
SHIRE OF COOROW

ROAD RESERVE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Thursday, 20 March 2003



Content:

Following some controversy over Council's Road Reserve Management, a community workshop was held at Maley Park, organised by the Shire and financially supported by the Roadside Conservation Committee.

The focus of the workshop was to develop workable guidelines to assist the Shire with issues surrounding road reserve management.

Objectives:

By the end of the workshop, participants had:

- identified the concerns and needs of the stakeholders;
- articulated guiding principles;
- generated options for roadside reserve vegetation control, roadside conservation, gravel extraction from road reserves and road construction practices;
- developed agreements on guidelines; and
- identified the steps to be taken to assist the Shire.

Participants

Kelvin Bean	-	Shire of Coorow
Gina Broun	-	CALM Moora
Beth Brown	-	Coorow
Winston Brown	-	Waddy Forest
Siu Campbell-Lamont	-	Social Science observer
Marie Carter	-	Moora / Gunyidi
Rebecca Carter	-	CALM
Jayne Cullen	-	Waddy Forest
Alan Corr	-	Shire President, Coorow
Alison Doley	-	Waddy Forest
John Doley	-	Koobabie Coorow
Alaistair Falconer	-	Waddy Forrest
David Falconer	-	Farmer
Fiona Falconer	-	CALM / Farmer
Helen Falconer	-	Coorow
Keith Falconer	-	Coorow
Barry Fowler	-	Coorow
Peter Gillis	-	Shire of Coorow
Moira Girando	-	Councillor Coorow Shire / Marchagee
Helen Hunt	-	Marchagee
Gavin Johns	-	Coorow
Wally Kerkhoff	-	Moora
David Lamont	-	Roadside Recovery Committee
Maria Lee	-	CALM Geraldton
Wesley Manson	-	CALM Geraldton
Leonie McMahon	-	Carnaby's Black Cockatoo Recovery Project – Birds Australia
Adam Meyer	-	CALM
David Mickle	-	Roadside Conservation Committee
Keith Morcombe	-	Waddy Forest
Helen Nankivell	-	Farmer / Shire of Dalwallinu
Betty O'Callaghan	-	Coorow Councillor
Bruce Ovens	-	Farmer
Jim Ovens	-	Councillor, Shire of Coorow
Lyn Ovens	-	Farmer
Gary Sherry	-	Shire of Coorow
John Stacy	-	Marchagee
Greg Waite	-	Waddy Forest
Jan Waite	-	Waddy Forest
Jodie Watts	-	CALM Geraldton

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The workshop identified the following needs with regards to road reserve management:

- Safety of all road users.
- Recognition of all values of road reserves.
- Good usable roads.
- Protection of rare flora.
- Need to conserve indigenous vegetation.
- Protection of old growth vegetation.
- Protection of endangered fauna.
- Protection of landscape function.
- Protection and encouragement of diversity
- Visual aesthetics of road verges.
- Need to control pests (weeds and feral animals).
- Movement of machinery.
- Consultation between all stakeholders on all issues relating to roads.
- Policy and guidelines.

From these needs, the following guiding principles were established:

- Road safety is recognised as a paramount concern for the community.
- There is a strong desire to balance road safety with natural resource management and protection.
- It is recognised that the community has a range of views associated with road reserves.
- It follows that road reserves hold multiple values.
- Consultation is seen as an essential process.
- Policies need to be backed up with clear guidelines.
- Guidance is needed for:
 - vegetation control;
 - road reserve conservation; and
 - road construction.

After discussion on the options for road reserve management, the workshop agreed on the following guidelines:

Road widths and clearing

- Road surface of between 8 metres and 8.6 metres for main roads, as determined by road safety considerations.
- Cleared road width of at least 11 metres.
- In terms of safety, 10.6 metres of cleared area is needed for road trains to pass safely.
- Safety buffer zone of 1.5 metres on each side of main and secondary roads to be pruned, not cleared.
- Vertical pruning to be 6 metres in height.
- Where a large tree species is present in the safety buffer zone (backslope area), real consultation must occur.

