

# Biodiversity Offsets Scheme Update No. 2

14 March 2022

**Welcome to Issue No. 2** of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme Update.

The Biodiversity Offsets Scheme enables the impacts of development on biodiversity to be avoided, minimised and offset. Offsetting means biodiversity loss from development is balanced with biodiversity gains by managing land elsewhere for conservation. Loss and gain are measured in biodiversity credits. The scheme provides a consistent, transparent, and scientifically credible way for development to proceed while still protecting our environment, with requirements set out under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The Government remains committed to improving and refining the scheme and has an active work program to ensure the scheme is operating effectively. You can read more about the [Improvements to the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme](#) on our website.

This monthly newsletter is one of the ways in which we communicate and help support the implementation of the scheme. Your **feedback** on how we can improve our communication is encouraged. Please submit your feedback [by completing our survey](#). See also [Issue No. 1](#).

'Understory' is the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's (BCT) twice-yearly newsletter featuring updates, news, and stories from across New South Wales. The seventh issue is now available on the [BCT website](#).

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## 1. New BOS Help Desk and webinars

The new Help Desk is an expansion of the existing BAM Support Help Desk, but will be open to inquiries on anything related to the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, and from any scheme participants or stakeholders.

You can contact the BOS Help Desk Mailbox by email or phone:

- [BOS.helpdesk@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:BOS.helpdesk@environment.nsw.gov.au) monitored Monday to Fri 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- 1800 931 717 our staffed hotline open Tuesday to Thursday 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

More details on the new BOS Help Desk and an introduction of the team members can be found here: [Biodiversity Offset Scheme Support webpage](#).

We've also moved our well-attended webinars to Microsoft Teams for accessibility and interactivity. A link to a survey will be shared at the end of each webinar as we encourage your feedback. To view our past webinars, visit [BOS Support Webinars website](#).

## 2. BCF charge system webinar

The new system for using payments into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund to meet offset obligations, called the BCF Charge System, has been developed by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) following consultation in 2021 and an independent review process. This is proposed to replace the Biodiversity Offset Payment Calculator. An information webinar on the new system was presented on 7 March and can be viewed on our [BOS Support webinars](#).

The consultation has now been extended to Monday 4 April 2022, and the BCT will also have two extra weeks to consider feedback before finalising the method and providing a brief for the Minister for Environment and Heritage to consider in late April.

## 3. Free training for local government

A tailored eLearning program for local government (LG) staff is available. The eLearning will help LG staff to understand the fundamental concepts of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, implementation of the BOS, the Biodiversity Assessment Method, Assessor accreditation and LG's role and responsibilities in the scheme.

The department is offering to sponsor a limited number of local government staff to access the training for free. The sponsorship program has so far successfully granted sponsorships for over 230 LG staff across New South Wales.

Round 3 of the sponsorship program has commenced. To apply for a sponsorship, complete the 'Expression of Interest' form on [Greencap's](#) website before **5 pm Friday 18 March 2022**. Go to: 'Training for Local Government' then 'Sponsorship for council staff'. Training must be completed by 22 April 2022 to receive a certificate of completion.

## 4. Become a BAM trainer

The department is establishing a team of educators or trainers to deliver content in the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme (BOS) and Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) Training Programs for accredited assessors and the local government. The trainers will deliver the content to participants through online and face-to-face workshops held across metropolitan and regional locations in New South Wales. For more details please email [BAM\\_accreditation@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:BAM_accreditation@environment.nsw.gov.au). Proposals to become a trainer are due **2 pm Wednesday 30 March 2022**.

## 5. Accredited assessors audit and webinar

In 2020–21, the department initiated its own compliance audit of accredited assessors – as part of its commitment to continuous improvement and providing assurance to the scheme. 13 accredited assessors and their biodiversity assessment reports were audited. The audit looked at reports for local development sites (most less than 5 hectares) by new assessors. The department found a range of non-compliance, including quality assurance of technical data, and threatened species justifications. All the recommendations of the audit will be implemented.

In response to the audit, the department is preparing a *Compliance and Assurance Plan for Accredited Assessors*, including plans for future audits. For more information please see the department's [website](#).

The audit findings were also presented at a recent webinar on 17 February. A transcript of the Q&A session and the presentation can be viewed on our [Biodiversity Offsets Scheme Support webinars page](#).

