



Biodiversity

Outcome 2041:

Our native plants, animals and habitats are healthy, resilient and valued by the community.

Target:

Maintain the 2016 extent of native vegetation (no net loss) by 2041.





Biodiversity is the variety of all life — plants, animals and microorganisms, their genes and the ecosystems they inhabit.

The Sunshine Coast is recognised for its rich biodiversity which is supported in natural areas that include terrestrial bushland, the coast, waterways and wetlands. It is also supported in both the rural and urban landscapes.

The Sunshine Coast's subtropical location and climate and varied landform supports a diverse range of plants and animals, from tropical through to temperate and marine through to lowland and upland species. Under relevant legislation, 153 locally recorded plant and animal species are classified as rare or threatened, such as, the Buderim holly and swamp stringybark.

Aboriginal peoples have been stewards of the Sunshine Coast's natural environment for thousands of years and have maintained a deep cultural, spiritual and social relationship with biodiversity. Today's community continue to strongly value and appreciate the region's plants and animals, which is demonstrated by having one of the most active community conservation networks in the state.

The wellbeing of all Sunshine Coast residents is intimately linked to and dependent upon the region's biodiversity and its preservation. Healthy ecosystems help us sustain a range of ecosystem services including productive soils, clean air and water.

The building blocks of our biodiversity are our habitat areas. They include vegetation, resources such as water, soil and air, plants and animals and the interactions between all these elements. At the landscape scale, biodiversity can be understood as the spatial network of different habitat areas, their connectivity and their quality or functionality. In this landscape, our urban areas play an important role in enhancing biodiversity and contribute to the character and liveability of the built environment and our connection to nature.

Some of the Sunshine Coast's habitat areas are managed within the conservation estate, which represents a collection of lands where biodiversity is conserved through protected and voluntary conservation areas. The protected areas include national parks, conservation parks, nature refuges, council environment reserves and covenants, while the voluntary conservation areas include private lands managed through the Land for Wildlife Program. Habitats within the conservation estate are managed to reduce the impacts from invasive species, urbanisation and habitat loss and fragmentation. Expansion of the conservation estate is crucial to the ongoing protection of the region's biodiversity.

The conservation estate provides the window into local biodiversity. In these areas, residents and visitors can experience and connect to the natural environment while walking, riding, picnicking by a waterway or enjoying an iconic vista. For example, our renowned conservation areas such as the Glass House Mountains, Pumicestone Passage, Conondale Range and Maroochy-wallum corridor draw visitors to the region, providing opportunities to support local businesses and the economy.



Planning for change

The drivers of change will have varying levels of impacts on biodiversity and will continue to present challenges for the future.

Key impacts may include:

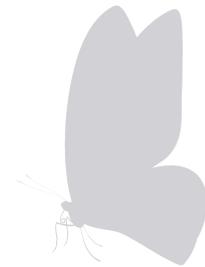
- further habitat loss and fragmentation
- changes in the extent/distribution of plant and animal populations
- loss of ecological resilience
- changes in habitat functionality and species behaviour
- increase in invasive plants and animals
- increased demand for community access and use of conservation areas for tourism and recreation.

To proactively respond to these likely impacts and seek new opportunities, a strong set of policy positions has been prepared to achieve the desired outcome.

Council's role

Preserving and conserving the biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast is the responsibility of the entire community. Council's role is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, advocating for the ongoing protection, building and strengthening stewardship and implementing legislative planning and regulatory powers to preserve these natural assets.

In addition council has a role in the management of environment reserves to both protect and enhance the ecological values and provide opportunities in keeping with the natural setting for public access and enjoyment.



Biodiversity policy positions

2.1 Natural ecosystems and the native plants and animals they support are preserved:

- a Habitat areas are ecologically functional and well connected.
- b Ecological functionality of habitat areas is maintained under changing environmental conditions.
- c Viable populations of native plants and animals are maintained.
- d Vegetation community diversity is maintained.
- e Core and connecting habitat areas are protected.
- f Habitat extent and condition (composition, structure and function) is maintained.
- g Remnant vegetation is protected.

2.2 Priority habitat areas are protected, enhanced, connected and responsive to changing environmental conditions:

- a An expanded conservation estate increases protection and connectivity.
- b Rehabilitated and restored strategic corridors enable fauna movement, gene flow and species and habitat migration.
- c Animal movement between priority habitat areas is maintained or facilitated.
- d Strategic management of invasive plants and animals reduces impacts on native bushland and wildlife.
- e Habitat extent, composition, structure and function are improved.
- f Biodiversity conservation incorporates the predicted impacts from climate change and natural hazards.
- g Strong partnerships and collaboration deliver biodiversity conservation outcomes.
- h The conservation estate is protected from fragmentation and encroachment.

2.3 Biodiversity is valued, respected and used sustainably to support our lifestyle, livelihoods and sense of place:

- a Biodiversity values and ecosystem services are appreciated by the community to ensure ongoing support for preservation.
- b Cultural heritage associated with biodiversity is preserved and promoted.
- c Recreational activities and supporting infrastructure in or near conservation areas minimise impacts on biodiversity values.
- d Commercial activities complement the biodiversity values and contribute to the economy.
- e Industries are appropriately located and implement best practice to minimise impacts on biodiversity.
- f Offsets are required for unavoidable clearance of native vegetation.

Refer to Part C for technical detail and planning directions specific to the Biodiversity theme.

