

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

BAM Assessor Update Number 1

May 31, 2018

1. Topics Covered:

2. Publication of stage 1 of the Operational Manual
3. Advice on pricing credits for BSA sites
4. Updates to the BAM Credit Calculator

1. Publication of Stage 1 of the Biodiversity Assessment Method Operational Manual

The Biodiversity Assessment Method Operational Manual is a companion document to the BAM which provides assessors with further guidance regarding applying the BAM to assess a site for biodiversity values for the purposes of assessing the impacts of development or clearing, or for developing a management plan for land proposed for a biodiversity stewardship agreement. The Manual is being prepared in three separate documents to mirror the structure of the BAM.

Stage 1 of the Biodiversity Assessment Method Operational Manual is now available on the OEH website:

- The Biodiversity Assessment Method

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodiversity/assessmentmethod.htm>

- Biodiversity Assessment Method Operational Manual – Stage 1

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-publications/Publications-search/Biodiversity-Assessment-Method-Operational-Manual-Stage-1>

It provides information to support the implementation of Stage 1 of the BAM (Biodiversity Assessment) and focuses on the operational detail of the assessment of the landscape context, the integrity of native vegetation and habitat suitability for threatened species.

The BAM Operational Manual *Stage 2 – Impact assessment* and *Stage 3 – Improving biodiversity values* are currently in preparation.

1. Pricing BAM credits for proposed stewardship agreements

OEH has received a lot of inquiry on pricing credits at proposed Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements (BSA) from landholders and assessors. Much of this has related to concerns regarding the credit price determined in the Biodiversity Offsets Payment Calculator (BOPC), as well as the BAM generally calculating a lower credit yield per hectare compared to the former Biobanking Assessment Method (BBAM).

OEH recommends that assessors do not use the BOPC when advising landholders on potential credit prices for proposed BSA. The purpose of the [BOPC](#) is to determine how much a developer must pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund to satisfy an offset obligation. It is not intended that it be used to price credits at proposed BSA sites.

Credit prices at a proposed BSA site should be determined by:

1. considering all biodiversity credit production input costs, which may vary depending on the particular business model adopted by individual landholders and the particular taxation implications for the individual. Landholders should continue to expect that funding to implement the management plan (including start-up and ongoing costs) will utilise a total fund deposit mechanism as under the previous Biobanking program arrangements, and considering existing and future market conditions, including the potential demand for their credits by developers, when estimating whether expected returns on their investment will be worthwhile.

We strongly advise landholders to seek appropriate expert advice before deciding to enter into a biodiversity stewardship agreement.

The lower credit yield per hectare under BAM reflects the revised gain model compared to the BBAM, particularly on sites that are in high or very degraded condition. Accordingly, the number of credits required for a development impact are also generally lower than what was required under the Framework for Biodiversity Assessment or BBAM. OEHL is monitoring the types of outcomes that are being achieved under the BAM, particularly in regards to identifying any adverse outcomes.

1. **Update to the BAM Calculator (31st May 2018)**

As part of ongoing improvements to the usability and functionality of the BAM Credit Calculator (BAM-C), the following modifications are now ready to be implemented. These amendments will be made in the BAM-C from 4pm on Thursday 31st May. Please note that the BAM-C and the Biodiversity Offset Agreement Management System (BOAMS) will be unavailable at this time.

The amendments include:

- For stewardship and development sites, an assessor can now add multiple management zones within a vegetation zone. This enables assessors to reflect different management methods within a vegetation zone (e.g. partial clearing for an APZ and total clearing elsewhere in the vegetation zone).
- In line with the advice above, the BOPC has been removed from the stewardship module. This will enable proposals for Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements to be finalised in BAM-C without needing to refer to the BOPC. Note that the BOPC will remain in BAM-C for development, clearing and bio-cert proposals.
- Unwanted BAM cases can now be deleted from your case history.
- Assessors are able to name their plots for the Vegetation integrity using alphanumeric labels, including via the CSV import.
- Assessors will need to complete the species survey timetable in the habitat suitability assessment to indicate when a survey was undertaken on a development or clearing site that did not detect the target species.
- The Candidate/Predicted species reports will indicate species that have been deselected by assessors. This information can then be imported in the BDAR/BCAR.
- Error messages in the 'habitat suitability' tab are now collapsible to improve operability by not covering the background text.