



Department of **Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions**



System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration

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Conservation and Ecosystem
Management Division

Custodian: Plant Diseases Program Leader

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Department of **Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions**



System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration

Plant Diseases Program

Conservation and Ecosystem Management Division

FEM068

Plant Diseases Series

October 2023

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This document was prepared by the Plant Diseases Program, Ecosystem Health Branch, Conservation and Ecosystem Management Division.

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1. Introduction

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) maintains a record of Registered *Phytophthora* Dieback Interpreters (Interpreters) who are recognised as competent and skilled in dieback interpretation on lands managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act). This registration is kept current through issuing Letters of Registration to each Interpreter at the beginning of an annual registration period. By signing and returning a copy of this document, Interpreters agree to comply with the System Guidelines and Terms and Conditions of registration.

The System Guidelines and the Terms and Conditions may be revised over time. The current version of this document is designed to be read and signed at each registration period. Any changes from previous versions will be clearly identified.

Proponents of disturbance activities on CALM Act lands will use the Interpreter register for contracting interpretation services. Proponents managing other tenures may also refer to the register.

The primary audience for this document is Registered Dieback Interpreters and their trainees.

2. Objective

The objective of this document is to outline DBCA's protocols for the registration system for *Phytophthora* Dieback Interpreters.

This objective supports [Corporate Policy Statement No. 3 - Managing Phytophthora Dieback](#) by maintaining a system recognising the skills that Registered Dieback Interpreters (Interpreters) possess. These skills are integral for identifying and prioritising protectable areas and conservation values.

3. Scope

This document will not introduce any new methods or standards for interpretation but establishes the protocol for the registration system supported by DBCA to recognise when individual Interpreters meet the criteria set out to undertake dieback interpretation on CALM Act lands.

Where any direct or perceived conflict exists between this document (FEM068) and the *Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter's Manual for lands managed by the department* (FEM047; PDIM), this document shall prevail.

This document contains Terms and Conditions for registration which are to be signed and returned annually by Interpreters as a binding agreement that the system is understood and will be upheld by both parties (see Section 11).

4. Legislation

DBCA has responsibilities for the conservation and protection of biodiversity and biodiversity components under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act). Under the CALM Act, land must also be managed to protect the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons. DBCA manages plant diseases through the functions of the CEO under section 33(1)(d) and Part VII of the CALM Act.

Within forest Disease Risk Areas (DRAs), DBCA regulates activities contributing to the spread of *Phytophthora* dieback under Part 16 of the *Forest Management Regulations 1993*. These are the operative regulations for managing risk, controlling access, and establishing quarantine stations within DRAs.

5. Administration

This system is administered by DBCA's Plant Diseases Program, within Ecosystem Health Branch of Conservation and Ecosystem Management Division. The primary point of contact for all enquiries relating to this document is the Disease Hygiene and Standards Officer (DHSO) (dhso@dbca.wa.gov.au).

6. Confidentiality

Interpreters may provide DBCA with data for a variety of reasons. Subject to compliance with any requirement to disclose by any applicable law, or if requested by a Minister of the State Government of Western Australia, DBCA will only use and disclose the reports or evidence data provided for the purposes defined within this procedure. Evidence data collected by Interpreters from the private sector and submitted for the purposes of auditing remains the property of the contractor and will not be sold, shared, distributed, or uploaded to corporate or public databases.

DBCA, through Forest Management Branch (FMB), is the custodian of all *P. cinnamomi* occurrence data obtained in relation to CALM Act lands.

It is acknowledged that DBCA has no ownership of or claim to information or data obtained from lands that it does not manage. DBCA will not sell, share, distribute, or upload this information or data without the prior written consent of the proponent.

7. Review

It is intended that this document is reviewed after 12-months of implementation. Subsequent review dates will be within a five-year period.

8. System for Registration

Section 8 details the conditions and processes for dieback Interpreter registration.

8.1. Registering of new Interpreters

The pathway to registration of a new Interpreter is:

1. Working alongside a DBCA registered Interpreter as an assistant/trainee being supervised and trained.
2. When the trainee is considered competent, their supervisor may nominate them by emailing dhso@dbca.wa.gov.au for a core evaluation for registration (see Section 8.3).
3. Once registered, supplementary skills for registered Interpreters can be gained through a secondary evaluation process. The same nomination and evaluation process applies for supplementary skillsets.

8.2. Mentoring Interpreters and trainees

Interpreter mentoring and training is most effective through on the job learning from experienced Interpreters that exist within the Interpreter's organisation.

Additional mentoring is also available through the Plant Diseases Program on a [fee-for-service](#) basis. This allows customised training or mentoring to be developed to suit the individual.

8.3. Registration and evaluation

Trainee or former Interpreters applying for registration must undergo a two-stage evaluation.

The two-stage process for evaluation is:

1. **Desktop Mapping Exercise:** A Protectable Areas Map must be created. The applicant must use the assessment template to explain the categories mapped based on the evidence data provided.
2. **Simulation Site Field Evaluation:** The field evaluation occurs after the applicant has demonstrated competence through the desktop mapping exercise. [Fees](#) apply for the field evaluation component for Interpreters who are not employed by DBCA. Fees are to be paid prior to evaluation and are non-refundable.

