

# FRIENDS OF THE EARTH KURANDA

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## The Kuranda Region's Vanishing Biodiversity

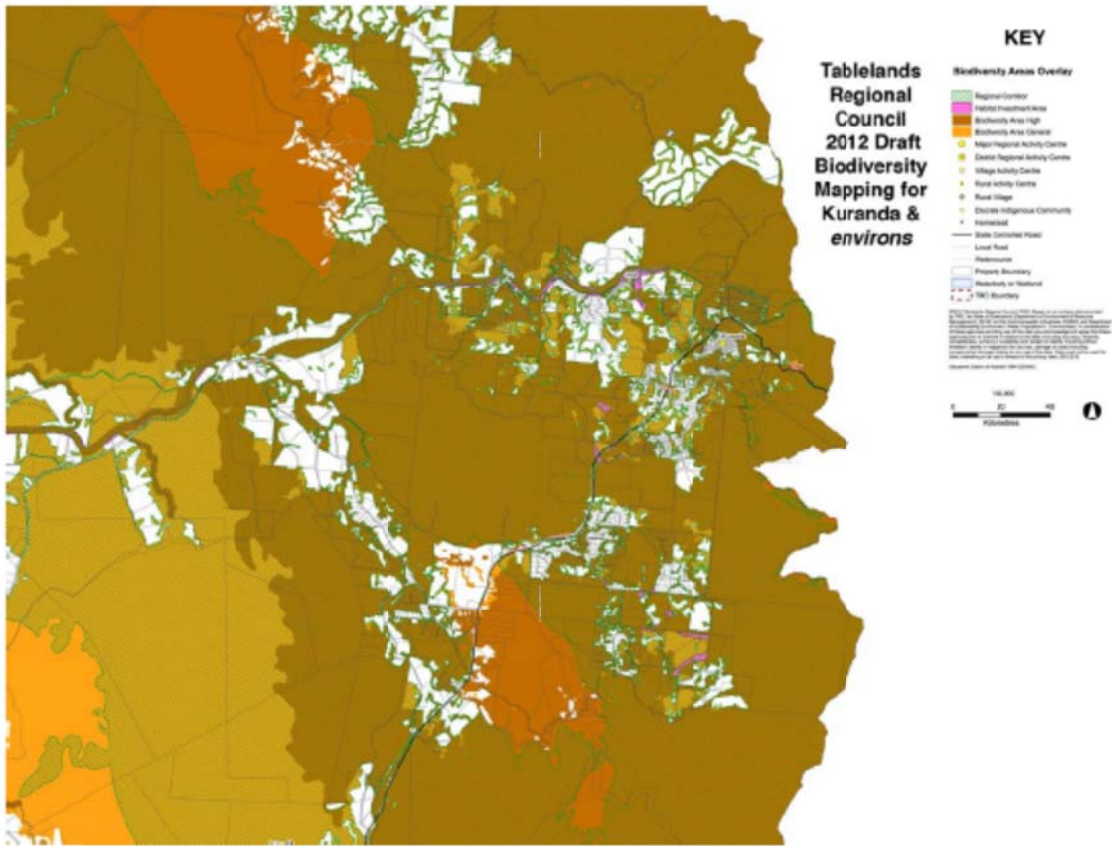
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**Friends of the Earth Kuranda has deep concerns about the latest draft plan for this region.**

Here's some details about our concerns -and also to show the difference between the old, amalgamated Tablelands Regional Council Draft Plan 2012 and the latest Mareeba Shire Draft Plan 2015:

