Roadside Conservation Committee

Roadsides - The vital link

2010-2011 Annual Report

Roadside
Conservation
Committee

Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future

This report was prepared by the Executive Officer and Technical Officer of the Western Australian Roadside Conservation Committee

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The recommended reference for this publication is:

Roadside Conservation Committee (2011). 2010-2011 Annual Report, Roadside Conservation Committee, Western Australia.

30 June 2011

Chairperson's Foreword

The Roadside Conservation Committee (RCC) was formed to coordinate and promote the conservation and effective management of rail and roadside vegetation for the benefit of the environment and the people of Western Australia. Road and rail corridor vegetation plays an important role in the conservation of Australia's unique flora and fauna. It provides essential habitat for rare species and forms linkages that facilitate fauna movement, whilst providing a valuable asset for tourism in rural areas.

This year saw the development of a 2010-2015 strategic direction guiding document to assist the RCC in identifying opportunities and priorities for future activities of the Committee to ensure conservation and effective management of road and rail reserve vegetation.

The Committee has also undergone significant change over the last year with four new members appointed to the Committee to ensure continued representation by a diverse group of government and non-government organisations.

The Roadside Conservation Value (RCV) Mapping program has undergone revitalization through investment in new handheld data collection devices which allow community volunteers to collect more environmental data and provide more meaningful results to local governments. While achieving this redevelopment, the Committee also added three new shires to the list of local governments with RCV Maps, being Merredin, Capel and Denmark.

Fittingly was the marking of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, as the RCC saw 11 roads nominated for inclusion into the Flora Roads program, of which 10 were deemed suitable additions to the current register of 36 roads across the south west.

Requests for training and advice from local governments have steadily increased over the last 12 months with the number of Shires undertaking training this year being a record nine individual local government works crew and a further 18 Shires represented at specialized training events (i.e. for Works Managers or Environmental Officers).

The Committee has also provided significant input into strategic issues such as the proposed closure of Tier 3 Rail lines in the Wheatbelt, development of the Wheatbelt Land Use Planning Policy, formation of Environmental Contract Clauses for Local Government contractors, development of a Guideline for Fire Management in Transport Corridors and in developing stronger networks with decision making authorities such as the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

The contribution of the RCC towards the effective management and conservation of road and rail reserve vegetation can be attributed to the quality of Committee members, staff and volunteers that have worked passionately this year to achieve extraordinary results.

Dr Ken Atkins
Chairperson

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Terms of Reference

To coordinate and promote the conservation and effective management of rail and roadside vegetation for the benefit of the environment and the people of Western Australia.

Policies

The Roadside Conservation Committee will promote and aim to achieve the following:

- Encourage rail and road management authorities and utility providers to conserve rail and roadside vegetation where possible.
- Provide information on the importance of rail and roadside vegetation for nature conservation, for landscape protection, and as an amenity.
- Develop rail and roadside management practices that conserve the native vegetation while achieving rail and road management objectives.
- Promote model by-laws, codes of practice and roadside management plans for rail and road management authorities and utility providers to use for conserving and managing roadside vegetation.
- Encourage the rehabilitation of degraded rail and roadsides to local native vegetation communities.
- Encourage the community to be involved in all aspects of conserving and regenerating rail and roadside vegetation.
- Promote specific research programs directed toward the conservation and management of rail and roadside vegetation.
- Promote the training of road managers, contractors and workers in techniques for conserving and managing rail and roadside vegetation.
- Encourage the integration of rail and roadside vegetation into regional management (e.g. natural resources management, conservation and development) strategies by community groups, local government and government agencies.

Membership of the Committee

Current Member	Organisation
Dr Ken Atkins (Chairman)	Department of Environment and Conservation
Mr Murray Limb	Main Roads WA
Ms Kelly Faulkner	Department of Environment and Conservation
Ms Jade Leask	Fire and Emergency Services Authority
Mr Damien Shepherd	Department of Agriculture and Food WA
Ms Jessica Sheppard	Western Australia Local Government Association
Cr Michael Norman	Local Government (City of Joondalup)
Cr Bethan Lloyd	Local Government (Shire of Toodyay)
Mr Craig Morgan	Western Power Corporation
Ms Caitlin Bridgland	WA Gas Networks
Mr Darren Trengove	WestNet Rail
Mr Jeff Anderton	Conservation Council WA
Dr Eddy Wajon	Wildflower Society of Western Australia (Inc.)
No Current Representative	Telstra

Committee Performance

The following performance report is presented against output objectives set by the Committee in the Strategic Direction document. Priorities for these objectives is provided in the Appendix to this report.

