

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

AIM OF CREDIT

To encourage and recognise development on land that has limited ecological value and to discourage development on ecologically valuable sites.

CREDIT CRITERIA

The Eco-Conditional Requirement is met where the project site is not:

- On prime agricultural land; should the project site be on prime agricultural land then this project is not eligible for a Green Star certified rating;
- On land containing old-growth forest; should the project site be on land containing old-growth forest then this project is not eligible for a Green Star certified rating;
- Within 100metres of a wetland listed as being of 'high ecological value'. Should the project site be within 100metres of a wetland listed as being of 'high ecological value', then the project can only be deemed eligible for a Green Star certified rating if the project is defined as a 'refurbishment' and the Wetland Protection Measures (as outlined below) have been completed;
- Within 100metres of a wetland NOT listed as being of high ecological value. Should the project site be within 100metres of a wetland NOT listed as being of high ecological value, then the project can only be deemed eligible for a Green Star certified rating if the Wetland Protection Measures (as outlined below) have been completed.

Wetland Protection Measures

- A site-specific Wetland Management Plan has been produced, exhibited and implemented; and
- All points are achieved in Emi-5 'Watercourse Pollution' and in Emi-7 'Light Pollution'.

The GBCA reserves the right to provide the final ruling on a project's compliance with this Conditional Requirement.

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Ensure that the submission adheres to all provisions of the Submission Requirements document found on the GBCA website.

The Certified Assessors will request additional information if there is doubt as to whether the area around the site contains a wetland.

Relevant local consent authority documentation is required to determine if this credit is met. The documentation must show:

- That the land is not prime agricultural land, old-growth forest or not within 100m of a wetland; or
- The distance between the development and any wetlands.

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

Wetland Management Plan

The site-specific Wetland Management Plan must be:

- Included within the Development Application;
- Exhibited to the public on the client's website, or the local council's offices or library for a minimum of 24 months. The 24 month period must start before construction of the project begins. The public display of the Wetland Management Plan must be easily accessible to the public and include an easy to read summary.
- Prepared by a qualified Ecologist and include:
 - A clearly defined management objective to protect the wetland;
 - A description of the ecological values of the wetland;
 - A list of risks and threats to the conservation of the wetland values associated with the development;
 - The proposed risk-management actions for all construction and operation stages;
 - Assumptions and a statement of resources required i.e. budget and specific actions for the management response;
 - Requirements for ongoing quarterly monitoring, annual reporting and management of the wetland ecosystem for a minimum of five years; and
 - A statement regarding the operational timeframe of the Wetland Management Plan (minimum of five years).

DOCUMENTATION: DESIGN RATING

Submit all the evidence and ensure it readily confirms compliance.

To demonstrate that the development is not on either prime agricultural land, old-growth forest or within 100m of a wetland:

- Short report
- Extract(s) from the current local development control plan
- Development zone map

Where the development is new and within 100m of a wetland not listed as 'high ecological value'

-OR-

Where the development is a refurbishment and within 100m of a wetland listed as 'high ecological value':

- Short report
- Wetland Management Plan
- CV of qualified Ecologist

Continued >

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

- Letter of confirmation from the building owner

- Extract(s) from website or correspondence from local library

- Extracts from the Development Application

Where the building is a refurbishment and within 100m of a wetland not listed as 'high ecological value':

- Short report

- CV of qualified Ecologist

short report:

- Describing the site and its location, whether it contained any buildings at the time of purchase, whether the site is on prime agricultural land or old-growth forest and the distance between the site and any wetland(s). Reference to the Evidence of Site Purchase and Site Documentation put forward in the General Section of the submission is recommended.
- Where the development is within 100m of a wetland, prepared by a qualified Ecologist describing any wetlands present on, or within 100m of the site, whether they are listed as 'high ecological value' or not as defined by this credit, and referencing the supporting documentation.
- Where a Wetland Management Plan is required, prepared by a qualified Ecologist summarising the Wetland Management Plan and its recommendations.

Extract(s) from the current local development control plan showing how the site was zoned prior to development approval.

