



Conservation Commission
of Western Australia



Annual Report 2006–2007



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Front cover photograph – The Conservation Commission

Back row (left to right): Vince Paparo, Graeme Rundle, John Bailey, David Newsome, William Mitchell

Front row (left to right): Marilyn Morgan, Regina Flugge, Carolyn Turner, Patricia Barblett

Conservation Commission Annual Report 2006–2007

Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for the Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report 2006-2007 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2007, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

Dr John Bailey
Chair

Overview of Agency

Chair's Report

The reporting period has seen the Conservation Commission of Western Australia (Conservation Commission) undertake significant work on ongoing issues and projects. These include management planning with traditional owners under the Ord Final Agreement and in the Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Nature Reserve, assessments of potential old-growth forest and the implementation of the performance assessment program.

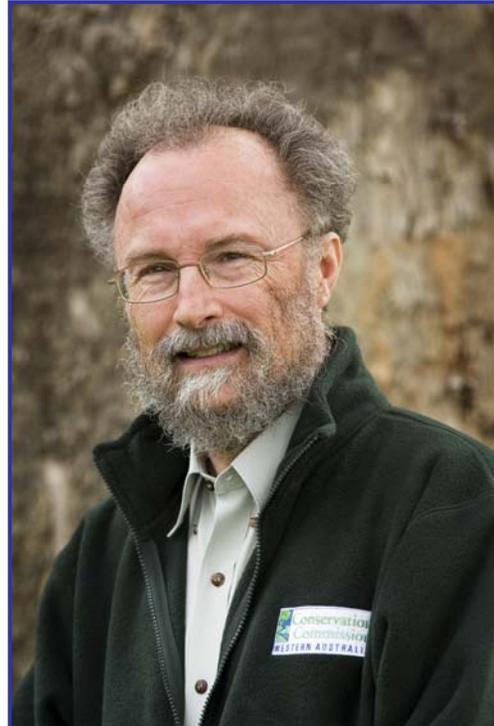
The Conservation Commission is committed to maintaining its role of management planning and performance assessment for existing and new conservation areas under the Ord Final Agreement while supporting the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council's role in conservation area management. As part of this commitment the Conservation Commission worked with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners, Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and CSIRO on developing a management planning framework that should enable the goals of the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners, and of the Conservation Commission and DEC to be combined.

The Conservation Commission undertook substantial work in the development of a number of management plans, with those for the Shark Bay terrestrial reserves and Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Nature Reserve being the most noteworthy. The Shark Bay management plan encompasses the terrestrial component of the Shark Bay World Heritage property and consequently aims to protect and enhance the World Heritage values of the area. The Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Nature Reserve management plan is being prepared with significant participation of the Park Council. The planning is incorporating the western, scientific approach to the areas' natural and cultural values with the Indigenous values throughout, and is providing the opportunity to formally develop an approach to management with effective involvement of local Indigenous people in both planning and management. Draft management plans for both of these areas are expected to be released for public comment during 2007.

During the reporting period the future conservation of the State's banded ironstone formation ranges, areas which are also prospective for iron ore, became subject to public debate. There are significant biological values in these ranges, including those found in the Mt Manning Range region. The Conservation Commission visited the Goldfields region in May 2007 to inspect these ranges in order to gain a greater appreciation of their values in advance of land-use decisions that are due to be made in the near future. These decisions will need to recognise the unique flora of the region.

Five performance assessment reports were published during the reporting period. Four of these assessments were undertaken in accordance with the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*, addressing fire management and protection of informal reserves in timber harvesting areas. The fifth assessment examined the implementation of the *Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve Management Plan*. The assessments identified areas for improvement as well as areas where management was very good. In one case the performance assessment used satellite imagery to remotely assess harvesting area boundaries in relation to informal reserve protection during harvesting activities, an innovation that was found to be useful.

The Conservation Commission was involved in a number of issues relating to water supply during the reporting period, including the assessment of the South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development proposal and drinking water source protection plans being developed by the Department of Water.



The Conservation Commission appealed against the Environmental Protection Authority's recommendations regarding the Water Corporation's South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development proposal as the development had the potential to cause extensive unacceptable and unmanageable impacts on a number of key conservation elements in the southwest including old-growth forest, the reserve system, and rare and priority flora and fauna. In May 2007 the Government announced that the proposal will not proceed.

A number of old-growth forest assessments were undertaken in the reporting period, both assessment of reclassifications of old-growth forest by the Department of Conservation and Land Management between 1997-2001 and the assessment of publicly nominated areas of forest. An area of 250 hectares of reclassified old-growth forest has been reviewed with 19 hectares returned to old-growth status and 231 hectares confirmed as not being old-growth forest. Two nominations were completed during the reporting period for areas within the Chester and Ellis Creek forest blocks. As a result of the Ellis Creek forest block assessment an area of 185 hectares was added to the corporate database as previously unidentified old-growth forest.

There was continued attention focused on the selection and management of fauna habitat zones in the South West State forests, with the Conservation Commission's consultation process with community representatives to help develop recommendations concerning the location of these zones continuing to be useful. The fauna habitat zones were included as a requirement of the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* as a means of ensuring biodiversity recovery between one timber harvesting event and the next.

In July we welcomed Carolyn Turner as a new member of the Conservation Commission and in December David Newsome and Vince Papero became members. They each bring a diverse range of experiences to the Conservation Commission and have made valuable additions to the team, providing useful insight into the work of the Conservation Commission and enhancing the results we are able to deliver.

Marilyn Morgan foreshadowed her resignation from the Conservation Commission in June 2007 but will continue to hold office until she is replaced.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Jenny Davis and Joanna Young, who both finished up with the Conservation Commission in December 2006 after having served since the Conservation Commission's formation in November 2000. I would also like to acknowledge the previous Director, Bill Carr, who left the Conservation Commission in November 2006.

In closing I would like to thank the members and staff of the Conservation Commission and DEC for their efforts and support during the year.

Dr John Bailey
Chair

Operational Structure

The Conservation Commission was established in November 2000 by the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 (CALM Act)*, and works independent of, but closely with, DEC. It is a statutory commission 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 DEC 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 *CALM Act*.

Members and Meetings

The *CALM Act* provides that the Conservation Commission of Western Australia is to have 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.

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor on the nomination of the Minister. The members of the Conservation Commission and the date of their initial appointment and term of appointment (including any reappointments) at 30 June 2007 were:

Dr John Bailey, Chair	November 2001 – November 2007
Mrs Patricia Barblett (AM), Deputy Chair	November 2000 – November 2008
Ms Regina Flugge	November 2003 – November 2007
Mr William Mitchell	December 2002 – November 2008
Ms Marilyn Morgan	October 2005 – October 2006 Continues to hold office until replaced
Dr David Newsome	December 2006 – December 2009
Mr Vince Paparo	December 2006 – December 2009
Mr Graeme Rundle	November 2000 – November 2008
Ms Carolyn Turner	July 2006 – July 2009

Dr Jennifer Davis and Dr Joanna Young, who each served as members of the Conservation Commission from November 2000 to December 2006, did not seek reappointment at the expiration of their terms.

No decision was made on whether or not to reappoint Ms Morgan when her term expired in late 2006, after which she continued to hold office until reappointed or replaced. Ms Morgan foreshadowed her resignation from the Conservation Commission in June 2007 but will continue to hold office until she is replaced. As Ms Morgan is the member with extensive knowledge and experience in Aboriginal cultural, heritage and environmental matters relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission and given our ongoing work in joint management with traditional owners, the Conservation Commission considers resolution of this appointment to be a high priority.

The Conservation Commission held 14 meetings during the reporting period, including 1 meeting in the Goldfields region. The meeting in the Goldfields region was held in association with a two day field inspection of banded ironstone formation ranges in the Mt Manning area and key recreation and interpretation facilities in the parks in the region.

Executive Support

The Conservation Commission had the following staff at 30 June 2007:

Director:	Vacant (Peter Baldwin acting)
Executive Assistant:	Caroline Stonier
Environmental Audit Manager:	Peter Baldwin
Forest Management Auditor:	Tom Hughson
Forest Policy Advisor:	Kathryn Allen

Over the course of the year the previous Director, Bill Carr, was seconded to work on the development of the Dampier Archipelago Bilateral Agreement (Burrup Peninsula).

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission and DEC agreed that the Conservation Commission's staff's employment would be transferred under working arrangements so that they would be employed by DEC but responsible to the Conservation Commission. The transfer process has occurred for permanent staff.

Corporate Services, including Human Resource Management, Financial Services and Information Technology support are provided under a bureau services agreement with DEC Corporate Services Division.

Vested Lands

Total Estate

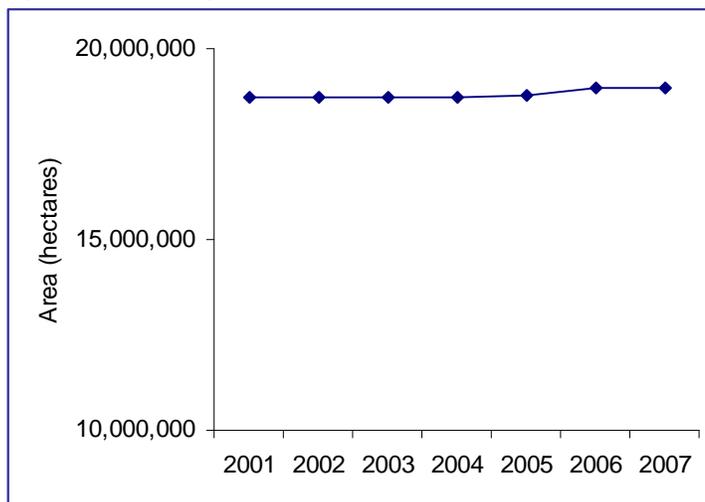
As at 30 June 2007 the total area vested in the Conservation Commission was 18 973 323 hectares. The vested area was approximately 7.5 per cent of the land area of WA. Table 1 provides a summary of the land categories.

Table 1. Land vested in the Conservation Commission

Land Category	Area (hectares) as at 30 June 2007	Area (hectares) as at 30 June 2006
National park	5 595 741	5 593 536
Conservation park	843 907	843 155
Nature reserve	10 872 183	10 860 832
State forest	1 304 492	1 304 619
Timber reserve	123 345	123 344
Sections 5(1)(g) & 5(1)(h) reserve	233 655	233 488
TOTAL	18 973 323	18 958 974

Source: Information Management Branch, DEC

Figure 1. Change in area of land vested in the Conservation Commission over time



National Parks

National parks are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study, preservation of features of archeological, historic or scientific interest, and enjoyment by the public. They have national or international significance for scenic, biological or cultural values.

The area of the 97 national parks at 30 June 2007 was 5 595 741 hectares, a net increase of 2 205 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of additions to existing parks.

Conservation Parks

Conservation parks have the same objectives as national parks. This classification may be used where there is, for example, high mineral potential.

The area of the 51 conservation parks at 30 June 2007 was 843 907 hectares, a net increase of 752 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of the establishment of 6 new parks (751 hectares) and additions to existing parks.

Nature Reserves

Nature reserves are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study, and preservation of features of archeological, historic or scientific interest. Some low impact recreation is allowed.

The area of the 1 271 nature reserves at 30 June 2007 was 10,872,183 hectares, representing a net increase of 11 351 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of the establishment of 15 new nature reserves (3 916 hectares) and additions to (7 736 hectares) and excisions from (301 hectares) existing reserves.

State Forest

State forests are managed for multiple purposes, including water catchment protection, recreation, timber production on a sustained yield basis, and conservation. Provision is also made for public utilities and mineral production, where these activities occur. Within State forests, designated areas are managed for specific purposes, such as conservation or optimum yield of exotic plantings.

The area of the 60 State forests at 30 June 2007 was 1 304 492 hectares, a net decrease for the year of 127 hectares. The excisions were for roads.

Timber Reserves

Timber reserves declared under the *CALM Act*, *Land Act 1933* and the *Land Administration Act 1997* are managed on the same basis as State forests. The category is often transitional; as reserves are evaluated they may be changed to a more appropriate category, e.g. State forest or nature reserve.

The area of the 76 timber reserves at 30 June 2007 was 123 345 hectares, a net increase of 1 hectare. The change was for a road closure.

Section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) Reserves

Under the *CALM Act*, lands categorised as section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) reserve are lands reserved under the *Land Act 1933* and the *Land Administration Act 1997* respectively, for which care, control and management placed with the Conservation Commission. Unlike national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves, they are not automatically vested in the Conservation Commission. Immediately before the commencement of the *CALM Act*, some were vested in, or were under the control of, the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority but not as a national park, e.g. Matilda Bay Reserve. Predominantly they have conservation/recreation purposes.

The area of the 125 section 5(1)(g) and section 5(1)(h) reserves vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2007 was 233,655 hectares, a net increase for the year of 167 hectares. The changes were a result of the establishment of 7 new reserves.

Performance Management Framework

The Conservation Commission contributes to the State Government's five strategic goals for public sector management under the Government's *Better Planning: Better Services* policy. These goals relate to:

- People and Communities;
- the Economy;
- the Environment;
- the Regions; and
- Governance.

The Conservation Commission is one of the lead agencies for achieving the Environment strategic goal. The Conservation Commission also contributes, often indirectly, to the other goals, such as People and Communities and the Regions, through implementing its policies and responsibilities that fall within the Environment goal.

Agency Performance

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; audit; advice and promotion; and other Conservation Commission activities.

Policy

In meeting its objective to develop and maintain policy and provide policy advice to the Minister for the Environment, the Conservation Commission has provided comment on the following major policies and related issues either in development or under review by DEC or by other relevant agencies.

Banded Ironstone Formations

The policy issues surrounding the provision or otherwise of access to the conservation reserve system for mineral and petroleum exploration and development has been controversial for many years. The Conservation Commission is of the view that national parks and nature reserves should remain free from these activities. During the reporting period the future conservation of the State's banded ironstone formation ranges, areas which are also prospective for iron ore, became subject to public debate.

There are significant biological values in these ranges associated with banded ironstone formations, including those found in the Mt Manning Range region. The region is also prospective for a number of minerals, especially iron ore. The land-use decisions that are due to be made will need to recognise the unique flora of the region will seeking a balance with the needs of the mineral sector. In some situations this will require the protection of core values from disturbance.

In addition to these land-use decisions, the Conservation Commission is progressing management planning for the Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves with the imminent release of an issues paper to guide the development of the management plan for this area. As the issues paper and management plan will both identify areas that should be added to the reserves it is important that policy decisions made by Government are reflected in the finalisation of both of these documents.

The Conservation Commission also noted that in areas where there is prospectivity for minerals there is a reluctance of other agencies to support the creation of conservation reserves due to concern that this will make access to these resources more difficult. The validity of this concern needs to be tested in the case of conservation parks since this tenure is intended to provide for access for exploration. It is acknowledged however that in banded ironstone formations the coincidence of the biological and mineral values may mean that the option of reservation as conservation parks may be less useful than elsewhere in the State.

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with DEC and the Department of Industry and Resources to try to resolve the conflicts between the biodiversity and mineral values of banded ironstone formations.

Conservation reserve management in the intertidal zone

The Conservation Commission, DEC and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority liaised regarding the tenure of intertidal zones where marine and terrestrial reserves abut. Intertidal zones are marine environments and logically belong in marine reserves. However the need for an agreed understanding between DEC, the Conservation Commission and the MPRA to ensure protection isn't inadvertently reduced in each case was acknowledged. It was found that changing the tenure of intertidal areas from national park or nature reserve to marine nature reserve, Marine Park or marine management area does not affect the security of tenure or purpose and that the level of statutory protection is also maintained.

The Conservation Commission noted that any decision to change the vesting of intertidal zones would be conditional on ensuring that biodiversity conservation objectives are met and that tenure changes occur simultaneously.

Dieback

The Conservation Commission is represented by Dr Joanna Young on the Dieback Response Group. Following the end of her term as a Conservation Commission member Dr Young agreed to continue to represent the Conservation Commission on this group, to periodically provide feedback and to identify any matters that require formal Conservation Commission consideration.

The Dieback Response Group is working to increase awareness of current impacts and future threats from Phytophthora dieback to biodiversity and to promote investment in and commitment to the protection of valued areas. Dr Young has also represented the Conservation Commission on the Dieback Consultative Council, the peak body advising the Minister on policy development and frameworks for action.

The Conservation Commission regards Phytophthora dieback to be an ongoing major threat to the State's biodiversity warranting continued attention from government and the investment of significant resources to manage the threat.

Drinking Water Source Protection Plans

The Department of Water is developing drinking water source protection plans for a suite of catchments, several of which include areas vested in the Conservation Commission. These plans aim to protect drinking water catchments and include land management obligations and access restrictions.

The Conservation Commission was not initially consulted in developing these plans, even where they involved land vested in the Conservation Commission. Upon becoming aware of these plans the Conservation Commission has sought sufficient information from the Department of Water to enable the Conservation Commission to make informed suggestions and recommendations that acknowledge the other non-water uses and values of the land. While there has been some progress with regard to consultation, the Conservation Commission is yet to receive sufficient information on the proposed drinking water source protection plans to provide informed comment on them.

Fire Management

The Environmental Protection Authority's *Review of Fire Policies and Management Practices of the Department of Conservation and Land Management* noted that the Conservation Commission has an ongoing role in auditing the DEC's fire management under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* and that the Conservation Commission's Research Advisory Committee's roles include providing formal advice on DEC's fire research activities. Due to difficulties in retaining suitable qualified people on the Research Advisory Committee the Conservation Commission is considering alternative approaches to providing this committee's advisory services (see Advice and Promotion, page 25). During the reporting period the Conservation Commission continued to focus on the fire section of management plans to ensure that biodiversity values are more appropriately and specifically addressed in fire management.

Throughout the year Conservation Commission worked with DEC, both directly with those conducting fire management and through management planning, to improve fire management in the vested estate. The aim has been to ensure that the intentions of DEC's fire policy, particularly with respect to consideration of biodiversity values in planning burns, are fully implemented and that the approach to fire management is appropriate to the particular ecosystem in which it is being applied. As part of this work the Conservation Commission conducted a performance assessment of the Master Burn Planning process for the south-west, which is described in more detail in the Audit section.

Gnangara Land Use and Water Management Plan

The Conservation Commission gave in-principle support for the scope and timelines of projects proposed to deliver a Gnangara Land Use and Water Management Plan, lead by the Department of Water, with DEC's active involvement with the inter-agency taskforce preparing the Gnangara Land Use and Water Management Plan and associated technical investigations. The Conservation Commission has a particular interest in the development of this plan. Over 85 000 hectares of land above the Gnangara Mound is vested in the Conservation Commission, and declining water tables

within the mound are severely threatening a number of biodiversity values, particularly in wetlands and several threatened ecological communities.

Management options for Rottnest Island

Rottnest Island is currently vested in the Rottnest Island Authority as an A Class tourism reserve. The Rottnest Island Authority's responsibilities include managing Rottnest Island to protect the flora and fauna of the Island, to maintain and protect the natural environment of the Island and, to the extent that the Rottnest Island Authority's resources allow, repair its natural environment.

The Conservation Commission provided advice to the Rottnest Island Authority concerning proposed amendments to the legislation governing management of the island. The Conservation Commission hopes that the management of the natural areas of the Island will be consistent with the conservation estate, and has agreed to provide advice and support through management planning and performance assessment.

Ord Final Agreement

The Ord Final Agreement, signed on 6 October 2005, is between the Western Australian Government, the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners and nine other parties including the Conservation Commission. The Agreement provides for the development of joint management arrangements with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners for 6 new conservation parks covering 154 000 hectares. The Conservation Commission is committed to maintaining its role of management planning and audit for existing and new conservation areas while supporting the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council role in conservation area management. As part of this, during the reporting period the Conservation Commission worked with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners, DEC and CSIRO on developing a management planning framework that should enable the goals of the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners and of the Conservation Commission and DEC to be combined. This work continues.

South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development

The Conservation Commission appealed against the Environmental Protection Authority's recommendations regarding the South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development proposal, put forward by the Water Corporation. The Conservation Commission is of the opinion that the development had the potential to cause extensive unacceptable and unmanageable impacts on: State forest; old-growth forest; the comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system; and rare and priority flora and fauna. The proposed contingencies for managing environmental harm are such that a delay between recognition of an issue, deciding on appropriate action and seeing the results of the action was likely. The Conservation Commission is of the view that such delays are likely to lead to deleterious effects on the achievement of some of the objectives of the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*. The Conservation Commission had recommended that the proposal not proceed.

During the appeals process the Conservation Commission met with the Appeals Convenor and Water Corporation.

In May 2007 the Government announced that the proposal will not proceed.

Other policy matters

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission adopted 3 of the former National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority's policies on extraction of basic raw materials from national parks, nature reserves and conservation parks, drainage and mosquito control. A new policy concerning minor changes to the conservation estate was also adopted. Another new policy in development will address decision-making processes with respect to the clearing of native vegetation on lands vested in the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission continued to contribute to wider environmental policy through representation on the working party for the State of the Environment report and the Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management Project technical advisory group, as well as ongoing work with the project partners and Government agencies on the approach to be taken in assessing the Gorgon Project on Barrow Island. Through these activities the Conservation Commission is able to contribute to and advance biodiversity conservation knowledge and management.

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 Conservation Commission. Advice on applications is subsequently provided to the Minister.
- A policy was implemented for delegation of decisions on minor changes to the conservation estate to a Commissioner. This has streamlined assessment of proposals so that decisions on those of a routine nature can be made quickly and out of session. Proposals involving large areas or that involve potentially contentious issues are still considered at the monthly meetings of the Conservation Commission.
- In working towards establishing a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system, the Conservation Commission considered changes to reserves and their uses. As previously discussed, during the period, more than 14 000 hectares were added to the estate, through land purchases, land exchanges and reserve disposal by other agencies. Lands acquired by DEC in the present financial year, but not yet vested in the Conservation Commission, will be detailed in DEC's Annual Report.
- Advice 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 to DEC. Table 2 summarises the Conservation Commission's consideration of *CALM Act* leases, licences and permits.

Table 2. CALM Act Leases, licences and permits considered during 2006-2007

	Pre-endorsed *	Delegated endorsement by the Chair	Conservation Commission endorsement
Leases	not applicable	not applicable	19
Licences	246	12	5
Licence endorsements	not available	5	0
Apiary permits	not applicable	not applicable	476

* Licences endorsed by the amended procedure as being consistent with the Tour Operator's Handbook for which the reserves and activities are pre-endorsed by the Conservation Commission.

- During the year DEC received 260 mining tenement applications including 139 which were notification only. 121 mining tenements were referred to the Conservation Commission for recommendations. Of the 121 applications requiring Conservation Commission advice to be provided to the Minister for the Environment, 15 required statutory recommendations under section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978*.

Management Plans

Soon after it was established, the Conservation Commission set up a Management Planning Review Committee in order to facilitate liaison with DEC. The committee's function is to improve the delivery of the Conservation 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 12 times and considered and facilitated action on the following matters:

- In consultation with DEC, development of agreed priorities for the development and review of management plans for the coming year.
- The proposed management plan for Lake McLarty Nature Reserve and proposed amendments to the management plan for Canning River Regional Park were endorsed for presentation to the Conservation Commission.
- Draft management plans for Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Range Nature Reserve, Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves and Proposed Reserve Additions were considered by the committee and endorsed for release for public comment.

The draft management plan for the Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Nature Reserve is the first plan the Management Planning Review Committee has considered in detail that has been developed with significant participation of a Park Council. This plan provided the opportunity to formally develop an approach to management with effective involvement of local Indigenous people in both planning and management. In addition to incorporating the western, scientific approach to the areas' natural and cultural values, the Indigenous values have been incorporated throughout.

The Shark Bay management plan encompasses the terrestrial component of the Shark Bay World Heritage property. Accordingly, in considering management of this area the Management Planning Review Committee worked to ensure all of the World Heritage values are adequately protected and enhanced, where appropriate. Mechanisms include proposed activities to increase knowledge of the World Heritage values and the impacts of various human activities, such as fire, on those values so that management can be adapted to better maintain those values over time.

Over the course of the reporting period this committee also provided considerable input to final and draft plans under development. These covered the following areas of the conservation estate:

- Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks
- Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves
- Proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks
- Cape Range National Park and Proposed Extensions
- Kennedy Range National Park and Proposed Additions
- Esperance Coastal Reserves
- Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves
- Tuart Forest National Park

A summary of the status of those management plans under development or review as at 30 June 2007 is shown in Table 3.

The Gull Rock National Park and Mt Martin Reserves Community Working Groups have been formed to advise on management issues for these reserves following agreement with the City of Albany and the local community to vest the Gull Rock and Mt Martin Reserves in the Conservation Commission and developing management plans for them. Management planning for these reserves is being undertaken as part of the Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast management planning process, which is also receiving community advice from the Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast Community Advisory Committee. New ways of integrating management across these separate, but related, reserves, within a sub-regional context, are being developed.

As part of the ongoing work on improving the rate of management plan production and the management planning process, the Conservation Commission and DEC identified the need to review the priority setting process, in addition to reviewing key performance indicators. The use of subregional management plans to achieve planning efficiency has been being explored, as have

means to improve the effectiveness of public participation. Work is underway to revise the mechanism for setting priorities for developing management plans to better reflect the full suite of values the reserves provide, including biodiversity and human use values, and resources available. A project to review the key performance indicators used in management plans is under development, with the aim of ensuring the indicators are both measurable and useful indicators of the success or otherwise of management plan implementation.

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

Table 3. Summary of Management Plan Progress

This table can be divided into 4 broad stages: (1) preparation of draft management plans through to submission to the Conservation Commission; (2) consideration of draft plans by the Conservation Commission through to public release; (3) public comment period, analysis of public comments and finalisation of plans; and (4) consideration of final plans by the Conservation Commission through to gazettal. The elapsed time to prepare draft and final plan columns identify the total time taken by DEC in developing those stages until the plans are submitted to the Conservation Commission, with the elapsed time to prepare final plan commencing from the end of the public comment period on the draft plan. The total elapsed time includes all time since work commenced on the plan until 30 June 2007. All of the elapsed time columns may include periods when a plan was on hold due to other priorities and therefore should not necessarily be taken as representing the actual time involved in developing a management plan.