These priorities are subject to ongoing review. While some priorities only need small modifications and review to ensure continual improvement, others are deliverable annually and these programs will continued to be reviewed, and where appropriate, the Strategic Direction document amended to fit with the current abilities and priorities of the Committee.

Capability

Objective: To increase the internal and external capabilities of the RCC through resourcing and training.

1. **Grant Applications**

   List of potential grants for which the RCC meets the selection criteria compiled and relevant applications submitted.

   ➔ A list of grants for which the RCC may be eligible has been developed by the RCC Executive Officer. To date, one grant application has been submitted to the Caring for our Country program which was not successful.

2. **Member / Stakeholder Contributions**

   Letter requesting financial support from RCC member organizations sent.

   ➔ A letter was sent to all Government and profit member organisations of the RCC requesting financial assistance for a variety of projects (large to small) planned by the RCC. The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) pledged $3000 for the development and printing of the RCC Fire Guidelines which was finalised on the 13th April 2011.

   ➔ The Wildflower Society of Western Australia (Inc.), while not formerly asked for financial support to the RCC, considered supporting the Roadside Conservation Value Mapping program. However, the Society was not able to undertake this support due to financial restraints.

   ➔ Main Roads WA maintained their commitment to fund half of the Executive Officer's salary.

3. **Local Government Authorities**

   a) Training framework and prioritization for delivery to be developed.

   ➔ A Training Framework for Local Governments has been developed. This document identifies the target audiences and way in which the RCC support training to be delivered to Local Government staff. The document will be amended as required.

b) RCC to conduct training with a minimum of five Shires in each financial year.

➔ The RCC has delivered 'Natural Resource Management in Transport Corridors' training to the following Shires during the 2010-2011 financial year:
1. Shire of Toodyay (13th July 2010)
2. Shire of Northam (13th July 2010)
3. Shire of Quairading (14th July 2010)
4. Shire of Cunderdin (14th July 2010)
5. Shire of York (14th July 2010)
6. Shire of Brookton (14th July 2010)
7. Shire of Beverley (14th July 2010)
8. Shire of Wongan Ballidu (14th April 2011)
9. Shire of Kellerberrin (28st April 2011)

➔ In addition to these individual Shires, the RCC has also engaged with Local Governments through Managers Working Groups to ensure the Committee is known by, and provides advice to, a wider range of Shires.

c) Strategic Planning framework to be developed to assist Local Governments in forward planning.

➔ In 2010, the WA Local Government Association secured grant money for the Road Reserve Asset Management Plan (RRAMP) project. This project aims to use pilot Shires as a model for developing an Asset Management Plan which will ultimately assist LGs in managing the vegetation within the road reserve corridor. An RCC representative sits on the committee which directs this project.
It is anticipated that the project will have deliverables in the 2011-2012 financial year which the RCC can assist to roll out and promote to LGs.

4. State Government Authorities

Training framework for delivery to State Government employees, including MRWA.

➔ A Training Framework for State Government has been developed based on the training framework for Local Government.

5. Utility Providers and Rail Network Managers

Training framework and prioritization for delivery to be developed.

➔ A Training Framework for Utility Providers and Rail Network Managers has been developed based on the training framework for Local Government.

6. Community Members

Increase quality and delivery of community member training.

➔ The majority of the community training undertaken by the RCC is undertaken during the Roadside Conservation Value (RCV) Mapping program as part of the volunteer training. This year the RCC has increased training in areas of vegetation complex identification and weed identification to ensure the quality of data collected under this program is of a high standard and to

satisfy the desire volunteers felt in wanting more general knowledge about their areas.

