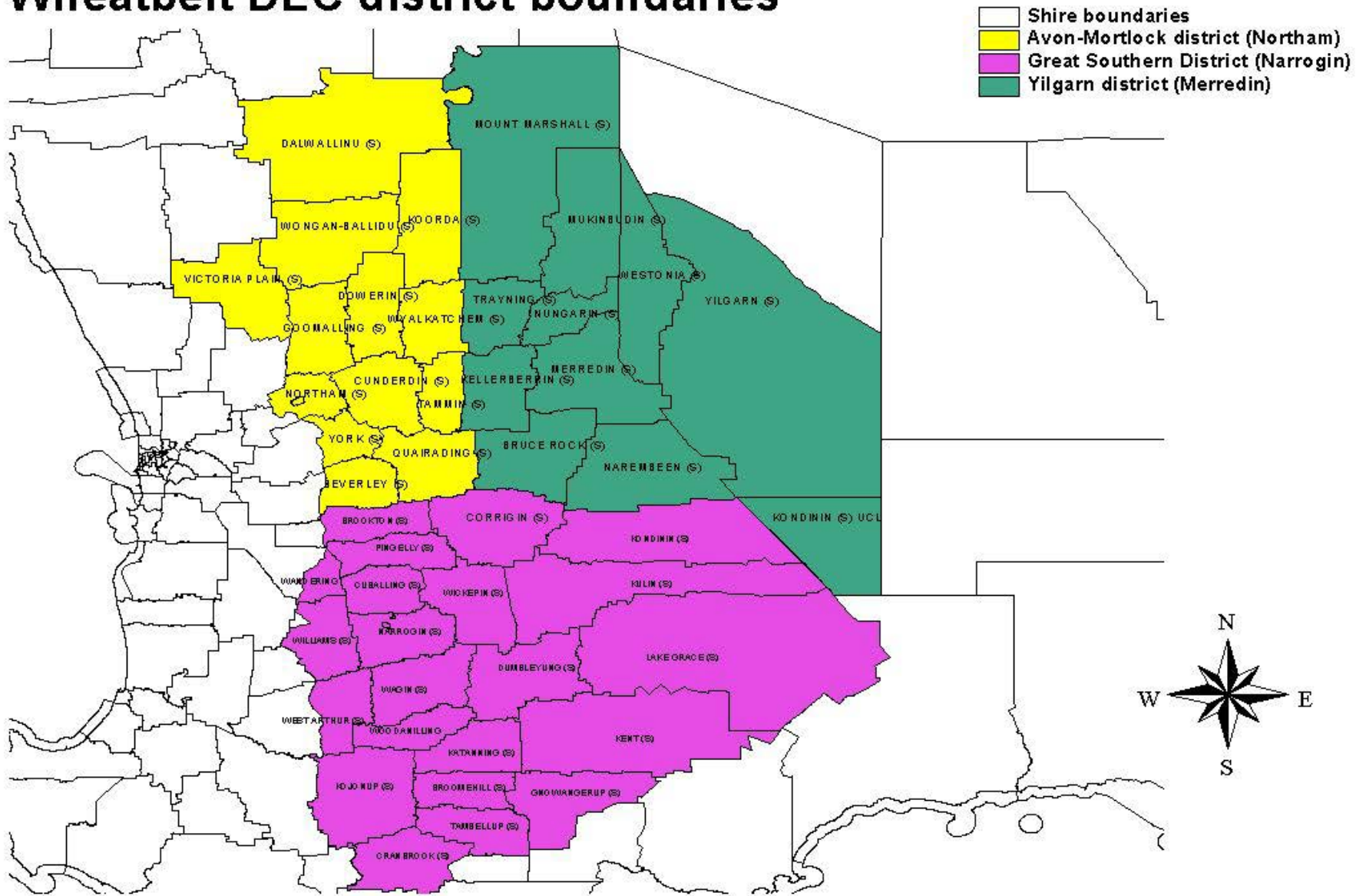




Avon Mortlock District overview

14.1.2009

Wheatbelt DEC district boundaries

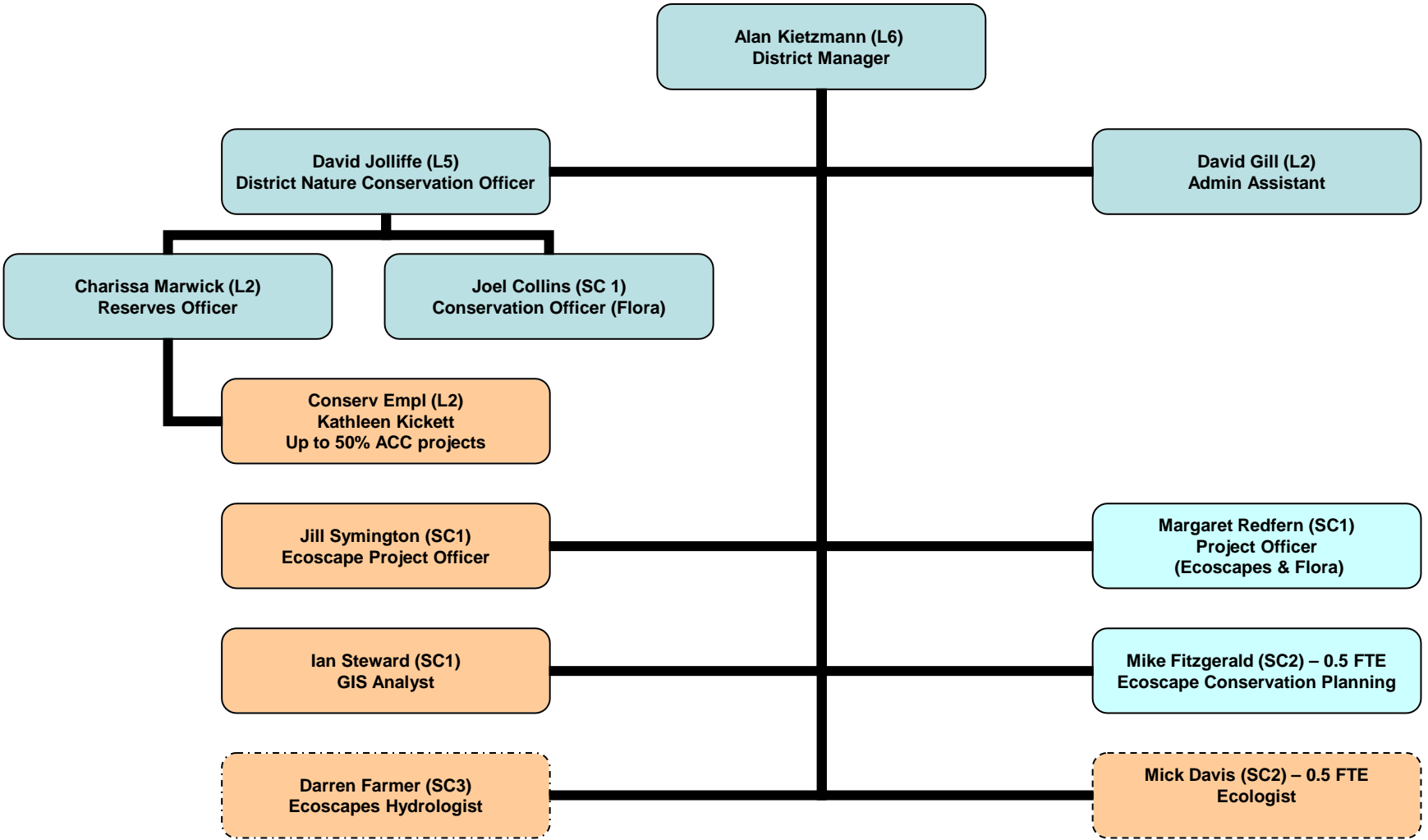


Avon-Mortlock District

- **Part of the only internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot in Australia**
- **Size of District** = 2,942,183.49 ha (29,412.8 km²) & includes 13 LGA`s
- **Includes 133 DEC-managed nature reserves**
 - 29,015.00 ha of conservation estate (median size = 93 ha)
 - < 1 % of District total size in conservation estate
 - 217 proposed DEC-managed nature reserves in District
- **363 threatened & poorly known flora spp**
 - 70 DRF spp (18% of WA 391 DRF spp !!)
 - 293 Priority flora spp (includes 51 Priority 1 flora spp)
- **36 threatened and priority fauna spp**
 - Includes 10 Schedule One Threatened fauna spp and 22 Priority fauna spp
- **1 TEC (Toolibin) & 10 PECs (2 of our PECs are proposed TECs)**
 - 2 of our 10 PECs occur on conservation estate
- **Significant areas:**
 - AW1 and AW2 sub-IBRA regions (National Priority 1 for reservation)
 - Wongan Hills (DRF & endemics; PEC P4; remnants)
 - UCL Jibberding & White Wells (ex Pastoral lease) of 46,000 ha (Dalw) – to be mgt / vested with DEC in 2015

Management approach

- Maintenance of ecological integrity & resilience for high value conservation assets within a highly fragmented landscape
- Prioritization of work based on the conservation assets involved, threat risk assessment & available mgt resources
- Partnership approach with community groups
- Mainly operational at present (strategic conservation planning needs to improve)



Challenges

- Reliance on external funding to operate
 - DEC budget - \$ 508K
 - ACC - \$ 845K (62%)
- Limited capacity to implement activities
- Strategic conservation planning at District level is currently constrained due to reactive nature of our work

District Nature Conservation Officer

- **Implement & coordinate District Nature Conservation Program**
 - Threatened & poorly known flora management
 - Nature reserve management
 - Expansion of conservation estate (assessment of freehold and proposed DEC-managed reserves for possible inclusion into cons. estate)
 - Monitoring programs
 - Strategic conservation planning for District
- **Land use planning**
 - Comment on subdivisions, town planning schemes, local gov. strategy plans, EPA referrals etc)
- **Impact assessments**
 - NOID & NOIC (statutory processes)
 - Miscellaneous assessments (e.g. utility works in reserves)
- **Implement & coordinate District's People Visitor Services (PVS) program**
- **Challenges**
 - Work currently focused on the reactive / responsive
 - Competing work demands (eg land acquisition program; strategic conservation planning suffers)

Flora Conservation

- 70 DRF taxa – 30 endemic to district (42%) and 293 priority (and growing)
- 33 % of DRF spp & 7.5 % of priority flora spp occur on DEC-managed conservation estate – remainder on freehold, road verges, rail reserves & non-DEC managed crown land
- 3241 flora spp (including sub-spp & variants) WA Herbarium collections recorded in Avon-Mortlock District
- Wongan Hills System - High flora diversity 24 threatened taxa endemic to Wongan Hills shire. 19 DRF and 28 Priority taxa occur within the shire
- Active recovery team – Avon Mortlock Rare Flora and Communities Recovery Team, bi-annual meetings
- Active community groups – including the Wongan-Ballidu Bushcare Group
- Recovery actions include – recruitment burns, fencing, monitoring, surveys, weed and rabbit control, seed collection, translocations, herbarium collections for District and Wongan Hills regional herbarium.

Reserves Officer

Pseudo / Operations Officer

- Weed management program
- Feral animal program
- Reserve rehabilitation (mainly Namecatchem NR – Dowerin)
- FAT
- Coordination of Remote Regions Projects – Rubbish removal, signage and seed collection
- PVS – metro counters, infrastructure and maintenance
- OSH Representative
- VRM Assessments
- Reserve Inspections – 133 reserves
- Maintenance of machinery and equipment
- Supervision of ACC Conservation Employee (Noongar Budjar Carer)
- Dealing with general public and community enquiries and issues relating to Nature Conservation and Nature Reserves
- **Challenges:**
 - New to position – little time to settle in. Large work load – spread very thinly over a range of tasks.

Noongar Budjar Carer

- Started in the Avon Mortlock Office in December 2008
- Traineeship through the Avon Catchment Council (ACC)
- Works with the Reserves Officer on a range of projects involving Nature Reserves in the Avon Mortlock District
- Brings local indigenous knowledge to the position
- Undertakes a range of activities relating to the conservation and environment work within DEC and the ACC including fauna and flora protection, construction and maintenance of infrastructure, fire suppression and control, support of tourism and recreational activities

Wongan Hills Ecoscape

- Area: ~ 47,000 ha (14 % rem veg)
 - 3175 ha in conservation estate
 - 3726 ha remnant on freehold
- Includes the Wongan Hills town
- Wongan Hills = PEC
- 19 DRF and 24 Endemic species
- Fauna: 6 species of rare/threatened fauna

Wongan Hills 08/09

- Implementation of recovery actions ID'd in interim conservation plans – on-ground activities eg revegetation, water management, fencing
- Community engagement
 - Negotiation of works with individual landowners
 - Regular communications – newsletters, Bushcare group
 - Workshops and seminars
 - Biological surveys
- Filling the knowledge gaps – threat audit of remnants
- **Challenges:**
- Short funding period with expectancy to deliver outputs
- Uncertainty of future CfoC funding
- Changing community mindset – need to increase their environmental awareness (some landholders still clearing)

Conservation Planning

- Provides support to Wongan Hills, Dale & Westonia (limited work in Tampus)
- Verify threats ID'd in ICP's
- Evolve conservation planning doc's
- Provide technical support
- Challenges:
 - Compressed time frames and funding
 - Staff attraction and retention
 - Limited knowledge of what is out there

Development of Conservation Plans

- Review interim conservation plans (ICP's)
- Develop new conservation plan format
- Assist with development of MERI (monitoring, evaluation reporting and implementation) plan and adaptive mgt
- Objectives, MATS and threat analysis
- Update / populate Wongan and Dale plans
- **Challenges:**
- Understanding diverse planning concepts
- Collating background material
- Hitting the ground running (tight time lines)

GIS support for ND projects

- Spatial & non-spatial data management planning.
- Design, develop & maintain data sets.
- Assist in planning & preparation for field trips.
- Provide appropriate levels of training.
- Undertake spatial analysis & modelling. (Suitability modelling)
- Cartographic support.

Challenges

- Developing an understanding of issues in NRM.
- Promoting the use of GIS within each ND projects.
- Ensuring spatial data reflects the valuable work being done.
- Providing quality advice on all things GIS.
- Promoting the use of GIS throughout the region.

Future District Challenges

- NRM projects
- Upcoming Avon-Mortlock District review
- District management plan – a vital tool for prioritization of work & assist decision-making
- Balancing proactive vs. reactive work