

Appendix 10

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP ON THE ASSESSMENT OF ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH-WEST FOREST REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Independent Expert Advisory Group on Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management submitted the following recommendations for consideration in developing the RFA for the South-West Forest Region:

1. The commitment and the policy framework

The Commonwealth and Western Australian governments should:

- 1.1 Systematically and jointly review relevant Commonwealth and State Acts to achieve consistency and minimise duplication; develop standard heritage criteria and assessment processes, and create a clear delineation of responsibilities for each level of government.

The Government of Western Australia should:

- 1.2 Amend the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, *Mining Act 1978* and other relevant legislation for the South-West Forest Region to explicitly incorporate the two overarching principles and the six specific principles of ecologically sustainable forest management used in the RFA process.
- 1.3 Revise the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* to:
 - A. include explicit requirements to conserve genetic, species and ecosystem diversity;
 - B. include a requirement to prepare and regularly review a state-wide strategy for conservation of biodiversity;
 - C. establish an explicit system of categorising threatened species and communities, threatening processes and critical habitats; and
 - D. formalise the responsibility of CALM for the protection and maintenance of both flora and fauna on all tenures, including the preparation of recovery plans for rare and endangered species.
- 1.4 Change the *Conservation and Land Management Act* to ensure the Executive Director of CALM does not serve on either the Lands and Forest Commission or the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, in order to avoid perceptions of conflict of interest. The composition of the Lands and Forest Commission should include an independent Chair, a community representative and three experts with experience in relevant aspects of forest management including wood production and nature conservation.

- 1.5 Review and, where necessary, amend the review provisions of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* to:
- encompass a joint review of environment protection, management plan requirements, and environmental management systems; such that the strategic issues of balancing and integrating forest uses, including social, economic and environmental implications, can be considered together. The review process should include some expert representation from outside the State, and
 - enable periodic independent and transparent audits of compliance with forest management processes, including codes of practice, and for subsequent joint reviews of those processes and codes.
- 1.6 Review the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* to:
- enable licences for the sale of wood to extend beyond the period of the management plan;
 - make some or all long-term licences renewable as well as transferable, and
 - introduce a declining ratchet provision in the volumes to be sold beyond the initial ten years of any longer-term licence.

CALM should:

- 1.7 Revise the draft Nature Conservation Strategy for Western Australia in the light of public comment already received and approve and implement the strategy as soon as possible.
- 1.8 Develop policy statements:
- dealing with the productive capacity of former mine sites, and other principles underpinning ecologically sustainable forest management;
 - on the maintenance of carbon and hydrological cycles at the ecosystem level to assist integrated planning and implementation;
 - on water and revise these periodically to facilitate the preparation of the next Forest Management Plan, and
 - on natural and cultural heritage, including geoconservation and cultural values, in collaboration with other relevant agencies.

The relevant land management agencies should:

- 1.9 adopt a new Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of remnant vegetation on private land to clarify responsibility for the pursuit of ecologically sustainable forest management in private forests.

2. Planning

The Government of Western Australia should:

- 2.1 Facilitate an integrated approach by relevant agencies to assess:
 - areas of native forest and present and planned plantations on private land, and
 - impacts of plantation development on regional values such as water yields, social, roading/infrastructure issues and industry development.

The Minister, controlling bodies and Executive Director of CALM should:

- 2.2 Determine a schedule for concurrent development of strategies and a new Forest Management Plan spanning all State public tenures in the South-West Forest Region. Where previous ministerial conditions have been imposed, these conditions and references to other previous plans should be revoked and replaced by a complete set of conditions consistent with the terms of the currently gazetted plan.

CALM should:

- 2.3 Complete a set of official guidelines and manuals for assessment of flora and fauna, consistent with a revised Wildlife Conservation Act and a finalised Nature Conservation Strategy.
- 2.4 Develop a formal process to appraise and meet data requirements to support assessment of risk to biodiversity from forest management practices, including those associated with timber harvesting, protection from fire, and conservation.
- 2.5 With other relevant agencies, develop a cost-effective and appropriate set of performance indicators for effective monitoring of plans relating to biodiversity, as well as other values.
- 2.6 Address the ecological basis for burning regimes in all forest ecosystems in planning for fire management. Annual District burning plans should be available for public access and medium-term (five to seven years) fire management plans should be published. Such plans should be prepared in conjunction with the medium-term integrated harvesting and regeneration plans specified within the Manual of Harvesting Specifications.
- 2.7 Explicitly define water quality in the Code of Practice for Plantations, Manual of Harvesting Specifications and Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting in Western Australia.
- 2.8 Complete and use soil and landform assessment methods and develop manuals for using this information in planning in the southern forests.
- 2.9 In consultation with the mining industry, review the present strategies and operations to establish formal requirements for conservation or re-establishment of all forest values, including productive capacity, on former mining sites, consistent with incorporation of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest

management into the CALM and the Mining Acts (see also Recommendation 1.4).

