



Conservation Commission  
of Western Australia



# Annual Report 2005–2006





# Conservation Commission of Western Australia

## *Annual Report 2005-2006*

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*Front cover photograph – Field assessment of potential old-growth forest*

# Conservation Commission Annual Report 2005–2006

## Transmittal to the Minister

Minister for the Environment

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report – 2005-2006 of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, covering its activities for the period ending 30 June 2006, as provided for under section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

Dr John Bailey  
Chairperson

## Chairperson's Overview

The reporting period has seen a number of significant achievements in the advancement of conservation throughout the State, including the groundbreaking signing of the Ord Final Agreement with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners in October 2005, the resolution of controversy over the future of the Gull Rock and Mt Martin reserves in Albany, and the finalisation and implementation of a process for reassessing areas of potential old-growth forest. The Conservation Commission of Western Australia (Conservation Commission) has also put in significant work on ongoing issues and projects including, the establishment of a new Biodiversity Commission, a draft management plan for the Walpole Wilderness Area and clarifying and formalising the strategic direction for the Conservation Commission.

It was my pleasure to sign, on behalf of the Conservation Commission, the Ord Final Agreement, marking a significant advance in working with traditional owners to achieve social and environmental benefits as well as promote economic opportunities. The Conservation Commission looks forward to working with the Miriuwung Gajerrong people in the development of joint management arrangements for the 154 000 hectares of new conservation parks.

A draft management plan for the Walpole Wilderness Area has received considerable attention during the reporting period. The Conservation Commission has worked closely with CALM to ensure that the wilderness, as well as biodiversity, values are incorporated in all aspects of management, achieving significant advances in the approach to managing conservation reserves. A particular focus was fire management and the need for the plan to provide for the requirements of fire sensitive communities. This draft management plan is expected to be released for public comment in August 2006.

During the reporting period *Interim Conservation Commission policy and guidelines for the performance assessment of conservation reserve and forest management plans and biodiversity management in WA* were completed and released for a period of one year of implementation. Two performance assessment reports based on the guidelines were published during the reporting period: assessments of the *Wanjarri Nature Reserve Management Plan 1996-2006* and of the selection and demarcation of fauna habitat zones as required under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*. Significant progress was also made on several other performance assessments including that of prescribed burning.

The reporting period saw the continued work of the Conservation Commission, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM)<sup>1</sup> and the Forest Products Commission in implementing the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* (Forest Management Plan). A report, *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 Status of Implementation as at 31 December 2004*, was completed during the year indicating each agency's progress with implementation of actions for which it is responsible.

The reporting period included the completion in December 2005 of the *Assessment Criteria and Process for the Conservation Commission Review of Old-Growth Amendments*, developed under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*. This document provides the process for the assessment of reclassifications of old-growth forest by CALM together with a process to allow the public to nominate areas of forest they consider are old-growth for assessment by the Conservation Commission. An area of 71 hectares of reclassified old-growth forest has been reviewed with 6 hectares returned to old-growth status and 65 hectares confirmed as not being old-growth forest. Three nominations were considered during the reporting period, with the assessment for Palmer and Arcadia blocks completed and assessment of Chester block deferred until the area's dieback status is determined.

There was continued attention focused on the selection and management of fauna habitat zones, with the Conservation Commission's consultation process with community representatives to develop recommendations concerning the location of these zones continuing to be useful. The fauna habitat zones were established as a means of ensuring biodiversity recovery between one timber harvesting event and the next.

CALM held a management planning workshop that provided an opportunity for the Conservation Commission to work more closely with all of the planners at once to develop mechanisms to streamline management planning. Implementing the workshop outcomes is expected to achieve more efficient management plan production with an associated increase in the rate of production, better community involvement and more consistent capacity to measure and report on the success of plans through assessment against key performance indicators.

The Conservation Commission has taken an important step in the advancement of conservation reserves through its work with the local community and Albany City Council concerning the Gull Rock and Mt Martin reserves. The Conservation Commission has worked through the issues with the community representatives and the Council to achieve a resolution to the vesting and management and use of the reserve; issues that have been present for an extended period.

The Conservation Commission has continued to work with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and CALM to ensure a smooth transition as the Government implements its policy to merge the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority into a new Biodiversity Commission.

The Conservation Commission has recognised the need for updating our strategic plan to ensure it remains fully applicable and will assist us in moving into the new Biodiversity Commission when the time comes. To this end, in May 2006 the Conservation Commission members and staff conducted a workshop to identify our objectives and strategies for achieving them. This work is now being incorporated in the development of a new strategic plan in 2006-07.

In October we welcomed Marilyn Morgan as a new member of the Conservation Commission. She has proven a valuable addition to the team, providing useful insight into the work of the Conservation Commission and enhancing the results we are able to deliver.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Tom Hatton, who finished up with the Conservation Commission in March 2006 to take up a position interstate.

In closing I would like to thank the members and staff of the Conservation Commission and CALM for their efforts and support during the year.

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<sup>1</sup> On 1 July 2006 the former Department of Conservation and Land Management and former Department of Environment merged to form the Department of Environment and Conservation. As this report is for the year preceding this change the Departments that existed during 2005-06 are referred to throughout. Where data was provided by the new department (i.e. provided after 1 July 2006, such as the data shown in Table 1) the former department that was custodian of the information during the reporting period is cited as the source.

## Members and Meetings

The *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 (CALM Act)* provides that the Conservation Commission of Western Australia is to have nine members who, in the opinion of the Minister have knowledge of and experience in:

- conservation or management of biodiversity;
- environmental management, including the management of the natural environment for use for recreational purposes; or
- the sustainable use of natural resources,

or,

- who have a particular function or vocational interest relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission, and
- who, in the opinion of the Minister, are able to make a contribution to the functions of the Conservation Commission.

One member is to be a person who, in the opinion of the Minister:

- has knowledge of and experience in Aboriginal cultural and Aboriginal heritage matters relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission; and
- is able to make a contribution to the functions of the Conservation Commission.

The members of the Conservation Commission and the date of their initial appointment and term of appointment (including any reappointments) at 30 June 2006 were:

Dr John Bailey, Chairperson	November 2001 – November 2007
Mrs Patricia Barblett (AM), Deputy Chairperson	November 2000 – November 2008
Dr Jennifer Davis	November 2000 – November 2006
Ms Regina Flugge	November 2003 – November 2007
Mr William Mitchell	December 2002 – November 2008
Ms Marilyn Morgan	October 2005 – October 2006
Mr Graeme Rundle	November 2000 – November 2008
Dr Joanna Young	November 2000 – November 2006

In March 2006 Dr Thomas Hatton resigned his membership due to taking up a position interstate. The Minister is seeking an appropriate person to fill this vacancy and is expected to make an appointment in July 2006.

Ms Marilyn Morgan was appointed to the Conservation Commission during the reporting period as a person with knowledge of and experience in Aboriginal cultural and Aboriginal heritage matters relevant to the functions of the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission held 14 meetings during the reporting period.

## Vested Lands

### Total Estate

As at 30 June 2006 the total area vested in the Conservation Commission was 18 977 638 hectares. The vested area was approximately 7.5 per cent of the land area of WA. Table 1 provides a summary of the land categories.

**Table 1. Land vested in the Conservation Commission**

<b>Land Category</b>	<b>Area (hectares) as at 30 June 2006</b>	<b>Area (hectares) as at 30 June 2005<sup>2</sup></b>
National park	5 593 536	5 591 090
Conservation park	843 155	681 708
Nature reserve	10 860 832	10 856 529
State forest	1 304 619	1 304 631
Timber reserve	123 344	123 346
Sections 5(1)(g) & 5(1)(h) reserve	233 488	233 348
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18 958 974</b>	<b>18 790 652</b>

Source: Information Management Branch, CALM

### National Parks

National parks are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study, preservation of features of archeological, historic or scientific interest, and enjoyment by the public. They have national or international significance for scenic, biological or cultural values.

