

Good neighbour policy

July 2007



Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future



Foreword

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) manages more than 25 million hectares of conservation lands across Western Australia – including our national parks, nature reserves, regional parks and State forest. The Department also has responsibility for feral animal and weed control as well as wildfire preparedness on a further 89 million hectares of Crown lands.

Such an extensive area (larger than New South Wales and Victoria combined) means DEC has many neighbours – around 7000 in rural and regional Western Australia.

The successful management of these lands next to commercial enterprises such as farms and pastoral stations, as well as people's homes, requires respect and understanding. The State Government appreciates the spirit of cooperation DEC receives from its neighbours and acknowledges that for its part, DEC also must reflect a similar spirit.

This Good Neighbour Policy, developed through extensive consultation and involvement with DEC's neighbours and peak primary producer and local government organisations, reflects the commitment from 'both sides of the fence'.

I congratulate DEC's neighbours and the peak organisations as well as the Departmental staff for their contribution and commitment to the development of this policy.

The Good Neighbour Policy makes a positive contribution to the conservation of our biodiversity and protection of our environment alongside the sustainable development of our rural sector.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Templeman".

David Templeman MLA
Minister for the Environment;
Climate Change; Peel

July 2007

Preface

Commencing in 2004 the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), previously through one of its predecessor agencies (the Department of Conservation and Land Management), has been developing a Good Neighbour Policy in collaboration with rural stakeholders. DEC is a major land manager in both the agricultural and pastoral zones, as well as in urban centres, with many thousands of neighbouring properties. DEC has recognised the need for such a policy for some time, to state formally its aim to build and maintain good relations with all of its neighbours, and to set out the way in which the Department deals with common cross-boundary issues.

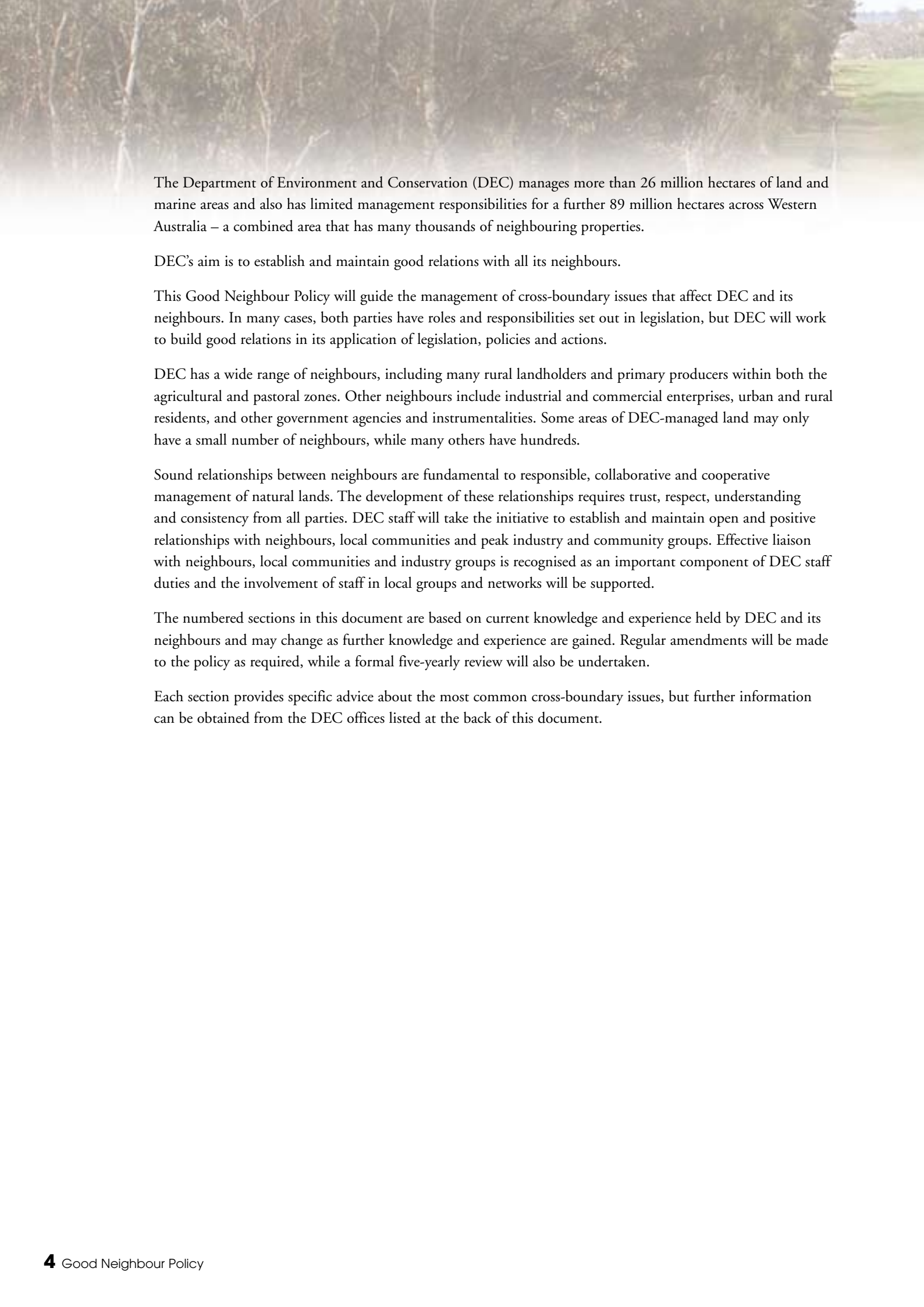
It is important for both DEC and DEC's neighbours to have an improved understanding across a wide range of issues of mutual interest and importance, especially in rural areas. This process commenced with the development of 17 draft position papers on key cross-boundary issues. The development of these papers coincided with extensive discussions with key stakeholders, particularly the Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFF), the Pastoralists and Graziers Association (PGA) and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). A draft Good Neighbour Policy was publicly released in September 2005. The draft policy was mailed out to 250 stakeholders and distributed widely through WAFF and PGA newsletters and during an extensive community consultation process which followed. This included a survey that was distributed to approximately 7000 neighbours of DEC-managed lands. DEC appreciates the generous contribution made by senior representatives of these organisations towards the development of the Good Neighbour Policy.

The Good Neighbour Policy provides some specific information about the most common cross-boundary issues, but not all queries will be answered by the document. There will be a need for telephone, email or personal contacts to resolve some issues. Contact details for DEC's regional and district offices are provided at the back of the document.

DEC will continue to aim to achieve high standards in responding to our neighbours' issues. The policy also helps to provide a strong foundation for a corresponding respect for the values and management directions on DEC-managed lands from our neighbours and surrounding communities.



Keiran McNamara
DIRECTOR GENERAL



The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) manages more than 26 million hectares of land and marine areas and also has limited management responsibilities for a further 89 million hectares across Western Australia – a combined area that has many thousands of neighbouring properties.

DEC's aim is to establish and maintain good relations with all its neighbours.

This Good Neighbour Policy will guide the management of cross-boundary issues that affect DEC and its neighbours. In many cases, both parties have roles and responsibilities set out in legislation, but DEC will work to build good relations in its application of legislation, policies and actions.

DEC has a wide range of neighbours, including many rural landholders and primary producers within both the agricultural and pastoral zones. Other neighbours include industrial and commercial enterprises, urban and rural residents, and other government agencies and instrumentalities. Some areas of DEC-managed land may only have a small number of neighbours, while many others have hundreds.

Sound relationships between neighbours are fundamental to responsible, collaborative and cooperative management of natural lands. The development of these relationships requires trust, respect, understanding and consistency from all parties. DEC staff will take the initiative to establish and maintain open and positive relationships with neighbours, local communities and peak industry and community groups. Effective liaison with neighbours, local communities and industry groups is recognised as an important component of DEC staff duties and the involvement of staff in local groups and networks will be supported.

The numbered sections in this document are based on current knowledge and experience held by DEC and its neighbours and may change as further knowledge and experience are gained. Regular amendments will be made to the policy as required, while a formal five-yearly review will also be undertaken.

Each section provides specific advice about the most common cross-boundary issues, but further information can be obtained from the DEC offices listed at the back of this document.

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DEC's role

DEC has adopted as its mission 'Working with the community, we will ensure that Western Australia's environment is valued, protected and conserved, for its intrinsic value, and for the appreciation and benefit of present and future generations'.

DEC is responsible for administering the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act), the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003* and the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

DEC has eight key objectives:

- To protect, conserve and, where necessary and possible, restore Western Australia's biodiversity.
- To protect, manage and, where necessary and possible, restore Western Australia's natural resources, including land, water and air, and promote the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices in the community, industry and government.
- To provide leadership in the development and implementation of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change for Western Australia.
- To generate environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits through the development of a world-class parks system in terms of ecosystem management and visitor facilities and services.
- To generate social, economic and cultural benefits from forests while sustaining their biodiversity, health, vitality and productive capacity.
- To protect the environment, and people's health and amenity, by ensuring discharges meet approved criteria and contaminated sites are appropriately remediated.
- To develop community awareness and appreciation of the State's natural environment and biodiversity and promote community involvement in and support for its protection and conservation.
- To foster a positive work culture of trust, continuous improvement and anticipation of environment and conservation issues and customer needs, and deliver core business activities in the most effective and efficient manner.

This Good Neighbour Policy will help deliver these objectives.

Principles for effective neighbour relations

- Good neighbour relations rely on a 'two way process' between both DEC and neighbours of DEC-managed lands.
- Establishing and maintaining open, positive and respectful relationships with neighbours is essential, and a priority for DEC staff.
- All landowners and managers can benefit from maintaining a productive and sustainable environment.
- DEC will consider the potential broader social impacts on neighbouring communities when making management decisions and setting Departmental policy.
- Issues and problems are generally best addressed at the local level.

Definitions

Aboriginal site means a place to which the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* applies by the operation of Section 5 of that Act. That section includes, but is not limited to “any place of importance and significance where persons of Aboriginal descent have, or appear to have, left any object, natural or artificial, used for, or made or adapted for use for, any purpose connected with the traditional cultural life of the Aboriginal people, past or present”.

Agricultural zone means the area of land used intensively for agricultural purposes in the south-west division as described in schedule 1 of the *Land Administration Act 1997*, and the local government districts of the Shire of Ravensthorpe and the Shire of Esperance.

Biodiversity values refers to the inherent values in the variety of life forms, the different animals, plants and micro-organisms, their genes and the ecosystems of which they are a part.

DEC-managed lands refers to all lands and waters on which DEC has a statutory management role, including those vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia (i.e. national parks, nature reserves, conservation parks, State forest and timber reserves) and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, freehold land in the name of the Department, acquired pastoral leases and lands managed under Section 33(2) of the CALM Act.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary conservation program, managed by DEC, that recognises the conservation efforts of private landholders and managers and helps them do more to conserve biodiversity on their lands by protecting, managing or recreating suitable habitat.

Native plant or animal means a plant or animal indigenous to the State of Western Australia.

Natural Resource Management (NRM) includes the management of air, water (fresh, estuarine and marine), land and biodiversity.

Neighbour includes any individual, body corporate or association as well as local, State and Commonwealth government agencies or instrumentalities that own, are responsible for, or live on, or near, land adjacent to DEC-managed lands.

Necessary operations are defined in Section 33A(1) of the CALM Act, as those operations ‘that are necessary for the preservation or protection of persons, property, land, waters, flora or fauna, or for the preparation of a management plan’. The necessary operations provisions of the CALM Act apply only to national parks, nature reserves and conservation parks where there is no approved management plan.

Pastoral zone means the area of land, other than land in the ‘Agricultural zone’, which is used principally for pastoral purposes within the rangelands of the State.

Wildfire Threat Analysis is a decision support system used by fire managers to identify and address the risks of fire impacting on assets and values that may include economic, health, biodiversity, infrastructure, cultural and heritage values.

1. Fences adjacent to DEC-managed lands

One of the most common issues between neighbours is the construction and maintenance of fences. This section summarises the legislation relating to boundary fencing, including the clearing of native vegetation, the sale of any timber products from clearing and the maintenance of the State Barrier Fence.

1.1 Agricultural zone

- 1.1.1** Fences dividing properties are controlled by the *Dividing Fences Act 1961*, which does not bind the Crown. The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's Report on Dividing Fences (Project No 33, 1975) recommended that the Crown should only be liable for contribution to the cost of construction and repair of fences in a residential locality on which a private dwelling house is erected or being constructed.
- 1.1.2** There is no legislative requirement for landholders to fence their property. They do however need to ensure that stock does not stray onto adjoining land (refer to section 5). DEC is not liable for damage to fences caused by native animals. Legislative provisions through damage licences exist to mitigate against this damage where applicable (refer to section 6).
- 1.1.3** Where an adjoining landowner seeks to construct a new fence or renew an existing fence that will involve the clearing of native vegetation, a written request for approval is required so that DEC can confirm the alignment against cadastral information and check databases and other maps and records for biodiversity values, including threatened flora and fauna, disease status, soil and water values. A DEC officer will contact the landowner to arrange a site inspection. In some instances, such as minor maintenance involving tidying up an existing access track or firebreak along a fenceline, telephone notification and approval will be sufficient. This will generally be followed up via letter or fax from DEC outlining any conditions to be observed. The site inspection covers how the values listed above will be addressed and also covers clearing width, erosion control, weed infestation, disposal of clearing debris and sale of any forest products generated by the vegetation clearing. A check for Aboriginal sites which may be impacted by the proposed activity should also be conducted at this stage.
- 1.1.4** A clearing width up to five metres may be approved, although this is generally only required where an access track or firebreak is to be installed within the DEC-managed land. Clearing width will depend on the type of vegetation and other environmental and operational factors. Where an access track is not required, a clearing width no greater than three metres will be approved, where fire protection requirements are relevant. Removal of other dangerous trees leaning over the fence may also be authorised, on an individual basis, by the DEC inspecting officer. CALM Act management plans for specific areas may contain specifications contrary to this clause. In this case the details contained within the management plan will prevail. DEC also has broader responsibilities with regard to the clearing regulations associated with the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (refer to section 11.1).
- 1.1.5** The cost of construction and maintenance of the boundary fence rests with the landowner. DEC is not responsible for damage caused by trees falling across fencelines or vegetation growing through fencelines, from within DEC-managed lands. DEC is not responsible for removing trees or repairing fences, but may elect to do so if conservation values are threatened and resources permit.
- 1.1.6** Debris resulting from fenceline clearing is to be heaped on the private property side of the fence unless suitable locations are authorised within the DEC-managed lands. No wire or other non-combustible materials or exotic plants are to be included in heaps on DEC-managed land.

- 1.1.7** Timber products produced as a by-product from fenceline clearing may be taken for sale from private property through a Commercial Producers Licence issued by DEC under the Wildlife Conservation Act. If the timber to be taken from private property is to be removed in log form for the purpose of milling, an Owner's Identification Code (OIC) for the property must be obtained. If the timber is being used on the property from which it was taken, a Commercial Producers Licence and/or an OIC is not required (i.e. the timber is not being sold and is not being removed in log form for milling).

Under the *Forest Products Act 2000* the Forest Products Commission (FPC) is responsible for timber harvesting operations on some DEC-managed lands such as State forest and timber reserves. First and second grade sawlogs on these lands form part of the sustained yield available to the FPC. Any first and second grade sawlogs proposed to be removed from these lands as part of fenceline clearing must be offered to the FPC to fulfil their contractual requirements.

- 1.1.8** Where fences are intentionally or unintentionally damaged by DEC's actions (for example, during fire suppression or other fire management works), DEC will repair the fence promptly to the same standard that existed prior to the damage, by arrangement with the landowner.
- 1.1.9** In some instances, where there is no firebreak or access track on the DEC-managed side of the boundary, landowners have agreed to construct the fence on their property, offset from the boundary, to provide management access to the landowner and to DEC. This avoids further clearing of native vegetation, which can be a significant cost to the landowner on a long boundary. DEC will look at contributing to the cost of such fencing on a case by case basis.

1.2 Pastoral zone

DEC has acquired significant areas of pastoral land to add to the conservation reserve system. Where there is a need to manage stock on or adjacent to this land, and as priorities and resources permit, DEC will contribute on a shared basis to the construction and maintenance of boundary fencing to a standard agreed by both parties along an agreed management boundary. Fencing may be initiated by either party. This arrangement may apply in pastoral lease acquisitions in the Agricultural zone but does not apply to other DEC-managed lands adjoining pastoral leases, unless there is a very high priority to protect conservation values.

1.3 Fences adjacent to road reserves

- 1.3.1** The clearing of vegetation adjacent to fencelines within road reserves is generally a matter between shire councils and landowners or between public utility managers and landowners. Many councils permit a one metre clearing width for vegetation adjoining the fenceline within the road reserve, however proponents should liaise directly with the relevant local authority to clarify this situation.
- 1.3.2** Where clearing by a landowner exceeds the approved width, the action may constitute a breach of the Wildlife Conservation Act or the Environmental Protection Act and DEC officers may be required to check compliance.

1.4 State Barrier Fence

- 1.4.1** The management and maintenance of the State Barrier Fence is the responsibility of the Agriculture Protection Board of Western Australia (APB). The APB has a full-time staff member based in Merredin to coordinate this function.
- 1.4.2** Works adjacent to the fence in addition to the above maintenance, such as additional vegetation removal associated with fire access or similar, are the responsibility of the respective land occupier or manager.

2. Fire management

Fire management deals with the key areas of planning and capacity to deal with fires, prescribed burning to reduce fuel levels, firebreaks and access tracks, and responding to wildfires.

2.1 Preparedness

- 2.1.1** DEC will, wherever practicable, integrate its operations with those of neighbouring landowners to maximise the effectiveness of fire preparedness.
- 2.1.2** DEC will involve itself with the local community in preparing and planning for fire incidents. DEC officers will attend shire and brigade meetings and bushfire advisory committee meetings on a regular basis, as far as resources allow, and participate in the Local Emergency Management Committee process.
- 2.1.3** In consultation with the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA), DEC will make available, wherever practicable, opportunities for training and fire suppression experience to local volunteer brigade members so as to ensure complementary working arrangements and procedures during fire events.
- 2.1.4** Where access to and from neighbouring properties provides clear strategic advantage for DEC's fire control operations, these access routes may be included within construction and maintenance programs, as resources allow, in consultation with neighbours.
- 2.1.5** Consideration of the needs of neighbours to obtain water for fire control operations will be incorporated in establishing and maintaining water points on DEC-managed lands.
- 2.1.6** A regional plan or area management plan may identify different fire management strategies for different climatic sub-regions (bioregions) and land use regions (such as pastoral lands). For example, within the Wheatbelt Region different strategies are required for wandoo woodlands in the wetter part of the Wheatbelt compared to those required for heathlands and mallees in more eastern areas. These differing strategies may be identified in a regional plan or other document.
- 2.1.7** Where a shire or a group of shires, or a group of landholders seeks to develop an integrated fire management plan, assuming this plan encompasses all land types and tenures over an extensive area, DEC will provide input into the development of the plan. Where significant biodiversity and landscape values are at risk, DEC may initiate this type of integrated process.
- 2.1.8** DEC has been assigned responsibility for on-ground management of certain activities with respect to non-metropolitan, non-townsite unallocated Crown land (UCL) and unmanaged reserves. The on-ground management responsibility transferred from the former Department of Land Administration includes fire preparedness. This includes pre-suppression fire management works.

2.2 Fuel management

- 2.2.1** DEC uses prescribed burns to reduce fuels for the protection of community assets and natural values. The location, extent and frequency of burning is determined through an analysis of hazards/fuel loads, risks and impacts of wildfires, as well as the need to apply fire to protect and maintain biodiversity values. Prescribed burns are planned and implemented in line with existing area management plans, or in accordance with interim management guidelines. In the absence of either, burns may also be conducted as a 'necessary operation'. The key pre-suppression tactic for DEC-managed reserves in the Department's Wheatbelt, South Coast, Midwest, Pilbara, Kimberley and Goldfields regions is to maintain fire access tracks if appropriate and to carry out some strategic fuel reduction burning. The size of the park or reserve will determine the requirement for perimeter and internal fire access tracks and suitability for burning (refer to section 2.3.1).

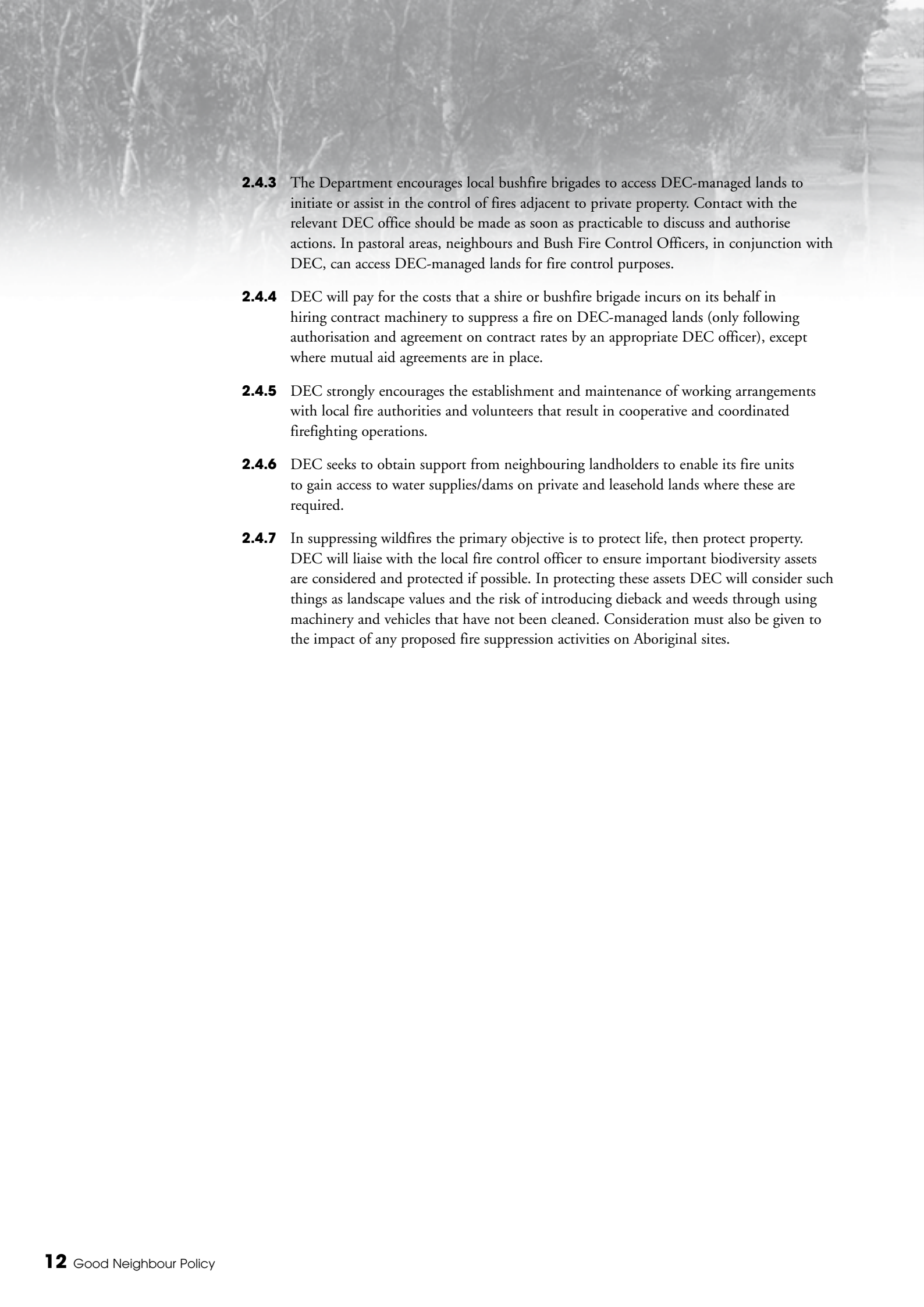
- 2.2.2** Particular attention is given to locating prescribed burns in places that can provide strategic protection to large tracts of fire-vulnerable public land, farmland, plantations and rural subdivisions.
- 2.2.3** DEC will encourage local bushfire brigades and neighbouring landholders to undertake coordinated fuel reduction burns on adjoining lands as well as DEC-managed lands.
- 2.2.4** DEC is committed to advising and consulting with local government on its annual fuel management programs. This is done at a number of levels including shire meetings or bushfire advisory committees, local bushfire brigades and fire control officers. Additionally, DEC's Fire Management Policy commits the department to consulting with traditional owners, the community, government agencies and specific stakeholders during the planning process for prescribed burning.
- 2.2.5** Fuel modification, through scrub rolling or slashing, is also undertaken in some vegetation types to establish strategic buffers. Environmental considerations are included in the planning and implementation of fuel modified buffers.
- 2.2.6** DEC may also undertake prescribed burning with the aim of maintaining or enhancing the conservation of biodiversity.

2.3 Firebreaks and fire access tracks

- 2.3.1** DEC aims to maintain strategic fire access tracks and firebreaks on DEC-managed lands adjacent to private property. These firebreaks and fire access tracks provide for access to and within the DEC-managed estate adjacent to private lands. Refer also to section 1.1.4 if associated with a boundary fenceline. Many DEC regions have a minimum size reserve on which firebreaks or fire access track will be considered.
- 2.3.2** It is impossible to maintain annually the many thousands of kilometres of perimeter tracks and internal firebreaks in a fuel-free condition, however a priority is given to maintaining accessibility through an annual program of works. This program is determined by the availability of resources and by monitoring community needs, fuel age and those areas where the threat of wildfire is highest according to the Wildfire Threat Analysis.

2.4 Wildfire suppression/response

- 2.4.1** *The Bush Fires Act 1954* specifies that the responsibility for controlling and extinguishing bushfires lies with local government authorities and the fire control officers appointed by them. Although this authority may be exercised by an authorised DEC officer when the fire is burning in or near forest or Crown lands managed by the Department, it is the normal practice in regions outside the south-west to remain under the authority of the local Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, although this situation varies on a case by case basis.
- 2.4.2** The Department will respond to fires occurring on or near DEC-managed lands to a degree that is appropriate to the values at risk, the prevailing and forecast weather, the availability of resources, and the cost of the operation. DEC may elect to take control of, or provide assistance where requested on fires near DEC-managed lands in accordance with State and local arrangements between the Department and other fire authorities including local government. Generally, where DEC is a minor provider of resources to a fire, DEC would normally play a support role. Where DEC is the major resource provider or where significant values are threatened and DEC's incident management experience could add value, then DEC may assume control.

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- 2.4.3** The Department encourages local bushfire brigades to access DEC-managed lands to initiate or assist in the control of fires adjacent to private property. Contact with the relevant DEC office should be made as soon as practicable to discuss and authorise actions. In pastoral areas, neighbours and Bush Fire Control Officers, in conjunction with DEC, can access DEC-managed lands for fire control purposes.
- 2.4.4** DEC will pay for the costs that a shire or bushfire brigade incurs on its behalf in hiring contract machinery to suppress a fire on DEC-managed lands (only following authorisation and agreement on contract rates by an appropriate DEC officer), except where mutual aid agreements are in place.
- 2.4.5** DEC strongly encourages the establishment and maintenance of working arrangements with local fire authorities and volunteers that result in cooperative and coordinated firefighting operations.
- 2.4.6** DEC seeks to obtain support from neighbouring landholders to enable its fire units to gain access to water supplies/dams on private and leasehold lands where these are required.
- 2.4.7** In suppressing wildfires the primary objective is to protect life, then protect property. DEC will liaise with the local fire control officer to ensure important biodiversity assets are considered and protected if possible. In protecting these assets DEC will consider such things as landscape values and the risk of introducing dieback and weeds through using machinery and vehicles that have not been cleaned. Consideration must also be given to the impact of any proposed fire suppression activities on Aboriginal sites.

3. Control of weeds

Weed control on DEC-managed lands is prioritised within each DEC region in line with the Environmental Weed Strategy for Western Australia, which estimates that the State has 1350 environmental weed species.

