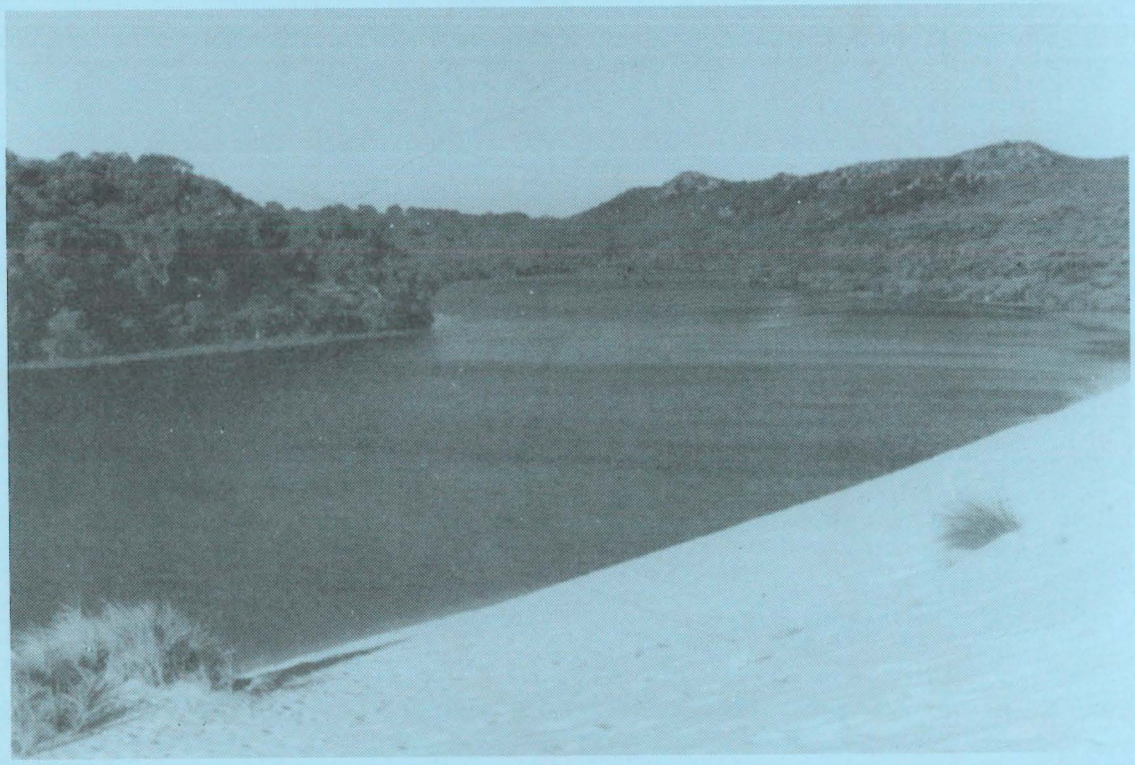
Friends of Moore River Estuary and Bushland

