



Conservation Commission
of Western Australia



Annual Report 2009-2010



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Contents

Transmittal to the Minister	1
Overview of the Agency	2
Chair's Report	2
Operational Structure.....	5
Members and Meetings	5
Executive Support.....	6
Vested Lands	6
National Parks.....	7
Conservation Parks.....	7
Nature Reserves	7
State Forest	7
Timber Reserves	8
Section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) Reserves	8
Performance Management Framework.....	8
Agency Performance.....	8
Policy	9
Estate.....	9
Management Plans.....	10
Improving the Management Planning Process	11
Summary of management plan progress	11
Forest Management	13
Old-Growth Forests	14
Old-Growth Review Areas	14
Summary of Assessment of Old-Growth Review Areas	15
Public nomination of old-growth	15
Fauna Habitat Zones.....	16
Performance Assessment.....	16

Interaction with Other Agencies	17
Participation on External Committees	17
Significant Issues Impacting the Agency	18
Joint Management.....	18
Improving the Management Planning Process	18
Performance Assessment	18
Greater Community Engagement	18
Proposed Reserves	19
Disclosures and Legal Compliance.....	19
Financial Statements	19
Detailed Key Performance Indicators Information	19
Other legal requirements	19
Advertising.....	19
Disability access and inclusion plan outcomes.....	20
Compliance with public sector standards and ethical codes	20
Recordkeeping plans	20
Ministerial directives	20
Government policy requirements	20
Corruption prevention.....	20
Substantive equality	21
Occupational health and safety management	21
APPENDIX 1	22
Functions of the Conservation Commission.....	22
Policy	22
Estate	22
Management Plans.....	22
Forest Management	23
Advice and Promotion	23

Tables

Table 1. Land vested in the Conservation Commission	6
Table 2. CALM Act Leases, Licenses and permits considered during 2009-2010	10
Table 3: Summary of Management Plan Progress	12
Table 4: Summary of old-growth assessment carried out during the reporting period	15
Table 5: Summary of public nominations carried out during the reporting period	15
Table 6: Summary of Occupational Safety and Health incidences	21

Figures

Figure 1: Change in area of lands vested in the Conservation Commission over time	7
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Cover Photo

West Cape Howe National Park
Photo provided by Geoff Cullen

**Conservation Commission
of
Western Australia**

Annual Report 2009-2010

Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report 2009-2010 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2010, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

Patricia Barblett AM
Chair

Overview of the Agency

Chair's Report

The Conservation Commission of Western Australia would like to acknowledge the dedicated service of the previous Chair of the Commission, Dr John Bailey. John's contribution over the years has been of great importance, particularly during a period of considerable public debate and concern about the management of the forests of the south west of Western Australia.

The 2009-2010 reporting period saw the Conservation Commission undertake significant work on a number of important issues and projects.

The Conservation Commission determined that all terrestrial management plans would apply to regional areas rather than to individual reserves, be concise and be prepared in a timely manner. The Commission is of the view that plans are still taking far too long to produce, with this in part being a result of the documents trying to cover too many expectations as to what they are to achieve. It is considered that management plans should set out objectives and strategies to achieve realistic management outcomes. An example of how plan preparation and presentation can be improved is that information on the history of an area or lists of flora and fauna, unless directly associated with a management outcome, are best addressed through other means. Plans should focus on the primary issues, constraints and opportunities for the areas they cover rather than detailing operational activities that are generally expected in the management of the conservation estate. It is noted by the Commission that the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), which produces management plans on behalf of the Commission, has made some effort to meet these requirements, however the process of improvement does need to be given a priority in the organisation.

In line with these changes, the Commission's performance assessment process has itself been changed from individual reserve assessment to looking at groups of reserves.

The Albany coast and hinterland contains iconic landscapes with diverse values including its internationally and nationally recognised biodiversity significance. It was therefore determined that the park and reserve system was ideal for a pilot study on the new performance assessment process. Firstly, a self-assessment questionnaire to return broad information on the management of reserves across the Albany parks was completed by DEC staff. A Geographic Information System was then used to allow spatial representation of the information gathered to assist the Commission to analyse the questionnaire results. Finally, interviews with DEC regional staff, records checking and site visits to the parks for evidence based reporting, completed the process.

The pilot study proved to be a success by providing additional information such as the social and landscape values of the conservation reserves in the area, the threats to these values and an evaluation of the management response. By establishing benchmark data for these reserves this evaluation aims to support departmental management learning and adaptation which hopefully leads to improved long-term conservation outcomes. The Commission will now follow this audit procedure in the future.

The Conservation Commission has continued its assessment program of old-growth forest areas under review and assessment of publicly nominated areas of old-growth forest. This reporting period saw three areas nominated by the public for assessment. The total area assessed for old-growth was over 1000ha. This has been a significant achievement for all involved.