- 3.1** DEC is obliged to control declared plants on the land it manages under the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976* (ARRP Act). However the provisions of the *Agriculture Protection Board Act 1950* take precedence over the ARRP Act to limit any inconsistencies between the two Acts. This is interpreted as allowing DEC in carrying out its responsibilities under the ARRP Act to decide priorities and the level of control based on available resources. The Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF) has proposed a Regional Model for Better Declared Plant and Animal Control that has undergone a period of public consultation, and new biosecurity legislation has been developed. DEC is committed to working with DAF and landholders to achieve effective weed control.
- 3.2** In keeping with the Environmental Weed Strategy, expenditure and resources are prioritised to those weeds and infestations that can return the best value for biodiversity conservation, recognising that it is unrealistic to expect all weeds can be fully controlled on or eradicated from DEC-managed land.
- 3.3** Weed invasion is one of the most significant threatening processes to biodiversity values and DEC's primary focus in weed management is therefore to minimise the impact of weeds on biodiversity. The primary focus of the ARRP Act, however, is the impact of weeds on agricultural production values. Many weeds impact both biodiversity and agricultural production.
- 3.4** In the interests of developing good neighbour relations, DEC will also give a priority to treatment of weeds adjoining private land where landowners are active in weed control within the private land.
- 3.5** In 1999, DEC developed the Environmental Weed Strategy for Western Australia, which now guides the Department's activities in weed management. The strategy identified 1350 weeds considered to be of environmental concern. These weeds were classified as high, moderate, mild or low priority based on their invasiveness, distribution and environmental impacts. Thirty-four of the 1350 'environmental weeds' were rated as high priority and have therefore been targeted for priority control operations on lands managed by DEC. Of these 34, six are also declared plants under the ARRP Act. Some area-based management plans, as well as recovery plans for threatened species and threatened ecological communities, may also contain more detailed and specific guidance for prioritising control efforts.
- 3.6** DEC has an extensive annual program aimed at controlling a range of weeds including blackberry, arum lily, bridal creeper, cape tulip and Patterson's curse. Eradication on most sites is difficult and treatment of problem weeds often requires cooperation between private landholders and DEC.
- 3.7** DEC's regions are encouraged (where resources allow) to develop a weed strategic plan which includes a systematic review of weeds occurring on DEC-managed land.
- 3.8** DEC is committed to meeting its responsibilities under legislation which identifies the responsibilities of land managers for weed and feral animal control. The responsibilities of landholders are also clearly stated in legislation.
- 3.9** DEC views weed control as a partnership, and works wherever possible with the community, and especially neighbours to DEC-managed land, to share the control burden and optimise the benefits from weed control works that are undertaken. DEC will also collaborate with DAF in relation to the provision of consistent messages about environmental weeds that threaten DEC-managed lands as well as agricultural weeds in relevant publications.

4. Control of introduced pest animals

A wide range of introduced pest animals presents a threat to values on DEC-managed lands. These animals include foxes, cats, pigs, rabbits, goats, wild cattle, horses, donkeys and camels. Wild dogs present a lesser threat to nature conservation values but a greater threat to neighbouring livestock production enterprises.

DEC undertakes its own control of most declared animals on DEC-managed lands within the agricultural areas. The Department also undertakes these responsibilities in the rangelands and adjacent agricultural areas as required for the protection of environmental values and on a good neighbour basis. In the rangelands and adjacent agricultural areas, DEC has contributed directly and in kind to control programs, usually negotiated between neighbours with the assistance of Department of Agriculture and Food staff. DEC will continue to seek to integrate and coordinate baiting and culling activities with other landholders where there are conservation benefits and will continue to develop partnerships in this regard.

This process has worked well and will continue to operate on a needs basis. The Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF) has proposed a Regional Model for Better Declared Plant and Animal Control, which has undergone a period of public consultation, and new biosecurity legislation has been developed. DEC is committed to working with DAF and landholders to achieve effective and humane pest animal control.

In July 2004, DEC was assigned responsibility for on-ground management of fire preparedness, feral animal control and weed control on non-metropolitan, non-townsite UCL and unmanaged reserves. This role was transferred to DEC from the former Department of Land Administration to provide cost efficiencies and the application of land management expertise not previously provided to these lands. This includes the actions taken to control wild dogs.

4.1 Foxes and cats

4.1.1 DEC undertakes specific, regular introduced predator baiting programs to protect wildlife in some areas. This program is called *Western Shield*. In other cases pest animal control is undertaken pursuant to the ARRP Act. Baits are laid under strict requirements, and buffers are provided around habitation sites and areas of special use. Consideration is also given to buffers around gates, stockyards, etc. Both aerial and ground baiting are carried out. The *Western Shield* program baits more than 3.9 million hectares of DEC-managed lands, predominantly in the south-west of the State and includes the three key elements of:

- large-scale operations so as to optimise the area:perimeter ratio in the control of foxes;
- substantial research into control of feral predators, particularly cats; and
- returning native animals to former habitats as predators are controlled in target areas.

4.1.2 DEC's *Western Shield* baiting program primarily targets the control of foxes on larger (greater than 2000 hectares) remnants in the south-western portion of the south-west land division.

4.1.3 Research suggests that baiting to control foxes on conservation areas less than 2000 hectares is considered ineffective because most/all of the susceptible species (mid-weight range animals 1-5 kilograms) have disappeared and smaller mammals and reptiles are able to persist in the presence of foxes. Research has shown that to generate effective conservation outcomes, these larger remnants need to be baited at least four times a year. In specific instances, baiting does occur on areas less than 2000 hectares in size to protect highly threatened species.

4.1.4 Baiting foxes for other than conservation reasons (agricultural protection) can have short-term benefits. DEC may assist groups of landowners in coordinated fox control programs by authorising baiting on DEC-managed land and/or purchasing baits for use on DEC-managed land where conservation benefits are clearly demonstrable. Individuals wishing to undertake baiting on their land in conjunction with DEC should approach the relevant District office.

4.1.5 Feral cats are currently not specifically targeted for broad scale control under DEC's *Western Shield* program in the south-west although the Department is investing in the development of a suitable bait to control feral cats.

4.1.6 Some larger reserves in the eastern Wheatbelt and in the pastoral rangelands are purposely not being targeted for baiting until baiting regimes are developed to control feral cats adequately. Feral cats are usually prevalent in these areas and removal of foxes will accentuate feral cat numbers in these areas.

4.2 Rabbits

4.2.1 DEC specifically targets rabbit 'hotspots' where habitat and soil types suit high rabbit numbers. Particular attention is given to those rabbit infestations that threaten significant conservation values, such as threatened ecological communities or populations of Declared Rare Flora (DRF). A coordinated approach with landowners is essential.

4.2.2 Control methods appropriate to local conditions are used.

4.3 Pigs

4.3.1 DEC is not currently able to operate a major control effort against feral pigs in all areas, however a portion of its operational budget for feral animal control is allocated to feral pig control in strategic areas. Control efforts are generally based on the current Feral Pig Management Strategy. It should be noted that the effectiveness of control efforts is hindered by the illegal hunting, transport and release of pigs by recreational shooters onto land managed by the Department, often establishing new populations where they have not previously existed.

4.3.2 DEC is a major participant and contributor of resources to a community-based cooperative feral pig control program in the shires of Plantagenet and Manjimup. DEC is keen to expand this type of project to other areas where pigs present a problem across both private property and DEC-managed lands.

4.4 Goats

Feral goats have been an issue on lands managed by DEC in the arid and semi-arid shrublands for many years. The Department has become responsible for significant areas of additional land in the pastoral zone, as a result of the purchase of pastoral stations under the Gascoyne-Murchison Strategy. DEC supported and was actively involved with the Goat Eradication Campaign administered by the then Department of Agriculture until its cessation in 2002.

DEC remains concerned about the significant impacts from goats on biodiversity values and ecological sustainability in the arid shrublands. DEC's objective is to remove grazing pressure from goats on DEC-managed lands and where there are specific biodiversity values under threat on other lands and, where practical, control activities will be conducted in partnership with neighbours.

4.5 Donkeys, horses and camels

4.5.1 Donkeys, horses and camels have a variable environmental impact depending on numbers and seasonal factors. They threaten biodiversity values through grazing, trampling and impact on waters in the arid and semi-arid zones and also cause damage to infrastructure on pastoral lands.

4.5.2 Camels have the biggest impact on UCL and DEC-managed areas where they graze palatable plants, often in the process causing damage to trees and regrowth. They also drain natural waters (especially rock holes) that would provide water to native animals.

They are also responsible for polluting waters. Camel numbers on UCL in the Goldfields and Pilbara regions are high in some areas where large herds are now being seen. They are present throughout the deserts with estimated populations in inland Australia of at least 700,000.

As well as being resident in pastoral country, camels also move from the desert into pastoral country, damaging fences and managed waters. There are some control measures taken, mainly commercial and opportunistic shooting.

- 4.5.3** Donkeys are much less of a problem in the southern rangelands with small populations on pastoral lease areas and UCL. Donkeys, while in smaller numbers, do graze native vegetation and have environmental impacts as uncontrolled feral herbivores. Control is undertaken by shooting and trapping.
- 4.5.4** Horses are widely scattered in most areas in highly variable numbers, mainly on pastoral leases as they are more water dependent. They do occur on UCL and DEC-managed reserves where there is water. They contribute to grazing impacts and can cause erosion. Consideration will be given to allowing groups with a special interest in horses with historic value to remove animals prior to culling programs being implemented.
- 4.5.5** DEC would like to see pest animal control programs expanded to include donkeys, horses and camels to address the ecological pest problems on UCL and DEC-managed lands as resources permit.