Proposal for

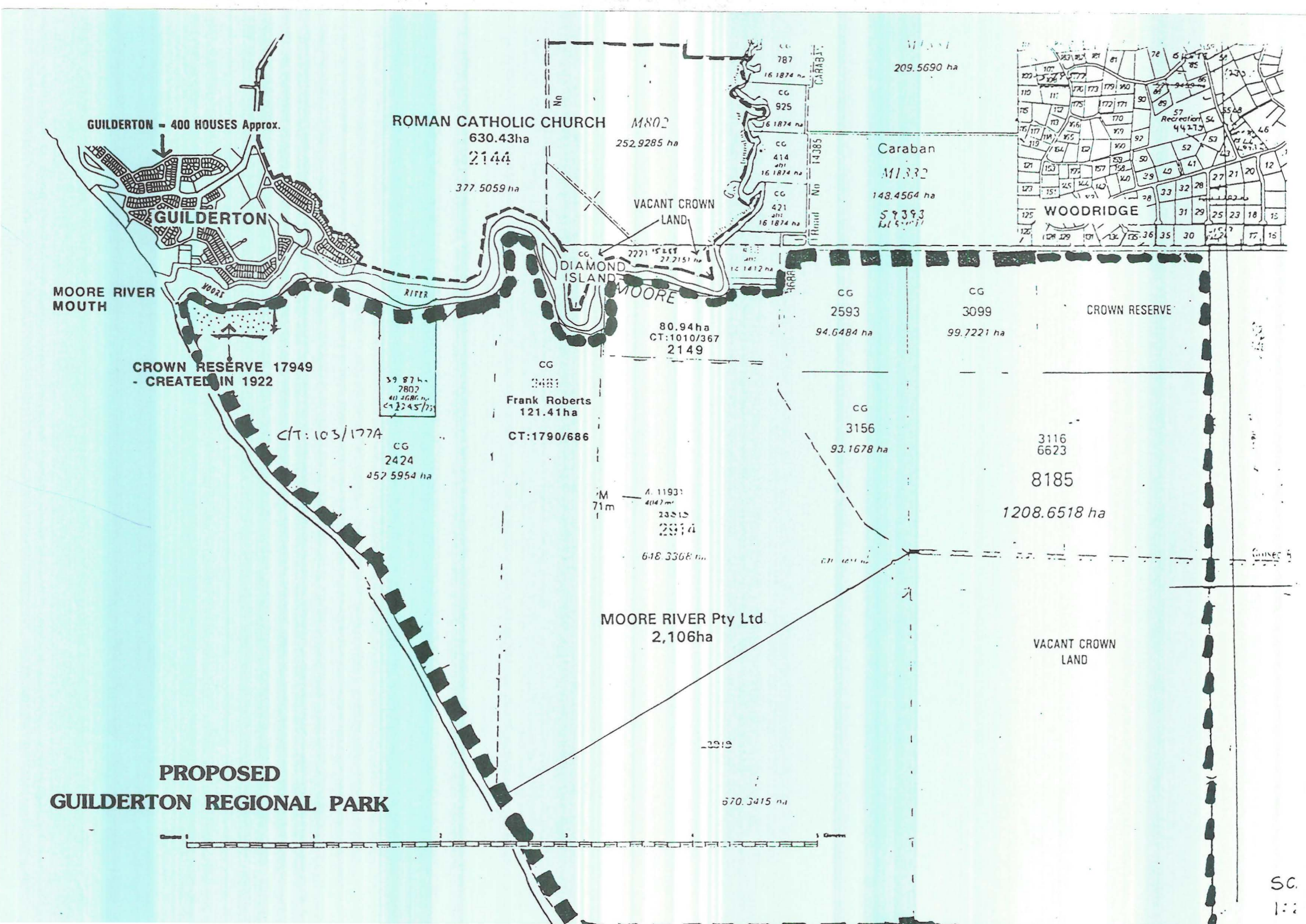
Guilderton Regional Park

- south of the Moore River



According to the Waugal story, Moore River represents a mythological site for Aboriginal people. Those who fished the estuary and hunted in the surrounding bushland called the area "Gabbadah", meaning mouthful of water.

Today it is an important place for recreation. We have the opportunity to retain the natural beauty of the estuary and bushland for generations to come, through this Regional Park proposal.


GUILDERTON – 400 HOUSES Approx.
GUILDERTON
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
630.43ha
2144
377.5059 ha
M802
252.9285 ha
209.5690 ha
787
925
414
421
VACANT CROWN LAND
Caraban
M1332
148.4564 ha
WOODRIDGE
DIAMOND ISLAND
MOORE
MOORE RIVER MOUTH
80.94ha
CT:1010/367
2149
CG 2593
94.6484 ha
CG 3099
99.7221 ha
CROWN RESERVE
CROWN RESERVE 17949
- CREATED IN 1922
Frank Roberts
121.41ha
CT:1790/686
C/T: 103/177A
CG 2424
457.5954 ha
CG 3156
93.1678 ha
3116
6623
8185
1208.6518 ha
MOORE RIVER Pty Ltd
2,106ha
VACANT CROWN LAND
PROPOSED
GUILDERTON REGIONAL PARK

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Guilderton Regional Park

The Moore River estuary, near Guilderton, and the bushland to the south is a place of outstanding beauty. The coastal landscape, significant vegetation, river estuary and its proximity to the Perth metropolitan region make the area regionally important for conservation. In view of development pressure, action is needed now to protect it. This is a proposal for establishment of a Regional Park so this natural heritage can be enjoyed for generations to come.

1. What is a Regional Park?

The Regional Park concept evolved in the late 1970s when the Environmental Protection Authority registered concern over the loss of natural ecosystems on the Swan Coastal Plain. To protect the remaining fragments the concept of Regional Parks was proposed in the System 6 Green Book (System 6 Committee, 1981). It was envisaged that Regional Parks would include both private and public land to protect regionally significant landscapes such as estuaries, wetlands and beaches, bushland and the escarpment. They would also provide for conservation, recreation, education and scientific research by retaining significant areas of the original ecosystems of the coastal plain. (Siewert, 1990)

The Regional Park concept was restated in the System 6 Red Book in 1983 and endorsed by the State Government in 1984. The idea was further developed in a review for the State Planning Commission in 1987. The "Planning for the Future of the Perth Metropolitan Region" review proposed a system of Metropolitan Parks to protect the natural environment and quality of life in the region.

