

THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

THE Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) aims to encourage a more rapid and effective shift towards ecologically sustainable development, including biodiversity conservation. This will be achieved through the expenditure of funds across a suite of 17 programs that are focused on addressing key environmental issues. Table 1 lists the major programs.

The NHT will be largely delivered through direct investment grants between the Commonwealth government and incorporated groups, local government or State agencies. The call for grant applications will be once a year through a One-Stop-Shop arrangement that receives applications and priorities project proposals. The merit of proposals is considered through a process that is modeled on the previous National Landcare Program where all NHT applications are assessed and ranked by community-based regional assessment panels (RAPs), then a State Assessment Panel (SAP).

For this round of funding, there will be a **single set of guidelines** (*Natural Heritage Trust Funding: Guide*

to New Applications 1998-99) for all applicants and programs, whether for a community group, State agency, local governments or NGOs with a closing date of **6th March 1998**. Accompanying the NHT Guidelines will be supplementary guidelines that provide State and regional priorities and detail specific information requirements that WA applicants must supply. These should be read thoroughly before attempting to develop a project application.

TABLE 1. LIST OF THE NHT MAJOR PROGRAMS

Bushcare: The National Vegetation Initiative
Murray-Darling 2001
National Wetlands Program
Weeds and Introduced Pest Animals
National Landcare Program
Farm Forestry Program
Endangered Species Program
National Rivercare Program
Fisheries Action Program
National Reserve System Program

NHT Principles

Underpinning the Natural Heritage Trust and the delivery of its component programs are a number of key principles. In order that applicants have a greater likelihood to receive funding, they are encouraged to develop projects that meet the following requirements.

- ✦ NHT funding is intended to be **catalytic** rather than subsidization of particular activities that are regarded as core business of land managers or having high private benefit. As funding through the NHT is from the public purse, the Trust intends to maximize environmental outcomes by funding activities that will promote ecologically sustainable land management practices across the community, as well as having a noticeable change in the landscape. Accordingly, **projects that demonstrate the greatest public benefit will receive priority consideration.**
- ✦ Grants are aimed to help groups get over a self-reliance hurdle and make them more self-sufficient. Projects that require on-going funding will need to develop other mechanisms for funding.
- ✦ The project **must address the cause** of natural resource or environmental problems rather than solely the symptoms. For example, if a group is intending to address human induced salinisation, revegetation of recharge areas and not saline scalds must prominently feature in their proposal.
- ✦ **Project must be integrated** across soil, water, vegetation and biodiversity issues and take a long-term approach that is **linked to regional strategies** or fits regional initiatives.
- ✦ The applicant must **contribute** some of the costs (in kind or cash) in order to demonstrate a lasting commitment to the project and help foster a conservation ethic.
- ✦ **Projects must address a national, Statewide or regional issue;**
- ✦ Project must be **technically feasible** and **propose the most efficient solution**
- ✦ Priority will be given to projects developed in **partnership** with other proponents (such as State agencies, local government or catchment groups)

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This year's guidelines are in 5 parts:

1. DEVELOPING AN ELIGIBLE APPLICATION

- ▷ read to see if your project fits – if it does, go ahead and read the rest of the guidelines – if it doesn't, rethink your idea.

2. PREPARING YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL *(the amount of information requested will depend on the amount of funding you are seeking)*

- ▷ for projects <\$10,000, you need to answer 7 general questions on page 44 and attach your answers *(no more than 3 A4 single-sided pages)* to the application form;
- ▷ for projects between \$10,000 and <\$50,000, you need to answer 16 general questions on pages 26-29 and attach answers to the application form *(limit your answers to 7 A4 single-sided pages)*. In addition, you will also need to answer specific questions for each type of project and attach to the application form;
- ▷ for projects >\$50,000, you need to answer 16 general questions on pages 26-29 and attach answers to your proposal. *(You must provide more information than projects that are less than \$50,000 but limit your answers to no more than 10 A4 single-sided pages.)* In addition, you will also need to answer specific questions for each type of project and attach to the application form.

3. WORK OUT YOUR BUDGET

- ▷ read carefully and be certain all rules are followed;
- ▷ double-check to make sure the arithmetic is correct.

4. WHAT NEXT

- ▷ Outlines information on where to send your application and the assessment process.

5. YOUR APPLICATION

- ▷ This is the application form – fill it in carefully.
- ▷ Attach your answers from Part 2.
- ▷ Send to the address in Part 4.
(For on-ground native vegetation management and revegetation activities, you must supply maps, aerial photographs and on-ground photos, which should be attached to your application).

■ SUMMARY

Under the NHT over the next 3 years, there will be an increase in funds for direct grants. However, this will also mean greater competition for funds both within the State and between States. In order for applicants to have a greater likelihood to receive funding, they are encouraged to develop projects that meet the NHT funding criteria and complement the above principles.