4.6 Wild dogs

- 4.6.1** Wild dog control is undertaken in line with the current Wild Dog Management Strategy, often in partnership with neighbours. Some funds are currently allocated to DEC to undertake feral animal control on UCL. Most of these funds are being directed towards the control of wild dogs. The funds that have been allocated to DEC for this work are the same as those previously allocated to the Department of Agriculture and Food. These funds are limited, requiring rigorous priority setting within the control program.
- 4.6.2** The priorities and programs for wild dog control on DEC-managed lands and UCL are developed in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Food, shires and landholders and local Declared Animal Group (DAG) or Declared Species Group (DSG) committees, where they have been formed.
- 4.6.3** DEC will continue to use both aerial baiting and on-ground dogging and baiting methods for wild dog control in applicable areas.
- 4.6.4** While dingoes are considered vermin in pastoral areas, they are an important component of the natural ecosystem. However, wild dog baiting (including dingoes) is carried out within and adjoining pastoral leases according to a program agreed with the Department of Agriculture and Food.

5. Straying stock on DEC-managed lands

Straying stock has the potential to cause significant environmental damage on conservation reserves and legislation is in place to regulate this.

5.1 Agricultural zone

5.1.1 Neighbours of DEC-managed lands must keep stock off DEC-managed land.

Incidents of stock straying onto DEC-managed lands are infrequent but when these incidents occur there is the potential for significant damage to occur through grazing and trampling of native vegetation. Domestic animals may become feral. Problems are known to occur with cattle, sheep, goats, deer, pigs and horses.

5.1.2 Where the owner of straying stock can be identified, the owner is contacted and required to remove the animals from DEC-managed land. The arrangements for mustering and retrieval are discussed. DEC may offer to assist in the removal of straying stock.

5.1.3 If the straying stock problem persists after several requests, including a written notice to remove the stock, the stock may be mustered by DEC officers or a contractor and impounded or destroyed. Destroying animals is a last resort. Refer also to DEC's Prosecution Policy.

5.1.4 Where an accidental stock incursion occurs onto DEC-managed land, DEC accepts that often immediate removal will minimise the impact on environmental values and also potential stock losses. It is desirable that DEC is notified before action is taken to remove the stock. Where this notification is either not practical or will delay and jeopardise the effective stock removal, the DEC notification may be delayed until immediately following the removal operation. In normal circumstances where this procedure is followed, and is not the result of a repeated number of incidents, DEC would generally not pursue legal action (refer also to DEC's Prosecution Policy, being developed from the previous Department of Conservation and Land Management and Department of Environment policies).

5.2 Pastoral zone

5.2.1 Application of the *Stock (Identification and Movement) Act 1970* is a challenge for DEC especially where cattle, in particular, stray long distances into remote terrain. It may be appropriate to develop a written agreement to formalise the management of straying stock in unfenced sections of boundaries between DEC-managed lands and adjoining pastoral leases. Such agreements may cover monitoring and mustering arrangements, sale of mustered stock and closing of waters close to the lease boundary.

5.2.2 Where mustering of stock is approved on DEC-managed lands, in consultation with neighbours, neighbours bear the cost of mustering and arrange return of branded stock to respective owners. Where DEC has contributed to the cost of mustering, up to 50 per cent of returns from sale of 'cleanskins' may be paid to DEC to cover this cost and ongoing associated expenditure. Agreement to muster is conditional on acceptance that stock remaining on DEC-managed lands (post-muster) may be killed as part of feral animal control programs. Communication with all neighbours is critical to the success of any mustering program. Where mustering is not viable, culling may be required as a means of herd management.

5.2.3 Due to the complexities associated with managing straying stock on DEC-managed lands within the rangelands, the DEC Rangelands Policy Group (RPG) will develop a specific set of operational guidelines to address this issue.

6. Native animals that affect primary production

Only one vertebrate native animal, the dingo, has been declared to be not protected throughout Western Australia. Dingoes can be destroyed on non DEC-managed lands by the property owner/occupier or by a person who is authorised by the property owner/occupier.

In recognition of their potential to cause damage to private property or primary production, several species of fauna have had their protected status varied to allow them to be taken by property owners or occupiers under certain circumstances. The mechanism prescribed by the Wildlife Conservation Act for varying the protected status of fauna is to declare an open season by notice in the *Government Gazette*.

Other fauna can also cause damage from time to time. If an open season notice does not apply to the species causing damage, then the Wildlife Conservation Regulations 1970 provide a mechanism for dealing with the offending animals by way of a damage licence. A damage licence may be issued by a DEC wildlife officer, subject to conditions, to enable a property owner or occupier or his nominated agent to kill or scare fauna if the fauna is causing or is reasonably expected to cause damage. In the case of common fauna causing damage, such as emus, a damage licence will be readily available to destroy the offending animals. In the case of threatened species causing damage, a range of non-lethal crop protection mechanisms will be suggested.

6.1 Fauna known to cause damage for which an open season **does** apply

Open season notices and their conditions change periodically. DEC will be proactive in communicating amendments to listings. DEC wildlife officers will be aware of changes to listings.

6.1.1 *Sulphur-crested cockatoos and rainbow lorikeets*

Can be destroyed by the property owner with a licensed firearm, throughout the south-west land division. A licence is required only if the birds are to be trapped.

6.1.2 *Little corella, western long-billed corella, galah, twenty-eight parrot, Port Lincoln parrot, Australian raven, Australian crow, little crow*

Can be destroyed by the property owner with a licensed firearm if the birds are causing or are reasonably expected to cause damage to plant production or domestic stock. The areas in which open seasons apply vary depending on the species.

6.1.3 *Red-capped parrot, western silveryeye*

Can be destroyed by the property owner with a licensed firearm on land on which there is a commercial orchard, vineyard or flower plantation if the birds are causing or are reasonably expected to cause damage to commercial fruit or flower production. The areas in which open seasons apply vary depending on the species.

6.1.4 *Grey kangaroos, red kangaroos in certain areas and euros*

Can be destroyed by the property owner, lease holder or their approved nominated agent with a licensed firearm in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos if the kangaroos are causing or are reasonably expected to cause damage to primary production. Kangaroos cannot be taken for commercial purposes without a licence. The areas in which open seasons apply are specified in a schedule.

6.1.5 *Australian shelduck (mountain duck) and maned duck (maned goose or wood duck) – restricted open season from 1 January to 30 June each year*

Can be destroyed between the hours of sunrise and sunset by the property owner or their approved nominated agent with a licensed 12 gauge shotgun on managed farmland when the ducks are causing or are reasonably expected to cause damage. Wild ducks cannot be taken for sale, aviculture or keeping. The restricted open season area includes the south-west land division and the Eucla division excluding the Perth metropolitan region. Other restrictions apply.

In the event that any of these species cause damage outside the parameters of the open season notices, a damage licence may be sought from a DEC wildlife officer.

6.2 Fauna known to cause damage for which an open season **does not** apply

Emus, grey kangaroos outside open season areas and white-tailed black cockatoos are known to cause damage at certain times of the year. Damage licences for emus are readily available.

Damage licences for grey kangaroos outside open season areas are subject to a property inspection. Subject to evidence of high numbers or of damage, licences will be made available to destroy appropriate numbers.

Licences for white-tailed black cockatoos will be limited to scare only in view of their threatened species status. Advice will be provided by DEC wildlife officers on non-lethal crop protection methods.

Specific damage control guidelines for individual species may also be produced by DEC where deemed necessary. An example of these is the guidelines for damage by wedge-tailed eagles.

6.3 Native animal pests on DEC-managed lands

Fauna, whether it is protected or not, cannot be taken on DEC-managed land without DEC approval. Some populations of fauna on DEC-managed lands may increase to unusually high levels in certain circumstances. This generally does not apply to birds, but most mammal species are sedentary and they may forage on adjoining developed land.

Some native fauna may cause damage to fences, crops or stock on adjoining land. Native animal pest control measures on DEC-managed land are considered on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the species involved, the circumstances associated with the damage caused and the control options available.

In the case of threatened or uncommon species, such as rock wallabies or tammar wallabies, animals may be removed as part of translocation programs, but this does not provide a long-term solution. Consideration may also be given to arrangements with adjoining property owners to reduce the impact on crops and fences without having to destroy the fauna.

Approved baiting programs for dingoes are conducted in perimeter areas of some of the larger eastern and northern parks and reserves (refer to the Wild Dog Management Strategy).

Emus, when in large numbers, can potentially cause damage to crops and fences. This damage can be mitigated through the damage licence system.

Control programs for kangaroos currently are rarely conducted on DEC-managed land, except during the closure of artificial watering points on lands newly acquired for conservation in the pastoral rangelands. Generally the control of kangaroos is more effective when conducted on adjoining pastoral and agricultural land.

Any activity on DEC-managed lands requiring the use of firearms needs to be approved under the Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002.

7. Access to and activities on DEC-managed lands and waters

There were nearly 12 million visits to lands and waters managed by DEC during 2005-2006, more than half of them by visitors who live in Western Australia. The popularity of different areas and the activities that people want to pursue vary considerably.

