



Ministerial Media Statements



Donna Faragher
Minister for Environment; Youth

Wed 03 November, 2010

Minister releases vision for the Great Western Woodlands

Portfolio: Environment

Environment Minister Donna Faragher has today honoured another major Liberal-National Government election promise on the environment with the release of an integrated conservation strategy for the Great Western Woodlands in the State's south-east.

"The release of this document culminates a year of community engagement through a reference group that included community-based groups along with industry organisations and State and local government authorities," Mrs Faragher said.

"It marks the beginning of a new era for conserving the region's natural and cultural values as well as ensuring sustainable development of resources, tourism and other industries, including pastoralism."

The Minister said the strategy focused on improving co-ordination and management of the Great Western Woodlands for the next 10 years.

"The Great Western Woodlands extends across 16 million hectares, about the same size as England, and represents the biggest and most intact eucalypt woodland remaining in southern Australia," she said.

"It is the only arid region on the planet where there are tall trees and contains 3,000 species of flowering plants - about one-fifth of the nation's known flora - as well as a diverse range of mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds.

"Its human history dates back at least 22,000 years and it has great cultural significance to Aboriginal people. The area is also steeped in European history, with pastoralism having been carried out since the 1860s and mining since the gold rush days of the 1890s.

"The significance of the natural and cultural values of the woodlands is enhanced by their scale and the fact they are relatively intact. This means that the long-term conservation of the region is more achievable than would be the case in smaller and more disturbed areas."

Mrs Faragher said key priorities under the integrated conservation strategy were:

- creating greater public awareness of the Great Western Woodlands
- creating voluntary partnerships to co-ordinate on-ground activities across the many tenures of the region
- establishing a Great Western Woodlands Reference Group to provide advice on the management of the Great Western Woodlands and implementation of the strategy
- implementing an integrated fire management program
- joint management of conservation reserves and creating training and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people
- better control of weeds and pest animals including wild dogs, foxes, cats, camels and goats
- research to increase the knowledge base to guide management and use of the woodlands and their resources.

"The State Government has allocated \$3.8million across the next three years to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) for the development and initial implementation of this strategy," the Minister said.

“A total of \$3million has been earmarked for on-ground operations through DEC’s nature conservation program while \$800,000 will be spent on capital works.”

Mrs Faragher said that in line with the strategy, DEC had already drafted a Bushfire Threat Analysis for the area and this would form the basis for more detailed fire management planning.

“The department is also preparing a signage and information plan for key entry points into the woodlands and has developed a special Great Western Woodlands section on the DEC website,” she said.

“Further action plans will be developed which will outline what is needed to implement other priorities outlined in the strategy.

“Importantly, the strategy will help ensure that the benefits from activities such as mining, pastoralism, tourism, recreation and forestry will continue to flow to the people of Western Australia, while at the same time the Woodlands’ natural and cultural values will be conserved for present and future generations.”

Copies of ‘A Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation Strategy for the Great Western Woodlands’ are available from DEC’s website at <http://www.dec.wa.gov.au> or phone 6467 5555.

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Page last revised:4 Nov 2008