Classifying roads

- Classify roads based on values and use.
- Develop a generic template for main roads, side delivery roads and minor roads.
- Designate some roads as conservation roads:
 - Shire to erect signage about large tree species or other high value vegetation in the safety buffer zones;
 - consult with landholders about access options.
- Designate sections of some roads as conservation areas.
- Be flexible in assessing specific sites and sections.

Vegetation control and timing

- Under pending legislation, removal of vegetation will be dependent on a permit, which will only be granted if a management plan is in place.
- The adjoining land tenure and land use must also be considered, as part of the specific vegetation management plan.
- Specific management plans and guidelines should be developed for vegetation types in the Coorow Shire.
- Specific guidelines should be developed for techniques in vegetation control in the Coorow Shire:
 - horizontal and vertical trimming of acacia thickets;
 - selective pruning of older growth species;
 - use of equipment that least damages understory;
 - appropriate disposal of prunings and debris;
 - timing to cause the least disruption to vegetation and landscape.

Protocols for notification of works

- In general, the process should be:
 - notification of intent;
 - comment / objection period;
 - submission review; and
 - independent facilitation (if necessary) including meeting of all parties with presentation of alternatives;
 - implementation of correct and agreed works.
- There also needs to be protocols for a landholder who requests the Shire to undertake clearing or works:
 - the request must be documented;
 - the Shire must document their decision; and
 - the notification system swings into place.
- Education and awareness is an essential and ongoing requirement.
- It was agreed to:
 - publicise the Shire's intended Works Program (five year strategy, annual Works Plan, construction and maintenance);
 - advertise for winter regrades;
 - provide notification for maintenance grading so that local input can be added;
 - notify adjoining land holders of major works; and
 - a minimum of one month notification for major works.

Protocols for revegetation on road reserves

- Protocols are needed for planting, spraying and burning.
- Planting:
 - notify the Local Authority:
 - area, location, preparation of site,
 - type of vegetation and species;
 - plant local provenance and/or plants suitable for the soil type and soil structure;
 - plant understory;
 - establish a seed bank of local species and genetics; and
 - identify areas of conservation significance, ie:
 - rare flora and fauna habitat,
 - threatened communities.
- Fence lines:
 - where there are severely degraded areas, set the fence lines further back and revegetate a worthwhile area;
 - reimburse the landholder for the additional cost of refencing (Shire of Mullewa uses a levy on all ratepayers to fund the fencing costs).
- Spraying:
 - Shire can provide chemicals for spraying or can provide plant species, to be matched with in-kind contributions from the landholder;
 - target specific areas, according to a management plan;
 - focus on working together, in partnership.



Roadside conservation

- Firewood collection and grazing on road reserves are illegal.
- The responsibilities for weed control are unresolved for unvested Crown Land (road reserve):
 - Shire is responsible to the apex of the backslope
 - landholders are responsible for adjoining land but can only control weeds in the reserve from their side;
 - in practice, the Shire sprays declared weeds and works to Agency requests or requirements.
- No controlled burns, east of the Midlands Road.
- Shire to develop a strategic fire plan in conjunction with FESA and the community.

Road construction

- Stockpiles on cleared areas, utilising weed hygiene measures.
- Gravel pits on private land and operated according to a management plan that details extraction and rehabilitation guidelines.
- If a gravel pit is needed in a road reserve, the reserve must be greater than 20 metres.
- Shire to establish a royalties payment scheme.
- For construction guidelines, Shire to obtain a copy of the Code of Practice generated by WALGA, MRD and RCC, review it and get input from the Works team.

