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# Western Australian Regional Forest Agreement

## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1996



Karri/Marri old growth forest

## Dissatisfied with the constant forest disputes?

It seems that just about everyone is - the timber industry, conservation groups, the mining industry, the beekeepers, the wildflower pickers and the Australian public. Well, the State and Commonwealth Governments have started a process which they anticipate will provide greater certainty for conservation and industry alike in the south-west forest region of Western Australia.

You may have already heard the jargon: CRAs, RFAs, CARs, NFPS and SRGs - but what does it all mean? In particular, what does it mean for you - the people who live, work, hike, camp

Camping in the forest



and research in the forests, or who through your ancestors, have spiritual and cultural ties to them?

In this newsletter, we will try to give you the information you need to understand the regional forest agreement process and how to participate effectively in it. Over the coming months, we will use this newsletter as a way of keeping you informed about progress in the process, outcomes of key projects, dates for workshops and tips on how you can get involved. We will also be including comments from key stakeholders about the RFA process and their

perspective on the future of the forests in the region.

## What is an RFA ...?

The Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments are

jointly working to develop a Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) on the allocation of resources in the south-west forests of Western Australia, including how the forests will be conserved and managed. It is anticipated that the agreements reached as part of the RFA will provide a durable blueprint for forest conservation and management in the region for the next 20 years.

Of course, it will be impossible to achieve such a long-term goal if the process isn't rigorous, open and based on the best information available about the values contained in the region's forests. Comprehensive Regional Assessments (CRAs) will be undertaken between now and June 1997, which will aim to identify the range of environment, heritage, social and economic values of the forests.

The RFA process is a joint State/Commonwealth process. The Commonwealth has committed substantial funding and resources to the process and is keen to ensure that Commonwealth objectives are met.



## ... and why do we need one?

The National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) outlines agreed objectives and policies between the State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments for the long-term management of Australia's public and private forests. The NFPS advocates the establishment of a forest reserve system based on the principles of Comprehensiveness, Adequateness and Representativeness (CAR), ecologically sustainable management of forests and value adding of forest products. It has been agreed that the RFA process is the most appropriate mechanism for establishing the forest reserve system. Both the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments are committed to the CRA/RFA process being rigorous, and scientifically based.

## What about the forests in the meantime?

In 1995, a joint Commonwealth-State Deferred Forest Assessment (DFA) of existing forest data was conducted,



Chuditch Photo – Babs & Bert Wells/Calm

with a DFA Agreement being reached in July 1996.

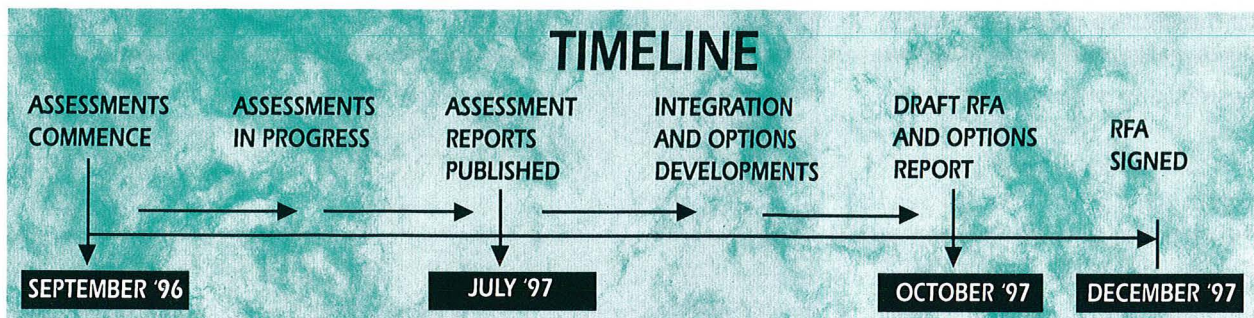
The purpose of the DFA was to ensure that options for the creation of the CAR forest reserve system were not foreclosed. This was achieved by deferring some additional areas of jarrah and karri old growth from any commercial harvesting or associated roading while the CRA/RFA process is undertaken. The areas that were deferred included some that might be required to meet the CAR forest reserve criteria for biodiversity, old growth and wilderness.

In addition, the WA Government has offered to defer from harvesting all

national estate places in the southern forests region during 1996. In 1997, the WA Government has proposed to defer harvesting in 14 national estate sub-areas (the remainder of the forest blocks which were selected as DFA for their old-growth values) Giblett (part), Jane and Sharpe (part).

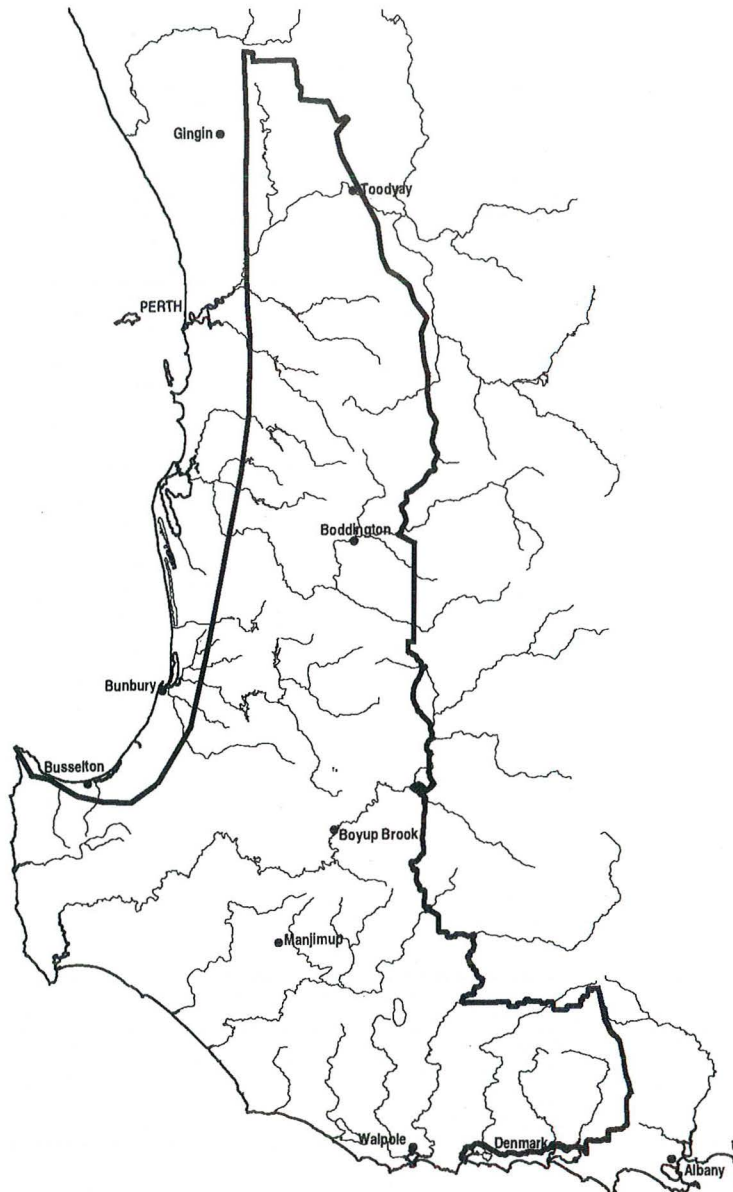


Wood product: Table





## BOUNDARY OF SOUTH WEST FOREST REGION FOR THE REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT



## So, what is going on at present?

- ❖ Public briefings about the RFA process were held in Manjimup and Perth on 9 August 1996.
- ❖ A stake holder reference group meeting was held on 26 September 1996.
- ❖ A joint Commonwealth/State Steering Committee has been established to manage the RFA process.
- ❖ Western Australian and Commonwealth technical staff are preparing project proposals for Steering Committee endorsement. Projects cover a range of issues including: biodiversity, old-growth and minerals assessments, cultural and indigenous heritage, economic profiles of forest resources, future demand for wood products and a survey of forest industry service providers. Public workshops will then be held about the projects.
- ❖ Several projects have already commenced including vegetation, soils mapping, minerals assessments and data reviews.



## I want to be involved!

Fantastic! Your involvement is necessary for the whole process to succeed. There are a number of opportunities for you to make sure your voice is heard:

- ❖ you can choose to provide information or comments which will assist in the process of gathering information on the economic, social, environment and heritage values of the forests;
- ❖ you can come along and participate in workshops, seminars and public meetings which explore the methodologies proposed for each CRA assessment;
- ❖ you can help to develop options for maximising the conservation and production use of the forests;
- ❖ you can provide direct written comments on the draft RFA; and
- ❖ you can keep yourself informed, pass this newsletter onto your friends and family, and find out as much information as you can about the forests in your region.

### Coming up next issue

- ❖ details on the public meetings, workshops and seminars to be held
- ❖ outcomes from the inaugural SRG meeting
- ❖ an indigenous perspective
- ❖ sustainable yield - what it is and how it is being dealt with.

## Stakeholder Reference Group

A Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) has been established which will ensure that all stakeholders have regular access to the process, in particular the joint Commonwealth-State Steering Committee.

The SRG will advise the Steering Committee on the RFA process, consultation and options development. Its views will be taken into account in any decisions governments make.

## Scientific community and independent experts

The scientific community and independent experts have an important role in the RFA process. In addition to the mechanisms mentioned above, experts and scientists are to be involved in the development of methodologies and in a number of expert groups and specific projects.



*Forest Research: Checking nest boxes in 14 year old Karri regrowth*

## How do I get started?

A pamphlet 'How you can be involved in the Regional Forest Agreement for Western Australia' has been produced. It contains a postage paid form, including information the project team needs from you to facilitate your involvement. Copies of the pamphlet are available from the project managers (contact numbers below).

So ring Alan or Ric, grab a copy and fill out the form today!

### For further information contact:

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