## 6. Accredited assessors forum

The department is establishing a new consultation forum for accredited assessors, and will shortly be seeking expressions of interest. The forum will provide the department with a way of consulting accredited assessors on the new compliance and assurance plan and improvements to the scheme. If you are interested, please send a one-page covering letter and short CV to: [BAM\\_accreditation@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:BAM_accreditation@environment.nsw.gov.au)

More information and terms of reference will be distributed to accredited assessors soon. For more information, please contact Tim Sides, Senior Team Leader, Accreditation and Training, on 02 6229 7901 or [timothy.sides@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:timothy.sides@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## 7. Case study: Office of Strategic Lands

The Office of Strategic Lands (OSL) has acquired land for strategic planning purposes and since 2017, the OSL has established 5 biodiversity stewardship sites. The OSL are creating biodiversity credits from these sites to fund management, enhance biodiversity, and help fund further land acquisition for open space for the community. Read more on this [case study](#).

## 8. Active restoration under the Biodiversity Offset Scheme – new research project

Researchers at the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS:ISF) and Science, Economics and Insights Division, Department of Planning and Environment, are conducting a research project that aims to understand barriers to the uptake of active participation restoration in the context of the BOS. The survey seeks to identify the various environmental, practical, social and regulatory factors that influence ecological restoration activities within New South Wales and specifically when used as part of biodiversity offsets under the BOS. This research will help inform potential approaches to support and improve the adoption and implementation of ecological restoration.

We value your opinion and invite you to share your thoughts with us by clicking on the [UTS Survey: What influences Active Restoration under the Biodiversity Offset Scheme in NSW?](#)

## 9. 1BCT Statewide Biodiversity Credit Tender

The BCT 2022 Statewide Biodiversity Credit Tender is **now open for applications**. The tender will close at 11:59 pm on Wednesday 23 March.

The BCT is seeking its largest ever number and most diverse array of biodiversity credits through the tender. There are over 117 types of species credits and 126 different offset trading groups for ecosystem credits being sought as part of the tender.

A new Credit Offer Portal has been launched as a new approach to simplify and streamline the way credit holders offer to sell credits to the BCT. The tender participants guide, FAQ Sheet and other information are available on the BCT [Credit tenders](#) webpage.

## 10. Biodiversity Stewardship Site Assessment Report template – feedback

The BCT is developing a Biodiversity Stewardship Site Assessment Report (BSSAR) template to provide a standardised report resource available to accredited assessors. This will be a valuable resource aiming to ensure consistent reporting content and allow ease of review for the BCT.

As part of the development of the BSSAR template we are seeking EOIs from accredited assessors and other relevant stakeholder willing to share their feedback and review of the draft template.

If you would like the opportunity to provide feedback during the development of this template you can register your interest by completing the [online submission form](#).

Please register your interest before **1 April 2022**.

## 11. BSA Ecological Monitoring Module

The [Ecological Monitoring Module \(EMM\) Operational Manual](#) has now been updated on the BCT website. Specific changes include:

- additional guidance for koala monitoring, particularly for very large sites
- updated guidance on monitoring breeding habitat for hollow-nesting birds
- detailed guidance on populating the total fund deposit (TFD) spreadsheet for EMM activities
- error corrections in data sheets (Appendices).

A reminder that all Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) applications submitted after 1 March 2021 require a monitoring plan consistent with the EMM, costed appropriately in the TFD. Noting that the updated BSA Management Plan Template includes an amended Section 7 to accommodate required EMM-related information

## 12. BSA livestock grazing guidelines – update

The BCT has updated this resource following three years of operation. You can find it on BCT [Guidelines on land management for conservation](#) website. Key updates include:

- additional guidance for biodiversity stewardship agreements to strengthen the requirement that grazing management must be done to meet conservation goals
- reduction to the maximum number of grazing days per year from 90 to a standard of 28 days
- rephrasing the grazing options from ‘maintain’ and ‘enhance’ to ‘grazing management’ and ‘grazing exclusion’ to more clearly reflect their intent
- increased flexibility around the grazing window from a 3-month period to any period the BCT, Accredited Assessor and landholder agree is optimal to achieve the conservation goals of the agreement.

Accredited Assessors are encouraged to contact the BCT early in the development of the management plan to establish whether grazing management is suitable for the BSA.

### 13. Status of BSA applications

