

Farm Plan template

This template has been developed by Mitchell Shire Council and Consultants RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd trading as RMCG to assist landholders in developing a simple farm plan / land management plan to sustainably manage their property

Table of Contents

What is farm planning?	2	Action Plan	9
My property and its natural resources	4	Mapping – Future	10
My vision and goals	5	Implement and review	14
The Property Map	6		

What is farm planning?

Whole farm planning is a process for documenting visions, goals, and actions for your property, recording natural and property resources and current management practices, and planning changes to the property and its management. For some people it is a case of documenting and prioritising what is already in your head, for others it may uncover new possibilities to explore.

This is also an opportunity for you to assess how well you are meeting your legal responsibilities as a landholder and identify issues you may need to address.

The end result is a plan that can assist in developing and managing a property sustainably. It can guide on-ground changes, but may also prompt you to undertake research or skill development to aid in managing your property and natural resources.

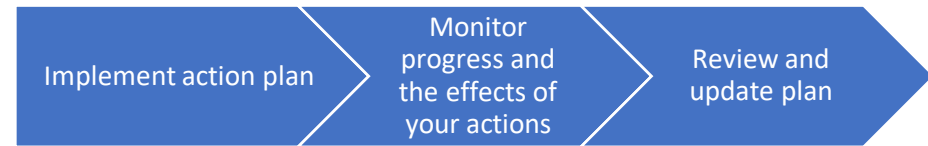
To get the best out of your property management plan, you should refer to it regularly and review both your progress towards objectives, and whether anything has changed on your property that needs to be updated in your plan.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLANNING PHASES

Planning



Implementing, monitoring, reviewing and updating your plan is as important as writing it in the first place.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED?

Property management planning should recognise the following guiding principles to achieve sustainable natural resource management:

- The natural resources supporting rural lifestyles and production from the land rely on healthy and functioning ecosystems.
- Sustainable property management must consider the potential for off-site impacts for all management practices. For small properties, the influence of neighbouring and catchment land use and natural resource condition can be particularly important.
- Sustainable properties and communities require wise use of natural resources. Better natural resource management will be achieved by working as a community to address issues which go across property boundaries. Shared knowledge and resources will also greatly enhance people's ability to manage small properties.

Your property management plan should be based on sustainable land management principles.

There may be plans developed for your local catchment, district or region that may help guide you. It is important to be aware of these and the issues they highlight as they may be relevant to your property. Refer to the Landcare website at <https://www.landcarevic.org.au> for resources that will help you manage your property.

After identifying the values on your property, and establishing your vision and goals, the Action Plan will help you to recognise issues that may need attention. You will then be able to plan appropriate actions to develop and/or better manage your property and prioritise what you wish to tackle over the next few years.

Your property management plan will also include maps on which you can draw current property layout and plans for the future.

My property and its natural resources

Description of property	Please describe your property e.g. location, size, crops/animals, products produced. Please attach images of your property, e.g. special places, natural values, things you are proud of.	
Description of your natural resources	Please describe the natural resources on your property e.g. streams, wetlands, soil types, geology, bush/forest, animals or birds which inhabit or visit the property, and any special observations you have made.	
	What do you like or value most about your property? Do any of the natural resources have special meaning or value to you?	
Description of personal and community resources	Please describe the personal skills and resources you and your family bring to your property. Think about the activities you undertake and the skills you have.	
	What are your community resources? Think about what skills and resources are next door or in the area, whether through groups, businesses or individuals.	

My vision and goals

VISION AND GOALS FOR YOUR PROPERTY AND ITS RESOURCES

Your property vision should be long term, can be general, and should encompass whatever is important to you about your property and lifestyle, not just productivity aspirations or how others think the property should be managed.

Consider some or all of the following:

- Why did you purchase your property?
- What do you want to achieve from your property?
- What values are important to you?
- How is the property important to you family or friends, even if they don't live there?
- Do you wish to derive an income from the land and develop a commercial enterprise?

What is your vision for your property? What do you want it to look like and provide for you in the future?

Example Property Visions

To develop a small-scale commercial farm that will provide an income to support me and my partner in our retirement through enterprises that are not labour intensive, while providing a beautiful environment in which to live.

To manage the property in an environmentally friendly manner that will meet the needs of our family and return income to cover most costs and increase the real estate value of the property.

What specific goals do you have for your property to achieve your vision?

Goals are specific medium to long term objectives you want to achieve; you may want to list a couple of intermediate steps or targets including timeframes with each goal. It is ok to have less than 3 goals.

	GOAL	TARGET / STEPPING STONES
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Think about your own strengths and weaknesses and those that are inherent to your property e.g. due to location or other issues and list them below:

Think about opportunities and threats for you and your property that are beyond your control and list them below:

Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	
Threats	

The Property Map

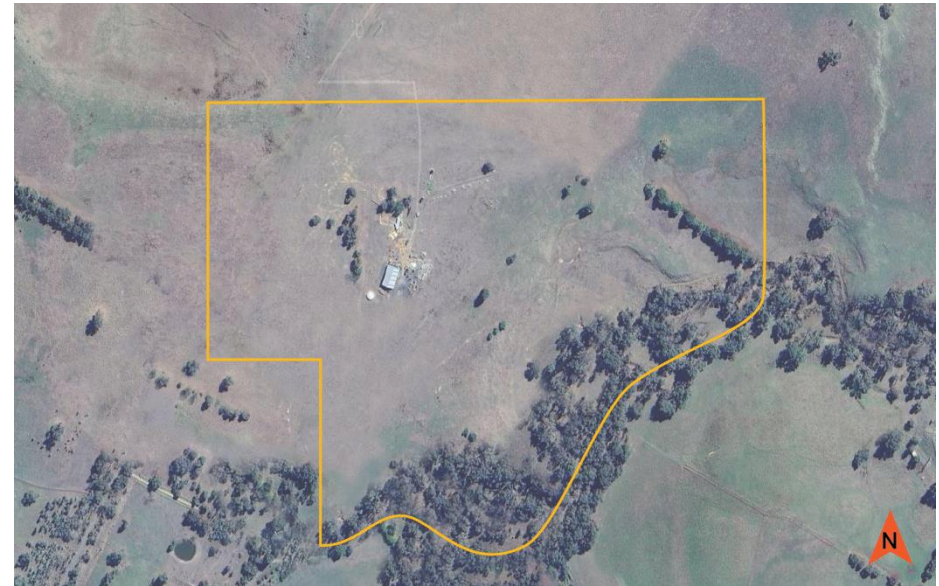
WHY MAP YOUR PROPERTY?

Property maps are excellent tools for planning land development and assisting ongoing management. A detailed map showing the natural aspects (e.g. topography) and resources (e.g. soil types, water resources and natural vegetation) of your property will help you understand many aspects of your property and assist you to plan for appropriate land use and location of infrastructure.

Careful planning will help you get the most out of your property whilst protecting valuable natural assets and/or sensitive areas and avoid creating problems such as erosion.

Your map will be of assistance for many property planning and management tasks including:

- layout of paddocks;
- positioning of tracks, buildings, pipelines and powerlines;
- locating intensive use areas such as cultivation or animal yards, chemical storage areas;
- measuring distances, areas and elevation differences;
- marking the location of issues or problems requiring management such as weeds or soil degradation; and
- highlighting locations for any visitors to the property e.g. fertiliser spreading contractors etc.



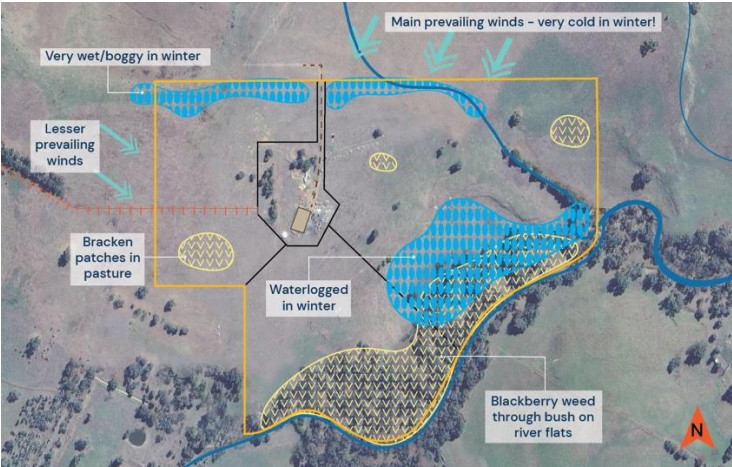
YOUR PROPERTY, ITS NATURAL RESOURCES AND EXISTING LAYOUT

The aim of this section is to create a map of how your property currently looks. Use different colour pens or markers to draw in the following features on your map.

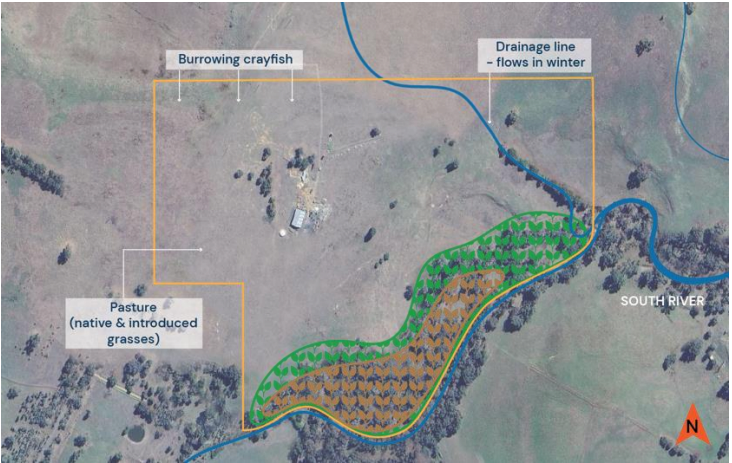
Mapping symbols

Mapping symbols

SYMBOL	FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Property boundary		Solid yellow line
Internal fence line / yard		Solid black line
Gate way		Black cross on fence
Access roads		Dashed brown line
Property tracks		Pink dotted line
Watercourse		Solid blue line
Drainage line		Dashed blue line
Dams, soaks, springs		Blue shading
Ridge line		Solid tan line
Soil type boundary		Solid purple line
Soil problem		Purple cross pattern shading
Water logging		Blue oval shading
Native Vegetation		Yellow plant pattern shading
Revegetation / shelterbelts		Green plant pattern shading
Weed infestation		Yellow V shading
Buildings		Brown shading of shape
Hazard areas (buildings, sites)		Yellow triangle
Power line		Orange T lines
Telecom line		Dark grey lines
Easement		Grey dot shading
Prevailing wind direction		Pale blue arrow
Stock shelter (building)		Orange square
Water pipeline		Dark blue dotted line
Water pump		Light blue double arrow in direction of flow
Stock water trough		Solid blue dot
Water supply for fire fighting		Blue arrow with water drop



Existing map layout



Natural resources and value map

HOW SUSTAINABLE IS YOUR PROPERTY USE AND MANAGEMENT?

Sustainable management of all facets of a property, whatever its size, can be complicated and difficult to achieve. There can be many questions to consider:

- Are you using your land within its capabilities or are there 'problem areas' that suggest a different use or management approach is needed?
- How does your property layout interact with its natural resources and values? Are they protected from degradation and negative impacts from any infrastructure, agricultural / horticultural activities and/or domestic stock on your property?

With many aspects to consider it is hard to know how you are going unless you take a step back from the individual issues and review the entire property.

Action Plan

Review your answers in the Strength/ Weakness/Opportunity/Threat exercise and use the following table to collate and summarise a list of all those issues and actions you have identified to address. Before preparing the action plan in the below table, you may wish to make a draft for each issue using a separate sheet of paper.

ISSUE, IMPACT AND RISK	DESIRED OUTCOME	MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES / PRACTICES (WHAT TO DO)	ACTION PLAN (HOW, WHERE, WHEN TO DO IT AND ESTIMATED COST)	WHAT AND HOW TO MONITOR AND RECORD	PRIORITY (HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW)
e.g. Gorse reducing grazing area, risking spread off site	Contain spread of or eliminate gorse	Remove gorse and rehabilitate area	Spray affected area, remove or burn dead material (in favourable seasonal conditions) and re-vegetate at (location) by (date) Estimated cost: \$	Keep photographs (before and after) Monitor site for new weed growth	How important is it to you and for managing natural resources?

Mapping – Future

DEVELOPING YOUR 'IDEAL' PROPERTY LAYOUT

Do you have issues highlighted in the preceding sections that suggest aspects about your current property layout or land use should be altered?

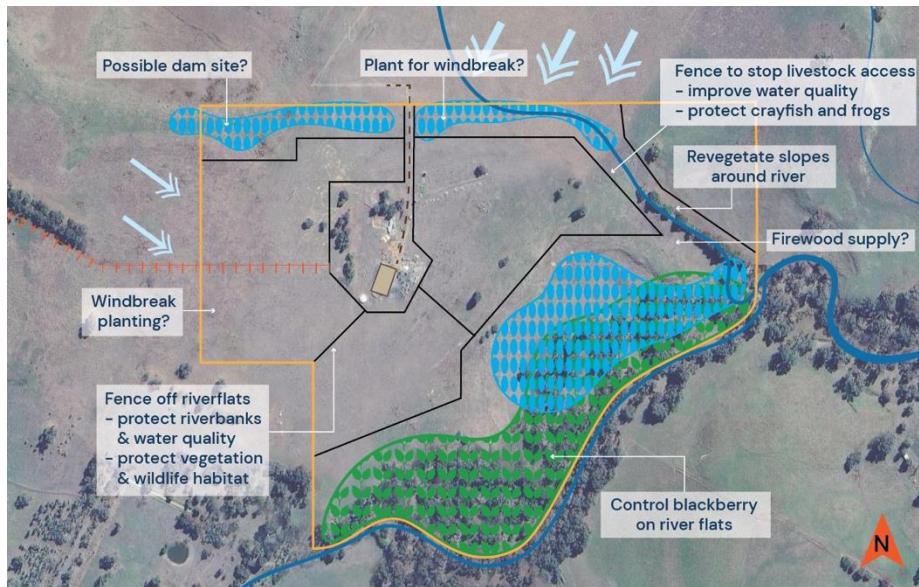
Using an aerial photo of your property create an 'Ideal Property Layout' map.

This activity may take some time to develop and get to a point that you are happy with. Take your time, consult others for ideas and be prepared to change things a number of times before you have it finalised. Following these steps may assist you.

1. To start with it is helpful to mark onto your map things that either can't be or are too difficult to change (e.g. soil types, drainage lines, location of houses and other expensive developments).
2. The next step should be to ensure that you have protected your natural assets with appropriate buffers and that significant landscape features and aspects are conserved and supported on your property.
3. After that, consider how you want to use the rest of your land, any issues you need to address or plans that you have, and map the rest of your property layout with these in mind. Mark on your map any planned actions identified for your property in your Action Plan. This may include the following:
 - Fencing to protect and create buffers around waterways / dams or vegetation;
 - Paddock or laneway layout changes;
 - Infrastructure e.g. sheds, wash-down facilities, stock water systems;
 - New irrigation areas; and
 - Land use changes.

Refer to the Mapping Symbols above for ideas of symbols to use for your proposed development. Consult professional help if you have difficulties.

Planning for improvement map



Protecting your property's natural assets

Watercourses, wetlands, threatened and endangered native vegetation and rare geological features are examples of high value natural assets which need to be protected in order to preserve their health and function and that of the wider landscape.

In most cases it is not enough to just protect the feature itself; these environmentally sensitive assets also need areas of protected land around them to buffer or insulate them from any potential negative impacts of surrounding land use. These 'buffers' work best if they are in a natural condition that is, covered with native vegetation.

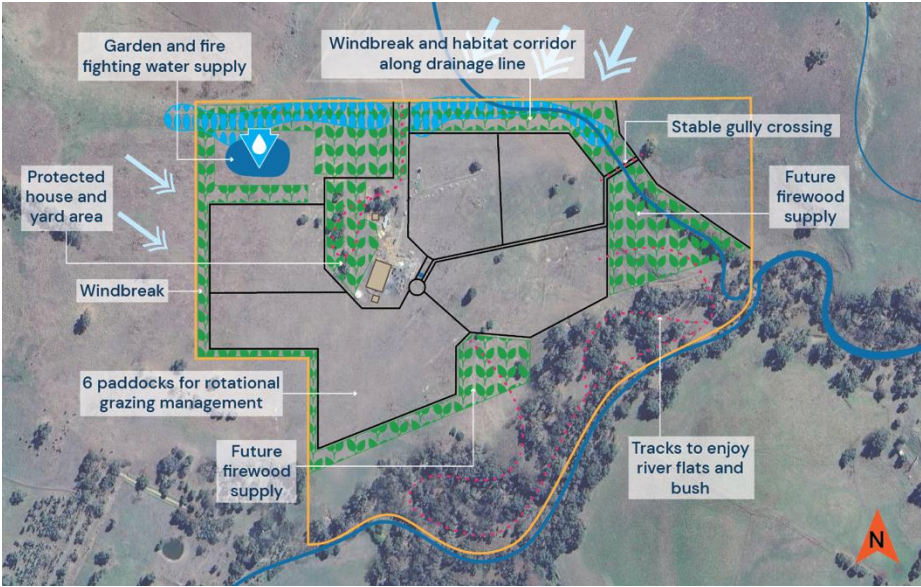
Buffers of native vegetation along watercourses, known as riparian vegetation, also play a vital role in maintaining the stability of the watercourse, the health of its in-stream and riparian habitats and in protection of water quality.

So, how big a buffer is required?

The simple answer is 'as much as possible'. In the case of watercourses, the larger the watercourse, the bigger the buffer should be. Even protecting small drainage lines can have significant impacts on all aspects of the health of a river system. Aim to create at least 5m, but ideally 10m buffers along both sides of all small to moderate watercourses and the same around other high value natural assets. Large watercourses need 10 – 20m wide buffers on both sides.

Protect as much as you can.

Ideal property layout map



Implement and review

IMPLEMENT AND REVIEW YOUR PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN

12 month priorities

Based on the process of preparing this plan, what are your top priorities for:

- On-ground actions on your property
- Outside advice / assistance you plan to obtain
- Training / skill development?

Property plan review

Set a date to complete your review. How many of the above actions have you completed? Tick them off or add comments in your property action plan.

What are your next priorities?

Property plan update

Set a date to complete the property plan update. Ask yourself:

- Has this plan helped to achieve your goals and approach your vision?
- Have your goals or aspirations changed, requiring updates to the plan?
- Have there been any external changes (i.e. threats or opportunities) which impact your property and its management and require changes to this plan?