Despite frequent statements of support for these proposals by successive governments, there has been little progress toward implementing the Regional Parks proposals. This has resulted in continuation of urban development and destruction of parts of the proposed parks system. However, planning studies have been undertaken and land acquired and reserved for some parks. The most advanced include Canning River Regional Park, Yellagonga Regional Park and Beeliar Regional Park.

Recently the Department of Environmental Protection has started an update of the System 6 report. It has called for public nominations and will use available information and undertake studies to identify locations with significant vegetation. An aim of the update is to ensure areas of regional value are represented in the conservation reserve system.

2. Guilderton area

The village of Guilderton, established in 1961, lies on the northern side of the mouth of the Moore River, approximately 100 km north of Perth. The population of Guilderton fluctuates, peaking over the summer holidays and the Easter break, with a stable population of around 120 for most of the year. Guilderton and its surroundings offer a unique tranquillity which is enjoyed by everyone who comes to the area, whether they be residents people with holiday homes, visitors to the local caravan park or day trippers. Like Rottnest Island, Guilderton is a major asset for the people of Perth due to its relaxed atmosphere, relative remoteness, yet close proximity to the metropolitan area. It provides a haven for city dwellers, allowing them to escape the urban sprawl and the hustle and bustle of city living without the hassle or expense of having to travel vast distances.

The Moore River estuary is fascinating to newcomers and locals alike as the mouth of the river is closed for most of the year by a sandbar that is constantly changing. Indeed it was known as "Gabbadah" (meaning mouthful of water) to the Aboriginal people who in the past fished in the estuary and hunted in the surrounding bushland (De Burgh, 1976). Normally maintained by wave action, the sandbar is occasionally breached by the build up of water in the estuary or excavation. During these short periods when the river drains into the sea, there is a scurry for fishing spots along the foreshore.

Guilderton, with the Moore River estuary and its surroundings provide an array of recreational activities for visitors to participate in. Activities tend to focus on the river or the adjacent ocean and include swimming, fishing, boating and canoeing. Guilderton townsite also offers barbecue facilities, boat launching at the groyne, the park, the golf course and tennis courts, trampolines and mini-golf, the Country Club and Community Hall, lawn bowls, walks to the lighthouse and along various bush tracks.

In addition to the recreational significance of the area, the land on the southern side of the Moore River estuary possesses an array of significant natural features. In particular, the near pristine state of much of the remnant native vegetation makes this area immensely valuable. It represents an important historical and social record of conditions present prior to European settlement (George Seddon, University of WA, pers. comm.). As such it is a resource of major significance that must be conserved as part of the natural heritage of Western Australia.

3. Guilderton Regional Park

The Proposal

The area immediately south of the Moore River estuary is regionally significant for its conservation and landscape values. The establishment of the Guilderton Regional Park is proposed to protect the area. The park should include the southern foreshore of the river near its mouth and extend south along the coast to connect with the proposed Wilbinga conservation reserve; it would protect about 4,400 ha of coastal landscape. Refer to maps, showing location and suggested boundaries of the park.

Rationale

The strategic location and natural features of the area give it regional significance for conservation and open space.

- The Moore River estuary is the only waterway which drains into the ocean along the 200 km of coastline between the Swan and Hill Rivers. It is unusual within the System 6 area as it is a narrow river in a shallow valley, with a sandbar at its junction with the sea (Semeniuk, 1994). Fringing wetlands and flooded paperbark woodlands add to its uniqueness.

- Most of the area south of the Moore River is situated on the Quindalup Dune System, in places overlaying the Spearwood Dune System. The Quindalup dunes comprising this area are regionally unique as (i) they bar an estuary, (ii) are well vegetated and (iii) are in good condition (Semeniuk, 1994). In general the Quindalup Dune System, with its variable landforms and vegetation, is poorly represented in conservation reserves, particularly between Whitfords and Lancelin (Semeniuk, Cresswell and Wurm, 1989; Trudgen, 1990).

- The sandsheet on the south side of the river, known locally as "The Desert", is a unique landform within the Whitfords to Lancelin sector as it is one of the few remaining that represent the typical processes that formed the now stabilised Quindalup dunes in the region (Griffin, 1994).

- The vegetation of the Quindalup Dune System in much of this area is in very good condition with little weed invasion, in contrast with other areas on the Swan Coastal Plain (CALM, 1994; Trudgen, 1990). This probably results from its relative isolation from development.

