National Environmental Research Program

LANDSCAPES AND POLICY hub

Landscapes and Policy Research Hub – *An Overview*

The Landscapes and Policy Hub is a research collaboration that focuses on integrating ecology and social science to provide guidance for policy makers on planning and management of biodiversity at a regional scale.

OVERVIEW

Focusing on two contrasting landscapes, the Tasmanian Midlands and the Australian Alps, the research hub is ***developing tools, techniques and policy options to integrate biodiversity into regional scale planning.***

The interdisciplinary research is placing particular emphasis on landscape-scale management of species and communities listed under the under Australia's primary conservation legislation: *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This includes '*Matters of National Environment Significance*', like the Tasmanian Midlands Lowland Grasslands communities and the unique alpine wetlands in the Australian Alps.

The multi-disciplinary research collaboration, known as the '*Landscapes and Policy Hub*', is hosted by the University of Tasmania and is one of five national research hubs recently funded to study biodiversity conservation by the National Environmental Research Program (NERP) for four years (2011-2014).

RESEARCH GOALS

The research hub is reviewing a range of planning processes, policies and institutional arrangements related to fire risk, water yield, carbon sequestration, and human social and economic well-being. These will be assessed using ecological analysis, modelling, experimental economics, and social and institutional research.

The researchers are collaborating closely between eight core research areas to explore the likely implications of different scenarios of climate change climate, land use, land management, demographics, infrastructure development, and other human and natural influences on ecosystem services and habitat suitability for selected species of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians and plants.

The research team is supported by a Communications and Knowledge Brokering Group that facilitates links between researchers and policy-makers.

BACKGROUND

The Hawke Review in 2009 reviewed Australia's key piece of environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC), recommending that we need to lift the scale at which we manage Australia's biological diversity from that of species and communities to include whole landscapes and ecosystems.

The review recommended that the Australian Government '*streamline approvals through early engagement in planning processes and provide for effective and greater reliance on strategic assessments and bioregional planning.*'

RESEARCH COLLABORATORS

Our researchers are based at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), The Australian National University (ANU), Griffith University, Murdoch University and the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC).

The researchers are from several schools within these organisations including; UTAS Centre for Environment; UTAS School of Geography and Environmental Studies; UTAS School of Economics and Finance; the Griffith Climate Change Response Program at Griffith University; Murdoch University School of Veterinary and Life Sciences; ANU Fenner School of Environment & Society; ACE CRC Climate Futures; UTAS School of Zoology and UTAS School of Plant Science Environmental Change Biology Group.

Our 37 researchers work in collaboration with people and land managers, conservation organisations and natural resource management departments at all levels of government who focus on '*Matters of National Significance*'. To date this includes the Australian Government's Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment, Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Parks Victoria and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (NPWS) and regional natural resource management organisations.

First published July 2011, updated edition Feb 2013

CASE STUDY REGIONS

The Tasmanian Midlands - Biophysical research will occur over the whole of Tasmania while the integrated social-ecological assessment will be carried out within a subset centred on the Northern Midlands bioregion.

The Australian Alps - The Local Government Areas (plus the ACT) that include parts of the Australian Alps bioregion, total area 8.8 million hectares. Biophysical research will occur over the whole study area while social, economic and institutional research will be carried out within a subset to be determined.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The hub's Steering Committee provides overall governance and is led by independent chairperson, Professor Barbara Norman. The committee is responsible for ensuring the hub research plan addresses stated NERP priorities and stakeholder requirements and monitoring progress against milestones. In addition, a hub management committee consists of the eight project leaders and communications team, convening bimonthly.

Photo: Landscapes and Policy Research Hub Researchers on a field trip in the Tasmanian Midlands, at Andrew & Edwina Colvin's property, *'Nosswick'*, Cressy.

Ref	Project	Project Leader
#1	Communication & Knowledge Brokering	Professor Ted Lefroy (UTAS)
#2	Social & Institutional Futures	Dr Michael Lockwood (UTAS) Associate Professor Sue Moore (Murdoch University)
#3	Economic Futures	Professor John Tisdell (UTAS)
#4	Bioregional Analysis	Professor Brendan Mackey (ANU)
#5	Climate Futures	Professor Nathan Bindoff (UTAS)
#6	Wildlife	Professor Chris Johnson (UTAS)
#7	Vegetation & Fire	Professor David Bowman (UTAS)
#8	Freshwater Ecosystems	Professor Peter Davies (UTAS)

FUNDING

The Landscapes & Policy Research Hub is supported through four years of funding from the Australian Government's National Environmental Research Program (2011 to 2014). (www.environment.gov.au/NERP)

CONTACT US

Hub Director: Professor Ted Lefroy
(03) 6226 2626 / Mobile: 0408 180 567

Host Organisation: University of Tasmania (UTAS)

Enquiries: Landscapes.Policy@utas.edu.au

www.nerplandscapes.edu.au

UTAS · ACE CRC Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems CRC · Australian National University · Murdoch University · Griffith University · Charles Sturt University

First published July 2011, updated edition Feb 2013