

SOUTH-WEST FORESTS DEFENCE FOUNDATION INC. NEWS – December 2014

In this Newsletter:

- AGM: 17th December – Please renew your membership!
- Help yourself to our old poster stock!
- We urge you to consider making a donation to keep the forests campaign going.
- Articles on:
 - Forest Management Plan 2014-2023;
 - Sustained unsustainability;
 - FPC losses;
 - Saving Challar forest;
 - Misleading speech by the Minister for Forestry.

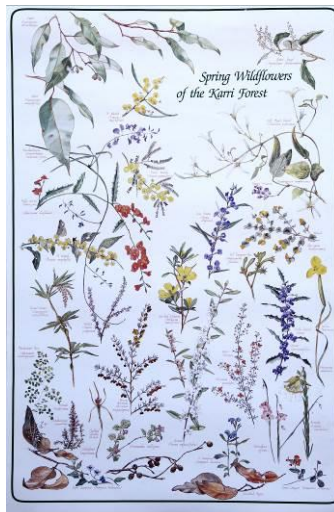
Gifts for you

Some years ago the Foundation printed beautiful posters but did not sell them all. They are: *Karri forest Warren National Park*, *Spring wildflowers of the karri forest*, *Wondrous West – Lake Maringup* and a painting, *Karri and a southwest stream*, by Robert Juniper (some copies are signed).

If you would like copies of any of them, please phone Beth Schultz on 9386 7159 or email her on beth.schultz@amnet.net.au to arrange for you to get them or pick some up at the AGM.



Karri forest Warren National Park



Spring wildflowers of the karri forest



Karri and a southwest stream



*Wondrous West –
Lake Maringup*

Help needed!

The Foundation continues to help the WA Forest Alliance. To keep the forests campaign going, it needs a lot of money. It would be greatly appreciated if you could make a donation to the Foundation for us to pass on to WAFA or you could donate directly to WAFA. Send your cheque to:

The Treasurer
WA Forest Alliance
6 Hampton Road
Fremantle WA 6166

or make your donation direct to:
WA Forest Alliance
Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000 Account No. 130 457 369

Forest Management Plan 2014-2023 – a recipe for environmental vandalism

In December 2013 Western Australia's Environment Minister, Albert Jacob, signed off on a 10-year management plan for WA's south-west native forests, the Forest Management Plan 2014-2023 (FMP).

For management, read "logging and burning". WA's current forest managers cannot conceive of any forest management that does not involve chopping down trees and burning forests at unnatural frequencies and over unnaturally large areas.

Minister Jacob had been in the job for three months and wasn't even born when the fight for WA's forests began, in 1975. Of course the decision was not his alone. It was the decision of the Barnett Government, which is determined that native forest logging will continue for at least another 10 years despite the cost to taxpayers, the environmental damage it will do and conclusive evidence that native forest logging under the FMP is unsustainable – facts available to any independent investigator interested in the truth.

The Minister claimed that the FMP was prepared following an extensive process of consultation and review. That is not true. The 5,141 submissions made on the draft FMP raised 516 issues. Only 19 were more or less taken on board and some of them advocated increased logging. The whole consultation process was a fraud on the public.

With or without government direction, WA's government agencies – the Conservation Commission, the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Environmental Protection Authority and the Appeals Convener - obligingly provided the smokescreen of misinformation, willful blindness and falsehoods behind which the false claim of sustainable forest management is promulgated.

The FMP increases the allowable cut of karri sawlogs by 9 per cent above the 2004-2013 level. It retains virtually the same allowable cut of jarrah sawlogs but sets a potential upper limit that is 22 per cent above the 2004-2013 level. Yet not once was the allowable cut of jarrah sawlogs under the FMP 2004-2013 ever reached.

While the allowable cut of marri logs is 29 per cent below the 2004-2013 level, the potential upper limit is 30 per cent above the 2004-2013 level.

In his June 2013 audit report, the Auditor General said that the forest managers had overestimated the amount of logs they could sell by 19 per cent.

The expert panel that examined how the sustained yield for jarrah, karri and marri was calculated found that the software used to model these fundamental figures could not take fire or drought into account. To make allowance
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for these episodic events, as a safety margin the forest managers simply reduced the allowable jarrah cut by 10 per cent and the allowable karri cut by 15 per cent.

No explanation has been provided as to how the safety margin of 10 and 15 per cent was arrived at.

The expert panel on sustained yield said that the next FMP should not run for 10 years but be reviewed after five years to enable the plan to adapt to shocks such as major fires, cyclones or pest or disease outbreaks. This recommendation was ignored.

The Minister's assurance that the FMP will include timelines for completion of some management activities rings hollow. The guideline, "Goals for understorey structure," required under the FMP 2004-2013 to be completed following public consultation by 31st December 2005, we are now told won't be finalised until June 2016 – more than 10 years late!

