



Stewardship Support Program Applicant's Guide

August 2026

Department of Climate Change,
Energy, the Environment and Water



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the People and Community symbol.

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Introduction

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) established the Stewardship Support Program (SSP) to reduce barriers for eligible landholders to participate in the Biodiversity Offset Scheme.

SSP helps eligible landholders to create biodiversity credits by supporting entry into Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements (BSA).

SSP is seeking expressions of interest to participate in a free biodiversity assessment.

Steps to establish and manage a BSA

A BSA creates biodiversity credits you can sell to fund the management of weeds, pests, and fire and ecological restoration.

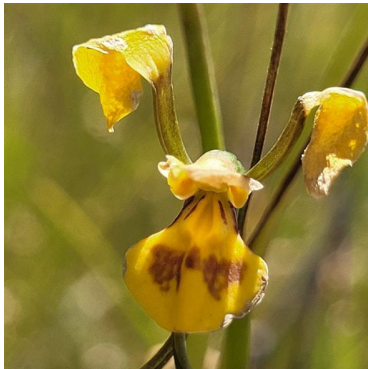


Image: Steve
Lewer/DCCEEW

Landholder wants to establish BSA

- Biodiversity values and gains assessed
- Management plan created
- Total Fund Deposit (TFD) calculated
- BSA approved.

This step may be supported via a free assessment by SSP for successful applicants.

Landholder sells credits

- Direct to developer or via government Reverse Auction
- TFD filled first from credit sales
- Remaining credit sale funds paid to landholder.

BSA managed by landholder

- In perpetuity conservation agreement on the land title
- Annual management payments for conservation work from TFD and agreed management plan
- Biodiversity monitoring and management review

Attributes of a feasible BSA site

As the landholder, you decide which parts of your property and the area to include in your BSA, however there are certain attributes that contribute to whether a site will be feasible or not.

Feasible sites are typically:

- Located in region with credit demand from major projects.
- Able to produce in-demand credits from a significant proportion of the site, that are not already supplied from existing sites.
- Able to produce both ecosystem and species credits.
- Larger in size to produce economies of scale in assessment and management costs relative to small sites. As a guide, feasible sites are typically:
 - Tablelands and Slopes regions – larger than 200 hectares
 - Coastal regions – larger than 50 hectares
 - Cumberland Plain – larger than 30 hectares or have >10 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland or other high value credit type.
- Requiring low management costs (for sites with vegetation already in good condition) OR well suited to active restoration work that can increase credit yield (for sites with a history of clearing and grazing)

The SSP evaluation process considers these attributes when selecting sites to offer assessments through the program.



Image: Steve Lewer/DCCEEW

How SSP operates



Image: Steve
Lewer/DCCEEW

Landholder Applications

The program opens for applications once or twice each year. Applicants complete a simple online form to express interest in the program. In 2025 we received around 100 applications.

Desktop Assessment

Applications are assessed for eligibility and potential of the site to generate in-demand biodiversity credits. Offers are made to successful landholders for an on-ground biodiversity assessment, within program resources. In 2025 offers were made to 24 applicants.

On-ground feasibility assessment

An accredited assessor completes 2-3 day on ground assessment to confirm vegetation and habitat, key management issues and boundaries, and prepares feasibility report for landholder.

Feasibility considers credit supply and demand, potential biodiversity credit value and management costs to establish the site as a BSA.

Full sites assessment and BSA application

Feasible sites progress to a full biodiversity assessment including vegetation plots and target species surveys. The team prepares the reports, management plan and Total Fund Deposit costing to support the landholder to submit the application to create a BSA.

Eligibility

To be eligible for consideration under the Stewardship Support Program (SSP), you must meet all of the following criteria:

- The land is located in an area of New South Wales with current or anticipated biodiversity credit demand, as identified by the SSP team.
- All lots proposed for inclusion in the biodiversity stewardship agreement (BSA) must have the same legal owner. This is a mandatory requirement for BSA approval.
- The land must not be subject to any existing offset obligations or commitments related to future development. Sites with such obligations are not eligible to establish a BSA.
- The applicant must agree to allow a SSP accredited assessor to visit the site for an on-ground assessment within 6 months of being notified of the application outcome.
- The application is NOT submitted by a development corporation.
- The application must be submitted online before the closing date and time.

How will my site be assessed?

Sites will be assessed against 4 evaluation criteria:

Potential to generate in-demand credits

This is the primary criteria which also considers current credit supply.

