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Western Australian Regional Forest Agreement

NEWSLETTER 2



Wandoo Forest

What is a Regional Forest Agreement?

A Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) is an agreement between a State Government and the Commonwealth Government which "recognises the range of social, economic, environmental, conservation and heritage obligations that both governments have regarding the long term management and protection of forest values"

Under the National Forest Policy Statement signed by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments in December 1992, the governments agreed to a framework and a joint scientific and public consultation process for a comprehensive regional assessment (CRA) of forests leading to negotiation of a Regional Forest Agreement for Western Australia.

"The RFA is intended to bring stability to the South West region by providing a positive environment for economic and employment growth in local communities, a sustainable resource base for industry and ensuring the protection of Australia's biodiversity, old growth and wilderness through a world class comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system, and ecologically sustainable forest management practices.

A series of Comprehensive Regional Assessments which the governments are undertaking jointly as part of the RFA, are designed to:

- ❖ provide for the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) forest reserve system which includes strategies to protect high conservation value old growth forests and wilderness;
- ❖ identify the potential for Western Australia's forest-based industries;

- ❖ address biodiversity and threatened species issues;
- ❖ address Indigenous, National Estate and World Heritage issues;
- ❖ accredit codes of forest practice and other management arrangements;
- ❖ identify forest resource use and sustainable industry development options and examine any potential economic and social implications, including implications for communities;
- ❖ identify performance indicators and develop monitoring arrangements to report on the RFA every five years.

Public consultation and development of the RFA

In recognition that effective community involvement is critical to the successful completion and enduring life of the RFA, public consultation will be a feature of the development of the RFA.

The public consultation process provides for participation in four distinct ways - first, input to the information gathering stage; second, through workshops, seminars and public meetings which explore the methodologies proposed for each CRA assessment; third, in the development of options; and fourth, through written submissions on the draft RFA.

National Estate Community Heritage Values in Forests

Forests can be special for many reasons. As well as their importance for such things as the plant and animal communities they support, the forests themselves and specific places within them can be special to communities for other reasons too.

Some places are valued highly because they form part of a community's identity. Forest places may be valued because they are places of recreation,

commemorative places where significant events have occurred or prominent natural features such as a granite outcrop or a king jarrah tree.

Places can also be valued by the community because of their particularly high scenic quality or their ability to stir our emotions.

These are what are termed "community heritage values". As part of the identification and assessment of national estate values in the Regional Forest Agreement process, the Commonwealth Environment Forest Taskforce (EFT) and the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) will be holding a series of workshops to identify these places valued by the community.

It is intended to hold workshops in up to 10 communities within the south-west forest region in July-August. Further information on these workshops will be available when arrangements have been finalised.

Only you and other members of your community can identify community heritage values - places that are important to you. Participating in the community heritage workshops is a way for your special places to be recognised and cared for appropriately.

If you want more information on identifying community heritage values or national estate assessment, please call Andrew Story at EFT on (06) 274 1667.

Murray River Lane poole Reserve



CRA Project Updates

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

The Comprehensive Regional Assessment process involves projects covering a wide range of issues such as biological diversity, old growth, wilderness and the assessment of economic, social and heritage values.

The following is an update on some of the projects that have been in progress for several months, several of which are nearing completion.

Vegetation Mapping

Ian Abbott (CALM, WA) / Bruce Cummings (Commonwealth)

A consultant (Mattiske Consulting) has almost completed mapping vegetation complexes in the south-west.

The project so far has included updating relevant literature, collating and integrating floristic classification data, reviewing options for defining vegetation mapping units, updating taxonomic changes into historical datasets, verifying voucher material at the CALM Herbarium, collating historical vegetation mapping data, liaison with stakeholders who are owners of datasets, a gap analysis of the adequacy of datasets on floristic classifications and vegetation mapping, field studies in the eastern and south-western forest areas where there are major gaps in data.

The key floristic classification systems that have been developed by a range of authors for the south-west forest

region have been integrated into one classification system.

