



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

# BAM Assessor Update – Number 30 – 24 January 2020

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Welcome to 2020. Most of the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) support team are now back at work after the summer holidays. We look forward to continuing to support your work in the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme (BOS) in 2020 through ongoing development of the scheme and continuing to provide further active engagement and learning opportunities.

## 1. Biodiversity Assessment Method support Mailbox

The BAM Support Mailbox is back to be being monitored on a daily basis. Please see the [BOS support page](#).

## 2. Commencement of first audit of Accredited Assessors

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment will shortly commence an audit of the Accredited BAM Assessors. The audit, in accordance with section 20 of the *Accreditation Scheme for the Application of the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) Order 2017*, may check either:

1. compliance by an accredited person with the conditions of their accreditation
2. biodiversity assessment reports prepared by an accredited person
3. the application of the BAM by an accredited person.

The audit will focus on Part 4 local development (Council Development Applications) and will be conducted over the next few months. It will seek to assess compliance, identify opportunities for education and ongoing scheme improvement, as well as identify areas that the Department may target for future audits. Findings from the audit may be made public once it is complete.

The Department will select a sample of Biodiversity Development Assessment Reports (BDARs) to audit. Those accredited assessors whose BDARs are selected will shortly be contacted by the Department for the provision of relevant records and to arrange a time for an interview.

## What does this mean for you?

With the upcoming audit, we would like to remind all accredited assessors that you must comply with the conditions of your accreditation. This includes providing information to the audit team (as delegates of the Environmental Agency Head) during an audit, as specified in the *BAM Assessor Code of Conduct*. In particular, **we recommend that all accredited assessors log into their Biodiversity Offsets and Agreements Management System (BOAMS) account** and ensure that all cases where a BDAR has been lodged with and/or approved by a determining authority (e.g. Council) as part of a development application, that it has been correctly finalised in Biodiversity Offsets and Agreement Management System (BOAMS). This means parent cases in BOAMS should be at a status of 'submitted' and the relevant child case in the BAM-C should be at a status of 'finalised'. This is an important aspect of demonstrating compliance with accreditation condition 1 and assists the Department to accurately report and evaluate the performance of the BOS and the conservation of NSW biodiversity.

### 3. Fourteen day biodiversity assessment reports submittal period

In accordance with section 6.15(1) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, 'a biodiversity assessment report cannot be submitted in connection with a relevant application unless the accredited person certifies in the report that the report has been prepared on the basis of the requirements of (and information provided under) the Biodiversity Assessment Method as at a specified date and that date is within 14 days of the date the report is so submitted.'

To meet this requirement a biodiversity assessment reports (BAR) must be certified, for instance by signing the first page. In addition, the date of submission of the BAR must be within 14 days of the date shown on the relevant finalised credit report generated using the BAM Calculator. The date the accredited assessor signs the BAR does not need to match the date on the finalised credit report, however, the BAR must be submitted within 14 days of the date that the credit report was finalised in order to be considered valid.

The image below shows an example for a BDAR.

The image shows a screenshot of a 'BAM Biodiversity Credit Report (Like for like)'. The report is titled 'Credit report (Like for Like)' and features the NSW logo. It is divided into several sections:

- Proposal Details:** This section contains a table with the following information:

Assessment ID	00017772/BAAS21234/19/00017772	Proposal Name	Report Test	BAM data last updated *	27/06/2019
Assessor Name	[Redacted]	Assessor Number	[Redacted]	BAM Data version *	15
Assessment Name	[Redacted]	Report Created	30/06/2019	BAM Case Status	Finalised
Assessment Revision	0	Assessment Type	Part 4 (Developments - General)	Date Finalised	30/06/2019
- Potential Serious and Irreversible Impacts:** This section contains a table with the following information:

Name of Threatened ecological community	Listing status	Name of Plant Community Type/ID
Hunter Valley Weeping Myall Woodland in the Sneyrey Basin Bioregion	Critically Endangered Ecological Community	118-Weeping Myall - Cooabah - Scrub-Wilga (subland of the Hunter Valley
- Additional Information for Approval:** This section contains the text 'PCTs With Customised Benchmarks'.

At the bottom of the report, there is a footer with the Assessment ID, Proposal Name, Report Test, and Page 1 of 4.

**NOTE:** Once BAM-C is finalised, the BDAR must be submitted to the consent authority with 14 days (BC Act s6.15).

## **4. Assessment of recently burnt sites**

Bushfires have long been part of the Australian landscape and are a natural disturbance that many of our native species are adapted to and rely upon. However, the extent of the broadscale devastation to lives, properties, native vegetation and wildlife caused by the recent bushfires will necessitate the review of some of the information and data that support the operation of the BOS, particularly in regard to threatened species. We will keep you posted over the coming months on the outcomes of this work.

The Department has received many requests for guidance on assessing or progressing the assessment of recently burnt sites. We appreciate your recognition that application of the BAM to a site severely impacted by fire is not appropriate and we are developing guidance on how to conduct assessments on development sites severely impacted by fire. Many thanks to the accredited assessors who have helped to shape this advice over the holiday period.

Please note that the extent of the recent fires may also impact on our ability to provide timely advice or cause delays in providing advice on particular projects as we build our understanding of the impacts that the fires may have had on particular threatened entities or important populations of threatened entities.

## **5. Drought affected vegetation condition benchmarks for the Brigalow Belt South bioregion**

The Department has received feedback from some accredited assessors as to the impact of the severe drought on the vegetation integrity of plant community types (PCTs) in Western NSW. The Department is currently planning to conduct vegetation benchmark surveys for targeted PCTs that have been severely affected by protracted drought in the Brigalow Belt South bioregion.

The aims of the project are to collect local data to develop revised 'drought affected' vegetation condition benchmarks within priority vegetation classes and provide the revised benchmarks to assessors working in the target PCTS of the Brigalow Belt South bioregion. The benchmarks should be available in the first part of the year. Further updates will be provided in the following assessor updates. If you would like further information please contact [bam.support@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bam.support@environment.nsw.gov.au).

## **6. Upcoming BAM Support Webinars**

The BAM support webinar series provides a regular forum for interested participants to build their understanding of the BOS and BAM, ask questions and stay up to date. As 2020 heralds the release of new and updated support resources and tools that will support the work of BAM accredited assessors, we aim to deliver a webinar program that reflects these exciting developments.

The BAM support webinar series will kick off on Wednesday 19 February, where we will take you through a detailed explanation of the BAM gain model and use of active restoration management actions at proposed biodiversity stewardship sites – registration coming soon.

Additional proposed topics for 2020 include:

- Update on the 12-month BAM review
- How to apply the habitat suitability assessment
- Important Mapped Areas
- Assessing post-fire and drought affected sites
- Determining Category 1 – Exempt Land
- Biodiversity Values Map and Threshold Tool
- Credit Equivalence
- BOS administration and the accreditation scheme
- Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement applications

To get involved in future sessions and catch up on past topics, visit the [BAM support webinar page](#).

If you would like to provide suggestions for future topics or offer additional feedback on these sessions, please contact us at [BAM.Support@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:BAM.Support@environment.nsw.gov.au).