natural resources commission

15 February 2010

Hon. Frank Sartor, MP
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
Level 33, Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister

Advice on proposed amendments to Chapter 7 of the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology

I refer to the letter dated 2 December 2009 (enclosed) from the then Minister for Climate Change and the Environment requesting the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to provide advice on the suitability of proposed amendments to Chapter 7 of the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology (Assessment Methodology). The Minister sought this advice in accordance with clause 25(1)(a) of the *Native Vegetation Regulation 2005*.

NRC Recommendations

The NRC recommends that the Minister adopt all of the proposed amendments with the provision that clearing types 'a' through to 'c' are only permitted for the invasive native species *Acacia farnesiana* and *Acacia stenophylla*.

The NRC also recommends that the best available expertise within government agencies be used while developing such amendments to the Assessment Methodology. In this instance, the Botanic Gardens Trust was not consulted effectively.

Proposed amendments

Of the 15 proposed amendments, four amendments are extensions to adjacent bioregions for three species (*Acacia farnesiana*, *Geijera parviflora* and *Acacia stenophylla*) already listed in the Invasive Native Scrub Species Database (the database). The remaining 11 recommendations are minor spelling corrections for the database.

The NRC notes the following four key amendments:

- Amendments 1 and 4 recommend the inclusion of *Acacia farnesiana* (Mimosa) for Brigalow Belt South and Nandewar bioregions to the database. The Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority has provided a submission to the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) recommending this inclusion
- Amendment 11 recommends the inclusion of *Geijera parviflora* (Wilga) for Brigalow Belt South bioregion to the database. The Western Catchment Management Authority has provided a submission to DECCW recommending this inclusion

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- Amendment 14 recommends the inclusion of *Acacia stenophylla* (Black Wattle) for Nandewar bioregion to the database. The Western Catchment Management Authority has provided a submission to DECCW recommending this inclusion.

The NRC believes the proposed amendments are logical, considered and justified based on the available information, and as explained below.

Acacia farnesiana is a well-known invasive native scrub species and is already listed in adjacent bioregions.

There is limited evidence of *Geijera parviflora* as an invasive species. However, its occurrence as localised, patch-scale dense stands is documented. Inclusion of this species, moderated by limited stem retention, is a logical compromise providing capacity to actively manage while retaining ecological integrity of the species in local patches.

Acacia stenophylla is known to regenerate in dense stands after floods and so has the capacity to invade under certain circumstances. It is already listed in adjacent bioregions.

Review process

In undertaking this review, the NRC posted the proposed amendments on its website and invited submissions from key stakeholders and the community. We conducted an internal review and engaged a scientist to conduct an independent external review.

We received submissions from the following and considered them in preparing our advice:

- Botanic Gardens Trust
- NSW Department of Industry and Investment
- Namoi CMA
- Western CMA
- David Eldridge.

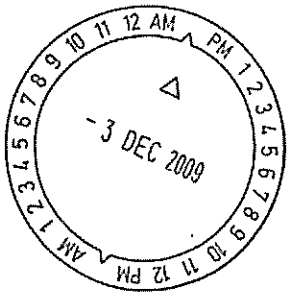
Yours sincerely

John Williams
Commissioner

Enclosure

New South Wales

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
Minister for Energy
Minister for Corrective Services
Minister for Public Sector Reform
Special Minister of State



DOC09/18913

Dr John Williams
Commissioner
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Dr Williams

I am writing to seek the advice of the Natural Resources Commission on amendments to the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology (EOAM) proposed by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water. I am seeking this advice in accordance with clause 25(1)(a) of the *Native Vegetation Regulation 2005.*

The proposed amendments recommended by the Department are concerned with Table 7.1 of the EOAM, which lists those Invasive Native Scrub species that may be treated in accordance with the EOAM. The attached document includes a comprehensive table that identifies all proposed changes (highlighted) and reasons for the changes.