The field evaluation takes place at a designated simulation site based on the location of the applicant. Simulation sites are pre-established and allow the assessor to evaluate core competencies through a single evaluation. The simulation site is pre-assessed by the Plant Diseases Program prior to use for evaluation. An acceptable margin of error is included to cover GPS error and sections of complex, subtle or cryptic disease expression.

Prior knowledge of the site and area is not necessary. The applicant will be asked to produce and provide an interpretation of the area, including mapping boundaries.

The assessment area is designed so that the applicant can complete the assessment independently. The evaluator will accompany the applicant for a maximum of two hours to gain an understanding of their knowledge and offer support and advice on the interpretation at the site.

The remainder of the field evaluation will be completed by the applicant independently. To pass the independent assessment component of their evaluation, the applicant must demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- accurate mapping of assessment boundaries (within tolerance bands),
- collection of evidence and use of correct symbol convention, and
- completion of the assessment within the allocated time.

On completion of the field evaluation, the applicant is required to provide a completed and comprehensive GPS track and evidence data set for the simulation site. This includes the location where boundaries would be placed if taped in field as per methods outlined within the *Phytophthora Dieback Interpreters' Manual for lands managed by the department* (FEM047; PDIM).

All applicants will receive the same background and relevant information for the assessment from the assessor upon arrival at the simulation site.

Following a successful field evaluation, the applicant will be advised to familiarise themselves with the System Guidelines (this document) and return a signed Terms and Conditions Declaration (Section 11). Once a signed Declaration is received by the Plant Diseases Program, a Letter of Registration will be issued and the applicant will be added to the register of DBCA Registered Dieback Interpreters.

Where an evaluation of an Interpreter is successful, no additional fee will be charged for the remainder of the current registration period.

In the event of an unsuccessful evaluation, the applicant and supervisor will receive recommendations for areas of improvement. Applicants may re-apply for evaluation once their supervisor believes they will meet the requirements. Fees for evaluation are non-refundable and are valid for one attempt only.

8.4. Annual registration renewals

Before the end of the annual registration period, Interpreters not employed by DBCA will be issued an invoice. Subject to the department receiving payment and a signed Declaration (Section 11), a Letter of Registration is issued confirming the individual's ongoing status as a registered Interpreter. This letter includes a list of any supplementary skillsets in which the Interpreter is qualified.

An interpreter who has not renewed their registration is no longer eligible to undertake interpretation on CALM Act lands, will forfeit their registration, and be removed from the DBCA Interpreter register.

DBCA may choose to extend a registration period for any reason.

8.5. Deregistration and re-registration

Deregistration can occur through:

- written resignation as an Interpreter.
- declining to renew registration.
- inactivity (Section 8.5.1).
- breaching the Terms and Conditions of registration (see Section 10).
- abuse directed towards a DBCA officer.

Depending on the circumstances and conditions of deregistration, former Interpreters may apply to the Plant Diseases Program to be re-evaluated for registration.

Where Interpreters become deregistered, it is at the discretion of DBCA to determine what skillsets are re-attributed to the Interpreter upon re-registration.

Registered Interpreters who supervise non-registered staff are responsible for the accuracy of work completed.

In cases of deregistration, excluding deregistration due to inactivity or declining to renew registration, Ecosystem Health Branch will first attempt to resolve issues through negotiation. Where no resolution is reached, the Executive Director Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM) will receive a recommendation to deregister the Interpreter and if accepted, the Interpreter and supervisor will receive a letter explaining the reasons for deregistration. If the Executive Director CEM accepts deregistration, the Interpreter will no longer be permitted to undertake interpretation on CALM Act lands.

At the discretion of the Executive Director CEM, the department retains the discretion to discontinue the Interpreter registration system at any time.

8.5.1. Inactivity while registered

Where an Interpreter is inactive on CALM Act lands within a registration period, a registration letter for the next registration period will not be issued and the Interpreter will be deregistered.

Exceptions may be made for deregistration due to inactivity in cases where DBCA is notified in writing prior to the end of the registration period.

If an Interpreter is undertaking assessments on non-CALM Act lands but wishes to have their activity for the registration period recognised, they must submit evidence data, map and report to DBCA, for at least one assessment completed during the registration period.

Alternatively, where an Interpreter is at risk of deregistration through inactivity, the Interpreter may apply to the DBCA in writing to be re-evaluated for registration at a DBCA simulation site at their own cost.

9. Core and Supplementary Skills

The core skill for dieback interpretation is based on a set of foundational standards that Interpreters need to employ in all interpretation jobs. An Interpreter cannot be registered for supplementary skills without first being registered for core skill.

Supplementary skills are required under specific circumstances and are based on additional standards, and often require expanded or enhanced evidence collection. An Interpreter can be registered for all supplementary skills if they meet the relevant requirements.

For registration to be extended to cover supplementary skills, Interpreters must first be mentored by other experienced Interpreters and then undergo additional assessment from the Plant Diseases Program. If required, the Plant Diseases Program can mentor the Interpreter (see section 8.2).

