

The 2021-2022 Annual General Meeting of the South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc. will be held at 5.00 pm on Tuesday 13th December 2022, at 112 Eric Street, Cottesloe. Please note the starting time and venue.

The agenda is as follows:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of previous AGM
3. President's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Auditor's report
6. Election of office bearers and committee members for 2023
7. Other business

Nominations for the positions of President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and five committee members are called for.



SOUTH-WEST FORESTS DEFENCE FOUNDATION INC.

PO BOX 203, NEDLANDS WA 6009

www.southwestforestsdefence.org

NEWSLETTER – December 2022

Please check the message on the mailing label above to see if your subscription is due. We thank all those who have renewed their membership.

NAME (BLOCK LETTERS):.....

ADDRESS:..... POSTCODE:.....

EMAIL ADDRESS:.....RECEIVE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?.....

SIGNED:.....DATE:.....

MEMBERSHIP: \$15.00 DONATION: \$..... TOTAL AMOUNT: \$.....

Mail to: Treasurer, South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc., PO Box 203, NEDLANDS 6009.

Or EFT to: Bendigo Bank, BSB: 633-000, Account Number 159 893 577 – include your name please.

The year that was

The past year has been seen a revival of the campaign against bauxite mining in the northern jarrah forest and the release of the draft Forest Management Plan 2024-2033 (dFMP) in November. We have supported the WA Forest Alliance in its activities, especially the campaign against bauxite mining; had several letters the Editor published in *The Post* and the *Walpole Weekly* but only one in *The West* (and not for want of trying); drafted useful Questions in Parliament for Hon. Brad Pettitt to ask (the only person who can do this for us); and made donations to help with the production of Jane Hammond's wonderful documentary, *Cockatoo Crisis*.

We have watched with interest the success of legal actions by environment NGOs against VicForests, Victoria's version of CALM but even worse, and are wondering if the Foundation could do the same here. We may find that out in 2023.



Old growth karri forest

Now most attention is on the FMP. The draft is out for comment until 18th December, and the Foundation will make a substantial submission.

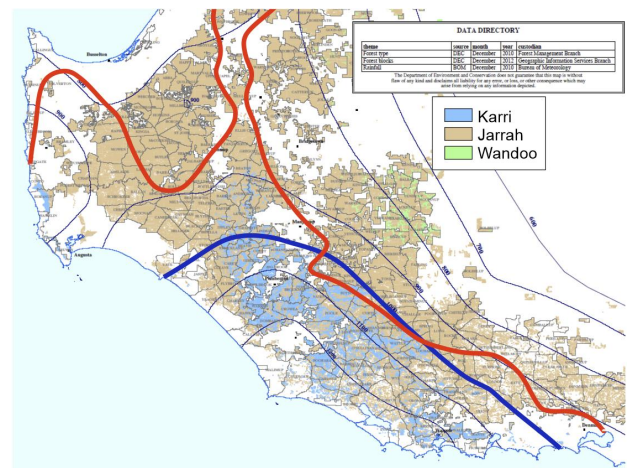
Worryingly, instead of proposing a forest conservation plan, the dFMP looks more like another logging plan.

Members and friends are invited to make a personal submission, using the suggestions offered below. Just a few sentences of criticism from each one of you will help show that the community does not like what is being offered.

A seriously deficient document

The draft Forest Management Plan 2024-2033 is seriously deficient and very disappointing. It is glossy, padded out with extraneous material, and contains patent errors of fact. The caption for the unnecessary glossy photo on page ii is factually incorrect (Boranup Karri Forest is not old growth), and the caption for the front cover is misleading. The so-called 100-year forest is now at least 150 years old. People may think that karri can regrow to this size in 100 years when it took 150 years or more.

The map showing isohyets on page 21 is at least 30 years out of date. It has an isohyet for 1,400 mm. The isohyet map for 1991-2010 does not. Since karri needs an annual rainfall of at least 1,000 mm, the dFMP's outdated and misleading map shows it in areas that have not had sufficient rainfall for decades.



*The blue line shows the 1,000 mm isohyet on the department's 1991-2010 map.
The red line shows the 1,000 mm isohyet on the dFMP map overlaid on the department's 1991-2010 map.*

The Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 has 33 KPIs. The dFMP has only four, and they have no performance target date, or reporting or response to target shortfall requirements.

It is to be hoped that the final FMP reflects community criticism and is more like the FMP 2004-2013.

The end of native forest logging?

The 47-year campaign to stop native forest logging may finally succeed. While in all those years we didn't stop logging, what we did achieve was to reduce the area of forest that could be logged, from about 2 million hectares in 1975 down to 850,000 hectares in 2021.

