

General Working Plan No. 87 1982

A Review

"The Forests Act (1918-1976) states that the Forests Department shall have exclusive control and management of all matters of forest policy, all State forests and all timber reserves. The Act also requires that working plans for the management of State forest and timber reserves be prepared to cover a period not exceeding ten years. These plans are to be approved by the Governor in Executive Council and shall not be altered except on the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests. The purpose of the general working plans is to set out how the Government's forest policy is to be achieved. Each State forest and timber reserve is to be managed in accordance with this general working plan".

These words introduce the Western Australian Forests Department's current working plan, General Working Plan No. 87, 1982, approved by the Governor in Executive Council on 9 March 1982.

The General Working Plan is a document covering management, by the Forests Department, of over two million hectares of State forests and timber reserves. It represents a commitment by Government for the Department to manage the resources under its control according to specifications in the plan.

This 1982 Plan outlines a history of previous working plans for specific forest areas and general working plans for the whole of State forest since the Forests Act was passed in 1918. It is placed within the context of these previous plans and also of recent events and developments that have affected and influenced management.

The previous plan, General Working Plan No. 86, was approved and published in 1977. The current Plan follows in the tradition of No. 86 which detailed the Government's forest policy based on the concept of multiple use management. No changes have been made to this policy and it provides the basis for the current Plan.

General Working Plan No. 87 sets out specifications for approaching the current issues and values confronting Western Australia's forest management. These specifications take the form of background information, statements of management objectives, policy and strategy and discussions concerning interaction of land uses, a necessary consideration in multiple use management.

The purpose of forest management is described as "conservation through planned use of forests and associated resources, for the greatest long term social and economic benefits". The definition of conservation adopted by the Department is that described by the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in the World Conservation Strategy ... *"the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. Thus conservation is positive, embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilization, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment."*

Because of the many demands placed on the forest for different purposes and values multiple use management is seen as the best way to achieve the benefits desired. The Plan defines multiple use as "the use of a tract of land for several different purposes", and this is achieved by defining priority use areas and within this framework presenting as many uses as possible.

Compared with General Working Plan No. 86 (the 1977 Plan) the 1982 Plan expands the application of multiple use management and provides a preliminary classification of all of State forest into Priority Use Areas. A Priority Use Area is defined according to its primary use. This does not preclude the areas from a secondary use, but where conflict in management arises, requirements for the primary use are given precedence. The main forest values for which the Plan specifies management guidelines are water, wood, flora, fauna, landscape, recreation, scientific study, education and minor products such as honey, sandalwood and wildflowers.

Historically, timber production has been the major objective of forest management in Western Australia. But in recognition of other values and the consequent application of multiple use management, timber production now takes its place alongside the other major forest values.

General Working Plan No. 87 specifies a reduction of harvesting eucalypts from the forest and an increased pine planting and logging programme for future timber supplies. The aim is "to ensure that the estimated local demand for sawn timber and other wood products is met as far as possible from local supplies."

Water production, recreation and flora and fauna protection are major values given emphasis in this Plan. Particular attention is paid to the protection of water catchments, as a large area of the northern jarrah forest covers catchment areas that are used to supply water for domestic, irrigation and industrial purposes. Recreation has received consideration, and specifications to co-ordinate recreation requirements and environmental protection are provided. Attention has also been given to the protection of wildlife, in the provision of flora, fauna and landscape priority use areas.

The Plan stresses the need for flexibility of management so that factors and events affecting forest resources, but beyond the control of the Department may be considered in future management decisions. An example of one such event in the previous planning period was Cyclone Alby in April 1978, which caused widespread damage in pine plantations.

Constructive comment on this 1982 Plan from organizations and interested members of the public is invited.

General Working Plan No. 87 is a comprehensive document covering all aspects of current forest management in Western Australian State forests and timber reserves. Copies are available to the public at a cost of \$12.00 each from the Forests Department, 50 Hayman Road, Como.

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