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Case Study 1: Vegetation Management Offsets for the SEQ Water Grid

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SEQ Water Grid

- Population growth + severe drought + climate change = unprecedented demand on SEQ water supplies
- Water Grid to drought-proof SEQ
- \$9 billion water grid is the largest urban drought response in Australia




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SEQ Water Grid

Includes:

- Western Corridor Recycled Water Project
- Gold Coast Desalination Project
- Southern Regional Water Pipeline
- Northern Pipeline Interconnector
- Eastern Pipeline Interconnector
- Wyaralong Dam
- Cedar Grove Weir
- Bromelton Off Stream Storage
- Proposed Traveston Crossing Dam




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Offset Requirements for the Water Grid

Water Grid Project	Offsets Required (ha)*	Expressed as a Percentage
SRWP	45.36	56.7
WCRWP	39.50	36
Gold Coast Desalination Plant	3.02	2.33
Cedar Grove Weir	3.29	2.79
Bromelton Off-stream Storage	2.57	2.18
Total	93.72	100

* actual ha of vegetation cleared that require offsetting prior to any offset ratio being applied. Ratio expected to be in the range of 1.5 to 2.5:1.

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Offset Program

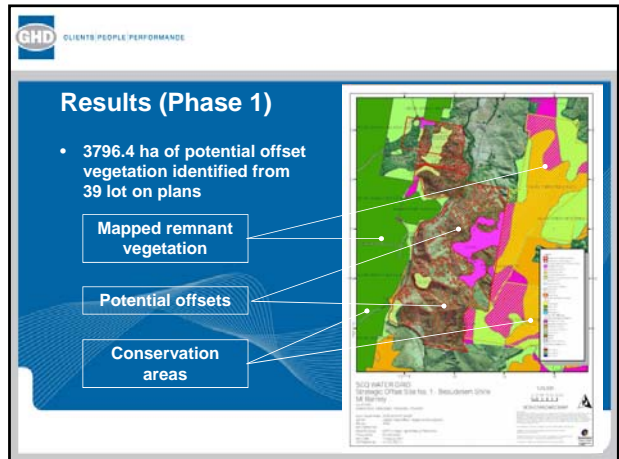
- GHD commissioned by Qld Govt to identify and evaluate vegetation offsets required for the SEQ Water Grid
- Three phases delineated for acquiring vegetation offsets:
 1. Identification of potential offset areas
 2. Ground-truthing of identified areas with recommendations given to DIP
 3. Preparation of Offset Management Plans, approval by NRW and DIP legally securing offset areas
- i.e. a technically-biased "top-down" approach

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Phase 1

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- ## Offset Analysis Process
- A step-wise spatial analysis with the following criteria preformed:
 - 1st Cut – Eligibility Analysis:**
 - Mapped as non-remnant vegetation;
 - Regrowth vegetation >10% FPC;
 - Matched at least one of the offset REs;
 - Located within Gold Coast, Beaudesert, Ipswich and Esk LGAs.

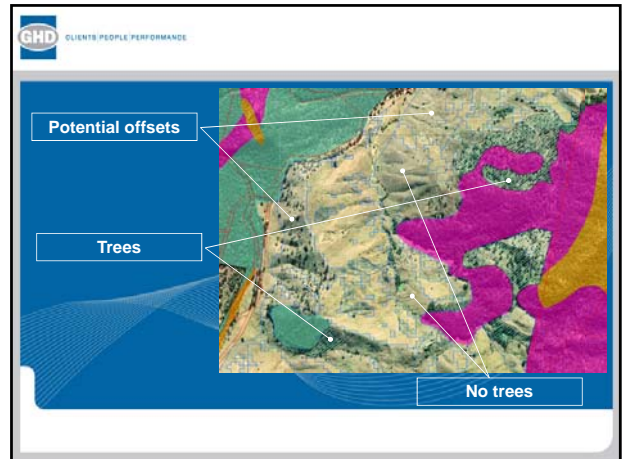
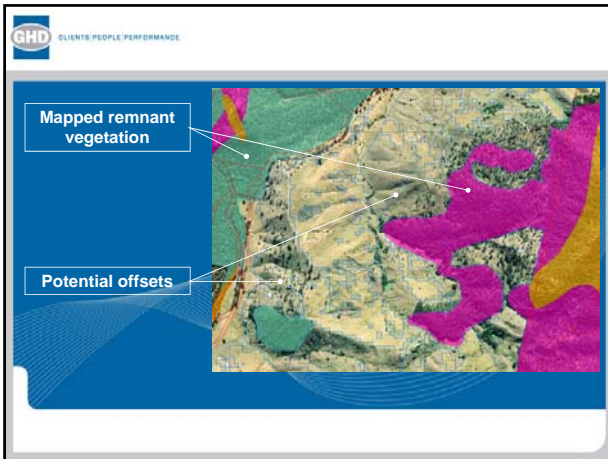
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- 2nd Cut – Priority Analysis:**
 - Area >15 ha;
 - Area in close proximity to protected area estate or bioregional wildlife corridors;
 - Area with higher FPC.
 - 3rd Cut – High Value Analysis:**
 - Essential habitat;
 - High biodiversity values;
 - Endangered pre-cleared RE;
 - Regrowth <5 yrs from attaining remnant status;
 - Wetlands or riparian areas.



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Phase 2

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- ## Results (Phase 2)
- Mapping of potential offset areas further refined
 - 14 lot on plans from three LGAs prioritised
 - Landholders approached
 - Potential offset areas assessed with EPA's BioCondition methodologies
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Results (Phase 2)

- Delineation of results of spatial analysis resulted in prioritising lots
- 14 lot on plans from three LGAs prioritised
- Landholders approached
- Potential offset areas assessed with EPA's BioCondition methodologies

A photograph showing a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a green undergrowth. The trees are mostly deciduous with light-colored bark.

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Results (Phase 2)

- Landholders approached:
- All 14 landholders approached
- Response varied from "Interested but not at the moment" to "Thanks but no".
- Met with two landholders (out of 14):
 - One was open to the idea but had a change of heart
 - Other landholder was very open, happy to talk and let us sample the site but was not interested in a covenant
- Summary:
 - Identified: 3796.4 ha
 - Assessed: 270.2 ha
 - Legally acquired: 0 ha

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Conclusion

- "Top down" approach:
 - Good in theory;
 - Not so good in practise.
- A "bottom up" approach may have more success, i.e. need to have a network of landholders who:
 - Own regrowth;
 - Have developed a working relationship;
 - Are interested in diversifying the income from their land.