

22.03 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

This policy applies to all land and water within the municipality. The responsible authority will consider this policy when making decisions on land use and development.

Policy Basis

Greater Bendigo is committed to achieving healthy catchments which protect and enhance the environment whilst supporting sustainable natural resource management. Sustainable resource management is recognised as being important to the economy and community of the municipality and region.

The natural environment of Greater Bendigo is worthy of protection and supports large areas of remnant and regrowth box ironbark forests of local, State and International significance. Lake Eppalock is also valuable as both a water supply and for recreation opportunities. These assets need to be protected and managed and the integrity of the water supply from the Lake Eppalock Catchment needs to be maintained.

Environmental hazards such as the removal of native vegetation, salinity, erosion and the proliferation of pest plants and animals also need to be managed and minimised.

Objectives

To protect and enhance the land and water resources of Greater Bendigo.

To ensure that the use and development of land does not cause significant environmental degradation.

To promote sustainable land management throughout the municipality based on land capability assessments.

To encourage appropriate revegetation of areas which are affected by salinity, erosion risk and native vegetation loss.

To encourage the maintenance and development of linkages between existing remnant vegetation.

To retain and enhance the internationally significant box-ironbark forest system, and threatened grasslands.

Policy

It is policy that: -

General

- A proposal to use and develop land should demonstrate how it addresses remnant vegetation, water quality, rare and threatened species and bio-diversity (where appropriate).
- A proposal to use and develop land will be considered in the context of the DNRE Selected Bio-diversity Components Map of the City of Greater Bendigo.
- A proposal to use and develop land should demonstrate whether the site is capable of supporting the proposal.
- Where the responsible authority considers that more information is required about a proposal, it may require a site and area analysis which sets out:

- A natural resource profile including watercourses, soil type, vegetation and habitat area.
- An assessment of physical limitations.
- An assessment of environmental hazards.
- The location and type of buildings and works, infrastructure, adjoining use and development and access.
- The measures to be undertaken to address natural resource management issues, physical limitations and environmental hazards.

Water Supply Catchment Area

- In considering proposals for land use and development in the Lake Eppalock proclaimed catchment, the responsible authority should consider:
 - The potential for surface and groundwater contamination resulting from on-site waste water disposal.
 - The capacity for existing waste disposal to accommodate land use change and development.
 - The advice of Goulburn Murray Water and other relevant water authorities regarding the proposal.
 - The recommendations of the Lake Eppalock Land Use Determination.
 - The recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee report entitled “Water Quality and Development Issues and Guidelines for Lake Eppalock and its Catchment”.
 - Recommendations of the Septic Tank Code of Practice, Feedlot Code of Practice, Piggeries Code of Practice and any other industry guidelines relating to effluent disposal as appropriate.
 - The impact of vegetation removal and landforming on drainage patterns and consequent water quality decline.
 - The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

Salinity

- A proposal and the assessment of a proposal to use or develop land which may contribute to salinity, or is at risk of salinisation, should consider the following:
 - The appropriateness or otherwise of irrigated land uses, water storage construction, and the need to demonstrate that any proposal does not increase recharge to groundwater systems, or lead to rising water tables.
 - The potential for groundwater pollution resulting from land uses requiring on-site waste disposal, and the need to consider appropriate waste disposal systems.
 - The need to retain or establish vegetation to reduce groundwater recharge, and to lower water table levels in discharge areas.
 - The need to construct buildings outside a discharge area.
 - Any relevant Salinity Management Plan or Regional LandCare Plan.
 - The State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria).
 - Salinity Information Kit-A Local Government Planning Guide for Dryland Salinity.

- The purpose of the zone within which the land is located.
- The capability of the land to accommodate the use or development.
- The following criteria be used to assess the impact of salinity: -

Class 1:

- Areas of low level salting.
- Soil Salinity Level: (EC 1:5 less than 600-1400 micro Siemens cm).
- Other signs include:
 - Isolated or scattered areas of 'patchy' growth in a paddock/vacant block. These may occur on seeps along a break of a slope.
 - Reduced vigour or stunting in improved lawn or amenity plantings.
 - Clovers, thin and die out. They are replaced by other plants with more salt tolerance.
 - Sea barley grass is often abundant.
 - Strawberry clover may be present.
 - No salt crystals or bare patches can be seen.