The area of the 97 national parks at 30 June 2006 was 5 593 536 hectares, a net increase of 2 446 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of the establishment of 1 new national park (2 104 hectares) and additions to existing parks.

### Conservation Parks

Conservation parks have the same purpose as national parks.

The area of the 45 conservation parks at 30 June 2006 was 843 155 hectares, a net increase of 161 448 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of the establishment of 7 new parks<sup>3</sup>.

### Nature Reserves

Nature reserves are established for wildlife and landscape conservation, scientific study, and preservation of features of archeological, historic or scientific interest. Some low impact recreation is allowed.

The area of the 1 259 nature reserves at 30 June 2006 was 10 860 832 hectares, representing a net increase of 4 303 hectares for the year. The changes were a result of the establishment of 8 new nature reserves (988 hectares) and additions to (3 545 hectares) and excisions from (230 hectares) existing reserves.

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<sup>2</sup> The area of conservation parks actually increased by 161 448 hectares during 2005-06. However, due to a reporting error the area of conservation parks was overstated by 63 487 hectares in the 2004-05 Annual Report, resulting in an apparent net increase of 97 960 hectares in 2005-06 compared with the 2004-05 figures.

<sup>3</sup> The 2004-05 Annual Report incorrectly stated that there were 37 conservation parks at 30 June 2005. There were 38 conservation parks at that time.

## **State Forest**

State forests are managed for multiple purposes, including water catchment protection, recreation, timber production on a sustained yield basis, and conservation. Provision is also made for public utilities and mineral production, where these activities occur. Within State forests, designated areas are managed for specific purposes, such as conservation or optimum yield of exotic plantings.

The area of the 60 State forests at 30 June 2006 was 1 304 619 hectares, a net decrease for the year of 12 hectares. The excisions were for roads.

## **Timber Reserves**

Timber reserves declared under the *CALM Act* are managed on the same basis as State forests. The category is often transitional; as reserves are evaluated they may be changed to a more appropriate category, e.g. State forest or nature reserve.

The area of the 76 timber reserves at 30 June 2006 was 123 344 hectares, a net decrease of 2 hectares. As for State forests the excisions were for roads.

## **Section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) Reserves**

Under the *CALM Act*, lands categorised as section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h) reserve are lands reserved under the *Land Act 1933* and the *Land Administration Act 1997* respectively, for which care, control and management is issued to the Conservation Commission. Unlike national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves, they are not automatically vested in the Conservation Commission. Immediately before the commencement of the *CALM Act*, some were vested in, or were under the control of, the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority but not as a national park, e.g. Matilda Bay Reserve. Predominantly they have conservation/recreation purposes.

The area of the 118 section 5(1)(g) and section 5(1)(h) reserves vested in the Conservation Commission at 30 June 2006 was 233 488 hectares, a net increase for the year of 140 hectares. The change was a result of additions to reserves.

## Summary of the Conservation Commission's Activities and Achievements: 1 July 2005 - 30 June 2006

The Conservation Commission was established in November 2000 under the *CALM Act*, and works independent of, but closely with, CALM. It is a statutory commission and body corporate and has vested in it terrestrial conservation reserves (including freshwater areas) and State forest and timber reserves. It has associated management planning responsibilities and functions in respect of monitoring and auditing performance of CALM and the Forest Products Commission in respect of those management plans. It also has policy advisory functions in relation to vested lands and waters, and broader biodiversity conservation matters. Appendix 1 provides details of the Conservation Commission's functions as provided in section 19 of the *CALM Act*.

The Conservation Commission contributes to the State Government's five strategic goals for public sector management under the Government's *Better Planning: Better Services* policy. These goals relate to:

- People and Communities;
- the Economy;
- the Environment;
- the Regions; and
- Governance.

The Conservation Commission is one of the lead agencies for achieving the goal: the Environment. The Conservation Commission also contributes, often indirectly, to the other goals through implementing its policies and responsibilities that fall within the Environment goal. Accordingly, this report of activities and achievements comes within the Government's Environment goal.

The Conservation Commission's activities and achievements during the last twelve months are detailed below under the key outcome areas of policy; estate; management plans; forest management; audit; advice and promotion; and other Conservation Commission activities.

### Policy

In meeting its objective to develop and maintain policy and provide policy advice to the Minister for the Environment, the Conservation Commission has provided comment on the following major policies and related issues either in development or under review by CALM or by other relevant agencies.

#### **Biodiversity Commission**

Formation of a new Biodiversity Commission, being a merger of the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority: the Conservation Commission worked with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and CALM to develop options for the creation of the Biodiversity Commission.

#### **CALM's fire management policy**

Following the Environmental Protection Authority's *Review of Fire Policies and Management Practices of the Department of Conservation and Land Management*, the Minister noted that the Conservation Commission had an ongoing role in auditing the Department's fire management under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* and that the Conservation Commission's Research Advisory Committee's role included providing formal advice on CALM's fire research activities. This added focus on the CALM's fire management has resulted in considerable focus on the fire section of management plans to ensure that biodiversity values were more appropriately addressed in fire management. This is discussed in the Management Plans section.

#### **Cape Peron tourist precinct project**

Over 42 hectares was proposed to be excised from Rockingham Regional Park, together with the loss of more than 34 hectares of a Bush Forever Site for the development of a Cape Peron tourist precinct. The project would also have had the potential for salt water intrusion into Lake Richmond. The Conservation Commission did not support the project.

### **Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995 review**

The Conservation Commission provided comment to the Department of Local Government and Regional Development concerning the review of the *Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995* that is underway. The Conservation Commission worked with the Department of Local Government and Regional Development and CALM to ensure that the proposed amendments to this law are consistent with managing to meet the purposes for which the land was vested, including fulfilling so much of the demand for recreation by members of the public as is consistent with the proper maintenance and restoration of the natural environment, the protection of indigenous flora and fauna and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest.

### **Conservation reserve management in the intertidal zone**

The Conservation Commission has worked with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority to ensure appropriate approaches to management planning were developed where terrestrial and marine conservation reserves adjoin.

### **Dieback**

The Conservation Commission, represented by Dr Joanna Young, has participated in the Dieback Response Group, working to increase awareness of current impact and future threat of *Phytophthora* dieback to biodiversity and to promote investment and commitments to the protection of valued areas. Dr Young has also represented the Conservation Commission on the Dieback Consultative Council the peak body advising the Minister on policy development and frameworks for action.

### **Great Northern Highway upgrade**

The Conservation Commission assessed a proposal to upgrade a section of Great Northern Highway south of Bindoon that affected part of the Chittering Nature Reserve. It concluded that the project would be supported given the proposed environmental management initiatives in relation to rehabilitation, weeds, dieback, drainage and Carnaby's cockatoo nesting hollows and feeding habitat, in conjunction with an offset of native vegetation in excellent condition being added to the nature reserve.

### **Gull Rock and Mt Martin reserves**

Following work in the 2004-05 year, the Conservation Commission has continued to work with the City of Albany and the local community concerning proposals to vest the Gull Rock and Mt Martin Reserves in the Conservation Commission and developing management plans for them. The City of Albany supports the proposals and efforts are ongoing to see them implemented.

### **Kalbarri wind farm**

The Conservation Commission considered a proposal from Western Power to establish a wind monitoring tower on a reserve scheduled to be added to the Kalbarri National Park. The Conservation Commission concluded that the assessment for wind turbines and subsequent installation of wind turbines should be conducted outside the park. This includes being outside the airstrip which is to be added to the park.

### **Management options for Rottneest Island**

The Conservation Commission advised that it supported either the natural areas of the island being vested in the Commission as a national park or the area remaining vested in the Rottneest Island Authority and called the Rottneest Park.

### **National Reserve System Program evaluation**

The Conservation Commission advised the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage that there are still significant additions required to achieve the goal of a comprehensive adequate and representative reserve system in Western Australia and that this should principally be

achieved through additions to the formal conservation estate. Private protected areas and Indigenous Protected Areas perform a valuable, but complementary, function in this regard.

### **Ningaloo and Cape Range World Heritage Area nomination**

The Conservation Commission advised that the Government's Ningaloo and Cape Range World Heritage Area nomination proposal was well chosen to include a number of aspects of geological and biological evolutionary history and associated biological diversity as well as the area's outstanding aesthetic qualities. Some areas with outstanding natural values associated with Exmouth Gulf and Lake MacLeod are not within the proposed World Heritage Area nomination boundary but instead of expanding the area overall, these could be included as 'outliers': satellite areas to the main property.

### **Ord Final Agreement**

The Ord Final Agreement, signed on 6 October 2005, is between the Western Australian Government, the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners and nine other parties including the Conservation Commission. It is the result of one of Australia's largest and most complex native title negotiation projects. The Agreement provided native title consents and heritage clearances for 65 000 hectares of land in the far north of Western Australia, enabling the development of Australia's largest irrigation scheme. It also provides for 154 000 hectares for the creation of 6 new conservation parks. The Agreement provides for the development of joint management arrangements with the Miriuwung Gajerrong traditional owners for these conservation parks. The Conservation Commission committed to maintaining its role of management planning and audit for existing and new conservation areas while supporting the Regional Park Council's role in conservation area management.

### **Position Statement No. 9 Environmental Offsets**

The Conservation Commission held discussions with the Environmental Protection Authority concerning its draft Position Statement No. 9 *Environmental Offsets* in order to ensure it adequately meets the needs of the conservation estate. The Conservation Commission sought recognition that biodiversity values are progressively declining over time in many areas of the State and offsets need to take this into account. Also secure management is important so land purchase for inclusion in the conservation estate is seen to be more desirable than rehabilitation of previously disturbed land which does not have certainty of beneficial outcomes.

### **Senate Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas**

The Conservation Commission advised the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee that the long-term plan is to establish a comprehensive adequate and representative reserve system in Western Australia containing at least 15 per cent of each ecosystem. This was supported in the Government of Western Australia's *Towards a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Western Australia Discussion Paper* (December 2004). The Conservation Commission's view was that the 15 per cent target should be seen as a minimum based on existing knowledge of values and threats. The Conservation Commission noted that national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas have been identified by the United Nations Environment Program as the principal tool through which the Convention on Biological Diversity attains its goal for biodiversity conservation. Alternative approaches to conservation such as private conservation lands and Indigenous Protected Areas do not provide the same level of protection of biodiversity or conservation focused management and should be seen as complementary to rather than as a replacement for dedicated conservation reserves.

### **South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development**

The South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development Sustainability Evaluation/Environmental Review and Management Programme, put forward by the Water Corporation, was reviewed by the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission concluded that the development had the potential to cause extensive unacceptable and unmanageable impacts on: State forest; old-growth forest; the comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system; and rare and priority flora and fauna. The proposed contingencies for managing environmental harm were such that a delay between recognition of an issue, deciding on appropriate action and seeing the results of the action was likely. The Conservation Commission is of the view that such delays are likely to lead to the deleterious effects of the development being long term and could result in it becoming impossible to

achieve a range of the objectives of the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013*. The Conservation Commission recommended that the proposal not proceed.

### **Worsley Alumina proposed expansion**

The Environmental Review and Management Programme for this project proposed a 70 per cent increase in annual area of eastern jarrah and wandoo woodland disturbed. The overall expansion of the 35 year mining envelope was from some 400 to 3000 square kilometres. The Conservation Commission agreed with CALM that approval should be granted in stages only. The Conservation Commission was also of the view that it would be desirable for future forest management plans to provide opportunities to achieve more integrated sustainable forest management through addressing the broad range of commercial activities in the forest. The aim of this approach would be to achieve more effective and efficient management regimes.

### **Other policy matters**

The Conservation Commission continued to develop its own policies on various issues for which it has responsibility, including performance assessment and old-growth forest reclassification assessment. These are described in the audit and forest management plan sections, respectively.

The Conservation Commission continued to contribute to wider environmental policy through representation on the working party for the State of the Environment report and the Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management Project technical advisory group, as well as ongoing work with the project partners and government agencies on the approach to be taken in assessing the Gorgon Project on Barrow Island. Through these activities the Conservation Commission is able to contribute to and advance biodiversity conservation knowledge and management.

## **Estate**

In meeting the objectives of:

- Identifying what is required for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system for Western Australia; and
- Considering proposed changes of purpose, or boundary of, land vested in the Conservation Commission and evaluating potentially incompatible activities on that land with a view to maximising biological diversity,

the following activities have been undertaken:

- Changes in purpose or boundaries, including advice on any contentious issue or activity, or the need to excise areas that are not of value in maintaining biological diversity, are considered at the monthly meetings of the Conservation Commission. Advice on applications is subsequently provided to the Minister.
- In working towards establishing a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system, the Conservation Commission considered changes to reserves and their uses. As previously discussed, during the period, more than 168 000 hectares was added to the estate, through land purchases, land exchanges and reserve disposal by other agencies. Lands acquired by CALM in the present financial year, but not yet vested in the Conservation Commission, will be detailed in CALM's Annual Report.
- Advice on matters relating to leases, licences, permits, mining tenements and other activities such as utility infrastructure proposed on land vested in the Conservation Commission was provided to CALM. Table 2 summarises the Conservation Commission's consideration of CALM Act leases, licences and permits.

**Table 2. CALM Act Leases, licences and permits considered during 2005-2006**

	<b>Pre-endorsed *</b>	<b>Delegated endorsement by the Chairperson</b>	<b>Conservation Commission endorsement</b>
Leases	not applicable	not applicable	21
Licences	245	9	8
Licence endorsements	not available	15	3
Apiary permits	not applicable	not applicable	878

\* Licences endorsed by the amended procedure as being consistent with the Tour Operator's Handbook for which the reserves and activities are pre-endorsed by the Conservation Commission.

- During the year CALM received 145 mining tenement applications including 59 which were notification only. 62 mining tenements were referred to the Conservation Commission for recommendations. Of the 62 applications requiring Conservation Commission advice to be provided to the Minister for the Environment, 6 required statutory recommendations under section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978*.

## Management Plans

Soon after it was established, the Conservation Commission set up a Management Planning Review Committee in order to facilitate liaison with CALM. The committee's function is to improve the delivery of the Conservation Commission's statutory responsibility for the preparation and submission to the Minister of proposed management plans, and for the review of expiring plans. During the course of the reporting period this committee met 14 times and considered and facilitated action on the following matters:

- In consultation with CALM, development of agreed priorities for the development and review of management plans for the coming year.
- The proposed management plans for Beeliar Regional Park and Proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks were endorsed and submitted to the Minister.
- Draft management plans for Cape Range National Park and proposed extensions, Dryandra Woodland, Kennedy Range National Park and Lake McLarty Nature Reserve were considered by the committee and endorsed for release for public comment.

Over the course of the reporting period this committee also provided considerable input to final and draft plans under development. These covered the following areas of the conservation estate:

- Parks of the Darling Range;
- Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks
- Walpole Wilderness Area
- Wellington National Park and Westralia Conservation Park

A summary of the status of those management plans under development or review as at 30 June 2006 is shown in Table 3. An integrated national park-regional park planning process for the Parks of the Darling Range is included in Table 3. This process evolved from an earlier proposal for a single Darling Range Regional Park and the creation of several new national parks from former State forest. While the initial planning began in 2001, progress has been slow due to the need to address boundary issues of contiguous reserves and other land. These issues have been resolved and development of the plans is expected to become more rapid.

During the past year the Conservation Commission has closely examined the approach in management planning to addressing the matters of introduced fish and fire management. With respect to introduced fish the Conservation Commission has worked with CALM and the Department of Fisheries to develop an approach to managing fish stocks that is more sensitive to riverine biodiversity conservation while recognising the societal value of recreational fishing.

With respect to fire management, the Management Planning Review Committee has worked extensively with CALM to assess and improve the approach to fire management planning to ensure it is more responsive to the suite of values fires impact upon, including biodiversity values as well as life and property values. The Walpole Wilderness Area Draft Management Plan, expected to be released in mid-2006, will be the first to contain the revised approach and the Conservation Commission expects to hear through the consultation process community views on how the revised approach is viewed by the community.

Conservation Commission members and staff participated in Community Advisory Committee meetings concerning the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park and the Lane Poole Reserve. These meetings have provided opportunities for the Conservation Commission to ensure stakeholders are fully engaged in the management planning process and that likely issues and concerns are identified early so that they can be adequately addressed. Greater Conservation Commission involvement in Community Advisory Committees and Park Councils is planned in the coming year. Dr Joanna Young has been informally engaged with the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee during the development of the draft management plan and will meet with them prior to the draft management plan being released.

The Conservation Commission participated in a CALM management planning workshop in December 2005. This workshop aimed to increase the shared understanding of planners and the Conservation Commission of issues associated with management plans, including the Conservation Commission's approach to management issues, development of key performance indicators and performance assessment. The planning staff were also all introduced to the guidelines for the preparation of management plans for terrestrial conservation reserves the Conservation Commission is developing (discussed in the Forest Management Plan section).

The key outcomes included a more consistent approach by planners to management issues and streamlining of technical components of management plan development which is expected to increase the rate of production of new plans. This includes the coordination of key performance indicators to ensure they are useful at a range of scales, across the landscape and through various reporting requirements. The approach to raising potential issues with the Conservation Commission earlier in the planning process to improve coordination between the Conservation Commission and planners was incorporated. The role and servicing of advisory committees was clarified which should improve their capacity to provide input to planning across the State. These initiatives were seen as part of a continuing process of improving the quality and effectiveness of and rate of production of management plans. The rate of production of management plans is a key concern which the Conservation Commission will be addressing in the coming year (refer to the Issues and Trends section).

The auditing of management plan implementation is a key Conservation Commission function and is discussed separately in a later section.

**Table 3. Summary of Management Plan Progress**

This table can be divided into 4 broad stages: (1) preparation of draft management plans through to submission to the Conservation Commission; (2) consideration of draft plans by the Conservation Commission through to public release; (3) public comment period, analysis of public comments and finalisation of plans; and (4) consideration of final plans by the Conservation Commission through to gazettal. The elapsed time to prepare draft and final plan columns identify the total time taken by CALM in developing those stages until the plans are submitted to the Conservation Commission, with the elapsed time to prepare final plan commencing from the end of the public comment period on the draft plan. The total elapsed time includes all time since work commenced on the plan until 30 June 2006. All of the elapsed time columns may include periods when a plan was on hold due to other priorities and therefore should not necessarily be taken as representing the actual time involved in developing a management plan.

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Beeliar Regional Park	Commenced: 1998 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) formed or notified: 1998 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	2.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep 2001 Approved by Conservation Commission: Sep 2001 Released by Minister for public comment: Nov 2001	4.1 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2006 Approved by Conservation Commission: Apr/2006	8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The Minister has approved the final plan and gazettal is pending.					
Canning River Regional Park (amendments to management plan)	Commenced: Aug/2004 CAC formed or notified: pre-existing	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Feb/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Jul/2005	Time to date: 9 months		1.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan amendment in progress with the submission of the final plan amendment to the Conservation Commission expected in Aug/2006.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Cape Range NP and proposed extensions (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: May/2003 Public participation strategy released: May/2003 CAC formed or notified: Jul/2003 Aboriginal Park Council formed: Apr/2004 Issues paper released: Apr/04	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Aug/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Feb/2006	Time to date: 1 month		3.1 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Conservation Reserves of the Albany Coast	Commenced: Sep/2004					1.7 years
<i>Comments</i>	The CAC is in the process of being formed and the expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Dampier Archipelago Island NRs and section 5(1)(g) reserves (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Mar/2002 Public participation strategy released: Oct/2002 CAC formed or notified: deemed not necessary as major stakeholder groups targeted. Issues paper released: Mar/2002					4.3 years
<i>Comments</i>	The outcomes of Government discussions concerning the proposal to change the 4 nature reserves into national parks need to be determined before the draft plan can be completed.					
Dryandra Woodland (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Aug/2005	3 months	Approved by Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Dec/2005	Time to date: 4 months		11 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Esperance Coastal Reserves	Commenced: 2005 Public participation strategy released: in prep CAC formed or notified: Aug/2002 Issues paper released: in prep					1.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Issues paper expected to be released late 2006.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Jandakot Regional Park	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	5.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jul/2004 Released by Minister for public comment: Nov/2004	Time to date: 1.4 years		7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Kalbarri NP	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: Jul/1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.					7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Preparation of the draft plan was delayed due to the process for pastoral lease acquisitions which was completed during 2005. Work on the draft plan recommenced in late 2005. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Kennedy Range	Commenced: Jun/2004 CAC formed or notified: no advisory committee was formed but views of key stakeholders were sought on the main issues. The plan will replace interim management guidelines which were endorsed by the Conservation Commission in Sep/2003.	9 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Mar/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Aug/2005	Time to date: 8 months		2 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission being in mid 2006 ( <i>Planning Diary</i> , Issue 9).					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Kimberley Regional Plan	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: formation of Advisory Committee considered ineffective due to size of region. Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	2.5 years	Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2001			7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Other planning priorities delayed completion of the plan. The expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission unknown as planning is on hold. The Conservation Commission is considering the priority that should be attached to the Kimberley Regional Plan.					
Lake McLarty NR	Commenced: Aug/2004 Public participation strategy released: deemed not necessary. CAC formed or notified: deemed not necessary – major stakeholders targeted for input Issues paper released: deemed not necessary.	10 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: Jan 2006	Time to date: 3 months		1.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Lane Poole Reserve (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Jan/2004 Public participation strategy released: Jan/2004 CAC formed or notified: Sep/2002 (existing); May/2004 (revised committee approved) Issues paper released: Feb/2004					2.4 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Millstream-Chichester NP	Commenced: 1998 CAC formed or notified: May/2003 (Aboriginal Park Council) Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.					8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Northern Yilgarn (Mt Manning Range, Mt Elvire and Jaurdi) Conservation Reserves	Commenced: Feb/2006					4 months
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Parks of the Darling Range, including: <i>National Parks</i> Avon Valley Canning Gooseberry Hill Greenmount John Forrest Kalamunda Mundaring Pickering Brook Serpentine Susannah Brook Walyunga  <i>Regional Parks</i> * Chidlow Kalamunda Kelmscott-Martin Wungong  Gordon Block State Forest	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: 1999					5.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Resolution of the boundaries has occurred and the draft plans are being developed progressively for the national and regional parks. The expected timing of submission of the draft plans to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

\* The names of the regional parks within the Parks of the Darling Range are interim names only. The process of identifying park names for these parks has commenced.

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Parks of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, Scott NP and Gingilup Swamps NR (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Apr/2000 Public participation strategy released: Jun/2003 CAC formed or notified: Apr/2000 (existing as Leeuwin Naturaliste NP AC, expanded in Jul/2004 to form the Capes Parks CAC) Issues paper released: Sep/2001					6.2 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					
Proposed St John Brook and Jarrahwood CPs	Commenced: Jun/2002 CAC formed or notified: Nannup Tourist Association provided community input pre-draft. No CAC.	1.7 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Mar/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Oct/2004 Released by Minister for public comment: Jan/2005	8 months	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Dec/2005	4 years
<i>Comments</i>	The final plan is awaiting Ministerial approval prior to gazettal. The expected timing is not determined.					
Rockingham Lakes Regional Park	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	4.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep/2003 Approved by Conservation Commission: Sep/2003 Released by Minister for public comment: Oct/2003	Time to date: 2.4 years		7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined.					
Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux NPs (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: Jun/1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	5.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Sep/2004 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jan/2005 Released by Minister for public comment: May/2005	Time to date: 10 months		7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission expected by Dec/2006 ( <i>Planning Diary</i> , Issue 9).					

	Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission		Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves and Proposed Reserve Additions (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: May/2005 CAC formed or notified: Mar/2006 Issues paper released: Oct/2005						1.1 year
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is late 2006 ( <i>Planning Diary</i> , Issue 10).						
Tuart Forest NP	Commenced: Apr/2005 CAC formed or notified: To be established in August 2006						1.2 years
<i>Comments</i>	The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.						
Walpole Wilderness Area (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Jun/2002 Public participation strategy released: May/2003 CAC formed or notified: Jan/2003 Issues paper released: Mar/2003	3.4 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Nov/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2006				4 years
<i>Comments</i>	Draft plan is expected to be released for public comment in Aug/2006.						
Wellington NP and Westralia CP	Commenced: Mar/2002 Public participation strategy released: Jul/2002 CAC formed or notified: Mar/2002 Issues paper released: Jun/2002	2.3 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jul/2004 Resubmitted to Conservation Commission: May/2005 Approved by Conservation Commission: Aug/2005				4.3 years
<i>Comments</i>	Draft plan awaiting release by Minister for public comment. Expected timing is not determined.						

	Stage 1		Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total elapsed time to 30 June 2006
	Preparation of draft plan	Elapsed time	Consideration of draft plan by Conservation Commission	Preparation of final plan – elapsed time after close of public comment period	Consideration of final plan by Conservation Commission	
Wheatbelt Regional Plan	Commenced: 1998 CAC formed or notified: formation of Advisory Committee considered ineffective due to size of region. Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	6.2 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Apr/2004			8.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Other planning priorities delayed completion of the plan. The expected timing of submission of the final plan to the Conservation Commission not yet determined. The Conservation Commission is considering the priority that should be attached to the Wheatbelt Regional Plan.					
Woodman Point Regional Park	Commenced: 1999 CAC formed or notified: 1999 Planning commenced prior to the current system of preparing a public participation strategy and an issues paper.	3.5 years	Submitted to Conservation Commission: Jun/2002 Approved by Conservation Commission: Jun/2002 Released by Minister for public comment: Aug/2002	Time to date: 3.6 years		7.5 years
<i>Comments</i>	Analysis of public submissions and preparation of final management plan in progress with the final plan expected to be submitted to the Conservation Commission in mid 2006 ( <i>Planning Diary</i> , Issue 9).					
Yanchep and Neerabup NPs and Neerabup NR (to replace existing plan)	Commenced: Aug/2001 Public participation strategy released: Aug/2001 CAC formed or notified: Jul/2001 Issues paper released: Aug/2001					4.9 years
<i>Comments</i>	Other planning priorities delayed completion of the plan. The expected timing of submission of the draft plan to the Conservation Commission is not yet determined.					

## Forest Management

The Conservation Commission has a statutory role to prepare forest management plans, and aims to ensure that the State forest and timber reserves, in particular, vested in the Conservation Commission are managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. The reporting period saw the completion of the second year of implementation of the Forest Management Plan.

Implementation of the Forest Management Plan is the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, CALM and the Forest Products Commission, with the Conservation Commission undertaking independent audits of the effectiveness of land management by the other two agencies under the Forest Management Plan. The audit function is discussed in a later section.

Action 5.2 of the Forest Management Plan requires that the Conservation Commission develop guidelines for the preparation of management plans for conservation reserves in the south-west forest region. Early in the development it was recognised that these guidelines will be more useful if broadened to address management for terrestrial conservation reserves throughout the state, rather than just the south-west forest region. Accordingly, the scope has been expanded and interim guidelines are expected to be released in mid 2006.

The Conservation Commission has also been working with CALM and the Forest Products Commission on achieving other aspects of the Forest Management Plan, for which those agencies have lead implementation responsibilities. A report detailing the progress with implementation of the Forest Management Plan actions by each agency during 2004, *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 Status of Implementation as at 31 December 2004*, was provided to the Minister during the reporting period. While not a requirement of the Forest Management Plan, it is anticipated that similar reports will be compiled annually to assist in tracking progress.

### Old-Growth Forests

The *Assessment Criteria and Process for the Conservation Commission Review of Old-Growth Amendments* was released in December 2005, following public comment and review of the draft released in July 2005. This document describes the process for the assessment of reclassifications of old-growth forest by CALM together with a process to allow the public to nominate areas of forest they consider are old growth for assessment by the Conservation Commission. There was considerable stakeholder consultation through its development including the provision of field demonstrations for interested stakeholders.

Approximately 71 hectares, in 6 forest blocks, were subject to reclassification work that was completed and endorsed by the Conservation Commission. Of the 71 hectares, the reclassification to non old-growth was confirmed for 65 hectares while 6 hectares were found to have been incorrectly reclassified and will be afforded permanent protection from timber harvesting as they are old-growth forest. In addition 122 hectares of other Crown land was returned to old-growth forest status.

The results of these assessments are expected to be published early in the next reporting period, following the development of an efficient on-line publishing system developed for the Conservation Commission web site. The program of assessing reclassifications is ongoing.

During the reporting period there were two new nominations of old growth with ongoing work on the assessment of a nomination received in the previous year. The assessment of this nomination (in Palmer block, near Collie) was completed early 2006 and found the presence of stumps throughout the nominated harvest area together with a reduction in the proportion of mature or senescent trees in the upper canopy in comparison with a nearby benchmark site of unlogged forest. It was thus determined that the area did not meet old-growth criteria.

The two new nominations were in Arcadia and Chester forest blocks. The assessment of the area proposed for logging within Arcadia compartment 3 showed high levels of disturbance as evidenced by stumps and the low proportion of mature and senescent trees in the upper canopy indicating there was no old-growth present. The assessment of Chester block is being deferred until the completion of dieback mapping over the area, as one of the criteria of old-growth forest is that it must be dieback free. Chester block will not be subject to logging until the dieback mapping is complete. The Conservation Commission will then determine whether or not the nomination warrants old-growth forest assessment.

## Fauna Habitat Zones

Fauna Habitat Zones within State forests and timber reserves are intended to maintain fauna populations and to provide a source for recolonisation of nearby areas after timber harvesting. There are approximately 300 indicative Fauna Habitat Zones of at least 200 ha each that are designed to provide a sufficiently extensive network of areas excluded from timber harvesting to maintain fauna numbers.

The Conservation Commission provided advice to CALM concerning proposed locations of Fauna Habitat Zones. To assist in the development of this advice, the Conservation Council of Western Australia, under an agreement with the Conservation Commission, provided reports on CALM's proposed Fauna Habitat Zones. The Conservation Commission met with the Conservation Council and CALM bimonthly to determine priorities for assessment to ensure the Conservation Commission could provide timely advice to allow for the Forest Products Commission's forest harvesting planning.

During the reporting period the Conservation Commission provided advice to CALM on proposed Fauna Habitat Zones in the following forest blocks:

- Hadfield 04
- Windsor 05
- Hunt 03
- Balmoral 04
- Beaton 06
- Carter 04
- Channybearup 04, 07, 09

The reports generally supported CALM's proposed Fauna Habitat Zones. However, the boundaries of the final Fauna Habitat Zone in Balmoral 04, inland from Jarrahdale, were changed to maintain dieback free status for mature forest and ecosystem links.

Performance assessment work has been undertaken in relation to Fauna Habitat Zones. The details are in the Audit section, below.

## Audit

Assessment and auditing (performance assessment) are an essential component of sound environmental management systems. The results of performance assessments are used in many ways, including:

- to promote adaptive management which leads to continuous improvement;
- to improve management planning; and
- to promote accountability and public support for management actions.

The Conservation Commission considers performance assessment to be much more than a compliance tool. The greatest value of performance assessments is that they will:

- assist land managers in their work;
- improve management planning practice and management outcomes; and
- help inform policy decisions that will benefit the environmental management of the lands vested in the Conservation Commission.

During the reporting period *Interim Conservation Commission policy and guidelines for the performance assessment of conservation reserve and forest management plans and biodiversity management in WA* were completed and released for a period of one year of implementation with concurrent opportunity for stakeholder comment. In the coming year this document will be reviewed and finalised.

Two performance assessment reports based on the guidelines were published during the reporting period. The assessment of the *Wanjarri Nature Reserve Management Plan 1996-2006* found that most of the actions in the plan had been implemented by CALM. Two substantial policy issues were identified. First, policy consideration was required on the way strategies which are outdated should be

managed during plan implementation, especially in instances where resource priorities make a review of the plan unlikely. Second, consideration was required to address the management of recreation use of nature reserves, arising from a proposal change the purpose of the reserve to conservation park to allow more flexible management. The appropriateness of this strategy, with inherent legislative and policy requirements as well as resource implications, should be considered and guidance provided.

The other performance assessment examined the selection and demarcation of Fauna Habitat Zones (FHZs) as required under the *Forest Management Plan 2004-2013* (FMP). The assessment identified a number of improvements that could be made to the management systems for selection of FHZs. It also found that there had been logging activity within the boundary of one FHZ as a result of poor operational control. CALM and the Forest Products Commission's progress on responses to these findings will be reviewed during the next reporting period.

Significant progress was also made on performance assessments of prescribed burning, the Lesueur National Park and Coomallo Nature Reserve Management Plan 1995-2005, and a Forest Management Plan assessment of informal reserve protection. These are expected to be published early in the next reporting period.

Forthcoming performance assessments are planned to address dieback management, activities in the Water Corporation's Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management project, weed and feral animal management by the Department of Environment and Conservation, and the *Dryandra Woodland Management Plan 1995-2005*.

## Advice and Promotion

The Conservation Commission met with the former and current Ministers for the Environment a total of 5 times to inform them of current issues facing the Conservation Commission and to provide advice on issues raised by the Ministers. Additionally, the Conservation Commission provided advice on specific issues concerning the conservation estate as and when required.

The Conservation Commission and CALM have identified a need for a conference to promote the values of national parks and protected areas to a wide audience. During the reporting period the Conservation Commission and CALM commenced work on developing this conference, which is expected to occur in September 2007. A Steering Committee was established comprising representatives of the Conservation Commission, CALM, Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, Conservation Council of Western Australia and Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism.

In the course of the year the Research Advisory Committee met twice, chaired by Professor Stephen Hopper. The Research Advisory Committee identifies and provides advice to the Conservation Commission on scientific and social research priorities that will make the most strategic improvement in biodiversity conservation outcomes for Western Australia. During the year, in accord with the Minister's decision based on Environmental Protection Authority advice, the Research Advisory Committee sought consolidated information on CALM's research work on fire, both in and out of the south-west forest region, as well as work outside CALM. The Research Advisory Committee capacity to provide advice with regard to fire was enhanced by the addition of Professor Rob Whelan, a noted fire ecology expert, to the Committee.

The Research Advisory Committee also considered wider scientific research issues, including models for the delivery of scientific research by CALM and social research needs for reserve management planning.

Two staff members attended the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) World Congress in Brisbane and met with audit officers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in August 2005. A poster paper on the Conservation Commission's old-growth assessment process was presented at the technical session "Managing forest landscape mosaics for production and conservation".

## Directions

In the reporting period there have been no instances under the *CALM Act* section 24 where the Minister for the Environment has given the Conservation Commission directions in writing with respect to the exercise or performance of its functions.

In accordance with the *CALM Act* section 17(4), there have also been no instances where advice has been provided to the Minister for the Environment under section 19(10) and the Minister has decided to act otherwise than in accordance with the recommendation.

## **Other Conservation Commission Activities**

### **Field inspections**

In order to introduce Conservation Commission members to conservation estate management issues and brief them on specific issues of importance, the Conservation Commission undertook a number of field trips during the reporting period.

#### **Palmer block**

In September 2005 the Chairperson and staff visited Palmer forest block, near Collie, to meet with stakeholders who nominated areas of forest for the assessment of old-growth status by the Conservation Commission.

#### **Ord Final Agreement**

In October 2005 the Chairperson visited Kununurra to sign, on behalf of the Conservation Commission, the Ord Final Agreement. While the principal purpose of the visit was to attend the signing ceremony for the Ord Final Agreement, inspections of regional conservation areas including Livistona Conservation Park, Parry's Lagoon Nature Reserve and Mirima National Park were also possible. A further visit to attend the inaugural meeting of the Regional Park Council for the 6 new conservation parks occurred in April 2006.

#### **Jurien Bay and Lesueur National Park**

In March 2006 the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson visited Jurien Bay and Lesueur National Park to attend the launch of the publication *The Turquoise Coast* and to inspect new facilities at Mt Lesueur.

#### **Proposed South West Yarragadee water supply project area**

In May 2006 the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Ms Marilyn Morgan and the Director conducted a comprehensive inspection of areas that could be impacted by the Water Corporation's proposed South West Yarragadee water supply project to ensure thorough understanding of the conservation issues. The area inspected included the area between Busselton and Nannup southward to the coast. The Commissioners were accompanied by staff from CALM's Nature Conservation Division as well as CALM's South West and Warren Regions.

#### **Community Forest Inspection**

In June 2006 Mr Graeme Rundle represented the Commission on a community forest inspection in the Swan region.

#### **Management of Ramsar wetlands in Western Australia**

The Conservation Commission contributed to the State Auditor General's audit of the adequacy of management of Ramsar wetlands in Western Australia and looks forward to seeing the audit results.

## Participation on External Committees

The following members represented the Conservation Commission on other committees, or as observers on Advisory Committees and Park Councils, as noted:

Dr John Bailey	Esperance Coastal Reserves Community Advisory Committee Albany Coast Reserves Community Advisory Committee
Mrs Patricia Barblett:	Bush Bank Board Capes Parks Community Advisory Committee
Dr Jennifer Davis:	Miliyana Chichester Park Council (alternate)
Ms Regina Flugge:	Coral Coast Parks Advisory Committee (alternate) Dampier Archipelago Community Advisory Committee Miliyana Chichester Park Council
Dr Thomas Hatton:	Wellington National Park Community Advisory Committee)
Mr William Mitchell:	Coral Coast Parks Advisory Committee
Mr Graeme Rundle:	Kalbarri National Park Community Advisory Committee Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks Community Advisory Committee
Dr Joanna Young:	Dieback Consultative Council Dieback Response Group Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks Advisory Committee Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee

## Interaction with Other Agencies

In order to ensure it effectively conducts its responsibilities the Conservation Commission works closely with a range of other agencies on a variety of issues. The Conservation Commission works closely with CALM on a day to day basis, both with the headquarters and regional staff.

The Conservation Commission works collaboratively with other environmental agencies including the Environmental Protection Authority, the Department of Environment and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. It also has association with the Forest Products Commission, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Industry and Resources, Tourism Western Australia, Western Australian Museum, local government authorities, Department of Indigenous Affairs, Rottne Island Authority, Main Roads WA, Water Corporation, Department of Fisheries, Swan River Trust, and Office of the Auditor General for Western Australia.

Outside the public sector, the Conservation Commission works with a range of community, conservation and industry stakeholders, as well as Indigenous representatives to ensure that policies and plans meet the balanced needs of the wider community. Of particular note are the regular meetings with the Conservation Council of Western Australia to discuss issues associated with fauna habitat zones in the Forest Management Plan area.