➔ Also related to this goal was the RCC's involvement in community displays in Dowerin (August 2010) and Wagin (March 2011) where community members were provided the opportunity to come and ask questions about roadside vegetation and its management. This allowed the RCC to increase awareness of the issues facing roadside vegetation as well as allowing the community to make informed judgments on the way vegetation was managed by their Shire.

7. RCC Staff

Increase RCC staff capacity and scope of knowledge (e.g. road engineering requirements, road building techniques and applicable regulations) through training of RCC staff or seeking access to specialist skills through other organizations.

➔ RCC staff have participated in a number of training/conference events over the last year, including:
1. Dieback Information Group Conference (July 2010)
2. Dieback Hygiene Training (Aug 2010)
3. Australian National Plant Conference (Sept 2010)
4. Roads Transport Forum (Oct 2010)
5. Environment and Climate Change Seminar (Oct 2010)
6. Managing Weeds in Bushland Training (Nov 2010)
7. DRF and TEC Information Sessions (Nov 2010)
8. Noongar Acknowledgement Training (Feb 2011)
9. Managing Utilities in Road Reserves Info Session (Feb 2011)
10. Community Forum for Environmental Volunteers (Feb 2011)
11. Engineering and Road Design Training (Feb-March 2011)

Promotion

Objective: To increase knowledge of the RCC, its objectives and services in the political arena and with road and rail reserve managers and the general public.

1. Community Involvement

a) RCC displays at strategic public events.

➔ This year the RCC held displays at two community events: Dowerin Field Days (August 2010) and Wagin Woolorama (March 2011). Both events were well attended, with the RCC engaging with over 300 people at each event, with many others likely to have viewed the display. At both events the RCC shared display space with the Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) which benefited the RCC due to their distinctive profile amongst community members while at the same time saving the RCC the financial costs of having a stand-alone site.

b) RCC to participate in Local Government and Community road shows.

➔ The RCC has engaged Local Governments in a road show style format through interaction with Managers Working Groups such as the Great Southern Managers Working Group.

➔ Community road shows have been limited to one in the Shire of Pingelly in May 2011. However, the offer for community engagement assistance has been given to several Shires dealing with community complaints and requests for assistance.

➔ Additional road shows are planned to be delivered in the 2011-2012 financial year in conjunction with the milestones for the WALGA driven RRAMP project.

c) RCC to select and promote best practice examples of roadside vegetation retention (during road works), revegetation, and Flora Road nomination.

➔ The RCC began working with the Shire of Cunderdin in April 2010 after the Department of Environment and Conservation issued the Shire with an EFN (Environmental Field Notice) for the clearing of native vegetation. The RCC has been providing ongoing assistance to the Shire throughout this financial year. In March 2011 the RCC was invited by DEC to inspect an area for which an application to clear native vegetation had been submitted. The standard of works undertaken to ensure minimal vegetation was cleared was considered to be outstanding. This has resulted in the RCC writing to congratulate the Shire of this effort, submitting articles to the WALGA EcoNewsletter for circulation to other Local Governments and undertaking a site visit in May 2011 with committee members to promote these activities in other Shires and organisations.

d) RCC to explore the development of a current matters newsletter.

➔ To date no action has occurred in this objective. RCC information is maintained on the DEC website and information contributed to other related newsletters.

2. Publications

Publications framework and prioritization for updating to be developed.

➔ A Publications Framework is currently being drafted by the RCC. However, further consultation regarding the priorities of publications is required before finalising.

➔ The 'Guideline for Fire Management in Transport Corridors' was finalized and published during the year as part of the series of publications providing technical information on roadside management issues.

3. Flora Roads Program

Review and promotion of the Flora Roads program.

➔ A review of the Flora Roads program was undertaken in August and September 2010. This review identified the following:
  - There are a number of roads on the register that have not been re-inspected in some time;

- There are a small number of roads which are sign posted on ground but do not appear in the Flora Roads Register;
- The database for managing Flora Roads required some revision for ease of data storage and accessibility.

➔ In October 2010, the RCC undertook to update the Flora Roads Register with roads that were known to be sign posted on ground but did not appear in the database. Ongoing updates will be required.

➔ During the 2010 Spring Flora Road surveys the RCC re-inspected a number of existing Flora Roads to ensure their conservation value had been maintained. Photo logs of these roads were collected and saved into the Flora Roads database for monitoring purposes. All roads inspected still maintained a high conservation value.

