

Walpole Wilderness Proposal

*“What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds* and the wilderness yet.”*
Gerard Manley Hopkins, ‘Inversnaid’

**It needs to be recognised that the author’s definition of weeds was actually wildflowers. However, another interesting connotation occurs when marri trees are referred to as weeds because of their ability to regrow vigorously after disturbance.*

A formal proposal prepared by the South Coast Environment Group Inc.

PO Box 24, Walpole, 6398.

Printed April 1998

Photographs courtesy of Simon Neville and Donna Selby. Cover photo: cascade at Gladstone Falls

CONTENTS

LIST OF ENDORSEES	IV
FOREWORD	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VI
INTRODUCTION	1
WHAT IS A WILDERNESS?	3
INDIGENOUS WILDERNESS	7
BACKGROUND	8
MAPS	11
A LANDSCAPE FULL OF NATURAL WONDERS	14
EARLIER PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION	20
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - PLACES TO RETAIN	24
RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE	30
INCREASED VISITOR STAYS	33
SEASONS AND WEATHER	34
ACCESSIBILITY	35
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE	37
CONCLUSIONS	38
ENDORSEMENTS	40
REFERENCES	43

LIST OF ENDORSEES

Conservation Council of WA
Dame Rachel Cleland
Denmark Conservation Society
Denmark Environment Centre
Denmark Shire President
Dr Ross Dowling, Associate Professor of Tourism, Edith Cowan University.
Dr Jean Paul Orsini, Conservation Biologist
Dr Pierre Horwitz
Dr Christine Sharp, MLC
Giz Watson, MLC
Glen Echo Bed and Breakfast
Grant Wardell-Johnson
Jim Scott, MLC
Billa Billa Cottages
Last Chance Forest Tours
Living Waters P/C Inc.
Manjimup Shire Councillor for Walpole Ward
Manjimup Shire Councillor for Northcliffe Ward
National Party of Australia (W.A) Incorporated
Norm Kelly, MLC
Professor Bert Main and Dr Barbara York-Main
Senator Andrew Murray
Senator Dee Margetts
Small Business Association of Western Australia
Tim Flannery, Principal Research Scientist
Tourism South West
The Wildflower Society
Western Australian Forest Alliance
Western Australian Labour Party
Wilderness Society (WA)
Walpole - Nornalup National Parks Association

FOREWORD

WALPOLE WILDERNESS PARK PROPOSAL

The landscape of the (north) Walpole region is one of the most beautiful in WA. With its varied topography, featuring high granite peaks, deep river valleys, broad plains, old growth forest and extensive wetlands, and with its relative absence of clearing and fragmentation, it provides a natural scenic and recreational resource of great value.

It is also one of the most scientifically important and biogeographical areas of the state. Embedded within the landscape is a remarkable diversity and richness of species and ecological communities. Many of the species and ecological communities are unique to the Walpole region, and many are of very ancient origin. Each new piece of research emphasizes the local, regional and continental significance of the plants and animals - and their fragility.

The conservation of the natural beauty and ecological richness of the region will require the utmost care in planning and management. The use of broad scale management or exploitative regimes that may be appropriate elsewhere will fail to address the unique and highly localised needs of the north Walpole region. The park, if given an opportunity to remain free of the degradative aspects of western technological society, will contain ongoing reference points for the coolest and wettest part of the western half of the continent. We currently do not have such reference points - but we need them!

Conserving the natural wonders of the region is the privilege and responsibility of all Western Australians. I welcome the concept of a (north) Walpole Wilderness Park as a sound and holistic approach to maintaining the quality of the natural environment for its own sake and for future generations, while at the same time meeting current human needs for the enjoyment of nature, the gaining of spiritual renewal, and ecologically sustainable economic activity.

Dr Pierre Horwitz
Centre for Ecosystem Management
Edith Cowan University
Joondalup Campus
Perth, Western Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The natural areas of the Walpole region are amongst the most beautiful and ecologically diverse landscapes in Western Australia. The great variety of unique plant and animal species, the presence of high quality wilderness values, and the high degree of ecological integrity means that this area represents one of the most significant opportunities for nature conservation in WA. Existing recreational infrastructure and close proximity to the township of Walpole also highlights the regions potential for a substantial nature-based tourism industry. To realise the potential of the Walpole region's natural assets the South Coast Environment Group Inc. proposes the formation a Walpole Regional Wilderness Park and a Regional Tourism and Recreation Development Strategy.

Located to the north of Walpole, the Regional Wilderness Park would include the catchments of two major river systems, extensive stands of old growth forest, ecologically valuable wetlands, broad heathlands, and spectacular granite outcrops. This area also has direct links to our Gondwanic heritage. It would be a valuable addition to the State's conservation reserve system, linking four existing national parks. Priorities for management of the Park would vary from strict nature conservation at its core, to multiple use in the surrounding areas.

The Regional Tourism and Recreation Development Strategy would facilitate the development of a wide range of nature-based recreational activities and maximise opportunities for associated business development. Existing recreational and tourism infrastructure would be enhanced and expanded to capitalise on the significant growth in tourism to the Walpole region, while concurrently ensuring the long term ecological and economic sustainability of the region.

Wilderness is one of the fastest disappearing natural resources in the world. This proposal would not only realise an internationally significant contribution to environmental protection, but also firmly establish Walpole as the State's premier wilderness tourism and recreation destination.

INTRODUCTION

The Walpole area has long been recognised as a unique and beautiful place where forest and rivers meet the sea. Walpole National Park, established in 1924, was one of the earliest national parks to be gazetted in Western Australia. Occupying an area of only 18,390 hectares it is small by national and international standards. The nearby Mount Frankland National Park was declared in 1988 through a process aiming to protect small 'representative' areas containing the maximum diversity of vegetation types.

Knowledge of flora, fauna, and ecological communities being limited at the time, it was assumed that conservation of some 'representative' areas of habitat would satisfactorily achieve conservation of all the species and other ecological values found in a given biogeographical region. However, this approach is no longer appropriate, especially since in more recent times the Walpole area has been widely recognised for its scientific importance as a centre of unique ecological communities and refuge for ancient and vulnerable Gondwanan relict species.

As wild and natural places have disappeared around the world, the significance of the extraordinary natural heritage of the North Walpole region has come into focus. Not only are the forests of North Walpole the habitat of ancient flora and fauna, but because of its remote location the wild and isolated character of the area has remained intact. To walk through these forests is not unlike walking through an ancient temple of nature.

In order to realise the region's full potential for nature conservation we propose the creation of a Regional Wilderness Park which expands and links the existing parks and reserves into a single integrated conservation reserve.

This proposal would extend the concept of conserving the Shannon River Basin across the Deep River and Frankland systems. Entire subcatchments would be protected and managed principally for wild land conservation. This would be an internationally outstanding contribution to biodiversity conservation and will guarantee future generations the opportunity to experience the wilderness forest landscapes of the South West.

This proposal is also unique because it integrates the Walpole/Nornalup townships and forming districts. It proposes the development of a unique relationship between local residents, visitors and the surrounding natural areas.

Walpole is becoming increasingly popular as a tourism and recreation destination. Although developments such as the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk attract hundreds of thousands of visitors there are currently insufficient additional facilities to cater for further tourist and recreational demands and expectations.

In order to realise the region's full potential for nature-based tourism and recreation, we propose the creation of a Regional Tourism and Recreation Development Strategy which aims to provide a wide range of nature-based recreational experiences and which focuses on the unique potential for wilderness recreation in the Walpole region.



Figure 1 The unique wilderness of the Walpole region

WHAT IS A WILDERNESS?

It is important to understand the definition of wilderness that is employed by the authors of this proposal. The South Coast Environment Group have adopted the definition of wilderness as used by the Australian Heritage Commission (1997):

‘Wilderness’ areas are large areas in which ecological processes continue with minimal change caused by modern developments.

