

# What Are the Philosophy and Goals for Managing Remnant Vegetation within a Landscape Context?



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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:

- ❖ What are the goals for land and nature conservation? How are these goals integrated?
- ❖ Researchers should recognise that they are servers.
- ❖ What are the conservation objectives and targets for the Wheatbelt? We can't look after everything, so what and how do we choose what to save?
- ❖ There is a strong need to develop a landcare ethic.
- ❖ People need to develop a vision for the future of agriculture and nature conservation on private property.
- ❖ Better definition of goals and objectives.

## DISCUSSION

### Philosophy Needed for Managing Remnant Vegetation

Society needs to develop a deep love for the land (landcare ethic) similar to that held by indigenous people, making abuse of the land unacceptable. Society also needs to accept its responsibility for managing the conservation estate on both private and public land. The strong affinity for the land needs to override issues of boundaries and ownership, and landowners must be custodians for future generations. In this regard, there is a dilemma between the rights of the individual who owns the land and the responsibilities of that individual to the community and future generations.

Conservation was seen as being possible once the basic needs of individuals, families and society were met. As the benefits of remnants are shared by the community, there needs to be government assistance for owners, particularly when times are hard. Assistance should not be through compensation, but in the form of technical and financial help, to ensure that the nature and land conservation values of remnants are maintained. Private owners should be encouraged to voluntarily enter into agreements to manage remnants, with this commitment being registered on land titles. Imposing values and management constraints on individuals is unlikely to result in the proper management of privately owned remnants. The maintenance of private ownership supports good management through personal identification with the piece of land.

The intrinsic value of biota in the Wheatbelt must be recognised in its world-wide context. While it may be possible to develop sustainable farming systems without retaining nature conservation values, this would result in a loss of biodiversity, ecosystem function, aesthetics and an Australian identity.

### Primary Goal

Stakeholders need to develop their own goals, objectives and strategies so that they have ownership of them. To assist in this process, a first attempt was made by the group. The primary goal proposed was: "To have a long-term, profitable land use, while maintaining ecosystem function and biodiversity and minimising any off-site deleterious effects".

It needs to be accepted that some parts of the landscape may have highly profitable uses, whereas other parts may not. The overall system needs to be profitable for nature conservation values to be protected.

### Process

The primary goals need to be accompanied by sets of objectives, strategies and actions that are specific at the State, regional, catchment and enterprise level. Some of these objectives have already been set (for example, the State Conservation Strategy, State Salinity Strategy, Decade of Landcare Plan, landcare district and catchment group objectives, strategies and actions).

Key ecological parameters need to be identified for developing management strategies (for example,

hydrologic water balance, energy and nutrient cycles, key species in ecosystems). Some of these will become the means of monitoring the health of the agro-ecological system, providing feedback for managers. It was accepted that both the native vegetation and farming systems would be in a state of dynamic flux.

### **Actions**

Representatives of the major stakeholder groups need to be drawn together to reach consensus on goals, objectives and strategies. This may take the form of identifying and coordinating existing structures at the State, regional, catchment and enterprise level. It was thought necessary to raise awareness of nature conservation values in some groups that were not currently giving these values sufficient emphasis.

A specific example of this process would be for the Department of Conservation and Land Management (for example, Ken Wallace) to liaise with the Department of Agriculture's Program Leader for the Great Southern and the Blackwood Catchment Coordinating Group (BCCG), to see how the groups could integrate farming and nature conservation objectives to everyone's advantage. This could become a model for other areas. It was stressed that we should not try to come in over the top of existing initiatives being taken by groups such as the BCCG, which are already developing a nature conservation strategy.

### **Implementation**

The integration of production and nature conservation objectives may require legislative changes and changes to statutory procedures. These details were not developed.

# REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION TEN YEARS ON

A DECADE OF RESEARCH  
AND MANAGEMENT

PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
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