Regional Bushcare Facilitators

To assist in the delivery of Bushcare in Western Australia, it is proposed to establish a skeletal network of regional Bushcare facilitators (Bushcare Workers) across the southwest agricultural areas and metropolitan Perth. The primary role of the Workers will be to promote nature conservation and ecologically sustainable land management. This will include assisting stakeholders in the development of projects that will improve native vegetation at a local level as well as complementing biodiversity conservation at the regional scale. The Workers will also provide native vegetation management advice and promote conservation mechanisms such as the Land for Wildlife Scheme, State Remnant Vegetation Protection scheme and other incentive schemes aimed at improving native vegetation management. It is anticipated that the Bushcare Workers will be in place early next year and community groups, local governments and State agencies are encouraged to contact them to seek assistance on native vegetation matters, as well as NHT funding. In addition, to assist Aboriginal Communities there will also be a number of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators. Further information on the location of the facilitators will appear in a future addition of Western Wildlife.

- For further details on NHT or NVI/Bushcare, contact:

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National Vegetation Initiative



BUSHCARE is a major program established under the NHT that expands on former Commonwealth government native vegetation initiatives, primarily the Save the Bush and One Billion Trees programs. The program takes a more holistic approach towards native vegetation management than previous programs and encourages integrated management planning, where existing native vegetation is better managed and complemented by strategic revegetation activities.

As native vegetation is central in maintaining productive capacity of the land and ecological systems, the Bushcare program aims to reverse the decline in the quality and extent of native vegetation, with a view to making significant changes in the landscape. Applicants seeking Bushcare funds through the NHT must clearly indicate how their project will achieve lasting on-ground outcomes that will benefit native vegetation.

Bushcare's **primary objectives** are to:

- ◆ conserve biodiversity through improved management of native vegetation and complementary strategic revegetation activities;
- ◆ conserve remnant native vegetation by implementing a range of conservation measures, e.g. controls on land clearing, State Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme; and
- ◆ restore productive capacity of degraded land/water by significantly increasing revegetation activity within an integrated landscape-planning context.

■ AREAS FOR FUNDING

Bushcare encourages applicants to address a range of native vegetation management issues. This may include:

- ▷ collection and collation of information (to better understand the role of native vegetation and identify significant areas for protection and key sites for revegetation);
- ▷ planning (management plans and strategies);
- ▷ implementation/management (e.g. better management of existing vegetation and revegetation activities);
- ▷ monitoring and evaluation;
- ▷ investigations and trials (identification of the conservation value of major areas and trialling of innovative vegetation management technology);
- ▷ community support (directed towards community and regional projects); and
- ▷ training and education awareness.

All projects must clearly indicate how they will achieve lasting on-ground outcomes that will benefit native vegetation.

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The 4 major steps in developing a Bushcare project

▶ 1. GET INFORMATION

- ▷ First, find out what other vegetation management activities are planned in your local area. *(Your local facilitators may be able to assist you, or try contacting other local catchment groups and landholders directly);*
- ▷ Find out if there is a regional land management strategy for your area and what are the State priorities. *(Your local landcare facilitators will be able to help you here.)*
- ▷ Contact your local council(s) and find out what plans they have for your area.

▶ 2. PLAN WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

- ▷ Involve relevant interested local people in the development of your proposal. If possible invite local experts, including local representatives from CALM, AgWA, Water and Rivers Commission, local government and expert field naturalists to a meeting to finalise your proposal.
- ▷ Identify land management issues, degraded land and causes of land degradation relevant to your area.
- ▷ Draw up a map of your catchment or region.
- ▷ Map areas of remnant vegetation and identify which areas need protecting and how you will go about protecting these areas.
- ▷ Identify where revegetation needs to occur, which will complement existing areas of remnant vegetation *(i.e. buffer plantings around existing remnants, and/or wildlife corridors to connect remnants).*

- ▷ Identify areas for agroforestry and how these areas can be integrated with nature conservation activities.
- ▷ Identify what plant species to use for revegetation activities, where to find the local seed source and whether to replant or direct seed areas *(priority will be given to projects that use local provenance indigenous species).*

▶ 3. DETERMINE WHAT RESOURCES ARE NEEDED

- ▷ Draw up an action plan of *proposed* works, including what activities will be carried out and when, what will be needed and who will do what.
- ▷ List what on-going management activities are needed (eg: weed control, fire management, rehabilitation activities, pest control).
- ▷ Develop a monitoring program to use during the years of funding and beyond.
- ▷ Determine how much time and money will be contributed by the landholders and by other groups.
- ▷ List what activities it has been decided to undertake and which are eligible under the NHT.

▶ 4. PREPARE YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL

- ▷ Incorporate all your ideas into the proposal and submit to the Natural Heritage Trust for funding by the closing date.

Good luck!

Bushcare