In using this term it is essential to realise that Indigenous custodianship and customary practices have been, and in many places continue to be, significant factors in creating what non-indigenous people refer to as ‘wilderness’.

And the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) criteria for assessing wilderness values of an area. These are:

- remoteness from settlement;
- remoteness from access;
- apparent naturalness; and,
- biophysical naturalness.

Many of the areas included in this proposal are rated as ‘very high’ or ‘high’ on the benchmark of these criteria, that is, their location is remote from and undisturbed by the influence of modern technological society. However, over time the value of these ‘core wilderness zones’ is steadily diminishing as they are subjected to further human disturbance.

Some areas included in this proposal may be below the benchmark of these strict requirements, but have been included for specific reasons. As the Australian Heritage Commission (1993) states, “Areas with lesser measures of wilderness quality may still be of significance as remote and natural environments when other environmental and land use demand factors are considered.” Certain areas have been chosen due to their close proximity to Walpole, their valuable species content, their important role as part of the Deep River and Frankland River catchment systems, and/or their potential as buffers to core wilderness zones.

The use of ‘wilderness buffer zones’ is imperative to ensure that the core areas are not compromised. These buffer areas should be extensive enough to prevent degradation of core areas, and they should permit only low impact use and access such as limited trails and remote camping and recreation opportunities.

Placing wilderness boundaries only around locations of high wilderness quality will not ensure the protection of these values. Development in areas of lesser wilderness quality on the margin of an area of high wilderness quality will reduce wilderness values within the high quality area. In order to ensure the protection of wilderness quality, boundaries should include all marginal areas. (AHC, 1993)

The term semi-wilderness may be used to describe areas that may not meet the AHC wilderness criteria but have the basic qualities of wilderness most people would deem suitable. Semi-wilderness would evoke an individual's feelings of remoteness and provide a sense of adventure, even danger, through its quintessence of primitive and pristine qualities. These are the qualities by which most visitors will judge it.

Increasingly the protection of wilderness areas has become of important concern to the Australian community. A nationwide survey conducted in 1996 by Roy Morgan for the Australian Heritage Commission found a high level of awareness of wilderness issues amongst respondents. Ninety seven percent of country WA and ninety eight percent of Perth residents felt that wilderness areas are needed to help maintain the variety of plant and animal species. Additionally the survey found that 97% of Western Australians believed they had a duty to future generations to conserve wilderness areas (The Wilderness Society (WA) 1996).

The forest of the North Walpole region is generally well endowed with aspects of high quality wilderness. These areas would form the 'core' of the Regional Wilderness Park. It is also important to note that this is the best opportunity south Western Australia has to preserve a forested wilderness area. The time to recognise the special significance of these areas is now, while disturbance is still minimal or could be repaired over time.



Figure 2 Scenic vista from Granite Peak to Mount Roe.

INDIGENOUS WILDERNESS

It is essential that within our concept of wilderness we recognise the occupation and management of the land by Indigenous people. It is widely accepted that the environmental interaction of Aboriginal people have had a significant effect the evolving process of what we now value as wilderness.

Unlike the European experience, the Aboriginal link to the land is not merely one of physical dependence. It is also very spiritual, and deeply cultural. The land and its plants and animals are intertwined with traditional law and the dreaming so that there is no delimitation between their environment and their society. As stated by Horstman & Downey (1995), and supported by Bennet (cited in Brown, 1992), the Aboriginal concept of country involves “the interaction between people, land, environmental health and management, each being integral to the other. (Mackenzie, 1997)

This proposal has not attempted to document the long history of Aboriginal habitation and interaction with the area proposed in the Regional Wilderness Park. However, as authors we feel it is crucial to recognise the importance of the Aboriginal relationship with the land and the need for traditional custodians to be involved in any management decisions.

BACKGROUND

Until recently Walpole and its surrounding environment were one of the best kept secrets in WA. In 1993 some 11,000 people visited the Walpole Tourist Bureau and by 1995 the number had increased to 24,000. However, with the opening of the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk in 1996 the secret of the beauty of Walpole was revealed. In 1997 more than 46,000 people visited the Bureau, yet significantly only a small percentage of the town's visitors actually visit the Bureau. Nevertheless, this figure gives some indication of the increase in popularity of Walpole as a holiday destination.

Tourist Bureau manager, Derren Foster, estimates that 30% of people visiting the Walpole township attend the Bureau. However, not all visitors to the area necessarily spend time in the township itself. Tree Top Walk Manager, Rod Hillman states that in 1997 more than 204,000 people visited the Tree Top Walk site.

A further indication of Walpole's growth as a recreation destination is the growth of tourism-related businesses. In the past 18 months seven new bed and breakfasts, two chalet developments, one caravan park, one motel, two restaurants, one tea room, one craft shop and four retail outlets have opened in the area. Added to this is the rise in private holiday accommodation, such as holiday home rentals, which have also increased considerably.

Walpole is clearly a growing and thriving community, surrounded with some of the most beautiful scenery found in Australia; much of it still untouched. The town is planning to capitalise and profit from the gifts nature has provided for them, but first it must ensure the protection of these gifts. Once protected, the residents of the area can benefit economically from the increase in ecotourism and visitors staying longer in the area.

WA Small Business Association figures show approximately \$170 million is currently spent by tourists in the South West per annum. If this figure were to rise by another \$50 million it would represent at least 700 new local jobs (Small Business

Association, 1995). The Association also states “International tourists represent approximately 8% of all tourists in WA but they represent approximately 30% of all tourist expenditure”. Furthermore, these tourists come to our South West forests to see big trees, local arts and crafts, wineries, galleries and the overall nature-based environment (Small Business Association 1995).

There is a clear need for planning to be done now to ensure that our recreation facilities and native flora and fauna can cope with the increasing influx of tourists. Locals must also be catered for, especially with regard to their needs to ‘get away’ from visitor-inundated recreational sites. Local residents and visitors will need access to areas that are not overwhelmed by tourists. Locals should be allowed the right, along with the broader community, to expect these areas to be there forever. The creation of a wilderness conservation park will guarantee areas of mixed recreational values, from remote hideaways to picturesque day facilities.

The revised overall objective for the management of native forests adopted by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in 1994 states,

to manage the native forests of the south-west of Western Australia, in consultation with the community, so that they provide the values required by society while sustaining indefinitely their biological and social diversity
(CALM 1994, 1)

The creation of a Regional Wilderness Park in the North Walpole region which expands and links existing national parks and conservation reserves will assist greatly in fulfilling this objective. It will also be of tremendous benefit to local residents and WA as a whole in perpetuity.

For the future, Walpole will be surrounded by a secure estate of high conservation value land, which will enhance the potential for integrated public and private land conservation and recreation development. This will mean that future impacts of increased tourism and recreation pressures can be dispersed over a wider area of land. In turn this will generate an entirely new niche of nature-based tourism opportunities for local residents.