Forest management remained topical during the reporting period with deliberations by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) continuing on the mid-term audit of performance of the *Forest Management Plan 2004 - 2013*. As a component of this the members of the Conservation Commission undertook a visit to the south west forests in April 2010 looking at a wide range of issues. This visit was similar to, but briefer, than that which had been

undertaken by the EPA earlier in the year. As has been previously raised by the Commission a primary concern for the longer term future of the south west forests relates to the impact of climate change. In its deliberations the Commission wishes to ensure that the full scope of demands and impacts on the forests are given consideration. Whilst timber production always appears to achieve pre-eminence in the public debate the Commission is also mindful of considering what the expectations of the broader community are under a drying climate. This then also requires consideration of issues such as recreational demand, water production, tourism, mining and the protection of conservation values. Intimately coupled with these issues are the continued pressures on the forests from disease, incremental fragmentation, inappropriate land use planning and illegal and uncontrolled activities. The Commission is of the view that planning processes must be undertaken in a fully open, inclusive and consultative manner.

During the reporting period plans for the improvement of facilities within the Fitzgerald River National Park generated a considerable amount of public discussion. It is hoped that the amendments to the existing management plan for the park related to this will be finalised before the end of 2010. Given this situation the Commission will continue to maintain a close interest in both the improvement project and management of the park overall. There has been considerable concern expressed about the potential threat of *Phytophthora dieback* being introduced during the construction of a coastal walk trail and its subsequent use. The Conservation Commission is also mindful of the existence of three infestations already within the park, the extent of infestation of lands surrounding the park and the range of possible avenues by which the pathogen might be introduced to the park. The Commission has supported the construction of a coastal walk trail, provided the risk of the introduction of *Phytophthora dieback* is properly managed.

An area of considerable concern to the Commission that cuts across management planning, the future of the south west forests, upgrades to park facilities to improve public access and enjoyment of the conservation estate is the level of resources made available for their management. The Commission considers that resourcing needs to keep pace with the changes occurring to the State's conservation reserve system, both in the contexts of environmental and social change, and reflect community expectations for the management of a world class park system in the 21st Century. The goal of ensuring that parks are for people is of utmost relevance in today's society however this needs to be supported with adequate staffing and resourcing of park management. The manner in which resources are made available for park and reserve management needs to be reviewed at all levels of governance as a matter of priority. This review should investigate a range of options and models for improvements in on-ground management. The challenges facing DEC in tackling the full range of issues across the State and the efforts of the agency in that regard are fully acknowledged by the Commission, however it is clear that in many areas resources are seriously inadequate or non-existent. A clearer priority setting rationale needs to be established which, whilst taking account of socio-political pressures, provides better information and guidance over time to the public and land managers alike. The Commission sees this particular matter as a priority for ongoing attention in its deliberations.

The establishment of a biodiversity conservation strategy, or a strategy that encompasses all the expectations of management including tourism and recreation, should be prepared. As a component to this I am strongly of the view that this State would be better served in terms of park and reserve management through the establishment of a single agency charged with the management responsibility for those areas held by the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission considers that the situation of having long-standing conservation reserve creation proposals not being acted upon must be addressed. The establishment of a system of conservation reserves is a basic principle for the State and the Nation in meeting obligations regarding biodiversity protection and allowing community appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment across the generations. In a number of instances recommendations have been in place for decades. It is clear that policy decisions concerning the creations of these reserves should operate across all of government, which currently is not the case. The promotion of tourism for the State invariably uses images of the glorious, and often remote, conservation estate as an iconic representation of what is

available for people to enjoy. The Conservation Commission believes that the promotion of people's enjoyment of natural areas supports sustainable local employment, contributes to the general well-being of individuals and continues to build the international recognition of the State's varied natural treasures. A major challenge is to how better respect and utilise our conservation estate in the face of climate change. A healthy parks system is integrally linked to the value placed on it by the community. As such, the health of individuals and the community is reliant on a healthy parks system. More of the world's communities are living in urban areas, so it is important to ensure that our connection to the environment is not lost. Our health and the health of the planet depends on it.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Commissioners and Conservation Commission Service Unit staff for their efforts and work over the year, and the support of officers from DEC.

Patricia Barblett AM
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), State forest and timber reserves. It has associated management planning responsibilities and functions in respect of monitoring and auditing the performance of DEC and the Forest Products Commission (FPC) 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:

- the conservation or management of biodiversity, or;
- 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 2010 were:

Mrs Patricia Barblett AM, Chair	November 2000 – December 2010
Ms Regina Flugge, Deputy Chair	November 2003 – November 2010
Mr William Mitchell	December 2002 – December 2011
Ms Karen Jacobs	November 2007 – November 2010
Dr David Newsome	December 2006 - December 2011
Mr Vince Paparo	December 2006 – December 2011
Mr Graeme Rundle	November 2000 – December 2011
Ms Carolyn Turner	July 2006 – December 2011
Dr Tony Brandis	December 2009 – December 2011

The Conservation Commission holds meetings on the second Monday of every month, and during the reporting period the Conservation Commission held 9 meetings.

