

REVIEW OF CALM'S FIRE POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Environmental Protection Authority is preparing advice for the Minister for the Environment on the Department of Conservation and Land Management's fire management policy and practices in its Swan, South West and Warren administrative regions.

The area covered by these administrative areas extends from Lancelin in the north to the south coast and eastwards to Albany in a strip 80-100km wide and encompasses a broad range of habitats and land uses.

EPA deputy chairman Dr Roy Green said that the EPA was aware that this was a contentious topic and was making the review as open as possible to members of the public through information days to seek opinions on what people believe are the important issues.

"A realistic and effective balance is sought between human health, safety of humans and property and the requirements of forestry management to optimise the biodiversity of both flora and fauna," Dr Green said.

Opinions from the information days and meetings with key stakeholders will then be combined into a Discussion Paper to be released in January 2004 for public comment.

Submissions on the Discussion Paper will be used in formulating the final advice to the Minister which the EPA wishes to complete by April 2004.

The following is a brief summary of some of the issues that the EPA is aware of that need to be addressed in the Discussion Paper:

- The values (conservation and cultural) of the land within the review area;
- Wildfires and their causes. Are they a requirement for SW Forest regeneration?
- Fighting wildfires;
- Access infrastructure- roads, bridges, firebreaks. The implications of keeping these open or closed;
- Prescribed burns. Are they necessary to reduce the incidence of wildfires?
- Do prescribed burns do what they are supposed to?
- Resourcing for prescribed burns;
- Costs of wildfires. Are prescribed burns good insurance?
- Health effects of smoke from burns;
- Property adjacent to DCLM-managed lands;
- Roles of local government authorities, State agencies- zoning and planning;
- Protection of properties and evacuations due to fires;
- How much personal responsibility should private landowners take if they choose to live in fire-prone settings?
- Post-fire recovery programmes.

The EPA is a five person independent board providing overarching environmental advice to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage through the preparation of environmental protection policies and the assessment of development proposals and

management plans, as well as providing public statements about matters of environmental importance.

The EPA is supported by the EPA Service Unit. This Unit sits administratively within the Department of Environment but for EPA matters is under the control of the EPA.

Under the *Environmental Protection Act (1986)* the EPA has no enforcement role. This role is undertaken by the Department of Environment, including auditing Ministerial Conditions imposed on proposals assessed by the EPA.

Information sessions attended by members of the public, EPA Deputy Chairman Dr Roy Green, EPA Member Dr Andrea Hinwood and representatives from the EPA Service Unit have been held at the following locations:

- Albany, Monday 24 November
- Walpole, Tuesday 25 November
- Manjimup, Tuesday 25 November
- Bunbury, Wednesday 26 November
- Swan View, Monday 8 December and
- South Perth, Tuesday 9 December.

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