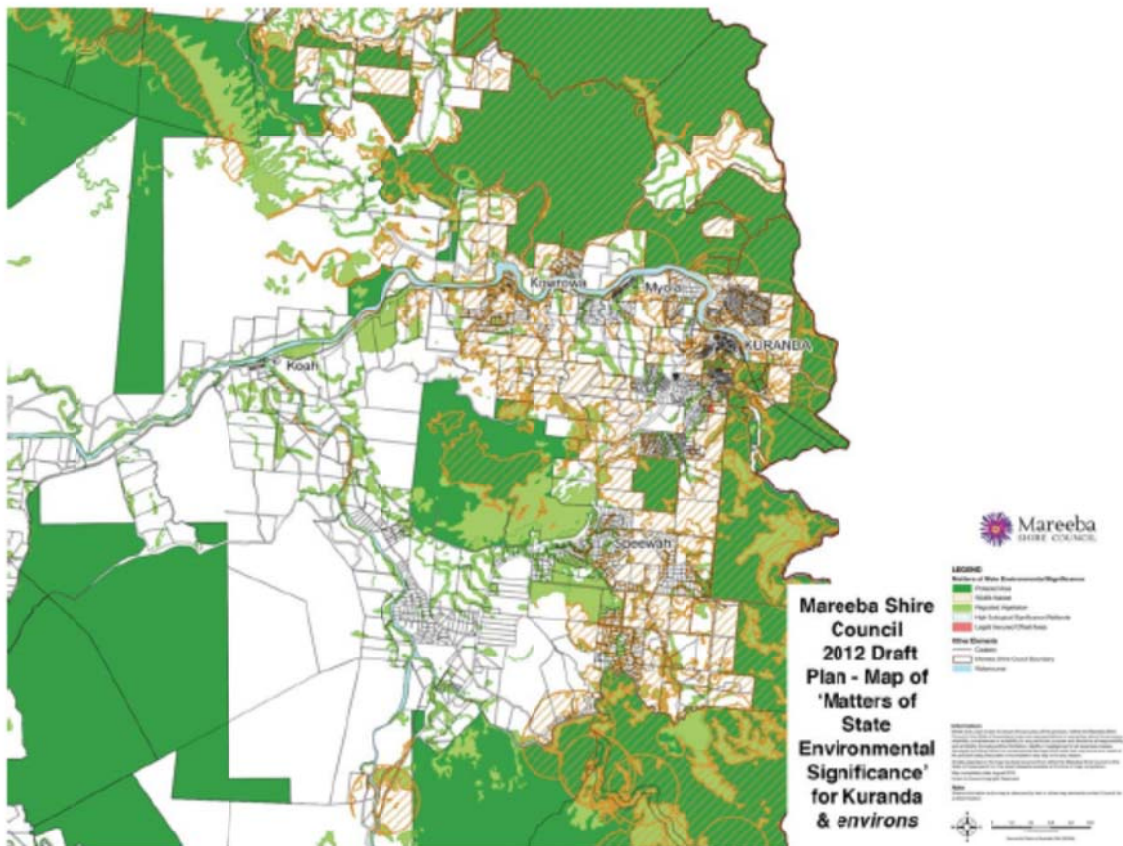
The 2012 Tablelands Regional Council Draft Plan included a series of biodiversity "overlays" covering the entire Tablelands.

FoE Kuranda joined four of these overlays (maps) together to produce a composite covering the entire greater Kuranda region..



There's no exact equivalent set of maps in the Mareeba Shire Council 2015 Draft Plan. The closest are its 'Matters of State Environmental Significance' map series.

Here's a composite view in the MSC Draft Plan for the equivalent area:



The contrast is dramatic.

In the TRC Map, it seems remnant vegetation was mainly used as a surrogate for biodiversity – probably based on satellite mapping.

That's reasonable, because the biodiversity of the region's forests – whether rainforest or the drier forest which borders the Wet Tropics – is *exceptionally* high. Forests around Kuranda are contiguous with the backbone of the Wet Tropics, internationally recognized for World Heritage wildlife values.

By contrast, the Mareeba Shire Council map disguises the extent of environmentally-significant native forest in our region. Instead of using science-

based environmental data-layers, the MSC has mapped a built-in political compromise.

## Regional Corridors: a Disappearing Act

The 2012 map showed extensive cross-hatching for 'Regional Corridors'. The extent of this cross-hatching was to be expected. Most of the native forest around Kuranda is broadly connected wildlife habitat. Adjacent to Kuranda, the protected Wet Tropics (essentially a north-south band of forest following the range) contract to a narrow neck. Consequently, remaining forests around Kuranda are important buffers and supplements to this World Heritage forest ecosystem.

The 2012 plan included guidance on protecting and reconnecting 'Regional Corridors' (see below).

### 3.4.5 Element—Strategic rehabilitation and regional corridors

Existing and potential habitat corridors are protected from development which compromises the existing or potential integrity of the corridor.

#### 3.4.5.1 Specific outcomes

**S01** *Regional corridors* are major existing habitat corridors which link key biodiversity areas within the Tablelands region and greater Far North Queensland region. Development will not compromise the habitat connectivity of *regional corridors*.

**S02** *Habitat linkages* are strategically located future habitat corridors linking biodiversity areas within the region. Development will not compromise the ability to realise these opportunities for ecological connectivity.

**S03** The ecological connectivity function of *habitat linkages* is enhanced within the subject lot when urban development occurs.

**S04** *Habitat linkages* are progressively revegetated with native vegetation.

· TRC 2012

This guidance is significantly watered down in the new Mareeba Shire Council Draft Plan (see below):

### 3.4.5 Element—Strategic rehabilitation and regional corridors

- MSC 2015

#### 3.4.5.1 Specific outcomes

- (1) *Regional corridors* are major existing habitat corridors that link key *biodiversity areas* within Mareeba Shire and greater Far North Queensland region. Development does not compromise the habitat connectivity of *regional corridors*.
- (2) *Habitat linkages* are strategically located future habitat corridors linking *biodiversity areas* within the shire. Development does not compromise the ability to realise these opportunities for ecological connectivity through progressive revegetation of *habitat linkages* with native vegetation.

Despite retaining the term 'Regional Corridors', in the Kuranda region at least, the MSC's latest map doesn't map them at all!

Instead, there's a greatly-reduced area of cross-hatching for 'Wildlife Habitat'. It's unclear how this shrinkage was carried out and on what basis.

Many areas shown as plain white in the new Draft Plan in the latest draft plan must surely have significant biodiversity values – and provide important connectivity for wildlife.

By mapping them as lacking significant environmental values, there's an obvious risk this becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy over time.