Note: Class 1 salting is often an early warning of a potentially bigger problem.

Class 2:

- Areas of moderate salting.
- Soil Salinity Levels (EC 1:5, 1400-3500 micro Siemens cm).
- Note the scattered bare patches which are visibly salt affected.
- Other signs include: -
 - Some Class 1 species disappear and are replaced by others with higher salt tolerance.
 - Salt strains are visible when soil surface is dry.
 - Small, bare areas up to 1 square metre are present.
 - Clover is absent.
 - Affected areas may occur as 'Scalds' exposed.
 - Affected areas may worsen after high seasonal rainfall.
 - Some species show marked changes in leaf colour (commonly reddening of the tips) and shape due to salt stress.

Note: Class 2 salting usually indicates rising groundwater levels and is relatively easy to recognise.

Class 3:

- Areas of high level salting.
- Soil Salinity Level (EC 1:5, 3500 + micro Siemens cm).
- Other signs include:
 - Only high salt tolerant plants are present.
 - Large areas of bare ground can be seen.
 - Often only 2 or 3 species will dominate such an area.
 - Trees will be dead or dying.
 - Species present are typical of salt pans and salt marshes.

Vegetation Protection

- The use and development of land should incorporate measures to minimise the impact on native vegetation, including dead and hollow-bearing trees.

- Proposals should provide areas of open space directly adjacent to existing native vegetation or areas of public land.
- All remnant native vegetation which is classified as depleted, rare or endangered, should be retained.
- Development should be designed and sited so that the removal of native vegetation is minimised.
- Development within residential forested areas or adjacent to forests which maximises the retention of native vegetation and provides an interface between cleared areas and forested areas will be supported.
- The responsible authority will consider the need to conserve, and the potential impact on values identified on the Selected Bio-diversity Components Map of the City of Greater Bendigo.
- If the removal of native vegetation is unavoidable, conditions may be included on a permit requiring the replanting of native vegetation of at least the equivalent area or amount of vegetation removed.
- The siting of replanted native vegetation should contribute to enhancing and maintaining key areas including vegetation links, habitat corridors and waterways.
- The responsible authority may consider the advice of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and the relevant Catchment Management Authority where sites include remnant vegetation, including grasslands.

Pest Plants and Animals

- Measures to manage pest plants and animals be incorporated in use and development proposals where appropriate.

Erosion Risk

- Where the Responsible Authority considers that erosion risk may exist, the following information may be required: -
 - A land capability assessment of the site, prepared by an appropriately experienced or qualified land management specialist, identifying those areas which may be subject to erosion and how development of the site, including access and servicing, will be located and managed to prevent erosion or landslip.
 - A detailed environmental management plan which outlines the ongoing maintenance for soil stability.
- Before deciding on an application to use, subdivide or develop land or carry out works the Responsible Authority may consider: -
 - Land Capability Studies.
 - The advice of any relevant land management agency.
- The Responsible Authority may impose conditions on a permit for land which may be at risk from erosion requiring works to be undertaken to minimise erosion risk such as revegetation of gullies and steep slopes.
- The removal of native vegetation and earthworks be minimised.

Flooding

- Within the Heathcote area, a replacement dwelling will only be permitted where the dwelling has a minimum impact on flood flows and the original dwelling was constructed after 16 February 1988.

Policy Reference Documents

Bluml, M et al., *Land Capability Study of the City of Greater Bendigo, Huntly District*, November 1995

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Government of Victoria, *Water Quality and Development Issues and Guidelines for Lake Eppalock and its Catchment*, 1983

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Walters, M, *City of Greater Bendigo Performance Criteria for Subdivision Proposals in the Rural Living Zone*, 1999

Butters, S & Hienschke, J, *Urban Bendigo Planning Scheme- Salinity and Remnant Vegetation Report*, June 1997

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Loddon Community Working Group, *Loddon Catchment Salinity Management Plan*, 1993

City of Greater Bendigo, *Greater Bendigo Roadside Management Guidelines*, 1995