Stakeholder Focus Group Report
DRAFT Forest Management Plan 2024-2033
Friday, 24 June 2022

VERSION 2

Table of Contents

Executive summary

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has undertaken pre-draft engagement activities in preparation for the development of the Forest Management Plan 2024-2033 (FMP 2024-2033) by the Conservation and Parks Commission (CPC). The current forest management plan will end on 31 December 2023 and the next plan is expected to commence on 1 January 2024.

In April and May 2022 pre-draft stakeholder focus groups were held to capture key interest group insight. The focus groups were facilitated by engagement consultants Andrew Huffer and Associates and Creational Consulting. This report was prepared by communications consultant Cannings Purple.

The valuable insights received through this engagement activity will inform the development of the draft FMP 2024-2033. The contributions and key themes will guide the draft, however not all comments and suggestions can or will be incorporated within the draft FMP 2024-2033.

It is expected that a draft FMP 2024-2033 will be released for public comment between October and December 2022. This report details the key findings of the stakeholder focus groups including themes, key findings, and opportunities.

Background

Various key stakeholder groups were invited by Expression of Interest (EOI) process to nominate a representative to participate in a focus group session as part of DBCA's consultation process. In total, 90 EOIs were sent and a total of 71 individuals participated in the pre-draft engagement activity. Focus groups are a popular engagement activity to gather qualitive data and in-depth insights through intimate group discussions.

The focus group consisted of two Zoom sessions; a 90-minute session followed by a 60-minute wrap-up session 48 hours later. Some groups required an additional session to capture detailed information to inform the draft FMP 2024-2033. The sessions were held online to ensure the safety of all participants in line with State Health COVID safe practices.

All participants were invited to provide detailed insights, opportunities, and feedback on three areas of particular interest to inform the FMP 2024-2033, these were:

- Forest health and biodiversity

- Climate change
- Forests values and use

Feedback and recommendations for FMP 2024-2033 were raised by each focus group and discussion was encouraged in response to the below four questions:

1. Vision – why are we suggesting that we do this and why now (not later?)
2. What are our goals and how could we achieve them?
3. What assumptions have we made?
4. What are the consequences of not doing this?

Focus groups

Industry and professional
- EOI to 9 organisations
- 2 no response
- 15 participants

Conservation
- EOI to 9 organisations
- 2 no response
- 8 participants

Local Government
- EOI 32 LGA
- 20 no response
- 14 participants

Tourism/ Recreation
- EOI 13 organisations
- 7 no response
- 8 participants

Land Manager
- EOI 9 groups
- 4 no response
- 5 participants

Mining
- EOI 6 organisations
- 1 no response
- 9 participants

Ecologists / Scientists
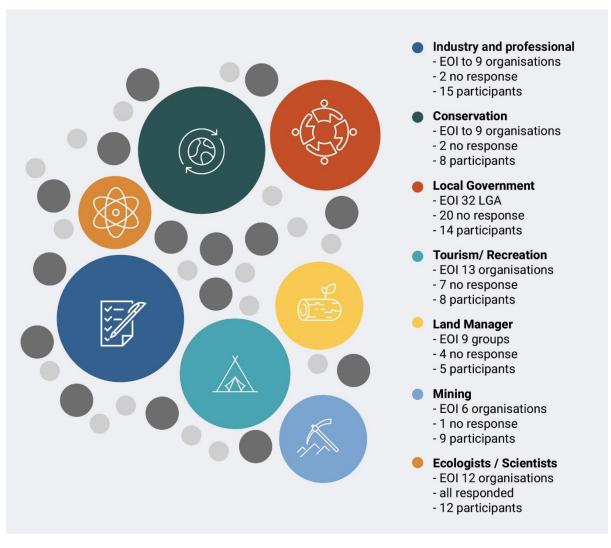- EOI 12 organisations
- all responded
- 12 participants

Figure 1.0 – illustrated the number of focus group expression of interests sent, no responses and participants across all key stakeholder groups.