Field work and mapping of the project area has been completed. Most of the former Darling System (System 6 area) has been re-mapped by the consultant and is now being re-digitised by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Minerals Assessment

Rick Rogerson (Geological Survey WA) / Yanis Mieztis (Commonwealth)

Data entry into the mineral occurrence database (WAMIN) and the exploration activity database (WAMEX) has been completed. More than 800 WAMEX activities have been entered and polygons digitised

Seamless mosaic images of digital aeromagnetic and Landsat data have been produced at various scales.

Digitising of surface geology and interpretive geology maps has been completed.

In-ground resource maps have been digitised using the MINEDEX database.

The information from the minerals assessment will provide estimates of mineral resource potential for the RFA region and subregions.

A draft report of the mineral resource assessments of the RFA region is being prepared.



Waylie (Brush tailed bettong)

Soils and Landforms Mapping Project

Greg Beeston (Agriculture WA) / Bruce Cummings (Commonwealth)

Existing soils data has been collected, checked and collated.

Survey of previously unsurveyed areas is almost completed including areas in the Shires of Chittering, Kojonup, Cranbrook, Manjimup, Boyup Brook and Augusta Margaret River.

Linework has been digitised and soil descriptions developed.

The final work involves matching survey boundaries and correlating map unit legends between existing and new surveys to develop a 'seamless' comprehensive map of soils and landforms for the entire RFA region.

Data Reviews

Kate Ord (Commonwealth) / Geoff Stoneman (CALM, WA)

Comprehensive reviews of data relevant to the biodiversity, old growth and National Estate (Natural and Cultural) assessments have been completed. The data owned by government agencies, universities, WA Museum, non-government organisations and private companies has been reviewed, checked, enhanced and documented (Metadata descriptions). Reports are being compiled.

NEW PROJECTS

The following 22 projects have been approved recently by the Steering Committee and will begin soon:

Biodiversity Assessment

- ❖ Distribution mapping and key ecological attributes of plant species present in the south-west forest region.
- ❖ Distribution of species of special interest.
- ❖ Historical fire frequency of the south-west forest region.
- ❖ Survival of hollow-bearing jarrah and marri trees in the south-west forest region.
- ❖ Distribution, habitat quality and species mapping of fauna.

Old Growth Assessment

- ❖ Old growth study - mapping disturbance history.
- ❖ Old growth study - mapping development stages.



Beckkeeping in the forest



Tamar Wallaby - Perup Nature Reserve

Economic Assessment

- ❖ Profile of native forest wood resources.
- ❖ Appraisal and accreditation of wood yield methods and data.
- ❖ Economic profile of forest based industries in WA.
- ❖ Development opportunities for wood-based forest industries.
- ❖ Future demand for wood products in WA.
- ❖ Potential economic impacts of varying fire protection and harvesting practices in State forests.
- ❖ Competitiveness of hardwood substitution by other species.

Social Assessment

- ❖ Post impact studies analysis.
- ❖ Regional social profile analysis.
- ❖ Social case studies in the south-west region.

- ❖ Locational impact of forest-based industry and employee expenditure within case study areas.

Heritage Assessment

- ❖ National Estate indigenous cultural heritage assessment.
- ❖ National Estate non-indigenous cultural heritage assessment.
- ❖ National Estate natural values assessment.

Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management Assessment

- ❖ Assessment of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management for the south-west region.

Several other projects are still being considered.

More details about any of these projects can be obtained by contacting the RFA Executive Officers.

Public Involvement in the RFA

A Stakeholder Reference Group for the RFA has been formed and three meetings have been held. A list of the key stakeholders is in the box below.

Two special reference groups have also been formed - an Aboriginal Reference Group and a State Agreement Acts Committee. These groups will meet with the Steering Committee as required.

A series of public information meetings about the RFA was held in south-west towns in the first week of June. Afternoon and evening meetings were conducted with varying attendances.

In the coming months there will be a series of workshops held in south-west communities. Heritage workshops and social assessment workshops are planned between July and October. Dates will be advised to people registered on the mailing list and advertisements will be lodged in local newspapers.

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS?

