



Landholders wanted to help protect threatened ecological communities

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Did you know that our region has two types of Threatened Ecological Communities?

The Australian Government has developed a list of Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs), which are essentially types of ecosystems protected under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). For example, types of ecological communities listed under the national environmental law include woodlands, grasslands, shrublands and forests.

Reef Catchments has been funded through the Australian Government's Reef Trust to protect these TECs, and we are seeking landholders who would be interested in working with us. The types of things we may be able to fund includes weed control, fencing, assistance in fire management and revegetation.

We encourage you to jump on our interactive map and see if you have any TECs on your property. Or if you know someone who does, encourage them to get in touch with us. We look forward to working together with the community to protect the last remaining patches of beach scrub and broad leaf tea-tree.

View the map here:

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=17d12ad9e41947e0bfe9984848d88ec0&extent=145.2559,-23.314,153.3693,-19.3754>

Under the EPBC Act, an ecological community is classified as threatened when it is at risk of extinction. There are three different levels of 'threatened' that can be assigned – critically endangered, endangered, and vulnerable. The Threatened Species Scientific Committee will only list an ecological community as threatened after a rigorous and transparent scientific assessment and a public consultation period.

There are many reasons that some of our ecological communities are threatened. Broadscale clearing and inappropriate fire regimes are two common examples.

Here in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region, there are two nationally listed Threatened Ecological Communities:

1. *Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia, which we call 'beach scrub'*

Beach scrub is a type of rainforest vegetation community that occurs in isolated pockets along our coast and throughout the islands. Most of the beach scrub within the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac (MWI) region is at Gloucester, Midge Point and along the Carmila/Clairview coastline.



This community is listed as critically endangered because of its restricted distribution and the many threats the community faces. What was once an almost continuous archipelago of patches of beach scrub along the eastern coast of Australia has been reduced and fragmented primarily by coastal development, sand mining and agriculture. The resulting fragmented patches are more vulnerable to other threats including weed invasion, edge effects and fire.

Beach scrub provides a range of benefits to the landscape. It is an important buffer to coastal erosion and wind damage and provides natural refugia, nest sites and food for a large number of native species.

In Queensland, more than three quarters of the patches of beach scrub are less than 10 ha in size. This means every patch is important for conservation.

2. *Broad leaf tea-tree (Melaleuca viridiflora) woodlands in high-rainfall coastal North Queensland, which we call 'broad leaf tea-tree'*

Broad leaf tea-tree is a woodland community where *Melaleucas* dominate the canopy, and the understory is a variety of grasses and sedges. These woodlands are found only within the high-rainfall parts of Queensland, including the wet tropics and central Mackay coast regions, with most patches being within approximately 20 km of the coast.

Flowering broad leaf tea-trees provide an abundance of nectar for birds, butterflies and mammals, and the sandy or clay soils of the ecological community provide habitat for frog and reptile species.

Broad leaf tea-tree woodlands no longer exist at many sites where they were formerly present. In many cases, the loss is irreversible because sites have been permanently cleared. Because of its very limited distribution and historical clearing, the broad leaf tea-tree is listed as endangered.

For more information, please contact Cass Hayward at Reef Catchments on cass.hayward@reefcatchments.com or 0429 155 841.

The Threatened Ecological Communities project is a sub-component of the overarching High priority coastal and island restoration for the protection of threatened ecological communities and species project, funded by the Australian Government 's Reef Trust.

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