

How Do We Achieve Communication within and between Agencies?



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Workshop Group

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Points from Plenary Session

The following points, raised during a plenary session, stimulated this workshop topic:

- ❖ Regional ecologists — are they the appropriate interface between research and management?
- ❖ How do you get researchers and managers to talk to each other?
- ❖ Do we need a central focus group? What should it be?
- ❖ Formal networking on remnants. Who organises it?
- ❖ Technical extension and remnant management.
- ❖ Technical advice on species for advisers — for example, “facts” sheet on proposed species introductions.
- ❖ Wanton oversights by end-users.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PROCESS

Before discussing particular issues and actions, the group first listed stakeholders and dealt with aspects of the communication process.

Stakeholders

The main agencies involved in remnant vegetation research and management are:

Federal

- ❖ Australian Nature Conservation Agency
- ❖ Department of Primary Industry and Energy
- ❖ CSIRO
- ❖ Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation

- ❖ Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- ❖ tertiary institutions.

State

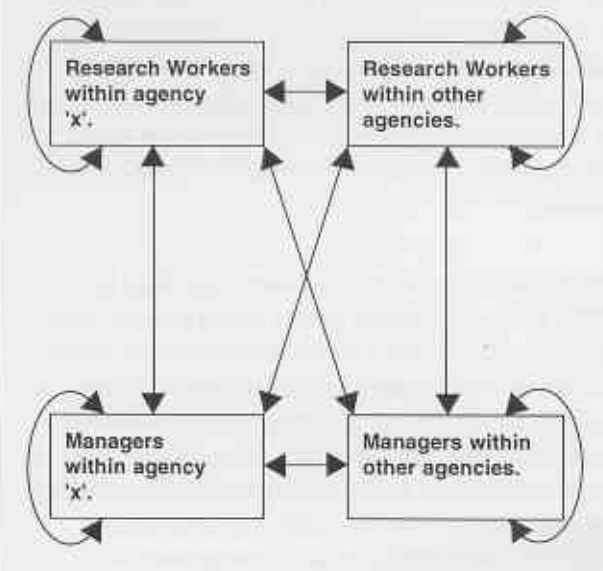
- ❖ Department of Agriculture, Western Australia (DAWA)
- ❖ Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM)
- ❖ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- ❖ Department of Planning and Urban Development
- ❖ Integrated Catchment Management Group
- ❖ Kings Park and Botanic Garden
- ❖ Office of Catchment Management
- ❖ Water Authority of Western Australia
- ❖ Waterways Commission.

Non-government Organisations

- ❖ Australian Conservation Foundation
- ❖ Conservation Council of Western Australia
- ❖ Greening Western Australia
- ❖ Men of the Trees
- ❖ World Wildlife Fund.

Communication Flow Diagram

The interactions within and between researchers and managers are generalised below. The arrows indicate the direction in which information and ideas are communicated.



Means of Communication

Communication between individuals and groups may be through one or more of the following channels:

- ❖ paper formats (letters, notes, published, unpublished, etc.);
- ❖ verbal (including teleconference);
- ❖ computer.

Processes for Communication

Linkages between groups and individuals who share a common interest may be maintained by using a range of methods including:

- ❖ informal network;
- ❖ formal network;
- ❖ research working group;
- ❖ workshops and technical workshops;
- ❖ computer network (for example, that maintained by DAWA);
- ❖ register of contacts;
- ❖ information sheets and bulletins.

DISCUSSION

Transfer of Information between Researchers and Managers

Within and between agencies, there is a need for effective internal and external communication of research information. This communication should involve both researchers and managers. It was agreed that communication within agencies is not adequate. Furthermore, a specific problem was identified with regard to accessing information from universities, where many graduate and undergraduate projects have the potential to contribute to the knowledge base. Unfortunately, this latter information is not widely available.