Figure 3 Gladstone Falls

MAPS

MAP 1 WILDERNESS QUALITIES - NORTH WALPOLE AREA

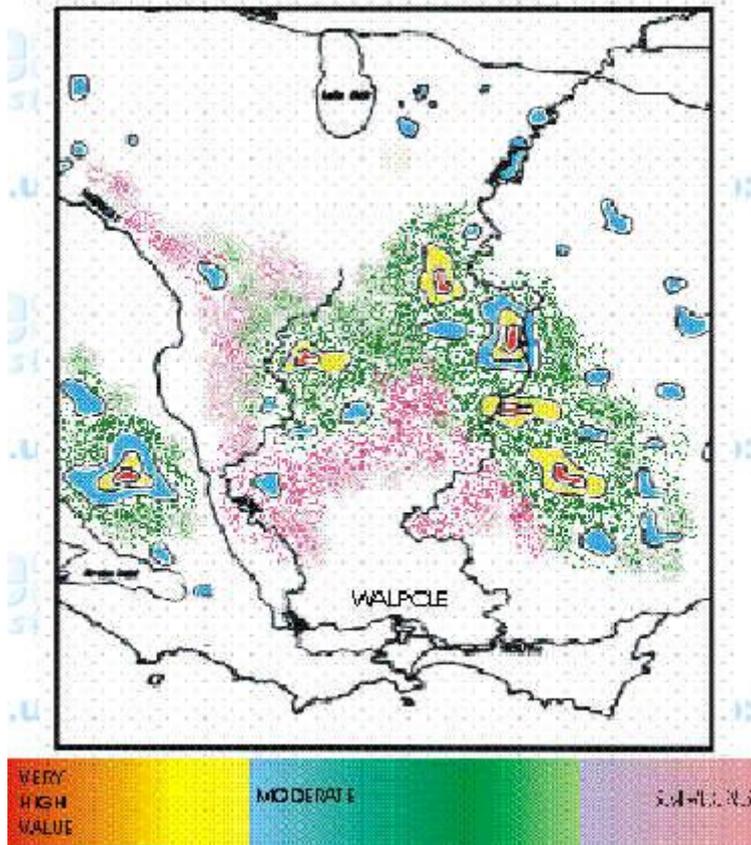
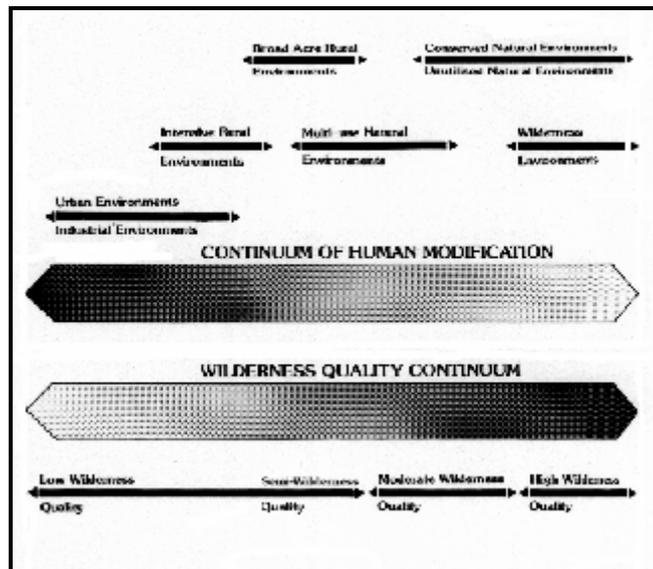
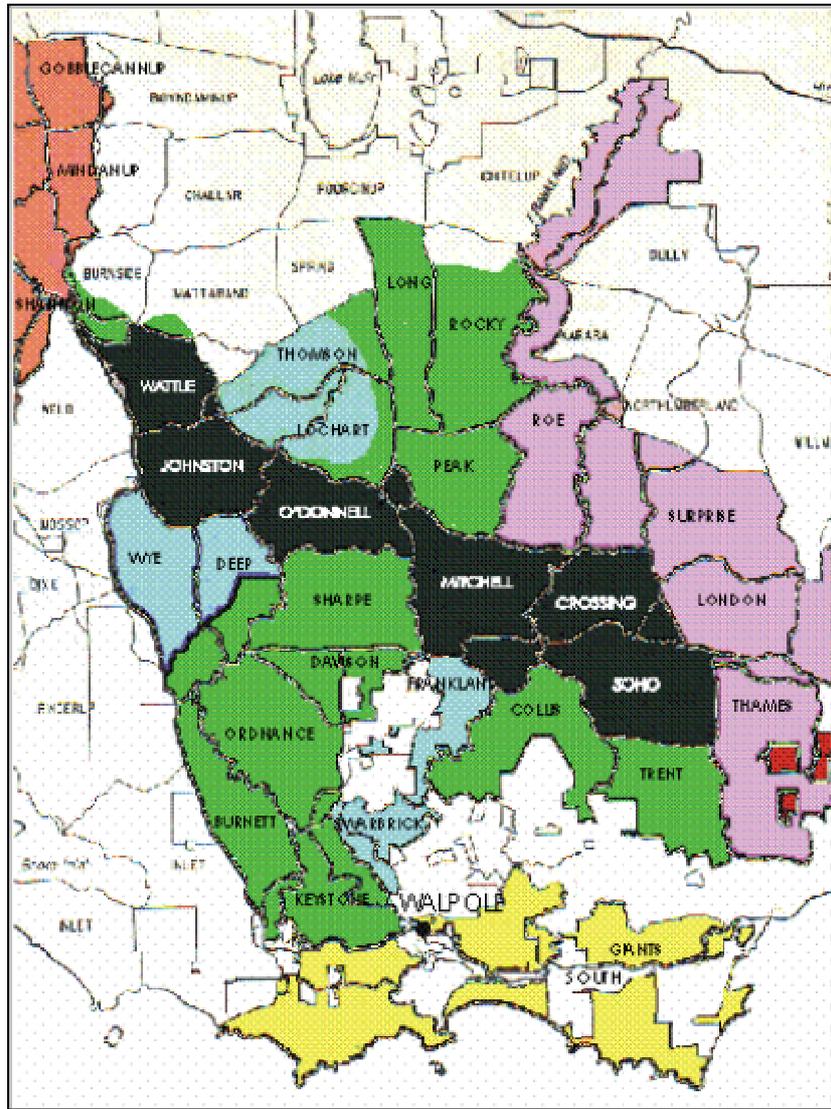


DIAGRAM 1 THE WILDERNESS CONTINUUM



Taken from the National Wilderness Inventory (AHC, 1993)

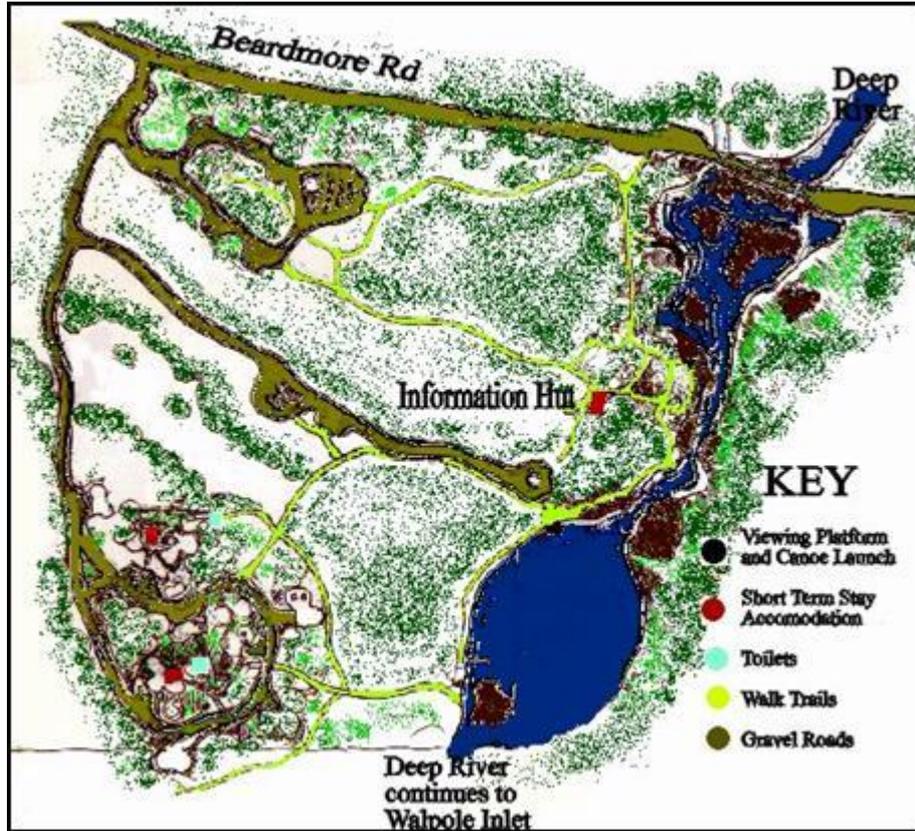
MAP 2 PROPOSED WALPOLE WILDERNESS RESERVE