Development zone map showing how the site and surrounding area were zoned prior to the Development Approval.

Wetland Management Plan – see Compliance Requirements.

CV of qualified Ecologist outlining relevant experience and number of years working as an active ecologist.

Letter of confirmation from the building owner stating their commitment to implement the Wetland Management Plan (as required by this credit), and describing the resources that will be allocated over the life of the plan to ensure implementation.

Extract(s) from website or correspondence from local library demonstrating how the Wetland Management Plan will be made available to the public.

Extracts from the Development Application demonstrating the inclusion of the Wetland Management Plan, including its cover page, table of contents and first few pages.

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

DOCUMENTATION: AS BUILT RATING

Submit all the evidence and ensure it readily confirms compliance.

To demonstrate that the development is not on either prime agricultural land, old-growth forest or within 100m of a wetland:

- Short report
- Extract(s) from the current local development control plan
- Development zone map

Where the development is new and within 100m of a wetland not listed as 'high ecological value'

-OR-

Where the development is a refurbishment and within 100m of a wetland listed as 'high ecological value':

- Short report
- Wetland Management Plan
- CV of qualified Ecologist
- Letter of confirmation from the building owner
- Extract(s) from website or correspondence from local library
- Extracts from the Development Application

Where the building is a refurbishment and within 100m of a wetland not listed as 'high ecological value':

- Short report
- CV of qualified Ecologist

Short report:

- Describing the site and its location, whether it contained any buildings at the time of purchase, whether the site is on prime agricultural land or old-growth forest and the distance between the site and any wetland(s). Reference to the Evidence of Site Purchase and Site Documentation put forward in the General Section of the submission is recommended.
- Where the development is within 100m of a wetland, prepared by a qualified Ecologist describing any wetlands present on, or within 100m of the site, whether they are listed as 'high ecological value' or not as defined by this credit, and referencing the supporting documentation.
- Where a Wetland Management Plan is required, prepared by a qualified Ecologist summarising the Wetland Management Plan, its recommendations, and the works completed at the time of practical completion in accordance with such plan.

Extract(s) from the current local development control plan showing how the site was zoned prior to development approval.

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Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

Development zone map showing how the site and surrounding area was zoned prior to development approval.

Wetland Management Plan – see Compliance Requirements.

CV of qualified Ecologist outlining relevant experience and number of years working as an active ecologist.

Letter of confirmation from the building owner stating their commitment to continue implementing the Wetland Management Plan (as required by this credit), and describing the recommendations implemented to date, and the resources that will be allocated over the life of the plan to ensure implementation.

Extract(s) from website or correspondence from local library demonstrating that the Wetland Management Plan has been made available to the public.

Extracts from the Development Application demonstrating the inclusion of the Wetland Management Plan, including its cover page, table of contents and first few pages.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

New Development

A 'new development' is defined as a development on a greenfield site or a development that extends outside the footprint of any existing buildings on the site. Building extension projects do not automatically meet the Credit Criteria.

Prime Agricultural Land

'Prime agricultural land' is defined as land recognised for its high productivity value in agricultural production, based on the importance of specific land requirements for high value crops. The designation of prime agricultural land is done by referencing the appropriate state or local land use planning or environmental guidelines.

Where the relevant state or territory has either an arable land or an agricultural land class system, the project must NOT be on land where the current or previous class was either the first or second highest class in terms of arable or agricultural quality. If the relevant state or territory does not have such land classes, Victorian classification and definitions must be used.

Old-Growth Forest

'Old-growth forest', as defined by the National Forest Policy Statement, is a forest that is ecologically mature and has been subjected to negligible unnatural disturbance such as logging, clearing or creation of roads. The definition focuses on forest in which the upper stratum or over-storey is in the late-mature to over-mature growth phases.

Wetlands

The following definitions from the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (2005) Wetland Mapping and Classification Methodology and the New South Wales Wetlands Policy (1996) are to be used. If either of these criteria is met then the area is considered to be a wetland for the purposes of this credit.