The following organisations have been identified as key stakeholders or they have nominated themselves as a key stakeholder in the RFA process:

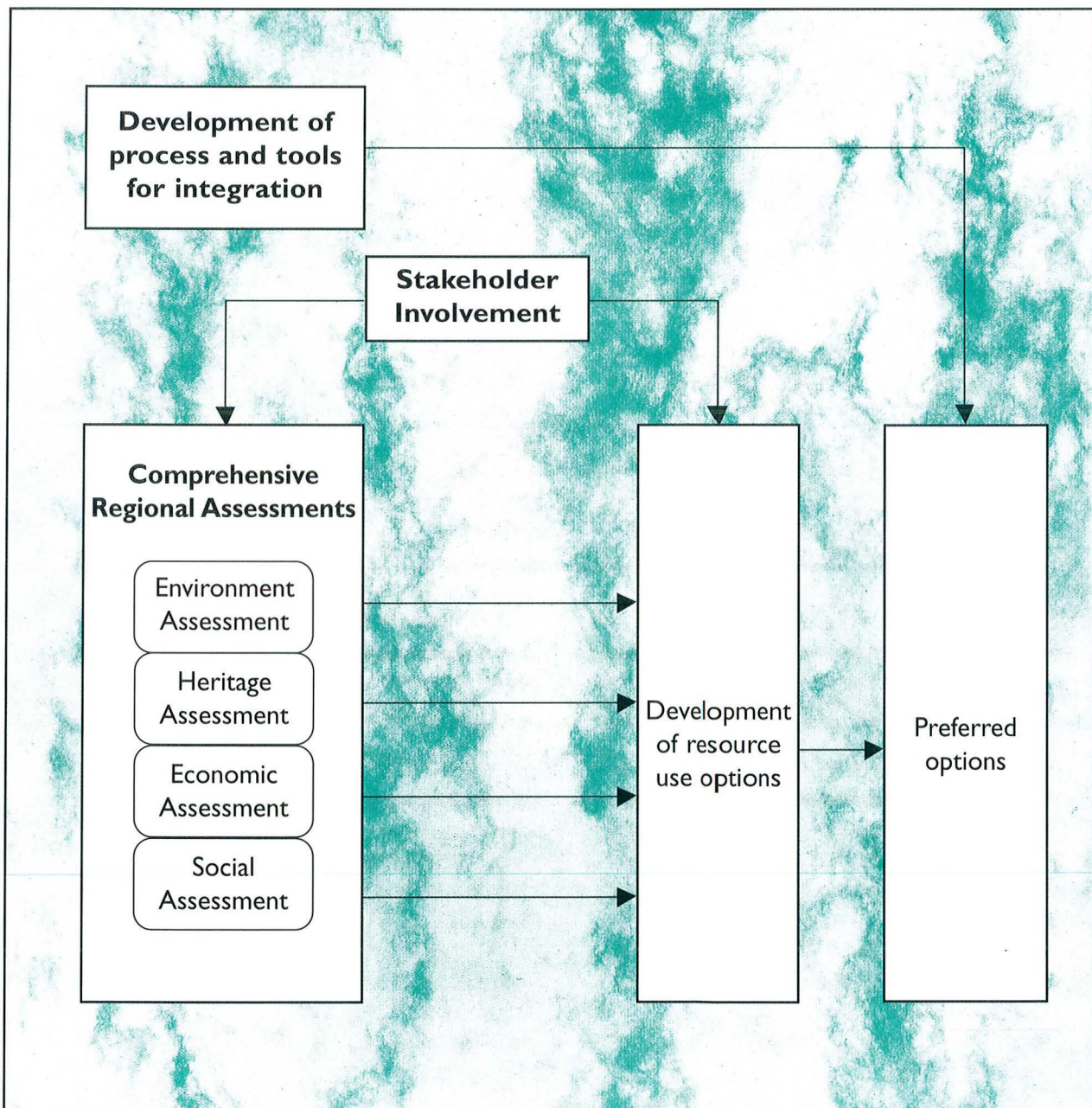
Aboriginal Affairs Department	Lands and Forest Commission
Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (Inc)	Leeuwin Conservation Group
Agriculture Western Australia	Manjimup Aboriginal Corporation
Albany Wildflower Pickers	Manjimup Chamber of Commerce
Alcoa of Australia Limited	Noongar Land Council
Amalgamated Prospectors and Leaseholders Assoc	NPNCA
Association of Mining Exploration Companies	Quinnup Community Association
Augusta-Margaret River Friends of the Forest	Peel Development Commission
Australian Worker's Union	Shire of Collie
Balingup Friends of the Forest	Shire of Bridgetown/Greenbushes
Beekeepers Section WAFF	Shire of Denmark
Botany Department, UWA	Shire of Manjimup
Bunnings Forest Products Pty Ltd	Shire of Murray
Busselton Naturalists Club	Shire of Nannup
Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA Inc	Shire of Waroona Simcoa Pty Ltd
Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union	South Coast Environment Group
Curtin University of Technology	South West Development Commission
Denmark Environment Society	South West Local Government Association
Department of Environmental Protection	WA Beekeepers' Association
Department of Minerals and Energy	WA Native Seed Industry
Department of Resources Development	Walpole-Nornalup National Park Association
Edith Cowan University	Warren Environment Group
Forest Industries Federation of WA	Water and Rivers Commission
Forest Protection Society	Water Corporation
Friends of Giblett	West Australian Farmers Federation Inc
Friends of Jane	Western Australian Tourism Commission
Great Southern Development Commission	Western Collieries Ltd
Griffin Coal Mining Co Pty Ltd	Whittakers Limited
Heritage Council of Western Australia	Wildflower Pickers and Producers Association
Institute of Foresters	Worsley Alumina

WA RFA Integration Process

Options for the Western Australia Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) will be developed following the completion of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) of forest values. This is known as the integration phase.

It will be a complex undertaking, requiring the orderly and sequential analysis of the environment, heritage, economic and social information from the CRA in order to identify the principal issues to be taken into account in developing the RFA.

The processes and tools for the integration phase are currently being developed. A range of public consultations, workshops and seminars will be held with interested parties to ensure full community participation in the development of options for the RFA.



Expert Workshops and Panels

Fire Workshop

A workshop was held on November 12, 1996, to consider draft proposals for RFA projects related to fire and the biodiversity assessment theme. Ten independent scientists attended, as well as State and Commonwealth officials involved in the RFA.

The independent scientists recommended the further development of two projects. Both of these projects have now been approved by the Steering Committee. These projects are titled 'Historical fire frequency of the south-west forest region' and 'Contemporary history of burning in Western Australian forests'.

Economics Workshop

A workshop was held on January 17, 1997 to examine the proposed

methodology to meet the requirements and expectations of the economic assessment. Attended by economists from universities and private industry attended, the workshop also reported on experience from the economic assessment for the Regional Forest Agreement process in Tasmania and East Gippsland. Feedback from the workshop has assisted in the further development of project proposals.

Workshop on Vegetation Mapping and a Panel of Independent Scientists and Experts (POISE)

A workshop of experts from Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland, as well as WA and Commonwealth officials, was held on April 17, 1997. The objective was to review vegetation mapping used for Regional Forest Agreements elsewhere in Australia, and vegetation mapping available for Western Australia and its utility for the RFA

process. A meeting of a Panel of Independent Scientists and Experts was held in late June 1997 to provide advice to the Steering Committee on the vegetation mapping to be used for the CRA.

Expert Advisory Group for the assessment of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management

An Expert Advisory Group (EAG) is being formed for the assessment of ecologically sustainable forest management. The group will have expertise in flora and fauna conservation and management, ecosystem processes, forest management and planning, silviculture, environmental management systems and heritage conservation and management.

The EAG will assess the scope, quality and integrity of forest management systems and processes for all forest uses in all land tenures in the south-west forest region.

It is anticipated that the EAG will hold a public workshop in early September. This will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to comment on their perception of forest management systems and processes in the south-west, and for the EAG to consider the issues raised by stakeholders in the development of their report.

'National Estate Values' Workshops

See page 2 for details"



Jarrah forest



Globulus Pine with sheep

**Western Australia
Regional Forest Agreement**

A joint process between the
Commonwealth Government and the
Government of Western Australia

For further information contact:

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or

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