Industry and professional
Facilitator: Andrew Huffer and Associates

Participants
An EOI to participate in the focus group was sent to nine organisations, of which seven participated. Additional attendees were requested by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) and the Bee Industry Council of Western Australia (BICWA). In total, twelve participants representing the 'Industry and Professional' stakeholder group engaged in the focus group. Three sessions were held, with thirteen participants attending in the first session, fourteen for the second and thirteen for the third session. The organisations represented were:

- Bee Industry Council of Western Australia
- Community Reference Panel for Forest Thinning for Ecological Health
- Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Honey Bee Products
- Forest Industry Federation WA (FIFWA)
- Forestry Australia
- Hive and Wellness Australia Pty Ltd
- Mandurah Timber Supplies
- Mortlock Timber Group
- South West Timber Hub
- WA Furniture Manufacturers Inc
- WA Pure Honey

A response was not received from the following organisations:
- Cabinet Makers Association of Western Australia
- Institute of Foresters Western Australia

Themes
The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:
- Need monitoring and measurement of what a healthy forest is and how it changes
- Government will need to step up to assess forest health
- FMP 2024-2033 will need to be highly flexible given change in practices occurring
- Increased community involvement in forest management
- Be willing to shift from a pilot or trial model to implementation at scale model
- A collaboration of foresters to form one governing 'Scientific Department'
- Identify which areas are more susceptible to drying
- Need to produce sufficient timber
- Native harvesting

Key findings

The group recommended that FMP 2024-2033 should promote the health of the natural environment, focus on practical and economically sustainable management, and enable the maximum benefit for the community who visit and use the forest, in the short and long term. Participants advised that the government has made a commitment that there will be sufficient supply of timber for furniture and timber manufacturing, heritage projects and reworks on existing projects. It is expected that FMP 2024-2033 will provide a framework to industry on how this commitment will be honoured, including key details such as timber species, qualities and quality.

- Perception that the current forest management plan was used as a guide rather than successful implementation. FMP 2024-2033 should include greater stakeholder consultation and contribution and be informed by industry knowledge, and scientific and evidence-based research.
- Recognised a need to develop a standardisation for forest health and biodiversity that includes a feedback mechanism that allows adaptive management and informs future forest management practices.
- Stronger connection between local shires and DBCA would empower and involve local communities to remain connected and feel a sense of responsibility to protect their local area.
- Independent from science and research. There is need for greater opportunity to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration within community and industry to improve decision making.
- Better protection is needed from the unmanaged activities of forest visitors, including illegal timber cutting, firewood harvesting, fire, and wild pig release.
- The mining industry and active operations should be subject to the same strict requirements as forest harvesting.
- Undertake an annual review and produce an audit report which includes the forest health outcomes and success measurements that is publicly available to industry and communities.
- It was noted by participants that any trials or practices to improve forest health should be considered time sensitive.

Considerations

Without definition of the current forest health and healthy ecosystems to create a measurable benchmark, any success measurements will be subjective. Participants noted that any monitoring or assessment of forest health must be independent of any industry or

vested industry, this includes assessments that are industry led, funded or influenced. The participants mentioned the Western Shield Program as an example of an industry dependent forest health assessment. It was acknowledged that there was a risk that valuable knowledge and insights could be drowned out by 'the loudest voices' assumed to be well-funded industries.

Participants considered the south-west forests a State-owned resource that is the Government's responsibility to fund and care for. There was a perception amongst the group that Government funding is not sufficient, and the management of forests has previously been too reliant upon contribution from industry as well as industry driven regulation and monitoring of forest use and activities.

Opportunities

Community involvement

Participants recognised the need for a platform to share information and knowledge about the forest's health and use to ensure that knowledge outside of the scientific community is not ignored. FMP 2024-2033 should strongly fund and support groups to contribute towards forest health protection, monitoring, and potential future use. These groups may include scientific community, researchers, general community, business, institutions and industry.

Department advocacy

The group suggested that a governing 'Scientific Department' should be established to advocate for forest health with the intention to better protect native flora and fauna and ultimately the climate. The department should be informed by a collaboration of expert knowledge, including but not limited to, hydrologists, wildlife biologists, geomorphologist, and dendrologists.

Standardisation of forest health

The group suggested that an International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) system be developed to establish a measurable benchmark for forest health, including biodiversity and habitat. This standard would assist in the observational monitoring of the forest as well as understand the impacts of climate change on the forests. Industry, community and subject matter expert input is considered and independently reviewed and verified before contributing to the ISO baseline or standards. As part of the ISO-reporting process, incident reports should be developed to track forest-use activities and ensure accountability for any impact on forest health and preservation.

