



Draft forest management plan 2014–2023 and protected areas

A conservation reserve system where species, communities and natural processes have minimal interference from external pressures is the cornerstone of conservation. A reserve system also helps biodiversity to cope with a changing climate, as large areas of intact ecosystems provide a resilience that buffers environmental changes.

The scope of the Draft plan is all lands vested in the Conservation Commission in the south-west corner of the State – an area stretching from Lancelin to Denmark. Within this area, the estate vested in the Conservation Commission totals nearly 2.5 million hectares and is made up of different land categories, including national parks, conservation parks, State forest and timber reserves.

Nearly 62 per cent of these 2.5 million hectares is in existing or proposed conservation reserves or otherwise protected areas. This is an area of nearly 1.3 million hectares in existing or proposed formal reserves or forest conservation areas and includes 52 national parks. (Western Australia currently has 99 national parks – for more information go to www.dec.wa.gov.au)

The Draft plan puts forward some alternative management options for feedback – depending on the outcome, there could be up to 195,980 hectares of informal reserves and 52,170 hectares of fauna habitat zones as well as the reserves above.

Reserves such as national parks and nature reserves are created under legislation and generally require Parliamentary approval to change them. For these reasons they are referred to as formal conservation reserves.

A forest management plan can establish informal reserves for conservation within State forest and timber reserves for the life of that plan. The main types of informal reserves are:

- **Old-growth forest**, protecting all old-growth forest that is not in formal reserves.
- **River and stream zones**, protecting corridors of vegetation along rivers and streams.
- **Travel route zones**, protecting corridors of vegetation along designated roads and the Bibbulmun Track for their aesthetic and social values as well as protecting biodiversity.
- **Diverse ecotype zones**, protecting sensitive ecosystems such as rock outcrops and wetlands.

Fauna habitat zones were introduced under the current forest management plan to provide a rotating source of areas for fauna to recolonise disturbed areas after timber harvesting (rotating over time as regenerating forest could replace previously identified zones). Again, timber harvesting and a range of other disturbance activities are not permitted in these areas.

The CALM Act also provides for **forest conservation areas** to be proposed. These provide a higher level of security of classification than informal reserves and are used for areas that have some impediment (such as mineral resources) to being considered for a formal reserve category. Forest conservation areas are managed for their biodiversity values and are not available for timber harvesting, but other uses may be permitted, such as wildflower picking, apiculture, craftwood and firewood collection.

The Draft plan carries forward from the current forest management plan existing and proposed changes to the protected areas listed above. It also:

- proposes a further 4,010 hectares be added to Whicher National Park
- puts forward for consideration an option to vary the existing travel route zones along roads in the Warren Region and introducing others to parts of the Munda Biddi Trail
- puts forward for consideration an option to vary the existing fauna habitat zones to keep the number and systematic location of zones, but amend their size and location to allow, for example, a much larger area to be set aside in Batalling forest block, which is a recognised fauna hotspot.

The *Draft Forest Management Plan 2014-2023* is available at www.conservation.wa.gov.au and is open for public comment until 7 November 2012.



Department of
Environment and Conservation

