
MEDIA RELEASE

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Littoral rainforest mapping improved by collaborative panel

Scientists and natural resource managers are working together to produce cutting edge mapping to protect critically endangered littoral rainforest in the Wet Tropics.

Accurate mapping of threatened ecological communities is an important step in ensuring the health of our natural resources. Due to significant gaps in local littoral rainforest mapping, Terrain NRM and CSIRO established an expert panel to develop a GIS mapping method to assist management of this matter of national environmental significance. A technical report has been published describing the new method.

Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia was listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the EPBC Act in 2009. It occurs on coastal substrates from Queensland to Victoria with a stronghold in the Wet Tropics.

The federal government's Listing Advice identifies certain Queensland regional ecosystems (REs) that "equate wholly" with littoral rainforest. However, preliminary field investigations by Wet Tropics land managers noted that the RE mapping method excluded some obvious littoral rainforest patches and included some questionable ones, so the expert panel was established with Australian government acknowledgement.

The panel included vegetation experts from local, state and federal government, Traditional Owners, consultants, universities, CSIRO and Terrain. Mission Beach was used as a pilot area and, subject to federal government support, the method can be refined for application throughout the region.

Terrain NRM CEO Carole Sweatman said "NRM is about making good decisions based on the best science. The expert panel collaboration brought a range of knowledge into the process. This



has resulted in improved science and access to knowledge regarding a matter of national environmental significance.”

CSIRO’s Dan Metcalfe said “Integrating science, traditional knowledge, planning tools and expert knowledge has enabled us to map this important community with much greater precision – funding from the Australian Government through the Natural Environment Research Program means that we could bring people together and deliver a new mapping method we have shared confidence in”.

The technical report entitled “Mapping Littoral Rainforest & Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia in the Wet Tropics: Mission Beach Pilot Study” is available from the National Environmental Research Program Tropical Ecosystems Hub <http://bit.ly/1h8MBwG> and from Terrain NRM <http://www.terrain.org.au/Projects/Plants-Animals/Littoral-Rainforest>.

For more information, contact Dan Metcalfe at Dan.Metcalfe@csiro.au or Tony O’Malley at tonyo@terrain.org.au.



Photo caption: Improved mapping and information on littoral rainforest will facilitate improved management of this critically endangered ecological community.



Littoral rainforest expert panel members doing field work.

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CONTACTS

Story Tony O'Malley 07 4043 8026 or 0437 728 190 tonyo@terrain.org.au

Media Kathryn Dryden 07 4043 8037 or 0439 737 023 kathrynd@terrain.org.au