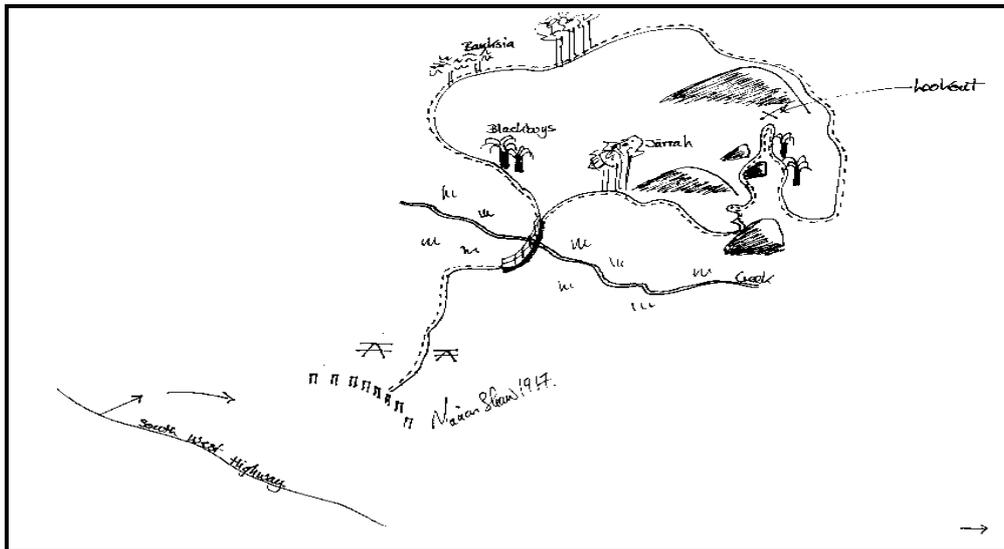
Key

	Walpole-Nornalup National Park
	Mount Frankland National Park
	Shannon National Park
	Existing Nature Reserve
	Proposed Wilderness Reserve
	Special Management Area
	Proposed National Park - Management Plan (2002)

MAP 3 FERNHOOK FALLS



MAP 4 MOUNT BURNETT WALK TRAIL IN BURNETT FOREST



A LANDSCAPE FULL OF NATURAL WONDERS

More than 25 years ago the North Walpole area was identified for its special flora, fauna and landscape conservation values (CTRC 1976, Forest Dept 1982). Following a Commonwealth-State joint assessment of the region's natural heritage values in 1991, virtually all of the North Walpole region is interim listed on the Register of the National Estate.

This listing is in recognition of the North Walpole region's outstanding ecological values.

The District's qualities are a sense of remoteness and wildness in its unique rivers and forest, almost inaccessible coast and diverse flora and fauna (CALM 1994, 16).

The North Walpole area contains parts of three major river systems:

The Shannon River; all of its catchment is now protected

The Frankland River; small parts of its catchment are now protected

The Deep River; no current catchment protection

The Deep River is one of the few remaining major freshwater rivers in the South West. It has an average annual discharge of around 170 million cubic metres and flows through State Forest for much of its length, entering Nornalup Inlet on the Western side (P.W.D. 1984). Above Centre Rd the river character is that of wide unobstructed pools interspersed with rapids and two waterfalls, Fernhook Falls and Gladstone Falls (Water Authority 1995, 4).

The southern forest region generally comprises patches of tall forests interspersed with open heathlands, wetlands and sedgeland, woodlands and rocky peaks. This ecologically and visually diverse landscape is ideally suited to the protection of the great variety of plant and animal species in the region. Although there has been some clearing in the area the overall integrity of the landscape remains high.



Figure 4 Within Sharpe Forest

The Walpole region features a relatively high rainfall, relatively little temperature and rainfall variation between seasons, and distinctive transition of landforms, from upland hills and rocky peaks through dissected steep river valleys, to coastal inlets and plains and spectacularly rugged coastlines. It is an inherently beautiful place where the native forests reflect the exceptional diversity.

There are several locally endemic eucalypt species, notably the magnificent tingle trees: Red tingle (*Eucalyptus jacksonii*), Yellow tingle (*E. guilfoylii*) and even rarer Rates tingle (*E. brevistylis*). There is also the distinctively attractive Red Flowering Gum (*E. ficifolia*). These four species of eucalypts occur in a now very restricted range in lower south Western Australia, the wettest and least seasonal part of the State (Wardell-Johnson and Coates, 1996).

As scientists Grant Wardell-Johnson and David Coates (1996, 148) state:

*The high species richness of eucalypts in the area may be indicative of more subtle richness and may be reflected by the patterns of communities in which these species occur. A thorough examination of the floristic pattern may provide evidence for diversity at different scales. Notably, many other vascular plant species also show ancient links to a wetter climate in the area. There are also several undescribed taxa known from this area which demonstrate these links (e.g. *Mitreola* sp. nov (Loganiaceae) from humic plains of the Soho Hills and two species of *Chamalaucium* (Myrtaceae), found only on granite outcrops of the Walpole area). Similarly the fungi *Descolea maculata* and *Rozites symea* are mycorrhizal Gondwanan relicts confined to moist forest localities in the same area. The retention of these conditions [mild climate, high moisture, closed canopy] is essential for the successful conservation of Gondwanan elements.*

Other outstanding eucalypt species are the Albany blackbutt (*E. staerii*) of which there are restricted outcrops within the area included in this proposal, and blackbutt (*E. patens*). The favourable climate and soil also mean that the main eucalypt species of the South West, jarrah (*E. marginata*), karri (*E. diversicolor*) and marri (*E. calophylla*), grow very large and tall in the region.

The northern ridgeline of Sharpe Forest contains particularly impressive stands of jarrah. Huge in diameter and still relatively dieback free, these could well be the best remaining examples of King Jarrah growing in a wilderness environment in the world. There is still a wealth of knowledge to be gained about the flora on the south coast. New species continue to be discovered (e.g. *Lambertia* sp. nov. aff. *rariflora* 1995), and there is ongoing research being conducted into the fungi of the area.

The subdued topography of the South-West belies a mosaic of great environmental richness. The relatively steep relief and sharp environmental gradients of the area are suggestive of islands of habitat surrounded by narrow geographic barriers. Thus each type of island (e.g. peat swamp, humic plain, gravelly slope, granite outcrop or forest scape) may vary considerably in their biotic composition over a narrow range. This area may prove to be a rich treasure of links to the past. (Wardell-Johnson and Coates 1996, 150)

One recently discovered link was the bright bellied Sunset Frog (*Spicospina flammocaerulea*). The first specimen was found by Dr Pierre Horwitz during a survey of wetlands of the South West of Australia in 1994. It was formally described in 1997 as a totally new genus of frog, which separated from its closest relatives more than 30 million years ago (Roberts 1998). The Sunset Frog is known from only eight locations in an area north-east of Walpole. Its complete range may be as small as 50 - 60 square kilometres.