- 7.1** DEC-managed lands include national parks, conservation parks, State forest, timber reserves, nature reserves, regional parks and former pastoral leases that have been purchased and await reservation. The manner in which access and activities are managed on these various land tenures varies significantly.
- 7.2** It is recognised that the lands managed by the Department have the capacity to satisfy an important portion of the public demand for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism and in doing so contribute significantly to the social, psychological and economic wellbeing of the community. It is also recognised that immediate neighbours to DEC-managed lands and waters (particularly those within the agricultural and pastoral zones) may have more focused and specific desires for access and expectations than those of the broader community.
- 7.3** DEC has a genuine concern for visitor welfare, as well as a moral and legal responsibility to consider the personal safety and welfare of visitors to DEC-managed lands. At the same time, the Department must also ensure that in preventing injuries and misadventure it does not significantly diminish visitor use and enjoyment. DEC's Policy Statement No. 53 Visitor Risk Management provides staff with a formal process to help identify and reduce risks to visitors.
- 7.4** DEC's Recreation, Tourism and Visitor Services Policy provides guidance on how various activities (predominantly recreational) are to be managed on the range of DEC-managed lands. Some land tenures, for example nature reserves, are more restrictive than others. Area-based management plans (where they exist) provide more specific guidance with respect to activities on particular lands.
- 7.5** Access to open roads and tracks through DEC-managed lands for people and licensed vehicles is generally freely available unless otherwise indicated by signage, barriers or similar.
- 7.6** The use of access routes, not including general public access roads across DEC-managed lands, in conjunction with agricultural operations will require DEC approval.
- 7.7** The movement of stock through DEC-managed lands without authority is specifically precluded by Regulation 15 of the Conservation and Land Management Regulations, which deals with the bringing of animals onto DEC land. There are, however, several cases where the movement of livestock through DEC-managed land has previously been authorised. Each case will be assessed on its individual merits, considering factors such as:
 - impacts on nature conservation values through grazing, introduction or spread of weeds and impacts on native fauna (machinery to be weed free);
 - other alternative routes available in terms of safety and net environmental impact;
 - established similar historical activity;
 - erosion impacts;
 - cost to management;
 - consistency with other decisions and precedents; and
 - any contribution to operational management.
- 7.8** Access onto DEC-managed lands for the purpose of managing utilities such as electricity, telecommunications and water reticulation is often required by neighbours and government instrumentalities. Each case will be assessed on individual merit following the appropriate level of environmental impact assessment.
- 7.9** Local government and other government agencies or instrumentalities often seek access to DEC-managed lands for the purpose of removing basic raw materials (BRM). Access to State forest and timber reserves where appropriate may be facilitated by interim arrangements issued in October 2002 and administered by DEC's Nature Protection Branch. Extraction of BRM from national parks, nature reserves and other conservation reserves, including proposed reserves, is discouraged and must be subject to considerable scrutiny. The Conservation Commission BRM policy deals with this issue in more detail and should be referred to and implemented.

8. Off-reserve conservation programs and activities

Achieving off-reserve conservation outcomes on private and leasehold lands, as well as lands vested in other authorities and local government, is increasingly recognised as pivotal to a whole-of-landscape approach to biodiversity conservation, including complementing formal conservation reserve system objectives.

DEC is committed to off-reserve conservation through a number of programs and activities such as Land for Wildlife and voluntary nature conservation covenants. These programs offer varying levels of management and protection for nature and biodiversity from informal advisory services to encourage active conservation to more formal arrangements such as conservation covenants. In addition to these programs, there are a number of other complementary programs run by a range of non-government organisations and government agencies.

A comprehensive guide, *Biodiversity Incentive Programs in Western Australia*, was produced by the Government of Western Australia in June 2004 and is available on DEC's NatureBase website (www.naturebase.net). This guide provides information to assist landholders with biodiversity conservation on private land, including wetlands.

9. Natural resource management (NRM)

Natural resource management has been used to mean many different things. Broadly defined the term refers to the management of air, water (fresh, estuarine and marine), land and biodiversity. Rural groups often use the term to describe a form of landcare that picks up water conservation and management of remnant bush on farmland.

There are six natural resource management regional groups operating in Western Australia, each with its own constitutional, strategic and operational framework. All aim to lead, plan and coordinate the sustainable use of natural resources in their regions.

DEC is committed to working closely with the regional natural resource management groups and is either represented on or closely associated with each group. Substantial staff resources have been allocated to assisting the groups, particularly in the area of biodiversity planning and program delivery. While most support comes from regionally based DEC officers, central support is also provided, particularly through the Department's Natural Resources Branch within the Nature Conservation Division.

9.1 Salinity

9.1.1 The impacts of salinity on biodiversity, agriculture, service infrastructure (such as roads) and water resources have been well documented elsewhere, and vary across the State according to the time since clearing, land-use and geology. A summary of the cause and extent of salinity is contained in the 1996 document *Salinity: A Situation Statement for Western Australia*, available from the Department of Agriculture and Food.

9.1.2 The *State Salinity Strategy* (2000) and the Government's response to the Salinity Taskforce report *Salinity: A New Balance* (June 2002) are the key documents describing the State Government's policy for salinity, together with the *National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality* (2000). Salinity investment is largely guided by the principles outlined in the State Salinity Investment Framework.

9.1.3 Salinity adversely affects native vegetation and aquatic ecosystems both on and outside DEC-managed lands. In particular, about 450 species of native plants and many native animal species are threatened with extinction from salinity. DEC therefore maintains a strong interest and program in salinity management. Key aspects of the program include the:

- Crown Reserves Program, aimed at improving the management of Crown reserves and thus protecting or improving their water use.
- Natural Diversity Recovery Catchments Program, an intensive management program currently aimed at six catchments. In these areas, DEC works closely with landholders and other agencies to plan and implement management to halt the decline, then recover,

important biodiversity assets. Management is aimed at improving the sustainable use of catchments as well as conserving biodiversity. Additionally, these catchments are important for applied research into salinity, including the development and testing of new tools for managing salinity.

- Land for Wildlife.
- The Oil Mallee and similar programs aimed primarily at improving on-site water use across catchments through the development of new industries based on native plants. Programs such as these should generally be used as part of an integrated package of measures across a catchment or sub-catchment.
- Biological Survey Program, now complete, which provided the core information required to better understand the biodiversity of the Wheatbelt and the implications for it of increasing salinity.
- Wetland Monitoring Program, which is providing long-term data on trends and changes in wetlands in agricultural areas.

9.1.4 All of the Department's salinity activities contribute to a range of other social, environmental and economic goals. They have enormous value in the broader context of achieving more sustainable, profitable land use and conserving natural diversity. Given the Department's statutory conservation role, DEC will participate in integrated land use/conservation/industry development in a manner that focuses simultaneously on outcomes for sustainable land use and conservation of biodiversity.

9.1.5 DEC has developed many important partnerships with landholders, other agencies and other groups and institutions to help deliver salinity programs. One of the inter-agency partnerships (at Lake Toolibin) is now over 25 years old. Partnerships will continue to play a vital role in the success of salinity and other natural resource management activities.

9.2 Revegetation

9.2.1 DEC promotes off-reserve conservation actions that protect biodiversity and complement the formal reserve system, and participates in integrated approaches to improve natural resource management. Revegetation is an important tool for nature conservation and is a key activity in off-reserve conservation.

9.2.2 Revegetation is undertaken for a number of reasons, including:

- providing buffers for existing remnant vegetation;
- creating additional new habitat;
- connecting physically separated remnants (corridors);
- rehabilitation of degraded lands (gravel pits, etc);
- direct salinity/groundwater management;
- mitigating wind or water erosion; and
- provision of protection for grazing stock and providing economic gain.

The majority of revegetation projects will realise a number of these benefits. It is highly desirable to work cooperatively with neighbours in achieving revegetation where a common purpose exists.

9.2.3 To be effective in contributing to the achievement of broader natural resource management outcomes, revegetation is required in targeted areas on a large scale. To implement the scale of revegetation required, it is essential that a significant proportion of the revegetation program realises direct commercial gains, and is integrated into the broader commercial practice of agriculture.

The State Salinity Strategy acknowledges the importance of planting species that are commercially prospective and also contribute to biodiversity conservation. This requires significant focus to be directed towards native plant species.

9.2.4 It is important to note that salinity management actions such as drainage and groundwater pumping can deliver beneficial outcomes or relief in the short term. These actions will be supported by DEC where a net conservation benefit can be achieved. Nevertheless, such actions focus largely on the symptoms of the issue, rather than tackling the root cause.

Revegetation is slower to deliver benefits but it consumes the excess water that drives the salinity problem. Revegetation is regarded by DEC as an essential key activity within a range of integrated water management practices.

9.2.5 The positive effects of substantial revegetation programs are potentially reduced by further loss of native vegetation. The Department will continue to mitigate against this through its administration of clearing controls under the Environmental Protection Act.

9.2.6 DEC will take a lead role in the active management of Natural Diversity Recovery Catchments and ensure that activities undertaken, including revegetation, are consistent with the Department's broader biodiversity protection and restoration goals, and will aid landholders in their work towards salinity control.

9.2.7 DEC will continue research and development into revegetation utilising deep-rooted perennial species. Liaison will continue with the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Future Farm Industries, primarily through the Department's Natural Resources Branch. The CRC is largely focused on perennial plants that will contribute commercially to diversified agriculture.

9.3 Water management – engineering options including deep drainage

Appropriately used, surface water management, deep drainage and groundwater pumping are useful tools for land managers. DEC uses these techniques to protect some conservation areas from the threats of high saline water tables and inundation/waterlogging. It is DEC's approach that these activities should be used as part of an integrated package of measures along with a range of other water management practices. Whole of catchment approaches are essential where water management involves more than one land manager.