Then Premier McGowan made the incredible announcement. In his media release of 8th September 2021, he said:

The decision to end logging of native forests in the upcoming Forest Management Plan 2024-33 will preserve at least an additional 400,000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests.

But look what happened!

The dFMP changes this important statement and announces:

the cessation of large-scale commercial timber harvesting in native forests (page 3)

The Premier said nothing about 'large-scale' or 'commercial' logging. It is a serious and deliberate misinterpretation of the Premier's decision, and it underlies the whole DFMP. It assumes that logging, now called 'ecological thinning', will continue for the next 10 years. The dFMP does not end native forest logging. It offers what is in effect another logging plan.

Ecological thinning

After giving us 'timber harvesting' (unsustainable logging) and 'clearfelling' (total destruction logging), the forestry fraternity has come up with another euphemism: 'ecological thinning'.

The dFMP proposes that so-called ecological thinning of regrowth be conducted in 8,000 hectares a year, even in regrowth proposed for inclusion in the conservation estate. This is much more than the 6,500 hectares logged each year under the current FMP.

The estimated area available for thinning is 845,470 hectares. This is almost exactly the area of forest available for logging under the current FMP.

In 2020-21, the Forest Products Commission (FPC) sold 430,823 cubic metres of native forest logs. The total estimated annual volume of logs in the dFMP is up to 300,000 cubic metres. This is two-thirds of the 2020-21 cut.

The dFMP opens the possibility of thinning following bushfire or 'treatment of other vulnerable areas' and lists possible co-benefits of thinning including 'fuel distribution', 'water catchment protection' and 'recreation', even 'improved visual amenity' (thinned forest looks nicer!). It fails to define 'conservation purpose', which it says is the primary objective.

Rather than having scientists managing the on-ground application of the program, the dFMP says that the FPC would 'provide contract

management, planning and operational support for ecological thinning for forest health.'

It's a regular commercial logging operation.

The forestry interests pulled the wool over Premier Gallop's eyes when he claimed that old growth forest would be protected. They changed the definition of 'old growth' and continued logging it for another 20 years.

Now the same interests want to try the same trick on Premier McGowan by pretending that thinning isn't logging. We can't let them get away with it!

Case against thinning regrowth

Until now, thinning trials have sought to find out if it can shorten the time needed for jarrah and karri trees to produce sawlogs. Now that sawlog production is no longer allowed, the logging fraternity has had to find another excuse for logging. With little or no scientific evidence, they claim that it will reduce moisture stress in forest stands and increase soil moisture; increase resilience to threats associated with climate change (drought, heatwave events and bushfire); reduce the fuel load and mitigate the risk of bushfire; increase the growth of retained trees to maturity, reducing the time required to develop suitable habitat such as hollows for fauna; and provide long-term carbon storage.

Unlike the claims for the benefits of thinning, there is proven evidence of the disbenefits.

Ecological thinning will be done by machine. This will compact the soil, which is bad for the health of all vegetation, not just the trees, and soil compaction lasts at least 50 years.

The large amounts of thinning debris will create a serious fire hazard, and prescribed burning, whether before or after the thinning, will release a lot of stored carbon that will not be quickly recaptured.

Thinning in regrowth karri causes the native Armillaria fungus to spread in the retained trees, killing some and damaging those that survive.

Windstorms, which are projected to increase as a consequence of climate change, can blow over the retained trees in stands of thinned regrowth karri.

Thinning in regrowth jarrah spreads Phytophthora dieback, which kills hundreds of understorey species.

Marri canker is killing marri trees wherever they grow. It occurs most frequently in disturbed



Thinned and burnt regrowth jarrah forest

forest, so it may well be increased by thinning in both regrowth jarrah and karri.

In any event, thinning regrowth is not necessary as both karri and jarrah thin themselves, as DBCA well knows for regrowth karri and DBCA's ForestCheck program clearly shows for regrowth jarrah.

The final FMP should not allow thinning regrowth karri and for regrowth jarrah, it should require a 10-year trial of thinning to see if it has more benefits than disbenefits.

Changes at government level

The Hon. Dave Kelly, the Minister for Forestry, has lost this portfolio and we are wondering why and who will replace him. With native forest logging supposed to end, does WA need a Forestry Minister? There are still State-owned plantations and responsibility for the sandalwood industry, but they could be managed by another agency.

At the federal level, Environment Minister Plibersek has announced improvements to environmental legislation and the establishment of a federal environmental protection agency (EPA). There is talk that the current exemption of native forest logging from the provisions of the **Environment Protection Act** will be removed. This should be of less concern to WA if indeed native forest logging is ended.

Incinerating the wilderness

On 30th November, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) lit a prescribed burn in the heart of the Walpole Wilderness. A plane flew back and forth over the forest dropping incendiaries.

