



Conservation Commission
of Western Australia



Annual Report

2003–2004



Conservation Commission of Western Australia

Annual Report 2003 - 2004

| CONTENTS: | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| Transmittal to the Minister | 1 |
| Chairman's Overview | 1 |
| Members & Meetings | 2 |
| Summary of the Conservation Commission's activities and achievements: 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2004 | 3 |
| Policy | 3 |
| Estate | 4 |
| Management Plans | 5 |
| Summary Table of Management Plan Progress | 6 |
| Forest Management | 9 |
| Advice and Promotion | 9 |
| Audit | 10 |
| Other Conservation Commission Activities | 11 |
| Issues and Trends | 12 |
| Conservation Commission Budget | 13 |
| Executive Support | 13 |
| Director's Statement on Compliance | 13 |
| Appendix 1 Functions of the Conservation Commission | 16 |

Front cover photograph – Geikie Gorge National Park

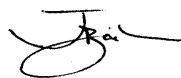
Conservation Commission Annual Report 2003 – 2004

Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for the Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report – 2003-2004 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2004, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.



Dr John Bailey
Chairperson

Chairperson's Overview

The period from 1 July 2003 to the end of 2003 saw the Conservation Commission continue with its principal focus on the preparation of the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 (FMP). During this time the main task undertaken was to manage the Commission's responsibilities as proponent of the FMP, during its formal assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). This required the Commission to respond to issues raised by the EPA and later by the Appeals Convenor.

The Commission was pleased that the EPA was supportive of the FMP and recommended only a few changes. The Commission was happy to give effect to these changes and to those required by the Minister for the Environment through her decision on the EPA's report.

The Commission is of the view that the FMP represents a significant advance in forest management and the application of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. In particular, the FMP reflects the following important objectives:

- The commitment to the creation of 30 new national parks and two new conservation parks;
- The protection of old-growth forests;
- Additional measures to protect biodiversity in areas subject to logging, especially the network of fauna habitat zones;
- Measures to reduce soil damage during logging activities;
- An ecologically sustainable supply of timber; and
- Increased commitments to audit the implementation of the plan.

The FMP was approved by the Minister for the Environment on 10 December, 2003 and came into effect on 1 January, 2004.

To achieve the objectives of the FMP will require an ongoing provision of financial and other resources. It is important that these resources do not detract from biodiversity, and park and visitor services elsewhere in the State.

Implementation of the FMP is now underway with progress made in a number of areas. For example, work has progressed towards the Commission's reassessment of areas of forest declassified from old-growth and in reviewing the indicative fauna habitat zones. The first of these tasks represents an important role for the Commission that emerged from the Minister's decision on the EPA's assessment and appeals thereon.

Another important project undertaken by the Commission was the preparation of its advice to Government on the provision of access to Barrow Island Nature Reserve for the Gorgon Gas Development. The Commission advised against access being granted because of the very high level of biodiversity conservation values on the island and the risk that they would be exposed to. After considering the Commission's, the EPA's and independent social and economic advice, the Government decided that it was prepared to consider access in principle. The Commission has continued its involvement with the environmental and risk assessment of the proposal during the first half of 2004 through the proponent's community consultation programme.

In May 2004 the Commission hosted a joint workshop involving itself, the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, and Department of Conservation and Land Management to initiate a major review of the management planning and auditing of terrestrial and marine protected areas.

This review is intended to address a wide range of issues including the nature and content of management plans prepared for application at various scales (from regional to area specific), alternative approaches for public engagement with the preparation of plans, and how best to provide for the assessment and auditing of approved plans. This review will itself provide for public participation.

The overall goal of the review is to ensure that management planning adds value to the management of lands vested in the Commission.

The Commission also prepared submissions on the Government's proposals regarding joint management of protected areas with Aboriginal people and a new Biodiversity Conservation Act. In both cases the Commission is very supportive of the proposals and recommended that its own role be enhanced.

In September 2003, the Commission spent a week in the Kimberley improving its understanding and awareness of key issues ranging from Aboriginal aspirations to fire and park management issues. The field trip was very comprehensive and well organised by the Department's regional staff.

In closing I would like to thank the members and staff of the Commission and the Department for their efforts and support during the year. In particular the Department's sustainable forest management staff should be thanked for their prolonged work on the FMP. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of two of the inaugural members of the Commission who left in November, 2003; Barbara Morrell and Rod Safstrom, and to welcome our new members Regina Flugge and Tom Hatton.

Members and Meetings

The Conservation Commission of Western Australia has nine members who, in the opinion of the Minister have knowledge of and experience in:

- conservation or management of biodiversity;
- environmental management, including the management of the natural environment for use for recreational purposes; or
- the sustainable use of natural resources,

or,

- who have a particular function or vocational interest relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission, and
- who, in the opinion of the Minister, are able to make a contribution to the functions of the Conservation Commission.

One member is to be a person who, in the opinion of the Minister:

- has knowledge of and experience in Aboriginal cultural and Aboriginal heritage matters relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission; and
- is able to make a contribution to the functions of the Conservation Commission.

The members of the Conservation Commission and the date of their initial appointment and term of appointment (including any reappointments) at 30 June 2004 were:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Dr John Bailey, Chairperson | November 2001 – November 2004 |
| Mrs Patricia Barblett (AM), Deputy Chairperson | November 2000 – November 2005 |
| Dr Jennifer Davis | November 2000 – November 2006 |
| Mr Glen Kelly | November 2000 – November 2006 |
| Dr Joanna Young | November 2000 – November 2006 |
| Mr Graeme Rundle | November 2000 – November 2005 |
| Mr William Mitchell | December 2002 – November 2005 |
| Ms Regina Flugge | November 2003 – November 2004 |
| Dr Thomas Hatton | November 2003 – November 2004 |

During the reporting period Ms Regina Flugge and Dr Thomas Hatton were appointed to fill the memberships previously occupied by Mr Rodney Safstrom and Mrs Barbara Morrell.

The Conservation Commission held thirteen meetings during the reporting period.

Summary of the Conservation Commission's activities and achievements: 1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004

The Commission was established in November 2000 under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, and works independent of, but closely with, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (the Department). It is a statutory authority and body corporate and has vested in it terrestrial conservation reserves (including freshwater areas) and State forest and timber reserves. It has associated management planning responsibilities and functions in respect of monitoring and auditing performance of the Department and the Forest Products Commission in respect of those management plans. It also has policy advisory functions in relation to vested lands and waters, and broader biodiversity conservation matters. Appendix 1 provides details of the Conservation Commission's functions as provided in section 19 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

The Conservation Commission's activities and achievements during the last twelve months are detailed below under the key outcome areas of policy; estate; management plans; forest management; advice and promotion; audit; and other Commission activities.

Policy

In meeting its objective to develop and maintain policy and provide policy advice to the Minister for the Environment and to develop policies that promote the conservation of the natural environment of the State, the Conservation Commission has provided comment on the following major policies and related issues either in development or under review by the Department or by other relevant agencies:

- A Biodiversity Conservation Act for Western Australia Consultation Paper – CALM

- Indigenous Ownership and Joint Management of Conservation Lands in Western Australia - Consultation Paper – CALM
- Fire Management Policy – CALM
- Tour Operators Handbook – CALM
- 2003 review of the lists of threatened flora & fauna – CALM
- Identification & Management of Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage on Lands & Waters Managed by CALM
- Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Plan –CALM
- Dibbler Recovery Plan – CALM
- Independent Review of Western Shield - CALM
- Revised CALM Beekeeping Policy & Tradability of Apiary Sites - CALM
- Plan for Management of *P.cinnamomi* at Bell Track, Fitzgerald River National Park – CALM
- Review of Department of Conservation and Land Management Fire Management Policies and Practices – Environmental Protection Authority
- Future Directions: Sustainable Tourism & Land Use Scenarios for the Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast – Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- Pastoral Industry Working Group – 2015 - Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- Gorgon – In-principle use of Barrow Island Nature Reserve for Gas Processing – WA State Government
- Developing a National Biodiversity & Climate Change Action Plan – Consultation Paper – Commonwealth Government

Estate

In meeting the objectives of:

- Identifying what is required for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system for Western Australia; and
- Considering proposed changes of purpose, or boundary of, land vested in the Conservation Commission and evaluating potentially incompatible activities on that land with a view to maximising biological diversity, the following activities have been undertaken:
 - Changes in purpose or boundaries, including advice on any contentious issue or activity, or the need to excise areas that are not of value in maintaining biological diversity, are considered at the monthly meetings of the Commission. Provision of advice on applications is subsequently provided to the Minister.
 - In working towards establishing a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system, the Commission considered changes to reserves and their uses. During the period, a total of approximately 1,344 hectares of conservation reserves were added to the estate, including 1,027 hectares of new reserves from land purchases, land exchanges and reserve disposal by other agencies and 317 hectares in additions to existing reserves.
 - Lands acquired by the Department in the present financial year, but not yet vested in the Conservation Commission, will be detailed in the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Annual Report.
 - Provision of advice to the Department on matters relating to leases, licences, permits, mining tenements and other activities such as utility infrastructure proposed on land vested in the Conservation Commission was provided. During the year 16 lease applications in 8 batches and 179 apiary permits were considered; 13 licences were presented in 7 batches to the Commission meetings, and 9 licences were presented in 5 batches for delegated approval by the Chairman. 254 licences were endorsed in 56 batches by the amended procedure as being consistent with the Tour Operator's Handbook in which the reserves and activities are pre-endorsed by the Commission.
 - During the year the Department received 92 mining tenement applications. 58 mining tenements were referred to the Conservation Commission for recommendations. Of the 58 applications requiring Commission advice to be provided to the Minister for the Environment, 28 required statutory recommendations under section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978*.