We believe it is essential to account for the complex connections between disturbance and exploitation, and to refocus perceptions, not on homogeneity illustrated by the ubiquitous presence of economically important trees, but on the remarkable diversification of life in the subdued landscape of the [high rainfall zone] of south-western Australia. The value of the rich assemblage of [species] from previously wetter and less seasonal climatic periods should be recognised in management.... Thus the conservation of these elements will have to become more intensive in the face of the greatly increased land use pressures throughout the high rainfall zone since the 1960s. There is a need to refocus on the precautionary principle to ensure the conservation of this

biota, much of which is still unknown. (Wardell-Johnson and Horwitz 1996, 234.)

It is widely accepted that recent fauna research in the Southern Forest region is not before time. Without doubt more and more treasures will be revealed as research continues.

If we are to fully understand and appreciate the wide variety and rareness of the endemic flora of this area it must be left in an undisturbed state. Given the area's links to Gondwanan species and its delicate climatic balance this is even more imperative.



Figure 5 Rowell's Pool on Deep River

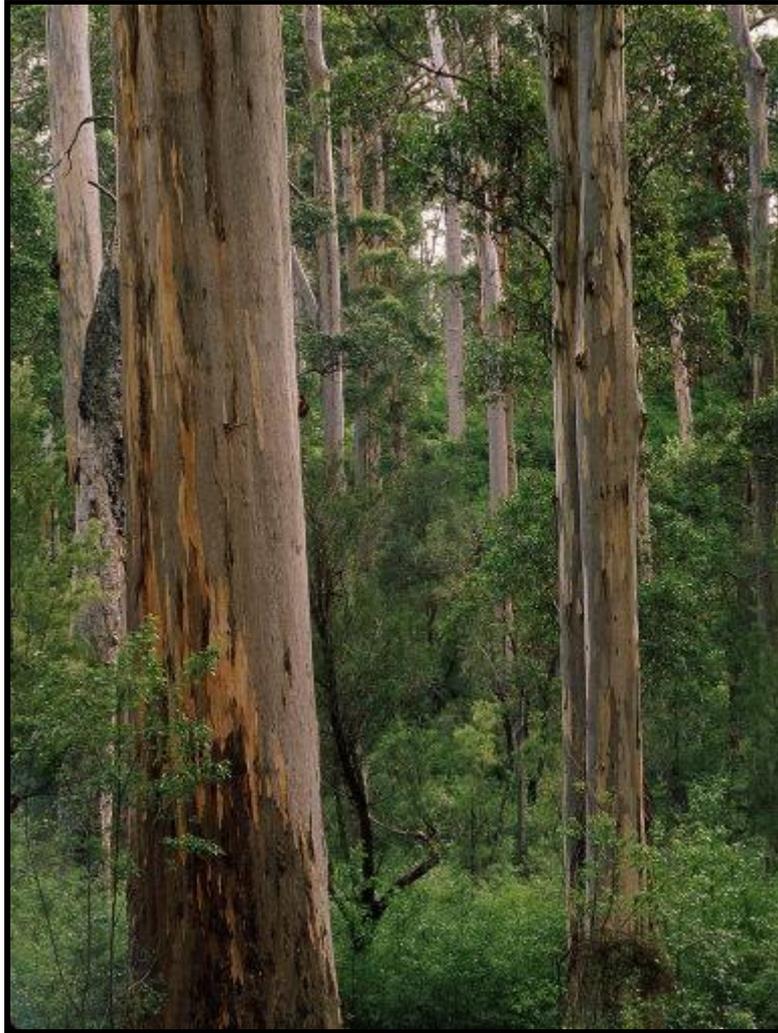


Figure 6 Karri/Casuarina stand in Sharpe Forest

EARLIER PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION

To have a Walpole Regional Wilderness Park it will be necessary to include a large area and a wide variety of vegetation and landform types situated in such a position as to surround and cocoon the North Walpole area. This proposal was dealt with in depth in *Karri at the Crossroads*, a 1982 publication by four conservation organisations. Although a percentage of the area mentioned in this proposal has now been damaged, the conservation ethic of the *Karri at the Crossroads* proposal rings true:

Enlightened communities have accepted that it is necessary to give complete protection to representative natural areas in rapidly changing habitats. Ecology, the study of relationships between living organisms and their environments, has created an awareness of the degree to which humans have upset the balance of nature. It is hoped that protected natural areas will preserve the potential for continuing evolution and provide reservoirs of genetic diversity (Campaign to Save Native Forests et al 1982, 1)

The *Karri at the Crossroads* proposal further states:

The practical benefits of conserving natural areas are fairly well understood by the community. Less accepted is the notion that natural phenomena should be preserved for their own sake. Yet this is merely an extension of the lessons of ecology to the ethical province:

“... we abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect” (Leopold, 1968, viii).

In 1987 the spirit of creating a semi-wilderness buffer for Walpole was again formulated in ‘Time for Change’ (Campaign to Save Native Forests et al 1987). The proposal included the formation of a Wattle-Soho National Park, part of which is now the Mount Frankland National Park, one of the most prized possessions in the North Walpole region. Unfortunately, some very vital and ecologically important areas were not included. One of these areas is Sharpe State Forest block. The proposal states

The Sharpe forest block should be added to this National Park. It is an integral part of the landscape of the CALM National Park proposal, and contains some magnificent wilderness vistas, including many breathtaking views of the peaks in the area (Granite Peak, Mt Frankland, Mt Roe, Mt

Mitchell, and the Soho hills). The Sharpe block would be a worthy and notable addition to any reserve system.

It continues:

A number of other areas should be added to the proposed Wattle-Soho National Park. These include Roe and Peak forest blocks, to the north of Mitchell forest block. Both contain extensions of the plains and hill country in Mitchell and O'Donnell blocks, both have very high aesthetic values, and both are visible from higher parts of the proposed National Park. (Campaign to Save Native Forests et al 1987, p. 42)

The report proposed the creation of a Deep River National Park, stating:

The river (Deep River) has exceptional value as "one of the finest wild rivers in south-western Australia and attracts many canoeists" . . . Such a National Park would protect the entire wild river area of the Deep, as well as a range of riverine, forest and open environments, some of them very rare and of great value. Because of environmental variations over the range of karri forest growth, a Deep River National Park would reserve forest landscapes not in existence elsewhere.

The entire Deep River National Park, as suggested here, has been nominated for listing on the Register of the National Estate. Among the reasons for nomination were the diverse range of landforms, soils and vegetation assemblages, its value as a fauna habitat - especially of freshwater vertebrates, and its value as one of the finest wild rivers in South-western Australia. (Campaign to Save Native Forests 1987, p.43.)

Obviously the forests of North Walpole are of great ecological importance as a place where ongoing forest and woodland processes can be maintained and as a study ground for relictual biota.

This was reinforced by the recommendation of the World Heritage Expert Panel which states:

The Panel also recommended that an area of forest that would form a connection between Shannon National Park and Mt Frankland National Park should also be considered for further investigation as part of the Western Australian representation of the sub-theme (World Heritage Expert Panel, 1998, 43).

It is vital that the Department of Conservation and Land Management's conservation ethic be not just fulfilled but surpassed, in full recognition of the value and unique potential of the North Walpole forests:

To maintain biological diversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem level in the forest, with special emphasis on the protection and conservation of threatened, rare and uncommon taxa and communities. (CALM Forest Management Plan, 1994-2003.)



Figure 7 Native flora



Figure 8 Granite outcrop view - Sharpe Forest

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - PLACES TO RETAIN

The following areas need to be included in the Walpole Regional Wilderness Park and have been listed with examples of their many values.

