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Walpole Wilderness Area and adjacent parks and reserves – have your say

Let us know how you think the Walpole Wilderness Area should be managed over the next 10 years.



A draft management plan for the Walpole Wilderness Area and adjacent parks and reserves has been released for public comment. Under this proposal, a large number of parks and reserves will be protected in the Walpole Wilderness Area for the first time.



Department of
Environment and Conservation



Conservation
Commission
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Walpole Wilderness Area

The Walpole Wilderness Area is the proposed name for a group of conservation reserves on the south coast of Western Australia and its hinterland. They have been bought together as part of the *Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves Draft Management Plan*.

The draft management plan, which covers the Walpole Wilderness Area (excluding Shannon National Park) and several nearby reserves, has been developed on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), in consultation with the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee, local communities and other interested stakeholders. This brochure summarises the

Below A variety of vegetation and topography covers the wilderness area.

draft plan's key elements. There is a three-month public comment period and your views are now sought.

The area's values, threats and community expectations will be considered in preparing the final management plan for the Walpole Wilderness Area and adjacent parks and reserves.

The draft management plan proposes the following vision for the area.

The Walpole Wilderness Area is a vast natural and wild landscape embracing the essence of the southern forests and coast of Western Australia. Old majestic jarrah, karri and tingle forests surround imposing granite peaks, peaceful rivers, wetlands and tranquil inlets, and overlook picturesque sandy beaches, sheer coastal cliffs and the Southern Ocean.

The Walpole Wilderness Area will be recognised as an important component of an international biodiversity hotspot, where natural and cultural values, such as wilderness, tingle forest, a threatened and highly endemic and relictual flora and fauna, threatened ecological communities, old-growth forests and wetlands, and our knowledge of them, will be maintained and enhanced for future generations.

This ancient landscape will be recognised for its great visual and aesthetic appeal and for its rich Aboriginal heritage and stewardship, which will be encouraged through joint management with Aboriginal people.

People will find inspiration, enjoyment and livelihoods, and gain an understanding of the natural, cultural and indigenous environment of the Walpole Wilderness Area. Sustainable use of the area, reflecting a custodial spirit, will ensure it will benefit future generations.



Wild places, quiet places

The Walpole Wilderness Area will form a world-class network of reserves totalling almost 363,333 hectares including national parks, nature reserves and other reserves.

Together, the Walpole Wilderness Area and D'Entrecasteaux National Park will create a conservation reserve system stretching from near Augusta in the west to Denmark in the east.

It will offer people the opportunity to experience a unique wilderness area, while contributing to the protection of diverse plants, animals and landscapes.

Located in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, the Walpole Wilderness Area offers remote and natural beauty not readily available in other parts of the south-west.

The area contains an outstanding mixture of landscapes and scenery with forests, granite outcrops, rivers, wetlands, coastal cliffs and beaches. The ecosystems of the Walpole Wilderness Area provide habitat for flora and fauna and are largely undisturbed.



Located in one of the wetter parts of WA, the Walpole Wilderness Area supports a rich array of vegetation and habitats. It protects about half of the old-growth jarrah and karri forests in WA's south-west and supports diverse flora species, a number of which are not found anywhere else in the world.

The giant, old-growth tingle forests are a feature of the area. Rare orchids such as



Above Granite is a feature of this region, as depicted in this photograph of a granite outcrop at Mt Lindesay.

Above right One of the Walpole Wilderness Area's spectacular plants, the Southern Cross flower (*Xanthosia rotundifolia*).

Left The enormous tingle trees that characterise the area are relictual linking back to the flora present millions of years ago.

Below Swamps, such as this one off Beardmore Road, support a huge variety of plant and animal life.



the blue babe-in-a-cradle orchid and a number of threatened ecological communities such as the 'Mt Lindesay-Little Lindesay Granite Community' are also found here.

The Walpole Wilderness Area is home to significant populations of species which are either threatened, only found in the area or have prehistoric links including the quokka (*Setonix brachyurus*), sunset frog (*Spicospina flammocaerulea*), Nornalup frog (*Geocrinia lutea*), Walpole burrowing

crayfish (*Engaewa walpolea*) and the tingle trapdoor spider (*Moggridgea tingle*).

Many rivers start in or pass through the area such as the Shannon, Deep, Weld, Walpole, Frankland, Bow, Kent, Styx, Denmark, Mitchell and Hay. These rivers provide important habitats and also offer recreation opportunities and, in some cases, water supplies.

The Walpole Wilderness Area provides for the protection of most of the Deep River, and contains extensive, varied and nationally significant wetlands, such as the Owingup Swamp and Mt Soho swamps.


Left A remnant of the once prolific timber industry, the Rest Point sawpit.

Below left The creation of the Walpole Wilderness Area will encourage protection of the endangered sunset frog.

Below right Deep River, one of many waterways in the region.

Bottom The tranquil Frankland River.





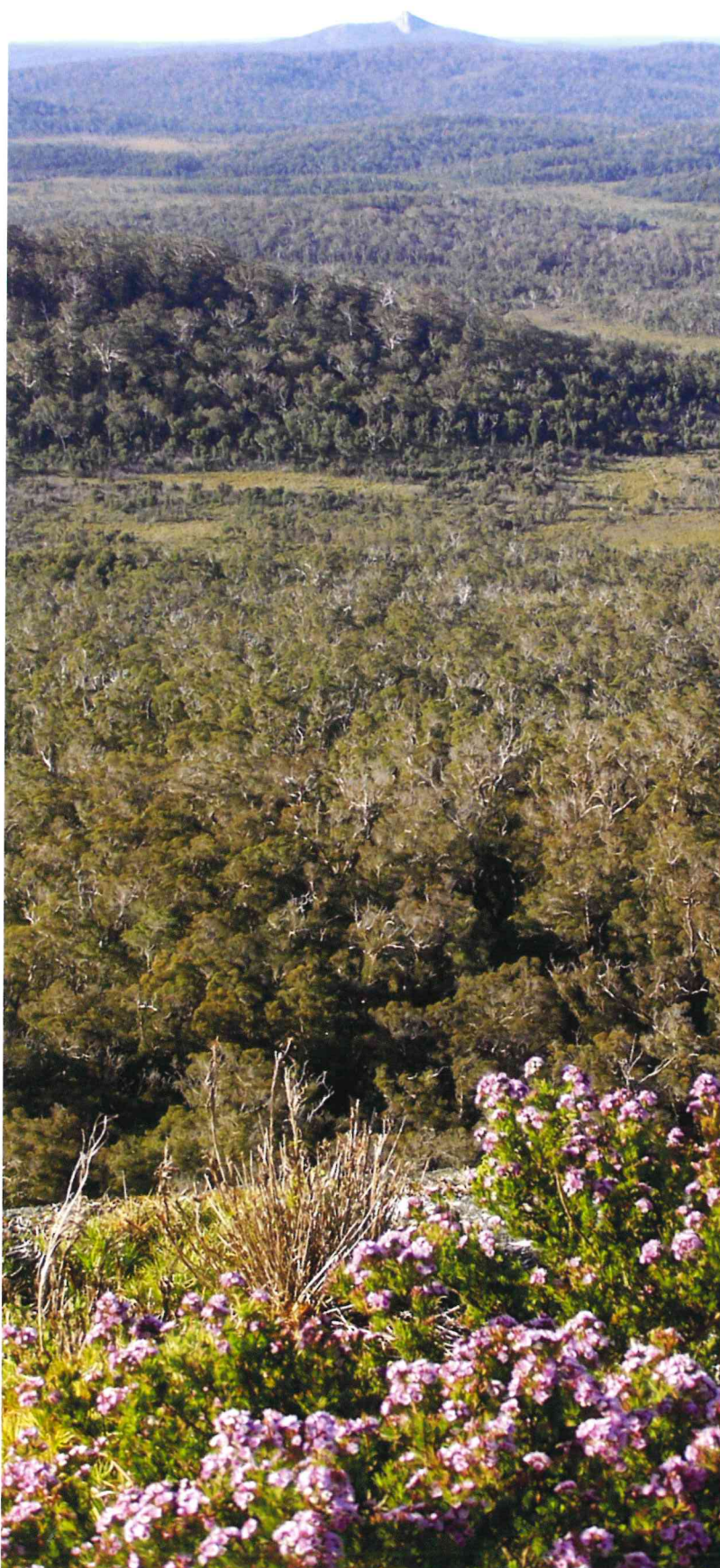
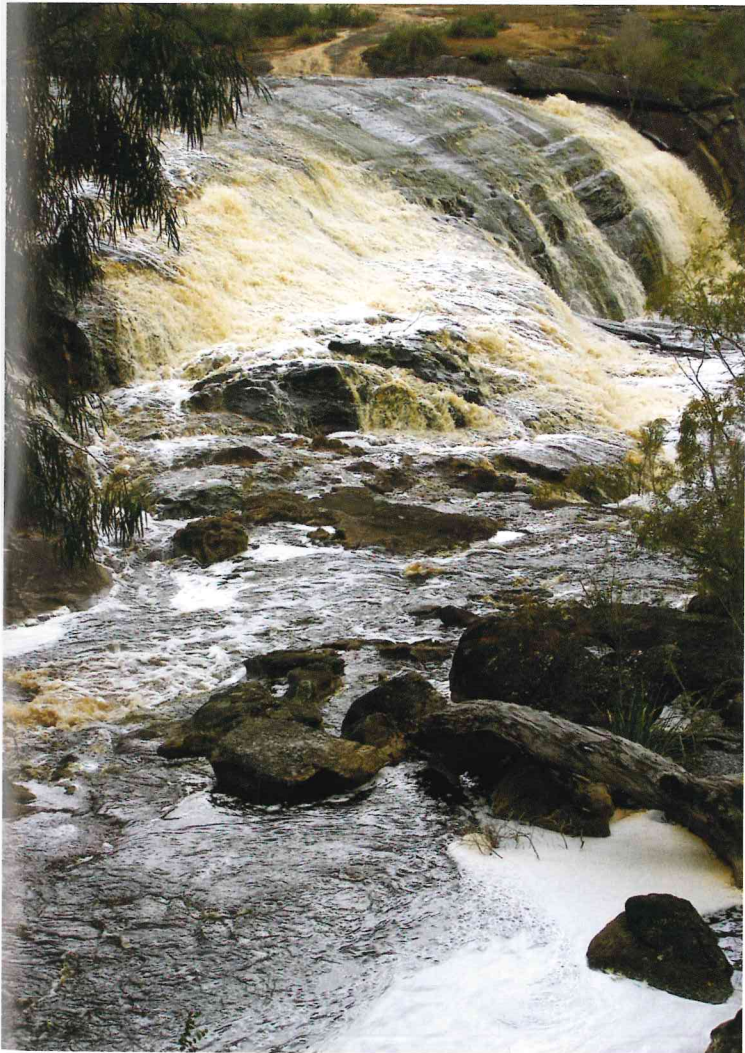
The Frankland, Deep and Walpole Rivers also flow into the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets, which are the focus for planning for a proposed marine park.

The Walpole Wilderness Area has significant value to humans. Nyoongar people have traditional ties to this land, and the area contains sites and landscapes of mythological, ceremonial, cultural and spiritual significance.

There is also non-Indigenous cultural heritage in the area, in terms of exploration, early settlement, and the agricultural/forestry industries.

Below Deep River's spectacular Fernhook Falls.

Right Mt Roe rising above the wilderness with granite outcrop wildflowers (*Verticordia plumosa*) in the foreground—one of the main features of the area.



