

South-west timber workers employed

Twenty eight timber workers in the south-west have been employed by the Department with seven working as a seasonal firefighting crew.

"They've been a welcome addition to the Warren region," Donnelly District Manager, John Gillard, said.

"They've been actively involved in prescribed burning and fire suppression operations."

The men found themselves without jobs as the timber industry declined and the State Government—fulfilling its election platform—halted logging in old growth forests last year.

A group of four workers taken on by the Department will work on the maintenance of the Bibbulmun Track. They began work on the track south-east of Nannup earlier this month.

Another group of people is working on the construction and maintenance of recreational facilities and signposting in the new national parks. Others are working on jarrah silvicultural projects including jarrah thinning.

Regional Services Director Alan Walker said the Department was seeking every opportunity to employ displaced timber workers in a variety of roles.

"I hope that the employment opportunities we are offering will achieve a transition to new employment and in some cases to permanent positions within the Department.

"There will certainly be an acquisition of skills that will enhance their future employment prospects," Alan said.

A total of 91 people were referred to the Department by the Forest Project Office, which is overseeing the process to transfer timber industry workers to other employment.

"Sixty of those declined an interview, and of the remainder, 28 have now been employed by the Department," Alan said.

He added that more displaced timber workers would be employed in the new parks program, part of the move to develop and enhance the 30 new national parks being established in the south-west. Funding for the program would escalate next financial year.

"We hope to employ up to 30 people in the new parks program and have already created eight new ranger positions.

"Many of those positions will be filled by forest workers who have been obtaining the necessary qualifications. Hopefully, their vacancies can be filled by displaced timber workers," Alan said.

The employment offered by the Department this year follows the 1999 employment of 37 people left without a job when Whittaker's mill closed its doors. Many of those people are now in permanent positions in the Department, particularly in the Blackwood District.



The dugong aerial survey team was (from left) pilot Eddie Malatesta, Judy Davidson and Dave Holley from the Marine Conservation Branch, Department of Conservation and Land Management volunteer Gail Neylan, Ivan Lawler from James Cook University and second volunteer, Richard Campbell.

Aerial survey shows dugongs abound

A SIX-DAY aerial survey of the Shark Bay World Heritage area has confirmed the area has possibly the highest density of dugongs in the world.

The Department's marine fauna zoologist Dave Holley said the estimation of 12,000 dugongs verified the area as having the highest density of the animals per square kilometre anywhere in the world where similar surveys have been conducted.

Shark Bay has been recognised internationally for its significant dugong population.

Dave said the last survey in 1999 had estimated about 14,000 dugongs in the area, with estimates from 1994 and 1989 at 10,000.

"The 1999 survey was conducted not long after cyclone Vance so there had possibly been an influx of dugongs from Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo into the area," he said.

This new survey, the first to

be conducted in the summer, reinforced the theory that the average dugong population could be between 10,000-11,000 animals.

It also aimed to provide important information concerning distribution patterns and habitats of the dugong for future conservation of the species.

A joint project between the Department and Queensland's James Cook University, it has also enabled the Department to

gain a better insight into the movements of dugongs, and their habitats.

The aerial survey involved the flying of a twin engine aircraft along predetermined transects at a ground speed of a 100 knots and at a height of 137 metres.

The Australian regional populations of dugongs, including those of the Shark Bay World Heritage area, form the largest and most secure populations of dugong in the world.



Displaced timber workers in S-W
work for Dept Conservation
Land Management as
maintenance officers, early 2002.

L to R

Trevor Insley

Steve Luff

Sid Sepkus

Peter Bracknell



Four displaced timber workers,
working on the Bibbulman
Track for the Dept. of
Conservation & Land Management,
2002.