



Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020 – What's new

The NSW Government has amended the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) to improve its usability in assessing biodiversity values. This fact sheet provides an overview of the key differences between BAM 2017 and BAM 2020. The changes are effective from 22 October 2020.

Context

The BAM is used to assess biodiversity values as part of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. The BAM 2020 replaces the first version of the BAM, which was published in 2017 when the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme commenced.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring the BAM is scientifically robust and practical to apply. The BAM 2020 includes a range of improvements. The changes were publicly exhibited in September 2019 and finalised following careful consideration of the submissions received. Thank you to everyone who made a submission – we value your feedback and interest. Minor amendments are also included based on outcomes from applying the BAM for over two years.

What's new and different?

The BAM 2020 includes the following key improvements.

Usability

Edits have improved the language and readability of the BAM, making it easier to understand and apply. Terminology is consistent and aligned with legislation and regulations. Improved definitions in the glossary provide clarity for users.

Streamlined assessment

There is a new streamlined assessment module for assessing planted native vegetation. The streamlined assessment module for paddock trees has been renamed 'scattered trees' to enable wider application including to urban areas.

Amendments to the small area module include allowing its use on land identified by the Biodiversity Values Map and reducing the area clearing threshold for when it may be applied. Other amendments ensure the assessment of:

- a threatened ecological community
- incidental recording of a threatened species on the site
- all species at risk of serious and irreversible impacts (SAII).

These changes reduce the risk of cumulative loss of threatened species.

A new appendix has been added, providing checklists of report requirements for the three streamlined assessment modules.

Prescribed and indirect impacts

Assessment requirements for prescribed and indirect impacts are clarified. The new Chapter 6 requires prescribed biodiversity impacts to be identified. Chapter 7 outlines requirements to

avoid and minimise prescribed and indirect impacts. Chapter 8 outlines requirements for assessing and mitigating these impacts. It also provides guidance on options for when biodiversity credits may be used to offset or mitigate these types of impacts.

Serious and irreversible impacts

The impact assessment criteria for entities at risk of SAIL now align with the Principles defined in the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation. Assessors are required to address these criteria. Such information will aid the decision-maker in forming an opinion on whether the impact will be serious and irreversible.

Biodiversity certification

There is a new appendix to support strategic biodiversity certification proposals. This appendix provides a method to value land-based conservation measures (e.g. reservation of land and development controls) in terms of biodiversity credits.

Section numbering

Formatting and section numbering have changed to meet accessibility standards so all users can access the BAM. BAM 2020 has 12 chapters instead of 13 and section references in BAM 2020 are different to references in BAM 2017 e.g. Appendix 1 is now Appendix B and landscape context is now outlined in Chapter 3 instead of 4.

Biodiversity gain

Some minor amendments have been made to the settings that are used to predict improvement in biodiversity values from management actions undertaken at biodiversity stewardship sites. These changes provide a more consistent and robust approach to estimating improvement in biodiversity values.

Key elements have not changed

No changes have been made to the equations for calculating the biodiversity credit requirements for offset obligations. Similarly, the approach and metrics used to assess the condition of native vegetation and the habitat suitability for threatened species remain unchanged.

Transitional arrangements

To minimise disruption, transitional arrangements allow BAM 2017 to continue to be used for 12 months or longer for strategic biodiversity certification proposals, up to 12 months for major project and non-strategic (standard) biodiversity certification proposals and up to 6-months for all other proposals.

Want to know more or provide feedback?

Visit the [BAM 2020](#) page on our website to download the new BAM, learn more about the transitional arrangements and find out about the release of BAM support documents such as operational manuals and guidelines.

We will host a webinar to describe the changes in the new BAM and answer questions. You can register to attend a webinar at [BOS Support Webinars](#). If you can't attend on the day, the webinar will be recorded and published on the [Energy, Environment and Science website](#) so you can access it at any time.

We welcome your questions and feedback. Please visit [Biodiversity Offsets Scheme support](#) or email bam.support@environment.nsw.gov.au.