



## Wetlands

Wetlands are defined by the Northern Rivers Catchment Blueprint as shallow bodies of water such as marshes, billabongs, swamps or sedgeland, that are cyclically, intermittently or permanently inundated with water, and vegetated with wetland plant communities' (Northern Rivers Catchment Management Board, 2003).

Wetlands are considered one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. Australia has lost around 50% of wetlands mostly through a combination of drainage, water harvesting and development. Coastal freshwater wetlands now cover 0.015% of the state of NSW. In the Richmond Catchment 26% of wetlands are protected in reserves with the remainder mostly located on private land.

## Coastal wetlands are important because they -

- Cleanse and filter our water removing pollutants.
- Control and mitigate floods.
- Safely confine acid sulfate soils.
- Prevent blackwater discharge.
- Support the food chain and the fishing industry.
- Provide vital habitats for plants and animals including threatened species.
- Are often beautiful places with cultural, historical and educational values.

## Coastal EEC Wetlands

Three types of wetlands on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast have been listed as Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC) under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

- Freshwater wetlands on coastal floodplains.
- Swamp oak floodplain forest.
- Swamp sclerophyll forest on coastal floodplain.

## Freshwater Wetland on Coastal Floodplain

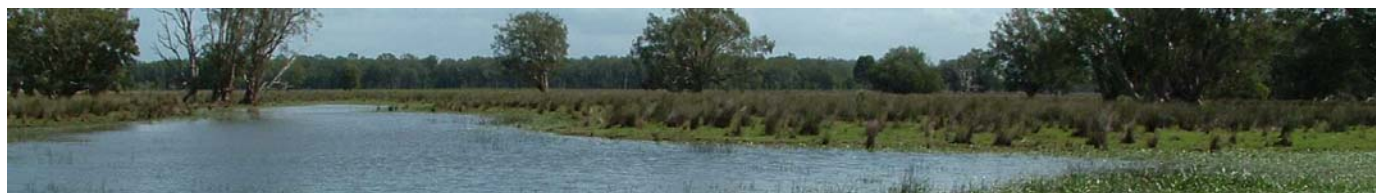
Freshwater wetland on coastal floodplain are located on low-lying parts of floodplains, alluvial flats, depressions, drainage lines, backswamps, lagoons and lakes but may also occur in back-barrier landforms. They are subject to periodic flooding and dominated by herbaceous plants with very few woody species.



Freshwater Wetland on Coastal Floodplain.

## Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest

Swamp oak floodplain forest is located on waterlogged or periodically inundated flats with a dense to sparse tree layer in which *Casuarina glauca* (swamp oak) is dominant. The understorey is characterised by frequent occurrences of vines, a sparse cover of shrubs, and a continuous groundcover of forbs, sedges, grasses and leaf litter.





Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest

### Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplain.

Swamp sclerophyll forest on coastal floodplain has an open to dense tree layer of eucalypts and paperbarks with a midstorey shrub layer and a groundcover composed of abundant sedges, ferns, forbs, and grasses and may include areas of fern land and tall reed land or sedgeland, where trees are very sparse or absent. Usually associated with humic clay loams and sandy loam soils on waterlogged or periodically inundated alluvial flats.



Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplain

### EEC Wetlands Project

WetlandCare Australia is currently seeking landowners willing to participate in the EEC Wetlands project. The Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (NRCMA) has contracted WetlandCare Australia to run the project on the North Coast of NSW. The NRCMA region covers an area of approximately 50,000 square kilometres from the Camden Haven River in the south to the Queensland border. If you own land within this area containing a coastal EEC wetland you have a unique opportunity to protect it while improving the environment and enabling future generations to enjoy its benefits.

Improvements could include fencing to exclude stock, blocking artificial drains to hold water, revegetating scalds, removing exotic weeds or reintroducing native endemic wetland and riparian plants. Funding assistance may be obtained for activities, which will result in an improvement to the ecological function of the wetland. Landowners may be expected to make some negotiable in kind commitment such as labour and maintenance and sign a works agreement.

### How can you become involved?

If you are interested in participating in this or future projects you are encouraged to obtain and submit a site nomination form. The form available from WetlandCare Australia enables landowners to supply contact details, wetland description and location and a short description of proposed restoration or protection works. A site meeting can be arranged between the project officer and landowner or manager to discuss the project. Sites will be prioritised to achieve the most ecological benefit for the available funding. Prioritisation will take into account conservation value, size of area protected, landowner commitment, presence of threatened species and value for money.

For a copy of the site nomination form or for more information about the project please contact the project officer at WetlandCare Australia, Ballina.

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