

CLASSIFYING THE POTENTIAL OF STATE
FOREST TO PROVIDE RECREATION

by

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A system for classifying the potential that land in State Forest has for providing recreational satisfaction is being developed. Information on the value of different areas for recreation is required in the preparation of management plans for recreation. To attempt to plan for recreation without first classifying the recreational potential of the forest is like trying to draw up a logging plan without A.P.I. maps.

The objectives in classifying the forest are as follows:

1. To provide a reliable overview of the location, quantity and quality of the recreation resources in state forest to:
 - (a) enable zones to be defined where different management practices are implemented to cater for diverse recreational demands.
 - (b) ensure that areas of possible conflict with other management practices are recognised and minimised.
 - (c) assist in determining the priorities for development in different areas.
2. To identify lands or features of outstanding or unique recreational value.
3. To facilitate the location of recreational facilities such as scenic roads, walk tracks and picnic sites in areas with the best recreation potential.

The system developed so far is subjective, simple and easy to apply because there is insufficient time and money to carry out a more detailed classification of large areas. It therefore has numerous faults and the

reliability and validity is not high at this stage. Foremost among the defects in the system is that in classifying the value of an area for recreation the rating should be based on the opinion of a large cross section of people. Future research in this area should reduce the element of personal bias which many feel is painfully obvious at present. The system is flexible however because it can be refined to give a more accurate rating and additional information as the need arises and there is some value in making a start in the hope that the idea will not be rejected out of hand but others will offer suggestions for improvement.

The basis of classification of an area of land is its natural ability to provide recreation enjoyment. The following assumptions are made:

1. There is access to the area or it can be provided.
2. The presence or possibility of developing recreational facilities such as picnic sites, walking trails, boat ramps etc. is not considered.
3. Distance from population centres does not influence the classification.
4. The overstorey vegetation will not change. Where it is altered as in the case of logging or fire the area will be reclassified.
5. Present use will not influence ratings except in cases where features have become part of the folk lore of Western Australia and have assumed historical significance. (Example: Gloucester Tree and giant tingle hollow butts in the Valley of the Giants).
6. Sound management practices are assumed to ensure that the attractive features in each area are retained.

The classification rates the number of people an area will attract annually for any recreational pursuit without causing site alteration. It also indicates the type of recreation that the area will provide. This rating is applied to areas with a similar recreational

potential which can be isolated by drawing the boundaries on an 80 chain to the inch scale map. The classification is designed for undeveloped land and at present will not be used to classify agricultural and urban land.

The classification system rates each area by placing it in one of seven classes and one or more alphabetical subscripts are added to indicate the type of recreation that an area will provide. These are defined below:

Class 1

Very high capacity to attract high density use with no limitations on the ability to sustain this level of use or features of historical or special interest with state significance. These are features which already are or could become major tourist attractions in their own right.

Examples: Gloucester Tree, Giant tingle hollow butts in the Valley of the Giants, One Tree Bridge (becoming of historical significance), Serpentine Dam.

Class 2

High capacity to attract steady use on broad areas with no limitations on the ability to sustain this use. These areas may be at present or could become well known throughout the State.

Examples: Spectacular sections of the south coast, Yeagerup Dunes, The Darling Scarp, Murray and Collie River Valleys through the Scarp.

Class 3

Attractive areas which can supply steady recreational satisfaction but without the special attributes of areas in Class 2.

Examples: Pure karri valleys, steep good quality jarrah valleys with good trout and marron streams, most coastal shorelines.

Class 4

Areas which are acceptable aesthetically but offer neither great attraction no dissatisfaction for recreational use.

Examples: Karri-marri or good quality jarrah-marri stands with undulating topography, interesting understorey species and small streams.

Class 5

Areas which are not naturally very attractive but where occasional minor features relieve the unattractiveness.

Examples: Average to below average jarrah forest with undulating topography and an interesting understorey or a distant view.

Class 6

Areas where natural unattractiveness presents a severe obstacle to recreational use and where there are no relieving features.

Examples: Poor quality jarrah and flat country (JC and flats).

Class 7

Areas with a very low capacity for most types of recreation providing only open space. People tend to avoid these areas.

Examples: Dieback areas, eroded areas and minesites.

SUBSCRIPTS - TYPES OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

These are placed in the order of importance behind the rating for the area.

V = viewing scenery when driving, bushwalking, horse riding, trailbike riding, picnicing or barbecuing.

