

EcoTender Demonstration 2007/08

Specifications for landholder actions

Information Sheet No. 4

Under the EcoTender Demonstration project, landholders will be required to meet minimum standards and agree to certain management requirements to score environmental benefit points.

In general, landholders will need to agree to an integrated management approach that commits to implementing a range of parallel management actions.

For example, for management actions such as native vegetation understorey maintenance or improvement, landholders may be required to commit to actions that manage both the grazing impacts of stock (eg. fencing) and introduced herbivores (eg. rabbit control) and any associated weed control required as a result of any reduced grazing pressure.

In such cases, commitment to the full complement of actions may be required to qualify as habitat improvement.

Fencing

In many cases, fencing will be appropriate to address grazing impacts by domestic stock. Landholders who choose not to fence their offered site will need to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the EcoTender Field Officer how they intend to manage grazing in the absence of fencing in order to qualify for the relevant improvement points.

Minimum fencing standard

In general either standard 6/70/30 or 7/90/30 ring-lock and plain wire or seven strand **plain wire** with steel posts every 10 metres, will be the minimum fencing standard. Other fencing options such as the use of electric wire may be possible in some cases.

The EcoTender Field Officer will be able to assist the landholder with choosing the most appropriate fencing option for the site.

In line with other fencing incentive programs, successful bidders who sign management agreements that include fencing will be required to *maintain that fencing in stock-proof condition for a period of ten years from the date of commencement of the agreement.*

Grazing

Landholders will be encouraged to adopt grazing practices that maximise habitat quality outcomes for the native vegetation on their site.

Landholders may choose to restrict grazing to achieve such outcomes. In most cases, this will require complete exclusion of stock. In other cases, particularly where current herbaceous weed cover is high, modified grazing may be appropriate at an agreed timing and rate. Some native grasslands may also require periodic grazing to maintain their quality over time. Your EcoTender Field Officer will be able to advise you on grazing options for your site.

Generally, landholders will need to commit to controlling other grazing pressure by introduced animals (ie. rabbits) and in some cases, browsing by native herbivores (kangaroos, wallabies) may also need to be controlled. Landholders should note that mechanical ripping of rabbit burrows within existing native vegetation will not be permitted unless approved by the EcoTender Field Officer. In most cases, hand collapsing of burrows will be required to qualify for improved environment points.

Grazing management will require that livestock be kept in a holding paddock outside the site for a minimum period of 24 hours prior to entry to reduce the risk of weed introduction and spread.

Weed control

Current legislation requires landholders to eradicate regionally prohibited weeds and prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds on their land and other land under their control. During the EcoTender Demonstration project, weed control above current responsibilities and obligations qualifies for improved environment points.

For example, improvement points can be achieved where landholders commit to reducing the area covered by regionally controlled weeds or other identified environmental weeds. Eradicating regionally prohibited weeds will not qualify for improved environment points.

Specifications for landholder services

Target high-threat environmental weed species will be those determined by the EcoTender Field Officer. Weed control actions will be based on landholders agreeing to meet certain weed species/cover targets.

For more information on the weed control, please contact the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186 or visit the DPI website at: www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

Standing/fallen timber

In some cases, remnant vegetation on private land is likely to be a source of firewood and/or fence posts for landholders. Standing and fallen timber are important habitat for a range of native plant and animal species and their retention is strongly encouraged (although not compulsory) as part of any EcoTender management plan.

Landholder commitments to retain standing and/or fallen timber on-site will qualify for improvement points where this does not require a permit under the local planning scheme.

Revegetation and supplementary planting

Revegetation and supplementary planting standards have been established for different vegetation types in the project area. Landholders will need to commit to meeting the minimum-required target mix and density of species according to an agreed site preparation, planting and maintenance schedule to qualify for improved environment points.

All tube-stock or seed used for supplementary planting or revegetation purposes must be from species indigenous to the local area. Landholders will be required to demonstrate evidence of this as part of the annual reporting requirements.

Fire prevention

Landholders should take all reasonable steps to prevent fire on their land, provided these steps do not conflict with other commitments under the management agreement. In many cases, control of various environmental weeds should help reduce fuel loads at most sites.

Where possible, fire-breaks should be established outside the EcoTender site. If required within a site, firebreaks should be slashed rather than cultivated or sprayed. Mineral earth fire-breaks will not be permitted in the agreement site.

Note - Any fire prevention actions required within the EcoTender Demonstration site may reduce the native vegetation score available and in some cases may render the site unsuitable, depending on the extent of the proposed actions.

Use of fire as a management tool

Nearly all Victorian vegetation types are adapted to periodic burning by fire. In many lowland Victorian forests, fire is critical to the survival and regeneration of some species, particularly in areas where fire may have been absent for many decades.

Landholders wishing to use fire as a management tool in the EcoTender Demonstration project should seek advice from the EcoTender Field Officer who will assess the need based on the amount of regeneration of fire-dependent species on the site and in consideration of other observed threats.

In general, fire will not be a recommended management tool under EcoTender due to the associated risks and uncertain outcomes.

Mandatory commitments

Landholders need to agree to a number of mandatory commitments in order to participate in the EcoTender Demonstration project. In particular:

- no fertilizer application;
- no rock removal;
- no ploughing or soil disturbance within existing native vegetation (unless approved by the EcoTender Field Officer for management purposes);
- no altering the natural hydrology (i.e. water courses, creeks) of the site (unless approved by the EcoTender Field Officer for management purposes); and
- no artificial feeding of stock.

Further information

For further information on the EcoTender Demonstration project, please contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on **136 186** or visit DSE website www.dse.vic.gov.au/ or visit the Corangamite CMA website www.cma.vic.gov.au/ and search under "EcoTender".



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