At the same time, DBCA had seven prescribed burns between Albany and Manjimup, plus five bushfires all going at once.

The burn was implementing government and departmental policy to burn 200,000 ha every year in the three south-west forest regions and have 45 per cent of the vegetation in this area with a 'fuel age' of less than six years.

The conservation estate (as distinct from unprotected forest blocks) in this remote area is a prime target for burning to meet these targets.



Flight path of plane dropping incendiaries

The weather was hot and windy with a rating of high fire danger, and in no time, the burn escaped. By 4 pm, the prescribed burn was out of control

By 4.15 pm, it was about 15km x 12km in size and DBCA was conducting extensive back-burning so the area burnt continued to increase.

Intended to burn about 14,000 hectares, this prescribed burn ended up burning almost double that and could still burn more.

The incineration of such a large area in the conservation estate, the destruction of all the vegetation and the massacre of all living things by the agency entrusted with protecting our precious biodiversity are inexcusable. Change must happen now!



Walpole Wilderness prescribed burn and escape

Increased threats to northern jarrah forest

While we focus on Alcoa and South32 and try to stop their expansion, other miners are lining up to exploit mineral resources other than bauxite.

As at 1st November 2022 there were 125 granted mining leases and 152 granted exploration licences that intersected with the designated areas contained within the FMP. We do not know how many more applications have been lodged.

Click this [link](#) to see the Facebook page of Jarrahdale Forest Protectors for more info and to stay up to date on the campaign to 'SAVE OUR JARRAH', or go to jarrahdaleforestprotectors.org



Mining tenements over forest

Points to include in your submission about the draft Forest Management Plan 2024-2033 (dFMP)

Choose the points you think are most important, put them in your own words and send them to forestmanagementplan@dbca.wa.gov.au or post to the following address:

Draft Forest Management Plan 2024-2033
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Locked Bag 104
BENTLEY DELIVERY CENTRE WA 6983

Or you can fill in an [online submission form](https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/forests/forest-management-plan) at this page: <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/forests/forest-management-plan>

before 11.59 pm on Sunday, 18th December – please do it now!

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2033

- § The final FMP must comply with the Premier's decision to end native forest logging and set out how it will end.
- § The addition of areas to the conservation estate announced in previous forest management plans dating back to 1987 should be completed within one year.
- § The addition of 400,000 hectares of forest to the conservation estate should be completed within 18 months.
- § Noongar heritage should be protected, and Noongar people should be fully involved in forest and fire planning and management.
- § The final FMP must be easy to follow, short and to the point, with Key Performance Indicators for planned actions giving time frames for monitoring, assessment and completion.

- § The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) must be given adequate funding to protect the land it manages and conduct research and monitor and assess its activities with full public access to all its documentation.
- § 'Ecological thinning' of regrowth forest allows the Forest Products Commission to continue commercial logging and is contrary to government policy.
- § Thinning of regrowth forest causes soil compaction, which is harmful for all vegetation and lasts at least 50 years.
- § There must be no thinning of regrowth karri because karri self-thins, so thinning is unnecessary and does more harm than good.
- § There is published research to show that thinning in regrowth karri will increase the incidence of the Armillaria fungus, which kills young karri trees and weakens those that survive.
- § Thinning makes regrowth karri vulnerable to windstorms, which can and do blow down the retained trees and are projected to increase.
- § There should be no thinning of regrowth jarrah until long-term trials show that the alleged benefits actually happen.
- § Jarrah self-thins but it may take a long time (~100 years) so thinning is unnecessary and does more harm than good.
- § There is published research to show that thinning in regrowth jarrah will spread Phytophthora dieback, which kills hundreds of understorey species in jarrah forest.
- § Exotic species in mine site rehabilitation should be cleared and replaced with native species.
- § Non-sawlog wood from thinning and clearing mine site rehabilitation should be used for firewood.
- § Current fire management and prescribed burning are having devastating impacts on the biodiversity of the FMP area so the FMP must give biodiversity protection equal importance with protection of life and property.
- § The annual prescribed burn target (200,000 hectares to be burnt every year with 45 per cent of the FMP area to have a 'fuel age' of less than 6 years) must be abandoned.
- § There should be no prescribed burning in areas remote from dwellings and infrastructure except for proven biodiversity management burns.
- § Wildfire-mitigation measures should be taken within 500 metres of buildings, infrastructure and biodiversity assets in need of protection from wildfire.
- § Some of the funds used for prescribed burning should be used instead to acquire and use modern technology that allows rapid detection and at-source suppression of ignitions.
- § There should be no use of aerial ignition of prescribed burns.
- § The Conservation and Parks Commission should conduct periodic assessments of the implementation of DBCA's prescribed burns and be provided with the resources to do so.