

How do We Ensure that Community Education and Extension Maximise Remnant Conservation?



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Workshop Group

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Points from Plenary Session

The following points, raised during a plenary session, stimulated this workshop topic:

- ❖ The importance of direct personal contact (for example, researchers devoting a fixed percentage of their time to direct communication).
- ❖ Networking using local people at a face to face level.
- ❖ Promote nature conservation through logos, etc. (that is, start nature conservation movement at a local level).
- ❖ Tangible examples of the value of remnant vegetation are required (for example, positive stories, pamphlets, natural histories, walk trails).
- ❖ Take advantage of simple stories which capture people's enthusiasm.
- ❖ Is one to one contact with a researcher the only (most) successful extension method?
- ❖ Are there useful social models to help us interest rural people in nature conservation?
- ❖ Issues of male-female relationships in communication and information.
- ❖ Education of new farmers in tertiary institutions.
- ❖ Technical extension and remnant management.
- ❖ Should we have "bushwatch" for schools?

Following detailed discussion of these points, a vision

for education and extension was created, the major issues were identified, and actions were drafted.

VISION

Workshop participants considered that community support and action were required if areas of remnant vegetation were to be conserved. To achieve this, it was agreed that the long-term vision for education and extension programs was: "To foster people's interest to the point where the community actively seeks information to conserve remnant values".

ISSUES

From both management and research perspectives, the participants then identified key issues that needed to be resolved in order to achieve the above vision. Specific action items stemmed from these discussions.

Direct Personal Contact

Workshop participants agreed that direct "face to face" contact between researchers, managers and the community was an effective means of communication, especially in rural areas. However, as this method of communication is extremely time-consuming, small group meetings addressing a series of issues were considered the preferred medium. The participants also noted that people with the most knowledge were not always the best people to deliver a message. In rural communities, it was considered that the ideal communication method was to have local people giving information to a local audience.

Action

Identify and support the good communicators within agencies and local communities.

Promotion of Nature Conservation at a Local Level

Workshop participants quickly agreed that the promotion of nature conservation within rural communities required that the uniqueness of local environments be highlighted. It is also important to raise the awareness of each local community to the values of its landscape. Through these means, it was considered that local people would develop a sense of ownership for local bushland and consequently protect the values of these areas.

Actions

- ❖ Develop simple nature conservation stories that are pertinent to local people, and include themes or elements that are unique to their landscape. Stories with a local historical perspective should be sought.
- ❖ Document and promote specific examples of people's nature conservation efforts in rural areas — for example, the Doleys' story (see page 57). Provide "hands on" experience of the values of remnant vegetation so people may internalise the nature conservation ethic — for example, through guided bush walks or the involvement of local communities in fieldwork.
- ❖ Support people's nature conservation efforts by promoting their achievements in the mass media.

Nature Conservation and Education

The basics of nature conservation are not taught in schools or in agricultural training courses, such as landcare courses and the Bachelor of Agriculture. The participants believed that the integration of nature conservation units into existing school and university courses was an essential step towards the long-term conservation of remnant bushland.

Actions

- ❖ Ensure researchers and managers involved with the conservation of remnant vegetation have input into landcare courses.
- ❖ Introduce a natural science course into teaching and land management degrees. This course would form part of the first year syllabus and cover geology, zoology, botany, geography and hydrology.
- ❖ Provide information for a basic textbook which covers the natural history of Western Australia.
- ❖ Support community conservation programs, such as "bushwatch", which have an important educational role.

Technical Extension and Remnant Management

The workshop group acknowledged that technical information on the management of remnants should be readily accessible and interpreted at different levels of

expertise, ranging from newspaper articles to journal publications. The participants then resolved that an effective technique for explaining remnant management to the rural community was to use agricultural analogies. For example, the basics of remnant management could be illustrated by explaining that the processes underlying agricultural systems (the nutrient and water cycles, and the flow of energy and genetic material) also sustain natural ecosystems, but on a different timescale.

Action

Ensure information on the management of remnant vegetation is readily accessible, is interpreted at different levels of expertise, and concentrates on systems and processes.

Women in Remnant Conservation

Within the group, anecdotal evidence was presented to show that, in some cases, women were more caring land managers, and had better long-term vision, than men. However, with further discussion, the group resolved that for successful long-term conservation of remnants, it was essential that the whole community be involved. This includes all sectional groups, for example:

- ❖ women, children and men;
- ❖ Aboriginal people;
- ❖ land managers;
- ❖ rural and urban communities;
- ❖ local people.

Action

Seek to involve the whole community in remnant conservation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the workshop participants considered that for education and extension to be successful, they must:

- ❖ be relevant;
- ❖ be credible;
- ❖ be interesting;
- ❖ result in action;
- ❖ lead to success;
- ❖ be "followed-up".

REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION TEN YEARS ON

A DECADE OF RESEARCH
AND MANAGEMENT

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
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