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Beeliar Regional Park	Commenced: Jan/1998 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) formed or notified: 1998 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	3.6 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep 2001 Approved by Conservation Commission: Sep 2001 Released by Minister for public comment: Nov 2001	4.1 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2006 Approved by Conservation Commission: Apr/2006	8.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	The plan was gazetted on 20 October 2006.					
Canning River Regional Park (amendments to management plan)	Commenced: Aug/2004 CAC formed or notified: pre-existing	5 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Feb/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Jul/2005	0.9 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Aug/2006 Approved by Conservation Commission: Sep/2006	2.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The amendments to the plan were gazetted on 19 January 2007.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Cape Range NP and proposed extensions (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: May/2003 Public participation strategy released: May/2003 CAC formed or notified: Jul/2003; re-formed May/2007 Aboriginal Park Council formed: Apr/2004 Issues paper released: Apr/04	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Resubmitted to Conservation Commission: Apr/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Aug/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Feb/2006	Time to date: 1.1 year		4.1 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast	Commenced: Sep/2004 Public participation strategy released: not yet prepared Gull Rock and Mt Martin Reserves Community Working Groups formed: Dec/2004 CAC formed or notified: Jan/2007 Issues paper: in prep					2.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Dampier Archipelago Island NRs and section 5(1)(g) reserves (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Mar/2002 Public participation strategy released: Oct/2002 CAC formed or notified: deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted. Issues paper released: Mar/2002					5.3 years
<i>Comments</i>	It had been intended that the outcomes of Government discussions concerning the proposal to change the 4 nature reserves into national parks be determined before the draft plan was completed, work on the draft plan will occur concurrently with this proposal. Preparation of the plan has been deferred pending the completion of higher planning priorities. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is early 2008.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Dryandra Woodland (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Aug/2005 Public participation strategy released: deemed not necessary. CAC formed or notified: deemed not necessary – major stakeholders targeted for input Issues paper released: deemed not necessary.	3 months	Approved by Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Dec/2005	Time to date: 1.3 years		1.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Esperance Coastal Reserves	Commenced: 2005 Public participation strategy released: in prep CAC formed or notified: Aug/2002 Issues paper released: Mar/2007					2.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the plan has been deferred pending the completion of higher planning priorities.					
Jandakot Regional Park	Commenced: Sept/1998 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	5.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jul/2004 Released by Minister for public comment: Nov/2004	Time to date: 2.4 years		8.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Kalbarri NP	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: Jul/1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.					8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the draft plan was delayed due to the process for pastoral lease acquisitions which was completed during 2005. Work on the draft plan recommenced in late 2005 but has been delayed again due to other planning priorities. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Kennedy Range NP and Proposed Additions	Commenced: Jun/2004 Public participation strategy released: deemed not necessary. CAC formed or notified: no advisory committee was formed but views of key stakeholders were sought on the main issues. Issues paper released: deemed not necessary. The plan will replace interim management guidelines which were endorsed by the Conservation Commission in Sep/2003.	9 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Mar/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Aug/2005	Time to date: 1.7 years		3 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan is in progress with the expected timing of submission of the proposed final plan to the Conservation Commission by mid 2007.					
Lake McLarty NR	Commenced: Aug/2004 Public participation strategy released: deemed not necessary. CAC formed or notified: deemed not necessary – major stakeholders targeted for input Issues paper released: deemed not necessary.	10 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Jan 2006	Time to date: 1.2 years		2.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan is in progress with the expected timing of submission of the proposed final plan to the Conservation Commission by mid 2007.					
Lane Poole Reserve (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Jan/2004 Public participation strategy released: Jan/2004 CAC formed or notified: Sep/2002 (existing); May/2004 (revised committee approved) Issues paper released: Feb/2004					3.4 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is by late 2007.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Millstream-Chichester NP and Mungaroona Range NR	Commenced: 1998 CAC formed or notified: May/2003 (Aboriginal Park Council) Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	8.9 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: November 2006 Approved by Conservation Commission: May 2007			9.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The draft plan has been printed and is awaiting Ministerial release.					
Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves	Commenced: Feb/2006 Public participation strategy released: not yet prepared CAC formed or notified: not yet formed Issues paper released: agreed to in Dec/2006; not yet released					1.3 years
<i>Comments</i>	Release of the issues paper and preparation of the draft plan are pending the appointment of a planning officer. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Parks of the Darling Range, including: <i>National Parks</i> Avon Valley Canning Gooseberry Hill Greenmount John Forrest Kalamunda Mundaring Pickering Brook Serpentine Susannah Brook Walyunga <i>Regional Parks</i> [*] Chidlow Kalamunda Kelmscott-Martin Wungong Gordon Block State Forest	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: 1999					8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	An integrated national park-regional park planning process is being applied to these parks. This process evolved from an earlier proposal for a single Darling Range Regional Park and the creation of several new national parks from former State forest. While the initial planning began in 1999, progress has been slow due to the need to address boundary issues of contiguous reserves and other land. Resolution of the boundaries has occurred and the draft plans are being developed progressively for the national and regional parks. The expected timing of submission of the draft plans to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

^{*} The names of the regional parks within the Parks of the Darling Range are interim names only. The process of identifying park names for these parks has commenced.

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Parks of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, Scott NP and Gingilup Swamps NR (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Apr/2000 Public participation strategy released: Jun/2003 CAC formed or notified: Apr/2000 (existing as Leeuwin Naturaliste NP AC, expanded in Jul/2004 to form the Capes Parks CAC) Issues paper released: Sep/2001					7.2 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is late 2007.					
Proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood CPs	Commenced: Jun/2002 CAC formed or notified: Nannup Tourist Association provided community input pre-draft. No CAC.	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Oct/2004 Released by Minister for public comment: Jan/2005	8 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Dec/2005	5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The final plan is awaiting Ministerial approval prior to gazettal. The expected timing is not determined as the creation of the proposed conservation parks is being sought prior to Ministerial approval.					
Rockingham Lakes Regional Park	Commenced: Sep/1998 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep/2003 Approved by Conservation Commission: Sep/2003 Released by Minister for public comment: Oct/2003	Time to date: 3.6 years		8.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux NPs (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: Jun/1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	5.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: May/2005	Time to date: 1.9 years		8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission expected by late 2007.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves and Proposed Reserve Additions (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: May/2005 Public participation strategy released: Oct/2005 CAC formed or notified: Mar/2006 Issues paper released: Oct/2005	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: January 2007 Approved by Conservation Commission: May 2007			2.1 years
<i>Comments</i>	A date for the Ministerial release of the draft plan has not been determined.					
Tuart Forest NP	Commenced: Apr/2005 Public participation strategy released: not yet prepared CAC formed or notified: Oct/2006 Issues paper released: Jul/2006					2.2 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Jun/2002 Public participation strategy released: May/2003 CAC formed or notified: Jan/2003 Issues paper released: Mar/2003	3.4 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2006 Released by Minister for public comment: Aug/2006	Time to date: 7 months		5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the proposed final plan to the Conservation Commission is by late 2007					
Wellington NP and Westralia CP	Commenced: Mar/2002 Public participation strategy released: Jul/2002 CAC formed or notified: Mar/2002 Issues paper released: Jun/2002	2.3 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jul/2004 Resubmitted to Conservation Commission: May/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Aug/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: September 2006	Time to date: 7 months		5.3 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2007
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Woodman Point Regional Park	Commenced: Sep/1998 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	3.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2002 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2002 Released by Minister for public comment: Aug/2002	Time to date: 4.6 years		8.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan is in progress. Due to other planning priorities the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Yanchep and Neerabup NPs and Neerabup NR (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Aug/2001 Public participation strategy released: Aug/2001 CAC formed or notified: Jul/2001 Issues paper released: Aug/2001					5.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	Other planning priorities delayed completion of the plan. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

The Kimberley and Wheatbelt regional plans are no longer on the list of management planning priorities and are therefore no longer being developed. These plans has been on hold for several years while other management plans were developed. Priority management planning for reserves in these regions is being addressed through alternative means, such as management planning under the Ord Final Agreement.

The Conservation Commission is concerned about the length of time it is taking to produce management plans, notably for regional parks. Over the coming year the Conservation Commission will continue to work with DEC to try to address the causes of delays and increase the rate of management plan production.

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 Conservation Commission are managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. The reporting period saw the completion of the third year of implementation of the Forest Management Plan.

Implementation of the Forest Management Plan is the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, DEC and the Forest Products Commission, with the Conservation Commission undertaking independent audits of the effectiveness of land management by the other two agencies under the Forest Management Plan. The audit function is discussed in a later section.

Action 5.2 of the Forest Management Plan requires that the Conservation Commission develop guidelines for the preparation of management plans for conservation reserves in the south-west forest region. Early in the development it was recognised that these guidelines will be more useful if broadened to address management for terrestrial conservation reserves throughout the State, rather than just the south-west forest region. Accordingly, the scope has been expanded and interim guidelines were released in August 2006.

The Forest Management Plan includes requirements for the development of a range of subsidiary management documents by the Conservation Commission, DEC and the Forest Products Commission. These documents are to provide more detailed guidance for ensuring the objectives of the Forest Management Plan are met in day-to-day forest management. A list of these documents is found in Appendix 1 of the Forest Management Plan. The documents for which the Conservation Commission is responsible for development have been completed. However, there have been significant delays in the completion of other documents, some of which were to be developed by 31 December 2004. The Conservation Commission is concerned about the lack of delivery of these guidance documents in accordance with the Forest Management Plan and has raised its concerns with DEC and the Forest Products Commission, particularly noting that mid-term audit of the extent to which management of land to which the Forest Management Plan applies has been undertaken in accordance with the Forest Management Plan will be provided to the Environmental Protection Authority by 31 December 2008.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of the Forest Management Plan *per se* the Conservation Commission has been involved in ongoing discussion concerning how the timber industry is evolving in light of timber availability. This has included participation in reviews to determine the reasons for production difficulties and ensuring that Conservation Commission actions such as assessments of old growth forest are undertaken in a timely fashion.

Old-Growth Forests

A number of old-growth forest assessments were undertaken in the reporting period. These assessments included the assessment of reclassifications of old-growth forest by the Department of Conservation and Land Management between 1997-2001 and the assessment of publicly nominated areas of forest. The methodology applied for these assessments is outlined in the document *Assessment Criteria and Process for the Conservation Commission Review of Old-Growth Amendments*, which was released in December 2005.

Approximately 250 hectares, in 21 forest blocks, were subject to reclassification work that was completed and endorsed by the Conservation Commission. Of the 250 hectares, the reclassification to non old-growth was confirmed for 231 hectares while 19 hectares were found to have been incorrectly reclassified and will be afforded permanent protection from timber harvesting as they are old-growth forest.

An efficient on-line publishing system has been developed for the Conservation Commission web site, where the detailed results of these assessments are published. The program of assessing reclassifications is ongoing.

During the reporting period two community nomination reports for old growth forest assessment, within the Chester and Ellis Creek forest blocks, were completed and published on the Conservation Commission's website. The assessment of the area proposed for logging within the Ellis Creek forest

block identified variable levels of disturbance as evidenced by stumps, and an area of 185 hectares was added to the corporate database as previously unidentified old-growth forest. The assessment within the Chester forest block revealed a high proportion of dieback infection and disturbance from logging. No additional old-growth forest was identified in the Chester forest block nomination area.

There are two additional community nominations which have been accepted by the Conservation Commission relating to the Warren and Crowea forest blocks. These assessments are expected to be finalised during the 2007-2008 reporting period.

Fauna Habitat Zones

Fauna Habitat Zones within State forests and timber reserves are intended to maintain fauna populations and to provide a source for recolonisation of nearby areas after timber harvesting. There are approximately 300 indicative Fauna Habitat Zones of at least 200 ha each that are designed to provide a sufficiently extensive network of areas excluded from timber harvesting to maintain fauna numbers.

The Conservation Commission provided advice to DEC concerning proposed locations of Fauna Habitat Zones. To assist in the development of this advice, the Conservation Council of Western Australia, under an agreement with the Conservation Commission, provided reports on DEC's proposed Fauna Habitat Zones. The Conservation Commission met with the Conservation Council and DEC bimonthly to determine priorities for assessment to ensure the Conservation Commission could provide timely advice to allow for the Forest Products Commission's forest harvesting planning.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission provided advice to DEC on proposed Fauna Habitat Zones in the following forest blocks:

- Arcadia 03 and 04
- Chandler 04,05 and 06
- Cobiac 01 and 03
- Leach 01 and 02
- Leach 01 and 03
- Maryvale 02
- McAlinden 01/02 and Woop Woop 04

The reports generally supported DEC's proposed Fauna Habitat Zones for 3 Fauna Habitat Zones. The reports recommended changes to the boundaries of the final Fauna Habitat Zones or further assessment on 4 occasions. Changes or review were recommended due to concerns about dieback infestation, inclusion of more areas of mature forest and whether the zones contained areas of mining rehabilitation.

Audit

Assessment and auditing (performance assessment) are an essential component of sound environmental management systems. The results of performance assessments are used in many ways, including:

- to promote adaptive management which leads to continuous improvement;
- to improve management planning; and
- to promote accountability and public support for management actions.

The Conservation Commission considers performance assessment to be much more than a compliance tool. The greatest value of performance assessments is that they will:

- assist land managers in their work;
- improve management planning practice and management outcomes; and
- help inform policy decisions that will benefit the environmental management of the lands vested in the Conservation Commission.

A database has been developed to track, monitor and prioritise the performance assessments which are to be undertaken by the Conservation Commission. The Performance Assessment Review

Committee was established during the reporting period as a subcommittee within the Conservation Commission responsible for considering performance assessment priorities and drafts of the performance assessments in the rolling plan.

Five performance assessment reports based on the guidelines were published during the reporting period. The assessment of the *Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve Management Plan* revealed that overall management of the area had been effective in providing for both conservation and recreation outcomes within a relatively constrained budget. However, there had been relatively poor implementation of dieback hygiene planning requirements as it was found that during the construction of a road in Lesueur National Park a hygiene management plan had not been developed. In relation to fire management it was found that the management plan lacked specific strategies to deal with uncertainty of knowledge, and that while prescribed burning had been applied to selected areas as the plan required, with good effect in protecting the parks from wildfire to date, there had been no action to determine how the remaining areas should be managed in the future.

The other four performance assessments were undertaken in accordance with the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* (FMP). The two assessment reports in relation to fire management primarily assessed the standards being applied to prescribed burning. From these assessments it was clear that DEC has increased the level of planning for biodiversity management and protection during its planning, however there are still ongoing developments in this area that will be the subject of future assessments. The Conservation Commission remains concerned that biodiversity conservation is not afforded sufficient weight through the implementation of DEC's Fire Management Policy.

The two assessment reports in relation to the protection of informal reserves in timber harvesting areas identified areas where improvements were required, mostly relating to old-growth issues for planning and operational implementation. Overall the assessment found that generally the system for protecting reserved areas such as streams and important patches of vegetation was satisfactory. As an innovation in its performance assessment, the Conservation Commission used satellite imagery to remotely assess harvesting area boundaries in relation to informal reserves. By using this technology the Conservation Commission was able to review a large area with follow-up site inspections where results from remote analysis could be confirmed. This methodology identified two areas which were cleared for use to load logs within the area designated for protection without proper authorisation.

Table 4. Summary of performance assessments undertaken and key issues identified

Performance assessment	Brief summary of key issues identified
<i>Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve Management Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Effective provision of both conservation and recreation outcomes. ➤ Inadequate dieback prevention planning. ➤ Fire strategies not implemented increasing future wildfire risk.
Prescribed burning (Parts 1 and 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Significant recent changes to planning systems but further improvements required particularly planning for biodiversity management and protection during its planning.
Informal reserve protection (Parts 1 and 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Systems for identifying unmapped old growth forest not in place. ➤ Standards of boundary protection generally good but two breaches identified.

Advice and Promotion

The Conservation Commission met with the former and current Ministers for the Environment a total of 6 times to inform them of current issues facing the Conservation Commission and to provide advice on issues raised by the Ministers. Additionally, the Conservation Commission provided advice on specific issues concerning the conservation estate as and when required.

The Conservation Commission has identified a need to focus more attention on communication and promotion opportunities. To address this a new subcommittee was established: the Communication and Promotion Committee. The Communication and Promotion Committee met twice during the year.

As part of the increased focus on communication and increasing the Conservation Commission's public profile, the Conservation Commission released 5 media statements during the reporting period concerning the release of performance assessment reports and forthcoming field visits by the Commission. The Conservation Commission's appearance in various news media has increased significantly, including interviews of members on radio news programs in relation to the South West Yarragadee proposal and banded ironstone formations. The Chair also spoke at the Conservation Council of Western Australia's State Conference, a banded ironstone formation forum and at a climate change breakfast organised jointly with Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism (FACET).

The Conservation Commission and DEC have continued to work on planning the Parks and Protected Areas forum to be held in September 2007. A Steering Committee comprising representatives of the Conservation Commission, DEC, Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, Conservation Council of Western Australian, FACET and Parks Forum has overall responsibility for the conference.

The Research Advisory Committee identifies and provides advice to the Conservation Commission on scientific and social research priorities that will make the most strategic improvement in biodiversity conservation outcomes for Western Australia. During the reporting period the Research Advisory Committee did not meet. While the Conservation Commission recognises its value, attracting and retaining appropriately qualified people to sit on the Research Advisory Committee has been difficult. The Research Advisory Committee cannot be simply disbanded as there is an outstanding Ministerial referral, to provide advice on DEC's fire research activities. The Conservation Commission is considering alternative approaches for providing these advisory services. Options are being developed for Ministerial consideration.

Directions

In the reporting period there have been no instances under the *CALM Act* 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 *CALM Act* 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 the Minister has decided to act otherwise than in accordance with the recommendation.

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 importance, the Conservation Commission undertook a number of field trips during the reporting period.

Goldfields

In May 2007 the Conservation Commission conducted its monthly meeting in Kalgoorlie. Associated with this meeting the Conservation Commission and staff visited the Mt Manning area to ensure thorough understanding of the issues associated with banded-ironstone formations. The Conservation Commission also met with various local stakeholders to discuss their issues and concerns.

A management plan for Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves is currently in the early stages of preparation.

Community Forest Inspection

In June 2007 Mr Graeme Rundle represented the Commission on community forest inspections in the Swan and South West regions.

Management of Ramsar wetlands in Western Australia

The State Auditor General's audit of the adequacy of management of Ramsar wetlands in Western Australia was released in October 2006. It contains a number of recommendations concerning ways to improve the management of these important areas. The Conservation Commission has reviewed the recommendations and will respond by October 2007.

Participation on External Committees

The following members represented the Conservation Commission on other committees, or as observers on Advisory Committees and Park Councils, as noted:

Dr John Bailey	Esperance Coastal Reserves Community Advisory Committee Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast Community Advisory Committee Gull Rock National Park Community Working Group Mt Martin Botanic Park and Voyager Park Community Working Group Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council
Mrs Patricia Barblett:	Bush Bank Board Capes Parks Community Advisory Committee
Dr Jennifer Davis:	Miliyana Chichester Park Council (alternate – until December 2006)
Ms Regina Flugge:	Cape Range Community Advisory Committee (alternate) Dampier Archipelago Community Advisory Committee Miliyana Chichester Park Council
Mr William Mitchell:	Cape Range Community Advisory Committee (until May 2007)
Dr David Newsome:	Cape Range Community Advisory Committee (from May 2007) Shark Bay Community Advisory Committee
Mr Graeme Rundle:	Kalbarri National Park Community Advisory Committee Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks Community Advisory Committee
Ms Carolyn Turner:	Tuart Forest Community Advisory Committee
Dr Joanna Young:	Dieback Consultative Council (ongoing) Dieback Response Group (ongoing) Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks Advisory Committee (until December 2006) Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee (until December 2006)

Interaction with Other Agencies

In order to ensure it effectively conducts its responsibilities the Conservation Commission works closely with a range of other agencies on a variety of issues. The Conservation Commission works closely with DEC on a day to day basis, both with the headquarters and regional staff.

The Conservation Commission works collaboratively with other environmental agencies including the Environmental Protection Authority and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. It also has association with the Forest Products Commission, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Industry and Resources, Tourism Western Australia, Western Australian Museum, local government authorities, Department of Indigenous Affairs, Rottnest Island Authority, Main Roads WA, Water Corporation, Department of Water, Department of Fisheries, Swan River Trust, and Office of the Auditor General for Western Australia.

Outside the public sector, the Conservation Commission works with a range of community, conservation and industry stakeholders, as well as Indigenous representatives to ensure that policies and plans meet the balanced needs of the wider community. Of particular note are the regular meetings with the Conservation Council of Western Australia to discuss issues associated with fauna habitat zones in the Forest Management Plan area.

Review of the Conservation Commission

Under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* section 26AC a review of the operations and effectiveness of the Conservation Commission is to be carried out as soon as practicable after the expiration of 5 years from the commencement of the *Conservation and Land Management Amendment Act 2000*. In other words, as soon as practicable after November 2005. The review is to have regard to the need for the continuation of the Conservation Commission. Due to the proposed merger of the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority into a new Biodiversity Commission the Government has not started this review.

Significant 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 Conservation Commission through the process of implementing the Forest Management Plan. Most notable among those requirements in the coming year is the preparation for the mid-term audit of the Forest Management Plan's implementation due by the end of 2008, the ongoing fieldwork required for assessing DEC's reclassification of areas previously mapped as old-growth, a targeted audit program and the need to comment on guidelines for the selection and management of fauna habitat zones and informal reserves. Additionally, the Conservation Commission will focus on increasing effective community involvement in forest management, with fauna habitat zone selection being an important component.

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with the Forest Products Commission, DEC and the timber industry as the industry evolves.

Joint Management

The Conservation Commission will continue to seek opportunities to become more closely involved in joint management initiatives. The Conservation Commission's role in joint management includes statutory management planning and performance assessment.

The Conservation Commission will also explore ways of more fully integrating Indigenous issues within management plans. Mechanisms for achieving this are being explored through the Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungarooona Range Nature Reserve management planning process as well as ongoing work with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners in the Ord Final Agreement area.

Improving the management planning process

There will be continued focus of Conservation Commission attention on further improvement of the management planning process, considering issues such as the range of policies and strategies that are common to plans and regional recreational opportunities and constraints. Opportunities for increasing involvement with the Community Advisory Committees will be sought, including meeting with the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee prior to the finalisation of the Walpole Wilderness Area Management Plan and meeting with the Miliyana Chichester Park Council following the public comment period on the Millstream-Chichester National Park and Mungarooona Range Nature Reserve Draft Management Plan, expected to be released soon.

The Conservation Commission is concerned that the rate of production of management plans is too slow. During 2007-08 the Conservation Commission will work with DEC to address the problem through activities including exploring new ways of integrating management across separate, but related, reserves, through the Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast and Parks of the Darling Range management planning processes and reviewing the public consultation process to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

Biodiversity Commission

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Government to ensure a smooth and effective transition to the new Biodiversity Commission, when the time comes.

Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Bill

The Conservation Commission will continue to work closely with DEC and the Government in the development of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and a Biodiversity Conservation Bill.

Audits

As part of its ongoing responsibility for audit, the Conservation Commission will continue to implement its performance assessment program, including fire related assessments, assessments under the Forest Management Plan and assessments of management plan implementation in reserves in other parts of the State. In addition the Commission has identified as a strategic goal the undertaking of a flagship performance assessment that will be directed towards Statewide functioning of a key area of management.

Parks and Protected Areas Forum

The Conservation Commission, together with DEC, the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and stakeholders will host a Parks and Protected Areas Forum in September 2007. The Forum will provide information and understanding of the values that conservation reserves provide to the community.

Water Management

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with other agencies concerned with options for accessing future water supplies, including through participation in the drinking water source protection planning process. The Conservation Commission will continue to keep abreast of the findings of the Water Corporation's Wungong thinning trial. The Conservation Commission will continue to work with DEC, the Department of Water and Water Corporation concerning water quality, as well as supply, issues.

Establishing New Conservation Reserves

The Conservation Commission will continue to seek the expansion of the conservation reserve system aiming towards achieving a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system in Western Australia. The Conservation Commission remains concerned that it is difficult to get approval to establish new reserves. In seeking to expand the conservation reserve system the Conservation Commission will work with the mineral and petroleum sectors to increase the understanding of what the various land categories actually mean for development, combating the concerns about access.

Disclosures and Legal Compliance

Financial Statements

The Conservation Commission had a cash expenditure of \$734 921 for the reporting period against a budget allocation of \$801 733. The reporting and audit of the Conservation Commission's expenditure is included within that for DEC under the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985* and is incorporated into DEC's annual report on an accrual basis.

Detailed Key Performance Indicators Information

The Conservation Commission's performance is reported at *Performance of statutory functions by the Conservation Commission of WA – Service 3* in DEC's annual report. The performance indicator reported is the average cost per management plan/significant policy submitted for the Conservation Commission's consideration.

Other Legal Requirements

Advertising

(*Electoral Act 1907*, section 175ZE)

In accordance with section 175ZE 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 2006-2007 was \$2784.00.

Expenditure was incurred 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)	\$2784.00

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Outcomes

(*Disability Services Act 1993*, section 29)

The Conservation 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. The Conservation Commission aims to ensure people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities to be informed and participate in Conservation Commission processes as people without disabilities. Through implementing its Disability Services Plan, in conjunction with DEC, the Conservation Commission's activities during the reporting period met the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan desired outcomes, namely that:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, a public authority.
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of a public authority.

3. People with disabilities receive information from a public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of a public authority as other people receive from the staff of that public authority.
5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to a public authority.
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by a public authority.

Equal Employment Opportunity Outcomes

(Equal Opportunity Act 1984, section 146)

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

The Conservation Commission complies with DEC's administrative policies and procedures as they relate to equal employment opportunity outcomes.

Compliance with Public Sector Standards and Ethical Codes

(Public Sector Management Act 1994, section 31(1))

DEC undertakes human resource management for the Conservation Commission under a bureau service agreement.

In the administration of the Conservation Commission, the Director has 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.

Recordkeeping Plans

(State Records Act 2000, section 61 & State Records Commission Standards, Standard 2, Principle 6)

A Record Keeping Plan was submitted to the State Records Office in 2003 in compliance with the *State Records Act 2000*.

As reported in the 2003-04 Annual Report, during 2004 the Auditor General undertook a review of the Conservation 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. During the reporting period the Conservation Commission has used the Auditor General's findings as a basis for improving the implementation of the Record Keeping Plan.

All staff have received basic training in record keeping as part of the Conservation Commission's employee induction program. This is conducted using DEC's online Record Keeping Awareness program. This addresses employee roles and responsibilities in regard to their compliance with the recordkeeping plan. To meet job requirements the Executive Assistant also received ongoing detailed training, through DEC, in the use of Objective, the records management program used by the Conservation Commission.

As the recordkeeping training program is provided by DEC, review of the efficiency and effectiveness is conducted by DEC.

Government Policy Requirements

Corruption Prevention

The Conservation Commission has a Code of Conduct that addresses accountability, use of public sector resources, record keeping and use of information, conflict of interest, and compliance with the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics and Codes of Conduct.

New staff are inducted according to DEC's induction program, which includes ensuring they are informed about information and asset security as well as guidelines for private use of vehicles, if applicable. The Conservation Commission complies with DEC's administrative policies and procedures as they relate to corruption prevention issues such as the use of credit cards.

Sustainability

While the *Sustainability Code of Practice for Government Agencies and Resource Guide for Implementation* does not apply to the Conservation Commission, the Conservation Commission works in accordance with the Sustainability Code's goals, as sound operational practice. These goals are:

- Planning, reporting and decision making are conducted in accordance with sustainability principles;
- Agency operations support sustainability; and
- Employees are encouraged and empowered to support sustainability

Appendix 1

Functions of the Conservation Commission

Policy

- To develop policies —
 - (i) for the preservation of the natural environment of the State and the provision of facilities for the enjoyment of that environment by the community;
 - (ii) for promoting the appreciation of flora and fauna and the natural environment; and
 - (iii) to achieve or promote the objectives for management plans, taking into account specific requirements referred to in the *CALM Act* pertaining to State forests, timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other vested land.
 - (iv) to advise the Minister on the development of policies for the conservation and management of biodiversity and biodiversity components throughout the State.
 - (v) with the approval of the Minister, to cause study or research to be undertaken for the purposes of the development of policies.

Estate

- To have vested in it State forest, timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, relevant land referred to in section 5(1)(g) of the *CALM Act* and to have the joint management function with other bodies as provided for in the *CALM Act*.
- To have the care, control and management of relevant land referred to in section 5(1)(h) of the *CALM Act* placed with it.
- To consider any cancellation, change of purpose or boundary alteration in respect of land vested, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, in the Conservation Commission.
- 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

- To be responsible for the preparation of proposed management plans, and the review of existing management plans for all lands vested in the Conservation Commission.
- To prepare [as the controlling body] proposed management plans for land vested in the Conservation Commission —
 - (i) through the agency of DEC;
 - (ii) if the vested land is State forest or a timber reserve, the Conservation Commission through the agency of DEC in consultation with the Forest Products Commission; or
 - (iii) if the vested land is or includes a public water catchment area, the Conservation Commission through the agency of the DEC in consultation with the Waters and Rivers Commission and any relevant water utility.
- To submit proposed management plans to the Minister for approval.
- In relation to management plans for land vested, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, in the Conservation Commission —
 - (i) to develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the management plans by DEC;
 - (ii) to set performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of DEC and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and
 - (iii) to assess and audit the performance of DEC and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans.

Forest Management

- To advise the Minister on the application of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management in the management of —
 - (i) State forest and timber reserves; and
 - (ii) forest produce throughout the State.
- To advise the Minister on the production and harvesting, on a sustained yield basis, of forest produce throughout the State.

Advice and Promotion

- To inquire into and after relevant consultation, to advise the Minister on any matter on which the Minister requests advice.
- To provide advice, upon request, on matters relating to land and waters vested in the Conservation 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 Conservation Commission to provide it.