Supplementary skills:

1. Dieback impact mapping

This refers to the mapping of *Phytophthora* Dieback impact where the area expresses current high or very high impact categories. In areas not yet infested, the proponent may require impact mapping categories be allocated based on predicted impact. Predicted impact is based on the expected impact over time and requires that Interpreters differentiate between vegetation and landform types, combined with the local physical characteristics indicating the area could express high or very high impact disease expression. Through the application of these categories a change in management and operational activities can be recommended.

2. Areas of low interpretability

The low interpretability zone is the description of an area prone to subtle disease expression. This zone is within the mean annual rainfall band of 400-600 mm/year, which includes parts of Geraldton Sandplains, Avon Wheatbelt, Mallee and Esperance Plains bioregions. Mapping *Phytophthora* Dieback becomes seasonally difficult in these areas due to drought and unreliable sample results. Within this zone, Interpreters have the option to use the temporary 'Not Yet Resolved' (NYR) category, to allow for the reinterpretation of the area to occur when seasonal changes are conducive to sampling. With low interpretability assessments a large number of symbols are used to record the increased number of observations that are required for this assessment type.

3. Karri regrowth

When a *Phytophthora* Dieback occurrence assessment is required in karri forest regenerated post 1960, interpreters will use karri-regrowth assessment procedures. Prior to the practice of hygiene management in karri, infested material is known to have been placed into uninterpretable areas, and due to this, the unprotectable category for these areas is frequently assigned. As with areas of low interpretability assessments, a large number of symbols are used to record the increased number of observations that are required for this assessment type.

4. Mining rehabilitation

This involves the interpretation of an area which was managed using appropriate hygiene. Interpreters in this assessment type will often determine protectable status by assessing the adjacent undisturbed areas and using principles derived from other types of dieback assessments. A large number of symbols are used to record the increased number of observations that are required for this assessment type.

10. Terms and Conditions for Registration

When first registered and at the beginning of each new registration period Interpreters will be required to sign and return the declaration within the *System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration* (FEM068, Section 11 of this document). The below Terms and Conditions for Registration state the responsibilities of the department and the Interpreter. When signed there is an agreement to the Terms and Conditions of the System Guidelines by the Interpreter and the department.

Under these Terms and Conditions, the department will:

- Administer the system according to processes described in the *System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration* (FEM068).
- Consult on proposed amendments to the system and clearly indicate in future versions the changes made.
- Offer training opportunities and a resource platform to support interpretation.

Under these Terms and Conditions, Interpreters will:

- Comply fully with all Terms and Conditions for Registration.
- Operate as per the *System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration* (FEM068) and *Phytophthora Dieback Interpreters' Manual for lands managed by the department* (FEM047; PDIM), including any amendments made.
- Be responsible for the quality and accuracy of any work performed within their organisation, including products/information submitted or produced under their direction.
- Retain current licences, authorities and permits to access CALM Act lands (see Sections 10.1 and 10.2).
- Submit all interpretation products to proponents. Interpretation products include reports, track and point data.
- Submit required interpretation products relating to CALM Act lands to the department's Forest Management Branch.
- Understand that registration as an Interpreter with the department is voluntary, individual and non-transferable.

10.1. Flora taking (biological assessment) licence

All flora native to Western Australia is protected throughout the state under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) and *Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018*, which are administered by DBCA. To 'take' flora from Crown land for non-commercial purposes a Flora taking (biological assessment) licence is required. These licences are issued by the DBCA's Wildlife Licensing Section and application forms and further information can be found on the [Flora Licences](#) website. A licence must be held by each person taking flora. All Interpreters, trainees and assistants should have a current licence to take samples.

10.2. Disease Risk Area permit

Disease Risk Areas (DRA) in the forested regions of the south-west of Western Australia have been gazetted under the CALM Act to provide special protection from plant diseases. Any member of the public or the department's staff in charge of a potential carrier, must gain a written authority from an authorised officer prior to entry, and must carry the written authority when entering DRA. DRA and permits to enter are administered by DBCA and may be provided to a person who has a valid and legal reason to enter DRA. Applications for a permit must be made to the district office in the locality of the DRA, and permits will be issued for a defined period and with specific conditions.

A carrier is anything capable of carrying and transmitting forest disease including soil, trees, timber, firewood, and forest products; tools; vehicles; machinery; and equipment or implements designed and used for the cutting or gathering of timber or firewood, or earth moving. In addition to those obvious carriers, pushbikes, wheelbarrows, and animals, such as horses and other stock, are also considered as potential carriers. All these modes of transport carry a risk of introducing dieback to or spreading it within a DRA. Entry on foot does not require a permit.

It is an offence under the *Forest Management Regulations 1993* to enter DRA without a permit, or to breach the conditions of the permit. Infringement notices may be issued by authorised departmental officers with current penalties up to \$2,000.

11. Declaration

The following party agrees to work within the *System Guidelines for Phytophthora Dieback Interpreter Registration* (FEM068):

Name:

Registration number:

Signature:

Date: