



Territory Conservation Agreements



Territory
Natural Resource
Management



Landholder Information

*Voluntary Conservation
Agreement Program for
Landholders in the Territory*

Territory Conservation Agreements

Community Information

The Northern Territory is renowned for its outstanding natural landscapes and ecological values. It encompasses a rich diversity of natural habitats, including many sites of conservation significance that remain in relatively pristine condition. This natural environment contributes to our Territory quality of life, but also underpins our local economy through pastoral, agricultural, mining and tourism industries.

Territory Natural Resource Management (Territory NRM) 'Territory Conservation Agreements' help landholders to establish conservation management systems protecting areas of high conservation significance on their lands. Territory Conservation Agreements (TCAs) are voluntary, with terms worked out between landholders and Territory NRM.

TCAs will be based upon a plan of management designed to protect the core environmental values of significant sites, consistent with the broader management goals for the property. TCAs encourage innovative multiple-use strategies which can demonstrate production benefits as well as delivering conservation outcomes.

Funding for establishment costs can be up to a maximum of \$50,000 per site.

Who is Territory NRM?

Territory NRM is an independent not for profit organisation that works with landholders, groups industry and government to sustainably manage our land, water, soil, plants and animals.

We have been operating since 2005 and our members include community and Landcare groups, industry bodies, indigenous organisations, pastoral companies, businesses and local government.



Ben Lynes

What is a Territory Conservation Agreement?

A TCA is a voluntary agreement made between a landholder and Territory NRM that establishes a partnership between the two based on a management plan for a site which has important conservation values on the landholder's property.

The agreement is a contract, committing the landholder to implement management actions for a period of ten years, but it is not registered on the property title or binding upon future owners. These management actions may be adaptively modified to respond to changing conditions at the specified site during the period of the agreement. The TCA program aims to raise awareness among Territory landholders of the benefits of integrated conservation management on high value sites across the NT.

How will Territory Conservation Agreements benefit landholders?

TCA's enable landholders to conserve key parts of their property, while enhancing the sustainability of their production operations and improving the condition of their land.

TCA site management plans will set out clear and simple steps for the management of sites and adjacent areas to restore and enhance their natural values and productivity. Territory NRM offers funding to offset the costs of establishing a TCA over high value sites, which may cover a broad range of conservation works and infrastructure.

Landholders entering into TCA's will join a network of land managers supported to undertake sustainable land management and maintain priority conservation sites on their land.

- Site management planning
- Site description (location, assets, threats)
- Required outcomes and targets
- Fire management
- Water resources and quality
- Grazing management
- Weeds, ferals and fire management
- Soil erosion and stabilisation
- Re vegetation works
- Ongoing monitoring
- Reporting requirements

What will be covered in TCA site management plans?

TCA site management plans will be developed in discussion between landholders and Territory NRM. They are entirely voluntary, and will not contain anything that the landholder has not agreed to. Management plans will be short clearly written documents, designed to protect, restore and enhance the biophysical and ecological values of sites. The management actions outlined in each plan will reflect the specific conditions, challenges and opportunities unique to each site.

Management plans will set 10 year targets and expected outcomes for the site. They will clearly demarcate the boundaries of the site over which the TCA is made. Management actions will include a package of complementary measures intended to mitigate threats and enhance existing values, consistent with broader property management objectives. The plans will also set out a simple monitoring and reporting schedule (or more detailed studies if these are required). Implementation and reporting requirements will not be onerous, and will in most cases be consistent with best practice property management.

Who can apply for a Territory Conservation Agreement?

Any individual, group or corporation that owns land or leases land from the Crown can apply for a Territory Conservation Agreement. Pastoral and aboriginal land managers have been identified as key partners. Individuals, groups or corporations who hold outstanding or un-acquitted funding from Territory NRM will not be eligible to receive funding under TCA's until such time as their outstanding funding is acquitted.

Can any area be placed under Territory Conservation Agreement?

TCAs are intended to look after areas of high conservation significance. Conservation significance can be justified in a number of different ways. One of the most important criteria for eligibility for a TCA is land condition, sites must be in good condition and not seriously threatened by unmanageable pressures or threats. Priority will be given to sites, that provide habitat to rare or threatened species, or that contain important ecological communities.

Recognition will also be given to any cultural values associated with sites (however landholders will have to demonstrate having obtained any necessary cultural clearance before receiving funding for infrastructure works).

Special account will be taken of sites that encompass or fall within officially listed sites of conservation significance, or match priorities identified in NRM funding programs, or highlighted in the Northern Territory Natural Resource Management Plan.



Factors contributing to conservation significance

- Within underrepresented bio-region or sub-bioregion
- Adjacent to (or buffering) Territory parks or conservation areas
- Habitat for threatened species or important ecological communities
- Sites important for landscape connectivity
- Wetlands, riparian and other aquatic habitats
- Special cultural or historic significance
- Any special geological or topographic attributes
- Listing as a site of International, National or Territory significance

What is eligible for funding under TCAs?

Territory NRM understands that changing the management of a site to achieve conservation outcomes may require considerable landholder investment. Funding will therefore be offered to cover the establishment costs of implementing a site management plan.

Specifically, TCAs will provide for the material costs of infrastructure required to establish an integrated conservation regime. It will fund chemical herbicide sufficient for a specified number of treatments, depending on the agreed management plan. Costs arising from the hire of equipment necessary to implement management plans will also be funded under the TCA. Any special surveys or site assessments required for implementation of the management plan will also be eligible for funding.

