

Community Forest Inspection Report



Contents

Purpose	3
Background	3
Program initiation and community involvement	3
Objectives	3
Memberships	4
Parameters for inspection	4
Inspection guidelines	4
Inspection sites	5
Collie Inspection	6
Attendance:	6
Process	6
Issues raised	6
Findings	7
Jarrahdale Inspection	8
Attendance:	8
Process	8
Issues raised	8
Findings	9
Pemberton Inspection	10
Attendance:	10
Process	10
Issues raised	10
Findings	11
General findings	12
Process	12
Findings	12
Recommendations	12
Conclusion	13
Glossary	14

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to report on the pilot program of Community Forest Inspections (CFI) initiated by the Minister for the Environment on 18 February 2003. This document has been prepared by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and is a summary of the three individual reports finalised by the participants of the pilot program. It provides background information on the development of the CFI program, the findings of the inspections conducted in the pilot and the recommendations put forward as a result of the inspections.

Background

Program initiation and community involvement

The Minister for the Environment, Dr Judy Edwards, announced the CFI pilot program on 18 February 2003 with the purpose of further including the community in the existing systems that monitor compliance of the Forest Products Commission (FPC) with the guidelines for management of timber harvesting.

Dr Edwards made the following comments in a media release on 18 February 2003:

The Community Forest Inspection Program will provide representatives of the wider community with an opportunity to inspect and question operational aspects of timber harvesting and how it is managed.

It will also further the community's understanding of the relationship between timber harvesting and sustainable forest management.

The CFI program was intended to build on the commitments given in the Government's *Protecting our old-growth forests* policy for better community involvement in forest management.

Since the announcement of the CFI pilot three inspections have been carried out in logging coupes in the State's south-west forests.

Objectives

The aim of the pilot program was to explore the feasibility of CFIs.

The objectives of the CFIs were to provide a formal opportunity for community members to:

- broaden their participation in the sustainable management of south-west forests;
- further their understanding of the relationship between timber harvesting and sustainable forest management by observing and having explained the operational systems and processes that CALM has put in place for the sustainable management and extraction of native timbers from State forests;
- inspect and question the compliance of timber harvesting contractors with operational requirements;
- have CALM and the FPC follow-up on concerns raised in relation to issues of compliance with operational requirements; and
- receive details on any follow-up actions undertaken in response to non-compliance with operational requirements identified in the inspection.

Memberships

Participation in CFIs was to comprise of a representative from the community, the WA Forest Alliance, CALM, FPC, and the Conservation Commission of WA.

The Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries raised the possibility with the Minister for the Environment of attendance by a timber industry representative. However, because the purpose of the inspections was to look at the compliance of harvesting operations with the required standards, which is a responsibility of the FPC, it was not implemented.

Parameters for inspection

Inspection elements to be considered were to include but not be limited to the following aspects of timber harvesting operations:

- consultation with local and State government agencies in planning the harvesting;
- coupe concept planning;
- coupe boundary demarcation;
- old-growth forest identification and protection;
- Aboriginal heritage identification and protection;
- European heritage identification and protection;
- selection and protection of habitat elements including trees, understorey species such as balga and logs;
- flora and fauna management issues;
- roading and traffic issues;
- water quality/catchment issues (including stream buffers);
- dieback hygiene practices;
- log landing location, construction and rehabilitation following the completion of harvesting;
- snig track location, construction and rehabilitation;
- the protection of soil including erosion control and drainage measures;
- compliance with the requirement not to cross the boundary between the harvest area and a formal or informal reserve;
- pollution and litter control; and
- log utilisation.

Inspection guidelines

Some initial guidelines were formulated to provide a methodology and place some limits on the scope of the inspections. The following were identified as a guide for the carrying out of inspections:

- Inspections will be carried out on active or recently completed harvesting coupes.
- Community representatives will be invited to nominate one coupe for inspection. The purpose of this is to ensure that for at least one component of the inspection there is no forewarning. A second coupe will be selected at random from appropriate coupes within reasonable proximity of the nominated coupe.
- Representatives other than those representing the nominated groups may be invited to participate after consultation.

- Following the inspection CALM will prepare a draft report, including photographs of any alleged non-compliance, and provide it to all participants for comment for at least one week prior to finalisation. CALM will report on any required follow-up actions within 30 days of the inspection.