Site configuration

The program will prioritise sites of a larger size, with a smaller area to perimeter, low fragmentation and high connectivity and/or located within priority investment areas from a relevant Conservation Investment Strategy.

Ownership

Sites owned by private landholders or small businesses and Aboriginal-owned sites will be prioritised.

Establishment complexity

The program will consider complexity and sites may be deprioritised if there are issues that could impact progression including overlapping interests, intent to subdivide, or potential conflict of interest issues with landholder representatives who are brokers or accredited assessors.

The role of credit demand

This round of the program is accepting applications from anywhere across New South Wales.

Biodiversity credit demand is driven by major projects. The largest sources of credit demand include renewable energy and transmission, housing, transport, mining and infrastructure projects.

Credit demand is anticipated in the Hunter Central Coast and New England Renewable Energy Zones which are a priority for this round.

Priority credit-types for this round of SSP

Hunter region in-demand credits

Ecosystem credits in the Ellerston, Hunter, Upper Hunter, Tomalla, Wyong and Yengo IBRA subregions:

- Central Hunter Grey Box-Ironbark Woodland TEC
- Central Hunter Ironbark-Spotted Gum-Grey Box Forest TEC
- Coastal Floodplain Wetlands greater than or equal to 70% and less than 90%
- Coastal Valley Grassy Woodlands greater than or equal to 70% and less than 90%
- Dry Rainforests less than 50%
- Hunter Floodplain Red Gum Woodland TEC
- Hunter-Macleay Dry Sclerophyll Forests less than 50%
- Lower Hunter Spotted Gum Ironbark Forest TEC
- North Coast Wet Sclerophyll Forests less than 50%
- Northern Hinterland Wet Sclerophyll Forests less than 50%
- Northern Warm Temperate Rainforests less than 50%
- Northern Hinterland Dry Sclerophyll Forests less than 50%
- Sydney Hinterland Dry Sclerophyll Forests less than 50%

New England region in-demand credits

Development within the New England region is at an earlier stage in the planning process and the credit types required are still being confirmed. At this stage we are seeking expressions of interest from landholders within the New England Renewable Energy Zone who may be interested in setting up a stewardship site to create credits.

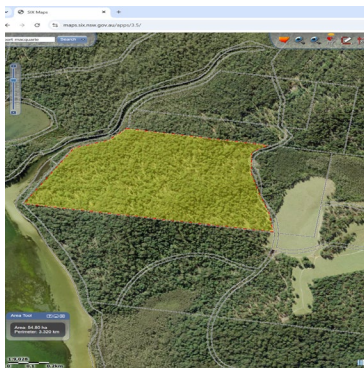
Preliminary assessment for sites that are progressed within this region will commence in late 2027/early 2028, as offset needs are determined through project approvals.

Applying to SSP

Application form

If you would like to apply, you need to complete a simple online application form that includes:

- Contact details
- Property information including address, legal ownership, and area of interest to assess for stewardship (may be less than whole property)
- Ownership information and existing relationships with accredited assessors or brokers
- Ability to include additional information to support the applications such as existing ecological reports or threatened species records.



Proposed BSA area map

While the form allows you to select and add the lots of land you want considered in the application, often it is only part of the area of interest.

It is very helpful for the evaluation team if you can add a sketch map of the area you are proposing to include in a BSA with a comment such as: 'Interested in putting the area inside yellow under stewardship'.



Useful additional information

The application form allows upload of photos, reports and maps. These can help support the evaluation process and confirm potential values on the site.

You may wish to provide:

- Photos or trail camera images of threatened species on site
- Preliminary ecological assessment reports
- Previous targeted surveys results
- Other relevant information

Expected timing

After applications close sites will be evaluated and applicants will be notified of the outcomes, in line with the following timeframe:

- 13 September 2026: Applications close
- 1 November 2026: Notify landholders whether application has been successful
- December 2026 – June 2027: Conduct Phase 1 feasibility surveys for successful applicants
- From late 2027: Full assessment and submit BSA application

How to apply

Please submit an online application before 13 September 2026

Click here: [Application Form](#)

Biodiversity stewardship online resources

[Stewardship Support Program](#)

[Overview of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme](#)

[Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement Application Guide](#)

[Credits Near Me](#) – online map to check what credits may be on your property

[Market sales dashboard](#) – to see past biodiversity credit sales