



**Conservation Commission  
of Western Australia**



# **Annual Report**

## **2002–2003**

# Conservation Commission of Western Australia

## Annual Report 2002 - 2003

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# Conservation Commission Annual Report 2002 - 2003

## Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for the Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report 2002 - 2003 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2003, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

The Conservation Commission is constituted under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, and in performing its functions complies with the following State legislation:

*Disability Services Act 1993*  
*Electoral Act 1907*  
*Equal Opportunity Act 1984*  
*Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985*  
*Freedom of Information Act 1992*  
*Government Employees Superannuation Act 1987*  
*Industrial Relations Act 1979*  
*Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951*  
*Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1984*  
*Public Sector Management Act 1994*  
*State Records Act 2000*  
*State Supply Commission Act 1991*  
*Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981*

Dr John Bailey  
Chairperson

## Chairperson's Overview

The principal focus of the Conservation Commission during 2002 – 2003 has remained the preparation of the new forest management plan. At the start of the reporting year the Conservation Commission released the Draft Forest Management Plan 2004 – 2013 for a two-month public comment period. During the public comment period the Commission held six public forums to facilitate community understanding and receive feedback from those able to attend. These forums were held in Bunbury, Collie, Manjimup, Mundaring, Perth, and Walpole, and were attended by over 900 people.

By the close of the public comment period approximately 5,600 submissions had been received, including some 900 substantial submissions and 4,686 pro-forma submissions (see Appendix 1 for more information on consultation). The Conservation Commission and Department of Conservation and Land Management (the Department) analysed these submissions as well as comments made at the public forums and revised the Draft Plan for forwarding to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for its assessment.

The preparation of the Proposed Forest Management Plan through to a form suitable for transmittal to the EPA involved a considerable amount of work as the Conservation Commission sought to give effect to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. This process involved the development of different options for forest management (called scenarios) and the modelling of the consequences of each for, in particular, the non-declining yield of jarrah and karri sawlogs. In April the Independent Panel on Calculating Sustained Yield for the Forest Management Plan 2004 – 2013 met to review the model used and explored a number of alternative scenarios. The Independent Panel was comfortable with the reliability of the model.

The Commission expresses its appreciation of the exceptional effort of the many people who assisted in this process from both within the Department and beyond.

While the necessary focus on the preparation of the new forest management plan has prevented the Conservation Commission from pursuing its other responsibilities as fully as it would have liked, other activities have occurred.

During the first half of 2003 the Conservation Commission engaged with the environmental, social and economic assessment of the Gorgon development proposed for the class A nature reserve on Barrow Island off the Pilbara coast. The Commission was asked to provide advice on the biodiversity conservation values of Barrow Island as part of this process. In preparing its advice the Commission sought to highlight the exceptional importance of Barrow Island as a refuge for species no longer found on the mainland.

The need for a policy on net conservation benefits was identified during the assessment of the Gorgon development. This concept together with the related concept of conservation offsets are of potential value to biodiversity conservation, but are also vulnerable to inappropriate application. Work will be needed to develop and refine these concepts in the months ahead.

In December 2002 the Government released its consultation paper *A Biodiversity Conservation Act for Western Australia*. This paper marked an important step towards the development of new and comprehensive biodiversity conservation legislation in Western Australia. The current *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* is widely acknowledged as out-of-date and inadequate to meet present day expectations for the conservation and management of the State's extraordinarily rich biodiversity. The Conservation Commission sees progress in the development of new legislation in this area as a very high priority and has sought and will continue to seek an active role in providing policy advice.

Of equal importance is the creation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserve system across all biogeographical regions in Western Australia. Some parts of the State are well served in this regard, others less well so. During 2002 – 2003 the Conservation Commission provided advice in support of the program to acquire additional reserves in the State's rangelands.

In September 2002 the Conservation Commission visited the Wheatbelt Region and in April 2003 the South Coast Region. These field inspections provided the Commission with an invaluable opportunity to both enhance its understanding of the issues affecting biodiversity conservation and visitor management on the one hand, and to meet with representatives from local communities. It was once again made clear that it will only be through partnerships with the wider community that the Commission and Department of Conservation and Land Management will be able to achieve long-term objectives. For example, many of the small, but valuable, nature reserves in the Wheatbelt are located low in the landscape and are therefore at risk from salinity. These areas can only be protected through management that encompasses many landowners – both public and private. Likewise the extensive network of national parks and nature reserves that stretch from west of Albany to Esperance and beyond need to be managed in the context of regional natural resource management to secure the linkages required through reservation and/or management.