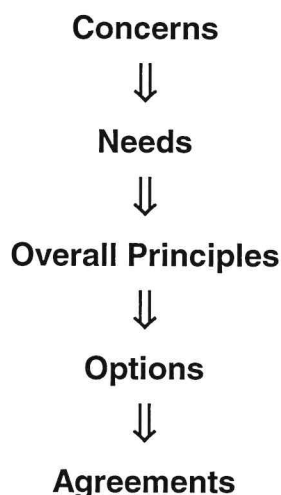
NEXT STEPS

The workshop agreed that:

- The outcomes are to be written up in a report.
- The report is to be sent to the Shire.
- Consultation and changes identified.
- Rewritten guidelines prepared.
- Guidelines put to Council for adoption.

OUTCOME ONE: CONCERNS AND NEEDS

In the first session, the framework for the consultation was laid out as:



Participants were asked to identify all of their concerns in regards to road reserve management.

When all of the concerns had been aired, participants began to identify the needs underlying those concerns.

Needs

The needs are:

- Safety of all road users.
- Recognition of all values of road reserves.
- Good usable roads.
- Protection of rare flora.
- Need to conserve indigenous vegetation.
- Protection of old growth vegetation.
- Protection of endangered fauna.
- Protection of landscape function.
- Protection and encouragement of diversity.
- Visual aesthetics of road verges.
- Need to control pests (weeds and feral animals).
- Movement of machinery.
- Consultation between all stakeholders on all issues relating to roads.
- Policy and guidelines.

These needs are based on groupings of the following concerns:

- Safety of all road users:
 - safety of all road users as a duty of care;
 - safety to all road users;
 - safety:
 - clear visibility around corners,
 - safe surface,
 - designated roads have a speed limit set for the purpose of the road;
 - road safety:
 - two way traffic,
 - fauna awareness;
 - overhanging branches preventing safe overtaking and passing, eg: road train, school bus.
- Recognition of all values of road reserves:
 - perceived lack of value of road verges;
 - lack of awareness of the role of road reserves:
 - fauna and flora corridors,
 - hydrology balance,
 - aesthetic value,
 - genetic resource;
 - harvesting gravel from vegetated verges;
 - identifying acceptable activities on road reserves:
 - gravel pits,
 - blue metal dumps,
 - vegetation 'trimming';
 - concern for the future of high conservation value areas.
- Good usable roads:
 - road surface condition;
 - road width and height.
- Protection of rare flora:
 - protect rare flora;
 - rare flora markers are not respected;
 - loss of only record of local vegetation.

- Need to conserve indigenous vegetation:
 - loss of vegetation:
 - biodiversity,
 - landcare,
 - tourism;
 - gravel extraction on road reserves destroys vegetation.
- Protection of old growth vegetation:
 - loss of big old trees means a loss of habitat, corridors, plants and animals unique to this district.
- Protection of endangered fauna:
 - impact of clearing on endangered species such as Carnaby's Black Cockatoo.
- Protection of landscape function:
 - loss of landscape function:
 - wind erosion,
 - soil decline,
 - changes in hydrological balance,
 - weeds introduced, GMO debate;
 - water management:
 - run-off between roads and paddocks.
- Protection and encouragement of diversity
 - loss of diversity:
 - fire,
 - feral plants and animals,
 - clearing.
- Visual aesthetics of road verges:
 - road clearing has a negative impact on eco-tourism;
 - concern about losing a potential tourism industry.
- Need to control pests (weeds and feral animals):
 - weeds on roadside verge:
 - competition,
 - invasion;
 - denuded landscape:
 - desertification,
 - weeds;