## Review of the Conservation Commission

Under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* section 26AC a review of the operations and effectiveness of the Conservation Commission is to be carried out as soon as practicable after the expiration of 5 years from the commencement of the *Conservation and Land Management Amendment Act 2000*. In other words, as soon as practicable after November 2005. The review is to have regard to the need for the continuation of the Conservation Commission. Due to the planned merger of the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority into a new Biodiversity Commission the Government has not started this review.

## Issues and Trends

There are a number of key areas of Government policy that the Conservation Commission will either have responsibility for or will have significant interest in over the coming year.

### Strategic Plan

The Conservation Commission is developing a new strategic plan to provide direction for the organisation over the coming years. It is intended that this plan will both meet current needs and contribute usefully to the direction of the Biodiversity Commission when it is formed.

### Forest Management Plan

There is significant ongoing work for the Conservation Commission through the process of implementing the Forest Management Plan. Most notable among those requirements in the coming year is the ongoing fieldwork required for assessing CALM's reclassification of areas previously mapped as old-growth, a targeted audit program, the need to comment on guidelines for the selection and management of fauna habitat zones and the finalisation of guidelines for the preparation of new conservation reserve management plans that are integrated with existing management plans. Additionally, the Conservation Commission will focus on increasing effective community involvement in forest management, with fauna habitat zone selection being an important component.

### Joint Management

The Conservation Commission will continue to seek opportunities to become more closely involved in joint management initiatives. The Conservation Commission's role in joint management includes statutory management planning and performance assessment. The Conservation Commission will participate in the triennial review of the broader joint management process.

The Conservation Commission will also explore ways of more fully integrating Indigenous issues within management plans.

### Improving the management planning process

There will be a focus of Conservation Commission attention on further improvement of the management planning process, considering issues such as the range of policies and strategies that are common to plans and regional recreational opportunities and constraints. The *Guidelines for the Preparation of Management Plans for Terrestrial Conservation Reserves* will be finalised. Opportunities for increasing involvement with the Community Advisory Committees will be sought, including meeting with the Walpole Wilderness Area Community Advisory Committee prior to the release of the Walpole Wilderness Area Draft Management Plan.

The Conservation Commission is concerned that the rate of production of management plans is too slow. During 2006-07 the Conservation Commission will scrutinize the reasons for the low production rate and work with the Department of Environment and Conservation to develop a plan to address the problem by June 2007.

### Biodiversity Commission

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Government to ensure a smooth and effective transition to the new Biodiversity Commission, when the time comes.

### Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Bill

The Conservation Commission will continue to work closely with CALM and the Government in the development of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and a Biodiversity Conservation Bill.

### Audits

As part of its ongoing responsibility for audit, the Conservation Commission will continue to implement its performance assessment program, including fire related assessments, assessments under the

Forest Management Plan and assessments of management plan implementation in reserves in other parts of the State.

#### **Conference on the Values of National Parks**

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with CALM, the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and stakeholders to conduct a conference to provide information and understanding of the values that conservation reserves provide to the community.

#### **Water Management**

The Conservation Commission will continue to work with other agencies concerned with options for accessing future water supplies, including providing advice on the likely biodiversity impacts of the proposed water extraction from the South-west Yarragadee aquifer. The Conservation Commission will also continue to keep abreast of the findings of the Water Corporation's Wungong thinning trial.

## Obligatory Reporting

### Conservation Commission Budget

The Conservation Commission had a cash expenditure of \$768 962 for the reporting period against a budget allocation of \$776 441. The reporting and audit of the Conservation Commission's expenditure is included within that for CALM under the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985* and is incorporated into CALM's annual report on an accrual basis.

### Executive Support

The Conservation Commission had the following staff at 30 June 2006:

Director:	Bill Carr
Acting Executive Assistant:	Caroline Stonier
Environmental Audit Manager:	Peter Baldwin
Forest Management Auditor:	Tom Hughson
Forest Policy Advisor:	Kathryn Allen

Over the course of the year the previous Executive Assistant, Karen Prosser, took up a secondment in another area of Government. An officer from the Department, Geoff Cullen, also worked for the Commission on a part-time basis for a short period.

### Corporate Services

Corporate Services, including Human Resource Management, Financial Services and Information Technology support are provided under a bureau services agreement with CALM Corporate Services Division.

In accord with these arrangements the Conservation Commission complies with a number of other CALM administrative policies and procedures in order to comply with Government policies and relevant legislation, for example, the Disability Service Plan, Equal Employment Opportunity and the Use of Credit Cards.

### Waste Paper Recycling

The Conservation Commission is committed to the recycling of waste paper and the use of paper made from recycled products where appropriate.

### Energy Use

The Conservation Commission's office has flexible heating and lighting arrangements to help reduce energy consumption. It contributes to CALM's energy use efforts.

The Conservation Commission's fleet vehicles comprise two four cylinder cars and one six cylinder four wheel drive.

### Corruption Prevention

The Conservation Commission has a Code of Conduct that addresses accountability, use of public sector resources, record keeping and use of information, conflict of interest, and compliance with the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics and Codes of Conduct.

New staff are inducted according to CALM's induction program, which includes ensuring they are informed about information and asset security as well as guidelines for private use of vehicles, if applicable. The Conservation Commission complies with CALM's administrative policies and procedures as they relate to corruption prevention issues such as the use of credit cards.

## Evaluations

No evaluations were undertaken during 2004-05. A review of the operations and effectiveness of the Conservation Commission, as required under the *CALM Act* section 26AC(1), was due during the reporting period. However, due to the Government policy to merge the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority into a new Biodiversity Commission, this review has not commenced.

## Sustainability

While the *Sustainability Code of Practice for Government Agencies and Resource Guide for Implementation* does not apply to the Conservation Commission, the Conservation Commission works in accordance with the Sustainability Code's goals, as sound operational practice. These goals are:

- Planning, reporting and decision making are conducted in accordance with sustainability principles;
- Agency operations support sustainability; and
- Employees are encouraged and empowered to support sustainability

## Cultural Diversity and Language Services Outcomes

Most of the Conservation Commission's cultural diversity and language services are provided through the agency of CALM and are conducted in accordance with CALM's cultural diversity policy and processes.

The Conservation Commission recognises the importance of the various cultural values associated with the vested land and ensures these values are reflected in relevant management plans. In particular, the Conservation Commission seeks opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in land management, including through joint management arrangements in order to better conserve and maintain cultural heritage values as well as increasing the understanding of Indigenous cultures throughout the wider community.

## Director's Statement on Compliance

### Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Outcomes

*(Disability Services Act 1993, section 29)*

The Conservation Commission's Disability Services Plan was formally adopted in 2002 and focuses on strategies that ensure compliance with outcomes focused on ensuring Conservation Commission information can be made available to people with disabilities; and providing increased opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in public consultation, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes. The Conservation Commission aims to ensure people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities to be informed and participate in Conservation Commission processes as people without disabilities. Through implementing its Disability Services Plan, in conjunction with CALM, the Conservation Commission's activities during the reporting period met the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan desired outcomes, namely that:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, a public authority.
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of a public authority.
3. People with disabilities receive information from a public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of a public authority as other people receive from the staff of that public authority.

5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to a public authority.
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by a public authority.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity Outcomes**

*(Equal Opportunity Act 1984, section 146)*

The Conservation Commission complies with CALM's administrative policies and procedures as they relate to equal employment opportunity outcomes.

## **Compliance with Public Sector Standards and Ethical Codes**

*(Public Sector Management Act 1994, section 31(1))*

CALM undertakes human resource management for the Conservation Commission under a bureau service agreement.

In the administration of the Conservation Commission, I have complied with the Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management, the WA Code of Ethics and the Conservation Commission's Code of Conduct.