In accordance with clause 25(1)l of the *Native Vegetation Regulation 2005,* please provide your advice in the form of a formal recommendation to me. This advice may be provided up to 30 days from the date on which you receive this letter but I would be grateful if you could provide your recommendation as soon as possible. Please note that, as required by the *Native Vegetation Regulation 2005,* your advice on this matter is required to be made public.

To assist in preparing your advice, I invite you or Commission officers to contact the Department's Mr Tom Grosskopf, Director, Landscapes and Ecosystems Conservation on 9995 6739, or by email tom.grosskopf@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

John Robertson, MLC
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment

Enclosure 2/12/09

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Attachment A

Changes required to Table 7.1 Invasive Native Scrub Species Database contained within the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005 Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology

Catchment Management Authority – IBRA region	Invasive Native Species	Retention requirements			INS type of clearing permitted	Reason for change
		Number of plants per hectare to be retained	Retention required by criterion 18A (clearing types d-f only)	Maximum dbh allowed to be cleared		
Border Rivers/Gwydir--BBS	Acacia farnesiana (Mimosa)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	New recommendation(1)
Border Rivers/Gwydir--BBS	Olearia elliptica (Stickey Daisy Bush, Peach Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Border Rivers/Gwydir--DRP	Dodonaea viscosa subsp. angustissima (Narrowleaf Hopbush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Border Rivers/Gwydir--NAN	Acacia farnesiana (Mimosa)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	New recommendation(1)
Border Rivers/Gwydir--NAN	Olearia elliptica (Stickey Daisy Bush, Peach Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Central West--All	Nitraria billardierei (Dillon Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Murray--All	Nitraria billardierei (Dillon Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Namoi--All	Olearia elliptica (Stickey Daisy Bush, Peach Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Namoi--All	Eremophila bignoniiflora (Eurah)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Western--BBS	Eremophila bignoniiflora (Eurah)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Western--BBS	Geijera parviflora (Wilga)	20 (Total under 20cm dbh)	n/a	20cm	a-c	New recommendation(2)
Western--BHC	Senna form taxon 'artemisioides' (Silver Cassia)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction

Attachment A

Catchment Management Authority – IBRA region	Invasive Native Species	Retention requirements			INS type of clearing permitted	Reason for change
		Number of plants per hectare to be retained	Retention required by criterion 18A (clearing types d-f only)	Maximum dbh allowed to be cleared		
Western--DRP	Eremophila bignoniiflora (Eurah)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction
Western--ML	Acacia stenophylla (Black Wattle)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	New recommendation(3)
Western--ML	Eremophila bowmanii subsp. bowmanii (Silver Turkey Bush)	None prescribed	No	n/a	All	Spelling correction

(1) An invasive plant that is spreading to the point of taking over large areas around the north western area of NSW. Can be observed regenerating profusely around older individuals and in areas with disturbance of the soil caused by machinery, flooding and stock trampling. When mature, the density attained alters the structure from a scattered shrub storey to one that is dense. Without intervention, the change in structure is likely to be long-term, and some well established populations show permanent change towards a shrub-dominated community. This species is already listed for other Border Rivers-Gwydir IBRA regions.

(2) Usually found as well-spaced trees in mixed woodland communities, however, it is now commonly found growing under a major portion of trees and/or shrubs where birds have perched and distributed the seeds in their droppings. This results in a dense understorey of Wilga under the major portion of trees/shrubs, changing the structure of the vegetation community. This species is already listed for other Western IBRA regions.

(3) Dense thickets can extend over large areas causing suppression of grasses and other shrub species. The thickening can reduce diversity of the groundcover. This suppression of understorey grass species will occur for unmanaged populations. This species is already listed for other Western IBRA regions.

Clearing types:
a) burning;
b) clearing of individual plants with no disturbance to groundcover (for example, chemical spot treatment or ringbarking);
c) clearing of individual plants with minimal disturbance to groundcover (for example, grubbing);
d) clearing of plants at paddock scale with nil to minimal disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, chaining, slashing or roping);
e) clearing of plants at paddock scale with temporary disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, bladeploughing); and
f) clearing of plants at paddock scale with longer-term disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, short-term cropping).