



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 36

CONSERVATION RESERVE SYSTEM

June 2017

1. OBJECTIVE

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

2. SCOPE

This policy and its implementation strategies apply to the Department of Parks and Wildlife's 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 areas of land and waters managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act).

3. CONTEXT

One of the key functions of the 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 a global biodiversity hotspot, one of only 35 in the world. Eight of the 15 nationally recognised biodiversity hotspots occur in WA. WA also contains one of the world's 18 tropical marine biodiversity hotspots. 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 cultural and heritage values 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.

The national frameworks against which progress towards a CAR conservation reserve system is planned and measured is 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 set a target of at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, to be conserved through effectively managed and representative protected areas by 2020 to improve biodiversity.

In addition to using scientifically-based CAR criteria, spectacular landforms and scenery as well as natural areas of high public use are also commonly included in conservation

reserves in recognition of their high socio-economic value and subsequent management requirements.

A well-managed conservation reserve system forms the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation, protecting viable samples of all regional ecosystems and the plants and animals they support. These areas provide the basis for integrated ecosystem management and a landscape-scale approach to conservation that seeks to link reserve and off-reserve conservation efforts to enhance ecosystem resilience and habitat connectivity.

4. LEGISLATION

Western Australia's lands and waters may be reserved and managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*. Such conservation reserves are vested in the Conservation and Parks Commission.

Associated policies and guidelines

The 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 Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030*, *the Regional Forest Agreement for the South-West Forest Region of Western Australia*, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Many of the department's corporate policies 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.

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 value and cultural and heritage significance.
- 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 significant cultural and heritage values.
- 5.3 Manage conservation reserves to enable use while minimising impacts to the conservation values by facilitating customary activities by traditional owners, providing opportunities for people to visit and enjoy the reserve system and enabling ecologically sustainable use of natural resources, where appropriate.
- 5.4 Promote and undertake scientific research and monitoring to develop a knowledge base for effective reserve management.
- 5.5 Undertake, coordinate and encourage education aimed at increasing public awareness, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity conservation, and the role of the conservation reserve system.

- 5.6 Undertake periodic performance assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the conservation reserve system in meeting goals and objectives for conservation of biodiversity and cultural values.

6. STANDARDS

Parks and Wildlife will ensure the processes and procedures outlined in the CALM Act regarding the establishment and management of lands and waters to which the Act applies are followed. These include requirements for consultation of other government agencies and the public regarding the establishment of new reserves, Ministerial concurrence requirements and the development and implementation of management plans.

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 for reservation.
- 7.2 Establish new, or amend existing, conservation reserves in accordance with the requirements prescribed in the CALM Act 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 species, threatened and priority species and communities, and key ecological processes.
- 7.7 In consultation with traditional owners, identify and protect culturally important landscapes and places, and provide access for Aboriginal customary purposes.
- 7.8 Develop joint management arrangements with traditional owners to collaboratively manage conservation reserves.
- 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 increased community understanding and appreciation of the value of conservation reserves, and of implementing a range of 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 threats impacting on the reserves and adjoining properties. Encourage complementary land management practices, sustainable use and property planning taking a landscape-scale approach to build ecosystem resilience and protect key biodiversity values.
- 7.12 Develop and maintain effective cooperative arrangements and collaboration with key stakeholders and partners for the purposes of acquiring, establishing, managing and monitoring conservation reserves.

8. CUSTODIAN

Director Science and Conservation.

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 five years after the effective date of the Director General's approval.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Jim Sharp
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 30 June 2017