Publicly available forest insights

Community sentiment and trust in FMP 2024-2033 will increase when more information about forest management insights and risks are publicly available, such as areas they are susceptible to drying. The session participants referred the *State of the Forest report* which includes online components and downloadable assets for public reference.

Industry monitoring

Participants noted that tourism and commercial beekeeping are profitable as well as sustain the health of the forests and support the forest health objectives. It was recognised that opportunity exists for these two industries to monitor their own forest use to demonstrate their sustainable practices, however capacity to do so would need to be provided by the Government.

Conservation

Facilitator: Andrew Huffer and Associates

Participants

An EOI was sent to nine organisations, of which seven participated. In total, nine participants representing the 'Conservation' stakeholder group engaged in the focus group. Two sessions were held, with seven participants attending in the first session and six for the second session. The organisations represented were:

- Conservation Council of WA
- Jarrahdale Forest Protectors Inc
- Nannas for Native Forests
- Save the Black Cockatoos
- WA Forest Alliance (WAFA)

- The Wilderness Society
- South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc
- BirdLife Australia

No response was received from the below organisations:

- Western Australian Naturalists' Club
- Wildflower Society of Western Australia

Themes

The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Forest protection/ conservation plan should be science-driven and informed
- Opportunity exists to dedicate resources to the task of understanding forests and what is important for their health
- Adding to the conservation estate/ expanding into National Parks
- Improve fire management
- Protecting and replanting forests where they've been cleared
- Conserving and reconnecting east west ecological linkages
- Opportunity exists to redefine the relationship with the forests
- Joint management and cooperative management agreements with Traditional Owners

Key findings

The required funding is attained, and adequate legal framework developed to achieve the full implementation of FMP 2024-2033 by DBCA and CPC. Participants were hopeful that FMP 2024-2033 will deliver on the Government's policy commitment to end all native forest logging as well as support the communities affected by the decision that directly impacts the logging industry. It is expected that the recommendations and management guidelines within

FMP 2024-2033 apply to all land tenures within the area, including both public and private ownership.

- The management of south-west forests is time-sensitive and implementing measures to better protect the area should be considered a high-priority. Significant time has been lost and the south-west forests are already greatly diminished, fragmented, and degraded.
- Restoration of the south-west forests could be supported through a large-scale ecological restoration project that includes on-ground protection measures including weeding, feral animal management, restoration of riparian zones, practices preventing diseases spread and other programs.
- Management practices should move away from an economic-focus and human-centre approach to a life-centred approach which acknowledges that forests have their own intrinsic values, are vital to myriad species and underpin the physical and mental wellbeing of modern cultures.
- CPC and DBCA should be funded and located independently of each other, as CPC actively advises the Minister for Environment on forest health and protection matters, including mine lease proposals and fire management.
- Auditing the implementation and success of DBCA's plans and programs – including the forest management plan and fire management plans – would ensure these commitments are as effective as possible and support the functioning of the south-west forests.

Considerations

Environmental

The group noted a reduction in the wildlife populations and evidence of biodiversity loss resulting from the isolation of species with diminished habitat and good sources.

Industry and human involvement

Human activities including inappropriate fire regimes and commercial mining and logging were considered destructive to the south-west forests. Participants noted that the approval of more industry could lead to alienation of Crown land in favour of private ownership for commercial gain.

Reputational

Participants referred to the Government's commitment to adding at least 400,000ha of native forests to the conservation estate and advised FMP 2024-2033 provides a platform to create

these new and expanded protected areas. The group noted that the public's trust would be undermined if these proposed conservation areas aren't secured or included within FMP 2024-2033.

Science-based expertise

Existing forest management processes were considered to not have kept up with scientific knowledge. The group also noted the absence of terrestrial nature conservation and restoration expertise in the CPC.

Opportunities

Forest protection activities

When considering management and protection of the south-west forests, the group highlighted the importance of applying the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) 2004 recommendation of biodiversity being the first consideration in every prescribed burn. This insight was supported with feedback that increased funding was required, as well as investment in infrastructure for rapid suppression of fire in the area. The group also noted that the annual target for forest burns should be abandoned.

Expertise: Traditional Owners and scientists

It was noted that future detailed forest management plans should be developed in consultation with Traditional Owners, the broader community and independent experts for each of the regions. Opportunity was also identified for DBCA and CPC to work collaboratively with universities to develop and implement science-focussed and evidence-based conservation practices.