Management Plans

Soon after it was established the Conservation Commission established a Management Planning Review Committee in order to facilitate liaison with the Department. The committee's function is to improve the delivery of the Commission's statutory responsibility for the preparation and submission to the Minister of proposed management plans, and for the review of expiring plans. During the course of the reporting period this committee met eight times and considered and facilitated action on the following matters:

- In consultation with the Department, development of agreed priorities for the development and review of management plans for the coming year.
- The proposed Turquoise Coast Island Nature Reserves Management Plan was endorsed and submitted to the Minister and approved by her.
- Draft management plans for Rockingham Lakes Regional Park, Thomsons Lake Nature Reserve and Forrestdale Lake Nature Reserve were considered by the committee and endorsed for release for public comment
- An amendment to Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve Management Plan was submitted to the Minister and approved by her.

The Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 was also approved in the reporting period. Details of this are provided in the next section.

Over the course of the reporting period this committee also provided considerable input to final and draft plans under development, and interim management guidelines and issues papers that are not part of the statutory responsibility of the Commission but that are used in the management planning process for reserves. These covered the following areas of the conservation estate:

- the proposed final management plan for Herdsman Lake Regional Park;
- the proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks and Jandakot Regional Park draft management plans;
- draft Wheatbelt Region Plan; and
- the Cape Range National Park Issues Paper.

A summary of the status of those management plans under development or review as at 30 June, 2004 is shown in Table 1. Progress on a number of these over the past year has been slower than predicted and the Conservation Commission and the Department are working towards improvements in the rate of progress and the quality of management plans. To that end, a management planning workshop was held jointly with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Department in May 2004 to help identify means to improve plan development and performance. A number of initiatives will flow from this in the coming year. Actions already progressed that are anticipated to help are the identification of Commission members to liaise directly with community advisory committees by participating in their meetings through the planning phases, and allowing for earlier engagement of the Commission through the drafting process by providing draft plans to the Commission at the same time as they are provided to the Department's Corporate Executive.

The auditing of management plan implementation is a key Conservation Commission function and is discussed separately in a later section.

Table 1 Summary of Management Plan Progress

| | 1. Develop Public Participation Strategy | 2. Issues paper released | 3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (CAC) | 4. Submit draft to CALM Corporate Executive | 5. Submit draft to Conservation Commission and finalise | 6. Print draft plan and notify Minister | 7. Release draft plan for public comment | 8. Prepare Analysis of Public Submissions (APS) | 9. Submit final plan and APS to Corporate Executive | 10. Submit final plan and APS to Minister(s) | 11. Gazettal of final management plan | Comments – (with timeline from 2002-2003 report in brackets) |
|---|--|--------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Cape Range National Park and proposed extensions | 01/05/03 | 1/4/04 | 29/07/03 (existing but reformed). Aboriginal Park Council formed 10/4/04 | | | | | | | | | Six CAC meetings held, and Aboriginal Park Council initiated. Draft proposed for release in Sept/Oct 2004 (July/August 2004). |
| Dampier Archipelago Island NRs and 5(g) reserves | 07/10/02 | 25/03/02 | Deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted. | | | | | | | | | Draft in preparation with ongoing public consultation. The proposal to change the four Dampier Archipelago nature reserves to national park continues, with ongoing negotiations with the Department of Industry and Resources (April 2004). |
| Esperance Coastal Reserves | In prep | In prep | 01/08/02 (new) | | | | | | | | | Draft in prep, with several CAC meetings held during the year. Draft for release in latter half of 2005 (September 2004). Issues paper to be released by late 2004 (early 2004). |
| Forrestdale Lake NR | 01/03/02 | 31/03/02 | 31/07/02 (existing) | 01/05/03 | 31/05/03 | 26/08/03 | 27/10/03 | 2/02/04 | | | | Draft released for public comment in October 2003. Amendments currently being made to final plan, which is proposed for release by December 2004 (September 2004). |
| Kalbarri NP | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 29/7/99 (new) | | | | | | | | | Remains on hold pending resolution of pastoral acquisitions. |
| Kennedy Range NP and proposed additions | Preparation of the management plan was progressed from an interim management guideline (approved 13/11/03) | | Deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted. | | | | | | | | | Draft plan in preparation. Advice sought from the MPRC re roading options 18/12/03. Comments on roading options and IMG sought from key stakeholders early 2004. Proposed for release as draft by Dec 2004. |
| Kimberley Regional Plan | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. Formation of Advisory Committee considered ineffective due to size of region. | | | 26/8/98 | 15/06/01 | | | | | | | Issues related to tenure, development of performance indicators, and joint management delayed the plan following initial presentation to the Conservation Commission. Other planning priorities have delayed release—proposed release in first quarter of 2005 (June 2004). |
| Lake McLarty NR | Deemed not necessary as key stakeholders readily identified and targeted. | | | | | | | | | | | Plan focused on water quality and quantity issues related to maintenance of Ramsar values. Proposed release as a draft in final quarter of 2004. |

| | 1. Develop Public Participation Strategy | 2. Issues paper released | 3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (CAC) | 4. Submit draft to CALM Corporate Executive | 5. Submit draft to Conservation Commission and finalise | 6. Print draft plan and notify Minister | 7. Release draft plan for public comment | 8. Prepare Analysis of Public Submissions (APS) | 9. Submit final plan and APS to Corporate Executive | 10. Submit final plan and APS to Minister(s) | 11. Gazettal of final management plan | Comments – (with timeline from 2002-2003 report in brackets) |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Lane Poole Reserve | 16/01/04 | 2/02/04 | 18/09/02 (existing) 25/05/04 (revised committee approved) | | | | | | | | | Draft in preparation with ongoing public and stakeholder consultation, and with input from the Lane Poole Reserve Advisory Committee. Internal workshops held for nature conservation and recreation, with Recreation Master plan now underway. Draft plan proposed for release by second quarter of 2005 (November 2004). |
| Leeuwin Ridge Parks, Scott NP and Gingilup NR | 30/06/03 | 30/09/01 | 30/04/00 (existing as LNNP AC; it is expected to be expanded in mid 2004 to cover extra reserves) | | | | | | | | | Successful public consultation period completed in second half of 2003. Internal workshops held for nature conservation and recreation, with Recreation Master plan now largely complete. Delays experienced due to changes in staff. Draft proposed for release early 2005 (mid 2004). |
| Millstream - Chichester NP | Millstream Chichester NP management plan commenced in 1998 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | Aboriginal Park Council formed 19/3/03 | | | | | | | | | Work still continuing with the Millstream Aboriginal Park Council to reach consensus relating to recreation facilities within the park. Draft to be released during the first half of 2005 (first half 2004). |
| St John Brook CP | Originally commenced as Interim Management Guideline in June 2002. Nannup Tourist Association provided community input pre-draft. No CAC. | | | 17/12/03 | 17/3/04 | | | | | | | Draft to be released for public comment by September 2004 (April 2004). |
| Shannon and D'Entrecasteau NPs | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 23/6/99 (existing) | | | | | | | | | Preparation of draft put on hold during 2000 due to other urgent regional tasks. Draft plan presented to CAC in September 2003. Proposed to be presented to Corporate Executive and Conservation Commission in Sep 2004 (Feb 2004) for release as a draft in Nov 2004 (April 2004). |
| Thomsons Lake NR | 01/03/02 | 31/03 | 30/09/02 (new) | 01/05/03 | 31/05/03 | 31/08/03 | 27/10/03 | 2/02/04 | | | | Draft released for public comment in October 2003. Amendments currently being made to final plan, which is proposed for release by December 2004 (September 2004). |
| Turquoise Coast Island NRs | Turquoise Coast Island NRs management plan commenced prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. No advisory committee formed as community input achieved through marine planning process, which preceded islands management plan. | | | 24/08/00 | 08/09/00 | 06/06/01 | 19/12/01 | 31/07/02 | 17/12/03 | 12/5/04 | | The final plan has been printed and is ready to be released by the Minister, pending completion of the Jurien Bay Marine Park Management Plan (March 2004). |
| Walpole Wilderness Area | 01/05/03 | 27/03/03 | 31/01/03 (new) | | | | | | | | | WWA Community Advisory Committee formed in 2003. Seventeen Advisory Committee meetings held. Community consultation nearing completion. Development of the draft is well advanced and proposed for release in November 2004 (September 2004). |

| | 1. Develop Public Participation Strategy | 2. Issues paper released | 3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (CAC) | 4. Submit draft to CALM Corporate Executive | 5. Submit draft to Conservation Commission and finalise | 6. Print draft plan and notify Minister | 7. Release draft plan for public comment | 8. Prepare Analysis of Public Submissions (APS) | 9. Submit final plan and APS to Corporate Executive | 10. Submit final plan and APS to Minister(s) | 11. Gazetteal of final management plan | Comments – (with timeline from 2002-2003 report in brackets) |
|--|--|--------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Wellington NP and proposed conservation parks | 15/07/02 | 30/06/02 | 31/03/02 (new) | | | | | | | | | Issues related to the primacy of water have delayed the completion of the draft management plan. Options for management will be presented in the draft, and issues resolved prior to the release of the final management plan. It is expected that the draft management plan will be released by September 2004 (March 2004). |
| Wheatbelt Regional Plan | Wheatbelt Regional Plan commenced in 1998 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. Formation of Advisory Committee considered ineffective due to size of region. | | | | | | | | | | | Delays experienced due to changes in key staff. Planning undertaken part-time basis only. Pre-draft copy commented on by the Management Planning Review Committee. Draft proposed to be released for public comment in first quarter of 2005 (April 2004). |
| Yanchep and Neerabup NPs and Neerabup NR | 17/08/2001 | 17/08/01 | 31/07/01 (existing) | | | | | | | | | Draft plan development deferred due to other planning priorities. Proposed release in second quarter of 2005 (February/March 2004). |
| Beelii Regional Park | Management plan commenced in 1998 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 1998 (new) | 27/08/01 | 28/09/01 | | 14/11/01 | | | | | APS and proposed final plan in preparation. Anticipated that final plan will be released in first half of 2005 (June 2004). |
| Darling Range Regional Park | | | | | | | | | | | | Public submission period for indicative boundaries of new forest parks closed end of November 2003. Resolution of boundaries will determine future planning area boundaries and timelines for completion for new national parks and regional parks. Management planning for national and regional parks of the Darling Range will commence following this process (early 2005). |
| Herdsmen Lake Regional Park | Management plan commenced in 1998 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 1998 (new) | 08/09/00 | 22/03/01 | | 05/06/01 | | 03/02/04 | | | Proposed final management plan to be approved by the Conservation Commission in August 2004 (June 2004). |
| Jandakot Regional Park | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 1999 (new) | 3/2/04 | 7/7/04 | | | | | | | Draft management plan to be approved by the Conservation Commission for public comment in July 2004. Launch date being arranged (April 2004). |
| Rockingham Lakes Regional Park | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 1999 (new) | 10/06/03 | 13/08/03 | | 27/10/03 | | | | | APS and proposed final plan in preparation. Anticipated that final plan will be released in second half of 2005 (early 2005). |
| Woodman Point Regional Park | Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper. | | 1999 (new) | 15/4/02 | 13/5/02 | | 30/08/02 | | | | | APS and proposed final plan in preparation. Anticipated that final plan will be released in first half of 2005 (August 2004). |

Forest Management

The Conservation Commission has a statutory role to prepare forest management plans, and aims to ensure that the State forest and timber reserves, in particular, vested in the Commission are managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management.

During the first half of the reporting period the proposed forest management plan was submitted to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for assessment under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. Following modification of the plan to incorporate relevant Ministerial conditions the plan was approved by the Minister under sections 60(2) and 61 of the CALM Act. The plan then came into operation on 1 January 2004.

During this period the Conservation Commission also developed a supporting explanatory paper to help the community understand considerations that went into finalising the plan and also provided information on matters raised by the community that were outside the statutory scope of the plan. This paper – “Implementing Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management - An Explanatory Paper by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia to accompany the proposed Forest Management Plan 2004-2013” – was released in September so that it could be considered in conjunction with the EPA assessment report.

Two significant amendments were made to the proposed plan as a result of the Ministerial Conditions set on approval. One was the requirement to concentrate fauna habitat zones in the Greater Kingston area to provide for a greater level of exclusion from timber harvesting in that locality. The other requirement was for the Conservation Commission to undertake a review of old-growth forest which had been declassified as old-growth by the Department to determine if it should remain declassified or should be reinstated as old-growth and thus afforded protection. While the former matter was addressed in the finally approved plan, work on developing a process for this latter task has been underway in the second half of this reporting period and will continue into the future.

Additional resources have been allocated to the Conservation Commission over the next four years to allow it to implement the abovementioned old-growth review as well as other plan requirements for increased auditing and ongoing input to subsidiary documents to be developed or reviewed in the early stages of the plan period. This will result in two additional staff members being appointed to the Conservation Commission.

Advice and Promotion

The Conservation Commission met with the Minister for the Environment six times to inform her of current issues facing the Conservation Commission and to provide advice on issues raised by the Minister. Additionally, the Commission provided advice on specific issues concerning the conservation estate as and when required.

In the course of the year a Research Advisory Committee was established at the request of the Minister to replace the Forest Monitoring and Research Committee established under Ministerial Condition 17 (attached to the Forest Management Plan 1994-2003). In the development of the terms of reference for this committee it was also agreed that there would be benefit from having a broader focus than forest research matters. This committee has now met twice under the Chairmanship of Professor Alistar Robertson.

In the reporting period there have been no instances under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* section 24 where the Minister for the Environment has given the Conservation Commission directions in writing with respect to the exercise or performance of its functions.

In accordance with the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* section 17(4), there have also been no instances where advice has been provided to the Minister for the Environment under section 19(10) and she has decided to act otherwise than in accordance with the recommendation.