C = camping or caravanning

X = viewing flora

A = viewing fauna (animals and birds)

D = dunebuggy riding

HA,HW = Hunting or shooting (animals or waterfowl)

R = rockclimbing

I = site of historic or special interest

S = swimming (in bath, sea and river)

B = boating and canoeing (rivers and streams)

W = water skiing, sailing and boating (lakes and broadwaters)

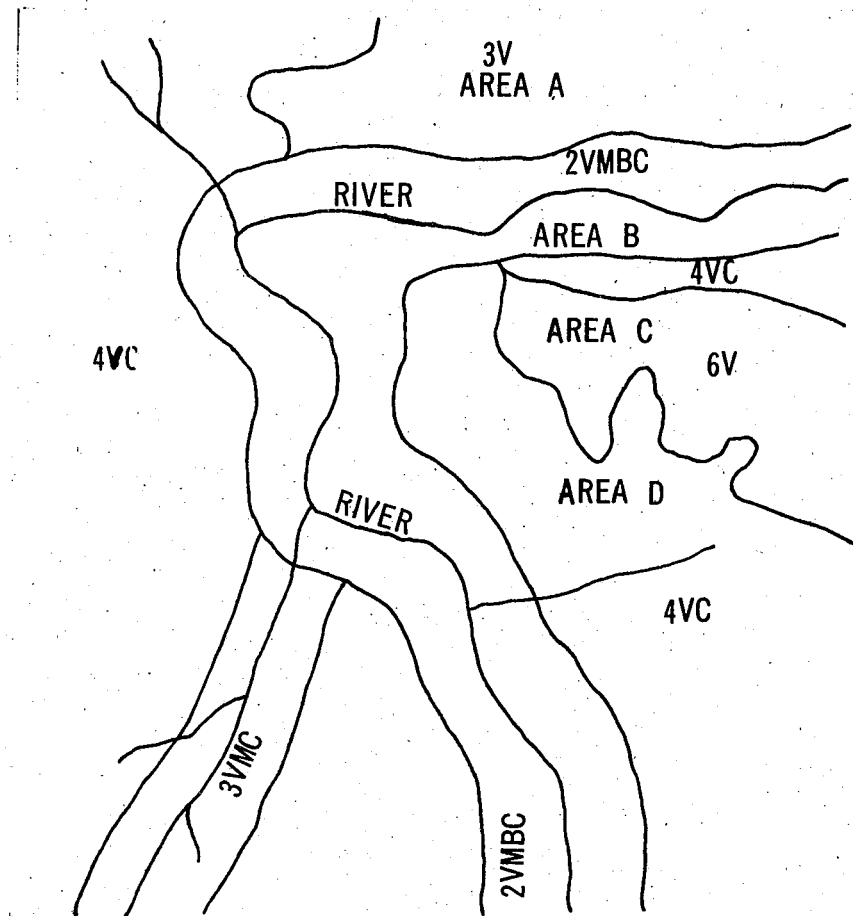
M = marron, trout and other fresh water fishing.

F = salt water fishing.

To apply the system the area to be classified is divided into areas with a similar recreational potential by drawing boundaries on an 80 chain to the inch scale map. This is done with the aid of local knowledge, aerial photographs and A.P.I. Maps. These areas should be as large as possible while ensuring that all land within the unit will have the same rating. The recreational activities which an area will support are then listed in order of importance. For example VBC refers to an area which will provide viewing, boating and camping in that order of importance. The rating from 1 to 7 is then selected on the basis of the first activity and modified as required after consideration of the rating that the other activities would give to the area. To assist in this process "guide to classification" sheets have been written for each activity. They are too detailed to be included here but they describe more fully and give many examples of the rating different areas should be given. Areas in each class are then coloured on the map using a standard code so that the potential of all land in an area for recreation can be easily seen.

The map shows a small area classified as an example of how the system works. Area A is rated 3 because it is an area of pure virgin karri in a steep river valley and hence can attract people to view the scenery while driving, picnicing etc. Area B along the valley of a major river has an even higher capacity to attract people for viewing, marroning, boating and camping. On area C the karri has been clear felled and it is therefore rated low for viewing which is the only activity which it can support. Area D is an average karri-marri stand which is capable of providing for viewing and camping.

The rating an area is given does not indicate whether or not it should be developed for recreation. Some highly attractive areas for example could be left as wilderness. Areas and places with a lower rating may be developed if they are more accessible. Neither does the rating indicate how many people will actually use an area because of the importance of the degree of development, advertising and distance from population centres, in attracting people. This classification is therefore similar to the forest types on A.P.I. maps which give no indication of whether an area should or will be logged. The system however does provide information on the quality of forest areas for recreation and although it could and should be greatly refined, will provide a basis for drawing up management plans in the near future.



An example of a forest area classified on the basis of its potential to provide recreational opportunities.