Reclassification of areas

The group noted opportunity to establish a new land category specifically for the rehabilitation of land that would be subject to active management. It was recognised that the forests are used for recreation and tourism, and to support the establishment of a rehabilitation area, it was necessary for National Parks to be expanded to create areas where recreation if appropriate and complimentary to the preservation and biodiversity of the area. Participants suggested that all State Forests and Timber Reserves should be moved into Class A protected areas for the benefits of future generations.

Tourism/ Recreation

Facilitator: Andrew Huffer and Associates

Participants

An EOI was sent to thirteen organisations, of which six participated. Additional attendees were requested by WA 4WD Association and Bibbulmun Track Foundation. In total, eight individuals participated in the 'Tourism/ Recreation' focus group. Two sessions were held, with three participants attending in the first session and five for the second session. The organisations represented were:

- 4WD Club WA
- Bibbulmun Track Foundation
- Munda Biddi Trail Foundation
- Track Care WA Inc

- Trails WA
- WA 4WD Association
- WestCycle

No response was received from the below organisations:

- Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism
- Hikewest
- Outdoors WA
- WA Parks Foundation

- WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)
- WA Field and Game Association
- Tourism Western Australia

Themes

The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Better communication systems with clubs and organisations
- Protect forest areas from development including mining and housing

Key findings

Industry value

The recreational use of south-west forests should be valued as highly as other commercial uses.

Ease of communication and feedback processes

An actively monitored two-way system is developed so that forest visitors and users can share insights and feedback to DBCA, and key information be shared by DBCA to forest users. Participants identified that this could be supported by an active feedback system, the

example of Border Watch online feedback form and WestCycle's new application were provided.

Group and volunteer capability and capacity

The organisations and volunteers working in the forest are informed about the best way to manage the forest health and use the forest in a sustainable practice. These stakeholders are competent and have the capacity to undertake their tasks.

Mining: Rehabilitation works

It is expected that the mining companies will continue to undertake rehabilitation works as part of their leasing and operational agreements and that the forest user groups, including visitors and commercial operations are considered in this process.

- Forest visitors and organisations that use the forest would be better able to support the forest health with greater education programs and improved signage that builds a stronger understanding of the south-west forests.

- There is a need for a dedicated two-way communication and feedback process between DBCA and organisations. Participants recommended this should be supported by a dedicated role within DBCA and provides action and active feedback to enquiries and reporting.

- Clubs and organisations have identified a need for more up to date and relevant information to keep them engaged.

- Need to improve site rehabilitation practices to meet the needs of forest track users.

Considerations
Training

Individuals and organisations may undertake tasks and activities based on their own judgement and without proper training and direction.

Mining and residential development

Mining lease agreements and future housing will continue to encroach on south-west forests unless formal checks and balances are in place. Respondents identified a risk of running out of track space for recreational use if these developments are not considered and planned.

Opportunities
Communication systems: clubs and organisations

The group identified the need for a dedicated position within DBCA to support a clubs and organisations liaison role and provide action and active feedback for forest visitors and

users. There is a need for a dedicated position where the clubs and organisations can send and receive information, such as track maintenance or closure information and identified inappropriate use of the forests.

Participants recognised that clubs and organisations are a resource to communicating DBCA updates to stakeholders and may help alleviate pressure on DBCA communications. These groups are also seeking more timely and relevant information about the south-west forests to maintain their engagement and interest in supporting the forest health.

Education

It has been identified that having more accessible education available to forest visitors and users will support their understanding of the forests and how to respond to risk. This education should expand to the broader community and include the environmental, cultural and physical value of the south-west forests, including biodiversity, ecology and recreation. This may assist in supporting a behavioural change process and reduce the impact that forests users, including the impact of track users on the forest.

Mining and housing development

So that the forest visitors and organisations that use the forest can plan accordingly for their ongoing use and enjoyment, participants are seeking to understand the minimum and maximum areas planned for future mining and housing development.

Site rehabilitation

Improve site rehabilitation practices to meet the needs of track user group. A potential opportunity identified was to use rehabilitation sites for intensive recreational use such as dirt bikes and 4WDs.

Interagency collaboration

There is opportunity for greater collaboration between DBCA and other agencies and volunteers, such as the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES). There are various stakeholders visiting, using, and working towards the common goal of protecting the forests and opportunity has been identified to share knowledge and experiences to inform future planning and management.

Land Manager
Facilitator: Andrew Huffer and Associates

Participants
An EOI was sent to nine organisations, of which five participated. In total, five participants representing the 'Land Manager' stakeholder group engaged in the focus group sessions. Two sessions were held, with all five participants attending both the first and second session. The organisations represented group were:

- Blackwood Biosecurity Inc
- Leschenault Catchment Council
- Perth NRM
- South West Catchments Council
- The Bushfire Front

No response was received from the below organisations:

- Leschenault Biosecurity Group Inc
- Peel Harvey Biosecurity Group
- Peel Harvey Catchment Council
- South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc

Themes
The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Greater resourcing of DBCA to be able to effectively manage the lands they're responsible for, particularly pest management
- Greater consultation with the Noongar community in the South West Native Settlement Area around fire management and investigation of cultural burning practices
- Independent review of fire management practices
- Forests on private land
- Increased community engagement

Key findings
Budget transparency

Greater transparency around budget allocation and how it will support the achievement of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out in the management plans. The respondents expect the KPIs, Management Plan and Legislation are being monitored and reviewed regularly, through the CPC audit function which is supported with funding.

State of Environment Report

The overarching *State of the Environment Report* is considered in the development of the new plan.

Government involvement

The government should be willing to be involved in the management of private land, as they are with public land. Private land shares similar risks to that of public land, including increased spread of pests and diseases, reduction in biodiversity and the increased impacts of climate change.

- The structure of the DBCA management plan is not the concern, rather the resourcing was identified as the key issue.
- It was suggested that it is better to allocate greater funding now to mitigate any risk, improve forest health and avoid any problems becoming worse.
- There is a broad community expectation that DBCA can do their job and do it well.
- Incorrect fire management can have severe ecological, economic and tourist implications. There is opportunity for better fire management practices, including greater inclusion of traditional fire management practices.
- Private landholders should be considered as part of the entirety of the south-west forest landscape, and there is interest for government to invest and take action in this private land ownership space.
- Respondents identified that greater collaboration and input by private landholders would increase users' sense of responsibility to manage and use the forests in a sustainable manner.

Considerations

Resourcing

Resourcing of FMP 2024-2033 was identified as a risk. It was suggested that resourcing should be targeted through a FORESTCHECK monitoring program that includes forest researchers and more resources on the ground.

Wildfires

There are more frequent and larger wildfires affecting public and private land with increased loss in land, life and the severity of economic impact. It was suggested that future resourcing needs to address control mechanisms that reduce fire hazard, such as blackberry control. Participants identified that traditional fire management has been used successfully for

60,000 years to manage the south-west forests, and this knowledge and experience should be considered in the development of FMP 2024-2033.

Eco system and pests

It was recognised there is an overall decline in the ecosystem services, including horticulture industries and overall increase in declared pests spreading into neighbouring properties.

Reputation

Western Australia's reputation for environmental protection will be damaged if the health of the south-west forests is not managed and protected within FMP 2024-2033.

Opportunities

DBCA resourcing

More long-term, transparent budget allocation, with funding allocations restored to previous levels.

Consultation with the Noongar community

The South West Native Title Settlement will have significant implications on how and who is managing fire in out south-west forests. It was suggested that DBCA will need to liaise closely with the Noongar community. Engage and consult with the Noongar community on fire management practices suitable for the south-west forests.

Education

Develop the skills and educate private land managers to take action and achieve positive change for their land. There is opportunity to consult with these stakeholders and collaborate to achieve a collective management approach that is aligned with shared goals for public land.

Local Government – Group 1
Facilitator: Creational Consulting

Participants
An EOI to participate in the focus groups was sent to 32 organisations, of which 12 responded. There were 14 registered participants, representing the 12 LGAs for the two focus groups. The local government's represented were:

- Shire of Albany
- Shire of Augusta Margaret River
- Shire of Boyup Brook
- Shire of Capel
- Shire of Dardanup
- Shire of Donnybrook Balingup
- Shire of Manjimup

No response was received from the below local government authorities:

- City of Armadale
- City of Bunbury
- City of Busselton
- City of Gosnells
- City of Kalamunda
- City of Rockingham
- City of Swan
- City of Wanneroo
- Shire of Boddington
- Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes
- Shire of Chittering
- Shire of Collie
- hire of Denmark
- Shire of Gin Gin
- Shire of Harvey
- Shire of Mundaring
- Shire of Plantagenet
- Shire of Toodyay
- Shire of Wandering
- Shire of Williams

Themes
The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Establish a set of criteria for measuring/ defining 'forest health and biodiversity' - that sets the baseline for FMP 2024-2033.
- Define thinning approach, rationale, volume, evidencing, benefits and end use purposes (high v low quality products).

