

Wellington-one of 12 new national parks

THE State Government's commitment to create 12 new national parks throughout the south-west forest region was further demonstrated with the transfer of land acquired to create the Wellington National Park to the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Premier Richard Court said the 4300-hectare Wellington National Park would be a core of a continuous conservation reserve encompassing 10,000 hectares around Wellington Dam and in the forest between Collie and Dardanup.

The State Government has bought 3000 hectares of land formerly owned by the Worsley Timber Company to be incorporated into the National Park.

Mr Court said CALM would manage the new land and surrounding forest for nature conservation. The new land would be included in CALM's Western Shield program to control introduced predators such as the European fox.

Other parts of the 10,000-hectare conservation reserve network include the Gervasse, Lennard and Davis forest blocks which adjoin the new park along its western boundary.

"The Worsley land contains some magnificent stands of jarrah and blackbutt forest," Mr Court said.

"These include some of the biggest blackbutt trees recorded in the central forest region, with one more than 41 metres high and more than 2.4 metres in diameter near the base.

"The addition of such beautiful forest and landscape to the conservation reserve network is part of a \$9.5 million investment for the future in the Wellington district."

The new land adds a further 56 km of waterline around the Wellington Dam to the reserve system and brings to more than 100 km of dam frontage set aside for conservation.

The 12 new forest national parks being created following the Regional Forest Agreement will cover a total of 72,300 hectares. The overall forest conservation reserves has increased by more than 150,000 hectares through the RFA and subsequent actions by the State Government. These reserves contained 70 per cent of old-growth jarrah and 86 per cent of old-growth karri.

The State Government had allocated \$250,000 in the 2000-01 Budget to begin the planning process for parks management.

The RFA would also provide \$1 million to develop facilities and services for visitors to the new national park.

CALM's Director of Parks and Visitor Services Jim Sharp said the purchase of private land surrounding the dam had increased the opportunity for recreation and tourist developments including campsites and day-visitor facilities. This, combined with the Potters Gorge private hotel/chalet project, would be a significant boost for tourism in the Collie region.

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Providing moral support for the Hon Barbara Scott, MLC, who is about to plant the first tree at Woodman Point Regional Park on Arbor Day 2000, are from left, Ben Carr; representing Woodman Point Regional Park Community Advisory Committee; Ben's son Adam; Brooke Till, with spade at the ready; Ben and Carl Moreschi; CALM Executive Director Dr Wally Cox; Coogee Primary School teacher Keith Brown; Samantha Samarelli (partly obscured); Eric Boutens and Luke Gonnella. The children were from Coogee Primary School.

Photo by Ernie McLintock

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AS part of the ceremony held to announce the creation of the Park, the Premier also announced that woylies were to be returned to the Wellington forests between Collie and Dardanup.

CALM Mornington District Manager Drew Griffiths said the release,

which took place at dusk on the day of the announcement, would not only restore the species to parts of its former range, it would also enhance the Department's schools education programs that would be run at the Wellington Discovery Forest in September.

CALM Mornington nature conservation officer Rob Brazell said monitoring the area over the past few years had recorded native species such as chuditch, quenda (southern brown bandicoot) and brush tailed possums. Ring tailed possums had been seen in the neighbouring pine plantations.

Rob said the 3000 hectares of private land that had been bought to create the Wellington

National Park had now been included in the baiting program which would extend the area of suitable habitat for native species.

The woylies for the translocation have come from Batalling forest, about 30 km east of Collie, where the population has increased dramatically as a result of fox baiting. Batalling is the location for CALM's Wildlife Branch fauna-handling courses held each year.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes, Forest Products Minister Paul Omodei, local MLA Dr Hilda Turnbull and CALM Executive Director Dr Wally Cox attended the ceremony to create the Park.

The ceremony was also

marked with a traditional welcome to the land by Joe Northover, Custodian for the local Ngalang Boodja Aboriginal Council.

At the end of May, Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes officially opened the Wellington Discovery Forests' new activities centre and launched a new register of significant trees.

Mrs Edwardes also presented a gift to former Central Forest Region Manager Don Spriggins who had been the driving force behind the Discovery Forest concept.

Drew Griffiths said the events of the past few weeks had meant Mornington staff had been particularly busy, but they had run with the challenge and done a sterling job.

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