The Conservation Commission had two sub-committees operating in the reporting period:

- The Management Planning Review Committee (MPRC) which provides recommendations to the Conservation Commission on planning matters; and,
- The Communications and Promotions Sub-Committee whose focus is on recommendations relating to stakeholder interactions including website design and improvement.

Executive Support

In 2006 an operational relationship agreement was signed between the Conservation Commission and DEC which established the Conservation Commission Service Unit.

The Conservation Commission Service Unit had the following staff at 30 June 2010:

Director: Gordon Graham (Acting)
 Executive Assistant: Kelly Watkins (Acting)
 Senior Environmental Auditor: Tom Hughson
 Environmental Auditor: Geoff Cullen (Acting)
 Policy Officer: Vacant

Corporate Services support, including Human Resource Management, Financial Services and Information Technology, is provided to the service unit under the operational relationship agreement.

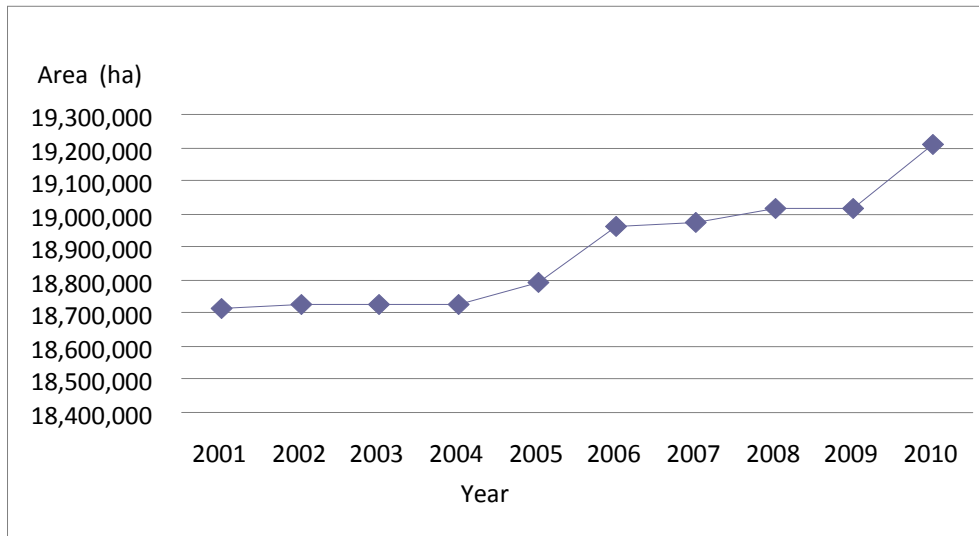
Vested Lands

As at 30 June 2010 the total area of the lands vested in the Conservation Commission was 19,207,491 hectares, approximately 7.5% per cent of the land area of Western Australia. This represents a net increase of 188,395 hectares during July 2009 – June 2010. Table 1 provides a summary of the land categories and figure one demonstrates the variation in lands vested over time.

Table 1. Land vested in the Conservation Commission

Land Classification	Area (ha) as of 30 June 2010	Area (ha) as of 30 June 2009
National Park	5,668,065	5,637,483
Conservation Park	847,312	847,586
Nature Reserves	10,875,720	10,872,105
State Forest	1,304,685	1,304,709
Timber Reserves	123,269	123,279
Section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) Reserves	388,440	233,934
TOTAL	19,207,491	19,019,096

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



National Parks

National parks are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study, preservation of features of archaeological, 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 national parks vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 5,668,065 hectares representing an increase of 30,582 hectares in the reporting period.

Conservation Parks

Conservation parks have the same purpose as national parks but do not have the same national or international significance. They have significant local or regional value for conservation and recreation. This classification may be used where there is, for example, high mineral potential.

The area of the conservation parks vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 847,312 hectares representing a slight decrease of 274 hectares in the reporting period.

Nature Reserves

Nature reserves are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study and preservation of features of archaeological, historic or scientific interest. Recreation that does not harm natural ecosystems is allowed.

The total area of the nature reserves vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 10,875,720 hectares representing an increase of 3,615 hectares in the reporting period.

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. Within State forests, designated areas are managed for specific purposes, such as conservation or the optimum yield of exotic plantings.

The total area of the state forests vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 1,304,685 hectares representing a slight decrease of 24 hectares in the reporting period.

Timber Reserves

Timber reserves declared under the CALM Act 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 tenure, e.g. State forest or nature reserve.

The total area of the timber reserves vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 123,269 hectares representing a slight decrease of 10 hectares in the reporting period.

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

Under the CALM Act, lands categorised as sections 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) reserves are lands reserved under the *Land Act 1933* and the *Land Administration Act 1997* respectively, for which care, control and management is placed with the Conservation Commission. Unlike national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves, they are not automatically vested in the Conservation Commission.

The total area of sections 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) reserves vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2010 was 388,440 hectares, representing an increase of 154,506 hectares in the reporting period.

Performance Management Framework

The Conservation Commission aligns with the State Government's five strategic goals for public sector management, which are.

- State Building – Major Projects;
- Financial and Economic Responsibility;
- Outcomes Based Service Delivery;
- Stronger Focus on the Regions; and
- Social and Environmental Responsibility.

The Conservation Commission is a significant contributor in achieving the Social and Environmental Responsibility goal through the enactment of its statutory responsibilities and, in particular, its planning and advisory functions. Likewise the Conservation Commission also contributes, often indirectly, to other goals, such as State Building – Major Projects and Stronger Focus on the Regions.

Agency Performance

The decisions of the Conservation Commission, the Commissioners and the staff of the Conservation Commission are guided by the following principles as set out in its strategic plan:

- The need to comply with relevant State Government policies and national and international treaties, protocols and conventions relating to ecologically sustainable development and biological diversity conservation;
- The need for the application of the precautionary principle;
- The need for intergenerational equity;
- The need for community involvement and participation;
- The need for the involvement of Aboriginal people and consideration of their perspectives, cultural needs and rights;
- The need for community appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment, and;
- The need to maintain a diverse range of values, including cultural and heritage values.

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, and performance assessment.

Policy

Objective

- To develop and maintain policy and provide policy advice to the Minister for Environment.

Strategies

- Develop policies that promote the conservation of the natural environment of the State.
- Develop policies that promote the creation of facilities for the enjoyment of the natural environment by the community, and promote the appreciation of flora and fauna, and the natural environment.
- Develop policies that recognise the roles of Aboriginal people, knowledge and use of natural resources on lands vested in the Conservation Commission, for the protection and preservation of Aboriginal interests and cultural values, and for the establishment of genuine cooperative management of the conservation estate in Western Australia.
- Develop policies with Aboriginal people for the protection of biological diversity and management of the natural environment on Aboriginal lands.
- Undertake research approved by the Minister for Environment for the purposes of policy development.

The situation regarding *Phytophthora* dieback as an ongoing major threat to the State's biodiversity, warrants continued attention from government and the investment of significant resources for its management. The Conservation Commission is concerned that efforts to ensure an adequate level of public understanding of this plant pathogen and its impacts does not receive the degree of attention it deserves.

As was stated in the 2008-2009 annual report, work on a performance assessment of the management of *Phytophthora* dieback on lands vested in the Conservation Commission commenced in early 2009. Due to staff changes there have been significant delays in the preparation of this performance assessment and it is now intended that the Commission will publish a report by the end of 2010. It is likely that the results of that assessment will be used to develop a position statement on *Phytophthora* dieback management.

The Conservation Commission has received briefings from DEC on the proposed CALM Act amendments and has provided comment. The changes to the CALM Act are strongly supported by the Commission, particularly with respect to facilitating joint management of the conservation estate with traditional owners.

Estate

Objective

- To identify what is required for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system for Western Australia.
- To consider proposed changes of purpose, or boundary of, land vested in the Conservation Commission and to evaluate potentially incompatible activities on that land with a view to maximising biological diversity.

Strategies

- Provide advice upon request to the Minister for Environment on applications for changes in purpose or boundaries, including advice of any contentious issues or activities or the need to excise areas that are not of value in maintaining biological diversity.

- Promote the maintenance and extension of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserves system through the strategic acquisition of key lands and innovative funding.
- Consult and provide advice on matters relating to lease, licences, permits, mining tenements and any other activities on land vested in the Conservation Commission.

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.

The policy for the delegation of decisions on minor changes to the conservation estate to a Commissioner or the Director continued to be implemented. 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 reserves system, the Conservation Commission considered changes to reserves and their uses. During the reporting period more than 188,395 hectares were added to the estate, with the bulk of that addition (approximately 154,000 hectares) being as a result of the creation of seven reserves jointly vested with the Conservation Commission and the Yawooroong Miriuwung, Gajerrong, Yirrgeb, Noong, Dawang Aboriginal Corporation. These reserves have the purpose of 'Conservation and Traditional Aboriginal Uses'. Lands acquired by DEC in the present financial year, but not yet vested in the Conservation Commission, are detailed in DEC's Annual Report.

Advice on matters relating to leases, licenses, 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, licenses and permits.

Table 2. CALM Act Leases, Licenses and permits endorsed during 2009-2010

	Conservation Commission endorsement
Leases	25
Licenses	21
Apiary permits	669

Management Plans

Objective

- To ensure the preparation of, and compliance with, management plans for lands vested in the Conservation Commission.

Strategies

- Develop and maintain guidelines for the preparation of management plans for lands vested in the Conservation Commission.
- Establish with DEC agreed priorities for the development and review of management plans for lands vested in the Conservation Commission.
- Prepare management plans through the agency of DEC and submit proposed management plans, to the Minister for Environment for approval.
- Promote the objectives of management plans, pertaining to indigenous State forests or timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, and nature reserves.
- Develop generic guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of management plans by DEC.

- Set generic performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of DEC and the FPC in the implementation of, and compliance with, management plans and associated protocols and codes of practise.
- Assess and audit the implementation of, and compliance with, existing and new management plans prepared by the DEC and the FPC on a regular basis.
- Undertake research and consultation as necessary in the preparation of management plans.
- Provide appropriate mechanisms whereby Aboriginal groups, organisations and traditional owners can fully participate, in a culturally appropriate manner, in the development and implementation of management plans.
- Include the protection and preservation of Aboriginal interests and cultural values in management plans.

During the 2009-2010 reporting period, the Minister for Environment approved the management plan for the Walpole Wilderness and Adjacent Parks and Reserves and Woodman Point Regional Park.

The MPRC facilitates liaison with DEC with the committee's major functions being 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 the MPRC met eight times and considered a range of matters including the creation and operation of management plans with special attention to the cost of plans, their timeliness, management plan priority setting and assessment criteria. Over the course of the reporting period, the MPRC contributed to final and draft plans under development.

On advice from the MPRC, the Conservation Commission undertook the following actions:

Approved the following plans for forwarding to the Minister for Environment to be released as drafts for public comment;

- Ord River and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserves.
- Yoorrooyang Dawang Conservation Parks.

Approved the following plans for forwarding to the Minister for Environment to be released as final plans;

- Jandakot Regional Park.
- Rockingham Lakes Regional Park.
- Lane Poole Reserve and Proposed Reserve Additions.

Improving the Management Planning Process

The Conservation Commission received a report from Murdoch University which provided an independent analysis of methods that might be adopted to improve the management planning process and forwarded this to DEC for its views. A considerable amount of work is required to improve the cost and timeliness involved in the preparation of management plans, a clear identification of their applicability and their presentation. It is acknowledged that there have been some improvements in the planning process brought about by DEC and it is expected that a concerted effort across a range of areas will bring about significant improvements in the delivery of management plans.

Summary of management plan progress

The following table provides an indication of progress of draft and final management plans at the end of the reporting period.

Table 3: Summary of Management Plan Progress – Draft Management Plans

Management plan area	Date plan commenced	Status
Leeuwin – Naturaliste Capes	April 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2010 draft plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Ord River and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserves	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2010 draft plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Northern Yilgarn	February 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2009 draft plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Yoorrooyang Dawang Conservation Parks	June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2010 draft plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Albany Coastal	September 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2009 Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and plan area.
Barrow Island	October 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2010 draft plan in preparation.
Blackwood Plateau	April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2010 Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and plan area.
Esperance coastal reserves	March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2010 Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and plan area.
Kalbarri Shark Bay	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2010 Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and plan area.
Perup	July 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2010 draft plan in preparation.
Purnululu	March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2010 - Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and plan area.
Swan Coastal Plain South	March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2010 Conservation Commission approved preparation of draft plan and area.
Yanchep Neerabup	August 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2010 public submission period closed on draft plan. • Analysis of public submissions and final plan in preparation by DEC.
Tuart Forest	April 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2010 Conservation Commission endorsed plan to proceed as a concise, single park.

Table 3: Summary of Management Plan Progress – Final Management Plans

Management plan area	Date plan commenced	Status
Cape Range National Park	May 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Dryandra Woodland	August 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Millstream-Chichester	January 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Rockingham Lakes Regional Park	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2010 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Shannon-D'Entrecasteaux National Park	January 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Shark Bay Reserves	May 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Jandakot Regional Park	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2009 final plan forwarded to Minister for consideration.
Lane Poole	January 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2010 Conservation Commission endorsed final plan to be presented to Minister.

Previously work had been undertaken on a management plan for the proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks however progress on this document required the creation of reserves. The Conservation Commission has decided that this area would be incorporated into the work being done on the Blackwood Plateau Planning Region.

Forest Management

Objective

- To have the State forest and timber reserves that are vested in the Conservation Commission managed on an ecologically sustainable basis and apply those principles in the management of forest produce throughout Western Australia.

Strategies

- Prepare, through the agency of DEC acting jointly with the FPC and any relevant water utility, and with appropriate research and consultation, a ten-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the period 2004 - 2013.
- Monitor, assess and audit existing and new FMP's.
- Provide advice on principles of ecologically sustainable forest management with respect to the State forest and timber reserves and forest produce and forest products throughout the State.
- Provide advice to the Minister for Environment on the production and harvesting of forest products and forest produce to maintain a sustained yield, including areas not covered by the FMP's.

Deliberations on the mid-term audit of performance of the FMP (reported on in the 2008-2009 annual report) continued through the reporting period with the Conservation Commission responding to the EPA on the public submissions received and providing supplementary information on Karri bole production and Jarrah sawlog yields. Staff from the Conservation Commission Service Unit accompanied the EPA on two field visits to the south-west and the members and staff of the Conservation Commission also undertook a field visit in April 2010.

Further to this the Conservation Commission considered documentation received from DEC on 11 Key Performance Indicators that were identified as requiring attention as a result of the audit.

It is expected that there will be considerable activity in the 2010-2011 period on this topic following the release of the EPA's report.

Old-Growth Forests

Through the FMP approximately 331,370 hectares of old-growth forest has been set aside from timber harvesting in formal and informal reserves.

The FMP also identifies an additional portion of forest for the Conservation Commission to assess. This portion of the FMP area consists of 9,387 hectares of State forest which was reclassified from old-growth to non old-growth by DEC (ex CALM) between 1997 and 2001. A further 2,650 hectares of other crown land which is not vested in the Conservation Commission was also reclassified in DEC's corporate database during the same period and is also subject to this assessment.

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. This document describes the process for the assessment of reclassifications of old-growth forest together with a process to allow the public to nominate areas of forest they consider to be old growth for assessment by the Conservation Commission. There was considerable stakeholder consultation through its development, including the provision of field demonstrations for interested stakeholders. The assessment process is ongoing and involves remote and field assessment techniques.

To facilitate greater public access to these reports an on-line publishing system has been developed for the Conservation Commission website. Detailed results including aerial maps of all old-growth assessments can be easily accessed via the Conservation Commission's website at <http://www.conservation.wa.gov.au/growth.htm>. During the reporting period the Conservation Commission undertook and published four assessments of old-growth forest extent in Beaton, Burnside, Easter and Mowen forest blocks.

Old-Growth Review Areas

Collins

Both field assessment and remote analysis was undertaken for three areas within Collins forest block totaling approximately 18 hectares. Field surveys revealed stumps present throughout the areas assessed. The recommendation made by the Conservation Commission was that 18 hectares within Collins forest block did not meet the criteria of old-growth forest.

Iffley

Both field assessment and remote analysis was undertaken for areas within Iffley forest block totaling approximately six hectares. Field surveys revealed evidence of intensive harvesting with greater than 10 stumps per hectare and some areas of non-forest. The recommendation made by the Conservation Commission was that six hectares within Iffley forest block did not meet the criteria of old-growth forest.

Yornup

Both field assessment and remote analysis was undertaken for three areas within Yornup forest block totaling approximately 44 hectares. Field surveys revealed evidence of intensive logging from previous lease activity and confirmed infestations of dieback. The recommendation made by the Conservation Commission was that 44 hectares within Yornup forest block did not meet the criteria of old-growth forest.

Summary of Assessment of Old-Growth Review Areas

During the reporting period, approximately 68 hectares, in three forest blocks, were subject to reclassification work that was completed and endorsed by the Conservation Commission. Of the 68 hectares, the reclassification to non old-growth was confirmed for all 68 hectares. Please see Table 4 for a breakdown of the assessments.

Table 4: Summary of old-growth assessment carried out during the reporting period

Block Name	Area classified as old-growth (ha)	Area classified as non old-growth (ha)	Total area under review (ha)
Collins	Nil	18	18
Iffley	Nil	6	6
Yornup	Nil	44	44
Total area	Nil	68	68

Public nomination of old-growth

As required in the FMP, and further detailed in the Conservation Commission's paper *Assessment criteria and process for the Conservation Commission review of old-growth amendments*, there is a public nomination process for persons to request the Conservation Commission to assess whether areas should be classified as old-growth in DEC's corporate database.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission received two such requests, for Warrup and Clarke forest blocks. Reports have been published for the Warrup community nomination. A full assessment and report was not undertaken for the Clarke community nomination.

Warrup

Warrup forest block contains predominantly jarrah forest. Both remote and field assessments were conducted in an area of approximately 573 hectares. Canopy sampling was undertaken at seven different locations and stump data was collected for more than half of the nominated area. A total of 259 hectares (minus future mapping from DEC on diverse ecotype zones and informal reserves) was determined to meet the criteria for minimally disturbed old-growth forest.

Clarke

Clarke forest block contains predominantly jarrah forest with varying predominance of marri and blackbutt. Remote assessment and initial inspections by the Conservation Commission and dieback interpreters, strongly indicates that the area is unlikely to meet the criteria for old-growth forest because of past logging and the presence of dieback. The Commission determined the area in Clarke did not warrant a full assessment as the area falls within a Fauna Habitat Zone and is not available for timber harvesting.

Table 5: Summary of public nominations carried out during the reporting period

Block Name	Area found to be old-growth (ha)	Area found to be non old-growth (ha)	Total area assessed under nomination (ha)
Warrup	259	314	573
Clarke	Nil	37	37
Total area	259	351	610

Fauna Habitat Zones

Fauna habitat zones (FHZs) 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 FHZs, of at least 200 hectares each, designed to provide a sufficiently extensive network of areas excluded from timber harvesting to maintain fauna numbers.

The Conservation Commission provides advice to DEC concerning proposed locations of FHZs. To assist in the development of this advice, the Conservation Council of Western Australia, under an agreement with the Conservation Commission, provides reports on DEC's proposed FHZs.

