

Questions and answers

Changes to Biodiversity Assessment Method Calculator (BAM-C) assessments and transitional arrangements

Can an assessor do a scenario test on the difference between 1.1 and 1.2 benchmarks for a Biodiversity Offsets and Agreement Management System (BOAMS) case that is being run at present? If so, how?

Yes. Open an in-progress assessment to update the assessment with the V1.2 benchmarks. Complete the assessment at least as far as Tab 3 (Vegetation), hit "Save" and then "Save as new version". The new version will contain a copy of all data entered in the original assessment (including the v1.2 benchmarks). You can then choose to modify the benchmarks of one version (using the "Modify default benchmarks" function in Tab 3) with the V1.1 benchmark values and compare the outcomes between the two assessment versions.

Some Biodiversity Development Assessment Reports (BDARs) and Biodiversity Stewardship Site Assessment Reports (BSSARs) were finalised using the v1.1 benchmarks but are still going through the approval process. For these now there is a benchmark transition period, is there the option to update the BDAR or BSSAR to utilise the v1.2 benchmarks (if the landholder wishes to do so)?

Yes. Re-open the finalised assessment to trigger a data update to V1.2 benchmarks. To re-open a finalised assessment that is already submitted in BOAMS, the decision-maker must first return the assessment. You may need to request the decision-maker to return the assessment and allow you to update the assessment. The benchmark update will apply to all finalised assessments that are reopened (and open/locked assessments), including stewardship assessments. Biodiversity stewardship agreement (BSA) assessments may be updated with the V1.2 benchmarks up until the agreement is approved and credits issued. After this time a variation to the agreement may be required to amend the benchmarks and credit outcomes. Please consult the Credit Supply Taskforce for further information on applying V1.2 benchmarks to finalised stewardship assessments.

Where a site generates credits under the former plant community types (PCTs) and the PCT has moved to a different class (and therefore offset trading group), how will the 'equivalence' be applied when a site may provide offsets in v2 but the projects are in v1 and would otherwise be equivalent?

To understand equivalence of the former PCTs and revised PCTs in eastern NSW under the offset rules, please refer to the [Plant Community Type to Offset Trading Group lookup tool](#). This will indicate which former and revised PCTs are like-for-like credit retirement options for an offset obligation. This information will indicate whether the revised PCTs on a planned biodiversity stewardship site are an equivalent like-for-like credit retirement option for an existing offset obligation. This is only necessary for non-threatened vegetation ecosystem credits. The changes

to a vegetation class do not alter the equivalence or trading relationship of threatened ecological communities (TEC) ecosystem credits or species credits.

If a proponent is planning to use a future stewardship agreement to generate and retire credits for impacts already approved, it is recommended that a BAM-C assessment is commenced prior to 23 February 2023 to ensure access transitional arrangements and, if required, apply of the former PCTs for generation of biodiversity credits within the same Vegetation Class.

Is the transitional period for eastern PCTs 24 months from the planned update for major projects?

Yes, transitional arrangements commence from the date of the BAM-C update to include revised PCTs in eastern NSW. Part 4 local development will be subject to a 12-month transitional period and all other proposals, including major projects, stewardship, and biodiversity certification.

Some proposals which include BDARs are subject to court proceedings. From time to time, experts need to check Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) data entered at the time of the assessment. How would this be done in the future for assessments with the 'old' PCTs / benchmarks compared with the new East Coast PCTs / benchmarks? Would this be one of the 'case by case' examples?

Once an assessment is finalised, that version of the assessment is retained in the BAM-C. Re-opening the assessment (via the "Re-open" button) does not actually re-open it but instead creates a new version of the assessment. So, an assessment which is finalised before the V1.2 benchmark update and/or the East Coast Classification update will retain the legacy data. Existing finalised assessments that are re-opened will have access to the transitional arrangements for East Coast PCTs. All assessment versions, including previously finalised assessments, are listed in the dialog box in the BAM-C (after clicking on the "Open" button in the BAM-C), and the associated data is viewable with each assessment. Assessments that are initiated after the BAM-C data updates will use V1.2 benchmarks and East Coast PCTs (if the site is in the appropriate IBRA regions).

The v1.1 benchmark data provided on BAM-C landing page has been summarised and is missing useful info. Could you please make the following available to all assessors and govt reviewers: V1.1 benchmark data in the same form as the benchmark export from BioNet Vegetation Classification - PCT (plus decommissioned), and wet and dry benchmarks. If it is already available via open access, please provide us with a link and instructions.

The V1.1 benchmark data do not include wet and dry benchmarks. Only the V1.2 benchmark data (i.e. current benchmark data) include wet and dry benchmarks. Version 1.2 can be viewed and downloaded from the BioNet Vegetation Classification application and the BioNet Web Service. A preconfigured refreshable power query for the vegetation condition benchmark data is available on the BioNet resources web page here:
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/publications-search/bionet-plant->

community-types-benchmarks-data. The V1.1 benchmark data is archived on the BAM Calculator page can be viewed here: <https://www.lmbc.nsw.gov.au/bamcalc>. The V1.1 benchmark data does not include PCTs but is configured at the Vegetation Class level for the purpose of the transitional arrangements for the BAM-C. There are detailed release notes showing how to use the V1.1 archived data spreadsheet in a BAM-C assessment under the transitional arrangements at the Vegetation Class level. Please see the release notes for more details: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Biodiversity/bos-update-12-release-notes-bam-c-jan-2023.pdf?la=en&hash=8F66861CC2541335671B7544BCA96453DFBCB58F>

BioNet data and resources

The former PCTs that still apply to assessments under the transitional arrangements have been listed as "decommissioned" in BioNet Veg Classification since all the new PCTs were added. This has caused a great deal of confusion between PCTs that are still usable (e.g. PCT 849), and PCTs that were decommissioned for other reasons previous to the new PCTs coming out. Can the old legacy PCTs be listed as something different to "decommissioned" in BioNet to distinguish them from others?

