

Transforming research results on ground management action

Leader: Ian Kealley      Reporter: Keith Morris

Experimental management could be defined as the interaction of research and operations staff to undertake field manipulative trials to determine the effects of certain management practices on conservation problems. These management practices are those perceived to enhance conservation values.

This experimental management is an extremely important process for conservation agencies to participate in and is particularly relevant to the management of spinifex deserts. It is a process which involves both research and operations staff, and should be considered a necessary precursor to any major operation in spinifex deserts.

The process of experimental management was discussed using specific examples from the desert, and a list of steps to be undertaken was developed. These are:

1. Identify the problem jointly between research and operation staff.
2. Prioritize the perceived problems.
3. Seek and obtain funding.
4. Undertake the research.
5. Communicate to others involved.
6. Demonstrate the findings to others in the field.
7. Establish guidelines for ongoing operations.
8. Establish monitoring regions.
9. Modify guidelines if necessary.

Because research in remote areas can be an extremely expensive undertaking it was considered necessary that

- a) funding must be sought and obtained prior to commencement
- b) motivation of staff at all levels was important.

The motivation of managers can be achieved by

- a) asking them what they see as conservation priorities in their region
- b) involving them in the process from the beginning.

The motivation of more senior bureaucrats and politicians is more difficult and involves giving them access to field

trips, preparing "good news" articles for press, lobbying, impressing upon them the wider application of results etc.

It was generally felt that there was a public misconception about the deserts being a wasteland, unproductive and not worth preserving. This attitude needs to change, and improved communication is the major way of achieving this. Several means of communicating were discussed.

1. There is a need for a facilitator to push the management issues of spinifex deserts at all levels.
2. Spinifex desert management needs to be included on the agenda of joint land use planning bodies, where all interests are represented.
3. There is a need for better interaction with other user groups, particularly the Aboriginal people and pastoralists e.g. field days, membership of Aust. Rangeland Society.
4. There is great scope to include professional and amateur conservation groups in the management of spinifex deserts.
5. Use of other groups such as Tertiary students and school live play groups should also be encouraged.
6. Corporate sponsorship for desert projects should be sought.
7. There needs to be a coordinated approach to research between state and territory government departments, with joint application for funding.
8. Education within National Parks.
9. Obtaining the services of special media personnel and programs (Quantum etc.), and the opportunistic press exposure is also worthwhile.