- 2.10 Involve communities in planning for cultural heritage conservation.
- 2.11 Assess natural and cultural heritage resources through systematic surveys and the development of databases and integrate the conservation of natural and cultural heritage values into the management and planning process through training and more explicit processes and guidelines.
- 2.12 Extend the use of operational planning on a periodic (say five yearly) and integrated basis and introduce the opportunity for public comment on these 'look ahead' plans.

The relevant land management agencies should:

- 2.13 Adopt a new Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of remnant vegetation on private land to ensure that harvesting is carried out in a manner that will lead to adequate stocking after harvest of retained growing stock or new regeneration for all timber harvesting operations.

3. Implementation

The Government of Western Australia and CALM should:

- 3.1 Ensure that the management of CALM lands in the South-West Forest Region is placed under a single integrated management entity, either as a:
 - public service entity being an integral part of CALM, or
 - separate commercial entity with its own board of management, chief executive, and commercial objectives.

CALM should:

- 3.2 Review the CALM fire process for setting priorities for the use of prescribed fire and change the weighting given to different values to better reflect the two overarching and six specific principles of ecologically sustainable forest management and the current knowledge of the response and resilience to fire of ecosystems in the South-West Forest Region.
- 3.3 Implement a District-level forest health surveillance system (including private forests) to provide early warning of potential pest disease and weed problems, develop an associated action plan, and undertake risk analyses for likely incursions or outbreaks.
- 3.4 Give the Director of Regional Services explicit responsibilities for cultural and natural heritage management matters.
- 3.5 Revise the two existing Codes of Practice and accompanying manual to make them easier for field operators and field staff to understand.

- 3.6 Give increased attention to skill requirements, staff training and the contracting of external services to ensure timely access to the range of skills needed to implement ecologically sustainable forest management.
- 3.7 Release draft Policy Statements related to ecologically sustainable forest management for public comment prior to finalisation.
- 3.8 Develop appropriate processes to facilitate consultation with and involvement of Aboriginal communities in the development of policies and procedures for heritage conservation.

4. Monitoring and compliance

The Lands and Forest Commission and the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority should:

- 4.1 Jointly report on compliance with all provisions of relevant management plans, including periodic reporting of progress with the structural goals prescribed within the Forest Management Plan.

CALM should:

- 4.2 Complete the revision of Policy Statement No. 28 to include the current objectives and a commitment to develop and regularly monitor a set of indicators of ecological sustainability in relation to all of the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. The revised policy should be implemented as soon as possible.
- 4.3 Collate and maintain a database on forest soils (including soil nutrients) and carbon, using data from researchers within and outside CALM.
- 4.4 Employ Aboriginal heritage officers in the field monitoring of CALM activities and to maintain the indigenous places database, as well as communicate with Aboriginal communities on the protocols for data entry and retrieval; and:
 - link CALM heritage databases to the CALM geographic information system and to databases of other agencies;
 - commission experts to explore the feasibility of developing sensitivity indicators which might be applied to the location of prehistoric Aboriginal sites, and
 - sponsor research on the ability of prescribed buffer zones to conserve a representative sample of cultural heritage values.
- 4.5 Continue to operate the CALM Management Audit Branch as an internal audit of CALM planning and implementation priorities. In addition, there should be an external, independent audit of a sample of operational practices on an annual basis. Performance criteria and the results of the external audit should be published in the annual report of CALM.

5. Review and improvement

CALM should:

- 5.1 Implement frequent (about one to two yearly) internal review and periodic (about five yearly) external review of the Code of Harvesting Practice and Timber Harvesting Manual.
- 5.2 Encourage the implementation of the new processes for formal involvement of Regional and District staff in setting priorities for research and development, and planning implementation of research results in management. Strategic research should continue to be funded from the programs, but regions should also purchase research using funds under their control. CALM should periodically assess whether the processes are meeting the research needs of the Regions and Districts.
- 5.3 Retain the Forest Monitoring and Research Committee as a peak committee for advising on research priorities within CALM, but the committee should not have authority or responsibility for funding or the detail of the research program. CALM should ensure that the Forest Monitoring and Research Committee represents a wide range of stakeholder interests relevant to ecologically sustainable forest management.
- 5.4 Establish scientific advisory committees to facilitate input of external advice to research projects and to aid integration of CALM's strategic research planning with research priorities of other organisations, agencies and institutions.
- 5.5 In consultation with harvesting operators, develop mechanisms for fostering research and development and transferring new technology in harvesting operations.
- 5.6 Initiate a cross-agency cultural and natural heritage research program.
- 5.7 Develop further its social and economic research program.

The Western Australian Museum, CALM and other relevant institutions should:

- 5.8 Develop formal processes for jointly determining priorities for collection of fauna data and for maintaining a consolidated database.

The relevant land management agencies should:

- 5.9 Ensure that the requirements for restoration of former mine sites take account of the full range of values related to ecologically sustainable forest management and so guide research and development by the mining industry.