Key findings
Enabling change

Participants noted that waiting for a review of a report shouldn't be required to make positive change or communicate with the community.

Current data

That baselines should be based on more recent data, given the level of degradation in most forested areas.

Independence

Practices such as thinning will have independent oversight to ensure a balance of values/ outputs.

- Clarification sought on the amount of thinning and why it is required
- Transparency in land use management
- Create baseline for biodiversity and clarify goals
- Clear management of the transition to FMP 2024-2033
- Community use of the south-west forests and tourism needs to continue to be accommodated
- Economic value stared across Aboriginal, mental health, physical health and carbon capture
- Manage different areas for different values/ threats, management and preservation of the south-west forests should not be a cookie cutter approach
- Expand opportunity for greater Aboriginal participation
- Expand the collaborators to increase capacity for data collection: science, universities, DBCA research programs

Considerations

Loss of biodiversity

The group noted that this was raised in a previous review five years ago and questioned why a loss of biodiversity is still occurring. Clear accountability and transparency regarding biodiversity is noted throughout the responses in this focus group.

Reputation and trust

The group noted that public perception and reputation could continue to decrease if management isn't improved. A lack of clarity among stakeholders could also lead to a lack of trust.

Climate change

Climate change was mentioned throughout, with a loss of opportunity for diversifying and adapting to climate change and not realising the longer-term impacts of climate change from an economic perspective.

Drying climate

A drying climate, human-use drawdown of water tables and mismanagement of forested areas has resulted in some areas of forest dying during extreme heat events through lack of groundwater. The data needs to be clearer and more readily available.

Forest fires

Increased risk of forest fires, which in turn has potential for negative environmental, financial, and human impact.

Opportunities

Criteria and measurement

The group noted several instances of seeking measurable targets, including SMART goals and objectives and charting progress and actions. Development of a framework and adaptive management practices to address concerns as they arise based on measurable parameters was noted.

Reporting

Regular reporting and communication with the community was noted as a logical method of achieving goals and addressing transparency and accountability concerns.

Sustainable forestry management

Criteria and baseline information was noted as being key components to improve forest management practice for this natural resource.

Risk assessment

Develop a risk matrix to evaluate the consequences of all proposed forest management actions/ interventions.

Local Government – Group 2

Facilitator: Creational Consulting

Participants

- Shire of Murray
- Shire of Nannup
- Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale

- Shire of Waroona
- Shire of West Arthur

No responses as listed above for Local Government – Group 1.

Themes

The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Establish governance framework for managing mining (encroachment, rehabilitation)
- Define thinning approach, rationale, volume, evidencing, benefits and end use purposes (high v low quality products)
- Develop an approach to managing the transition to new ecosystems (uses) that deliver (environmentally, socially and economically) acceptable outcomes
- Targeted approach for improved pest management (plant and animal)

Key findings

Exclusion zones

Exclusion zones around communities should be imposed and the size clarified, i.e. townsite encroachment - requires community consultation.

Regulation and controls

Strong regulation and controls with integration with forest management for mining operations.

Evidence based

End use purpose (i.e. mountain bike trial) should be evidence based (i.e. economic contribution) rather than outcome focused (i.e. need for more trails).

Balance

There should be a balance between ecosystem health and high value products and the economy.

Public expectations

Public expectations to better use, manage and access the land will necessitate a coordinated approach as opposed to the ad-hoc, fragmented approach at the moment.

Funding

The government is willing to fund a new financial model to improve forest management:

- Feral/ pest plant and animals' species are getting worse, and intervention is required
- Education needed to explain why large portions are inaccessible
- Define a thinning approach
- Articulate policy position on logging, noted benefits and drawbacks
- Better communication regarding why large sections of forest are closed to the public
- Improve dieback management to address spread
- Thinning articulation is required
- Confusion regarding logging
- Explain how traditional uses have been managed to not impact on forests
- Awareness and education required for public use
- Analysis on pine plantations across all forests and by region
- Establish a governance framework for managing mining

Considerations
Mining

Commentary that mining practices operate by its own rules, with a separate governance framework, and is unaffected by FMP 2024-2033.