The technical report Updating BioNet Plant Community Types: Eastern New South Wales PCT Classification Version 1.1 (2022) contains detailed information on which PCTs were Decommissioned as part of the Eastern NSW PCT v1.1 release. Appendix A can be downloaded in excel spreadsheet form. The spreadsheet contains a list of PCTs that were 'Approved' prior to the Eastern NSW PCT Classification, their PCT definition status after the Eastern NSW Classification, and notes. The Appendix A spreadsheet can be used to distinguish the 625 PCTs that were decommissioned because of the Eastern NSW PCT Classification, from PCTs previously decommissioned for other reasons.

Is there a plan to provide the East Coast PCTs in a more digestible form? Currently it is provided as one massive mapping file which then requires significant work to separate it into smaller areas?

Yes. A new state vegetation type map (SVTM) data base is being commissioned that will support users in clipping out PCT map data for their assessment area.

Is it possible to publish threatened species associations with the previous PCTs somewhere? They are no longer available in VIS or in Threatened Biodiversity Data Collection (TBDC), which makes it difficult for any projects still using previous PCTs.

Threatened entity associations to Decommissioned PCTs are not visible in BioNet Atlas or the Threatened Biodiversity Profile web app. However, threatened species, population and ecological community associations to Approved and Decommissioned PCTs are available via the BioNet Threatened Biodiversity Species and Threatened Biodiversity Populations web services. Preconfigured refreshable Power Queries of these PCT-threatened entity associations are available to download from the [BioNet resources page](#), under the heading BioNet Threatened Biodiversity Profiles, Power queries.

Will the results of BAM plots be used to update the accuracy of the PCT mapping to constantly and consistently improve the East Coast PCT data and mapping?

Yes. Standard full floristic survey plot data uploaded to the Flora surveys module of the BioNet Atlas application are considered for analysis to improve the PCT classification, State Vegetation Type Mapping (SVTM) and vegetation condition benchmarks periodically. The collection of standard full floristic survey plot data, and entry of that data into the Flora surveys module of BioNet Atlas, is strongly encouraged as the most efficient and effective method for supporting the periodic evaluation the PCT master list and assessing the need for changes.

I have compared the PCT types on the portal and App to previous mapping (by OEH 2016 v3) particularly for the Sutherland Shire area (located in the South of Sydney) and have found numerous discrepancies.

This is out of scope for the webinar, but we will take on notice and forward to the mapping team. There is a feedback function in SEED to provide corrections to the mapping - these are investigated further and addressed on an annual basis. The feedback you provided late last year should be addressed in the next annual release, planned for late 2023.

Dynamic benchmarks

Which document in the assessor resources describes the dynamic benchmarks?

For scientific information on the methods used to develop dynamic benchmarks please see: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-vegetation/vegetation-condition-benchmarks>. For guidance on how and when to apply dynamic benchmarks please see the: [Guidance for assessors and decision-makers in applying modified benchmarks to assessments of vegetation integrity](#). Found on the Assessor Resources web page under Practice Notes.

Biodiversity Conservation Fund (BCF) Charge System	
<p>Will accredited assessors still be able to produce credit summary and payment reports in the BAM-Calculator without contacting Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT)? If not, will there be a mandated turn-around time for BCT to respond to developers about indicative offset pricing?</p> <p>This is largely out of scope for this webinar so please get in touch with the BCT with your enquiry. The BCT have released information about their price estimation service which will be available very soon. For more details, please see the BOS Update No 12 now published on the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme updates web page: https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/accredited-assessors/assessor-resources/assessor-updates or the Biodiversity Conservation Fund Charge System web page : https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/info/biodiversity-conservation-fund-charge-system</p>	
Useful links – Guidance and support resources referred to during the webinar	
Transitional arrangements for new vegetation integrity benchmarks and plant community types	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/about-the-biodiversity-offsets-scheme/improvements-to-the-biodiversity-offsets-scheme/introduction-of-revised-pcts
Public BAM-C web page	https://www.lmbc.nsw.gov.au/bamcalc
Local Government updates	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/local-government-and-other-decision-makers/local-government-and-decision-maker-support
Assessor updates	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/accredited-assessors/assessor-resources/assessor-updates
Quick Guide – How to access PCT lineage transformation data from BioNet	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/publications-search/accessing-plant-community-type-lineage-transformation-data
PCT to OTG online lookup tool	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/about-the-biodiversity-offsets-scheme/what-are-offset-trading-groups/plant-community-type-to-offset-trading-group-lookup-tool

Plot to PCT assignment tool	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/nsw-bionet/nsw-plant-community-type-classification/plot-to-pct-assignment-tool
Integrated BioNet Vegetation Data for NSW	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/nsw-bionet/integrated-bionet-vegetation-data-for-nsw
NSW Plant Community Type classification	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/nsw-bionet/nsw-plant-community-type-classification/plot-to-pct-assignment-tool
NSW BioNet resources	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/nsw-bionet/resources
Archived BioNet datasets	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/nsw-bionet/about-bionet-vegetation-classification/archived-biometric-datasets
Technical document - Updating BioNet Plant Community Types: Eastern NSW PCT Classification Version 1.1 (2022)	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/publications-search/updating-bionet-plant-community-types-eastern-new-south-wales-pct-classification-2022
BioNet Power query - Threatened species associations to decommissioned PCTs	https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/publications-search/bionet-threatened-species-to-plant-community-types-association-data