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FARMING AND PROTECTING THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED PEPPERMINT BOX GRASSY WOODLAND

Since European settlement, most of the Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland of South Australia has been cleared, or degraded by pasture improvement and, in some circumstances, grazing. The small amount of woodland of this type remaining in good condition is now protected under Australia's national environment law—the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

What does national protection of Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland mean for farmers/graziers?

National environment law protects Australia's unique plants and animals without stopping farm business. In many cases, your supportive farming practices have helped retain remnant native grassy woodlands.

You may need Australian Government approval if:

- · the protected grassy woodlands (or other protected matters) occur on your property, and
- a new, intensified or changed activity could have a significant impact on the ecological community.

If you are not sure whether your activity requires Australian Government approval, you can get free advice from the environment liaison officer at the National Farmers' Federation on 1800 704 520 (or email environment@nff.org.au).

What and where is Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland?

Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland is known to occur from the Southern Flinders Ranges in the north, to Victor Harbour in the south, and around Tumby Bay on Eastern Eyre Peninsula.



This indicative map shows the outer boundary of the area in which the ecological community may occur. Within this boundary the ecological community itself has been heavily cleared and is very fragmented.



A more detailed map is available at (www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/maps/pubs/peppermint-box-iron-grass.pdf)

Remaining patches of the peppermint box grassy woodland ecological community typically occur on gentle to moderate slopes, hilltops and adjacent plains. The soil types range from sandy loam to clay-loam.

The canopy of peppermint box grassy woodland is dominated by peppermint box (*Eucalyptus odorata*).









Other tree species may include mallee box (*Eucalyptus porosa*), native pine (*Callitris gracilis*), South Australian blue gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) and sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*). Scattered shrubs may be present. The most common shrubs are golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) and sweet bursaria/christmas bush (*Bursaria spinosa*).

The understorey/ground layer is mainly grasses, other grass-like plants and broad-leaved herbaceous species.

Common ground layer plants include perennial native grasses such as brush wire grass (*Aristida behriana*), kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*), spear grasses (*Austrostipa* species) and wallaby grasses (*Austrodanthonia* species), as well as grass-like plants like iron-grasses (*Lomandra* species) and black-anther flax lily (*Dianella revoluta*). Common herbs include chocolate lily (*Arthropodium strictus*) and common woodruff (*Asperula conferta*).





How do I know whether the Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland on my property is protected?

Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland is only protected under national environment law where it is in relatively good condition. Areas of the grassy woodland of at least 0.1 ha with a large number of native plant species (more than 30) <u>OR</u> areas of at least 1 ha with more than 15 native plant species are likely to be protected (see diagram below).

IF the most common tree is peppermint box, and the understorey is grassy, AND:

If the patch is **1 ha or larger** AND has more than 15 native plant species INCLUDING at least 3 broad-leaved herbaceous species not on the disturbance resistant list* AND at least 2 perennial native grasses

OR

If the patch is **between 0.1 ha and 1 ha** AND has more than 30 native plant species INCLUDING at least 10 broad-leaved herbaceous species not on the disturbance resistant list* AND at least 5 perennial native grasses

then the listed ecological community of Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland of South Australia may be present.

*Disturbance resistant species: *Ptilotus spathulatus* forma *spathulatus*; *Sida corrugata*; *Oxalis perennans*; *Convolvulus angustissimus*; *Euphorbia drummondii*; *and Maireana enchylaenoides*.

How does protection of Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland affect my farming activities?

This ecological community was officially protected under national environment law on 21 June 2007. Lawful activities that began before national environment law came into effect on 16 July 2000 can continue without further Australian Government approval.

What routine farming activities do not need approval?

Farming activities that are unlikely to have a significant, irreversible or long-term impact on Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland do not require approval. These include:

- maintaining existing fence lines, tracks, roads or fire breaks
- · replacing or maintaining existing sheds, other farm buildings and yards
- maintaining existing grazing regimes (type of livestock, stocking rates and timing of grazing)
- · controlling weeds (with minimal disturbance, or by selective spot spraying)

What farming activities may need approval?

Activities that are likely to have a significant, irreversible or long-term impact on Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland may need Australian Government approval. These include:

- · land clearing or substantial lopping of trees
- changing grazing management, weed control or fertiliser use in a way that may affect the native plant or animal species of this grassy woodland
- · clearing understorey vegetation through cropping, excessive grazing or other methods
- renovating or improving pasture by introducing exotic species, fertilisers, herbicides, mechanical disturbance or cultivation, or addition of irrigation
- large-scale spraying that may significantly affect the plant or animal species of this grassy woodland
- developing infrastructure (for example, sheds, buildings or dams) at previously undeveloped sites.

If you are uncertain of your legal responsibility, you can contact the environment liaison officer at the National Farmers' Federation for help or go to: www.environment.gov.au/epbc

Can I get help to improve or restore Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland?

There may be natural resource management projects funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative that can help you manage protected woodlands.

For more information on local projects go to www.nrm.gov.au or contact your:

- local NRM regional body: www.nrm.gov.au/nrm/sa.html
- state facilitator: www.nrm.gov.au/contacts

Where can I get more information?

More information on this ecological community, and its condition classes, threats and priority conservation actions is contained in the comprehensive listing advice and shorter conservation advice at www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicshowcommunity.pl?id=36&status=Critic ally+Endangered and associated policy statement for this ecological community, at: www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/peppermint-box-iron-grass-policy.html

For free advice on whether or not an activity may need Australian Government approval contact the Australian Government's environment liaison officer at the National Farmers' Federation.

Phone: 1800 704 520 Email: environment@nff.org.au Web: www.environment.gov.au/farming

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