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In this issue:

- [Welcome!](#)
- [South West Native Title Settlement](#)
- [Noongar cultural heritage and management partnerships in the FMP](#)
- [Progress of the Forest Management Plan](#)
- [More than trees... discover the velvet worm](#)
- [The Noongar season, djeran](#)

Welcome!

G'day Nicole

In this newsletter we share what the team at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) are doing to support forest health and biodiversity resilience in our changing climate, and how we're moving forward with the implementation of the Forest Management Plan 2024–2033 (FMP).

The FMP is based on the following four foundations, each guided by a strategic goal.

Foundation 1: Noongar cultural heritage and management partnerships.

Strategic goal: To value and protect Noongar cultural heritage and support Noongar Traditional Owner involvement.

Foundation 2: Biodiversity conservation.

Strategic goal: To conserve biodiversity and support ecosystem resilience.

Foundation 3: Forest health and climate resilience.

Strategic goal: To maintain or improve forest health and enhance climate resilience.

Foundation 4: Social and economic benefits and opportunities.

Strategic goal: To deliver social, cultural and economic benefits through the provision of goods and services.

To acknowledge Reconciliation Week, our djeran newsletter focuses on the first foundation, Noongar cultural heritage and management partnerships.

The FMP continues DBCA's reconciliation journey through recognition of koorah (past), nitja (present) and boordahwan (future). Through Foundation 1, we strive to protect Aboriginal culture and heritage in our south-west forests while supporting Traditional Owners' customary activities and creating employment and economic opportunities.

By way of background, we've included details about the South West Native Title Settlement (SWNTS), and what it means for the FMP as the geographical location of the plan is within the SWNTS area. The FMP's Aboriginal Engagement Officer, Raymond De Jong, gives an insight into how he's working with Traditional Owners across the south-west to collaboratively deliver the FMP over the next 10 years.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to myself or the [FMP team](#).



Ben Sawyer
Coordinator, Forest Management Plan

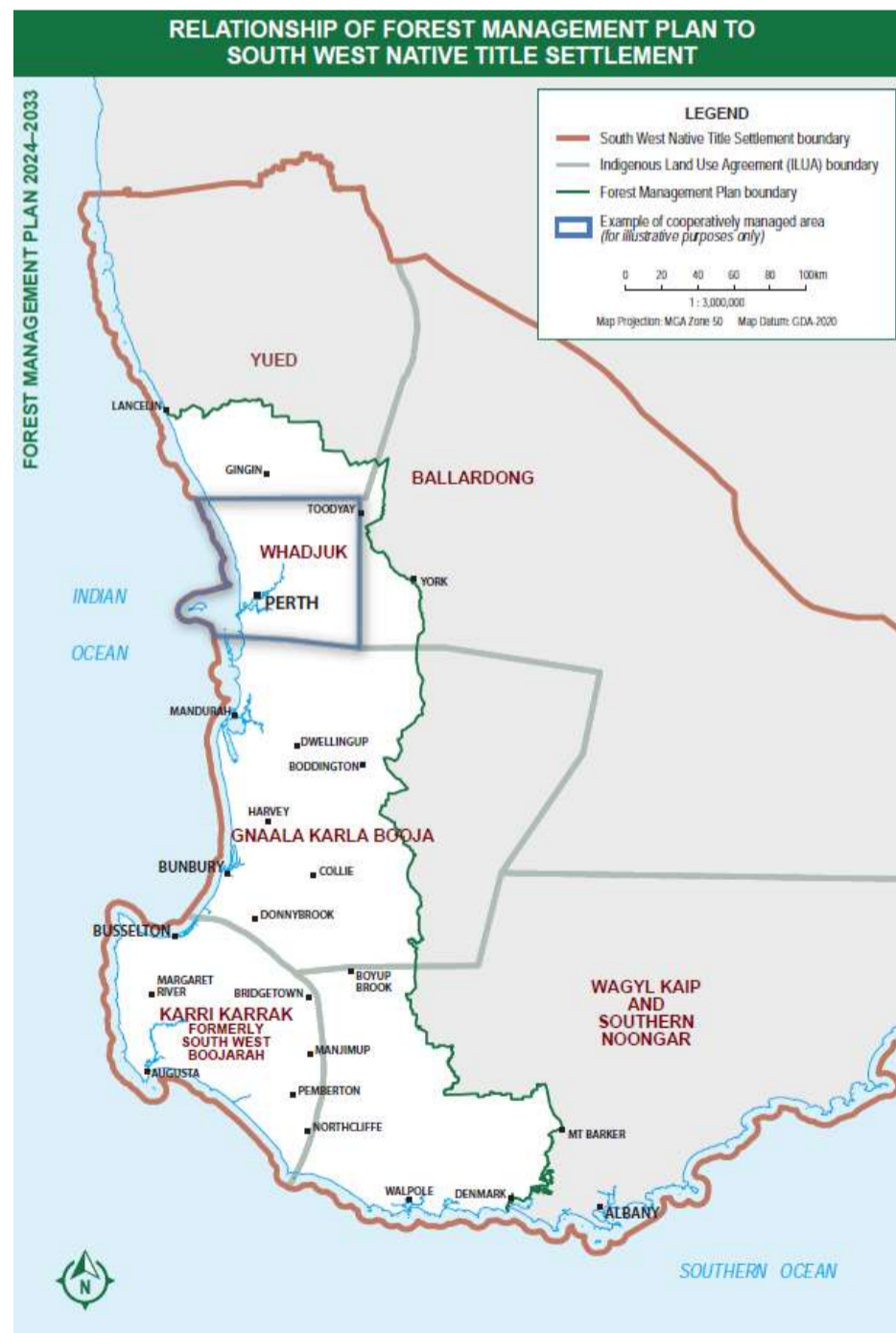
South West Native Title Settlement

On 25 February 2021, the South West Native Title Settlement became operational. The settlement, in the form of six Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), was negotiated between the Noongar people and the WA Government. This is the largest and most comprehensive native title agreement in Australian history providing long-term benefits and opportunities for Noongar interests.

In October and November 2022, six new Noongar regional corporations were appointed to represent the rights and interests of the ILUA groups and their community. The six Noongar regional corporations are:

- Yued
- Whadjuk
- Ballardong
- Gnaala Karla Booja
- Karri Karrak
- Wagyl Kaip and Southern Noongar

DBCA will work in partnership with the ILUAs to improve economic, social and cultural outcomes for Australia's First Nations people.



Partnerships in the FMP

Since the start of the year, Ray De Jong, FMP Aboriginal Engagement Officer, has been working with members of the six Noongar regional corporations (NRCs) to understand their goals and how Traditional Owners can be involved in implementing the FMP.

Noongar cultural heritage and management partnerships are taking on many different shapes and forms, but the consistent approach and drive will always be the protection of Noongar cultural and heritage values.

Ray and the NRCs are investigating opportunities that will deliver social, cultural and economic benefits in forest management, including commercial activities arising from ecological thinning or the monitoring of forest health to support ecosystem resilience.

There will be additional opportunities in cultural tourism development and tourism joint ventures in newly created reserves or existing national parks in the south-west.

The establishment of Noongar cooperative management partnerships, which cover the extent of the FMP area, marks a new era of collaboration, and continues to develop DBCA's forest and fire management practices in the south-west region. The partnerships present exciting land management opportunities to ensure the south-west forests are cared for using Noongar and Western methods.



Prior to joining the FMP team in 2023, Ray worked for many years in the Pilbara and Gascoyne (Ningaloo) with multiple Aboriginal corporations in joint management, economic development and other conservation estate management and operational activities.

Progress of the Forest Management Plan

The budget to deliver the FMP, [announced by the State government](#) on 17th April, commits to investing \$67 million over the next four years. This will create 65 new jobs to implement actions such as cooperative management with Traditional Owners; a new forest health monitoring program supported by emerging technologies; fire research; and ecological thinning to improve forest health.

The budget provides for increased protection of native wildlife from feral predators and funds to manage weeds and plant diseases. The FMP also commits to add more than 400,000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests to the conservation estate as nature reserves, national parks and conservation parks.

With the budget now confirmed, the FMP Implementation Plan is being finalised, and will be available to read on the DBCA website.

The Forest Health Monitoring Program Implementation Plan is also underway and will be published soon.

machinery required to thin in the jarrah regrowth forests has now arrived and ecological thinning in jarrah regrowth forests in the Gordon block (Warren region, 60 hectares) and Hamilton block (640 hectares) will start soon.



The numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) is one of the many species being protected from feral predators as part of DBCA's Western Shield.

More than trees... discover the velvet worm

Whilst we often think of the forest as 'trees', there's a huge amount of remarkable biodiversity in the south-west with many plants and animals that are remnants from ecosystems that were found across Gondwanaland.

Gondwanaland was the supercontinent that included about two-thirds of today's continental area from around 600 million to 30 million years ago. The climate during much of this period was wetter than today, with extensive rain forests covering much of the landscape.

The unique velvet worm is just one of the Gondwanan 'survivors' that are part of this forest ecosystem which the FMP aims to protect.

Today, velvet worms exist in cool damp habitats such as fissures in fallen branches, tree stumps, logs and leaf litter where there is 100% humidity. In the south-west, they're found near wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain and in suitable habitat in jarrah and karri forests.



The velvet worm, photographed by Dr Matthew Hourston.

Velvet worms resemble large caterpillars and have soft, velvety, finely patterned skin with 14 or 16 pairs of stubby legs, fleshy antennae and slime glands. Velvet worms are nocturnal hunters that ripple across the forest floor very slowly (one metre per hour), and creep up on their prey. When they encounter a small invertebrate, such as woodlice or a

As velvet worms are found in relatively small, localised areas and habitats of high humidity, populations are vulnerable to disturbance including the changing climate. Forest management activities aim to maintain the wetter habitats in forests, helping this ancient group remain part of the south-west's unique biodiversity.

The Noongar season, djeran

Djeran occurs in April and May and is represented by the colour green to symbolise the cooler weather of the season. Now the hot weather has passed, the cooler weather brings dew in the early morning. Red flowers are in bloom during the season of djeran, including on the red flowering gums (*Corymbia ficifolia*), and summer flames (*Beaufortia aestiva*). The male sheoaks (*Casuarina spp.*) turn a dusty red colour as they release pollen, and the female sheoaks produce small red flowers along with lots of seed cones. The banksias also start to flower in djeran, providing nectar for the small animals and birds that feed on them.

(Since writing this newsletter we're pleased to see the rain has finally come signalling the start of the Noongar season, makuru.)



Noongar artist, Linda Loo, created an original artwork for the FMP 2024-2033. She is a Noongar woman born in Corrigin and connected to the Ballardong/Whadjuk clans of the Noongar Nation. The Noongar Nation is located in the south-west region of Western Australia.

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DBCA acknowledges the Noongar people as the Traditional Owners within the Forest Management Plan area in the south-west of Western Australia and respects the continuing connection and importance of forests to their cultural, physical and spiritual health.



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