➔ Over November and December 2010, the RCC reorganized the way in which data on Flora Roads was maintained to ensure that the data was easily accessible and maintained appropriately. The data was also backed up onto an external hard drive to ensure an accurate record of information is kept over time.

Flora Roads: Declared
- Ficifolia Road, Shire of Denmark
- Scotsdale Drive, Shire of Denmark
- Mt Lindsay Road, Shire of Denmark
- Tindale Road, Shire of Denmark

All roads were declared on the 11th May 2011.

Flora Roads: Nominated
- Denmark-Mount Barker Road, Shire of Plantagenet – nomination accepted, managing authority notified
- Indian Ocean Drive, Shire of Dandaragan – nomination accepted, managing authority notified
- Bibby Road, Shire of Dandaragan – nomination accepted, managing authority notified
- Cervantes Road, Shire of Dandaragan – nomination accepted, managing authority notified
- Munbinea Road, Shire of Dandaragan – nomination accepted, managing authority notified

Flora Roads: Declined
- Coorow-Greenhead Road, Shire of Coorow – LGA declined nomination
- Prices Road, Shire of Moora – LGA declined nomination

4. **Political Profile**

Increase activities which promote roadside conservation to a wider audience including decision makers.

➔ In the last year the RCC has increased its profile through involvement with several high profile issues such as the Grain on Rail campaign which resulted in a parliamentary question on the conservation value of roads proposed to be upgraded. The RCC has also used its programs such as the Flora Roads program to have an increased opportunity for media releases

and radio interviews. An increase in Shire training, networking with DEC and WALGA as well as attendance at large public displays (Wagin and Dowerin) have ensured greater exposure of the RCC.

5. Rail Reserve Awareness

Increase RCC involvement in Rail Reserve management.

➔ Some progress has been made on the inclusion of RCC training into existing programs of rail managers. Discussions were had with the rail manager, WestNet Rail and primary sub-contractor John Holland, regarding the level of training and assistance the RCC can provide in relation to environmental training for rail staff.
John Holland have agreed to increased RCC input into training and have been provided an example training package from RCC to assist in the identification of opportunities for RCC training.

Information and Tools

Objective: To increase the quality and extent of, and access to, Roadside Conservation Value (RCV) data and to integrate the data into land management practices more effectively while maintaining community engagement and development.

1. Mapping Extent

RCC to coordinate Roadside Conservation Values (RCV) mapping with a minimum of five Shires being approached for mapping in each financial year.

➔ Over the past year the RCC has finalised the mapping for the Shires of Merredin and Capel and mapped the Shire of Denmark. The Shires of Esperance, Moora, West Arthur, Wagin, Woodanilling, Boyup Brook, Quairading, Cunderdin, Beverley, Brookton and York have been approached for mapping in 2010/2011.

2. Hardware & Software Upgrade

a) Equipment used for mapping updated to current technological capabilities.

➔ From July 2010 the RCC have undergone an updating of the hardware used to collect survey data due to problems with the old hardware becoming defunct and resulting in data loss. The new hardware devices are HTC slimline PDAs which have increased memory for storage as well as hard drive and SD card backup.

b) RCV survey program review undertaken and improvements to data captured through this system implemented.

➔ In line with the hardware update, the RCV survey software was also reviewed and updated to increase the data captured and simplify the user interface to increase the user friendliness of the program. This software upgrade also links to a newly established RCV survey website where

information is uploaded remotely and stored online, thereby improving data efficiency.

3. Value Adding

Value add to RCC data collected through the use of existing information databases.

➔ Access to DEC data enabled two functions to be added to the RCV data collection process:

- Inclusion of vegetation type selection allows the user to identify the Beard Vegetation Complex represented by the roadside vegetation. This will allow future analysis of the extent of Beard Vegetation Associations within road reserves and therefore a more accurate record for decision makers in determining the potential impacts of clearing certain sections of roadside vegetation.

- Inclusion of DRF (Declared Rare Flora) location data (centroid point) enables the RCV mapping to plot the actual extent of the rare flora population through the placement of DRF markers (yellow hockey sticks). By marking the location of rare flora markers, road managers have a better understanding of where these restricted areas are and DEC have a digital record of the linear spread of populations at these sites.

