

Computer programme for wildfire data

By NEIL BURROWS

THE often severe and destructive wildfires that followed heavy cutting operations in the northern jarrah forest early this century was one of the main reasons for the introduction of the Forests Act in 1918 and the formation of a Forests Department.

Today, the protection of CALM lands (and adjacent life and property) from wildfire is a key management objective.

An important component of this management is the description, documentation and archiving of all wildfires on CALM lands.

In the past this was done by marking wildfires onto maps or by written annual wildfire reports.

This information (which dates back to the 1920s in some districts) is stored on microfiche at State Headquarters and the amount of wildfire information

gathered over the years is causing the filing cabinets at Como to bulge.

In Manjimup District alone, there have been about 600 wildfires recorded and documented since 1950.

To facilitate storage and retrieval of wildfire data, Pete Walsh at Manjimup Research Station has written a computer programme to enable wildfire data to be easily stored, retrieved and analysed on computer.

He is also updating the programmes to include all CALM lands.

This mode of storage not only reduces storage space,

but allows rapid retrieval of data and production of any form of historical analysis one may need.

A single floppy disk can store information on about 2,500 wildfires.

As well as refining the programmes, researchers at Manjimup, assisted by Nick Bukelis from Protection Branch, are loading up the data base with historical records.

The systems should be up and running in February.

Loading the data base with the last 50 years or so of wildfire records will probably take up to 12 months.

JARRAH FOREST INSECT PROBLEM

AT a seminar in November, Dr Ian Abbott of the Research Branch reported on his studies of the insect problem in the southern