



Guidelines for the Nomination and Management of Flora Roads

Introduction

The Flora Roads program began as an initiative of the Roadside Conservation Committee (RCC), as a means of encouraging road managers to protect and conserve roadside vegetation of high conservation value.

Flora Roads highlight areas of high conservation flora as a tourist asset to local communities. These are easily identified to passing travellers as areas worthy of an inspection to view the local flora.

The Roadside Conservation Committee has defined Flora Roads as “those roads which have conservation value owing to the vegetation growing within the reserve”.

Principle Conservation Values of Flora Roads

- The roadside must contain a significant population of native vegetation. Introduced trees and grasses are not important for conservation.
- The native vegetation must be in as near to its natural condition as possible. In undisturbed vegetation, several layers of plants occur – trees, shrubs and herbs are present in woodlands, for example. If one or more of the expected layers are missing, the conservation value is reduced.
- The roadside may be the only remaining example of original vegetation within a cleared area. It thus:
 - assists in vegetation mapping and distribution studies;
 - provides a benchmark for study of soil change during agricultural development;
 - provides a source of local seed for revegetation projects;
 - acts as a wildlife habitat for the protection of fauna;
 - harbours rare or endangered plants in the roadside;
 - may provide nest sites and refuges for native animals; and
 - may act as a biological corridor.





Identification and Nomination of Flora Roads

The RCC has been coordinating a volunteer roadside survey program since 1989, which provides a list of high conservation value roads within many Shires in the agricultural areas of this state. These roadsides can be investigated further to see if they warrant declaration as a Flora Road. Nevertheless, roadsides that have not been surveyed may still be nominated.

Any person may suggest to the managing authority or to the RCC that a road, or a section of road fits the criteria of a Flora Road. However, only the managing authority in whom care, control and management of the road is vested can officially declare it a Flora Road.

A road may be nominated as a Flora Road by submitting a written request to the RCC. The RCC requires the following information:

- endorsement from the managing authority;
- name of the road, Local Government Authority, and the road manager (MRWA, Local Government or CALM);
- distance of the proposed Flora Road; and
- width of the road reserve.

The following information would also be useful:

- photograph(s) of the road;
- a list of the dominant plant species; and
- threats such as weeds, disturbances, etc.

This information is stored in the RCC Flora Roads Register, a database that is maintained by the RCC Technical Officer (Mapping).



Establishment of a Flora Road

Given that only the managing authority can officially declare a road, or section of road as a Flora Road, it is important to have the support of the road manager.

The RCC will provide two Flora Road signs to the managing authority. The signs are in the tourist sign colours of white letters and symbols on a leaf brown background. It is the responsibility of the managing authority to erect the signs, and to provide signposts, auxiliary signs and carry out maintenance. One sign may be placed at each approach to the area.

Management Implications

A standard sign was developed by Main Roads WA in the late 1980's; a policy for the erection of Flora Road signage was developed shortly afterwards.

Part 16 of the RCC *Roadside Manual* details the establishment and management of Flora Roads. The RCC's *Guidelines for Managing Special Environment Areas in Transport Corridors* and the *Roadside Handbook* also provides information on Flora Road establishment.

The aim of all management should be to minimise any disturbance to the roadside flora, consistent with the provision of a safe and efficient roadway.

The managing authority will be expected to take into consideration the high conservation values present, and take special care when working within the Flora Road road reserve and the surrounding area. More specifically though;

- Council may choose to adopt a policy on Roadside Conservation;
- environmental assessments (pre-construction checklists) should be completed prior to any upgrade work, to assist with planning for flora preservation;
- fire management should be undertaken in such a way so as to take into account the ecological needs of the flora; and
- where rehabilitation is contemplated, local native species should always be used.





Tourism Implications

Declared Flora Roads will, by their very nature, be attractive to tourists, and would often be suitable as part of a tourist drive network.

Consideration should be given to:

- promoting the road by means of a small brochure or booklet;
- eventually showing all Flora Roads on a map of the region or State;
- using specially designed signs to delineate the Flora Road section; and
- constructing roadside flora rest areas where people can get out and enjoy the flora. Walk trails could be made from these, and information brochures produced.

The RCC has established links with the W.A. Tourism Commission for inclusion on wildflower tourist publications.

Flora Road Register

To ensure that knowledge of Flora Roads sites does not get lost, due perhaps to staff changes, the RCC has established a Flora Roads Register. Information pertaining to each Flora Road (i.e. road name, location, length, etc) will be stored in the Flora Roads database, and updated as necessary.

In order to plan roadworks so that these important areas of roadside vegetation are not disturbed, road managers should also know of these areas. Therefore, it is suggested that the Managing Authority establishes a *Register of Roads Important for Conservation* also. This register should be consulted prior to any works being initiated in the area.

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