

South West Region Threatened Flora and Communities Recovery Team.

2004 Annual Report

by
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Chair of South West Region Threatened Flora and
Communities Recovery Team.

Introduction

The SW threatened flora and communities team again had a full year during 2004 with a number of notable events and challenging incidents keeping many of the members very busy.

Team Membership and meetings

Membership of the team has changed substantially since 2003, principally associated with a reduction in staff from Wellington District and after a period of 2-3 years the filling of vacant positions in Blackwood District.

The current composition is;

Kim Williams	Chair, R/L NC SWR
Russel Smith	Regional Flora Officer SWR
John Carter	D/L NC Blackwood
Andrew Webb	Threatened Flora Officer Blackwood
Janine Liddelow	Project Officer Blackwood
Aarron Grant	Project Officer Blackwood
Tom Kenneally	Acting D/L NC Wellington
Darren Harvey	Project Officer Wellington
Shirley Fischer	Regional Herbarium Grp
Graeme McCutcheon	Community
Will Oldfield	Busselton Shire
Vacant	Warren Region
Dave Mitchell	R/L NC Swan
Val English	WATSCU

Ironstone Workshop

One of the team highlights of 2004 was the Ironstone Workshop held in November. A two and half day field tour, seminar and workshop which reviewed approximately 8 years of recovery action progress associated with the Busselton Ironstone TEC. Each session of the workshop was well attended and included senior researchers from Science Division, WATSCU, Mining company reps, sub regional NRM reps and recovery team members. Priority tasks and recovery directions for the next 5 year period were identified. These were incorporated into an updated IRP for the community.

The mechanism of a "narrowly focused" workshop exploring an individual community or genus of flora appeared to work very well and is under consideration by the team as an annual event.

Threatening Processes - Fire Management

An aspect of threatened flora and communities management that has seen significant development and resources committed over the last 2 years has been the provision of detailed environmental impact assessment information for each of the proposed fuel reduction burns contained in the Fire Management Services annual program.

South West regions assessment and reporting procedures have been through various iterations to achieve a balance between quality of information on which to base a decision versus the time and resources required to compile it. A draft proposal and methodology was presented at the 2004 Annual FMS conference with recommendations for adoption elsewhere across the CALM estate.

Wildfires

In 2004/05 summer fires impacted on 6 TEC or DRF occurrences (Manea Park SCP09 TEC, Wellard Swamp SCP09 TEC, Meelup Mallee, Meelup Granites TEC, Tutunup Road Bsn Ironstone TEC). With the exception of Wellard Swamp all of these fires occurred off CALM managed estate. As a result departmental suppression forces were not either “first on scene” or the “lead agency” responsible for managing the fire. This resulted in the full significance of the Flora or TEC values not being given appropriate consideration during the suppression activities and failure to protect the conservation values from unnecessary disturbance. This highlights the need for the region to complete and fully implement its system of “Emergency Response Plans” for high value conservation assets across the region. One important aspect is the engagement with local government officers and volunteer fire brigades to raise their awareness and skill levels in minimizing fire suppression impacts. This will be progressed during 2005.



The remains of the only *Eucalyptus phylaxis* population following an escape from a Busselton Shire burn in April, 2005

Drought Deaths

A significant issue of concern over the summer months of 2005 has been the death of many species of flora including DRF and priority species in the Williamson Rd occurrence of the Busselton Ironstone TEC. The decline was first noted by local conservation officers from the Blackwood District in mid February during routine inspections of all known sites. This decline has been attributed to drought effects consistent with the summer period and exacerbated by below average rainfall over the last 3 or more years. However, although all occurrences were showing signs of "drought stress", the most severe symptoms were observed at the north west corner of the Williamson Road occurrence, the area in closest proximity to the recently completed mining operation by Cables Sands.

Region and district staff sought advice from Science Division and hydrologist officers before undertaking amelioration measures including a thorough inventory of all threatened flora species and their condition in the drought affected area, a weekly watering program and sought expert hydrological advice on the interpretation of ground water monitoring from piezometer and neutron probe bores situated in and around the perimeter of the site. A permanent irrigation system was installed and the options for additional monitoring bores explored. Further condition monitoring is scheduled.

Despite these actions there has been a substantial reduction in the one and only population of the CR *Gastrolobium papilio* as well as deaths of CR *Dryandra nivea* sub *uliginosa*.



Gastrolobium papilio deaths at Williamson Rd Feb 2005

Regional Herbarium group

The Bunbury regional herbarium volunteers group has once again had an active and productive year with an average of 8 members committing 4 hours every week to the operations and functions of the herbarium. Achievements this year include consolidating the layout and functioning of the new herbarium building opened in late 2003, completed updating and cataloging the scientific collection, commenced updating and rehousing the public reference collection as well as a number of enjoyable field trips assisting local district staff field survey and monitoring plot establishment.

A project to draft a strategic 5 year plan for the operations of the herbarium was commenced but put on hold awaiting the return of the herbarium project officer from extended leave.

A funding application through the SW Catchment Council to employ two project officers to consolidate and reinvigorate the 18 regional herbaria within the SWCC area (all or parts of 4 CALM regions) was submitted and recommended for funding. Funds are expected to be available from August 2005 thru to June 2006.

NRM projects

In addition to the regional herbarium project discussed above a number of other funding applications were submitted to the SW NRM process. The most significant of these was a \$500,000 project for threatened species and communities recovery actions (fauna and flora) for the 2005-2006 financial year. The CALM South West Region is expecting to receive approximately \$110,000 for threatened flora and TEC works. Additionally two project officers will be employed to assist the 4 CALM regions with implementation.

(Sunday, June 19, 2005)