Audit

Section 19(g) of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* establishes that it is the function of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia:

“in relation to management plans for land vested, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, in the Conservation Commission-

- to develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the management plans by the Department (CALM);
- to set performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of the Department (CALM) and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and
- to assess and audit the performance of the Department (CALM) and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans”.

The Conservation Commission has been seriously constrained in performing this function adequately due to staffing interruptions and the ongoing pressure placed on its limited resources by the development of the new forest management plan. With the plan now in place and staffing matters soon to be addressed, significant progress is expected on this function over the next period. This is anticipated to include the finalisation and publication of management plan audits partly completed in past years including those for Wanjari Nature Reserve, Mooradung Nature Reserve, Dryandra Woodlands, and Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve.

In respect of forest audit issues the focus of the Commission’s attention over the first half of the next period have been endorsed as:

- The establishment of informal reserves, particularly old-growth (planning and demarcation pre-logging) – and verification of CALM coupe management audit which will assess compliance with protection of informal reserves (including old growth and fauna habitat zones).
- Fauna habitat zone selection and establishment process, and
- The compliance with soil management requirements in native forest operations, including the development of the interim Manual of Procedures.

Despite staffing interruptions and the impact of other responsibilities a number of audit activities have been undertaken:

- The Acting Director participated in a community forest inspection in the Jarrahdale area. This inspection was organised through the office of the Minister for the Environment. These inspections are organised in order to engage the community better in regard to concerns over the impact of harvesting operations. While they cannot replace the strategic and planned audits required to satisfy the Conservation Commission’s function they can be used to help inform the priorities for issues to be audited.
- Commission staff accompanied the Department’s auditor on audits of dieback interpretation to verify his approach and standards. This allows confident use by the Conservation Commission of audit data supplied by the Department.
- An audit of Yalgorup National Park Management Plan 1995-2005 was undertaken. It is anticipated that the report of this audit will be finalised and posted on the Conservation Commission’s web site in the near future.

Other Conservation Commission Activities

Field inspections

In order to introduce Conservation Commission members to conservation estate management issues and brief them on specific issues of relevance, the Conservation Commission undertook one major field trip during 2003 - 2004 and a number of shorter field trips. All were co-ordinated and supported by Department regional staff.

Kimberley Region, September 2003

Most members and the Acting Director visited the West Kimberley in September 2003 to inspect conservation reserves in the region and to become acquainted with key management issues. In the course of the visit the Commission visited areas of Minyirr Park (near Broome), Devonian Reef Conservation Park, Geikie Gorge National Park, Windjana Gorge National Park and King Leopold Range Conservation Park.

Meetings were also held with representatives from Kimberley Land Council, traditional owners in the Broome locality, Broome Bird Observatory officials and staff, management of the Kimberley Diamond Company at its Ellendale Minesite, and the operators of the Mount Hart Wilderness Lodge in King Leopold Range Conservation Park.

There was significant benefit gained from the field inspection in providing first hand information on Aboriginal liaison and joint management issues, new arrangements for field research, the nature conservation program for Kimberley, management of Unallocated Crown Lands, progress with "2015" pastoral excision negotiations, fire management issues for the Kimberley and the status and issues related to those specific parts of the conservation estate visited.

Forest management field inspection

The Chairperson, a number of Conservation Commission members and the Acting Director were joined by the members of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on a field inspection of jarrah forest areas to assist with the EPA's consideration of the proposed forest management plan.

Rockingham Lakes Regional Park

In December 2003 members and Commission staff visited parts of the Rockingham Lakes Regional Parks to be appraised of management issues. At this time "Naragebup", the Rockingham Regional Environment Centre, was also visited and discussions were held with community representatives.

Participation on external committees

The following members represented the Conservation Commission on other committees as noted:

Mrs Patricia Barblett: Busselton Wetlands Conservation Strategy Steering Committee
Bush Bank Board

Dr Joanna Young: Dieback Consultative Council

In relation to the Gorgon development proposal on Barrow Island Nature Reserve Dr John Bailey was invited to be a member of the Standing Interagency Committee of Chief Executive Officers (SIAC), while the Acting Director was a member of a Technical Advisory Committee established through SIAC for that development.

Issues and Trends

There are a number of key areas of Government policy that the Conservation Commission will either have responsibility for or will have significant interest in over the coming year.

Forest Management Plan

There is significant ongoing work for the Commission through the process of implementing the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013. This has been recognised through the allocation of additional funds to allow two extra staff to be engaged in the areas of audit and policy development. Most notable among those requirements in the coming year is the need to review the Department's reclassification of areas previously mapped as old-growth, a targeted audit program, the need to comment on guidelines for the selection and management of fauna habitat zones and the preparation of guidelines for the preparation of other management plans that integrates them with existing management plans.