Inspection sites

The Minister for the Environment identified harvesting operations near Collie as the site of the first CFI. Subsequent inspections were completed in the Swan Region near Jarrahdale and the Warren Region near Pemberton.

Considerable effort was put into developing the protocols for attendance and for reporting. The main issues raised during these inspections and the findings from the individual reports have helped compile this report and its recommendations.

Collie Inspection

Timber harvesting operations in coupes in Roseneath and Fleays blocks near Collie in CALM's South West Region were inspected in the first CFI on 8 April 2003.

Attendance:

Ken Waterhouse	Collie Conservation Group
Kim Redman	Western Australian Forest Alliance
Drew Griffiths	CALM District Manager
Kevin Haylock	FPC Manager Native Forests Branch
Peter Baldwin	Conservation Commission Acting Director

In addition to the objectives set out on page 3, this inspection was used to develop and test a process for conducting the inspections.

Process

The inspection group commenced with a session in the office where they selected the areas to be inspected (Roseneath and Fleays) and examined the documentation relating to the approvals required before timber harvesting could commence. The areas were then examined and issues that arose during that examination documented.

As a result of the issues raised, CALM was required to undertake additional surveys to quantify the issues. This was done and the results included in the final report that was distributed to participants.

Issues raised

Observation from members of the inspection party identified areas where operations needed to be improved. The main areas were:

- The removal of the tops of felled trees from the base of crop trees, habitat trees and other retained but unmarked trees was insufficient in some areas of the coupe. This process is referred to as "tops disposal" and if not done properly can lead to damage to the butt of crop trees from subsequent fire when the woody material catches fire.
- Erosion control measures for some snig tracks were inadequate and required attention. Contractors are required to undertake erosion control measures on snig tracks to prevent them eroding as a result of a heavy rainfall event. This involves establishing barriers across the track to prevent surface flow. The community members observed a situation where run-off from rainfall had concentrated in snig tracks and breached an erosion barrier.
- The culling of overstorey and understorey which the community members perceived as "bush bashing" and unnecessarily destructive. It was explained that the jarrah silvicultural guideline provides for the culling of unwanted overstorey and understorey species to facilitate the establishment of jarrah seedlings and the growth of crop trees.

Tree tops around the base of crop tree, Collie



Findings

The report of the Collie inspection made recommendations on the process to be followed for the subsequent inspections and field compliance issues that included:

- a list of the status of coupes needs to be made available before the inspection so that it was understood what requirements could be expected to be completed and so that community members could inspect the areas before hand and identify issues of concern;
- a list of the approval documentation required should be provided which can be checked-off by participants;
- future audits and inspections undertaken by CALM on harvesting operations need to concentrate on compliance with tops disposal requirements; and
- the level of supervision of contractors by FPC staff should be increased.

The extent of overstorey and understorey culling was reassessed in the review of the jarrah silvicultural guideline during the development of the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 (FMP). The guidelines for culling were subsequently amended to reduce the impact on understorey species while still reducing competition enough to provide adequate regeneration and crop tree growth.



Culling of understorey and overstorey, Collie

Jarrahdale Inspection

Timber harvesting in coupes in Geddes and Balmoral blocks near Jarrahdale in the Swan Region were inspected on 7 November 2003.

Attendance:

Jan Star	Jarrahdale Serpentine Shire
Cassidy Newland	Western Australian Forest Alliance
Mike Meinema	CALM District Manager
Steve Raper	CALM Sustainable Forest Management officer
Kevin Haylock	FPC Manager Native Forests Branch
Peter Baldwin	Conservation Commission Acting Director

The objectives were as set out on page 3.

Process

Significant time was spent in the office speaking generally to issues raised by community members. These ranged from valuing non-timber elements of the forest, incentives to contractors to harvest sensitively, re-growth demands on water, the level of sawlog yield determination, utilisation of felled trees and providing background to processes related to harvest planning, approvals, implementation, monitoring and auditing.

Community members selected the coupes for inspection (Geddes and Balmoral) and the group undertook the inspection. CALM produced a draft report, received comments on it, then distributed the final report to participants.

Coupe inspection in Balmoral block, Jarrahdale



Issues raised

From the inspection at Geddes block issues were raised over the:

- utilisation of third grade logs, stock piling of logs on coupe landings and the Conservation Commission audit and findings on stockpiling; and
- relative merits of the silvicultural technique to obtain regeneration of jarrah (harvesting to gap).