BURNETT/WYE STATE FOREST AREA

- Half in Deep River catchment system and half in the Broke Inlet catchment, and previously recommended for inclusion in the Shannon/ D'Entrecasteaux National Parks. Burnett also contains parts of the Deep River valley system.
- It contains magnificent scenic values complete with small waterfalls along the river
- Scenic vistas from Mt Burnett
- The area contains Tingle forest assemblages
- Important link between dedicated reserves
- Habitat for a range of special fauna species

DAWSON STATE FOREST AREA

- An integral part of an important recreational area
- Wetlands/swamps
- Upland - high country wetlands
- Steep forested valleys
- Deep River catchment area
- Recognised as rich in diverse ecotypes
- Important buffer between farmland and Deep River area

ORDNANCE STATE FOREST AREA

- Deep River Valley
- Extensive flats and wetlands
- Tingle forest assemblages
- Diverse landscape, open forest landscape
- High wilderness value (CALM 1998)
- Scenic vistas/ granite outcrops
- Recognised in rich diverse eco-type
- Habitat for Quokka (*Setonix brachyurus*), Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*), Baudin's and Red-tailed Cockatoo, and Short-nosed snake (*Notedchis minor*)
- Protection for a suite of aquatic fauna

SHARPE / DEEP STATE FOREST AREA

- Deeply dissected river valley (part of the Deep River)
- Diverse forest types, including karri /jarrah/ marri /blackbutt and yellow tingle forest assemblages
- Flat uplifted valley and its catchment, and would be the largest of its kind in any conservation reserve, consisting of early Tertiary marine sediments which contain relict species of freshwater invertebrate
- High wilderness value (CALM 1998)
- Wilderness vistas which include many of the peaks in the area
- Recognised as rich in diverse eco-types
- Contains the largest single occurrence of the uncommon Albany Pitcher Plant (*Ephalotus follicularis*)
- Habitat for Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*), Baudin's and Forest Red-tailed Cockatoos, Western Shrike-tit, and Red-eared Firetail (*Emblema oculata*)
- Southern acid peat flats of the subarea contain habitat for aquatic insects not found elsewhere in Western Australia

COLLIS STATE FOREST AREA

- Visual foreground to south vista of Mt Frankland
- Frankland River catchment and is of high significance for maintaining ongoing physical processes
- The Frankland River Valley has significant landscape values (CALM unpub. 1991)
- Recognised as rich in diverse ecotypes and forest types including Yellow Tingle (*E. guilfoylei*) and Rates Tingle (*E. brevistylis*)
- Area includes the habitat for Quokka (*Setonix brachyurus*) schedule 1 of CALM endangered species list, Honey possum (*Tarsipes rostratus*) and Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*) among other significant fauna habitats.

PEAK STATE FOREST AREA

- Visible from Mt Frankland National Park
- Significant expression of vegetation diversity
- Contains the uncommon Albany Pitcher Plant (*Ephalotus follicularis*)
- Wetlands and heath vegetation communities
- Granite outcrops / monadnocks
- The area contains woodland and wilderness characteristics, rated as high

SOUTHERN TWO-THIRDS OF ROCKY STATE FOREST AREA

- Extensive unlogged and dieback-free jarrah forest on geologically significant landforms
- Significant wilderness values (CALM 1998)
- High biophysical naturalness (CALM 1998)
- High species richness (CALM 1998)

LONG STATE FOREST AREA

- Extensive unlogged jarrah forest and undisturbed wetlands
- Significant wilderness values (CALM 1998)
- high biophysical naturalness (CALM 1998)
- High species richness (CALM 1998)

- Part of possible wildlife corridor to Perup Nature Reserve

PARTS OF KEYSTONE STATE FOREST AREA AND WALPOLE RIVER CATCHMENT

- Unique steep landscape
- Walpole River Valley
- Deep River Valley
- Tingle Forest assemblages
- Keystone hill



Figure 9 Heathlands meets forest - Sharpe Forest

TRENT STATE FOREST AREA

- Visual foreground to south vista of Mt Frankland
- Frankland River catchment and is of high significance for maintaining ongoing physical processes
- The Frankland River valley has significant landscape values (CALM unpub.1991)
- Recognised as rich in diverse ecotypes and forest types including Yellow Tingle (*E. guilfoylei*), Rates Tingle (*E. brevistylis*) and Red Flowering Gum (*E. ficifolia*)

This list of attributes is gained from the 'National Estate Values in the South Forest Region of Western Australia', volume 3, February 1992, and from on the ground surveys.

PROPOSED SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

1. Areas of Walpole Wilderness Park proposed to be managed on long rotation selection logging basis for long term old growth timber and craftwood production: parts of - Wye/Deep/Lochart/Thomson/ Swarbrick/ Frankland.
2. Areas set aside for nature conservation and with limited public access; Peak/Rocky/Long; are of high biodiversity/endangered species/dieback free areas.



Figure 10 Boardwalk at Fernhook Falls



Figure 11 Short Stay Cabin at Fernhook Falls

RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We propose the creation of a Regional Tourism and Recreation Development Strategy which will provide a wide range of nature-based recreational experiences and which focuses on the unique potential for wilderness recreation in the region.

There is already a considerable infrastructure of small roads, tracks and recreational facilities available for immediate use in the North Walpole area. For example, there is an extensive short stay cabin and day-use facility at Fernhook Falls, which on its own has the potential to attract visitors to the area. Timbered boardwalks meander along the river past giant Grass trees (*Xanthorea* sp.) and granite outcrops. Rowell's Pool offers perfect canoe launching, swimming or bird watching opportunities. The Fernhook Falls infrastructure should be utilised as a commencement point for wilderness orientated, nature based recreational plans.

Mt Frankland, Granite Peak and Centre Road also provide small overnight huts. This strategy would encourage more frequent use of this infrastructure and potentially integrate the use of these areas with a walk trail linkup system. This possibility has apparently been recognised in the Recreational and Tourism Framework Plan of the Southern Forest Region, 1994, which states:

Funding will be sought to maintain existing and to develop new tourist destinations in the Region with the provision of a greater variety of experiences being a priority (CALM 1994, 54).

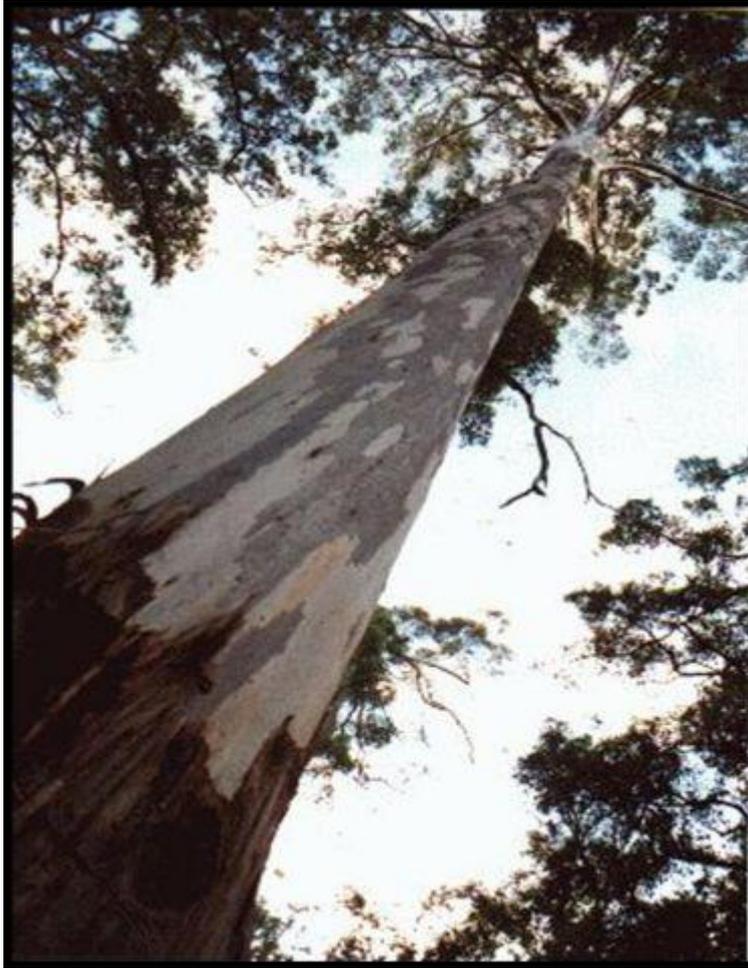


Figure 12 King Karri in Sharpe Forest

It would seem that as far back as 1994 the Department recognised the shift in desires of tourists and the need to cater to a larger base of tourism opportunities.