Under most TCAs, labour should be provided as a contribution by the landholder, although applications for the hire of contract labour will be considered where special circumstances require this.

The cost of implementing a TCA will be agreed through discussion between landholders and Territory NRM. Territory NRM will fund individual TCAs up to a maximum of \$50,000 for sites of exceptional value.

Eligible for funding:

- Fencing
- Off-stream water points
- Chemical herbicides for weeds
- Seeds or saplings for revegetation
- Hire of plant and equipment for erosion management and stabilisation works
- Necessary plans, assessments and surveys
- Contract labour



Hannah Seward



Ben Nottidge

What are landholder responsibilities under a TCA?

When landholders enter into a TCA they are entering into a legally binding contract with Territory NRM. Under the terms of this contract they agree to implement the actions set out in the management plan for the site within the specified time schedule. Other than where contract labour has been included within TCA budget, the landholder will be responsible for providing labour to implement these actions and providing for the ongoing inspection and maintenance of this infrastructure until the expiry of the agreement. The landholder will also be required to provide short annual reports on conditions within the site until the expiry of the agreement. The landholder will also need to allow regular follow-up site inspections each during the course of the agreement.

Can other land uses continue in or around a TCA site?

TCAs specifically seek to demonstrate the benefits of integrated approaches to conservation including multiple land uses. They will aim to deliver (where possible) both conservation and enterprise benefits. Building on advice from relevant experts and the knowledge and experience of landholders, site management plans will identify simple strategies to maintain the integrity of sites of high conservation value within broader property management objectives.

However, in order to be eligible for a TCA site management plans will need to achieve a basic standard of conservation merit.

Some TCAs may (with the consent of landholders) require the exclusion of stock from core areas, although in many cases sites may benefit from the controlled grazing of stock (e.g. to help manage fuel loads or suppress weeds).

How is the merit of a TCA determined?

Land managers must first submit an Expression of Interest. A panel of experienced land managers will review the EoI against program criteria to assess whether the proposed site is eligible for a TCA. If it is, the panel will provide preliminary advice on actions required to manage the site.

A site visit will then be carried out by a Territory NRM representative. Panel recommendations and options for the site's management will be discussed. If the landholder decides to proceed, a site management plan will be developed in discussion between him or her and Territory NRM. Additional expert advice may be sought

Is a TCA a conservation covenant?

No, TCA agreements are not the same as conservation covenants recorded under section 74 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act. TCAs are contracts between landholders and Territory NRM; they are limited in duration and not recorded on a property title. They are entirely voluntary.

How is payment made to landholders under TCAs?

Once the terms of the TCA have been agreed between Territory NRM and the landholder, the final agreement is signed. Territory NRM will make payment in full upon this signature. Landholders will be required to either provide audited statements of expenditure (for larger payments) or proof of expenditure in the form of receipts (for smaller payments) as stipulated in the terms of their TCA.



The TCA Process

1 Landholder submits an Expression of Interest (Eol)

A landholder decides that they have a site on their property which they wish to manage through a TCA. The landholder may contact their Regional NRM Coordinator to discuss their interest and completes an Eol form and submits to Territory Natural Resource Management.

3 Site visit

A site inspection by the Regional NRM Coordinator is organised with the landholder. They discuss panel recommendations, ideas and any other options for the site's management. They agree on an overall strategy and rough costing for its implementation.

5 Agreement signed

When the terms of the plan have been agreed and it has been approved, Territory NRM will send the landholder the final plan, together with the supporting financial schedule as a TCA to be signed. Funds are released once the plan is signed and returned.

2 Eol reviewed and preliminary advice provided

A panel of experienced land managers will review the Eol against program criteria to assess whether the proposed site is eligible for a TCA. If it is, the panel will provide preliminary advice on actions required to conserve the property's natural values.

4 Draft management plan developed

Following a site inspection and discussions with a landholder, the Regional NRM Coordinator will develop a simple initial site management plan and financial proposal. Additional expert advice may be sought where required. The plan is then sent to the landholder for approval. The plan can either be approved or amendments requested.

6 Planned Works

Works will be carried out according to the agreed management plan. A Regional NRM Coordinator will visit the site to view completed infrastructure works during the first year.

7 Reporting and Monitoring

Landholders are required to produce and submit brief annual reports tracking progress made on the management plan. Follow-up site inspections will be made by Regional NRM Coordinators.

How do I enter into a Territory Conservation Agreement?

If you are a landholder and are interested to enter TCA, the first step is to lodge an Expression of Interest form (Eoi) with Territory NRM.

Eoi forms are available on the Territory NRM website at www.territorynrm.org.au/tnrm-action/tnrm-programs/tcas/ or contact your Regional NRM Coordinator or the Territory NRM Darwin office to request a form.

Regional NRM Coordinators:

Top End	Ph: 8942 8317
Gulf / Savanna	Ph: 8971 0405
Tablelands	Ph: 8959 6021
Arid Lands	Ph: 8959 6020
Darwin Office	Ph: 89 42 8300

Expression of Interest forms should be returned to:

Territory Conservation Agreement Program
GPO Box 2775 Darwin 0801

Or
Email: info@territorynrm.org.au
Fax: 08 8942 8333