

Management zone approach to assist commercial decision making and balanced management.

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A land Management plan was developed for a property of 1,478 hectares located in the Goulburn-Broken Catchment of northern Victoria, Australia.

The commercial managers of the property recognised the importance of balancing management for biodiversity values with enhanced agricultural production capacity. The plan was required to inform the lease agreement so that the management of the site achieves the dual objectives of protecting the agricultural productivity of the land, whilst protecting, and enhancing, the natural biodiversity values of the land.

Baseline data was collected on-site, including: soil samples for chemical analysis; soil classification; pasture condition assessments; and a comprehensive flora and fauna survey. Areas that required different management approaches were identified, based on a range of factors, including: soil type; remnant vegetation; fauna habitats; and pasture condition. Three 'zones' were defined:

1. Prime Agricultural zones –with management practices that maximize agricultural production and enhance the production capacity of the soil.
2. Prime Environmental zones - these support vegetation considered to have significant ecological values (flora and fauna). These zones aim to protect and enhance the biodiversity values of the site.
3. Prime native pasture zones - these support greater than 50% (by cover) of native grass pasture species. The recommended grazing regimes for these zones preserve and enhance the native grass component of the pastures, while still maintaining a productive agricultural land-use.

A zoned approach enables management of the site that balances commercial agricultural interests with significant biodiversity values. The resulting land plan clearly articulates the objectives and management requirements of each zone for the lease and also provides clear guidelines for the ongoing monitoring of site condition.