



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 36

CONSERVATION RESERVE SYSTEM

May 2022

1. OBJECTIVE

To establish and effectively manage a system of comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserves in Western Australia (WA) to contribute to long-term conservation of biodiversity and the culture and heritage of Aboriginal people.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the selection, establishment and management of terrestrial and marine conservation reserves, including national parks, nature reserves, conservation parks, regional parks, State forest, timber reserves, marine nature reserves, marine parks and marine management areas and other land and waters managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) and to designated land, as defined by the *Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Act 1998* (BGPA Act).

3. CONTEXT

One of the key functions of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (department) is to establish and manage a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) conservation reserve system as a major contribution to biodiversity conservation. The south-west of WA is recognised as one of only 35 global biodiversity hotspots in the world. Eight of the 15 nationally recognised biodiversity hotspots and one of the world's 18 tropical marine biodiversity hotspots also occur in WA. The reserve system plays a pivotal role in conserving WA's biodiversity, which is both rich and displays a high level of endemism (i.e. plants and animals occurring nowhere else). It also contributes to protecting and conserving the value of the land and water to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal people and supporting Aboriginal connection to lands and waters through customary activities and joint management; community wellbeing through provision of ecosystem services, nature appreciation and recreation opportunities; and State and regional economies through nature-based tourism and sustainable resource use and extraction.

Representative areas are identified and selected using scientifically-based CAR criteria, spectacular landforms, amenity or cultural value. Using a landscape scale approach, areas may also be selected to enhance habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience by linking ecosystems on conservation estate and private lands. This policy statement recognises the contribution of land managed for conservation under the BGPA Act, to the CAR conservation reserve system. Unless specified otherwise, 'conservation reserve' includes land managed for conservation under the BGPA Act.

Multiple corporate policy statements and guidelines are relevant to the various aspects of the management of conservation reserves. This policy should be read in conjunction with those policies and guidelines.

4. LEGISLATION

Western Australia's lands and waters may be reserved and managed for conservation under the CALM and BGPA Acts. Conservation reserves under the CALM Act are vested in the Conservation and Parks Commission and managed by the department either solely or jointly. The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority has the care, control and management of land designated under the BGPA Act.

5. POLICY

The department will:

- 5.1 Establish and maintain a statewide conservation reserve system that is broadly representative of the State's natural ecosystems and habitats, contains viable populations of species and ecological communities, and protects areas of high conservation, cultural and heritage value.
- 5.2 Manage conservation reserves to maintain or enhance biodiversity and ecological processes, including habitat and ecological conditions for priority and threatened species and communities, and to protect and conserve Aboriginal culture and heritage values.
- 5.3 Manage conservation reserves to enable use while minimising impacts to values, by providing opportunities for people to visit and enjoy the reserve system, and enabling ecologically sustainable use of natural resources where appropriate.
- 5.4 Manage conservation reserves to facilitate access for Aboriginal people to conduct customary activities while minimising impacts to other values.
- 5.5 Promote and undertake scientific research and monitoring to develop a knowledge base for effective reserve management.
- 5.6 Undertake, coordinate and encourage education aimed at increasing public awareness, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity conservation and Aboriginal culture and heritage, and the role of the conservation reserve system.
- 5.7 Undertake periodic performance assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the management of the conservation reserve system in meeting goals and objectives for conservation of biodiversity and cultural values.

6. STANDARDS

Establishment and management of a CAR conservation reserve system provides a means of meeting the objectives and obligations of various national strategies and international conventions, including *Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System 2009-2030*, *Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030*, *the Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia*, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The national frameworks against which progress towards a CAR conservation reserve system is planned and measured are the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) and Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA) for terrestrial (including freshwater) and marine environments, respectively. These bioregions are defined by their distinct biological and physical characteristics, such as climate, geology, landform, ecological features and plant and animal communities.

Western Australia has been divided into 27 IBRA bioregions (comprised of 55 subregions) and 13 IMCRA bioregions. The Convention on Biological Diversity has a target to conserve and effectively manage at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The department will implement the policy through the following strategies within available resources.

- 7.1 Establish conservation reserves, where feasible, based on strategic priorities and contribution to CAR targets.
- 7.2 Establish new, or amend existing, conservation reserves in accordance with the requirements prescribed in the CALM and BGPA Acts and *Land Administration Act 1997*, as appropriate for the current tenure and proposed reservation type, ensuring native title requirements are met as prescribed in the *Native Title Act 1993*.
- 7.3 Prepare, implement and review management plans for conservation reserves or groups of reserves with clearly defined objectives for maintenance, sustainable use and, where necessary, restoration of identified conservation values.
- 7.4 Establish and manage classified areas or management zones, as prescribed in section 62 of the CALM Act, within conservation reserves where necessary, to provide for priority use of these areas according to the level of protection to be provided and the degree and nature of use.
- 7.5 Identify the key ecological, social and cultural values of the conservation reserves, the threats to these values, and undertake or support collaborative scientific ecological and social research targeted to improve knowledge and guide appropriate reserve management.
- 7.6 Implement management actions, prioritising those actions that protect the greatest diversity of plants and animals, threatened and priority species and communities, and key ecological processes.
- 7.7 Develop joint management arrangements with traditional owners to collaboratively manage conservation reserves under the CALM Act.
- 7.8 In consultation with traditional owners, identify, protect and conserve culturally important values, landscapes and places, by co-designing reserves and management plans, where appropriate, and providing access to country for Aboriginal people to continue to practice their customs and traditions.
- 7.9 Undertake, support and collaborate on robust long-term monitoring of species, communities and ecosystems, the pressures impacting them and the effectiveness of management responses, and use findings to inform and continuously improve reserve management.
- 7.10 Promote community understanding and appreciation of the value of conservation reserves. Increase community awareness of the conservation management measures to protect biodiversity and cultural values, through education, recreation and tourism opportunities, including developing and operating educational and interpretive facilities and programs, and disseminating information.

7.11 Work cooperatively with neighbours to manage values and the threats that impact on the reserves and adjoining properties, encouraging complementary land management practices, sustainable use and an ecosystem planning approach.

7.12 Collaborate with key stakeholders and joint management partners for the purposes of acquiring, establishing, managing and monitoring conservation reserves.

8. CUSTODIAN

Executive Director, Biodiversity and Conservation Science.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's internet and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Adaptive management, conservation, cultural, customary activity, education, management, management plan, marine, monitoring, park, public participation, recreation, reserve, research, terrestrial, zone.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than May 2027.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Mark Webb
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 3 May 2022