- management of vegetation:
 - clearing profile,
 - drainage,
 - conservation.
- Movement of machinery:
 - moving of over-width machinery.
- Consultation between all stakeholders on all issues relating to roads:
 - lack of consultation about road management:
 - local input and knowledge of the land,
 - balanced decisions;
 - consultation procedure;
 - concern of lack of community consultation with road maintenance program, leading to a continuity of current management (attitude and standards);
 - consultation with landcare groups prior to clearing on roadsides is inadequate;
 - lack of communication between stakeholders;
 - care is taken only after confrontation.
- Policy and guidelines:
 - no policy;
 - no guidelines , Shire staff in the middle;
 - a lack of policy and its implementation at all levels;
 - care is taken only after confrontation;
 - lack of information about road management plans – designation, ability to cope with road widths;
 - least cost, least effort approach leads to inadequate consideration of conservation issues;
 - management needs to be area specific, rather than broad-scale, ie: road widths east and west of Coorow;
 - care in operations and work carried out;
 - disregard for fences in road maintenance:
 - too close,
 - not cleaning up properly;
 - concern of road side maintenance causing:
 - weeds,
 - reduced habitat (through widening),
 - erosion,
 - bush destruction from pushing.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were established:

- Road safety is recognised as a paramount concern for the community.
- There is a strong desire to balance road safety with natural resource management and protection.
- It is recognised that the community has a range of views associated with road reserves.
- It follows that road reserves hold multiple values.
- Consultation is seen as an essential process.
- Policies need to be backed up with clear guidelines.
- Guidance is needed for:
 - vegetation control;
 - road reserve conservation; and
 - road construction.

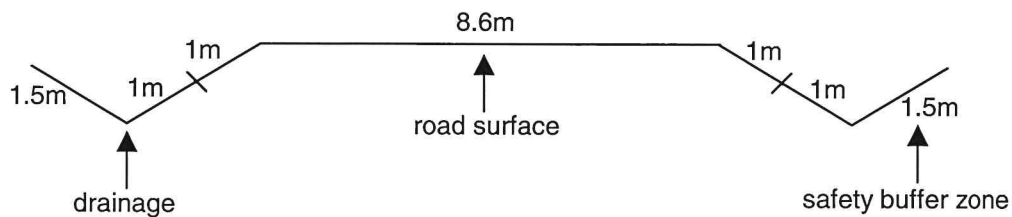


OUTCOME THREE: OPTIONS FOR ROAD RESERVE MANAGEMENT

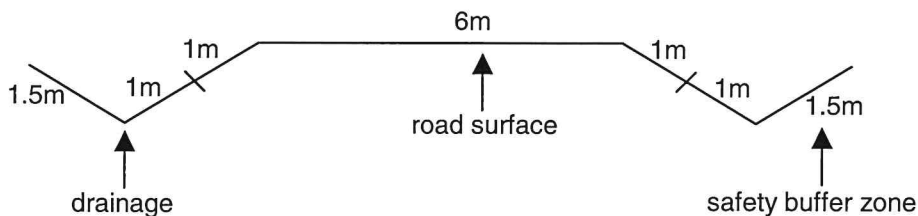
Road widths and road reserves

Group One

- Main access roads, eg:
Coorow Latham Road;
Coorow Maya Road;
East Boundary Road:
 - 1 chain or 20.8 m road reserves;



- minimum width requirement is 16 metres, to handle Road Train Permits issued by Main Roads Authority
 - 12.6 metres of road area cleared;
 - consultation is needed regarding the safety buffer zone; does this have to be cleared or can there be pruning of trees, in this area?
 - 5.2 metres of road reserve vegetation retained.
- Side delivery roads, eg:
Belpa Shenton:

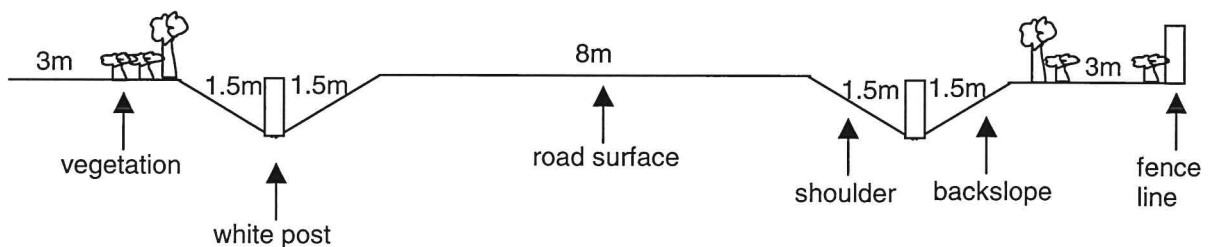


- minimum width requirement is 13 metres;
- 10 metres of road area cleared;
- consultation is needed regarding the safety buffer zone; does this have to be cleared or can there be pruning of trees, in this area?
- 7.8 metres of road reserve vegetation retained.