Issues

9.3.1 Drainage and groundwater pumping shift water from one position in the landscape to another, which may result in a negative impact on the supplying and/or receiving environment. In respect to conservation reserves managed by DEC the main issues resulting from engineering solutions, including deep drainage relate to:

- Hydroperiod: the timing and duration that the level of water in a wetland exceeds a specified level, affecting wetland vegetation, dependent fauna (including terrestrial fauna using wetlands), etc.
- Water depth and surface area: affects wetted area of wetland, and this in turn affects water relations such as seepage.
- Salt concentration: relationships between salt concentration and the presence/absence of plants and animals are comparatively well understood.
- Salt load: particularly important in relation to salt concentration and crusting of salt on dry lake floors.
- Ionic composition, nutrients: for example, acidity, calcium, magnesium, nitrate, etc may all have negative impacts on plants and animals.
- Sediment: sediment transports many nutrients and has a direct effect by filling wetlands, smothering vegetation or reducing light.
- Habitat extent and integrity, particularly affected by construction impacts: destruction of vegetation, impacts on surface hydrology, erosion.

9.3.2 Conservation reserves are often located in valley floors. Bushland and wetlands in these areas, including streams and associated vegetation, are particularly vulnerable to the above factors.

Management approaches

- 9.3.3** Over the medium (10–20 years) to long term (>50 years) salinity and water management must be approached strategically. This will involve using more than one water management tool. Sustainability of production and conservation across the Agricultural zone will ultimately depend on a range of actions such as engineering for surface and groundwater management, protection and enhancement of remnant vegetation, landscape scale revegetation and the use of sustainable farming systems incorporating perennials with an emphasis on retaining and using water where it falls.
- 9.3.4** Under suitable conditions engineering options, such as drainage and pumping, can be useful. However, it is likely that due to the high cost of installation and operation, these will be more suited to the protection or recovery of high value assets, such as areas of very high agricultural productivity, areas of biological significance, wetlands, town buildings or other infrastructure such as grain delivery points, roads and railways. Where broadscale deep drainage schemes show promise, it is essential that these are trialled and used in a way that does not detrimentally affect land (including aquatic ecosystems) downstream.

Duty of care and engineering issues

- 9.3.5** When evaluating the suitability of using engineering options to manage water at a particular site, landowners and land managers should:
- Ensure proposals are comprehensively and carefully planned by suitably qualified persons on a total catchment basis.
 - Assess the potential cumulative impact of the drain or pumping system, including ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the drain's effectiveness.
 - Ensure receipt of drainage water offsite meets the specific criteria laid down under legislation, and is consistent with the situation of downstream land managers including DEC-managed lands. It is particularly important to take into consideration the risks of increased flooding and sedimentation downstream and associated impacts on ecosystems receiving water that is of different quality and/or quantity.
 - Assess the potential for damage to other property, including Crown lands, as landholders have a duty of care to ensure their management actions do not degrade other private or public assets.
 - Ensure the drainage design adequately provides for managing surface run-off, so as not to accelerate erosion or increase flood risk.
 - Evaluate a comprehensive range of management options including alternative disposal and receipt options prior to implementation.
- 9.3.6** Where possible, improved surface water management systems should be planned and implemented before deep drainage is considered. While existing and new deep drains, groundwater pumping, relief wells and syphons can provide enhanced discharge, there needs to be continued evaluation of their design, implementation and impacts.
- 9.3.7** The ultimate objective of water management should be that it maximises productive use of water where it falls and that the quality and quantity of flows are maintained in a state that protects public asset values, including biodiversity conservation.
- 9.3.8** DEC will work constructively with proponents to ensure that responses to Notices of Intent to drain are consistent with legislation and Departmental policies to ensure nature conservation values are protected.

10. Neighbour and community input to DEC planning and operations

The importance of effective communication and cooperation with the community and interest groups has been widely recognised in the legislation and policies that guide the management of lands entrusted to DEC.

- 10.1** DEC's Policy Statement Number 15 Community Involvement includes as one of its objectives 'to encourage and assist the public to participate in the development of conservation and land management policies, advise on the implementation of plans and facilitate information flow'.
- 10.2** At a statutory level, the CALM Act requires public involvement at two different levels:
- (a) Through the two vesting bodies, the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. Public membership of these bodies ensures a breadth of knowledge and experience in matters relating to conservation and land or marine management.
 - (b) The Act also describes the requirements for preparation of management plans for all lands and waters vested in the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. Public notification of a proposed draft management plan is required and copies of the plan must be made available for inspection. Written submissions on the proposed draft plan may be made by any person, organisation or body, and must be considered when finalising the plan.
- 10.3** An integral part of DEC's public participation process is the establishment and involvement of advisory and consultative committees. These committees play an important role in representing the wider community viewpoint and provide advice to the Department, particularly within planning processes. These committees generally include community members from the districts or neighbourhoods surrounding DEC-managed lands as members and often local government representation. Similarly, consultative committees exist for a range of issue-based topics, as well as for parks or reserves (for example, kangaroo management, wildflower industry, beekeeping).
- 10.4** At a project level, it is common practice (in many areas) to initiate a targeted consultative process with stakeholders. Examples of this include site redevelopments to provide visitor facilities, where key stakeholders such as tourism groups, Aboriginal groups, neighbours and environment groups are often involved from the conceptual stage of a project.
- 10.5** Stakeholder meetings are often held for significant works or activities that are likely to draw a high level of community interest. An example of this type of initiative is meetings held within the south-west areas to discuss indicative prescribed burning programs within the fire management program. DEC also works with FESA and local government to draft Fire Control Working Plans in many areas.
- 10.6** DEC encourages the formation of volunteer groups such as 'friends of' groups, which generally focus on particular geographic areas (such as a national park), and in addition to providing a valuable contribution to management activities within those areas, also provide considerable advice and assistance to management staff.

11. DEC Environmental Protection Responsibilities

- 11.1** Clearing of native vegetation is administered by DEC under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. The protection of remaining native vegetation is an essential step toward sustainable use of our land in Western Australia. Under recently amended laws the clearing of native vegetation requires a permit unless the clearing is for an exempt purpose. A range of exemptions have been developed to ensure that day-to-day activities involving clearing can be undertaken. Clearing applications will be assessed for the impact on biodiversity, water and soil resources, salinity and other environmental issues. More information on the application and approval process is available from DEC offices and its website. Refer to the contacts section (and associated maps) at the back of this document to determine the most appropriate office to contact.
- 11.2** The *Contaminated Sites Act 2003* is administered by DEC and is the most progressive contaminated sites legislation in Australia. Further information on the definitions of 'contaminated' and 'site', requirements for reporting, remediation and how sites are classified is available on the Department's website (www.dec.wa.gov.au/contaminatedsites), by contacting the DEC Contaminated Sites Section on 1300 762 982 or DEC Regional and District offices as listed at the back of this document.

12. Communication, contacts and liaison

- 12.1** Detailed contact information (and maps) for DEC Regional and District offices is included on the following pages. DEC is committed to providing phone and office customer service at a DEC regional level and where appropriate at a DEC district level. Shopfront and counter enquiries can also be attended to at most offices. To allow this to occur expediently and to a high standard, DEC customers and particularly neighbours need to know within which DEC region or district they are situated.
- 12.2** As a minimum, a 24-hour, seven days per week 'point of contact' will be available for emergency and urgent contacts at a regional level.
- 12.3** DEC's website (www.dec.wa.gov.au) allows access to a considerable range of information, including latest news, current major projects, detailed site information and recreational opportunities, management plans and discussion papers, information sheets, publications and links to other useful sites.
- 12.4** DEC currently engages actively with the broader community and neighbours of DEC-managed lands through a number of forums. These include:
- Local Emergency Management Advisory Committees (LEMAC)
 - District Emergency Management Advisory Committees (DEMAC)
 - Visitor and Tourist Centre committees
 - Local authority meetings
 - Park Councils comprising representatives of Aboriginal traditional custodians
 - Regional NRM groups (often also sub-regional and local catchment groups)
 - Bushfire Advisory Committees
 - Regional herbaria
 - Threatened flora and fauna recovery teams
 - Landcare District Committees
 - Focused working groups (for example Midwest Fire Control Working Group, Katanning District East Fire Advisory Committee, Wild Dog Advisory Committee, etc)
 - Agriculture Protection Board Zone Control Authorities and Declared Animal Groups
 - Four-wheel drive associations.

The type and level of engagement varies across areas and over time, generally based on an assessment of need, resources available and the overall benefit.

- 12.5** The use of advertisements in the media, particularly the print media to provide information and notification of important issues, events or changes in management direction is encouraged.
- 12.6** Newsletters or flyers may also be used to achieve rapid, generally localised coverage of important management issues, changes or events.
- 12.7** In some cases DEC has a mandatory and statutory requirement to provide written advice to neighbours in certain circumstances. Examples include notification of intention to burn, undertaking of 1080 baiting and the presence of Declared Rare Flora (DRF).
- 12.8** In addition to the above more structured approaches to communication and liaison, DEC staff are required to respond to written and verbal requests for information and advice as received, attend meetings where requested (and resources allow) and liaise with individual landowners, managers and other agencies with respect to specific operations and issues.