However, having guidelines to protect biodiversity does not help. The Auditor General found ongoing breaches of environmental standards and limited monitoring of compliance with contractual obligations.

The FMP is not legally binding and will be implemented according to available resources. It is a recipe for another 10 years of environmental vandalism.

National parks may not be safe

The Forest Management Plan 2014-2023 says that 0.8 per cent and possibly 1.1 per cent of the total area of jarrah and wandoo forest vested in the Conservation Commission and 1.1 per cent of the total area of karri forest vested in the Conservation Commission are projected to be logged each year for the next 10 years.

Alarming, these figures refer to **all** the jarrah and wandoo and **all** the karri forest vested in the Conservation Commission - not just the forest available for wood production but also forest in national parks and reserves.

According to the FMP, the area of jarrah forest and wandoo forest available for wood production is 790,100 hectares. It is projected that round 13,500 hectares but possibly up to 18,500 hectares will be logged each year

The amount of the jarrah and wandoo forest available for wood production projected to be logged each year for the next 10 years is not 0.8 to 1.1 but 1.7 and possibly up to 2.3 per cent. It will all be logged within 60 or as little as 43 years.

According to the FMP, the area of karri forest available for wood production is 58,780 ha. It is projected that round 2,000 hectares will be logged each year.

The amount of the karri forest available for wood production projected to be logged each year for the next 10 years is not 1.1 per cent but 3.3 per cent, and it will all be logged within 30 years.

Why does the FMP include forest in national parks in its calculations for the percentage of forest to be logged each year? Is the Government considering allowing logging in national parks? In light of the fact that the Prime Minister has said there is too much forest “locked up” in national parks, we must be on our guard.

Sustained unsustainability in the karri forest

Under the Forest Management Plan 2014-2023 (FMP) the area of karri forest available for wood production is 59,980 ha. It is both two-tiered forest (selectively logged forest) and post-clearfelling regrowth.

In 2013, there were 50,000 ha of two-tiered karri forest and 10,000 ha of regrowth karri available for wood production.

At the proposed rate of logging of around 500 ha/yr, the two-tiered karri forest available for wood production will be clearfelled within about 20 years (by 2033).

Post-clearfelling regrowth could extend the life of karri clearfelling from 2033, when the two-tiered forest runs out, to 2042.

Karri clearfelled and regenerated from 1967 on will be available for clearfelling on the planned 100-year rotation beginning in about 2067.

On these projections there will be a gap of 25 years (2042 to 2067) when there will be no karri forest aged 100 years and ready for clearfelling on the planned 100-year rotation.

However, regrowth karri is growing much more slowly than anticipated. The average age at which regrowth karri is to be thinned under FMP 2014-2023 is not 20 years as projected, but 30 years.

In any event, regrowth karri will not sustain a sawlog industry. Most regrowth logs are invaded by fungi that cause brown and white rot, which discolour and degrade the wood and make it unsuitable for sawn timber.

The Auditor General has found that an average of 19 per cent less product is being removed than was forecast.

The karri sawlog industry has logged itself out of existence and the end is in sight. When the two-tiered forest is gone, it will collapse. This is conclusive proof that the karri sawlog industry is, and always has been, unsustainable.

Forest Products Commission hides its losses

The Western Australian Forest Products Commission (FPC) was established in November 2000. On formation it was “given” state-owned native forests and recorded their value as \$0. No rationale was provided in support of this value.

In 2002 the FPC increased the value of native forests from \$0 to \$67 million. The increase was said to be “due to a reduction in attributable management and protection costs.” These costs were removed from the 50-year cash flows by which the forests were valued and recorded in another sector of the FPC's operations.

In 2005 the FPC increased the value of native forests by a further \$33 million. This was said to be due to exclusion of an “allocation of corporate overheads” from the cash flows.

If one considers the change in discount rates used, the impact of removing these overheads from the cash flows was in fact in the order of a \$75 million increase in the FPC's value of native forests.

It seems extraordinary that a change in accounting practices should be considered as profit.

The FPC now values the forests at \$84 million. Had the value of the forests not been initially recorded as \$0 and had they not been revalued based on changes in accounting procedures, the FPC would have reported a cumulative loss over this period of millions of dollars. Clearly, forest revaluations play the critical role in the FPC's reported profit.

The FPC calculated these increases in value despite:

- declining actual and projected rainfall (widely acknowledged for south-west Western Australia);
- declining forest growth rates;
- catastrophic decreases in the production of quality logs (between 2004 and 2014 the amount of first-grade jarrah sawlogs sold by the FPC fell by 99 per cent).
- demonstrable unsustainability of karri sawlog production;
- a near doubling in value of our currency (which has had a significant detrimental impact on all agricultural profitability); and
- the Global Financial Crisis (worldwide, prices of all forestry products have suffered severe declines).