Joint Management

The consultation paper *Indigenous Ownership and Joint Management of Conservation Lands in Western Australia* has provided an ongoing focus of attention on issues of joint management. The Conservation Commission will remain closely involved in this important policy area.

Drainage in the Wheatbelt Region

In the course of 2003-2004 a number of issues brought before the Commission highlighted the need for the development of a policy to guide decision making on matters related to the drainage of areas affected by salinity into or through conservation estate areas vested in the Commission. It is acknowledged that this is a very difficult area of policy and careful consideration will need to be given in order to ensure that a holistic approach is developed.

Review of the Department's fire management policies and practices by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

With the finalisation of the EPA's review of the Department's fire policy and practices expected in October 2004 it is anticipated that there will be ongoing advice from the Commission to the Minister on the findings of the review. It is also anticipated that as part of the Commission's function of auditing the implementation of management plans fire management matters will be assessed and reported on.

Cape Range National Park management plan review and proposed additions

The impending release of the Cape Range National Park draft management plan, anticipated land-use decisions in relation to the Ningaloo Coast and possible World Heritage Area listing for the area will require ongoing input from the Conservation Commission during the next reporting period.

Improving the management planning process

There will be a focus of Commission attention on further improvement of the management planning process.

EPA Preliminary Position Statement No.9 Environmental Offsets

The Conservation Commission has been involved in the provision of comment on the EPA's Preliminary Position Statement on Environmental Offsets. It is anticipated that there will be ongoing involvement from the Commission.

Conservation Commission Budget

The Conservation Commission had a cash expenditure of \$574,911 for the reporting period against a budget allocation of \$561,000. The reporting and audit of the Conservation Commission's expenditure is included within that for the Department under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985 and is incorporated into the Department's annual report on an accrual basis.

Executive Support

The Conservation Commission had the following staff at 30 June 2004:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Acting Director: | Peter Baldwin |
| Executive Assistant: | Karen Prosser |
| Audit Manager: | Vacant |
| Temporary Forest Auditor | Tom Hughson |

Over the course of the year Hazli Koombri was seconded from Water and Rivers Commission to the position of Audit Manager. Additional support was provided to the Commission through the part-time temporary engagement of Jane Van der Meer to assist with the processing of records.

Corporate services

Corporate Services, including Human Resource Management, Financial Services and Information Technology support are provided under a bureau services agreement with the Department of Conservation and Land Management Corporate Services Division.

In accord with these arrangements the Conservation Commission complies with a number of other Department of Conservation and Land Management administrative policies and procedures in order to comply with Government policies and relevant legislation, for example, the Disability Service Plan, Equal Employment Opportunity and the Use of Credit Cards.

The Conservation Commission is committed to the recycling of waste paper and the use of paper made from recycled products where appropriate. In recent times work has been undertaken in the office to enable more flexible heating and lighting to help provide for reductions in energy consumption. Its fleet vehicles comprise one four cylinder car and one LPG powered car.

Director's Statement on Compliance

Disability services plan outcomes

The Commission's Disability Services Plan was formally adopted in 2002 and focuses on strategies that ensure compliance with outcomes focused on ensuring Conservation Commission information can be made available to people with disabilities; and providing increased opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in public consultation, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes.

Statement of compliance with public sector standards

The Department of Conservation and Land Management undertakes human resource management for the Conservation Commission under a bureau service agreement.

In the administration of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, I have complied with the Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management, the WA Code of Ethics and the Conservation Commission's Code of Conduct.

Information on both the Code of Ethics and the Code of Conduct is provided to employees on commencement with the Conservation Commission.

No complaints have been lodged under the Code of Ethics during the reporting period and there have been no instances of misconduct.

The Commission has developed an Equal Employment Opportunity/Diversity Management Plan in accord with the Government's Equity and Diversity Plan 2001-2005.

Information statement

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (FOI)* provides that the public can access the majority of the records of the Conservation Commission. Wherever possible the Commission will endeavour to provide access to information as quickly and easily as possible without the client needing to submit a formal FOI request.

The Conservation Commission's records are managed in-house, with professional advice through the bureau service provided by the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Corporate Services Division. Documents held by the Conservation Commission include routine administrative records, Commission agendas and minutes, committee records, financial reports. Personnel records are held in the Department's People Services Branch, which undertakes human resource management for the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission has formulated a records disposal schedule and the former National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and any relevant Conservation Commission records will be forwarded to the Western Australian State Archives when the schedule is approved and archival storage space is available at the State Archives.

Submission of FOI request

In the first instance, contact the Conservation Commission by telephone, fax, and email or in person, as it may not be necessary to submit a formal FOI request. The Commission will endeavour to satisfy each information request as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Should an applicant wish to proceed with a formal application, a valid FOI application needs to be in writing; to give sufficient information so the document(s) requested can be identified; give an Australian address to which notices can be sent and be lodged at the Conservation Commission office with any application fee, if payable.

