



# Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033

## Fact Sheet: Conservation reserve system for forests

A key focus of the Draft *Forest Management Plan 2024-2033* is to value and protect our south-west forests. This is captured within the strategic goals of the plan.

Under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, 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 conserving, protecting and managing biodiversity.

Currently nearly 1.3 million hectares of the 2.5 million hectares of lands covered by the Forest Management Plan are in existing or proposed formal reserves, including 56 national parks. In September 2021 the State Government announced the **preservation of an additional 400,000 hectares of jarrah, karri and wandoo forest**. This involves converting State forest to a different tenure, reserve or purpose; such as national park, conservation park or nature reserve.

In addition to conserving Western Australia's biodiversity, the conservation reserve system 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. The reserve system also contributes to community wellbeing through provision of ecosystem services, nature appreciation and recreation opportunities; and State and regional economies through nature-based tourism.

An important feature of CAR reserves is that they have security of tenure. That is, they are secure if a change or cancellation of the reserve types has to be approved through Commonwealth or State parliament. The categories of reserves that make up the CAR reserve system are Categories I-IV defined by IUCN Commission for National Parks and Protected Areas.

### Targets for the CAR conservation reserve system for forests

Progress on establishing a CAR conservation reserve system is measured against particular criteria, or targets. For the whole of Western Australia, the target is to conserve and effectively manage at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas.

In the Forest Management Plan area, reserves are identified and selected using scientifically based criteria as specified in the Nationally Agreed Criteria for the Establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System for Forests in Australia.

Western Australia's conservation reserves form part of the National Reserve System (NRS) which contributes to Australia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The goal of the NRS is to develop and manage the CAR national system of protected areas.

The CAR principles:

- **Comprehensive** - including the full range of ecosystems across the landscape.
- **Adequate** - ensuring the level of reservation is large enough to provide ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and ecological communities.
- **Representative** - conserving the diversity within each ecosystem, including genetic diversity.

Establishing and maintaining the CAR reserve system is included in the Regional Forest Agreement between the Government of Western Australia and the Australian Government.



## Biodiversity criteria

- 15 per cent of pre-European distribution of each forest ecosystem is included in reserves.
- At least 60 per cent of vulnerable forest ecosystems are included in reserves.

Twenty-six forest ecosystem types have been mapped in the south-west Regional Forest Agreement area. The criteria of 15 per cent reservation is exceeded in 21 of these forest ecosystems in existing or proposed reserves under the *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*. The remaining five ecosystems meet the biodiversity criteria for vulnerable and rare or endangered ecosystems.

Note that criteria and targets are different for reserving vegetation on the Swan Coastal Plain from the forested portions of the Forest Management Plan area. This includes the identification of regionally significant natural areas, with their management and protection primarily addressed through the land use planning system for the Perth metropolitan, Peel and Greater Bunbury regions.

## Old-growth criteria

- Where rare or depleted all old-growth examples should be protected.
- In other areas, 60 per cent of old-growth forest should be protected.

In Western Australia all old-growth forest has been protected since 2001.

## Wilderness criteria

- 90 per cent of high-quality wilderness that meets minimum wilderness requirements should be protected.

In the south-west the Walpole Wilderness Area was established in 2004 and includes over 360,000 hectares of protected areas.

## IUCN Protected Area Categories

- I - Strict nature reserve (I b Wilderness area)
- II - National park
- III - Natural monument or feature
- IV - Habitat/ species management area
- V - Protected landscape/ seascape
- VI - Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

In addition to IUCN Categories I–IV, some informal reserves can also be included in the CAR reserve system as they are established under the Forest Management Plan and are managed for conservation. In the *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033* informal reserves are collectively called Disturbance Avoidance Zones.

Under the *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033* the CAR reserve targets will be exceeded across the plan area.

In addition, areas of State forest and timber reserves no longer available for large-scale commercial timber harvesting, will be considered for inclusion in new or expanded conservation reserves. The *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033* will lead to improved protection for at least 400,000 hectares of forest.

## Reserve creation over the next decade

Establishing and maintaining the conservation reserve system, including meeting or exceeding CAR targets, is a key goal of the *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*.

Using a landscape scale approach and the CAR criteria, areas may also be selected to enhance habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience by linking ecosystems on conservation estate and private lands.

There are other factors to be considered in changing State forest and timber reserves to a different purpose, such as national park or nature reserve. State forest allows a range of uses such as recreation, apiary sites, firewood collection and commercial wildflower and seed collection. These uses may not be compatible with management of conservation reserves and this has implications for access to the forest for these activities.

Changing or creating new reserves is a legal process which can be time and resource consuming and requires negotiation with traditional owners and extensive consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders.

The management of Western Australia's south-west forests will be outlined in the *Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*.

For more information visit our website at [dbca.wa.gov.au/forest-management-plan](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/forest-management-plan)