The following background information was provided to attendees prior to the forum:

Review Of The PVS Research Database & Reference Group

CALM and Western Australia's universities have joined forces to offer students opportunities to become involved in nature-based recreation and tourism research.

CALM staff from around the State has identified a range of research projects that will lead to better management of CALM lands and waters. Projects cover a broad range of categories.

The projects within each category vary from undergraduate through to PhD level, and are assessed for suitability and usefulness by the Nature-based Recreation and Tourism Research Reference Group (NBR&TRRG). The Group also provides some funding to high priority projects. Possible consultancies are also listed under each category.

A couple of years ago, the NBR&TRRG decided to design a database for the research projects they are involved with. This would enable CALM staff, academics and students to identify what projects are currently available, which ones are in progress and obtain details of completed projects.

The database can be found on NatureBase at:
http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/tourism/nbtrp_splash.html. Simply go there and click on the link "See what projects are available, in progress, or completed". This will bring you to the search screen for the database and you are able to search on a number of different fields to find what you are looking for.

I would encourage you to take a look at the database prior to this session if you have the opportunity. We will not have the time or resources to do so on the day.

For your convenience, I have attached sample tables of available projects within each project classification. This will give you some idea of the type of projects that the NBR&TRRG accepts.

The basic objective of the session is to obtain feedback from staff on the database and the PVS Research Programme itself. Any issues raised during the session will be investigated and discussed by the NBR&TRRG at subsequent meetings.

Issues you may want to consider include:

- Ease of searching the database.
- Processes involved in updating the database and nominating new projects.

- Scope of the projects – should we increase the scope to include non-PVS projects that will assist CALM's work?
- Do you see this group as beneficial? Is it assisting you to achieve outcomes?
- Funding is currently $5000 p.a. Sometimes additional funds have been sought from Jim Sharp via capital applications. Are these funds enough to deliver high quality projects with results applicable to daily operations?
- How would you like to see this group evolve? What do you want to get from the NBR&TRRG?

At the forum, attendees were asked to provide feedback on both the database and the program itself. They were provided with 5 topics to discuss. These were:

1. Nomination and Assessment Process (projects)
2. Scope of Projects
3. Database
4. "The Group"
5. Funding

Only the first three topics were discussed due to a limited number of attendees. Below are the comments made/issues raised.

Nomination and Assessment Process (projects)
1. Profile is low – needs promotion internally
2. CALM needs to list criteria for nomination
3. Use PVS annual workshop to gauge current research needs/gaps
4. Objective criteria for assessment for decision making
5. Face to face contact when requesting nominations (Perth, Regions and Districts). Research and Information Management Coordinator to combine this with other field trips
6. Increase funding to attract greater interest and maintain higher quality candidates.

Proposed actions/recommendations:

- External Profile - Develop a flier for universities to increase awareness of the group.
- Internal Profile - Present information sessions (North, Central and South) to increase the Department's awareness of the group's function. Due to the current process, it is difficult to have face-to-face contact when requesting project nominations as the request is sent out at a set time during the year. It would be possible, however, to utilise these information sessions to discuss project nomination and assessment, increase staff knowledge about the process and determine research needs.
- Develop a cover sheet to be sent out with the Project Nomination Form providing information about the process, including the assessment criteria/prioritisation process. Re-evaluate assessment criteria to ensure they are still relevant.
- The identification of current research needs/gaps can either be done through the annual PVS workshop or through the recommended information sessions as mentioned above. By having this session at the PVS Workshop staff would be able to discuss the different issues across the Regions/Districts and possibly

create projects that can include a comparison of situations in different environments.

- Meet with Director, Parks and Visitor Services to determine a long-term approach to an increase in funding for the group. In the interim Executive Officer has applied for Capital funding.

Scope of Projects
1. Consistency in descriptions for each project
2. List issues and outcomes
3. Pitch at State, Local and Federal
4. Integration between Science and PVS projects.

Proposed actions/recommendations:

- Make amendments to the Project Nomination Form to include Project Title (separate from proposed research topic/issue) and Expected Outcomes. Develop parameters for project descriptions.
- The Nature-based Recreation and Tourism Research Reference Group provides CALM staff from around the State with the opportunity to identify a range of research projects that will lead to better management of CALM lands and waters. CALM is also a member of the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) and as such has the opportunity to influence research proposals and priorities for research expenditure. The proposition of information sessions throughout the State will increase staff awareness in relation to the types of projects that can be nominated for both of these research/funding avenues.
- The Department does not currently have a social research policy. The Social Research Strategy and the Conservation Commission are addressing this issue.

Database
1. Online/real time application for review by "the group" – archived if not chosen so other people don't waste time applying again or might highlight priority.
2. Search by Region (CALM) or Location (external) – current only type, status, topic and keywords.
3. Updated to Oracle
   a. make it look better and easier to use
   b. add it to RATIS (or other internal database) as well as being on Naturebase
   c. we (Staff) need to access the updated version
   d. Info on Naturebase also needs to be up to date.
4. Has value for internal as much as external
5. Awareness needs to be raised
6. Regional agenda item to make sure projects are raised
7. Topics/projects are getting lost – were they forgotten or rejected by "the group" – need to get feedback.

Proposed actions/recommendations:

- Could look at having a similar online process as for the Capital Funding Applications. This could allow ease of transference of information from new

nominations to the database and provide an avenue for archiving rejected proposals. Need to talk to David Gough and Peter Fishwick regarding these processes.

- Need to work with David Gough to restyle the layout of the webpage. Also need to determine different levels of access for management, staff and public access. Staff able to search management database but not make any changes.

- All issues with transference of information from the management database to the public database have been resolved. Don't feel it is necessary to have database available on RATIS as well as Naturebase if staff have the link saved on their computers. This could be considered later if further discussions are had regarding the pros of having the database accessible on RATIS.

- Raising awareness of the database would be done at the information sessions, in conjunction with raising awareness of the group.

- Research and Information Management Coordinator to maintain contact with Regional and District PVS leaders to ensure NBRTRRG is kept on the agenda and projects are raised. This would also be discussed at the information sessions and noted for future meetings.

- Once nominations have been tabled Executive Officer to notify nominees in writing as to whether the project was approved or rejected. If rejected, provide explanation as to why.