Clearing and rehabilitation

Clearing is unsustainable, and the rehabilitation methods and its effectiveness are questionable. Rehabilitation methodology needs to be pre-approved before any mining expansion or inception commences. This could result in the collapse of the jarrah forest ecosystems.

Ecosystems

Ecosystem damaged from inappropriate thinning regimes. Managing the transition to new ecosystems for acceptable outcomes rather than leaving changes to occur without any consultation.

Climate change

Significant change is happening to the ecosystems, particularly as a consequence of climate change, and how can this be better managed for acceptable outcomes.

Flora and fauna

Increased pressure on flora and fauna and decreased biodiversity. Reduce the footprint in which invasive species inhabit.

Opportunities
Data

Increase data gathering for controlled burning to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Research

To clarify if thinning is required to restore the forest to pre-logging conditions and identify the relationship between thinning and climate change.

Sustainable tourism

Encourage tourism to sustainably use the environmental assets available. Require an overarching strategy for the coordination of the use and development of the south-west forests.

Mining
Facilitator: Creational Consulting

Participants
An EOI to participate in the focus group was sent to six organisations with five organisations responding resulting in a total of nine participants from the five organisations. The organisations represented were:

- Alcoa of Australia
- Chalice Mining Limited
- Chamber of Minerals and Energy of WA

- South 32
- Talison Lithium

A response was not received from Newmont Boddington.

Themes
The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- Develop a values hierachy to promote greater transparency of end use, clarify community benefits delivered and impacts associated with different uses.
- Further develop the current foundations of economically sustainable forest management to continue clarifying trade-offs.

Key findings
Social expectations

There are changing social expectations around forest use and economic drivers.

Transparency and communication

Better transparency of end use, conservation values and community benefits.

Trade-offs

Ensure trade-offs are clearly understood and reference to a values hierarchy and are articulated in FMP 2024-2033. Have a practical way of assessing priorities and access and ensuring areas of priority are actioned.

Access

That access will still be available for mining purposes or other industries (sustaining); wood cleared for access to mineral resources or ecological thinning can be utilised by other industries.

Funding

There will still be a government funded body that will undertake active management (thinning, monitoring, maintenance of fire, access routes, weeds, feral animals, recreation management etc).

- Develop a values hierarchy to promote greater transparency of end use, clarify community benefits delivered and impacts associated with different uses
- Develop a statement that outlines the reason for FMP 2024-2033 that is consistent with the previous plan statement
- Align FMP 2024-2033 with statutory process
- Develop a specific approach to controlled opening access to forests, e.g. public/ recreational use, mining etc
- Develop a specific approach to fire management responses that incorporate broader stakeholder responsibilities and input
- Align FMP 2024-2033 with other statutory processes, e.g. environmental assessment and approvals
- Introduce active management strategies (not passive) to manage key issues like dieback and carbon cycles
- Better access to existing road network throughout FMP 2024-2033 areas
- Commercialisation of forest products
- Focus on effective management for current uses

Considerations
Commercial logging

The end of commercial logging announcement for 2024 is a 'line in the sand' and will result in substantial change in the current setting. That the government doesn't back flip on harvesting – or rebrand it in another way.

Drying climate

Impacts such as increased wildfire risk is evolving.

Opportunities
Cumulative assessment

A cumulative assessment of 'other uses' such as tourism and other activities, both current and emerging and increasing changes in land use are needed.

Socio-economic values

Developing a better understanding of the socio-economic values and drivers.

Active Management

A need to assess what active management may be required to be implemented to actively sustain the forest.

Ecologists/ Scientists
Facilitator: Creational Consulting

Participants
Targeted ecologists and scientists were invited to participate, with 100% attendance in the focus group.

