



New South Wales

THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION ACT 1995 No 101

Notice of Final Determination and Amendment of Schedule 1 to Act

The Scientific Committee established under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* has, in pursuance of Division 3 of Part 2 of that Act, made a final determination to insert the following community in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to that Act (Endangered ecological communities) and, accordingly, that Schedule is amended as set out in Annexure "A" to this Notice:

Part 3 Endangered ecological communities

Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest
(as described in the final determination of the Scientific Committee to list the ecological community)

The final determination to insert this community in Schedule 1 has been made because the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that this community is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate.

Copies of the final determination may be inspected at:

The Information Centre (Level 1)
National Parks & Wildlife Service
43 Bridge Street
HURSTVILLE NSW 2220

and at all District Offices of the National Parks and Wildlife Service during business hours.

Signed at Sydney, this 29th day of May 1998.

Dr Chris Dickman
Chairperson
Scientific Committee

Annexure "A"

Schedule 1 to the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* is amended by inserting in Part 3 in alphabetical order the matter:

Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest
(as described in the final determination of the Scientific Committee to list the ecological community)

NSW SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Final Determination

The Scientific Committee established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act has made a Final Determination to list the Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community, as an ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY under Schedule 1 Part 3 of the Act. The Listing of endangered ecological communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The Scientific Committee has found that:

1. The Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community is a community of cool temperate rainforest with a ground layer dominated by sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum cristatum* Hampe 1874: Sphagnaceae).
2. The sphagnum moss community is located within Ben Halls Gap National Park.
3. The largest sphagnum moss community comprises large hummocks of moss, and other notable cool temperate rainforest species. It is a low closed forest on a sheltered permanent creek line. *Sphagnum cristatum* is a conspicuous component of this association. There are many plant components of this association: in addition to sphagnum moss, other important species are *Elaeocarpus Holopetalus* (black olive berry), *Quintinia sieberi* (rough possumwood), *Banksia integrifolia* var. *compar.*, *Callistemon* sp. nov., *Leptospermum polygalifolium* ssp. *montanum*, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Todea barbara*, *Blechnum nudum* and *Microsorium diversifolium*. The community is quite distinct from other cool temperate rainforest remnants found at Barrington Tops and on the northern tablelands, as indicated by the presence of a new species of *Callistemon*, a new taxon of orchid (*Corbas* sp.) and by the complete lack of *Nothofagus moorei* (Antarctic Beech). The Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest is also the known northern limit of the *Atherosperma moschatum*.
4. Ben Halls Gap National Park, where the sphagnum moss—cool temperate rainforest community occurs, has been shown to support a wide variety of birds, mammals, frogs and invertebrates.

5. The occurrence of sphagnum communities beneath a mix of cool temperate rainforest species represents communities which were formerly widespread on the northern tablelands but are now considered to be rare. The Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community also represents an unusual westerly location which is biogeographically interesting because it represents a remnant of a habitat that may have been more extensive during a wetter period. However, the modern day decline of sphagnum moss communities on the northern tablelands is directly linked to human interference. The conservation status of the community is poor because of a restricted and patchy distribution. This community has a high conservation value because it is a remnant community, containing an undescribed species of *Callistemon*, and is at the known northern limit of southern cool temperate rainforest.
6. The Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community has survived thus far because of its isolation and inaccessibility to the public. However, gazetted as a National Park, has greatly increased the desirability of visitation and access to Ben Halls Gap.
7. Greater accessibility, following formalisation of access to Ben Halls Gap National Park may result in a number of threats to the community:
 - (a) The sphagnum moss-rainforest elements are vulnerable to increased visitor pressure which may disturb the community and destroy the sphagnum moss.
 - (b) Sphagnum moss is much sought after for home gardens, and opening up of Ben Halls Gap to the public may place the ecological community at risk from illegal collection. This is particularly of concern, if further access becomes formalised.
 - (c) The cool temperate rainforest microclimate is particularly susceptible to disturbance from an increased fire frequency, and from prescribed burns.
 - (d) Increased public access to Ben Halls Gap, may result in English Broom weed invasion (given that it has invaded similar habitats in Barrington Tops and the Mount Royal Range) and threaten ground flora, including the Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community.

8. In the light of 7 (a-d) above, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the Ben Halls Gap National Park Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest Community is likely to become extinct in nature in New South Wales unless the circumstances threatening its survival or evolutionary development cease to operate and thus meets the criteria of Section 12 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act, for listing as an endangered ecological community.

Dr Chris Dickman
Chairperson
Scientific Committee