movement of soil all can indicate erosion which needs to be managed and controlled.</i>	
20. If scattered paddock trees are unfenced, is evidence of stock ringbarking or rubbing absent?	
21. Is the area free of herbicide, insecticide or fertiliser overspray from adjoining areas? <i>Herbicides and insecticides can kill native plants and small organisms. Fertiliser encourages exotic species by raising nutrient levels.</i>	
22. Is the area free from the threat of salinity and / or high water tables?	
Total number of “yes” answers	

CONDITION RATING - NATIVE VEGETATION

Number of “yes” answers			Vegetation condition rating	Mapping colour	Need for management attention
Remnant bushland	Remnant grassland	Scattered paddock trees			
14 +	9 +	12 +	Healthy	Green	Maintain current management
9 - 13	6 - 8	8 - 11	Good	Blue	Needs some management attention
5 - 8	3 - 5	5 - 7	Fair	Yellow	Needs a significant level of management attention
0 - 4	0 - 2	0 - 4	Poor	Red	Urgent management necessary if you wish to retain area as stock shelter