Information on both the Code of Ethics and the Code of Conduct is provided to employees on commencement with the Conservation Commission.

No complaints have been lodged under the Code of Ethics during the reporting period and there have been no instances of misconduct.

The Conservation Commission has developed an Equal Employment Opportunity/Diversity Management Plan in accord with the Government's Equity and Diversity Plan 2001-2005.

## **Information Statement**

*(Freedom of Information Act 1992, section 96-97)*

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (FOI)* provides that the public can access the majority of the records of the Conservation Commission. Wherever possible the Conservation Commission will endeavour to provide access to information as quickly and easily as possible without the client needing to submit a formal FOI request.

The Conservation Commission's records are managed in-house, with professional advice through the bureau service provided by CALM's Corporate Services Division. Documents held by the Conservation Commission include routine administrative records, Commission agendas and minutes, committee records, and financial reports. Personnel records are held in CALM's People Services Branch, which undertakes human resource management for the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission has formulated a records disposal schedule and the former National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and any relevant Conservation Commission records will be forwarded to the Western Australian State Archives when the schedule is approved and archival storage space is available at the State Archives.

### *Submission of FOI request*

In the first instance, contact the Conservation Commission by telephone, fax, and email or in person, as it may not be necessary to submit a formal FOI request. The Conservation Commission will endeavour to satisfy each information request as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Should an applicant wish to proceed with a formal application, a valid FOI application needs: to be in writing; to give sufficient information so the document(s) requested can be identified; give an Australian address to which notices can be sent; and be lodged at the Conservation Commission office with any application fee, if payable.

### *Applications and Enquiries*

FOI Coordinator: Director  
Conservation Commission of Western Australia  
Corner of Hackett Drive and Australia II Drive  
CRAWLEY WA 6009

Tel: 08 9389 1766  
Email: [information@conservation.wa.gov.au](mailto:information@conservation.wa.gov.au)

Applications will be acknowledged on receipt. A decision will be made, with notification of this decision and any information made available under the request forwarded within 45 days.

The means of accessing documentation is to be determined by negotiation between the Conservation Commission and the applicant. Documents can be inspected at the Conservation Commission office, posted, sent by facsimile or emailed.

Should an applicant be dissatisfied with an access decision she/he can request the Conservation Commission to undertake an internal review of that decision and, subsequently, a review by the Information Commissioner, if still not satisfied.

### *Amendment of personal information*

Under FOI procedures, an individual may also apply to amend personal information about them if they think that it may be inaccurate or misleading. To do this, applicants need to contact the designated FOI Coordinator nominated above.

### *Access charges*

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992* states that a \$30 fee must accompany a valid FOI application unless the request is entirely for personal information about the applicant. The Conservation Commission can help applicants determine if their enquiry is likely to attract the application fee if they contact the FOI Coordinator before submitting an application.

Fees may also apply for copying or transcribing information. These will be charged at cost, depending on the type and volume of copying necessary to meet the request. Photocopies will be charged at 20 cents per A4 page.

Concessions of 25% are available to applicants who can demonstrate financial hardship. As noted above, no fee is charged for a request to amend personal information.

### *2004 - 2005 Statistics*

There were no requests made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* during the reporting period.

## **Advertising and Sponsorship**

*(Electoral Act 1907, section 175ZE)*

In accordance with section 175ZE of the *Electoral Act 1907*, the Conservation Commission of Western Australia incurred the following expenditure in advertising, market research, polling, direct mail and media advertising:

Total expenditure for 2005-2006 was \$889.98.

Expenditure was incurred in the following areas:

Advertising agencies	nil
Market research organisations	nil
Polling organisations	nil
Direct mail organisations	nil
Media advertising (including employment, public participation notices and advertising of contracts)	\$889.98

## **Public Interest Disclosures**

*(Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003, section 23(1)(f))*

The *Public Information Disclosure Act 2003* serves to facilitate the disclosure of public interest information and to provide protection for those who make disclosures and for those who are the subject of such disclosures.

Over the reporting period there have been no disclosures under this Act.

## **Recordkeeping Plans**

*(State Records Act 2000, section 61 & State Records Commission Standards, Standard 2, Principle 6)*

A Record Keeping Plan was submitted to the State Records Office in 2003 in compliance with the *State Records Act 2000*.

As reported in the 2003-04 Annual Report, during 2004 the Auditor General undertook a review of the Conservation Commission's records management. The report of the Auditor General's review – *Records Management in Government – A Preliminary Study* – is included in its Second Public Sector Performance Report 2004 and can be accessed at: [http://www.audit.wa.gov.au/reports/report2004\\_04.html](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au/reports/report2004_04.html). During the reporting period the Conservation Commission has used the Auditor General's findings as a basis for improving the implementation of the Record Keeping Plan.

All staff have received basic training in record keeping as part of the Conservation Commission's employee induction program. This is conducted using CALM's online Record Keeping Awareness program. This addresses employee roles and responsibilities in regard to their compliance with the recordkeeping plan. To meet job requirements the Executive Assistant also received detailed training, through CALM, in the use of Objective, the records management program used by the Conservation Commission.

As the recordkeeping training program is provided by CALM, review of the efficiency and effectiveness is conducted by CALM.

## Appendix 1 – Functions of the Conservation Commission

### *Policy*

- To develop policies —
  - (i) for the preservation of the natural environment of the State and the provision of facilities for the enjoyment of that environment by the community;
  - (ii) for promoting the appreciation of flora and fauna and the natural environment; and
  - (iii) to achieve or promote the objectives for management plans, taking into account specific requirements referred to in the *CALM Act* pertaining to State forests, timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other vested land.
  - (iv) to advise the Minister on the development of policies for the conservation and management of biodiversity and biodiversity components throughout the State.
  - (v) with the approval of the Minister, to cause study or research to be undertaken for the purposes of the development of policies.

### *Estate*

- To have vested in it State forest, timber reserves, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, relevant land referred to in section 5(1)(g) of the *CALM Act* and to have the joint management function with other bodies as provided for in the *CALM Act*.
- To have the care, control and management of relevant land referred to in section 5(1)(h) of the *CALM Act* placed with it.
- To consider any cancellation, change of purpose of boundary alteration in respect of land vested, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, in the Conservation Commission.
- To be consulted on matters relating to the granting of licenses, leases, permits and mining tenement applications on land vested in the Conservation Commission.

### *Management Plans*

- To be responsible for the preparation of proposed management plans, and the review of existing management plans for all lands vested in the Conservation Commission.
- To prepare [as the controlling body] proposed management plans for land vested in the Conservation Commission —
  - (i) through the agency of CALM;
  - (ii) if the vested land is State forest or a timber reserve, the Conservation Commission through the agency of CALM in consultation with the Forest Products Commission; or
  - (iii) if the vested land is or includes a public water catchment area, the Conservation Commission through the agency of the CALM in consultation with the Waters and Rivers Commission and any relevant water utility.
- To submit proposed management plans to the Minister for approval.
- In relation to management plans for land vested, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, in the Conservation Commission —
  - (i) to develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the management plans by CALM;
  - (ii) to set performance criteria for assessing and auditing the performance of CALM and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans; and
  - (iii) to assess and audit the performance of CALM and the Forest Products Commission in carrying out and complying with the management plans.

### *Forest Management*

- To advise the Minister on the application of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management in the management of —
  - (i) State forest and timber reserves; and

(ii) forest produce throughout the State.

- To advise the Minister on the production and harvesting, on a sustained yield basis, of forest produce throughout the State.

*Advice and Promotion*

- To inquire into and after relevant consultation, to advise the Minister on any matter on which the Minister requests advice.
- To provide advice, upon request, on matters relating to land and waters vested in the Conservation Commission, whether solely or jointly with an associated body, to any body or person, if the provision of the advice is in the public interest and it is practicable for the Conservation Commission to provide it.