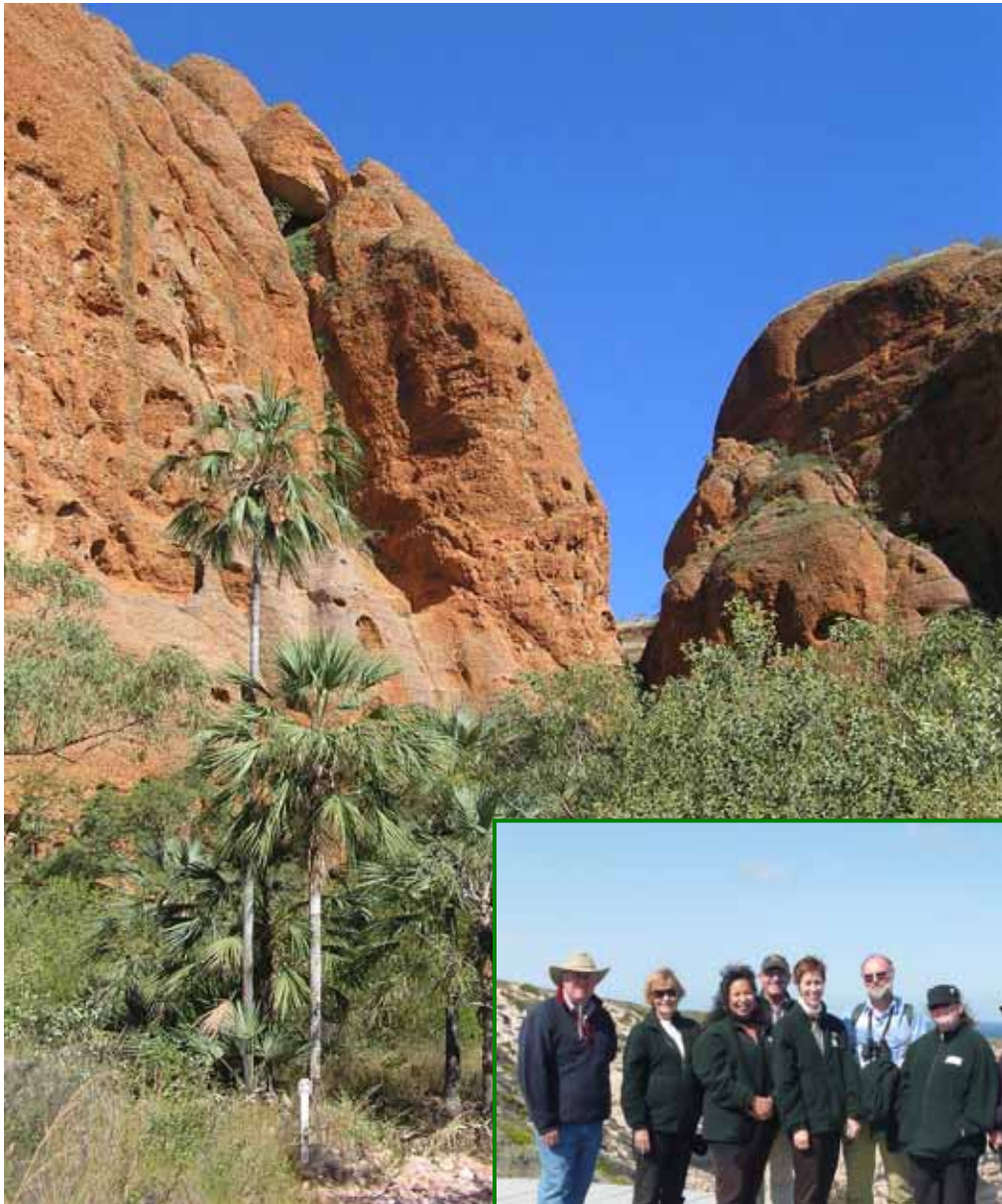




Conservation Commission  
of Western Australia



# Annual Report 2007 – 2008





# Conservation Commission of Western Australia

## *Annual Report 2007 – 2008*

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*Front Cover photograph: Purnululu National Park, insert; Commissioners and Commission staff at Kalbarri*

# Conservation Commission Annual Report 2007–2008

## Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report 2007-2008 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2008, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

Dr John Bailey  
Chair

## Overview of the Agency

### Chair's Report

The 2007-2008 reporting period saw the Conservation Commission progress a number of important issues and projects. Perhaps one of the more significant was the successful Parks and Protected Areas forum held in Fremantle in September to promote and reaffirm the importance of publicly owned, publicly managed and publicly accessible protected areas. At the forum it was acknowledged that Western Australia's conservation reserve system (comprised largely of national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves) was only about half way towards the goal of 15% of the State's land area. There are many areas long recognised as possessing high biodiversity and landscape conservation values that await formal reservation. In some instances agreement to establish these reserves is still being sought, while in other situations agreement at the highest level has been forthcoming, but formal reservation remains outstanding. The Commission looks forward to assisting in the resolution of any issues that are impeding the further development of the conservation reserve system.



At the Parks and Protected Areas forum many delegates supported the need for additional resources to be provided for reserve management. A special need exists for more park rangers who provide a valuable point of contact for visitors.

The Commission is pleased to report that the management planning process undertaken on its behalf by staff from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has become more focussed and productive in recent times. However, concerns remain in the area of the time taken to prepare management plans compared to the total number of plans required. Later in this report can be found a discussion of the proposals that the Commission has developed to address these concerns.

Last year mention was made of the importance of the joint management planning process being undertaken by DEC, the Miriuwung Gajerrong people and the Commission. Significant progress has been made in the finalisation of the Cultural Planning Framework by the Miriuwung Gajerrong people over the past year enabling a start to be made on the management plan itself. The Conservation Commission has watched with pleasure the development of the Cultural Planning Framework - it is an inspiring document to read. The Commission is now much better informed and better able to understand the task ahead to develop the management plan.

The Commission has continued its performance assessment program over the past year, with a significant effort being devoted to the first status performance assessment. Status performance assessments apply to issues of State-wide significance that extend beyond a single reserve and its management. This first assessment will review the biodiversity conservation status of those Western Australian offshore islands vested in the Commission.

The Commission and DEC have applied considerable resources towards the preparation of the mid-term audit of performance of the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*. This report is

due to be submitted to the Environmental Protection Authority by the end of 2008. Along with reporting on the implementation of individual actions and associated key performance indicators the Commission will need to determine an appropriate response to the impact of climate change on forest management both for the balance of the term of the present plan and beyond. A particular issue that falls under the same heading is that of the relationship between forest management, a drying climate and water supply. During the coming year the Commission will be undertaking a performance assessment of the Wungong thinning trial that will be critical to the management of this issue.

During the year the Commission's advice on the *Indigenous Conservation Title Bill* was sought. After considering the Bill in detail the Commission resolved to support a model for joint planning and management of Indigenous lands of conservation significance that involves a form of Indigenous title coupled with joint management with DEC and supported by the Commission under a formal management agreement. The Commission concluded that this arrangement did not require a leaseback to the State, although leaseback remains an alternative that the Commission can accept.

During the year the Commission welcomed a new Indigenous member – Karen Jacobs – who I am sure will continue the excellent work of the previous member Marilyn Morgan in this area. Karen has an extensive background in employment and apprenticeship opportunities for Aboriginal people; she has extensive knowledge and experience in developing sustainable tourism opportunities and a strong interest in environmental and conservation projects. Given the Commission's ongoing commitment to, and work on, joint management with traditional owners, her appointment has been welcomed.

In closing I would like to thank the Commissioners and Commission staff for their efforts and work over the year, and the support of officers from DEC. Success is so often a team effort.

## 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, the Department of Environment and Conservation (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 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 *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (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, 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 2008 were:

Dr. John Bailey, Chairperson	November 2001 – November 2010
Mrs Patricia Barblett AM, Deputy Chair	November 2000 – November 2008
Ms Regina Flugge	November 2003 – November 2010
Mr William Mitchell	December 2002 – November 2008
Ms Karen Jacobs	November 2007 – November 2010
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

The reporting period also saw the departure of Ms Marilyn Morgan, who served as a Commissioner since October 2005. Ms Morgan was replaced by Ms Karen Jacobs who was appointed for a three year term. Ms Jacobs was appointed to the Commission as the Commissioner with knowledge and experience in relation to Aboriginal culture and heritage.

The Conservation Commission holds meetings on the second Monday of every month, and during the reporting period the Commission held 11 meetings.

## Executive Support

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

The Conservation Commission Service Unit had the following staff at 30 June 2008:

Director: Gordon Graham (Acting)  
Executive Assistant: Kelly Boxall  
Environmental Audit Manager: Tom Hughson (Acting)  
Environmental Auditor: Carol Lacroix (Acting)  
Policy Advisor: Juanita Renwick (Acting)  
Technical Officer: Jenny Munro (Acting)

Corporate Services, including Human Resource Management, Financial Services and Information Technology support are provided under the operational relationship agreement.

## Vested Lands

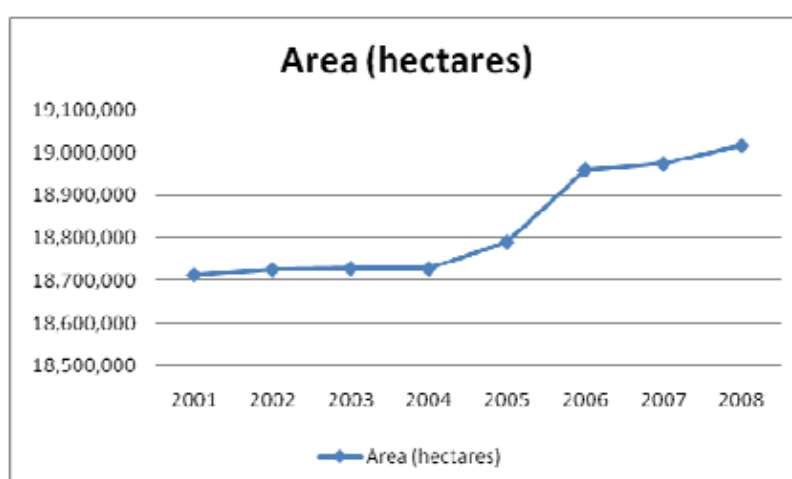
### Total Estate

As at 30 June 2008 the total area of the lands vested in the Conservation Commission was 19,016,040 hectares, approximately 7.5 per cent of the land area of WA. Representing a net increase of 42,717 hectares during July 2007– June 2008. 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 2008	Area (ha) as of 30 June 2007
National Park	5,637,482	5,595,741
Conservation Park	844,039	843,907
Nature Reserves	10,873,039	10,872,183
State Forest	1,304,710	1,304,492
Timber Reserves	123,279	123,345
Section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) Reserves	233,491	233,655
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,016,040</b>	<b>18,973,323</b>

**Figure 1. Change in area of lands vested in the 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 at 30 June 2008 was 5,637,482 hectares. Representing a net increase of 41,741 hectares.

### **Conservation Parks**

Conservation parks have the same objectives as national parks. This classification may be used where there is, for example, high mineral potential. In many cases existing conservation parks should be considered for national park status.

The area of the conservation parks vested in the Commission at 30 June 2008 was 844,039 hectares. Representing a net increase of 132 hectares.

### **Nature Reserves**

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

The total area of the nature reserves vested in the Commission at 30 June 2008 was 10,873,039 hectares, representing a net increase of 856 hectares.

### **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 Commission at 30 June 2008 was 1,304,710 hectares, representing a net increase of 218 hectares.

### **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 Commission at 30 June 2008 was 123,279 hectares, representing a total net decrease of 66 hectares.

### **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 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 section 5 (1) (g) and the section 5 (1) (h) reserves vested in the Commission at 30 June 2008 was 233491 hectares, representing a total decrease of 164 hectares.

## **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 its portfolio.

## 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 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.

### 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. 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. A performance assessment of dieback management on vested lands will be undertaken during the 2008-2009 period.

### 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*.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission continued to focus on the fire section of management plans to ensure that biodiversity values are 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 planned burns, are fully implemented and that the approach to fire management is appropriate to the particular ecosystem in which it is being applied.

### **Drinking Water Source Protection**

Western Australia, and specifically the Perth metropolitan area, are experiencing an unprecedented population boom, this combined with decreasing rainfall and the effects of climate change mean that pressure on the State's drinking water supply has never been greater. In order to tackle this challenge, effective and enduring plans to manage this precious resource need to be put in place.

The protection of the State's drinking water can have serious implications for lands vested with the Conservation Commission as constraints may be placed on land use, development, public access and land/water-based recreational activities. Certain recreational activities, especially those associated with direct human contact with the water, such as swimming, may be restricted. Other land management activities, such as fire management and weed and feral animal control, may also be impacted.

The Department of Water has developed a program to prepare Drinking Water Source Protection Plans for all drinking water sources in Western Australia. These plans aim to establish protection for Public Drinking Water Source Areas proclaimed under the *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* or the *Metropolitan Water Supply and Drainage Act 1909*. Liaison between the Department of Water and the Conservation Commission has continued to seek a resolution of the underlying issues.

### **Joint Management**

Joint management with Indigenous landowners acknowledges the invaluable role Indigenous knowledge, culture and land management practices have in management. Through the implementation of joint management plans traditional owners and traditional knowledge can play an important part in natural area management. During the reporting period significant achievements have been made in progressing towards achieving the Commission's goal of formulating cooperative management solutions, two examples are the Ord Final Agreement and the Indigenous Conservation Title Bill, details of which can be found below.

The joint management of Western Australia's natural areas is one of the Commission's stated priorities. As part of the Commission's ongoing commitment to this priority during the reporting period the Commission continued 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. Joint management initiatives are also one way in which the Conservation Commission explores ways of more fully integrating Indigenous issues within management plans.

Furthermore, joint management represents an opportunity for both conservation interests and Aboriginal interests to be simultaneously served. Indigenous lands represent a significant percentage of Western Australia's land area and if agreements can be made to have these lands managed in accord with conservation objectives there is the potential to contribute significantly to improved conservation management in remote areas of the state.

### **The Ord Final Agreement / Miriuwung-Gajerrong Cultural Planning Framework**

The Ord Final Agreement (OFA), 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 is the culmination of years of consultation and comprehensive negotiations between stakeholders and provides for the development of joint management arrangements with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners and for the creation of six new parcels of conservation land covering 154,000 hectares.

The OFA is a broad package of measures that provides a platform for partnerships between the Miriuwung Gajerrong peoples, the State Government, industry and developers for the benefit of the wider community and the region. The OFA acknowledges that Indigenous cultural and social wellbeing are intrinsically connected to the physical landscape.

During the reporting period the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council made substantial progress towards the finalization of a Cultural Planning Framework. This document expresses Indigenous values and aspirations for land in their own words.

The Conservation Commission is committed to maintaining its support for the finalization of this Framework and its incorporation within shared Joint Planning Guidelines. The Joint Planning Guidelines will be used to develop a final management plan. In this way the Commission's role in management planning and performance assessment for existing and new conservation areas can continue, while supporting the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council's role in conservation area management. During the reporting period the Chair of the Conservation Commission continued to attend meetings of the Regional Park Council and assist in the development of the future management plan for the parks.

### **Indigenous Conservation Title Bill 2007**

The Mantjiltjarra are the traditional owners of the land commonly referred to as the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve, while the Punmu are the traditional owners of the area referred to as the Ruddall River National Park. Both peoples possess a deep connection with their land. The *Indigenous Conservation Title Bill 2007* (ICT Bill) was introduced into the Parliament to create a new form of title that will return ownership and recognition of traditional Indigenous ownership to the land covered by the Bill. The ICT Bill requires a 99 year leaseback to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Such an arrangement makes way for the negotiation of management agreements that allow for the joint management of lands, to be known as conservation areas, together with access to state funding allocated for the joint management of these conservation areas.

The ICT Bill was drafted to achieve a number of key objectives, which include:

- To acknowledge, in a practical sense, the land aspirations of the traditional owners of the Parks. These long held aspirations are based on their undeniable rights in relation to this land, and;
- to realise the Government's commitment to facilitate the transfer of an appropriate form of title by creating a framework for the transfer of a unique form of estate in fee simple known as ICT, and;
- to settle the State's compensation liability under the *Native Title Act 1993*, for the complete extinguishment of native title in the Parks, and;
- to provide the foundations for the negotiation of joint management agreements that can be negotiated between the State and the traditional owners for mutual benefit, and;
- to facilitate the management of the Parks, in such a way as to ensure a balance between preserving the Indigenous cultural and heritage values of the land and preserving the conservation values of the land, and;
- to formally recognize and provide tenure for communities within Rudall River National Park and Gibson Desert Nature Reserve.

Joint management encourages increased communication not only between Indigenous land owners and government agencies but also between Indigenous groups themselves.

### **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.

The policy for the delegation of decisions on minor changes to the conservation estate to a Commissioner 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 (CAR) reserve system, the Conservation Commission considered changes to reserves and their uses. As previously discussed, during the period, more than 42,000 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, 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 considered during 2007-2008**

	<b>Conservation Commission endorsement</b>
Leases	13
Licenses	5
Apiary permits	503

## **Management Plans**

Management plans have been, and clearly will continue to be, a fundamental component of the Conservation Commission's work. The Conservation Commission has a Management Planning Review Committee (MPRC) 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 the following matters:

- During the past year the Conservation Commission, through the Management Planning Review Committee has closely scrutinized its approach to the creation and the operation of management plans. Special attention has been given to the cost of plans, their timeliness, management plan priority setting and assessment criteria.
- The Review Committee has recognized that different situations require different assessments, thus adaptive management is an absolute priority. The Commission will endeavor to continually improve management plans, the implementation of a management plan template and planning manual as well as a management planning workshop are currently under consideration.
- Steps have been taken to ensure that management plans are congruent with national and international standards. The creation of a checklist has been

envisaged to allow planners to reference management plans against international standards.

- Greater public participation in the management planning process has been a continuing priority of the Conservation Commission.

During the reporting period the following management plans were finalized:

- Kennedy Range National Park
- Lake McLarty Nature Reserve
- Shark Bay World Heritage Property Strategic Plan

Over the course of the reporting period the management planning review 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
- Kennedy Range National Park
- Proposed St Johns Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks.
- Parks of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, Scott National Park and Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve
- Wellington National Park and Westralia Conservation Park.
- Lane Poole Reserve and Proposed Reserve Additions
- Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves.
- Northern Yilgarn (Mount Manning Range, Mount Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Areas.
- Millstream Chichester National Park and Mungaroon Nature Reserve
- Proposed Murujuga Range National Park
- Cape Range National Park
- Dryandra Woodland
- Tuart Forest National Park
- Parks of the Yanchep Neerabup Area
- Ord River and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserves
- Miriuwung Gajerrong Conservation Areas (Parks)

### **Improving the Management Planning Process**

Last year's annual report identified the need to ensure that management plans were carried out and completed in an efficient and timely manner. During the reporting period the Commission has adopted this as a priority and has continued to work towards improving the management planning process through a review of management plans. However, inefficiencies remain and resolving this situation has been adopted by the Commission as a top priority.

Two actions are currently underway to further improve the management plan process:

- A major university based research project will soon be conducted to investigate best management planning practices and the subsequent management plan product. The results of which will be a valuable source of information for the Commission.
- The Chairman and Director are developing a position statement for consideration by the Conservation Commission which will set out what changes are immediately required to the management plan prioritization and preparation process.

Despite the efforts that have been made during the reporting period to improve the management planning process, the Commission remains concerned about the rate of progress. The Commission considers both the time taken to complete the management planning process and the length of the plans themselves as unacceptable. The Commission



would now like to move forward from the management plan review and sees the 2008-2009 period as an important opportunity to address the inefficiencies identified in the review and to make improvements to the management planning process.

The Commission intends to take a new approach towards the management planning process which will be focused on three main areas;

Management plans should be based upon a sub-regional planning approach. In terms of priority setting and the coverage of plans a strategy for preparing plans for sets of reserves, rather than single reserves, is to be considered. The 'regions' adopted should be based on biogeographical parameters rather than being structured along administrative boundaries.

Management plans are more efficient when they are concise documents. The documents currently being prepared have grown to be large and unwieldy. Plans have become multipurpose, addressing aspects that cover a range of functions that may be addressed through other documentation. For example, management plans currently contain vast amounts of resource information that would be best held elsewhere. Management plans should focus on management requirements.

Management plans should be less 'aspirational' documents. Although it is important to briefly mention the objective of long-term management and a strategic vision at the outset, plans should provide clear management direction. Similarly, there is a need to assess the progress, status, necessity and function of management plans need to be assessed with the use of Key Performance Indicators.

The commission looks forward to implementing these changes in the 2008-2009 period.

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

A summary of the status of those management plans under development or review as at 30 June 2008 is shown in Table 3.

**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 CALM 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 2008. 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 2008
	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	
<b>Albany Coastal Reserves</b>	Commenced: September 2004 A public participation strategy is yet to be prepared. Gull Rock and Mt Martin reserves Community Working Groups: Formed December 2004 CAC: Formed January 2007 Issues paper: In preparation	3 years, 9 months				2 years 9 months
<i>Comments</i>	Planning Officer retired in 2007-08 and new person yet to commence. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
<b>Barrow Island Nature Reserve</b>	Commenced: October 2007 A public participation strategy, CAC and an issues paper were not deemed necessary	8 months				
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is early 2009.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<b>Cape Range National Park (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: May 2003 Public participation strategy: Released May 2003 CAC : Formed July 2003 (reformed in May 2007) Aboriginal Park Council: Formed April 2004 Issues paper: Released April 2004	1 year 8 months	Submitted to CC: January 2005 Approved by CC: August 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: February 2006, closed May 2006	Time to date: 2 years 1 month		5 years 1 month
<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 in November 2008.					
<b>Dampier Archipelago Terrestrial Reserves (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: March 2002 Public participation strategy: Released October 2002 A CAC was deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted. Issues paper: Released March 2002	5 years, 3 months				6 years 3 months
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the plan continues to be deferred pending the completion of higher planning priorities.					
<b>Dryandra Woodland (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: August 2005 A public participation strategy, CAC and an issues paper were not deemed necessary	4 months	Approved by CC: November 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: December 2005, closed February 2006	Time to date: 2 year 4 months		2 years 10 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the proposed final plan to the Conservation Commission is in November 2008.					
<b>Esperance Coastal Reserves</b>	Commenced: 2005 Public participation strategy: In prep CAC: Notified August 2002 Issues paper: Released March 2007					2 years 6 months

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the plan has been deferred pending the completion of higher planning priorities.					
<b>Kalbarri National Park</b>	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed: July 1999 A public participation strategy and an issues paper are yet to be prepared					8 years 6 months
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the draft plan was delayed due to the process for pastoral lease acquisitions which was completed during 2006. Work on the draft plan is yet to recommence. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
<b>Kennedy Range National Park and Proposed Additions</b>	Commenced: June 2004 Public participation strategy, CAC and issues paper were deemed not necessary. The views of major stakeholders were sought on the main issues. The draft plan replaced interim management guidelines which were endorsed by the Conservation Commission in September 2003.	9 months	Submitted to CC: March 2005 Approved by CC: March 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: August 2005, closed October 2005		Submitted to CC: October 2007 Approved by CC: October 2007 Submitted to Minister: February 2008 Approved by Minister: February 2008 Released by Minister: April 2008	4 years 5 months
<i>Comments</i>	Final management plan launched by Minister March 2008.					
<b>Lake McLarty Nature Reserve</b>	Commenced: August 2004 Public participation strategy, CAC and issues paper were deemed not necessary. The views of major stakeholders were sought on the main issues	10 months	Submitted to CC: June 2005 Approved by CC: June 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: January 2006, closed March 2006		Submitted to CC: July 2007 Approved by CC: July 2007 Submitted to Minister: February 2008 Approved by Minister: February 2008 Released by Minister: June 2008	3 years 10 months
<i>Comments</i>	Final management plan launched by Minister June 2008.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<b>Lane Poole Reserve (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: January 2004 Public participation strategy: Released January 2004 CAC: Formed September 2002 (reformed May 2004) Issues paper: Released February 2004	4 years, 2 months	Submitted to CC: March 2008 Approved by CC: Pending			4 years 4 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of the release of the draft plan by the Minister is by late 2008.					
<b>Millstream Chichester National Park and Mungaroona Range NR</b>	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	9 years	Submitted to CC: November 2006 Approved by CC: May 2005 Released by Minister: August 2007, closed November 2007	Time to date: 7 months		10 years 6 months
<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 late 2008.					
<b>Murujuga National Park (Burrup Peninsula)</b>	Commenced:		Released: July 2006, closed September 2006			
<i>Comments</i>	The draft management plan was prepared for Burrup Peninsula Conservation Reserve, a reserve proposed to not be vested with the Conservation Commission. The expected timing of submission of the proposed final plan to the Conservation Commission is late 2008.					
<b>Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves</b>	Commenced: February 2006 A public participation strategy is yet to be prepared. A CAC is yet to be formed. Issues Paper: Presented to the Conservation Commission in December 2006	2 years 4 months				2 years 4 months
<i>Comments</i>	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 2008
	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	
<b>Parks of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, Scott NP and Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: April 2000 Public participation strategy: Released June 2003 CAC: Formed April/2000(existing as Leeuwin Naturaliste NP AC and reformed in July 2004 as the Capes Parks CAC) Issues paper: Released September 2001	7 years 11 months	Submitted to CC: January 2008 Approved by CC: Pending			7 years 2 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of the release of the draft plan by the Minister is by late 2008.					
<b>Proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks</b>	Commenced: June 2002 Public participation strategy, CAC and issues paper were deemed not necessary. The Nannup Tourist Association provided community input pre-draft.	1 year 7 months	Submitted to CC: March 2004 Approved by CC: October 2004 Released by Minister for public comment: January 2005, closed March 2005	8 months	Submitted to CC: November 2005 Approved by CC: December 2005 Submitted to Minister: February 2007 Approved by Minister: Awaiting creation of reserves	5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The final plan is complete and has been sent to the Minister but is awaiting the creation of the proposed conservation parks before Ministerial approval is sought and the plan gazetted.					
<b>Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: 1999 CAC: Formed or notified June 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper	5 years 6 months	Submitted to CC: September 2004 Approved by CC: January 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: May 2005, closed August 2005	Time to date: 2 years 10 months		9 years 6 months
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan is in progress with the submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission expected by late 2008.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<b>Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves and Proposed Reserve Additions (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: May 2005 Public participation strategy: Released October 2005 CAC: Formed March 2006 Issues paper: Released October 2005	2 years 11 months	Submitted to CC: January 2007 Approved by CC: May 2007 Submitted to Minister: December 2007 Released by Minister: April 2008, closed June 2008			2 years 1 month
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan will commence July 2008.					
<b>Tuart Forest National Park</b>	Commenced: April 2005 A public participation strategy is yet to be prepared. CAC: Formed October 2006. Issues Paper: Released July 2006					2 years 2 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
<b>Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: June 2002 Public participation strategy: Released May 2003 CAC: Formed January 2003 Issues paper: Released March 2003	3 years 4 months	Submitted to CC: November 2005 Approved by CC: June 2006 Released by Minister for public comment: August 2006, closed December 2006	Time to date: 18 months	Submitted to CC: November 2007 Approved by CC: November 2007 Submitted to Minister: April 2008 Approved by Minister: Pending	6 years
<i>Comments</i>	Proposed final management plan is currently with Minister and awaiting approval.					
<b>Wellington National Park, Westralia Conservation Park and Wellington Discovery Forest</b>	Commenced: March 2002 Public participation strategy: Released July 2002 CAC: Formed March 2002 Issues paper: Released June 2002	2 years 4 months	Submitted to CC: July 2004 Resubmitted to CC: May 2005 Approved by CC: August 2005 Released by Minister for public comment: September 2006, closed November 2006	Time to date: 1 year 7 months	Submitted to CC: May 2008 Approved by CC: May 2008 Submitted to Minister: June 2008 Approval by Minister: Pending	6 years 3 months
<i>Comments</i>	Proposed final management plan is currently with Minister and awaiting approval.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<b>Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks and Neerabup Nature Reserve (to replace existing plan)</b>	Commenced: August 2001 Public participation strategy: Released August 2001 CAC : Formed July 2001 Issues paper: Released August 2001	6 years 10 months				6 years 10 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is late 2008.					

Note: The Kimberley and Wheatbelt regional plans have been taken off the list of management planning priorities. The management plan for Parks of the Darling Range has been delayed to coincide with Regional Parks Unit planning for regional parks in the area.



Regional Parks Management Plans

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2008
	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	
<b>Jandakot Regional Park</b>	Commenced: 1999 CAC: 1999, Community Workshop: April 1999 Issues Paper: April 1999	5 years	Submitted to CC: June 2004 Approved by CC: July 2004 Released for public comment: November 2004, closed February 2005	3 years, 9 months (to present date)		9 years, 7 months
<i>Comments</i>	Final plan and APS in preparation.					
<b>Parks of the Darling Range</b>						
<i>Comments</i>	Preliminary discussions regarding the form/ structure of the Darling Range Management Plan have been undertaken, including consultation with the existing Darling Range Regional Parks CAC. The new names for the Parks of the Darling Range were announced in August 2008.					
<b>Rockingham Lakes Regional Park</b>	Commenced: 1999 CAC: 1999, Community Workshop: May 1999 Issues Paper: April 1999	4 years, 6 months	Submitted to CC: September 2003 Approved by CC: September 2003 Released for public comment: October 2003, closed February 2004	4 years, 9 months (to present date)		9 years, 7 months
<i>Comments</i>	Final plan and APS in preparation.					
<b>Woodman Point Regional Park</b>	Commenced: 1999 CAC: 1999, Community Workshop: March 1999 Issues Paper: April 1999	3 years, 3 months	Submitted to CC: June 2002 Approved by CC: June 2002 Released for public comment: August 2002, closed November 2002	6 years (to present date)		9 years, 8 months
<i>Comments</i>	Final plan and APS in preparation.					

## 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 fourth year of implementation of the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* (FMP). 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.

An ongoing issue of concern for the Conservation Commission has been how the timber industry has been evolving in light of timber availability. Difficulties have been experienced in supply, sufficient volume at a quality and price that support a viable industry. Throughout the reporting period, the Conservation Commission has been involved in ongoing discussion with the timber industry in relation to this. Discussions have 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

Through the FMP, and the State Government's *Protecting our old-growth forests policy*, 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 the Department of Conservation and Land Management (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 CALM'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 efficient 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 six assessments of old-growth forest extent in Boorara, Crowea, Dombakup, Dingup, Diamond 2 and the Murtin forest blocks.

## Old-Growth Review Areas

### Boorara

Both field assessment and remote analysis was undertaken on seven areas totaling 14.8 hectares. Old records for Boorara block indicated logging activity between 1960-1969, however in the majority of the areas inspected no stumps were located in the area and mature trees were prevalent. The recommendation made by the Conservation Commission was that 6.4 hectares of Boorara did not meet the minimum criteria of old-growth, the remaining 8.4 hectares were given old-growth status and afforded permanent protection from timber harvesting.

### Crowea

Both field assessment and aerial analysis were carried out at the 7.4 hectares location. As a result of recent logging activity, clearly visible on the aerial maps collected, no area reached the minimum requirements for old-growth classification. As a result all 7.4 hectares was deemed to be non-old growth forest.

### Dombakup

Both field assessment and remote analysis was undertaken on the thirty areas comprising the 230.3 hectare Dombakup block. The majority of the areas assessed had been significantly affected by recent logging activity, clearly visible on the aerial maps collected and while records for Dombakup block indicated that some areas had never been harvested, the vegetation structure was not consistent with that of old-growth forest. 0.5 hectares of the block was given old-growth status.

### Dingup

Both field assessment and aerial analysis were undertaken on the five areas comprising the 14.8 hectare Dingup block. Interpretive dieback mapping and positive sample points revealed that the block was dieback infected. As dieback forest cannot be considered to be old-growth forest, all 14.8 hectares failed to meet the minimum requirements for old-growth classification.

### Diamond 2

Diamond 2 block consists of ten areas totaling 22.8 hectares. Both aerial and field assessments were undertaken to determine the block's old-growth status. Interpretive dieback mapping and positive sample points revealed that all ten areas of the block were dieback infected and thus failed to meet the minimum requirement of old-growth classification.

### Murtin

Both field assessment and remote analysis were undertaken on the 51.1 hectare Murtin block. 29.2 hectares were found to be consistent with old growth forest and given old-growth status. The remaining 26.9 hectares were deemed to be non old-growth forest.

## Summary of Assessment of Old-Growth Areas

During the reporting period, approximately 350 hectares, in 6 forest blocks, were subject to reclassification work that was completed and endorsed by the Conservation Commission. Of the 350 hectares, the reclassification to non old-growth was confirmed for approximately 308 hectares while approximately 38 hectares were found to have been incorrectly reclassified and will be afforded permanent protection from timber harvesting as they are old-growth forest. Please see table four 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 Block Area (ha)
Diamond 2	Nil	22.8	22.8
Dombakup	0.5	229.8	230.3
Crowea	Nil	7.4	7.4
Boorara	8.4	6.4	14.8
Murtin	29.2	26.9	56.1
Dingup	Nil	14.8	14.8
Total area	38.1	308.1	346.2

## 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 process for persons to request the Conservation Commission to assess whether areas on an indicative timber harvest plan should be classified as old-growth in DEC's corporate database.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission received four such requests and published reports on community nominated forests at four locations, Collins (two locations), Crowea and Warren forest blocks.

### Warren

Warren (06) contains predominantly Karri forest with a small portion of mixed forest. Both field assessment and aerial analysis were carried out and the assessment revealed that 9.8 hectares of Warren block was found to be consistent with old-growth forest.

### Crowea

Crowea (10) block. is primarily composed of a mixture of Jarrah and Karri trees and, prior to the public nomination, was classified as 'dieback affected' by DEC. After field assessment and aerial analysis were carried out on the block, an area of approximately 13 hectares was found to be mature, dieback free and consistent with old-growth forest.

### Collins

Both field assessment and aerial analysis were conducted on Collins block compartments 11 and 15. Stumps and other evidence of logging were found at the site and, as Karri forest must be uncut to be considered for old-growth classification, the site failed to meet the minimum requirements. The classification of Collins 11 and .15 remains as non old-growth.

## 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 Fauna Habitat Zones of at least 200 hectares each, designed to provide a sufficiently extensive network of areas excluded from timber harvesting to maintain fauna numbers. Detailed maps of the location of the various categories of the various fauna habitat zones can be accessed via the Department of Environment and Conservation's website at <http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/forests/forest-management-planning/fauna-habitat-zones.html>

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. The Conservation Commission met with the Conservation Council and DEC regularly 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.

## Summary of Fauna Habitat Zones

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

- J0 Diamond Two 06 & 10
- JY Brockman 09
- H0 Beaton 05
- A9 Amphion 01
- JV Collins 02
- Quinninup 04 & 06
- 71 Wilson 04
- Whittaker 02
- GB Greenbushes 04
- FU Molloy 03
- GK Jacobs 01
- Yabberup 02

The reports generally supported DEC's proposed FHZs for ten FHZs. The reports recommended changes to the boundaries of the final FHZs or further assessment on two occasions.

As of 30 June 2008 there were a further 12 FHZs under consideration.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission also raised concerns and sought clarification on a number of occasions as to the activities considered acceptable within the areas subject to evaluation as FHZs.

## Performance Assessment

Auditing (performance assessment) is 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, and;
- 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, and;
- 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. During the reporting period after a trial of the interim guidelines, the final Performance Assessment Guidelines were published and made available on the Conservation Commission's website. In addition, the Performance Assessment Review Committee (a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission) met twice during the reporting period.

### **Dryandra Woodland Management Plan Performance Assessment**

During the reporting period, one conservation reserve performance assessment was undertaken. The Dryandra Woodland Management Plan assessment revealed that despite there being a strong desire at the local level for the creation of the national park, and whilst there are no existing national parks in the Wheatbelt region, little progress has been made towards the conversion of the Dryandra Woodland to national park. The Conservation Commission has raised the issue of the conversion with the Department of Industry and Resources.

The Conservation Commission feels that the cessation of the local plantation-based timber industry represents an opportunity to promote a large-scale return to natural vegetation communities. The assessment also revealed that quantitative information on the Dryandra Woodland is limited and that there is a lack of human resources, available to implement strategies identified in the management plan. This issue, especially prevalent in remote areas, has been identified in previous performance assessments carried out by the Commission.

### **Twelve Month Follow-Up of Informal Reserve Protection**

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission also conducted a 12 month follow up of informal reserve protection. The original review found that the system for identifying unmapped old-growth forest was not in place and that standards of boundary protection were generally good but several breaches were identified.

Work on the following performance assessments has either begun or will be undertaken during 2008-2009:

- The thinning of the Wungong catchment.
- Yalgorup National Park Management Plan.
- Forest Fauna Distribution Information System.
- Purnululu National Park Management Plan.
- Dieback review.
- Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve Management Plan.
- Biodiversity Conservation on Islands vested in the Conservation Commission.

Resource shortages with the Commission meant that fewer performance assessments were completed than in previous years. However, resources are now being channeled toward this area and the completion of several performance assessments are expected to occur during the next reporting period.

### **Islands**

Some 630 island, isles and rocks, are vested within the Conservation Commission as conservation reserves which is nearly a quarter of all of Western Australia's Islands. In line with its responsibility to assess the Department of Environment and Conservation's performance in implementing management plans and the strategies they contain, the Conservation Commission is carrying out a status performance assessment of these islands.

Islands are a very valuable part of the State's biodiversity conservation estate. They provide sanctuaries for some of Australia's rarest mammals, provide breeding sites free from feral animals for sea turtles, seabirds, seals and sea lions, and they are havens unaffected by most of the threatening processes – such as grazing, altered fire regimes, pests and disease, urban development and pollution – which have caused biodiversity decline on the mainland.

One component of the assessment was a one day workshop held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. The workshop provided a forum where scientists, managers and planners were able to focus on relevant issues and discuss management priorities.

Early indications were that while the conservation of biodiversity on WA islands has been a very successful method of conserving the State's and nation's biodiversity, the level of

conservation protection and management needs to be improved, particularly in relation to bio-security, resources and increasing knowledge about the effects of climate change.

## Advice and Promotion

During the reporting period the Chairman of the Conservation Commission met monthly with the Minister to inform the Minister of current issues facing the Conservation Commission and to provide advice on issues raised by the Minister. Additionally, the Conservation Commission provided advice on specific issues concerning the conservation estate as and when required.

## Directions

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.

## Other Conservation Commission Activities

### Field inspections

#### Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park Visit

Members of the Management Plan Review Committee travelled to Busselton on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2008 to attend a meeting with the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park Advisory Council to discuss issues relevant to both the Commission and the Advisory Council.

## 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 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.

One of the 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 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 and forest management in general.

## Parks and Protected Areas Forum

The Parks and Protected Areas forum was held in Fremantle between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2007. Speakers came from both government and community backgrounds and the forum took a holistic approach, focusing not only on the science of parks and protected areas management but also on the values of our conservation areas.

The *Agenda for Action* was produced in response to comments received both at the Forum and from subsequent consultation with Forum participants. The *Agenda for Action* sets out the priorities identified by those attending the Forum to protect and enhance Western Australia's network of protected areas. These included:

- giving priority to the expansion of the marine protected areas system to meet the criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system, with an immediate emphasis on the Kimberley and the South Coast;
- pursuing a minimum target for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of terrestrial parks and protected areas of around 15 per cent by 2018;
- reflecting the rights, needs and aspirations of Indigenous people as they relate to access to land for conservation, tourism and community benefits in legislation;
- increasing resources for parks and protected areas, particularly for on-ground managers; and
- considering the rights, needs and aspirations of local communities and neighbours in the acquisition of lands and waters for parks and protected areas and in their management.

## 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 Chair of Gull Rock National Park Community Working Group Chair of Mt Martin Botanic Park and Voyager Park Community Working Group Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council
Mrs Patricia Barblett AM	Founder and immediate past President, now an Executive Board Member of Forum Advocating Cultural and Ecotourism. Member Capes Parks Community Advisory Committee Member Maritime Museum Advisory Committee Member Bush Bank Steering Committee of the National Trust Deputy Chair, Project Reference Committee for Southern Darling Region Recreation Strategy for Inland Water Bodies and Catchments Member of the Rottnest Island Foundation Inc



	Member of the Kaitajin Mia Mia Foundation (Bush University)
Ms Regina Flugge	Millstream Chichester Park Council
Mr Graeme Rundle	Kalbarri National Park Community Advisory Committee Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks Community Advisory Committee Tuart Forest Community Advisory Committee
Dr David Newsome	Cape Range Advisory Council Shark Bay Advisory Committee Coral Coast Advisory Committee

## 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.

### Joint management

The joint management of Western Australia's natural areas is an ongoing priority of the Conservation Commission. The 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 Commission is committed to an ongoing process of improvement and evaluation of the management planning process. An independent review of the management planning process and product will be started in 2009. One aspect of this will be the inclusion of indigenous cultural and land management aspirations and responsibilities

### 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 Forest Management Plan and assessments of management plan implementation in reserves in other parts of the State.

### 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 and for approved reserves to be formally established. Some of these proposed reserves are of considerable biodiversity significance, for example, the Ravensthorpe range, parks and reserves in the Mid-West Region and the Pilbara. 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.

### 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 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 more user friendly and interactive website is currently under construction and scheduled to be launched later in 2008.

Over the next reporting period the Conservation Commission looks forward to working towards greater community engagement and consultation through a variety of mechanisms.

### **Climate change**

It is now widely acknowledged that various greenhouse gas causing human activities have altered the composition of the Earth's atmosphere and the Earth's climate is changing as a result. These changes are having significant impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity on a global scale and evidence suggests that Western Australia will be amongst the worst hit by the effects of climate change.

In Western Australia, we are already experiencing changed and reduced rainfall patterns and increased temperatures. These effects in-turn create 'knock-on' effects such as reduced inflows to water catchments, increased salinity, changed fire frequency and behaviour, increased ocean acidity levels and the increased frequency of extreme weather events. All of these changes pose significant threats to the biodiversity of Western Australia.

Many of Western Australia's unique landscapes and species are especially susceptible to the threat of climate change and the Conservation Commission recognises its special role in producing effective and adaptive management plans in light of the challenges that climate change presents.

## **Disclosure and Legal Compliance**

### **Financial Statements**

The Conservation Commission had a cash expenditure of \$721,117 for the reporting period against a budget allocation of \$814,733. The reporting and audit of the Conservation Commission's expenditure is included with 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 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:

Total expenditure for 2007-2008 was \$5554.30

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)	\$5554.30	The West Australian

### Disability Access and inclusion Plan Outcomes

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

The Conservation Commission's Disability Services Plan, formally adopted in 2002, 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.

## **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 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.

## **Record Keeping 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/report96\\_06.html](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au/reports/report96_06.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.

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, review of the efficiency and effectiveness is conducted by DEC.

## **Government Policy Requirements**

### **Corruption Prevention**

*(Premier's Circular 2005/02 : 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.

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.

## Sustainability

*(Premiers Circular 2004/14: Sustainability Code of Practice for Government)*

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
- Sustainability is a priority of the Conservation Commission and employees are encouraged and empowered to support sustainability both at home and in the office.

## Occupational Safety and Health

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

In accordance with its written policies, the Department is committed to providing a safe and hygienic working environment for its employees and assisting injured workers to return to work as soon as medically appropriate.

The importance of incident prevention is recognised as the major contributor to a safe and healthy working environment. This approach in conjunction with an effective injury management system, will contribute to an overall strategy emphasising human resource management.

**Table 5. Summary of Occupational Safety and Health incidences**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target 2007/2008</b>
Number of fatalities	Zero (0)
Lost time injury/diseases (LTI/D) incidence rate	Zero (0)
<b>Lost time injury severity rate</b>	<b>Zero (0)</b>

*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 of 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 Forest Products Commission; 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 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 —
  - 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 Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and
- 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 —
  - 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.