Applications and Enquiries

FOI Coordinator: Director
Conservation Commission
Corner of Hackett Drive and Australia II Drive
Crawley 6009
Tel: 08 9389 1766
Email: information@conservation.wa.gov.au

Applications will be acknowledged on receipt. A decision will be made, with notification of this decision and any information made available under the request forwarded within 45 days.

The means of accessing documentation is to be determined by negotiation between the Conservation Commission and the applicant. Documents can be inspected at the Conservation Commission office, posted, sent by facsimile or emailed.

Should an applicant be dissatisfied with an access decision she/he can request the Conservation Commission to undertake an internal review of that decision and, subsequently, a review by the Information Commissioner, if still not satisfied.

Amendment of personal information

Under FOI procedures, an individual may also apply to amend personal information about them if they think that it may be inaccurate or misleading. To do this, applicants need to contact the designated FOI Coordinator nominated above.

Access charges

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992* states that a \$30 fee must accompany a valid FOI application unless the request is entirely for personal information about the applicant. The Conservation Commission can help applicants determine if their enquiry is likely to attract the application fee if they contact the FOI Coordinator before submitting an application.

Fees may also apply for copying or transcribing information. These will be charged at cost, depending on the type and volume of copying necessary to meet the request. Photocopies will be charged at 20 cents per A4 page.

Concessions of 25% are available to applicants who can demonstrate financial hardship. As noted above, no fee is charged for a request to amend personal information.

2003 - 2004 Statistics

One (1) request was made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* during the reporting period and it was satisfied within the stated timeframe.

Electoral Act 1907 (section 175ZE Disclosure)

In accordance with section 175 ZE of the *Electoral Act 1907*, the Conservation Commission of Western Australia incurred the following expenditure in advertising, market research, polling, direct mail and media advertising:

Total expenditure for 2003 -2004 was \$6172.16

Expenditure was in the following areas:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Advertising agencies | - nil |
| Market research organisations | - nil |
| Polling organisations | - nil |
| Direct mail organisations | - nil |
| Media advertising (including employment, public participation notices and advertising of contracts) | \$6172.16 |

Public Information Disclosure Act 2003

The Public Information Disclosure Act 2003 has been in operation since July 2003. The Act serves to facilitate the disclosure of public interest information and to provide protection for those who make disclosures and for those who are the subject of such disclosures.

Over the reporting period there have been no disclosures under this Act.

State Records Act 2002

All staff have received basic training in record keeping. A Record Keeping Plan has been submitted to the State Records Office in compliance with the *State Records Act 2002*. During the period the Auditor General undertook a review of the Commission's records management. The report of the Auditor General's review – *Records Management in Government – A Preliminary Study* is included in its Second Public Sector Performance Report 2004 and can be accessed at: http://www.audit.wa.gov.au/reports/report2004_04.html.

Appendix 1 – Functions of the Conservation Commission

Policy - development of policies:

- *For the preservation of the natural environment of the State and the provision of facilities for the enjoyment of that environment by the community.*
- *For promoting the appreciation of flora and fauna and the natural environment.*
- *To achieve or promote the objectives for management plans.*
- *To cause study or research to be undertaken for the purposes of the development of policies.*

Advice to the Minister:

- *On the development of policies for the conservation and management of biodiversity and biodiversity components throughout the State.*
- *On the application of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management in the management of State forest and timber reserves and forest produce throughout the State.*
- *On the production and harvesting, on a sustained yield basis, of forest produce throughout the State.*
- *To inquire into and after relevant consultation, to advise the Minister on any matter on which the Minister requests advice.*

Estate - to have land vested in it and joint management with other bodies:

- *To have vested in it State forest, timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, and other relevant land referred to in the Act and to have the joint management function with other bodies as provided for in the Act.*
- *To have [as a controlling body] the care, control and management of relevant land placed with it, including consideration of any cancellation, change of purpose, boundary alteration or, security classification change in respect of land vested.*
- *To be consulted on matters relating to the granting of licenses, leases, permits and mining tenement applications on land vested in the Conservation Commission.*

Management Plans - preparation of and monitoring and assessing the implementation of management plans:

- *To be responsible for the preparation of proposed management plans, and the review of existing management plans for all lands vested in the Commission and to submit proposed management plans to the Minister for approval.*
- *To develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the management plans by the Department;*
- *To set performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of the Department and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and*
- *To assess and audit the performance of the Department and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans.*

Forest Management:

- *To ensure that the State forest and timber reserves vested in the Commission are managed on an ecologically sustainable basis, and that these principles are applied in the management of forest produce throughout Western Australia.*

Advice And Promotion:

- *To provide advice, upon request, on matters relating to land vested in the Commission, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, to any body or person, if the provision of the advice is in the public interest and it is practicable for the Commission to provide it.*