From the inspection at Balmoral block issues were raised over the:

- clarity of the demarcation of the interface between previously logged areas and old-growth forest that is to be protected;
- effectiveness of soil erosion control measures and the monitoring of soil erosion on snig tracks;
- tops of felled trees left against crop trees and habitat trees (in walking the coupe it was observed that there were tops up against some crop trees and habitat trees);
- harvesting in water catchments; and
- addressing non-compliance by harvesting contractors.

Findings

The information available to facilitate the inspection was considered inadequate by community members. Information on recently logged areas needs to be made available prior to inspection and the details of all applicable areas should also be available on the day. This might include:

- maps of the coupes to be inspected showing informal reserves and other exclusion zones;
- lists of rare flora and fauna that occur in the area and measures to protect them; and
- maps of where the various silvicultural prescriptions had been applied.

A useful aspect for future inspections would be to inspect an area that had been tree-marked prior to felling so that silviculture could be effectively discussed.

The Conservation Commission representative, from an audit perspective, suggested there would be merit in the FPC describing the process for dealing with non-compliance by contractors to enable a measurable way of auditing or assessing the application of compliance management measures.

Pemberton Inspection

Timber harvesting was inspected in coupes in Treenbrook, Flybrook and Diamond blocks near Pemberton in CALM's Warren Region on 5 August 2004.

Attendance:

Andy Russell	Warren Environment Group
Joanna Box	Community member
Don Box	Community member
Roger Cheeseman	Greater Beedelup National Park Society
Charlie Chodorawski	Greater Beedelup National Park Society
Peter Keppel	CALM Regional Manager
David Meehan (part of)	CALM A/District Manager Donnelly District
Jo Smith (part of)	CALM note taker
Steve Collings	CALM District Coordinator Sustainable Forest Management
Kevin Haylock	FPC Manager South West Forests
Peter Beatty	FPC Community Liaison Officer
Peter Baldwin	Conservation Commission Acting Director

The CFI near Pemberton involved a larger group than earlier inspections and larger than the initial pilot program had envisaged. However, community members and CALM and the FPC were happy to proceed with the larger group.

The objectives were as set out earlier.

Process

A considerable time was spent in the office prior to the field inspection with an explanation of and discussion on the roles of CALM and the FPC in harvest planning, coupe management auditing and environmental management systems employed.

Because this inspection was in mid-winter, there were only a few recently active areas to inspect. The group visited selected clearfelling operations at Treenbrook and a karri clearfelling operation that was a trial of soil protection at Diamond and a karri thinning operation at Flybrook.

Issues raised

Issues raised and discussed included:

- forest structure remaining following the removal of sawlogs and the appropriate follow-up silvicultural treatment;
- landscape amenity including buffers that might be retained on private property boundaries;
- the number and type of habitat trees retained;
- the economics of harvesting a small coupe (<5ha); and
- soil disturbance management through corduroying and use of forwarders to move logs to the landing.

Findings

The inspection was considered beneficial and the post inspection discussion concluded with agreement that the information session was important to enable community representatives to better understand the processes used by CALM and the FPC to plan and manage harvesting operations.

It was agreed that CFIs in the future would focus more on the detail of one or two specific active harvest coupes and how they are being managed. This would necessitate an inspection during the peak harvesting season of summer/autumn.



Snig track in Diamond coupe corduroyed to protect soil

General findings

Process

The three CFIs went smoothly as participants adhered to the methodology and reporting guidelines developed or as amended and agreed.

An initial concern by the community representatives was that there should be an element of surprise to the inspection so that areas could not be "tidied up" thus giving a false impression of compliance with guidelines. However, it is clear from the CFIs undertaken that a key component of the success of an inspection is being able to prepare the required maps and documentation that go with the harvesting approval process. Without this it is often difficult to understand why operations are as they appear.

The original concept of a small group able to fit into one vehicle was gradually expanded such that the Warren Region inspection had five community members participate. The number of participants, however, did not adversely affect the success of the inspection.

Findings

The CFIs identified particular instances of non-compliance with guidelines that required follow-up by CALM and the FPC but they did not reveal problem areas that were not already known to CALM. However, this was not their primary purpose and a community member from Collie made the point before the first CFI that it should not be up to the community to check the compliance of forest operations with required standards as that is the role of CALM and the Conservation Commission.

