

## CMA Regional Workshop – Native Vegetation Regulation Review - Notes Template

### Note taker instructions:

Please record comments from meeting participants in the comments table provided.

### Category:

During (or after) the workshop, please categorise each comment using the following codes.

Multiple categories can be assigned to a comment if needed.

If you are unsure of the appropriate category please leave it blank.

<b>Category Code</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
General	Overarching comments or those that do not fit into any other category
NV Reg	Comments specifically about the Native Vegetation Regulation
RAMA	Any comments specifically relating to Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs), e.g. activities which are RAMAs, those that should be RAMAs, implementing RAMAs etc.
PVP	Comments related to Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs) including the application process and the PVP developer.
NV Act	Comments related to the Native Vegetation Act 2003. While the Act is outside of the scope of the Review of the Regulation, comments on the Act will be collated and presented to Government.
EOAM	Comments related to the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology (EOAM)
Service/info	Comments relating to service delivery and information availability
PNF	Comments related to Private Native Forestry (PNF) including PNF PVPs and the PNF Code of Practice.

**CMA:** Southern Rivers CMA  
**Meeting location:** Cooma Ex-Services Club  
**Meeting date:** Tuesday 15 November 2011

**Note taker details (to be used if clarification required)**

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Name and Location	Comment/ Experience/ Feedback/ Suggestions	Category
MG	<p>Lovegrass (on properties at Bredbo) has resulted in loss of biodiversity and production. Bottomline is that this leaves the farm unviable. Another threat to grasslands is Eucalypt regrowth, resulting in (1) Loss of water out of the landscape, est. at 400L/tree (ribbon gum and white gum) (2) increased fire risk and harder to undertake cool fuel reduction burns (3) loss of biodiversity.</p> <p>PNF Code review was break through. PNF allows harvesting of 50% standing veg on properties without old growth. Without PNF there was no pathway to get property back towards objective of pre 1750 forest style grassy woodlands. If you don't have an objective for managing your property it is difficult to make any progress and farmers need legislation which supports long-term objectives. Has seen visual increase in biodiversity and regeneration since PNF operation. Springs are running again. Good anecdotal evidence, but no science to back up observations. Need more monitoring. With harvesting, the farm is returning to viability. PNF has been pretty straight forward. Timber has value to SE Chip mill whereas other farmer's bush (due to species) doesn't have same value. There needs to be a better flow of information between OEH, CMA, weed control authorities etc. What are the implications of SEPP46/NVA on lovegrass? Is there data from SEPP46 days to show the spread of lovegrass and its increasing threat to native grasslands?.</p>	General EOAM PNF
JC	<p>Agrees with Craig Mitchell's comments. Slow growth in productivity via genetic improvements, the grazing industry's ability to increase production is via improvement in the carrying capacity of country. Challenge of getting young sheep through first season. Rates on veg (e.g. \$1K per annum) - paying for community benefit. Why do we have properties that we can't run effective businesses on? Threat of lovegrass to whole of Monaro. Native pastures in low rainfall areas won't hold African lovegrass at bay. Non-productive lands are a liability to both the enterprise and the region. Similar concerns with 50% native/exotic rule. Would like to see some sort of test of the other values of the land (e.g. arable land and food production benefits for broader community). No issue of protecting high conservation value grasslands, but has issue with low conservation value grasslands.</p>	General RAMA EOAM