DEC contacts

www.naturebase.net

Kimberley Region

East Kimberley District

Lot 248 Ivanhoe Road
Kununurra WA 6743
Ph: 9168 4200
E: kununurra@dec.wa.gov.au

West Kimberley District

111 Herbert Street
Broome WA 6725
Ph: 9192 1036
E: broome@dec.wa.gov.au

Pilbara Region

Mardie Road
Karratha Industrial Estate
Karratha WA 6714
Ph: 9143 1488
E: karratha@dec.wa.gov.au

Exmouth District

20 Nimitz Street
Exmouth WA 6707
Ph: 9949 1676
E: exmouth@dec.wa.gov.au

Midwest Region

Geraldton District

First floor, The Foreshore Centre
201 Foreshore Drive
Geraldton WA 6530
Ph: 9921 5955
E: geraldton@dec.wa.gov.au

Moora District

Lot 124 Bashford Street
Jurien Bay WA 6516
Ph: 9652 1911
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Shark Bay District

89 Knight Terrace
Denham WA 6537
Ph: 9948 1208
E: denham@dec.wa.gov.au

Wheatbelt Region

7 Wald Street
Narrogin WA 6312
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Great Southern District

Hough Street
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Ph: 9881 9200
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Yilgarn District

33 Bates Street
Merredin WA 6415
Ph: 9041 2488
E: merredin@dec.wa.gov.au

Avon-Mortlock District

55 Fitzgerald Street
Northam WA 6401
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Swan Region

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Swan Coastal District

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Perth Hills District

51 Mundaring Weir Road
Mundaring WA 6073
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Goldfields Region

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Kalgoorlie WA 6430
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E: kalgoorlie@dec.wa.gov.au

South West Region

South West Highway
Bunbury WA 6230
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Blackwood District

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Wellington District

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Collie WA 6225
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Warren Region

Brain Street
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Donnelly District

Kennedy Street
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Ph: 9776 1207
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Frankland District

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E: walpole@dec.wa.gov.au

South Coast Region

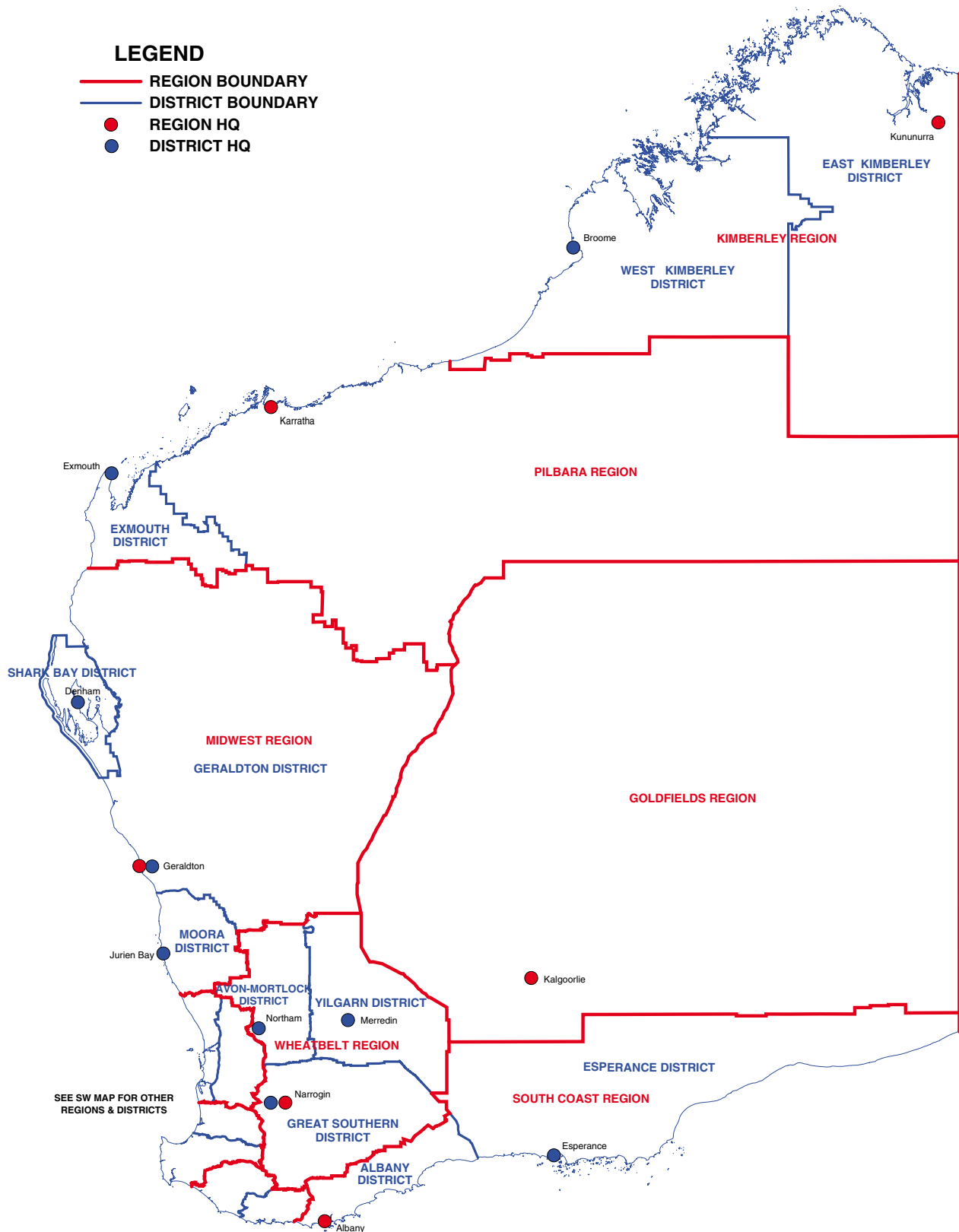
120 Albany Highway
Albany WA 6330
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Esperance District

92 Dempster Street
Esperance WA 6450
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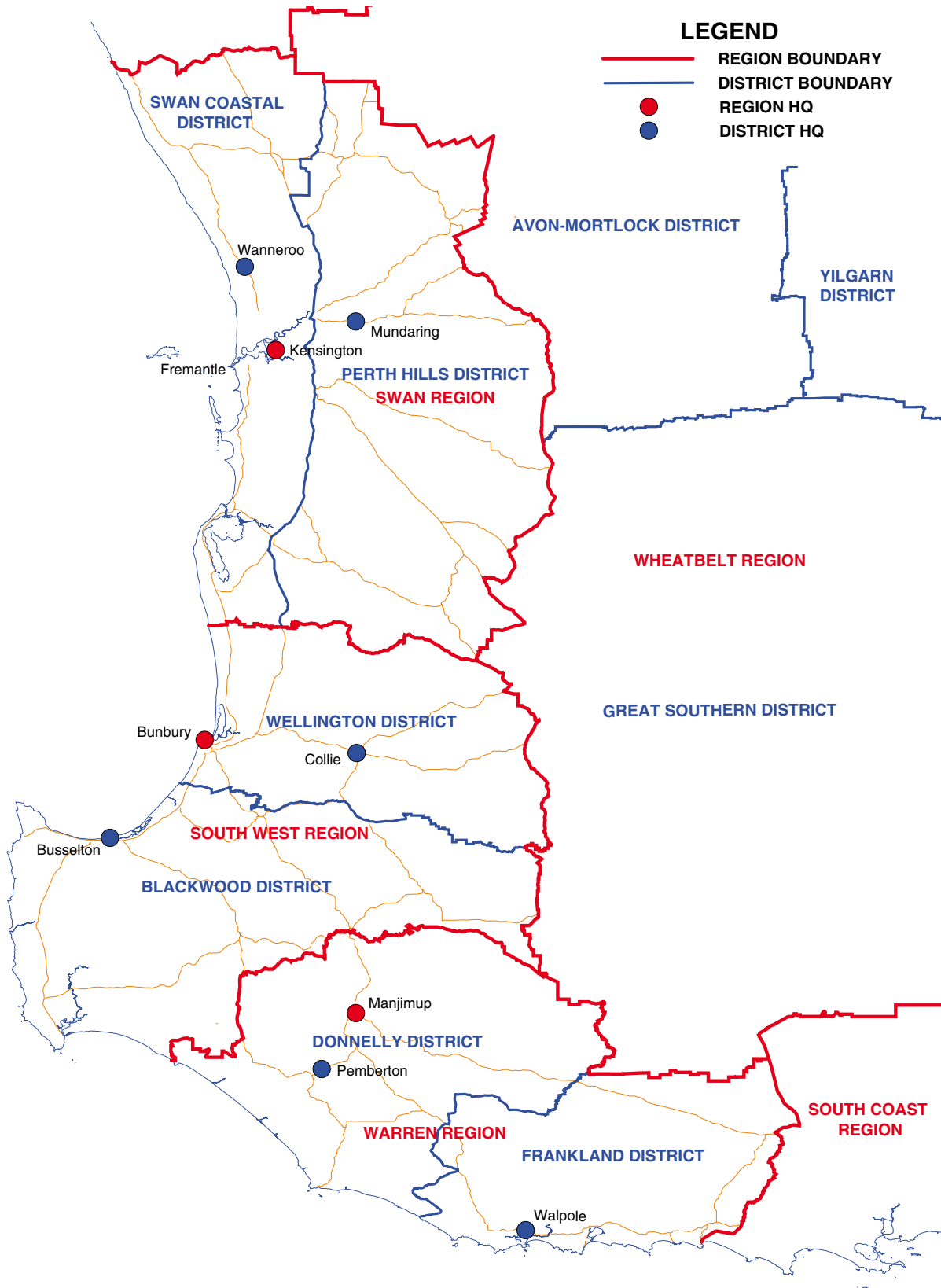
Department of Environment and Conservation region and district boundaries

July 2007



Department of Environment and Conservation region and district boundaries – south-west of WA

July 2007



Department of Environment and Conservation Wheatbelt region and district boundaries

July 2007