At each of the visits the Conservation Commission representative noted that while these inspections were not appropriately considered audits or compliance checks, they were very useful in informing the Conservation Commission of issues that may warrant formal assessment and audit under its statutory function. Subsequent to these inspections the Conservation Commission has prioritised audits for this year to include soil management, the protection of old-growth forest in informal reserves and the selection and management of fauna habitat zones.

The three inspections generated a significant amount of discussion and explanation of the processes in place to plan particular harvest areas, the standards that have to be complied with and how those standards are interpreted. In doing so the objectives of increasing broad community participation and understanding of sustainable forest management were achieved and, in the main, appreciated by the community participants.

Recommendations

The format of future CFIs should be essentially similar to those undertaken but include what was learned from the pilot ones, so that:

- at least one inspection be held in each of CALM's three south-west forest regions in each calendar year;
- where necessary that CALM initiate and manage the inspections, however the local community members may request an inspection;
- membership of the inspection group to be the community members, CALM, FPC, Conservation Commission and a WA Forest Alliance invitee, however, the number and makeup of the community representatives to be flexible and be decided locally depending on the issues and interest;

- for each inspection that is carried out at least one of the areas to be inspected to be decided early so that sufficient maps and documentation associated with coupe planning can be collated for the preliminary discussion;
- each inspection to be preceded by a review of the documentation relating to the approvals required to initiate the harvesting; and
- CALM be responsible for producing a report and, where appropriate, undertaking follow-up action including ensuring that the report is considered in the course of consultation between CALM, the FPC and the Conservation Commission on the development of their annual audit programs.

Conclusion

The FMP contains an action (35.2.1) "The Department will develop and undertake programs that seek to provide the community with educational opportunities and information on ecologically sustainable forest management ...". The outcomes of the three inspections suggest that the program of CFIs initiated by the Minister for the Environment is a useful strategy to advance achievement of the FMP action and should be continued.

Glossary

Block	A named administrative subdivision of the forest, varying in size from about 3000 to 8000 hectares.
Buffer strip	A strip of vegetation retained on the edge of a feature such as a stream or rock outcrop. Buffer strips can serve a variety of purposes in the landscape, including protection of the feature from a disturbing activity, and provide flora and fauna habitat and aesthetic values.
Clearfelling	A silvicultural system in which the trees are removed at one time to allow regeneration to establish and develop as an even-aged stand.
Corduroy	The process of matting the ground with small logs and branch material to provide flotation for heavy vehicles and protect the soil from being damaged by the repeated passage of vehicles.
Coupe	An area of forest that is planned for timber harvesting as a single unit. It may contain more than one silvicultural objective, such as a number of discrete gaps or clearfells or a combination of both.
Culling	The deliberate felling, poisoning or pushing down of unwanted overstorey or understorey species, usually to reduce competition to retained crop trees or establishing regeneration.
Gap	A discrete opening in the overstorey canopy created to reduce competition to allow seedlings to become established and or develop.
Guideline	Principles, standards and practices for meeting goals that have been established as desirable outcomes for management. They can be quantitative or qualitative.
Habitat	A component of an ecosystem providing food and shelter to a particular organism.
Landing	The roadside site in the coupe where logs are stored prior to removal from the forest.
Landscape	The visual elements of both the natural and the built environment including landforms, vegetation, waterform, land-use and architecture.
Old-growth forest	Ecologically mature forest where the effects of unnatural disturbance are now negligible. The definition focuses on forest in which the upper stratum or overstorey is in a late mature to senescent growth stage.
Rare species	Taxa which are uncommon, not widely distributed, or occurring sparsely across their range.
Reserve – formal	One of the land categories of national park, nature reserve, conservation park, or CALM Act sections 5(1)(g) or 5(1)(h) reserves for the purpose of conservation.
Reserve – informal	An area set aside for conservation under an approved management plan, with an opportunity for the public to comment on changes to reserve boundaries; able to be accurately defined on a map; and is of an area and design sufficient to sustain the values it seeks to protect.

Silviculture	The theory and practice of managing forest establishment, composition and growth to achieve specified management objectives.
Snig track	A track along which logs are pulled from the felling point to a landing or point of loading.
Timber harvesting	The cutting, felling, and gathering of forest timber undertaken as part of a planned sequence of silvicultural activities including the regeneration of the forest.
Treemarking	The silvicultural system in which trees are marked for retention prior to harvesting in a forest.

