

# "WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY" — HOW TO SAVE THE WORLD

The 'World Conservation Strategy' was launched worldwide by leaders of thirty countries on March 5-6th. In Western Australia Mr. Harry Butler presented a copy of the document to the Premier, Sir Charles Court.

The document is important to the preservation of mankind as well as animal and plant life. For the first time in history priorities for Governments within a global conservation framework have been established.

The document calls for a marriage between conservation and development.

The global strategy has three main objectives:

1. To maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems. This includes soil regeneration and protection, the recycling of nutrients, and the cleansing of waters on which human survival and development depend.
2. To preserve genetic diversity. This involves the breeding programmes necessary for the protection and improvement of cultivated plants, domestic animals and micro-organisms, as well as much scientific and technical innovation, and the security of many industries that use living resources.
3. To ensure the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems. This covers wildlife, forests and grazing lands which support millions of rural communities and major industries.

These objectives have become urgent because the planet's capacity to support people is being severely reduced.

For example:

1. 3 000 square kilometres of prime farmland disappear every year under buildings and roads in developed countries alone.
2. Thousands of millions of tonnes of soil are lost annually as a result of deforestation and poor land management.
3. Hundreds of millions of rural people in developing countries including 500 million malnourished and 800 million destitute, are compelled to destroy the very resources they need to free themselves from starvation and poverty; they strip the land of trees and shrubs in widening swathes around their villages, because they lack wood to cook or to keep warm and they are obliged to burn every year 400 million tonnes of dung and crop residues badly needed to regenerate the soils.
4. Siltation is reducing the lifetime of reservoirs supplying water and hydro-electricity by as much as 50 per cent.
5. The annual cost of floods that devastate settlements and crops in India alone ranges from 140 to 750 million dollars.
6. Tropical forests are contracting so rapidly that by the end of this century the remaining area of unlogged productive forest will have been reduced by 50 per cent.
7. The coastal support systems of many fisheries are being destroyed or polluted, and in the United States annual losses are put at 86 million dollars.



Harry Butler speaking about the importance of the "World Conservation Strategy". He presented a copy of the document to the Premier, Sir Charles Court.

A number of points in the Strategy are of relevance to Western Australia. In some cases, such as the establishment of National Parks and Nature Reserves, Western Australia is doing quite well compared with many other countries. However, the State does have problems such as salinity and water quality in the south-west, bad agricultural practices which could turn some of our low rainfall areas into deserts, the preservation of rare species of plants and animals and the allocation of sufficient staff and resources to manage Nature Reserves.

The Strategy highlights the south-west of Western Australia as an area of global significance—an ecosystem with large numbers of unique plants and animals some of which are in danger of becoming extinct.

The Strategy proposes concrete solutions to government policy-makers and their advisors, to conservationists directly concerned with living resources, and to those involved in development, such as development agencies, financing institutions, industry, etc. The Strategy proposes many practical solutions for example:

1. An integrated method for evaluating land and water resources, and outlines a procedure for the rational allocation of land and water uses.
2. Suggests ways of improving the organizational capacities for soil conservation and of marine living resources.
3. Recommends anticipatory environmental policies, a cross-sectional conservation policy and a broader system of national accounting in order to integrate conservation with development at the policy making level.
4. Proposes the adoption of national and sub-national strategies.
5. Recommends review of legislation concerning living resources.
6. Urges international programmes for the preservation of tropical forests and drylands, and for the conservation of global 'commons'—the open oceans, the atmosphere and Antarctica.

In the past conservation has often been thought of as the opposite of progress. The Strategy demolishes this fallacy; indeed it makes a compelling case that

without conservation there can be no satisfactory development. The Strategy calls for a marriage between conservation and development.

More than 450 Government agencies and conservation organizations in over 100 countries were involved in its preparation.

The idea came during discussions between UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) in 1975. Both organizations saw the need for a clear statement for conservation priorities, with a broad plan for achieving them. UNEP therefore commissioned IUCN to prepare a Strategy. WWF (World Wildlife Fund) also recognized the need for a Strategy and offered to help finance its preparation. Work on the Strategy began in 1977. It is not a document of gloom but one of warning and reflects an unprecedented agreement in the world's scientific community on what to do to ensure that the earth's natural resources are safeguarded, not only for ourselves, but for future generations.

The one weakness of the "World Conservation Strategy" is the scarcity of documents. No copies of the Strategy are available, however, there are small supplies of the book "How to Save the World" which is based on the "World Conservation Strategy". Anyone interested should write to:

World Wildlife Fund,  
G.P.O. Box 528,  
Sydney, N.S.W. 2001

and they will be advised when copies are available.