In its 2013-2014 annual report, the FPC reported an after-tax loss on its south-west forest operations of \$10.4 million.

Politicians and the general public are led to believe the FPC is a profitable and financially viable corporation. Clearly, this belief is false.

Saving Challar forest



Community direct action north of Walpole has protected Challar forest from logging since January this year.

Challar forest forms a critical link between two parts of the Walpole Wilderness Area and has the Deep River running through it. The Deep is the cleanest river left in WA and Challar forest is a high salt risk catchment of this river system. Logging here poses a salinity and turbidity risk to the Deep River, and to the integrity of the Walpole Wilderness reserves.

Challar is home to flocks of all three species of south-west Black Cockatoos, Brush-tailed Phascogales, Mainland Quokkas and Chuditch. Numbats have also been sighted in the area. All these fauna species are threatened with extinction and are endangered by logging operations.

Direct action to protect Challar began in November 2013 after failed attempts to negotiate changes to the logging schedule with the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW). Forest defenders used nonviolent direct action to delay and publicise the clearfelling of karri forest and intensive logging of jarrah forest there, resulting in three arrests and significant positive media coverage in November and December.

In January a treehouse was established about 40 metres up in the canopy of a beautiful old karri tree in the middle of the area scheduled for clearfelling.

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The treehouse and camp were successful in keeping the loggers out of the area, and when the winter rains set in, the area became temporarily safe. However, we understand that logging is due to recommence in late December or January because, while the high conservation values of the ancient karri and jarrah forest are acknowledged, it is claimed that logging will not threaten or destroy them.

People from Perth and around the south-west have supported the Denmark and Walpole communities in maintaining the camp and keeping the loggers out. The WA Forest Alliance is proud to support these brave people, and we will continue to support them with the aim of permanently protecting Challar and the rest of the Deep River catchment, and eventually, all of the south-west's native forests.

Donations and physical support for the camp are always appreciated.



Minister misleads Parliament

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) has provided false and misleading information to its Minister who unknowingly misled parliament.

Evidence of this improper behaviour was exposed in the Legislative Council on 27th November by Greens MLC, Hon. Lynn MacLaren.

In March of this year, the Minister for Forestry, Mia Davies, told Parliament that the timber industry provides a high level of employment as well as contributing economic and social benefits.

In fact, the native forest logging industry is heavily subsidised and has harmful impacts on other industries such as tourism, wine growing, beekeeping and the plantation industry.

The Minister claimed that the forest industry provides more than 3000 jobs across the state. However, in 2012, consultants advised the Government that the WA native forest industry had 1045 employees. And more jobs have been lost since then.

Minister Davies said that the forest industry 'is managed in an environmentally sustainable way.' This is nonsense. Little to nothing is known about most forest fauna and some 15 species of birds and mammals are on WA endangered species list. The red-tailed black cockatoo and the woylie have become more endangered since 2004 when the 2004-2013 Forest Management Plan came into operation.

The allowable cut of sawlogs has always been set far above the sustainable level and good quality sawlogs are now hard to find. Under the 2004 – 2013 Forest Management Plan the Forest Products Commission did not once manage to sell the allowable cut of first grade jarrah sawlogs.

Between 2004 and 2014, the amount of first grade jarrah sawlogs sold by the Commission fell by 99 per cent.

Minister Davies said that 62 per cent of native forests are set aside in national parks, reserves and other areas for the community to use and enjoy. This is not true.

To get to 62 per cent, the FPC included 12 types of land that aren't or can't be logged: peppermint and coastal heath, shrubland, hermland, sedgeland, rocky outcrops, swamps and sand dunes.

The correct amount of public forest protected within statutory formal reserves is 44 per cent. 45 per cent is available for wood production and the remaining 11 per cent is in informal reserves, some of which may be logged, and fauna habitat zones, which will be logged.

The Minister told Parliament that the forest available for logging is all regrowth. This is only true for karri regrown after being clearfelled. Most forest was selectively logged and is now a mixture of regrowth and old growth trees. Under this government, 600- year-old karri trees are being cut down for woodchips, 400-year-old jarrah trees for firewood.

In 2013-2014, only 10 per cent of the wood from our native forests became sawn timber. 90 per cent was sawmill residue, woodchips or fuelwood. The FPC now wants to sell huge quantities of logs to be burnt to produce electricity without the knowledge or consent of the people who own the forests. It's time for a change of direction. Our precious south-west forests are under threat as never before and are worth far more standing than as piles of logs.

Logging of our native forests should be phased out as quickly as possible, not propped up with government subsidies.



Logs from karri trees up to 600 years old - what the Minister for Forestry calls 'regrowth' - at the woodchip mill!