- Height of road profile:
 - minimum 5.5 metres;
 - pruning to fit profile before tree removal.
- Signage:
 - example: Narrow Road in Width;
Narrow Road in Height.
- Revegetation dovetailed with remnant vegetation maintained off verge by the landholder.
- Replanting of road verges only in consultation with the Shire – a two sided approach.

Group Two

- Normal Road:
 - 20 metres road reserve;



- width of road available 11 metres;
- width of cleared area is 14 metres;
- backslope area is cleared of any vegetation greater than 100 mm in diameter;
- 6 metre of road reserve vegetation retained.
- Vertical clearing:
 - to a height of 6 metres;
 - maintained by pruning, not the removal of trees.
- Timing of works:
 - to cause least disruption during critical times, ie: breeding period, wildflower harvest times.
- Classify roads:
 - dependant on use and values;
 - seasonal traffic;
 - conservation values, eg: flora roads.

Timing and techniques of vegetation control

Group One

- Types (size):
 - 0 – 0.5 metre - not required
 - 0.5 – 2 metres - problem
 - over 2 metres - problem
 - 0.5 – 2 metres: Acacia thickets:
 - overhang roads
 - reduce soil disturbance
 - Current practice – clear or bulldoze it
 - Preferred practice – trim back vertically or
 - horizontally at base
 - Manual labour (staff) or machine (\$60,000)
 - 2 metres and over: Older growth species:
 - Current practice – selective pruning
 - Preferred practice – selective pruning
 - Manual labour (by expert) or machine (less selective)
- Timing:
- avoid harvest
 - avoid fauna breeding time
 - prior to flora seed set



Group Two

- Recommend specific management plans and guidelines for vegetation types in the Coorow Shire:
 - Sandplain;
 - Salmon Gums / Gimlet Forest;
 - Coastal heath;
 - Samphire;
 - Mallee.

- Management plans to specify:
 - timing of vegetation control in each area to protect:
 - fauna, eg: nesting birds, echidnas;
 - flora , eg: not when flowering, seeding and in stressful periods such as drought.
 - spraying:
 - spot and low drift spraying;
 - control of weeds, eg: Patterson's Curse and Calthrop (at different times);
 - revegetation of native species plantings.

- Specific management plans and guidelines for techniques in vegetation control in the Coorow Shire:
 - consider lopping or pruning instead of removing the whole tree and understory (every 5 years, will cost \$160 / hour @ 3 kms/hr).
 - consider using equipment that has the least damaging effect to all the vegetation (protection of the understory vegetation).
 - consider reduced speed areas and signage around high conservation areas, eg: stands of Salmon Gums and larger trees, narrow parts of the roads.
 - no maintenance where the verge is only narrow.
 - appropriate disposal of prunings and debris, eg:
 - not onto fences;
 - best practice on gravel pit brushing;
 - designated area;
 - mulch on private salt pans;
 - consult adjoining land holders.

Protocols for notification of interested persons, for vegetation control and works

Group One

- The process should be:
 - notification of intent;
 - comment / objection period;
 - submission review;
 - independent facilitation (if necessary) including meeting of all parties with presentation of alternatives;
 - implementation of correct and agreed works.

- There also needs to be protocols for a landholder who requests the Shire to undertake clearing or works:
 - the request must be documented;
 - the Shire must document their decision;
 - the notification system swings into place.