One model to resolve this problem is provided by DAWA. It has a computer facility which lists, for each research scientist, their research projects and results. This allows ready access, by scientist name or topic, to the current work being undertaken, and also allows access to unpublished results. It was considered that it would be beneficial to link all institutions undertaking research — at least in the natural sciences and, in particular, those related to land management —

through a common database. Institutions that should be involved include CALM, CSIRO, DAWA, DEP and universities. A problem was seen, however, in maintaining these databases. In DAWA, it is each researcher's responsibility, but this may be harder to achieve in the universities.

Action

CALM (Ken Wallace) to write to Jim Armstrong, suggesting that CALM's Science and Information Division develop a computer network system similar to that used by DAWA.

Action

Promote the use of a similar database in tertiary institutions.

Action

Development of a network across organisations. With regard to access to computer networks in rural centres, it was noted that DAWA and CALM are linked at South Perth, and DAWA has a network to major rural centres. It is therefore feasible to have CALM and DAWA regional centres linked through the existing networks.

Information Integration

A problem was identified regarding the integration of information into a form suitable for managers to use. Options were developed that would improve communication to managers. It was recognised that options must be tailored for the particular circumstances of each agency and management or research group.

Action

Agencies to adopt a suitable strategy for communicating research information to managers, using one or more of the following options:

- ❖ employ a regional person to integrate information — for example, a regional ecologist;
- ❖ employ an organisational person to integrate information — for example, an information officer as used by CSIRO;
- ❖ expect research scientists to integrate information and produce prescriptions for managers based on their research;

- ❖ develop collaborative projects between managers and researchers, including university students where practicable, to achieve specified targets. Such projects involve integration from the outset, and are driven by feedback from project results.

It was commented that, to ensure that research is applicable to management requirements, managers need to drive research projects.

Manager Involvement in Research Projects

In line with the fourth option presented above (and the comment), managers should be proactive in identifying research requirements and seeking means to have research undertaken.

Action

Managers to identify and describe research projects that are a high priority. They should then circulate their proposals to all research bodies and promote funding under, for example, Federal grants, and the research programs of agencies and tertiary institutions.

It was pointed out that CSIRO has a model operating with universities, whereby research projects are listed with the intent of them being taken up as student projects. This model should be developed as a means for other agencies to promote their research requirements. It was noted that the provision of some funds by the sponsoring agency was not essential, but it helped. Also, it was noted that joint agency submissions could improve the chances of getting funds.

Action

J. Majer and CSIRO to circulate to managers and agencies the model or procedure for the listing of research projects at universities.

Coordination of Research Activities

Research steering committees in agencies are intended to establish protocols and policies for interagency research cooperation. Thus this level of committee does not provide for communication or interaction between researchers and managers.

The objective of a research coordinating committee is to ensure that research within an area or topic is

appropriate and coordinated. An example of this functional level is the Agroforestry Working Group. This level of interaction was seen as being more applicable for communication between researchers and managers.

Action

CALM to set up a research coordinating group for remnant vegetation management.

Extension to Managers

It was agreed that field based, topic driven technical extension workshops were very effective for providing information to managers. These are best organised as interagency meetings where all relevant workers are able to contribute. Results from field days should be collated and distributed to participants and other relevant agencies, to confirm agreements and to provide a basis for planning future research and management actions.

Action

Agencies to promote interagency technical extension workshops and technical review days from which proceedings can be produced.

Networking for Information Exchange

It was agreed that there was a continuing need for informal and formal networking. While informal networking (between officers) provides valuable contact, regular "formal" meetings are required, to ensure that all agencies are aware of current management and research actions and to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas. This is (at the time of writing) being provided through the DEP Native Vegetation Network Group.

Action

Agencies to be aware that the Native Vegetation Network Group is to continue meeting at DAWA.

REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION TEN YEARS ON

A DECADE OF RESEARCH
AND MANAGEMENT

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
DRYANDRA WORKSHOP
SEPTEMBER 1993



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

1995