During early 2003 the Conservation Commission was subjected to an independent review, together with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, as part of the Machinery of Government process. The findings of the review were positive and concluded that the Conservation Commission should continue as a separate agency to the Department and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority at least until the Commission's statutory review due after 2005.

The Commission looks forward to being able to focus considerable energy and time on the preparation of management plans and auditing their implementation in the years ahead. Progress with the former remains slow and a significant start with the latter has had to await the completion of the new forest management plan. For the Commission to effectively deliver on its statutory obligations in this area while also progressing the implementation of the forest management plan will require additional financial and human resources.

In conclusion I would like to thank my fellow Commissioners, the Commission's staff and those from within the Department of Conservation and Land Management who support the needs of the Commission. I would also like to especially note my appreciation of the contribution of Mr Tom Day who retired from the Commission in the course of the year after being the inaugural Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, the acting Chairperson for a period and the Chairperson of the Commission's predecessor, the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority. Tom, being a long-standing figure in local government, provided a very beneficial linkage to local governments throughout the State, and most particularly in the pastoral regions.

Dr John Bailey

## 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 2003 were:

Dr John Bailey, Chairperson	November 2001 – November 2004
Mrs Patricia Barblett (AM), Deputy Chairperson	November 2000 – November 2003
Dr Jennifer Davis	November 2000 – November 2003
Mr Glen Kelly	November 2000 – November 2003
Mrs Barbara Morrell	November 2000 – November 2003
Mr Graeme Rundle	November 2000 – November 2003
Mr Rodney Safstrom	November 2000 – November 2003
Dr Joanna Young	November 2000 – November 2003
Mr William Mitchell	November 2002 – November 2003

Mr Thomas Day, the previous Deputy Chairperson, was replaced as Deputy Chairperson by Mrs Patricia Barblett (AM) when he did not nominate for reappointment in November 2002. Mr William Mitchell was appointed to fill the membership vacancy created by Mr Day's departure.

The Conservation Commission held thirteen meetings during the reporting period including one at Goongarrie Station north of Kalgoorlie in September 2002, in celebration of the Year of the Outback.

## **Summary of the Conservation Commission's activities and achievements: 1 July 2002 - 30 June 2003**

The Conservation Commission was formed on 16 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).

### **Strategic Direction**

In 2001 the Conservation Commission set itself a three-year plan to achieve a number of objectives relating to its statutory responsibilities and Government policy, and has adopted the following vision and mission. The Commission has commenced an annual review of its Strategic Plan 2001 – 2003.

#### **Vision**

Western Australia is recognised as a place where biological diversity and the natural environment are valued and protected, and natural resources are managed sustainably.

#### **Mission**

By its leadership and actions, the Conservation Commission will work to conserve the State's biological diversity and to ensure the conservation estate for which it has responsibility is managed in an ecologically sustainable manner.

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 undertaken the following:

- Continued its review of the former National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority policies, including *Mosquito Control Policy*, *Drainage Policy* and *Basic Raw Materials Policy*, with a view to ascertaining whether or not they are consistent with the Conservation Commission's mission and whether or not they should be adopted by it. In the case of a number of these policies such as that for basic raw materials, they have been deemed to be of an operational nature and therefore are better as Departmental policies. The consideration of these has led to a more general analysis of the type of policies that may be developed by the Commission, those policies that should be of a joint nature between the Commission and the Department and to what level Commission endorsement of the Department's operational policies should occur. Further refinement of the Commission's position on policies will be undertaken in the coming year.

- Provided comment on the following major policies and related issues either in development or under review by the Department:
  - *Tour Operator's Handbook*
  - *Framework for Managing Natural Biodiversity in the Wheatbelt*
  - *Policy on High Speed and Freestyle Boating*
  - *Fuel Reduction Buffers on Nature Reserves in the Wheatbelt*
  - *Carnaby's Black Cockatoo Recovery Plan*
  - *Policy Statement 18 – Recreation and Visitor Services*
  - *Management and Administration of Apiary Sites*

## 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 2,610 hectares of conservation reserves were added to the estate, including 2,260 hectares of new reserves from land purchases, land exchanges and reserve disposal by other agencies and 350 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, the following applications were considered: nineteen lease applications in ten batches; 157 commercial activity (e.g. tourist operations) licence applications in fourteen batches; and 286 apiary permits in nine batches. A streamlined procedure developed by the Department to enable more efficient processing of licence applications was approved by the Conservation Commission.
- During the year, ten mining tenement applications were referred to the Conservation Commission for recommendations, none of which required statutory recommendations under section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978*; all applications however required Commission advice to be provided to the Minister for the Environment. Statutory recommendations were provided by the Commission under section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978* for the application of standard exploration conditions (Schedule A1) to existing mining leases.

## 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 ten times and considered and facilitated formal endorsement by the full Commission of 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 draft of the proposed Woodman Point Regional Park Management Plan, and approved its release for public comment.
- The proposed Management Plans for Yellagonga Regional Park and Carnac Island Nature Reserve were submitted to the Minister and approved by her.

A summary of the status of those management plans under development or review as at 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2003 is shown in Table 1. The Conservation Commission remains concerned at the slow progress being made in the development and review of management plans. While additional resources would be welcome, the Conservation Commission is keen to pursue other options to address this issue. To that end a workshop to be held jointly with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Department is planned for 2004.

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 (or other guiding document) released	3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (AC)	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 proposed plan and APS to Corporate Executive and then Conservation Commission and finalise	10. Submit proposed plan and APS to Minister(s)	11. Gazettal of management plan	Comments
Yanchep and Neerabup NPs and Neerabup NR	17/08/2001	17/08/2001	31/07/01 (existing)									Draft proposed to be released for public comment in February/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. Draft proposed to be released for public comment in April 2004.
Wellington NP and proposed conservation parks	15/07/02	30/06/02	31/03/02 (new)									Issues related to primacy of water to be discussed by heads of agencies in late November 2003. This issue has delayed the completion of the draft plan. Pending resolution, draft proposed to be released by March 2004.
Walpole Wilderness Area	01/05/03	27/03/03	31/01/03 (new)									WWA Community Advisory Committee formed in 2003. Nine Advisory Committee meetings held. Community consultation initiated. Draft proposed for release in September 2004.
Turquoise Coast Islands NRs	Turquoise Coast Islands 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				Resolution of performance indicators delayed completion of final plan, which is proposed to be released in March 2004.
Thomsons Lake NR	01/03/02	31/03/02	30/09/02 (new)	01/05/03	31/05/03							Draft released for public comment in October 2003. Final proposed for release in September 2004.
Forrestdale Lake NR	01/03/02	31/03/02	31/07/02 (existing)	01/05/03	31/05/03							Draft released for public comment in October 2003. Final proposed for release in September 2004.
St John Brook CP	Originally commenced as Interim Management Guideline in June 2002. Nannup Tourist Association provided community input pre-draft. No AC.											Draft to be released for public comment by April 2004.

	1. Develop Public Participation Strategy	2. Issues paper (or other guiding document) released	3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (AC)	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 proposed plan and APS to Corporate Executive and then Conservation Commission and finalise	10. Submit proposed plan and APS to Minister(s)	11. Gazettal of management plan	Comments
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 to be presented to Advisory Committee in September 2003. Proposed to be presented to Conservation Commission in Feb 2004 for release as a draft in April 2004.
Parks of the Leeuwin Ridge, Scott NP and Gingilup NR	30/06/03	30/09/01	30/04/00 (existing as LNNP AC; to be expanded in late 2003 to cover extra reserves)									Public consultation period to be completed in second half of 2003. Internal workshops held for nature conservation and recreation with recreation master plan now largely complete. Draft proposed for release 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									Major inroads achieved this year following formation of Aboriginal Park Council after several years' hiatus. Consultation ongoing with traditional owners, with draft to be released during the first half of 2004.
Lane Poole Reserve	In prep	In prep	18/09/02 (existing)									Release of draft proposed for November 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 have delayed the plan following initial presentation to the Conservation Commission. Changes to tenure recommendations to be resolved in January 2004, with re-presentation to Conservation Commission in March/April. Proposed date for draft release June 2004.
Kalbarri NP	Management plan commenced in 1999 prior to current system of preparing Public Participation Strategy and Issues Paper.		29/7/99 (new)									On hold pending resolution of pastoral acquisitions.
Esperance Coastal Reserves	In prep	In prep	01/08/02 (new)									Draft well advanced with several Advisory Committee meetings held during the year. Issues paper to be released by early 2004. Proposed to release draft in September 2004.

