



DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR HIGH COUNTRY BOGS AND FENS

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

A draft Action Plan has been prepared to address ACT's High Country Bogs and Fens being listed as an Endangered Ecological Community.

High Country Bogs and Fens are an ecological community of unique wetlands defined by an underlying layer of peat with distinct associated flora and fauna such as sphagnum moss, frogs, spiny crayfish and small mammals. This community is particularly susceptible to threats from climate change, fire and invasive fauna and, in the ACT, was significantly impacted by bushfires in 2003 and 2020.

In 2019, the High Country Bogs and Fens were listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. This listing requires a draft Action Plan to be prepared to stop the decline and support the recovery of the ecological community by addressing the threats to it and recommending management actions.

The draft Action Plan for High Country Bogs and Fens was developed with input from external scientists, internal government researchers and land managers, and stakeholders relevant to the ecological community including the Ngunnawal community via the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee and the ACT Scientific Committee. It was publicly released in December 2022 to further engage interested stakeholders and advise the community.

THE CONVERSATION

Community consultation took place on the draft Action Plan from 9 December 2022 until 8 March 2023.

Written submissions were invited through YourSay, the ACT Government engagement website. It was further promoted on the Legislation Register under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate communication channels (including website and social media), and through the media. Targeted engagement using direct communication to relevant stakeholders and interested organisations was also undertaken.

WHO WE ENGAGED

We received 51 survey responses and eight further detailed submissions.

While experts in the subject matter were consulted widely in the preparation of the draft Action Plan, further engagement on the draft Action Plan targeted environmental industry professionals and scientists, particularly those involved in research and management in the Australian Alps National Parks in ACT, NSW and Victoria.

Targeted engagement also occurred with the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, ACT Bushfire Council, Conservation Council ACT Region, ACT National Parks Association, ACT Rural Landholders



YOUR SAY



Association, Environment Defenders Office, ICON Water, Australian National Botanic Gardens, Australian National University and University of Canberra.

Beyond the ACT, targeted engagement was undertaken with Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Threatened Species Committee, Wetland and Aquatic Ecosystem Sub-Committee, Biodiversity Conservation Forum, Australian Alps National Parks Program, Greening Australia, University of Tasmania and the Threatened Species Interjurisdictional Common Assessment Working Group.

We received 51 YourSay survey responses of which 13 also included written feedback, and eight detailed written submissions via email.



Key insights from the community

Need for an Action Plan

There is strong support for an Action Plan to address the decline of and threats to High Country Bogs and Fens in the ACT and the content of the draft Action Plan was well received and applauded as a thorough, accurate and necessary document. Only three responses did not believe that the draft Action Plan supported bog and fen conservation sufficiently.

Expansion of known locations where bogs and fens occur and the flora species associated with them

Three submissions identified that there are other locations of the ecological community outside Namadgi National Park that should be mapped in the draft Action Plan. There may be a need for survey work to identify further sites for inclusion in the ecological community. Similarly, some submissions identified that the vegetation classifications for the community could be slightly adapted to better reflect the occurrence of certain species in the ACT ecological community.

Acknowledgement of drinking water catchment and carbon storage functional capacity

Two submissions identified that the draft Action Plan could further highlight the importance of the High Country Bogs and Fens Ecological Community in providing clean, high quality drinking water supply for the ACT water catchment. This ecological community has environmental values such as supporting other vulnerable aquatic species but also important human health provisions and therefore has inherently high economic value. Similarly, two submissions felt that the plan did not acknowledge that the ecological community, more broadly, is the world's most efficient terrestrial carbon store and therefore there is further environmental and economic value in conserving and protecting the community to prevent the release of carbon.

More ambitious restoration actions

Two submissions expressed the desire for more ambitious actions to restore the ecological community, not just conserve it, by having actions to improve and increase the extent, connectivity and integrity of the High Country Bogs and Fens Ecological Community. At the same time, other submissions indicated that ecological thresholds need to be identified that determine when a site has been so compromised that management approaches should change from maintaining the existing site as part of the community to recognising the collapse of community attributes at that site.

Community awareness and collaboration

Five submissions raised that greater public education would benefit bog and fen conservation by raising awareness and understanding. Submissions also raised that a cohort of interested volunteers exist that could be harnessed for further survey work and on ground conservation actions.

Need for implementation plan

Four submissions raised a concern that, despite the action plan, there may be limited on-ground action. These responses advised a timely and comprehensive 'implementation plan' that details allocation of ongoing funding and resources, including monitoring and reporting, is critical to the conservation of the High Country Bogs and Fens Endangered Ecological Community.



YOUR SAY



WHAT'S NEXT?

Submissions and survey responses will be considered in the finalisation of a High Country Bogs and Fens Action Plan that will address management recommendations to stop the decline of this Endangered Ecological Community. Publication of the final plan is anticipated by late 2023.

To find out more about the draft Action Plan and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au or follow us on Facebook (@ACTParks, @EnvironPlan, @ACTGov).

Key Timings

9 December 2022 – Public consultation opened on the draft Action Plan

8 March 2023 – Public consultation closed

1 August 2023 – Listening report released

Late 2023 – Final plan released

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

359

We reached 359 people via YourSay

51

We received 51 responses to our survey

8

We received 8 written feedback submissions

844

We received 844 reactions via social media

