# EMSA Floristics module guidance

## Introduction

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has received feedback from Regional Delivery Partners (RDPs) suggesting the EMSA Floristics module is overly time intensive given the requirement to collect plant specimen vouchers for all species in a plot for the enhanced protocol.

The purpose of this document is to provide additional rationale for the enhanced protocol requirement and present a protocol modification that may be used in some instances. Any use of the modification needs to be discussed with the Long-term Monitoring team first, as it may reduce floristics monitoring rigor and have implications for reporting on project outcomes.

## Plant specimen vouchers

It is a requirement of the Floristics module to collect plant specimen vouchers of species present in the 1ha EMSA plot. These vouchers ensure correct species identification and provide a taxonomic reference. **If physical vouchers are not being collected in a project, the project manager must seek an exemption from the EMSA Protocol Advisory Group.**

## Current Floristics protocols

The EMSA Floristics module currently has two protocols to record flora species composition in a 1 ha monitoring plot.

- In the enhanced protocol, plant specimen vouchers are collected for all species present in each plot. Species identification by a herbarium is the preferred approach, however an EMSA-approved Botanist may also be used. To accredit a botanist, see the information sheet and application form on the document downloads page of the EMSA website.
- In the standard protocol, plant specimen vouchers are collected for a subset of the species (new, unknown, important, contentious and threatened species) present in each plot. As above, species identification by a herbarium is preferred, or an EMSA-approved Botanist may also be used. Identification is undertaken by an ecologist or field botanist for the remaining species with plant photo vouchers collected.

The enhanced protocol is recommended for use when the plot is surveyed for the first time, to formalise a full baseline species inventory through collected plant specimen vouchers and subsequent expert identification. However, the standard protocol may also be appropriate for use in a first plot survey in

instances when a baseline has previously been established, or only a subset of species is being monitored (for example, weed species).

## Protocol modification

DCCEEW have developed a modified protocol as an alternative to the Floristics methodology outlined in the module manual. This modified protocol is most appropriate for use in projects with plots containing well known species in more homologous environments. Note the modification is not as robust a method as using the enhanced protocol in all plots in the first instance.

1. Complete the enhanced Floristics protocol in the first monitoring plot. Collect physical and photo vouchers of all flora species in the plot to create a species list for the project in the Monitor app.

   - The vouchers can be collected by any ecologist or field botanist on site, following guidance provided in the [Floristics manual](#).

   - Voucher barcode labels are available in the 'Request voucher barcode labels' page under the 'Admin' tab in the MERIT project (note, this can be accessed by MERIT users with the Project Administrator role).

2. Using the created voucher barcode labels from the initial plot, complete the standard Floristics protocol in all other plots within the project, and on subsequent visits, to record any additional species.

3. Vouchers are sent to a herbarium for identification or an EMSA-approved Botanist identifies the vouchered species. Where there is any uncertainty regarding species ID, vouchers must be sent to a herbarium. Note, species IDs do not have to happen immediately, as subsequent surveys can simply use the agreed field names instead of the actual species name.

4. Once known, field names can be updated to include actual species IDs.

**If this modified monitoring approach would be suitable for your project, please discuss with your DCCEEW contract manager before seeking approval from the EMSA Protocol Advisory Group.**

## Version control

| Version | Date | Version update overview |
|---------|------|-------------------------|
| 1.0 | 21 May 2025 | First release |

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