• Several uncommon and significant vegetation types have been recognised in the area (Alan Tingay and Assoc, 1993; CALM, 1994). These include: *Allocasuarina lehmaniana* shrubland is a dominant vegetation type near the river, however it is uncommon and poorly reserved elsewhere on the coastal plain. The Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) woodland here is significant, being the northern extent of the species as woodland and given its proximity to the coast and good condition of the understorey.

Melaleuca cardiophylla scrub occurs here, this type of vegetation is uncommon and is poorly represented in reserves. An additional six species of conservation significance have been reported within the Regional Park, these are restricted to the Quindalup or Spearwood dunes of the coastal plain.

• Land south of the Moore River is important as a large area of coastal landscape with potential to form a major conservation reserve. With clearing and urban development there are few opportunities to retain coastal bushland close to the metropolitan region. Guilderton Regional Park and the adjoining Wilbinga area would conserve significant landforms, vegetation and habitats which are poorly represented in existing reserves.

• The Regional Park and Wilbinga reserve could link with Yanchep National Park to the south and existing and proposed conservation reserves at Caraban, Wabling and Yeal to the east. This would provide a natural corridor and transect covering a range of ecosystems extending from the coast inland across the coastal plain.

• The Regional Park area together with Wilbinga could form a strategic greenbelt at the northern boundary of the Perth metropolitan region, thereby limiting urban sprawl in the North West Corridor. This belt of regional open space would separate potential urban development and provide opportunities for recreation in a largely natural area which has wilderness qualities.

The proposal would protect an important natural area in keeping with current government policy on expanding the conservation estate to make it more representative and viable, developing a system of regional parks and preserving and managing estuaries and rivers. It also helps meet government policy on controlling Perth's urban sprawl.

History of the proposal

The System 6 Red Book (EPA, 1983) identified the Moore River and its environs as a potential Regional Park. However specific recommendations were not made at the time; this could have reflected the concentration of the study on public lands.

An area of 557 ha immediately south of the Moore River estuary has been proposed for urban development by Moore River Company Pty Ltd. Rezoning for this purpose was initiated by the Shire of Gingin and approved by the Ministry for Planning but without any formal environmental assessment. At all stages of the rezoning process there has been substantial public comment and community effort to prevent urban development in the area.

Public objection to the proposed development relates directly to the impact on the conservation value of the area and the character of the existing townsite. The social impact of the development proposal was of concern, given changes likely with urbanisation (Pannell, 1994).

The Wilbinga area, immediately south of the subject area is also important for conservation and has been recommended for reservation (Griffin, 1993; Trudgen, 1990). Wilbinga includes vegetation in good condition and landforms of the Quindalup and Spearwood Dune Systems. The area also has value as habitat for several vertebrate species lost from more urbanised parts of the northern coastal plain (Ninox, 1991).

The Yanchep structure plan by the Department of Planning and Urban Development (1993) proposed a greenbelt including Wilbinga and land to the north extending to the Moore River,

providing a 12 km wide buffer at the metropolitan boundary. The Department stated that "the area offers the last and only opportunity for the creation of a coastal metropolitan regional park which would be representative of the coastal landforms and natural vegetation which has all but been eliminated in the remainder of the region" (p6).

4. Establishing and managing the Regional Park

The proposed Regional Park includes crown land (over 1,300 ha) and freehold land. The freehold land should be secured for the park; arrangements for acquisition of properties near the river are a priority. The regional significance of the area and its strategic location warrants the state government investing funds in protection of this land for inclusion in the park.

The area should be reserved for conservation and vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority as an A-class Regional Park. A planning study should be initiated to define exact boundaries and prepare a plan for the park. This can be guided by a steering committee with state and local government and community representatives.

The park should be managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management and a Friends group established to involve the community in looking after the area. Management issues for Guilderton Regional Park include allowing for public access and recreational use which does not degrade the area. Bushwalking, sightseeing, photography and fishing are current uses of the area. To protect vegetation some existing tracks should be developed as walk trails. Some areas have been disturbed by past use, these need rehabilitation and some discrete sites could be developed as activity nodes, perhaps for picnics and wilderness camping.

A comprehensive survey of the area is needed to document the natural environment and identify strategies to address management problems identified. The landforms and vegetation of the site and its location along the Moore River estuary make it a resource for education and research. Work in the area by universities and research institutions should be encouraged.

The Moore River estuary is under pressure from recreational use and nutrient input from land uses in the catchment (Bott and Maling, 1989; Rippingale et al, 1988). Water quality monitoring should be undertaken in the estuary and upstream and a catchment management plan prepared to protect the river ecosystem. The Waterways Commission should consider designating Moore River a management area to facilitate such action.