A change in the type of tourism product being sought by tourists and the recognition of this change by the evolution of such concepts as eco-tourism and cultural tourism (CALM 1994, 52).

As the Walpole community continues to develop its private stock of tourist, recreation and accommodation facilities the pattern of tourism and recreation use will change. This will require the protection of a significant land resource base in the region. Areas such as Mt Roe and Granite Peak have been well documented and recognised for their intrinsic values.

Mt Frankland, Mt Roe, Granite Peak and numerous small granite outcrops occur in the [lower] catchment of the Frankland River. These distinctive features in the wilderness zone, should retain their wilderness qualities and have their fragile environments protected, but still be available for all the public to appreciate in some form, or other (CALM 1994,13).

The Deep River and its surrounding countryside has also been recognised for its vast and obvious recreational opportunities. What this proposal aims to do is point out the ecological and economic benefits of the conservation of linkable, large areas of varied vegetation and landscape.

A wilderness-based recreation strategy for Walpole will bring business development and new enterprise opportunities, some examples of this are:

- Canoe, cycle and equipment hire services
- Tour guide services to take people through remote areas
- Specialised equipment and provisions stores
- Tourist guides and organised tours

Increased trade in local stores, higher resident population and more employment opportunities would be some of the economic benefits to the township. However, the success of this plan requires protected quality wilderness landscapes, well designed access networks, an excellent information/map service and a committed local community. Walpole could become recognised as a wilderness tourism and recreational destination, providing a source of income and pride to the community.

INCREASED VISITOR STAYS

Although Walpole is not in close proximity to other regional centres, visitors to the town often choose to use accommodation outside of the Walpole area. Many people travel from Denmark and Albany on day trips to visit the Valley of The Giants Tree Top Walk and see the town. Some call in on their way to other destinations. With nature-based tourism attractions, such as the Tree Top Walk, Walpole is gaining a name internationally for its superb tingle forest. If these natural assets are complimented with quality wilderness-based recreational activities it will gain the area further recognition as a destination - not just a destination to quickly visit but a destination to stay in and thoroughly experience.

More organised and convenient recreational tourism attractions promoted around Walpole will entice people to stay longer. This will bring increased trade and business opportunities. In particular high quality nature-based recreation facilities are required to absorb the flow-on effect from the Valley of the Giants Tree Top walk. In the meantime improved information could ensure that people enjoy existing facilities and that they are motivated to return to the area and encourage others to do likewise.



Figure 12 Centre Road crossing on Deep River

SEASONS AND WEATHER

Walpole's weather and seasons will lead to different patterns of recreational use of the landscape. For example, in summer, the coast, steep river valleys, tall forests and cool peaks will be popular. In winter, wild river canoeing on the Deep River, walking in upland areas and warm cabin/chalet accommodation will be more suitable. Spring and autumn will be ideal times for longer treks in the wilderness areas to the north. The Tourism Recreation and Development Strategy should address these issues so that the effective season for tourism in Walpole is extended throughout the year.

ACCESSIBILITY

The outskirts of the proposed Regional Wilderness Park are accessible by various means of transport, ranging from public transport through to privately operated tour vehicles, private vehicles, four wheel drive vehicles and bicycles.

The pattern of access for vehicular users, cyclists and walkers requires careful design to ensure that wilderness qualities are not compromised. **To maintain these qualities existing tracks and roads should be used rather than creating new disturbances.** There will need to be a balance between remote and semi-remote recreation in core wilderness areas and the provision of day-use and vehicle-based camping facilities.

There is potential for the integration of private facility developments with a Regional Wilderness and Recreation Management Strategy. Many private properties have exceptional natural features and are adjacent to beautiful state forests and national parks. Private landholders could provide a range of vehicle- based camping facilities with relatively low capital investment. Such developments would take pressure away from natural areas and complement the facilities provided on public land.

An alternative safe, scenic route to Walpole could be a north/south dual walking cycling track along Doug Road. This would provide an alternate route for visitors to reach Walpole for supplies or to continue their journey. The location of Ordnance Road provides an already established track to access various parts of the Deep River. This proposal recommends that this track be made into a cycle and/or walk track to lessen the impact on the Deep River environment.



Figure 13 Fernhook Falls in winter.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

This proposal specifically recommends:

- A regional network of walk trails and dual use paths integrated into remote and semi-remote camping sites and cabins.
 - The designation of existing track networks for vehicular access to points of interest, incorporating scenic routes for transient visitors.
 - The establishment of long distance (five day plus) treks and cycle routes
 - Promotion of existing public transport and private tour operations that provide access to the Walpole Wilderness experience by backpackers, cyclists etc., eg. designated drop off and pick up points.
 - More day use facilities in the vicinity of major attractions such as Mt Frankland, Fernhook Falls, Valley of the Giants and Hilltop Lookout.
 - Wild camping sites with orienteering routes where visitors are supplied with maps and suggested routes and destinations
 - Increased promotion of canoeing along the Deep River as an adventure activity. The provision of a hire service could be incorporated into the above industry or run as a separate business venture.
 - That traditional custodians be fully consulted in regards to any development in semi-wilderness areas.
-

CONCLUSIONS

This proposal has been developed to outline and identify a resource base for the future economic well-being of the Walpole region, while at the same time offering protection to many outstanding natural values. The resource base identified is ecologically intact primary forest interspersed with substantially undisturbed, floristically significant heathland, woodland, wetlands and granite outcrops.

For the many people who will visit the Walpole region, the creation of this Regional Wilderness Park will ensure there is a wealth of various adventures and beautiful vistas to enjoy. It will encourage people to spend more time in the area, consequently increasing trade for local businesses. Small fees for the use of overnight cabins will contribute towards the upkeep of the area.

Added to this is the potential for new businesses to evolve, based on the recreational needs of visitors (eg. canoe/ bike hire and guided walk/camping tours etc). There are further possibilities for ecologically sensitive development that will partner the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk and broaden the recreational developments and attractions of the area.

With the Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks linked to the Walpole National Park, in turn linked to the Mt Frankland National Park by magnificent forests, rivers, wetlands and heathlands, people will have a genuine Walpole Wilderness experience. Add to this the substantial areas of jarrah/marri forest north and east of Mt Frankland, which are the areas of highest quality forested wilderness. This will create a world class wilderness area which will put Walpole firmly on the map of wild and wonderful places to visit.

The Walpole Wilderness is worth far more to the local community and Western Australians as a whole if it is kept intact, than if it were to be destroyed by logging and other resource extraction operations for short-term gain.

As has been shown by this proposal, the opportunities of this Regional Wilderness Park are endless. If this large area of beautiful forests, rivers and coastline can be preserved in their natural state, its potential is limited only by our vision and imagination.



Figure 14 & 15 Clearfelling operation in Deep Forest



ENDORSEMENTS

"The proposal for a Walpole Wilderness Park is a concept which deserves the closest consideration. As you are aware this matter will be raised at a Labor Party Caucus meeting in the near future. The protection of the many natural values of this area and their inherent potential as a sustainable resource for the people of the Walpole region, and indeed the broader Western Australian community, is something which we owe to future generations.

