

Public Administration Committee

From: Graham Zemunik
Sent: Friday, 21 March 2014 8:36 AM
To: Public Administration Committee
Subject: Submission to the inquiry into the potential environmental contribution of recreational hunting systems

Dear Committee,

As a member of the community and, amongst other things, a botanist, I am deeply concerned about the possibility of recreational hunting in the state's reserves. Putting to one side for the moment, the policing of which animals will be killed, from a floristic and ecosystems perspective there is an enormous potential for damage due to the spread of dieback disease.

There are many references on dieback for you to consult (search for "phytophthora dieback Western Australia" on Google Scholar, as well as DPAW) but, in essence, it is a soil-borne pathogen which attacks the roots of plants, some of which subsequently die due to their roots losing the ability to transport adequate water. The problem we have here in southwest Western Australia is that many key groups of plants, not just isolated species, are highly susceptible to Phytophthora and it thus poses not only a risk of extinction to many species, but also will, and is, fundamentally altering natural ecosystems and landscapes.

So what has that got to do with hunting? Well, the reality is that unfettered access, not only by vehicles, but also by people and their dogs can very easily spread the pathogen. It is simply unrealistic to expect that even a majority, let alone all, of the hunters potentially going into these areas will be aware of dieback and, more importantly, implement the strictest cleanliness and hygiene protocols (on themselves, their vehicles and dogs) necessary to prevent further spread of the pathogen. It simply won't happen. With respect to dieback, the most likely outcome is yet another vector spreading the pathogen and destroying our internationally recognised biodiversity, which has already suffered tremendous loss.

This really needs to be taken very seriously, it simply isn't an issue that can be dealt with by providing "public education" in the form a short induction, or such like. Unfortunately, the only way we have at present of combating the spread of dieback is restricted/limited access, combined with strict dieback hygiene protocols; officially endorsing access to many of these at-risk areas is simply unconscionable given what we know about the risks posed.

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