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Dampier Archipelago Islands NRs and 5(g) reserves	07/10/02	25/03/02	Deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted.									Public workshop for recreation/tourism to be held in Karratha in August 2003, and consultations with key stakeholders in March, April and May. Proposed date for release of draft is April 2004 but will depend on discussions over tenure of islands.
Cape Range National Park and proposed extensions	01/05/03		29/07/03 (existing but reformed)									Advisory Committee formed and first two meetings held. Issues paper to be placed on NatureBase by end of 2003. Draft proposed for release in Jul/Aug 2004.
Herdsmen Lake Regional Park	1998	No guiding document produced.	1998 (new)	21/08/00	27/10/00	05/01	05/06/01					Proposed management plan and APS referred to City of Stirling, Water Corporation and CALM specialist branches in October 2003. Intended completion of final plan and APS by June 2004.
Beeliar Regional Park	1998	Beeliar Regional Park Proposals for Administration and Use" released in 1992.	1998 (new)	27/08/01	28/09/01	11/01	14/11/01					APS and proposed plan in preparation. Intended completion of proposed plan and APS by June 2004.
Woodman Point Regional Park	1999	No guiding document produced.	1999 (new)	28/03/02	29/04/02	31/07/02	30/08/02					APS and proposed plan in preparation. Intended completion of proposed plan and APS by August 2004.
Jandakot Regional Park	1999	Proposals for the Jandakot Botanic Park" released in 1995.	1999 (new)									Preliminary draft referred to Community Advisory Committee local governments and CALM specialist branches 19/11/02. Draft for public comment well-advanced for anticipated release in April 2004.
Rockingham Lakes Regional Park	1999	"Proposed Port Kennedy and Rockingham Parks Management Framework" released in 1997.	1999 (new)	10/06/03	13/08/03	23/10/03	27/10/03					Public submission period open until 27/02/04. Intended completion of Analysis of Public Submissions by June 2004. Intended completion of proposed plan in early 2005. This timeframe will be dependent on negotiations with the City of Rockingham.

	1. Develop Public Participation Strategy	2. Issues paper (or other guiding document) released	3. Form or notify Community Advisory Committee (AC)	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 proposed plan and APS to Corporate Executive and then Conservation Commission and finalise	10. Submit proposed plan and APS to Minister(s)	11. Gazettal of management plan	Comments
Darling Range Regional Park		Proposals for the Darling Range Regional Park <sup>7</sup> released in 1995.										Public submission period for indicative boundaries of new forest parks close end of November 2003. Resolution of boundaries will determine future planning area boundaries and timelines for completion for new national parks and regional parks. Commence regional park planning process in 2004, with intended release of draft management plans in early 2005.

## 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.

Development of the new forest management plan continued during the 2002 – 2003 year, through the agency of the Department, and where applicable, in consultation with the Forest Products Commission, the Water and Rivers Commission and other relevant water utilities.

The Steering Committee that was established to guide the process, comprising members and staff from the Conservation Commission and the Forest Products Commission met thirteen times during the year.

Consistent with the Government's *Protecting our old-growth forests* policy, a number of reviews were initiated as part of the process of monitoring, assessing and auditing the existing Forest Management Plan, as well as providing input to the new management plan.

These included:

- An independent expert panel review on *Calculating Sustained Yield for the Forest Management Plan(2004 – 2013)* that completed its final report in May 2003.
- A Social and Economic Impact Study of the potential impacts of the new forest management plan on regional communities was completed and published in time for consideration with the draft forest management plan, a supplementary report was also published.
- A Map and Data Assessment used to provide an assessment of stakeholder concerns raised in relation to the accuracy of maps and data used in the development of the sustained yields for the forest management plan.
- An assessment of silviculture practices in the jarrah forests: *Towards Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management in Western Australia: A Review of Draft Jarrah Silviculture Guideline 1/02*. (also known as Burrows Stage 2).

