

# Appendix C

## Ecological Significance Criteria

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The following provides explanations or guidelines for the application of ecological significance criteria in the assessment of sites.

Rankings within each criterion are: H = High; M = Medium; L = Low. They collectively contribute to an overall ranking, indicating the degree of significance. For a site to be considered significant, one of the first four criteria (representativeness, rarity, diversity and pattern or distinctiveness/special ecological characteristics) must rank M or H.

### Representativeness

The site is significant if it contains a good example of one of the characteristic ecosystem types in the region or ecological district.

**H:** The site contains one of the best examples of the characteristic ecosystem types in the region or ecological district.

**M:** The site contains one of the better examples, but not the best, of the characteristic ecosystem types in the region or ecological district.

**L:** The site contains an example, but not one of the better or best, of the characteristic ecosystem types in the region or ecological district.

### Rarity

The site is significant if it contains flora or fauna listed as nationally threatened; or the site contains flora or fauna of note in the region or ecological district because of scarcity, local endemism or extreme/anomalous geographic distribution; or the site contains plant or animal communities that are rare nationally, regionally or in the ecological district.

**H:** The site contains nationally threatened or rare flora, fauna or communities; or the site contains several examples of regionally or locally threatened or rare flora, fauna or communities.

**M:** The site contains one or a few regionally or locally (but not nationally) threatened or rare flora, fauna or communities.

**L:** The site contains no flora, fauna or communities threatened or rare in the ecological district, regionally or nationally.

### Diversity and pattern

The site is significant if it contains a range of species and ecosystem types that is notable for its complexity nationally, in the region or in the ecological district.

**H:** The site contains an unusually high diversity of species and ecosystem types.

**M:** The site contains a moderate diversity of species and ecosystem types.

**L:** The site contains a relatively low diversity of species and ecosystem types.

## **Distinctiveness/special ecological characteristics**

The site is significant if it contains ecological features that are outstanding or unique nationally, in the region or in the ecological district.

**H:** The site contains any ecological feature that is unique nationally, in the region or in the ecological district; or it contains several such features that are outstanding regionally or in the ecological district.

**M:** The site contains ecological features that are notable or unusual but not outstanding or unique nationally, in the region or in the ecological district.

**L:** The site contains no ecological features that are outstanding or unique nationally, in the region or in the ecological district; i.e. the ecological features are typical rather than distinctive or special.

## **Size and shape**

The site is significant if it is moderate to large in size and is physically compact or cohesive.

**H:** The site is large in size for the region or ecological district and is compact in shape.

**M:** The site is moderate in size for the region or ecological district and is compact in shape; or the site is relatively large but not very compact or cohesive.

**L:** The site is small in size for the region or ecological district, or the site is moderate in size but not at all compact or cohesive.

## **Connectivity**

The site is significant if it is physically connected or close to other natural areas, and/or is part of a larger natural ecosystem.

**H:** The site is close or well connected to a large natural area or several other natural areas.

**M:** The site is in the vicinity of other natural areas but only partially connected to them or at an appreciable distance.

**L:** The site is very isolated from other natural areas.

## **Sustainability**

The site is significant if it is ecologically resilient, i.e. its natural ecological integrity and processes (functioning) are largely self-sustaining.

**H:** The site can maintain its ecological integrity and processes with minimal human assistance.

**M:** The site requires some but not much human assistance to maintain its ecological integrity and processes.

**L:** The site requires much human assistance to maintain its ecological integrity and processes.