Guilderton Regional Park is a place of outstanding natural heritage which must be protected. Action is needed now to secure the area for conservation. The Regional Park should be established to protect and manage the area so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

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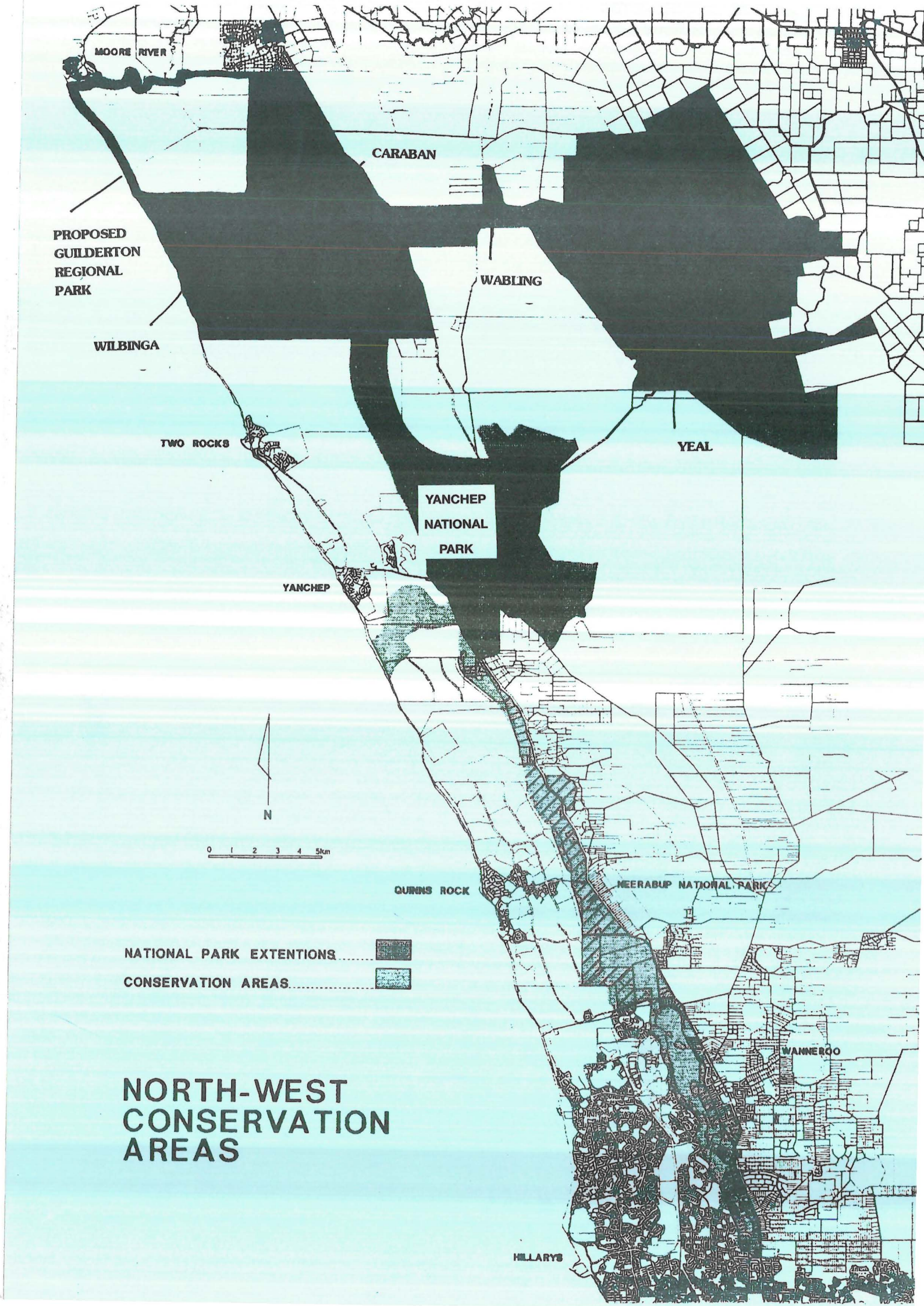
MOORE RIVER
CARABAN
PROPOSED GUILDERTON REGIONAL PARK
WABLING
WILBINGA
TWO ROCKS
YEAL
YANCHEP NATIONAL PARK
YANCHEP
N
0 1 2 3 4 5km
QUINNS ROCK
NEERABUP NATIONAL PARK
NATIONAL PARK EXTENTIONS
CONSERVATION AREAS
WANNEROO
HILLARYS
NORTH-WEST CONSERVATION AREAS