4. Volunteer Training

c) Increase training delivered to RCV survey program volunteers.

➔ As part of the RCV survey program, volunteers undergo training in the use of the data collection devices (PDAs). In addition to this, 2010 saw the introduction of Weed Identification and Vegetation Complex Identification into the training. This has increased the quality of data collected by volunteers while also providing volunteers with useful training and information.

d) Investigate alternative means of undertaking mapping

➔ No progress on this goal has been actioned to date as the need for alternative mapping methods is not imminent. Focus has been on upgrading the existing process.

➔ The RCC has begun to collect video of roadside data (using phone technologies) for possible use in future actions under this goal.

5. Data Accessibility

e) Publish available RCC data on SLIP portal.

➔ RCC data for Shires with available shape files have been uploaded onto the SLIP portal. DEC GIS is continuing to reverse engineer shape files for Shires mapped prior to the introduction of shape files for the mapping.

f) Publish available RCC data on RCC website.

➔ All available data have been uploaded to the RCC Website and continues to be added to as new data becomes available.

Conservation Initiatives

Objective: To identify opportunities for RCC research and involvement in issues impacting on conservation of rail and roadside vegetation.

1. **Research Opportunities**

    Proposals for three potential research projects to be presented to Committee. Projects to be available to take advantage of any funding or collaboration activity that becomes available

    ➜ Initial development of a research proposal has been undertaken, but not progressed to a full research proposal.

Summary of Progress

Based on the progress report above, the RCC has been able to achieve or undertake significant activity in relation to most of the actions set.

The RCC Strategic Direction Plan for 2010-2015 identifies priorities for achieving the actions. There were three lower priority actions which did not receive any attention over the 2010/2011 financial year, namely investigation into alternate mapping techniques, the feasibility of developing an RCC Newsletter, and development of research proposals relating to roadside conservation.

Alternatives for these actions have been addressed over the last year including an increase in submission of articles into Newsletters produced by other organisations such as WALGA's EcoNews and REC's E-Newsletter.

Discussions with industry experts surrounding a research proposal using remote sensing cameras to detect fauna use of transport corridors have occurred. However at this stage these have not progressed to formal research proposal development stage.

Financial Statement

The total expenditure for the operation of the Roadside Conservation Committee for 2010-11 was $196,119.

Dr Ken Atkins
Chairperson

Appendix 1: Priorities from the Roadside Conservation Committee Strategic Direction Document

Priority (High to Low)	Action Number	Title
1	5.1.3(b)	Capability/ LGA/ Shire training
2	5.1.7(a)	Capability/ RCC Staff Training
3	5.3.1	Information and Tools/ Mapping extent
4	5.3.2	Information and Tools/ Hardware and software upgrade
5	5.1.4	Capability/ State Government training
6	5.1.5	Capability/ Utility Providers training
7	5.2.5	Promotion/ Rail Reserve Awareness
8	5.2.1(a)	Promotion/ RCC Displays
9	5.2.2	Promotion/ Publications Framework
10	5.2.3	Promotion/ Flora Roads Program
11	5.2.4	Promotion/ Political Profile
12	5.1.1	Capability/ Grant Applications
13	5.1.2	Capability/ Member and stakeholder contributions
14	5.1.3(a)	Capability/ LGA Training Framework
15	5.3.4(a)	Information and Tools/ Volunteer Training
16	5.3.4(b)	Information and Tools/ Alternative sources of volunteers
17	5.3.5(b)	Information and Tools/ Data accessibility/ Website
18	5.3.5(a)	Information and Tools/ Data accessibility/ SLIP
19	5.1.3(c)	Capability/ LGA Strategic planning Framework
20	5.2.1(c)	Promotion/ Best Practice examples
21	5.1.7(b)	Capability / RCC engineering staff
22	5.2.1(b)	Promotion/ Road Shows
23	5.3.3	Information and Tools/ Value Adding
24	5.4.1	Conservation Initiatives/ Research Opportunities
25	5.1.6	Capability/ Community Members training
26	5.2.1(d)	Promotion/ Newsletter