

AGENDA FOR ACTION RELEASED ON INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

National parks and other protected areas will be crucial in fighting the effects of climate change on biodiversity, Conservation Commission Chairman John Bailey said today.

Dr Bailey was releasing the Agenda for Action produced from last year's major Parks and Protected Areas Forum, held in Fremantle.

Dr Bailey, the Forum Chair, said the Agenda was being released on international Biodiversity Day to highlight the importance of parks and protected areas in maintaining the diversity of plant and animal life and conserving natural landscapes.

"The Forum recognised that climate change is a major threat to the world's environment and society and is expected to have profound impacts on Australia's unique biodiversity," Dr Bailey said.

"Parks and protected areas are essential refuges for species affected by the impact of climate change.

"They contribute to moderating the impacts of climate change and serve as indicators of change.

"Of course parks and protected areas are important for many other reasons as well. They are often places where Indigenous peoples can maintain their cultural values and give all of us a chance to experience and connect to the natural world.

"They also help to regulate the climate and moderate weather, giving us clean air and water, retaining soil and recycling soil nutrients, protecting water catchments and storing carbon."

Dr Bailey said the Agenda for Action set out the key actions identified by Forum participants to protect and enhance WA's network of protected areas. These included:

- giving priority to the expansion of the marine protected areas system to meet the criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system, with an immediate emphasis on the Kimberley and the South Coast;
- pursuing a minimum target for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of terrestrial parks and protected areas of around 15 per cent by 2018;
- reflecting the rights, needs and aspirations of Indigenous people as they relate to access to land for conservation, tourism and community benefits in legislation;

- increasing resources for parks and protected areas, particularly for on-ground managers; and
- considering the rights, needs and aspirations of local communities and neighbours in the acquisition of lands and waters for parks and protected areas and in their management.

“The Agenda for Action reflects the views of the Forum participants rather than being the adopted policy of the seven organisations that co-hosted the Forum, but it will promote further discussion about the value of our reserve system.

“The world’s natural environments are in decline from activities such as habitat loss, land degradation, urban development, introduced species and pollution, and now they face the impacts of climate change.

“These assaults mean that the importance of parks and protected areas has never been greater.”

The themes of the Agenda for Action will be taken up at the Australian Protected Area Conference 08, to be held in Queensland in November.

The Agenda for Action is available at [www.....](http://www.parksandprotectedareas.gov.au)

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Note to editors:

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has defined a protected area as an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and or natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.

The 2007 Parks and Protected Areas Forum was hosted by the Conservation Commission of WA; the Department of Environment and Conservation; the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism; the Conservation Council of WA; the World Commission on Protected Areas; Parks Forum and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority.