

Remnant Management over the Last Ten Years—An Agricultural Viewpoint



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RESEARCH IMPLEMENTED

Fencing of Remnants

This form of remnant management is by far the most widespread in the agricultural zone of the State. Farmers accept that results can be obtained by fencing, and either do it as part of normal farm operations or make application for special grants. The continual over-subscription of the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme is one positive indication of the farming communities' attitudes.

Protection of Remnants by Buffer Planting

This form of management is necessary, to protect native remnants from rising watertables, which cause waterlogging and salt encroachment. While nowhere near as popular a management method as fencing, it is being increasingly used in the State by farmers interested in preserving their remnant vegetation areas.

The choice of species in these plantings is very important, with the preferred option being species native to the district and hopefully of types similar to those in the remnant vegetation.

Economic Value of Remnant Vegetation in Farm and Catchment Planning

The incorporation of remnant vegetation management in the catchment planning process has been widely accepted. This will increase in future years, with a greatly increased demand for technical information on nature conservation issues.

The utilisation of managed remnant vegetation to provide products for commercial return is a growing practice. Wildflower and seed picking, apiary sites, and firewood gathering are uses that most readily come to mind. There is also a valuable role for remnant vegetation in the farm stay industry. This industry is already widespread in the lower South West of the State, but has not yet expanded to the same degree into the Wheatbelt.

WHY HAS OTHER RESEARCH NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

Economics

Many farming communities have planned for land and nature conservation at farm and catchment levels, but this has not been translated into works on the ground. The main reason for this is the continued depression of the agricultural commodity markets.

Revegetation is the one form of remedial action that has continued through the depressed times. The reasons for this are many, and vary from district to district, but, above all, probably indicate that the community has accepted the extension message on this topic.

Landscape Importance

The other factor which hinders implementation is linked to economics, but is mainly about education. The role of remnant vegetation in the dynamics of the rural landscape has not been fully appreciated by the majority of the farming community. This may reflect the way the concept has been presented.

Education material which targets all sectors of the rural community is needed so that the rural community eventually sees the ecosystem, or "big picture" of the landscape in which they farm. Specific targeting of schoolchildren and women is suggested as a way of reaching receptive and influential sectors of the community.

Technical Extension

Increased awareness of the importance of the "big" landscape picture by the farming community, together with the trend to more broad-scale planning by land conservation groups, could increase the need for technical information in the future. Improved economic conditions will expand this need.

Currently, there is a lack of detailed information about the biology of Australian native species that live in remnants. Also, while there is much information on land management in scientific papers and manuals, this needs to be collated and presented to managers in readily accessible forms. Weed scientists present us with a model on how this should be tackled.

THE FUTURE

The role of remnant vegetation as an important component of the landscape will continue to grow in the perception of the rural community. The challenge for all scientists and extension specialists will be to have meaningful answers that enable rural communities to retain and expand both the areas and the species composition of the remnants.

REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION TEN YEARS ON

A DECADE OF RESEARCH
AND MANAGEMENT

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