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CM	<p>Farmer – produces a commodity. To keep farm viable it needs to become more productive. Two issues – young people coming into farming (buying unproductive land because it is cheaper and then trying to make it more productive, but regs prohibit this development) and myself. Nat Veg Regs thwart increased productivity. Can't clear native veg. Has several hundred hectares he has been told to keep for the common good. For what reason I have to keep it? I have no idea of its value – there is more of the same vegetation in the NP next door. Had PVP staff out but PVP offsets were 'bloody ridiculous – can't afford to make that deal. Has fenced off all rivers and creeks and now can't count them as an offset. Biggest problem is that the good guys are getting regulated ('bad guys' have already cleared). Is it being fair on a few for the good of the community? Suggest that a set percentage, E.g. 20% of farm should be native vegetation. Don't want to destroy our farms. The current Regulation is giving a perverse outcome of allowing weeds to invade native grassland and then being able to clear. Current rules encourage farmers to allow their paddocks to become weedier. Doesn't really know what the answer is. Can't see the point. Costing me (not the community) money. Is it fair that a few carry the cost for the community? Anecdotal feedback from orienteering group is that bush is moving (regenerating) at about 1m/yr. Education is a better solution than regulation especially with grasslands With education, we can recognise what this is. CMA can help us ID and protect. In lower rainfall country (1DSE/acre), cost of controlling weeds is almost prohibitive. Don't lose much production to keep weeds out of it, but do it to protect the land. Need public land managers adjacent to farmers to be doing the same (e.g. lovegrass coming out of NPs). Sees the same disincentive for farmers with carbon farming as with native veg act (i.e. penalise the 'good guys' who have been doing the right thing.</p>	<p>General NV Reg RAMA PVP EOAM</p>
JH	<p>Hasn't gone through PVP process as he fears there are too many restrictions on what he can do with low conservation value grasslands. Need to raise productivity on-farm to match rising costs. Needs to be able to identify low conservation value grasslands easily and be able to improve them. Hasn't struck any hurdles yet, but if there isn't already a significant quantity of exotic grasses, you will strike hurdles. Degraded pastures at immediate threat from African lovegrass. Distrust with regard to Native Vegetation Act because goal posts move too often. Noted there are changes in livestock management that can be implemented to utilise and protect HCV but of access to incentives Often required to enable the change to occur. Public investment, for whatever reason, limits future PVP development because they cannot be used for off-sets, despite delivering outcomes for broader community. Perhaps weed management fines are too small to ensure farmers actively manage weeds.</p>	<p>General NV Reg RAMA PVP NV Act EOAM</p>
SC	<p>Difficulties assessing groundcover during drought. Timing of assessment of grassland quality (May to Sept) is difficult on the Monaro. This is only the second year we have had groundcover. Priority now– to attack tussock and African lovegrass. Dieback evident in eucalypts. Wants to spend more time in the paddock, not stuck in the office reading and trying to understand complex legislation. Cost to farmers in interpreting legislation – keeps them out of the paddock making money. Make it clearer. Less red tape. Why all this legislation for doing something we have been doing for years?</p>	<p>General NV Reg PVP NV Act EOAM</p>

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SB	<p>Informed attendees that assessing grasslands in May – Sept gives you the greatest chance of seeing germination of exotic pasture species. If you are ever going to get low conservation grasslands over the line, this is the time you would assess. Increasingly does inspections for landholders who don't want to go through formal process and assists them to identify whether grassland is HCV or LCV and therefore which area of the farm is most suitable for improvement. 50% native/exotics rule is an issue as sometime they are simply dominated by poa, corkscrew or spear grass – therefore still low biodiversity. Set grazing has seen loss of biodiversity with all but monoculture of low conservation value grassland. Feed quality is comparable to African lovegrass (i.e. low value). Consider different thresholds for low conservation value grassland – some sort of inherent diversity test. Needs to be simple enough that a landholder can do. Kangaroo grass is a good indicator of high conservation value grassland. Need an assessment methodology for low conservation value grassland that include a biodiversity test, not just a 50% measure. Experience has been that all farmers he has dealt with, is that without exception, they have wanted to protect their high conservation value grasslands. There is a perverse outcome at the moment because if you assume that a landholder has 100% HVC native veg – they have no option but to increase stock to maintain productivity. Obvious repercussion is that biodiversity value decreases. McIntyre model is an appropriate way to manage the landscape – ‘having your cake and eating it too’ – native veg act could facilitate this. Conceptually, do everything you can to improve productivity on your farm on those paddocks that are suitable. Farm can be a mix of native grasslands, native pasture and exotic pasture/cropping. Still has the impression that many farmers really don't know much about the native veg act. Would like to think there is an appropriate communication strategy and engagement by ministers who are introducing the change.</p>	General NV Reg RAMA PVP NV Act EOAM Service/info
JL	<p>Issue with quantitative approach to native veg as opposed to qualitative. Once paddocks full of highly invasive species, pasture quality is affected (not just number or type of species). Could have a whole of district approach to native vegetation management rather than dealing with regulation on a farm by farm basis. There is an opportunity to trade clearing with revegetation. Current offset requirements are too onerous on individual land managers. There are areas in the landscape we want to see bush back in and there are areas we want to increase productivity. Productivity and conservation are not mutually exclusive. More productive pastures can actually enhance conservation elsewhere on the farm. Wants a regulatory framework best supports both production and conservation.</p>	General NV Reg NV Act EOAM
KC	<p>African Lovegrass is the biggest threat on the Monaro for farm viability and survival of native species. African lovegrass has positively beaten us and has greater consequence for loss of biodiversity than clearing.</p>	General EOAM
BC	<p>African Lovegrass is an enormous threat to increased fire risk. Weeds are a community issue. Has been able to manage serrated tussock, but African lovegrass is beyond control.</p>	General EOAM

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BJ	<p>50% native species test worries me. Especially with relation to African lovegrass establishment. Even at low density Lovegrass is too difficult to control by spot spray, need to boom spray, therefore stuck with issue of &gt;50% natives.</p> <p>Management of grassy weed to protect a farm and their neighbours will contravene the act. Weeds Act overrides the NVA – but confusion- ‘clearing to the minimum extent necessary’. Need clarity on where clearing is required for weed control. 10-15 years ago we were trying to hold lovegrass 10km north of Cooma, now we are trying to hold it 10km south of Cooma. We are losing our native veg rapidly because of it. We can’t get funding for adequate control. Weeds undermining the native veg act.</p>	General EOAM
GF	<p>Grasslands trial at Berridale and Bungarby. More modified grasslands had more biodiversity than the ‘untouched’ grasslands. Isn’t the greatest benefit to the wider community to produce more food and fibre? If I can see a patch of ground that can be more productive, there shouldn’t be anything to obstruct me. Eucalypt regrowth is main threat to productivity. Spends more money on that than other weeds. Offsets – has a problem with eucalypt regrowth. If we do offsets on a community scale, feels that someone will say that farmers in the east can grow better time than those in the west. Feels decisions should be made on a farm by farm basis so as to not limit one landholder. Rules keep on changing ‘forever’ – this is an impediment to landscape scale approach. If govt wants us to go back to 1750 veg, perhaps govt should go back to 1788 facilities for running their departments. Farmers steer clear of PVPs due to fear. If CMA staff are working with farmers, they should be given more leniency to ‘bend rules’. Balanced outcome for my farm – needs PVP staff to appreciate wider goals of the farmer. As commodity prices stabilise or improve, there is going to be more farmers wanting to develop farms. Most farmers want to spend profits on farm. More beneficial for broader community is money is spent on farm. More opportunities for carbon sequestration.</p>	General NV Reg RAMA PVP NV Act EOAM Service/info
IM	<p>Has never really come to grips with evaluation processes. It would be good to have a tool that helps you determine whether self assessment is adequate. What is the process? Do I need the CMA to come out? I want to feel secure in my decisions. How can I test myself? How can I document? Revisit the definition of what is clearing and what isn’t. Definition creates a lot of instability – don’t gloss over the definition. A single unit can not be the definition (e.g. knock over one stipa plant you are outside the law).</p>	General NV Reg EOAM Service/info
CB	<p>Difficulty with Monaro – talking about grasslands. Very difficult from broad acre farms out west. It would be good if the act was more area specific (regional variations) – but not sure how this will work in a practical sense. To improve our farms, we need to put more into our pastures. Our business is about producing food and fibre.</p>	General

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EH	Deals a lot with PNF. Issues with silviculture considerations behind PNF Code of Practice which were developed on the north coast and don't apply to Monaro and South Coast. North coast models for basal area calculations and mapped old growth don't apply to south coast. Overall the code is working OK, but more onerous for private landholders than it is for State Forests. PVP process for PNF has been streamlined.	PNF
HC	Speaking in private capacity. Hard to miss the anguish that regulation has caused Monaro landholders. Disgraceful that most of the Monaro has now been declared an EEC. Weeds are encroaching the Monaro and native grasses don't have the ability to stop them. The NVA is really about trees. Act should be about education not regulation – would have a lot more positive outcomes. Cost does not equal the benefit. Monaro is different. Need flexibility in management that the act doesn't allow. Need flexibility to be able to manage grassy weeds. Turns government people (CMAs) into policemen, which they are not- can achieve so much more with education. 50% native/exotics test is a major problem. Would use more flexibility in Act to conserve some areas on farm and then improve Low conservation value grassland areas.	General NV Reg RAMA NV Act EOAM Service/info
DM	1000acre block of 'virgin' forest, regrowth and cleared land. Used to be able to run 500 DSE (now only 100 DSE). Has an issue with aggressive natives, especially Native dog bush (cassinia). Ruins the soil – 10 year recovery period. [Note: Cassinia is an invasive native species so it can be cleared but requires a PVP]. Impracticalities with integration of numerous pieces of legislation. Continuing use of land rights (C'wealth). Need to keep pace with increasing costs. Would like to be able to manage his block the same as he did prior to 1995. Not into offsetting, why should he have to offset poor quality land against his Lucerne flat? Somewhere down the line he would have nothing left. Wants to be able to clear aggressive natives as part of RAMA (not a PVP). Frightened to clear as you don't know whether you will be donged and/or what the value is. The rates on his land are also going up on his remnant bush. Can't manage increasing costs with decreasing stock capacity. Pressure on farmers – too many controls on agriculture to allow it to exist (e.g. Water Sharing Plans. Disincentive for young people to farm. Security of tenure is being undermined by regulation not freehold system (now with increasing restrictions on certificates of title). Encouragement being taken away from agriculture and the people who are in it. 'Kangaroo grass has never fattened anything for me in my life'- not part of his farming practice. Conflicts within the act itself. There is no consideration of social impacts. The definition of clearing – one tree –is a shocking interpretation – apply common sense. Fines have a tremendous personal impact on people. Cheap way for govt to manage its acts but with shocking impact on society.	General NV Reg RAMA PVP NV Act EOAM Service/info
QCC	More education and information we can have, the more we can help land managers, especially blockies/lifestylers.	Service/info