A growing attraction

The Walpole Wilderness Area has long been popular for recreation with opportunities for picnics, walking, four-wheel driving, climbing, canoeing, fishing and swimming.

In fact, more visitors are travelling to the area for its major attractions. The award-winning Tree Top Walk, for example, attracts more than 175,000 visitors each year to the unique tingle forests in the Valley of the Giants.

The increasing numbers of and length of stay by visitors provide opportunities for the local economy, but also raise a range of issues that need to be managed to ensure the values that attract people to the area are retained.

A study of the economic value of recreation and tourism in the Warren Region by Carlsen and Wood (2004)¹ found that 80 per cent of visitors rated the natural environment as the primary reason for their visit, with 95 per cent of visitors saying the forests were important in attracting them to the region.

¹ Carlsen, J. and Wood, D. (2004) *Assessment of the economic value of recreation and tourism in Western Australia's national parks, marine parks and forests*. CRC for Sustainable Tourism, Gold Coast.

In terms of visitor activities, 90 per cent were found to be 'nature-based' and it is considered that 88 per cent of all visitor expenditure in the region can be attributed to the national parks and forests.

This equates to almost \$62 million a year, demonstrating the major importance of the natural environment to the local and regional economy.

Beyond the economic benefits, tourism also offers an opportunity to communicate with people so that they understand the importance of the Walpole Wilderness Area. To help with this, the Walpole Wilderness Discovery Centre is being developed to enhance the visitors' experience of the area.

The Walpole Wilderness Area is important for nearby population centres including the City of Albany, the towns of Walpole, Denmark, Mt Barker and Manjimup, and the settlements of Rocky Gully, Peaceful Bay, Nornalup and Northcliffe. The draft management plan aims to bring these communities together with a shared vision of the area for the future.



Left Picturesque Walpole Inlet and Rest Point seen from Walpole townsite.

Below left Tourist spot Green's Pool is popular with campers and day trippers.

Below and facing page One of WA's main tourist attractions, the Tree Top Walk, has had almost two million visitors since it opened in 1995.





Key elements of the plan

The plan aims to protect and enhance the unique and significant values of the Walpole Wilderness Area for the benefit of present and future generations. This means protecting the natural environment and cultural characteristics of the area, while also creating recreation and tourism opportunities that are consistent with the area's conservation.

The plan identifies two core wilderness areas that will be given special protection and managed to retain their remoteness and natural beauty.

Plant diseases, particularly *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, are among the most significant threats to the biodiversity of the Walpole Wilderness Area. The plan proposes to map the occurrence of *P. cinnamomi* using aerial photographic interpretation, identify large uninfected protectable areas and to apply management programs to minimise disease spread.

The management of fire is also another important part of the plan. The focus for fire management will continue to be on applying fire regimes that conserve biodiversity, and



Top Visitors enjoy the outlook at Circular Pool.

Top right An unsealed road takes visitors on a charming trip through Swarbrick Forest.

Above Tingle trees line many of the roads.

Left Brushtail possums can be seen on night stalks.

A range of conservation strategies aimed at protecting flora, fauna and landscapes, and managing threatening processes such as weeds, plant diseases and pest animals and inappropriate fire regimes are also outlined in the plan.

protecting life and property, fire-sensitive and threatened species and communities and other community assets. Fire planning and review processes will include community involvement. Fire management across the planning area will continue to be reviewed, and if necessary adjusted, in response to the results of the collaborative long-term landscape-scale 'Fire Mosaic Project' research trial and other improved knowledge.

In order to provide visitors with a wide range of nature-based opportunities to experience the diversity of the Walpole Wilderness Area, the plan allows for appropriate recreation development. New developments are proposed including interpretive entry points and drive trails, and facilities that cater for a range of recreational activities. The scale of the Walpole Wilderness Area ensures a spectrum of visitor sites and experiences is on offer, ranging from the more accessible and

highly visited settings to remote individual encounters with wilderness. Many of the older attractions will also be renovated.

The priority for works will be based in the following areas:

- those that have a high safety risk to visitors;
- those risking environmental degradation from the visiting public;
- those of high environmental value;
- those where there will be potential social benefits;
- those that can provide a range of experiences across the region;
- those where there is a high public demand across a broad section of the community; and
- those where there will be potential economic benefits.

Tourism and recreation also provide opportunities to communicate the importance of Walpole Wilderness Area to visitors and the community and, in doing so, contribute to the area's management. Planning is under way for the Walpole Wilderness Discovery Centre which will provide educational, interpretive and cultural insights into the Walpole Wilderness Area at three sites at the Tree Top Walk in the Valley of the Giants, Mt Frankland and Swarbrick Forest.

The Walpole Wilderness Area has important social and economic values for firewood, wildflower picking, beekeeping, craftwood and water extraction. These will be provided for in a way that minimises their impact on the environment and ensures their sustainability into the future.

There are opportunities for Aboriginal people to be more closely involved in the management of the area through joint management arrangements with DEC.

Working with Aboriginal people to care for the land will be beneficial for the area's natural and cultural heritage, as well as enriching cross-cultural awareness. Joint management arrangements for the parks will provide Aboriginal representation and participation in management of the planning area. The establishment of a park council is one option that may facilitate joint management.



Above The Tree Top Walk's floral emblem, the tassell flower (*Leucopogon verticillatus*).

Below Tingle and karri trees extend down to the banks of rivers and inlets.

Bottom One of the many dazzling flowers is the *Beaufortia sparsa*.



How was the draft management plan developed?

The draft management plan has been prepared on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia by DEC in collaboration with community representatives, local organisations, industry representatives, local governments and State Government agencies. Many stakeholder groups and interested individuals have provided input to the planning process on specific issues through 'Have Your Say' brochure comments and stakeholder meetings.

The Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee has made a valuable contribution to the draft plan by providing community input for the plan, advice to DEC, and help with keeping the community informed.

In partnership with the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, a study was conducted with the Nyoongar people to determine important issues in the Walpole Wilderness Area.

The community can have its say on how the Walpole Wilderness Area is managed over the next 10 years by submitting comments on the draft management plan.

Left Banksias (*Banksia seminuda*).

Below left The view from Mt Frankland looking north.

Right *Kingia australis* stand as silent observers over the expanse of wilderness.

How to make a submission

The *Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent Parks and Reserves Draft Management Plan* has been released for a three-month public submission period, closing on 1 December 2006.

Copies of the document are available for inspection in the offices and libraries of the Shires of Manjimup, Denmark, Plantagenet, Cranbrook and the City of Albany, and in DEC offices at Manjimup, Pemberton, Walpole and Albany. Copies can also be obtained from these DEC offices. The document is available on DEC's website at <http://www.naturebase.net>.

The draft management plan is your chance to provide information, express your opinion, and suggest alternatives on how the Walpole Wilderness Area and adjacent parks and reserves should be managed over the next 10 years. Your comments on the draft plan are very welcome. To make a submission you can:

- complete the submission form included with this brochure, adding extra sheets if you need more space (no stamp is required);
- write a letter setting out your comments; or
- send your submission electronically, either by completing the submission form online (www.naturebase.net), or by emailing wwa@dec.wa.gov.au.

Written submissions should be forwarded by 1 December 2006 to:

Planning Coordinator
Walpole Wilderness Area and Adjacent
Parks and Reserves Draft Management Plan
Department of Environment and
Conservation
Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre
BENTLEY WA 6983

Written submissions can also be made on the internet at <http://www.naturebase.net>.





What happens next?

Your submission is important.

Public submissions on the draft plan will be collated and assessed, with a review of submissions prepared. Comments will be sought from the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee on these submissions, before a final plan is prepared. The final plan will then be reviewed by the Conservation Commission of WA. Following this, the final plan together with submissions on the draft plan, the submission review and any briefing notes, will be forwarded to the Minister for the Environment for endorsement.





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