As we face the continuing loss of our wild and natural places with the attending loss of biodiversity, it is increasingly important to focus our guardianship on those remaining areas which can still provide the experience and values which make wilderness such a luxury in many parts of the world. The Walpole Wilderness Proposal is a significant contribution to that effort."

Geoff Gallop MLA, Leader of the West Australian Labour Party.

"I commend the South Coast Environment Group for this visionary concept. At present there is explosive growth of eco-tourism and nature-based tourism in Australia. The Walpole Wilderness Proposal has the potential to attract millions of dollars and many, many jobs to the region.

In 1997 alone, 125 million dollars of revenue was brought into our state from eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. This is a major growth industry. Stanford University figures show that whilst the tourism industry is increasing at a rate of 8%, nature-based tourism within that figure is growing at a rate of 30% per year.

The ecological values of the area are outstanding but if there is any doubt as to whether the Walpole Wilderness deserved protection, the economic justification is in the long term sustainable potential of the area as a nature-based tourism and recreation resource."

Dr. Ross Dowling, Associate Professor of Tourism, Edith Cowan University.

"Few communities in Australia are fortunate enough to live in an environment of such rich biodiversity as that enjoyed by the people of Walpole.

For this reason alone, the South Coast Environment Group's nomination for the establishment of a wilderness park in the north Walpole region should serve as a catalyst for local people, the tourism sector and the government to work together towards the development of a unique conservation resource. Such an integrated approach offers a rare opportunity for all participants to redefine a traditional local economy and develop nature-tourism as the key to continuing development and sustainability."

Jamie Kronborg, Director, National Party of Australia WA.

"I am happy to endorse your group's proposal for a Walpole Wilderness area. As Australian Democrats spokesperson for the Environment, and a member of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Committee, I wholeheartedly support the preservation of Western Australia's natural heritage, including special areas in the South West Wilderness.

The Democrats believe that the greater conservation of our environment can be achieved without having to sacrifice economic benefits. We are working closely with other concerned conservation and environmental groups, monitoring and suggesting ways to improve the management and protection of our native surroundings."

Norm Kelly, MLC.

"The Walpole-Nornalup National Parks Association supports the proposal as it reinforces the conservation, recreation, tourist potential and long term benefits to the Walpole area of one of the State's last wild river areas."

Walpole-Nornalup National Parks Association

"I have read your Walpole Wilderness Proposal and wholeheartedly support it. The region clearly has the potential to support a thriving tourism industry, and to provide a valuable income stream to local communities. This all depends, of course, on preserving sufficient areas of tourism interest. To log old growth forests in the region appears to me to be very short-sighted economics."

Dr Tim Flannery.

"May I congratulate your group on this very well thought out proposal which you have put together in such an attractive form. And I thank you on behalf of all those who love the forests and are concerned about them"

Dame Rachel Cleland

"Now, when strategic long term decisions for the forests are being taken, it is imperative that some near wilderness areas are protected in perpetuity. I am privileged to have the opportunity to endorse this initiative. It is also important that a strategy be developed which will focus on the use and minimize the abuse of the proposed park."

Hon Dr Christine Sharp,MLC.

"I congratulate the South Coast Environment Group for initiating the Walpole Wilderness Proposal... to protect the remaining natural forest heritage in this region for the future benefit of mankind, to act as true custodians as did the traditional Aboriginal occupants of this land, and accept, as they did, that we don't own the land, we are the land."

H J (Rob) Versluis, Shire President, Shire of Denmark.

"The areas nominated for inclusion are unquestionably fundamental to the continued ecological integrity of the region, and your arguments are powerful reminders that, through this proposal the community has a golden opportunity to save what is most important and most beautiful in the Walpole district.

We further endorse your comments about employment. Now, more than ever, we all need to accept the reality of diminishing jobs in the traditional workforce, and create opportunities that are satisfying, meaningful, and in harmony with retaining a natural environment that future generations can appreciate and enjoy."

Denmark Conservation Society Inc.

"The Society knows that amount of work involved in preparing submissions and would like to commend your Group on the very high standard of the Proposal."

Wildflower Society of Western Australia Inc.

"The South Coast Environment Group has excelled in providing the people and government of this State with a timely and visionary document meeting the ecological imperatives of our time, while importantly addressing the economic and social needs of the local community.

While the Wilderness Society does not endorse the need for any logging in native forests, the proposals overarching principles of species conservation, wilderness protection, and ecologically sustainable development deserve full support.

We sincerely hope that the political decision-makers of Western Australian have the foresight to adopt this proposal and implement it in full."

The Wilderness Society

"With ever diminishing natural forest areas, due to impacts of increasing population and multi-purpose uses, such a proposal has benefits for both conservation of the biota and landscape, and enjoyment of it by the public (including the tourist component). We trust that the proposal meets with authoritative approval and hence implementation."

Professor A R Main and Dr B York Main.

"I fully endorse the ideas put forward in the Walpole Wilderness Proposal as set out by the South Coast Environment Group. I have lived in the Walpole area for more than twenty years now and during that time have seen many changes in the district and in the number of visitors coming to the area. It is quite apparent that it is essential for the Walpole area that we ensure that we have adequate reserves of wilderness to satisfy the needs of our tourist industry and our local community in the years to come. It will need great vision and forethought to provide for the future demands of our community, I feel that this document embodies such vision"

Penny Jewell, Thurlby Herb Farm, Walpole.

"Congratulations on the Walpole Wilderness Proposal. The work you have put in the presentation is commendable.

Best wishes for the future and I as a tourism operator (i.e. Bed & Breakfast) firmly believe that your vision is exactly what is needed."

Glen Echo, Bed & Breakfast.

REFERENCES

- Australian Heritage Commission/Conservation and Land Management**, February 1992 - *National Estate Values in the Southern Forest Region of South-Western Australia*, Volume 3.
- Australian Heritage Commission/Wilderness Society (WA)**, 1996 - *Wilderness and Wild Rivers Survey*.
- Australian Heritage Commission**, 1993 - *National Wilderness Inventory*
- Bradshaw J. and Lush A.**, 1982 - *Conservation of the Karri Forest*.
- Campaign to Save Native Forests et al.**, 1982 - *Karri at the Crossroads*.
- Campaign to Save Native Forests et al.**, 1987 - *Time for Change*.
- Campaign to Save Native Forests et al.**, 1987 - *A Question of Balance*.
- Conservation and Land Management**, 1994 - *Recreation and Tourism Framework Plan of the Southern Forest Region*.
- Conservation and Land Management**, 1994 - *Forest Management Plan 1994 - 2003*.
- Conservation and Land Management**, 1997 - *Annual Report 1996 - 1997*.
- Conservation and Land Management**, 1998 - *Report of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment*.
- Christensen P.**, February 1992 - *The Karri Forest. Department of Conservation and Land Management*.
- Conservation through Reserves Committee**, 1976 - *Systems 2 Report*
- Forest Department**, 1982 - *No.87 Working Plan*.
- Horwitz P. and Wardell-Johnson G.**, 1996 - *Forest Ecology and Land Management* 85.
- Regional Forest Agreement**, 1998 - *World Heritage Report*.
- Small Business Association of WA.**, 1995 - *Old growth forests and new jobs - the Future*.
- WA Department of Environmental Protection**, 1997 - *Draft State of the Environment Report for Western Australia*.
- Wardell-Johnson G. and Coates D.**, 1996 - *Gondwanan Heritage: Past, Present and Future of the Western Australian biota*.

Water Authority, 1995 - *Recreational Use of Water Bodies in the Busselton-Walpole Region.*

Wilderness Society, 1997 - *Indigenous people & environmental issues; caring for culture and country,* unpublished.



The South Coast Environment Group would like to thank the many valuable people that contributed to this proposal.

South Coast Environment Group Inc.
Reg. No. 1004961

This proposal is printed  on recycled paper
