



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 your DCCEEW contract manager 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 may be a physical voucher and/or photographic voucher.

Photographic vouchers are sufficient for identification of well-known species, and species where collection is difficult (for example, tall trees) or not appropriate (such as threatened species).

We strongly recommend against using only photographs for plant specimen vouchers. A physical voucher assists with correct species identification and provides a taxonomic reference.

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 (ID) is completed by an EMSA-approved Botanist. Where there is uncertainty regarding species ID, vouchers must be sent to a herbarium. To accredit a botanist, see the information sheet and application form on the [document downloads](#) page of the EMSA website (under 'Floristics Module'). DCCEEW are finalising a species determination module that will allow field names to be updated to scientific names. RDPs can continue to use field names for all surveys in the meantime.
- 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 is completed by an EMSA-approved Botanist. Identification is undertaken by an ecologist or field botanist for the remaining species with plant photographic 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 homogeneous 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/or photographic 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.

As described above for the current floristics protocols, physical and photographic vouchers are determined by an EMSA-approved Botanist. Where there is uncertainty regarding species ID, vouchers must be sent to a herbarium. As noted above, field names are updated to scientific names once the species determination module has been finalised. RDPs continue to use field names for all surveys in the meantime.

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.

Requesting a Floristics module modification

RDPs seeking approval to use a modified version of the EMSA Floristics module should first discuss their monitoring requirements with their DCCEEW contract manager. A request must be sent to the Long-Term Monitoring inbox (ltmp@dcceew.gov.au) with justification that the project plots and/or wider project area represents a relatively homogeneous environment containing a majority of well-known species. Your request will be reviewed by the EMSA Protocol Advisory Group. Please allow for up to 7 business days for these requests to be processed.

Version control

Version	Date	Version update overview
1.0	21 May 2025	First release
1.1	2 July 2025	Minor revisions
2.0	13 November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated vouchers guidance in 'Plant specimen vouchers' • Updated species determination guidance under 'Current Floristics protocols' • Added new section 'Requesting a Floristics module modification'.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

Unless otherwise noted, copyright (and any other intellectual property rights) in this publication is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia (referred to as the Commonwealth). Header image photographer: Nerida Sloane.

All material in this publication is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](#) except content supplied by third parties, logos and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The Australian Government acting through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has exercised due care and skill in preparing and compiling the information and data in this publication. Notwithstanding, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, its employees and advisers disclaim all liability, including liability for negligence and for any loss, damage, injury, expense or cost incurred by any person as a result of accessing, using or relying on any of the information or data in this publication to the maximum extent permitted by law.