



Southwest Australia
Ecoregion Initiative

VISION, MISSION & GOALS

An initiative driven by a consortium

With representatives from:

Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority
Conservation Council, WA
Conservation Commission
Community Leaders
Consortium for Health and Ecology, Edith Cowan University
CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems
Department of Conservation and Land Management
(including the Western Australian Herbarium)
Department of Environment
Department for Planning and Infrastructure
Department of Agriculture
Forest Products Commission
Greening Australia, WA
National Trust of Australia, WA
School of Environmental Science, Murdoch University
State Sustainability Unit
University of Western Australia
Water Corporation
Western Australia Local Government Association
Western Australian Museum
West Australian Local Government Association
WWF Australia

Preliminary Scoping of a Biodiversity Vision for Southwest Australia:

Preamble

Currently, different groups/organisations/agencies engaged in bioregional planning in Southwest Australia appear to be using different elements and value systems or taking different approaches. The Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative consortium aims to establish a vision of what we want the landscape of Southwest Australia to look like and the different elements that might be taken into account in bioregional planning at the Southwest Australia Ecoregion level.

Bioregional planning is a concept whereby a landscape design is developed, but successful implementation is dependent on the activities being undertaken at the site or activity scale being integrated to achieve a common focus. This approach considers the individual and cumulative impacts of the full suite of land use activities across the Ecoregion, and then draws on this information to prepare specific management-orientated landscape designs and guidelines to help conserve biotic systems. 1.

It is also recognised that the degree of vegetation cover over areas of the Southwest Australia Ecoregion means that full achievement of biodiversity goals in all areas is not possible. This Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative aims to identify the appropriate activities to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the Ecoregion, recognising that the degree of success will vary across the landscape. Each level of success is, however, important in the overall achieving of biodiversity conservation and the complementary social and economic benefits within the Ecoregion.

The use of a vision and broad objectives or desirable outcomes allows a planner or proponent to check that activities are consistent with the goals and objectives at the ecoregion scale - or at least that they are not in conflict with the objectives (including the compromising of future opportunities).

Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative Mission:

Nature conservation is an integral component of land and water use and management activities in all landscapes of the Southwest Australia Ecoregion.

Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative Draft Biodiversity Vision:

A diverse and continuous mosaic of natural landscape features distributed across the landscape, interspersed with a diversity of socially and economically productive land uses, which support the natural diversity and natural functioning of that landscape

Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative Goals:

1. Ecological

Key goal: Protect and where necessary restore ecological processes, ecosystem functioning, and the biological, geological and cultural diversity of the Southwest Australia Ecoregion through ecologically sustainable land management practice.

Specific goals:

- ◆ Represent all dominant vegetation associations in protected areas or areas managed for conservation across all landscape units
- ◆ Maintain stable populations of all species that naturally occur, across their distributional range

2. Socio-economic

Key goal: The values, needs, and aspirations of people living in the Southwest Australia Ecoregion are an integral part of nature conservation planning and management

Specific goals:

- ◆ Nature conservation practices on private and public lands contribute to the productivity, values and aspirations of rural economies, support vibrant rural and urban communities and enhance property values
- ◆ Economic policy instruments are revised to remove inappropriate incentives and disincentives and to ensure that nature conservation is rewarded
- ◆ Nature conservation outcomes are an integral part of strategic and regional environmental planning
- ◆ Land managers and public authorities cooperate in the conservation and management of public and private lands for nature conservation

3. Cultural

Key goal: The Aboriginal and European cultural heritage values of the Southwest Australia Ecoregion are integrated into nature conservation planning and management

Specific goals:

- ◆ Nature conservation recognises the role of traditional owners as land custodians and is open and inclusive to Indigenous input
- ◆ Nature conservation becomes part of local culture through development of a sense of place or identity with the local environment
- ◆ European cultural heritage values are included in nature conservation planning

Landscape Design Elements

The following *landscape design elements* need to be addressed in order to achieve the above goals:

1. Habitat of sufficient quality and quantity to support species that have the greatest requirements for habitat area, floristic diversity, and structural complexity and to provide a range of microhabitats to support species with specific niche requirements such as minimum habitat area, complex ground cover, water bodies;

2. Sufficient amount of connecting vegetation that facilitates the persistence of viable continuous populations of all species native to the Southwest Australia Ecoregion. This vegetation should be viewed as linear habitat for dispersal-limited species rather than simply “corridors” for mobile species;
3. Native vegetation along all drainage lines of suitable configuration to act as habitat for lowland and riparian-dependent species and to absorb edge effects from adjoining land uses;
4. Management regimes designed to manage or reduce known or potential threats and opportunities such as hydrological imbalance (and salinity), dieback, weeds, inappropriate fire regimes, soil erosion and sedimentation of aquatic ecosystems, nutrient loading of drainage systems, feral predators/competitors, and grazing; and
5. An appropriate configuration of landscape elements that will accommodate, as far as possible, the impact of climate change on native species and ecosystems.