Organisation	Representative(s)
Curtin University	Philip Zylstra, Adjunct Associate Professor
	Grant Wardell-Johnson, Associate Professor
Edith Cowan University	Dr Anna Hopkins
	Professor Pierre Horwitz, Centre for People Place and Planet
Griffith University	Professor Brendan Mackey
	Dr Heather Keith
Murdoch University	Emeritus Professor Giles Hardy
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Themes
The key themes identified by this stakeholder group to discuss in detail were:

- The top opportunities were used as the basis for the group's suggestions for FMP 2024-2033, these were: Clear spatial definition of the more than 400,000 ha of additional formal conservation reserves committed to by state government to support conservation planning based on comprehensive analysis of multiple values and criteria that ensures adequate representativeness of ecosystem types, connectivity at landscape scales, protection of threatened ecosystems and species and cultural values, as well as the contribution of managing the forest area to broader regional and state environmental issues.

- Clear acknowledgement of the change of management from commodity production to conservation outcomes and therefore that management plans and activities need to change to meet the new objective. This must include the analysis of biotic threats (feral animals, pests, weeds, pathogens etc.), planned management interventions (eg. thinning, prescribed burning, mining, roads, infrastructure development), and climate

change impacts, along with their interactions. This requires a long-term commitment to adaptive management and monitoring with public reporting that informs management interventions as well as robust natural capital accounts for the forests of the south-west.

- Recognition of Traditional Owner knowledge and leadership, other cultural and relational values attached to forests and commitment to co-design of their management, including engagement of the public to better understand forest ecology and its relationship to human health and wellbeing.

Key findings

Changing nature of the forests

Clarification of the changing nature of forests to explain the why and what.

Transparency

Transparency of changing approaches in forest management is required.

Monitoring and reporting

Implementation of monitoring of ecosystem characteristics that is appropriate to the management interventions and the need to support evidence-based decisions in management. To date, data and evidence in the public domain have not been sufficient to underpin management decisions.

Ecosystem value

Recognition that natural ecosystems are valuable and play a different role in how they change over time, a one size fits all approach does not work.

Long term commitment

A long-term commitment to adaptive management of the transition from commodity production to conservation outcomes and monitoring. Public reporting that informs management interventions as well as robust natural capital accounts for the forests of the south-west.

Funding

Adequately funded research to close knowledge gaps.

- Global consistency in evaluation is required, including international auditing – enabling FMP 2024-2033 to be at the forefront of ecosystem management planning
- The need for fit-for-purpose data and reporting was a prominent theme throughout

- Aboriginal and other cultural values are important now for all communities, an increasingly important sense of the multiple roles of forest ecosystems and their contribution to human wellbeing is recognised
- Aboriginal co-design and acknowledgement of ownership and management and resourcing
- Appropriate Aboriginal representation in focus groups
- Co-design offers the most robust management plan because more stakeholders will be invested in its success
- Active management to support change of trajectory in the forest

Considerations

Climate change

Mitigation measures need to be developed.

Dated management practises

Management practices needs to be more contemporary and deal with rapidly changing conditions with the forests, e.g. destabilising carbon supplies.

Confusion

If spatial definitions are not applied greater confusion can permeate through all levels of government and the community.

Reputation and trust

Currently there is inadequate transparency about management decisions, particularly involving spatial allocation and criteria, which can lead to mistrust of government policy.

Assumptions and not being able to measure effectiveness

Without sufficient research, monitoring and reporting decisions taken will continue to be contested in the community based on incorrect assumptions to unavailable information. It will not be possible to determine whether management actions are effective.

Aboriginal representation

The group noted that they were speaking for Aboriginal people in a process that should already involve them meaningfully and doesn't yet appear to be doing so. The current Wadjela Toolbox isn't adequate.

Opportunities

Expansion

Opportunities for physical expansion of the forest.

Education and public awareness

Education and public awareness campaigns are needed to better engage across all user groups and bring news faces into key topics.

World health showcase

Opportunities to learn how forest and biodiversity and adaption is managed world health showcase best practice and build knowledge.

UN System adoption

Adoption of the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting to benefit spatial analysis, holistic data management and the overall assessment of a range of ecosystem services to help inform trade-offs.

National Park Cities

Opportunity for national park cities to be better understood.

Aboriginal Engagement

Western Australia could become a global leader in Aboriginal engagement on FMP 2024-2033 if the opportunity is realised. Co-design by traditional owners to incorporate the Aboriginal values systems.

Data sharing

Spatial datasets will be shared across government departments and statutory authorities to inform the best possible mapping.

Education

Broad societal education about the contributions that forest ecosystems make to society.