Summary of fauna habitat zones

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission provided advice to DEC on 18 proposed FHZs in the following forest blocks:

- Edward
- Scott
- Dale
- Nundedine
- Bowelling
- Ernest
- Treen Brook
- Tanjanerup
- Solai
- Taree
- Clarke
- Randall
- Fleays
- Gregory
- Morgan
- Court
- Flynn

The Conservation Commission's advice generally supported DEC's proposed FHZs with three minor boundary changes recommended.

Performance Assessment

Two Status Performance Assessments were published in 2009/2010. These were the series on the assessment of biodiversity conservation on Western Australian islands. Phase I of the assessment covered islands vested in the Commission and Phase II covered all Kimberley islands, most of which are not vested in the Commission.

Assessment of biodiversity conservation on Western Australian islands - Phase I.

Western Australia's island reserves represent a valuable part of the State's biodiversity conservation estate. Of the islands, islets and rocks in Western Australia, 635 are vested in the Conservation Commission as conservation reserves. In total there are 29 recommendations for future action in this report.

Assessment of biodiversity conservation on Western Australian islands - Phase II - Kimberley islands.

Phase II covers all Kimberley islands, most of which are not vested in the Commission. The 2633 Kimberley islands comprise the least impacted part of one of the world's last and largest tropical wilderness areas. The report includes a number of recommendations for future action.

*Performance assessment of *Phytophthora dieback* management on lands vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia.*

This assessment was progressed during the 2009-2010 financial year but not published at the time of finalizing the annual report. In this assessment the Conservation Commission is reviewing the strategies, plans, policies and procedures with regard to the management of *Phytophthora dieback* ("dieback" caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*) as primarily applied by DEC.

Wungong catchment environment and water management project.

Work continued during this financial year on the Forest Management Plan Performance Assessment (FMPPA) which reviewed the implementation of the Water Corporation's 'Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management Project'. The performance assessment was finalised in 2010 but published after 30 June 2010.

Albany Parks Performance Assessment.

This pilot study assessment was undertaken during the 2009-2010 financial year but not published until after 30 June 2010. The new assessment process represented a major development in the approach taken to assessing management effectiveness on conservation reserves. The assessment is based upon numerous reserves, reflecting a shift from individual reserve planning to planning for multiple reserves. The Albany coast and hinterland contains iconic landscapes with diverse values. This assessment report details the threats to these values with an evaluation of the management response.

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.

The Conservation Commission works collaboratively with other environmental agencies including the EPA and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. It also has association with the FPC, Department of Mines and Petroleum, Tourism WA, Western Australian Museum, local government authorities, Department of Indigenous Affairs, Rottnest Island Authority, Main Roads, Water Corporation, Department of Water, Office of Native Title, Swan River Trust, and Office of the Auditor General for Western Australia.

One of the Conservation Commission's key functions is to promote and facilitate community involvement in the conservation of Western Australia's environment. Outside the public sector, the Conservation Commission works with a range of community, conservation and industry stakeholders, as well as Aboriginal representatives to ensure that policies and plans meet the balanced needs of the wider community. This includes regular interactions with the Conservation Council of Western Australia and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy.

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.

Mrs Patricia Barblett AM	Founder and immediate past President, now an Executive Board Member of Forum Advocating Cultural and Ecotourism. Capes Parks Community Advisory Committee Member Maritime Museum Advisory Committee Deputy Chair, Project Reference Committee for Southern Darling Region Recreation Strategy for Inland Water Bodies and Catchments Deputy Chair Rottnest Conservation Foundation Member of the Kaitajin Mia Mia Aboriginal Foundation (Bush University) Member Southern Darling Range Recreational Study
Ms Regina Flugge	Millstream Chichester Park Council Coastal Planning and Coordination Council
Karen Jacobs	Board Member Rottnest Island Authority Chair of Kaitajin Mia Mia Aboriginal Foundation Independent Director of the Ngarluma Tharndu Karrungu

Maya Ltd (Ngarluma Trust)
Director of Indigenous Economic Solutions

Dr David Newsome	Cape Range Advisory Council Shark Bay Advisory Committee Coral Coast Advisory Committee Member World protection Areas Section of IUCN Queensland Government Horse Riding in Protected Areas Advisory Committee Hong Kong Geopark Education and Training Advisory panel
Mr Graeme Rundle	Kalbarri National Park Community Advisory Committee Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks Community Advisory Committee Tuart Forest Community Advisory Committee
Mr Bill Mitchell	Chair Rangelands NRM WA

The majority of Commissioners are also members in a wide variety of community-based committees. While not formally representing the Conservation Commission in these instances this does provide networking and information sharing opportunities that help to build upon stakeholder relationships and increase the public profile of the Conservation Commission. Examples include: the Perth Noongar Foundation, National Long Term Tourism Advisory Committee, the Coastal Planning and Coordination Council, Pastoral Lands Board, Port Kennedy Management Board, Golden Gecko Selection Panel, Dieback Consultative Council, Perth Airport Environmental Consultative Group, and IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

Significant Issues Impacting the Agency

Joint Management

The joint management of Western Australia's natural areas is an ongoing priority of the Conservation Commission. 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.

Improving the Management Planning Process

The implementation of changes to the way in which management plans are prepared remains a major task for the Conservation Commission and its staff. Changes to the management planning have been underpinned by a consultative approach throughout and communication with DEC has been a central part of the process of change. The process for approving management plans is important for the change process and the Conservation Commission is currently working with Parks and Visitor Services (DEC) to establish the most effective set of steps for approvals.

Performance Assessment

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 FMP and assessments of management plan implementation in reserves in other parts of the State.

Greater Community Engagement

The need for greater community engagement and participation in the activities of the Conservation Commission continues to be a major consideration. The Conservation

Commission also acknowledges that there is still a degree of confusion as to the roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Commission amongst the general public.

To facilitate greater public inclusion and information access, a complete overhaul of the website was completed during the reporting period.

Over the next reporting period the Conservation Commission will continue to work towards greater community engagement and consultation through a variety of mechanisms including further improvements to the website, including a review of how well it is currently meeting demand.

Proposed Reserves

A number of proposed reserves are awaiting tenure changes so they can be added to the conservation estate. This includes a large number of pastoral leases in the Rangelands purchased by DEC for the purpose of conservation, along with long standing reservation proposals. The Conservation Commission considers that a whole of Government approach is required in order to meet appropriate comprehensive, adequate and representative outcomes.

Disclosures and Legal Compliance

Financial Statements

Funding for the activities of the Conservation Commission is provided for by DEC with administrative arrangements being handled by that agency. The reporting and audit of expenditure is undertaken by DEC and, as required, is incorporated into DEC's annual report. Total expenditure by the Conservation Commission, and the associated support unit, was \$979,925 as identified in DEC's 2009-2010 annual report.

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 and 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:

There was no expenditure for advertising during 2009-2010.

Disability access and inclusion plan outcomes

(Disability Services Act 1993, amended 2004, section 29)

Under its operational relationship agreement with DEC that agency's policy relating to disability access and inclusion is adopted.

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 an operational relationship agreement.

In the administration of the Conservation Commission, the Director has complied with the Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management, the Western Australian Public Sector 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

A Record Keeping Plan Review Report was submitted to the State Records Office in 2008 in compliance with the *State Records Act 2003* and was then reviewed with the updated document submitted to the State Records Office. A review of management of vital records was undertaken in 2009 and recommendations for improvements to security, storage and retrieval processes have been implemented.

As part of the Conservation Commission's employee induction program, all staff receive basic training in record keeping. 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, the review of its efficiency and effectiveness is conducted by DEC.

Ministerial directives

In the reporting period there have been no instances under the CALM Act section 24 where the Minister 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 under section 19(10) and the Minister has decided to act otherwise than in accordance with the recommendation.

Government policy requirements

Corruption prevention

(Premier's Circular 2005/02 : Corruption Prevention)

The Conservation Commission operates under an Operational Relationship Agreement with DEC which includes adoption of DEC's Code of Conduct.

All 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.

Substantive equality

(Premiers Circular 2009/23: Implementation of the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality)

The Conservation Commission operates under an Operational Relationship Agreement with DEC which includes departmental representation on the Strategic Management Council. Information on DEC progress achieved in implementing the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality can be found in the Annual Report of DEC.

Occupational health and safety management

(Premiers Circular 2007/12: Code of Practice: Occupational Safety and Health in the Western Australian Public Sector)

The Conservation Commission operates under an Operational Relationship Agreement with DEC which includes provision of occupational health and safety management and the adoption of Occupational Health and Safety policy and guidelines set down by DEC.

Table 6 Summary of Occupational Safety and Health incidences

Indicator	Target 2009/2010
Number of fatalities	Zero (0)
Lost time injury/diseases (LTI/D) incidence rate	Zero (0)
Lost time injury severity rate	Zero (0)

Information provided by DEC Risk Management Section

APPENDIX 1

Functions of the Conservation Commission

Policy

- To develop policies -
 - for the preservation of the natural environment of the State and the provision of facilities, and;
 - for the enjoyment of that environment by the community, and;
 - for promoting the appreciation of flora and fauna and the natural environment, and;
 - 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, and;
 - to advise the Minister on the development of policies for the conservation and management of biodiversity and biodiversity components throughout the State, and;
 - 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 -
 - through the agency of DEC;
 - if the vested land is State forest or a timber reserve, the Conservation Commission through the agency of DEC in consultation with the FPC; or
 - 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 Minister (Water Resources) and the Department of Water.
- 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 -

- to develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the management plans by DEC;
- to set performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of DEC and the FPC in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and
- to assess and audit the performance of DEC and the FPC 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 -
 - State forest and timber reserves; and
 - 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.