The results of these reviews were published on the Conservation Commission website as they were finalised.

The Draft Forest Management Plan was released in July 2002 for a period of public comment. During this public comment period a series of six forums were held at regional locations and in Perth. These were attended by over 900 people. In addition to input gathered in the course of these public meetings there were a total of 5,600 submissions received (including 4,686 pro-forma submissions) that were considered in the preparation of the proposed forest management plan that was assessed by the independent expert panel.

A summary of public consultation on the Draft Forest Management Plan is provided in Appendix 1.

## Advice and Promotion

The Conservation Commission met with the Minister for the Environment seven 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 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.

As part of the promotion of its activities the Conservation Commission hosted, with the support of the Department, a camp-out at Goongarrie Station north of Kalgoorlie in September 2002, in celebration of the Year of the Outback.

## 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.

Nevertheless the following activities have been undertaken with regard to this function:

- The A/Director participated in a community forest inspection in the Collie area. This inspection was organised through the office of the Minister for the Environment who has proposed that they are organised on a regular basis 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.
- The A/Director accompanied the Department’s auditor on audits of timber harvesting practices to verify approach and standards used by both the Department and the Forest Products Commission. This allows confident use by the Conservation Commission of audit data supplied by the Department.
- An independent consultant was engaged to review the process used by the Department in undertaking forest audits. This was done to further verify the reliability of data and findings from those audits.
- An independent environmental auditor was engaged to audit the implementation of the Lesueur National Park and Coomaloo Nature Reserve Management Plan 1995-2005. 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 two major field trips during 2002 - 2003 and a number of lesser field trips. All were co-ordinated and supported by Department regional staff.

#### Year of the Outback at Goongarrie station and Kalgoorlie, 31 August - 1 September

As part of the celebrations for the Year of the Outback the Conservation Commission organised a camp-out for members of the public at Goongarrie Station, a former pastoral lease adjoining Goongarrie National Park some 100 km north of Kalgoorlie. The Chairperson, eight members and the Executive Assistant attended, convening a formal meeting, as well as interacting with local stakeholders and visiting other Commission vested lands around Kalgoorlie.

#### Wheatbelt region, 12 - 13 September

Seven Conservation Commission members including the Chairperson, and the Acting Director undertook a field visit to the Wheatbelt at Lake Grace, travelling through to the Dryandra Woodland and visiting a number of sites along the way. Key matters reviewed were salinity impacts on biodiversity, catchment landcare activities, the Lake Bryde Recovery Catchment project, recreation management issues in nature reserves, and the Dryandra Woodland management and rare fauna recovery program.

#### Karratha and Millstream Chichester, 1-2 October.

The Chairperson, a Commission member and the Acting Director attended the Department management planning workshop at Karratha and Millstream Chichester National Park. The focus of the Conservation Commission participation in the workshop was to provide input on the Commission's role and its views on management plan development processes. Also included were discussions focused on indigenous input to the planning process and joint management with local community members.

#### South Coast region, 3 - 4 April

The Chairperson of the Dieback Consultative Council joined eight Conservation Commission members and the Acting Director on its South Coast region field visit. The visit commenced in Esperance where the management of local nature reserves was the focus. Following this, key issues considered were management of Fitzgerald River National Park, and in particular dieback management, proposed conservation reserves near Ravensthorpe, Stirling Ranges National Park management and recovery programs for endangered wildlife at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve. A highlight of the visit was the strong interaction between Commission members and local government and other community members.

#### Forest management field inspection 18 June

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 to assist with the EPA's consideration of the proposed forest management plan.

### 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

Mr Rodney Safstrom: Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative Steering Group

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.

### Submissions to external reviews

The Conservation Commission made submissions to a number of external reviews during the year including:

- Review of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, the Marine Parks And Reserves Scientific Advisory Committee and the Conservation Commission of Western Australia
- Biodiversity Conservation Act Consultation Paper
- State Sustainability Strategy Consultation Draft
- Regional Tourism Strategy Draft

### 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

The first half of the coming year will see the finalisation and ultimate gazettal of the new forest management plan. In the early stages of implementation of this plan there will be ongoing work for the Conservation Commission in the development of subsidiary management guidelines and in other ways. Work will commence on auditing the performance of the Department and the Forest Products Commission in implementing the plan, most particularly against the key performance indicators identified in the plan.

#### Joint Management

The release of the consultation paper *Indigenous Ownership and Joint Management of Conservation Lands in Western Australia* will see a raised awareness of the issue of joint management and will require the development of a clear position by the Commission.

#### Pastoral Area Exclusions

There will be ongoing negotiation between the Department and leaseholders for areas identified as being important additions to the conservation reserve system in the State. The Conservation Commission supports the proposals as important elements to help the delivery of a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system.

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

At the request of the Minister for the Environment the EPA will undertake a review of the Department's fire policy and practices commencing in mid 2003. The Conservation Commission will maintain close liaison with the EPA through the review and will provide advice to the Minister on the findings of the review.

#### Cape Range National Park management plan review and proposed additions

The impending review of the Cape Range National Park and other land-use decisions in relation to the Ningaloo Coast will require ongoing input from the Conservation Commission during the next reporting period. Consideration of proposed coastal extensions to the park and the management of tourism developments along the coast will be focal issues.

## Conservation Commission Budget

The Conservation Commission was established with a minimal budget. Submissions for additional funds over the past two financial years have not been successful. It is a challenge for the Commission to continue to develop its policy and audit functions, to participate at an appropriate level in the preparation and review of management plans, and fulfil its other statutory functions within budget.

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*.

## Executive Support

The Conservation Commission had the following staff at 30 June 2003:

Acting Director:	Peter Baldwin
Acting Executive Assistant:	Julie Adams
Audit Manager:	Vacant

Over the course of the year the previous Acting Director, Christine Shervington and the Executive Assistant, Vikki Santwyk both took up secondments in other areas of Government. Additional support was provided to the Commission through the part-time temporary engagement of Jane Van der Meer to assist with processing submissions on the forest management plan. An officer from the Department, Kevin Vear, also worked for the Commission on a part-time basis for a short period.

During the consultation process for the forest management plan, a Public Involvement Coordinator, Marie Hauxby, of Tailored Media, was appointed. This contract commenced in June 2001 and has now been completed.

## 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.

The Conservation Commission complies with a number of other Department of Conservation and Land Management administrative policies and procedures, for example, the Disability Service Plan and the Use of Credit Cards, until such time as the Commission develops its own.

The Conservation Commission is committed to the recycling of waste paper.

## 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 2002

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 will formulate a records disposal schedule in the coming financial year, and the former National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority records will be forwarded to the Western Australian State Archives when the schedule is approved and archival storage space 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](mailto: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.

#### 2002-2003 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 2002 - 2003 was \$ 21,822.56

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)	\$21,822.56

## **Summary of public consultation on the new forest management plan from 2001 to 2003**

### **Stakeholder contact tools**

A variety of stakeholder contact tools were established at the project outset:

- a tailored database with ad-hoc reporting, automated mail-out and with the functionality to also record details of contacts with stakeholders;
- a Webpage, incorporating an electronic registration form for being sent ongoing information regarding the new forest management plan and the public involvement process;
- 1300 local call charge phone number;
- fax number; and
- dedicated e-mail address for queries and submissions.

### **Database**

The database stored the information of some 1,200 stakeholder individuals and groups comprising a broad range of interests.

### **Stakeholder mail-outs**

Over the period from July 2001 to October 2002, six mail-outs were sent to all stakeholders from the database to advise them of forthcoming consultation events, forest management plan progress or project timetable information.

A further five mail-outs were also sent to specific stakeholder groups to advise forum agenda and transcript information, to provide feedback to specific queries raised at public displays, and to update the progress of Indigenous consultation issues raised in the Regional Forest Agreement.

### **Information brochure**

An information brochure was prepared at the project outset, which outlined the (then) indicative forest management plan timetable, participation strategy, and broad information on forest management issues. An essential component of the brochure and all information for public dissemination was that it was objective, in plain language, provided the contact details of the Public Involvement Coordinator and was widely available. The information brochure was distributed to all identified stakeholder groups and individuals from an initial stakeholder listing, which was updated throughout the process, and was also available through the course of consultation as required.

### **Media releases**

Paid and unpaid editorials and advertisements were placed in State and local media at appropriate times during the public involvement process to advise of specific events and timetable information. Radio media was also utilised during the project.

### **Public displays**

A series of staffed public displays in sixteen locations throughout the South West were held in July and August 2001. The purpose of these displays was to provide broad project information to a large number of people in the general community. The Public Involvement Coordinator staffed all of the displays, providing general project information, maps and additionally, contact details for queries, comments and submissions.

### Round table of interest groups

An independently chaired Round table discussion group with thirteen members was established to ensure that the wide range of stakeholders were kept informed of the forest management planning process and to provide input to the Conservation Commission's project Steering Committee.

The Round table representatives met monthly from August 2001 to August 2002, soon after the release of the Draft Forest Management Plan.

The Round table meetings provided the participants with the opportunity to present their issues and concerns to the other members, for debate and discussion. A copy of the issues raised by the Round table group and the Steering Committee responses were made available electronically on the Conservation Commission's website.

### Regional and city forest forums

Two rounds of regional and city forest forums were held in a variety of locations to coincide with the release of the forest management plan Discussion Paper, and with the release of the Draft Forest Management Plan.

The approximate attendees at the forums, held in August/September 2001 and August/September 2002, were as follows:

#### Round one forum attendees

<b>Forum Location</b>	<b>Approx Attendees</b>
Mundaring	44
Collie	32
Margaret River	41
Manjimup	68
Perth City	48
<b>Total attendees</b>	<b>233</b>

#### Round two forum attendees

<b>Forum Location</b>	<b>Approx Attendees</b>
Mundaring	190
Manjimup	300
Collie	65
Bunbury	90
Perth City	230
Walpole	80
<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>955</b>

### Local government forum

Prior to the second round of regional and city forest forums, a forum aimed at the specific issues of Local government was held in August 2002. Twenty-one Local Government representatives attended this forum.

### Science forum

In order to encourage the involvement of various educational and technical groups and individuals, a science forum was held in March 2002, attracting some 150 attendees.

## **Website**

All information produced for public distribution was made accessible through the Conservation Commission's website. Members of the public and groups were encouraged to use the site to register their interest in the project and raise questions, comments or issues during the public involvement process.

Web statistics showed a marked increase in requests for pages in the months of August and September 2002 (over 50,000 requests for pages compared with an average of approximately 27,000 in the previous three months), with September being slightly higher than August. The peak period for accessing the Conservation Commission website was following the release of the Draft Forest Management Plan, when in September 2002, 52,700 page requests were recorded. This compared to the following month, October 2002, which recorded 48,000 page requests.

Stakeholder database information indicates that 62 new stakeholders registered in the public involvement process via the Conservation Commission website.

## **Australian Electoral Commission mail-out**

In an attempt to involve members of the public who may not normally take part in public submission processes concerning forest management, a random mail-out was made to people sourced from the Australian Electoral Commission Register.

A total of 2,800 letters were distributed, representing 1,400 to metropolitan constituencies and 1,400 to regional areas, based proportionately on population distribution. As a result of this activity, thirty-six new stakeholders registered to become involved in the public involvement process for the new FMP.

## **Public notification**

The availability of both the Discussion Paper and the Draft Forest Management Plan documents were advertised in the *Government Gazette*.

## **Public submissions**

One hundred and twenty nine submissions were received during the public consultation period for the Discussion Paper, released in January 2002.

Submissions on the Draft Forest Management Plan, released in August 2002, numbered over 900 in addition to over 4,000 pro-forma submissions and petitions on a variety of issues.

## **Indigenous groups**

To ensure that the Aboriginal consultation was effective and culturally appropriate, an Indigenous Consultation Working Group was established. The role of this Working Group was to assist in identifying Aboriginal groups for consultation and to advise on cultural protocol issues.

The group met on three occasions. These meetings included a thorough review of the Cultural Heritage section of the Discussion Paper and comment on the Draft Guidelines for Indigenous Consultation developed by Edith Cowan University: International, Cultural and Community Studies.

The specific groups identified by the Working Group were approached to find out how they wanted their consultation to take place.

Individual presentations were made to over a dozen individual groups, including Native Title Claimants, the Commission of Elders, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the ATSIC State Policy Centre. Other groups and individuals were contacted via mail and/or telephone contact.