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

Wetlands are areas of permanent or periodic/intermittent inundation, with water that is static or flowing fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed 6 metres. To be classified as a wetland, the area must have one or more of the following attributes:

- i. at least periodically, the land supports plants or animals that are adapted to and dependent on living in wet conditions for at least part of their life cycle, or*
- ii. the substratum is predominantly undrained soils that are saturated, flooded or ponded long enough to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper layers, or*
- iii. the substratum is not soil and is saturated with water, or covered by water at some time.*

Wetlands, as defined by the NSW Wetlands Policy 1996, are areas that are wet for long enough periods that the plants and animals living in or near them are adapted to, and often dependent on, wet conditions for at least part of their life cycle. (NSW Wetlands Policy, 1996).

The Australian Wetland Database contains a list of all wetlands listed under either the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) or the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia.

High Ecological Value Wetlands

For the purposes of this credit a wetland is considered a 'high value wetland' if it is:

- Deemed significant under a state or national register; OR
- A listed wetland under:
 - The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; or
 - 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia' (The Directory).

How to determine the ecological value of a wetland

The Ecologist's site assessment must be based on:

- Local, regional and state wetland mapping where available;
- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and The Directory listing;
- Aerial photography;
- Topographic mapping (to identify catchment areas and drainage patterns); and
- A site survey including assessment of the vegetation, soil and hydrological regime, against the definitions of wetland and wetland of 'high ecological value'.

Qualified Ecologist

A qualified Ecologist is considered to be an ecologist who has a degree in Ecology or similar and/or a minimum of five years continuous experience as a working ecologist. The ecologist must be independent and have no vested interest in the project.

Eco – 1 Ecological Value of Site

BACKGROUND

The principal aim is to minimise ecological degradation by encouraging the selection of sites for development that have low ecological value. Site selection is one of the easiest ways to gain positive environmental outcomes within the building industry.

REFERENCES & FURTHER INFORMATION

- Information on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands can be found at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/environmental/wetlands/ramsar/index.html><http://www.ramsar.org/>
- Directory listed wetlands can be found at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/directory.html>
- A searchable map of listed wetlands is available at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/erin/ert/index.html>
- ANZECC & MCFFA (1997), Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System for Forests in Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Australia, www.daffa.gov.au/rfa/publications/reserve-system.
- Western Australia Department of Agriculture (1988), Technical Report 072, 'The Concept of Prime Agricultural Land: A Western Australian Perspective', Western Australia, Australia, www.agric.wa.gov.au/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/IKMP/LWE/RPM/LANDUP/TR072.pdf.
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, National Forest Policy Statement, www.daffa.gov.au/forestry/policies/statement, accessed November, 2007.
- Department of the Environment and Water Resources, Australian Wetlands Database, www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/database.index.html, accessed November, 2007.
- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Criteria for determining important wetlands, www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/database/key.html, accessed November, 2007.
- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Directory of important wetlands in Australia www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/database/key.html, accessed September, 2008.
- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Environmental Reporting Tool www.environment.gov.au/erin/ert/index.html, accessed September, 2008.
- Environment Australia (2001), A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia, Third Edition. Environment Australia, Canberra.

Eco – Conditional Requirement

- Environmental Protection Agency (2005), Wetland Mapping and Classification Methodology – Overall Framework – A Method to Provide Baseline Mapping and Classification for Wetlands in Queensland, Version 1.2, Queensland Government, Brisbane. Available to download from www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/WetlandDefinitionstart/WetlandDefinitions.html.
- New South Wales Department of Agriculture, Land Use and Planning, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture, accessed November, 2007.
- Queensland EPA, 1999 State of the Environment – Land, www.epa.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/state_of_the_environment/state_of_the_environment_1999, accessed November, 2007.
- South Australia Department for Environment and Heritage, Biodiversity homepage, www.denr.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/index.html, accessed November, 2007.
- Tasmania Resource Planning and Development Commission, State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2000, www.iris.tas.gov.au/planning_and_development, accessed November, 2007.
- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, www.ramsar.org, accessed November, 2007.
- Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment, Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/index.htm, accessed November, 2007.