- Education and awareness:
 - signs on roads indicating past works, ie: gravel pit rehabilitation;
 - workshops on latest techniques of road verge management and rehabilitation techniques;
 - field trips to visit positive outcomes and learning areas;
 - roadside conservation and safety articles in papers;
 - school participation in roadside revegetation and conservation.



Group Two

- The process should be:
 - publication of Shire's intended Works Program:
 - approximate 5 year Strategy / Program;
 - detail annual Works Program;
 - monthly update in the local paper;
 - consultation period prior to implementation.
- Policy setting out the consultation / implementation process, eg:
 - designated Councilor or Council Officer responsible for vegetation control and management;
 - provide an avenue for direct approach;
 - followed up by written submission and reply.

Group Three

- Construction:
 - intended road works advertised in the local paper (Squark);
 - Town notice boards (Shire, shops);
 - local landcare groups.
- Maintenance (grading and pruning):
 - if practical, advertise in advance.

Protocols for the planting of vegetation on road reserves by individuals or community groups.

Protocols for planting:

- Notify the Local Authority:
 - area, location, preparation of site;
 - type of vegetation and species.
- Plant local provenance and/or plants suitable for the soil type and soil structure.
- Plant understory.
- Establish a seed bank of local species and genetics.
- Identify areas of conservation significance, ie:
 - rare flora and fauna habitat;
 - threatened communities.

Roadside Conservation – practices

Fence set backs:

- To retain high value vegetation where one side of the road has greater value, fence is not necessarily moved.
- Where both sides have exceptionally high value vegetation, retain as much as possible, and use safety signs and speed limits (signage on conservation is controlled by the Shire; speed limits are not controlled by the Shire).
- Where there are severely degraded areas, set fence back and revegetate a more worthwhile area (landholder and Shire, with funding).

Spraying:

- Target specific areas or weeds with a plan.
- Have a revegetation plan for denuded areas for weed management.
- Have realistic expectations:
 - landholder doing it;
 - achievable;
 - economics – viable;
 - effective area;
 - maintain and monitor its effectiveness.
- Landholder and Shire to work together (in West, Shire provides chemicals for control of Patterson's Curse)

Roadside conservation – threats

- Firewood collection:
 - firewood collection on road reserves is illegal.
- Grazing:
 - grazing on road reserves is illegal.
- Weed control:
 - identify problem weeds and their distribution;
 - prioritise problem weeds;

- develop control strategies;
- spray weeds before they seed.

(Determine who is responsible for controlling weeds on road reserves)

- Feral animal control:
 - rabbits, cats, foxes, pigs, goats
 - Shire to co-operate with local landholders to control feral animals.
- Fire:
 - no controlled burns east of the Midlands Road;
 - Shire to develop a strategic fire plan in conjunction with FESA (Shire liaison) and community input.

Road Construction

Group One

- Stockpiles for road making material:
 - cleared areas (previously cleared);
 - weed hygiene measures. ie: sourced from weed-free sites.
- Gravel pits:
 - located (preferably) on private land (with royalties to landowners - currently "works-in-kind" but royalties would be simpler);
 - rehabilitation as per RCC or MRD guidelines;
 - if a gravel pit needs to be in a road reserve, the road reserve needs to be greater than 20 metres;
 - all pits to have a management plan in operation detailing extraction and rehabilitation guidelines.



Group Two

- Construction:
 - check gravel quality;
 - check property reserves;
 - revegetate and reinstate pits when finished;
 - negotiate and compromise, eg: tree screen scars;
 - placing of “off shoots” at best practice;
 - local knowledge of water flow for culverts and washes;
 - guidelines from WALGA;
 - overgrowth of trees, assistance from landholders;
 - in construction, consult with CALM, etc regarding protection of flora;
 - much more discussion is needed regarding clearing and roadworks;
 - much active interest from involved landowners.

OUTCOME FOUR: AGREEMENTS ON GUIDELINES

As detailed in the Executive Summary, including the next steps agreed.

