

Consultation and communication with stakeholders is a central component of all Commission activities.

The creation of employment in regional areas, promotion of value adding opportunities and the long-term sustainable management of our timbers are key priorities.

A number of commercial projects have been progressed in the last year and new opportunities for Western Australian timbers and timber products are being established nationally and overseas.

Ongoing information sharing with other scientific institutes has enabled the Commission to progress in the area of technological innovation.



Community consultation and education is a key component of Commission activities.

Native forests consultation and extension

The Commission consulted a range of stakeholders on the following topics during the year:

- 2003 Harvest Plan for South-West forests
- Forest Management Plan
- Harvest coupes adjacent to private properties
- Forest management/awareness
- Indigenous values near and within harvest coupes

Stakeholder groups included the public, property owners, indigenous representatives, shires, parliamentary members, corporations, conservation groups, students and government agencies.

The Commission ensured prior notification was provided via media notices and direct mail when required. Detailed coupe maps, educational tours and follow up contact was also provided by Commission staff upon request.

Committee communication

The Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries established the Plantation Industry Ministerial Advisory Committee (PIMAC) in July 2003, to encourage communication between the government and the private plantation sector. The Committee's membership includes growers, harvesters, processors, users and key stakeholders from the community.

The Commission participated in Regional Plantation Committees in the South-West (Trees Southwest) and Great Southern (Timber 2002) as well as the TIRES (transport planning) group. Senior Commission staff also gave presentations at various strategic planning forums and were regular contributors to the local branch of Australian Forest Growers (the national private forestry body) and the WA Agroforestry Working Group.

Timber industry restructure

The Commission worked closely with the Department of Industry and Resources (DoIR) in assessing the 29 new Business Exit Assistance (BEA) applications during the year.

Forest Enhancement Program

During 2003, the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP) provided employment for up to 11 forest workers and fire fighters in the Conservation and Land Management district workforces based in the Perth Hills, Wellington and Donnelly districts. Some of these staff carried out silvicultural enhancement treatments in the forests.

A further four indigenous workers were employed by the Commission to complete jarrah forest thinning treatments. All four staff were employed through the Noongar Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation (NEEDAC).

Integrating trees and agriculture

Considerable progress was made during the year to develop planting designs and systems that will fit more effectively with current farming operations and enable better watertable management and control.

The broadscale planting of north and south orientated tree belts, has been successfully integrated into existing farming activities. This enables a contoured agricultural production emphasis and addresses land management issues more effectively.

Integrating commercial tree plantations with livestock.

Wood products research

The Commission's Timber Technology division conducted invaluable collaborative research during the year, on wood manufacturing processes in partnership with a number of national science and technology-based organisations.

Projects included research into the revolutionary potential of microwave technology, bending, drying and gluing processes; and the coating durability of certain woods. Assessment of the solid wood potential of pruned, 25 year-old Tasmanian bluegums and native species in semi arid areas, was also progressed.

Jarrah sawlog proposals

Together with the Department of Industry and Resources (DoIR), the Commission assessed detailed business plans for the short-listed proponents bidding for jarrah sawlog allocations. Finalisation of allocations was delayed pending decisions on the Forest Management Plan.

Indian sandalwood research continues

Research trials on Indian sandalwood continued at Kununurra, with a focus on developing high quality genetic material from existing stock. A review of existing trials and the identification, collection and storage of sandalwood seed has been performed. The University of Western Australia is conducting research on behalf of the Commission to quantify the oil yields and oil quality of existing stands of Indian sandalwood.

Researching wood manufacturing processes.



Goldfields eucalypts in South-West vineyards

Small diameter eucalypt posts, renowned for their strength and durability, have been sourced from regrowth woodlands in the Goldfields and incorporated in a number of South-West vineyards.

The posts provide a durable alternative to traditional timbers and offer competitive prices. The utilisation of these posts enables the thinning of dense regrowth arid eucalypt woodlands, which will increase the growth of the retained trees. This new product may provide another option for tree farms within the mid to low rainfall areas.

Seeking new markets for marri

Marri timber is increasingly important in Western Australia's furniture industry and during 2002, the Commission implemented new procedures to identify and supply marri sawlogs. At the same time, spot markets for the reduced quantities of marri residue or woodchips, were pursued to ensure that marri removed to assist silvicultural regeneration, was not wasted.

Pentarch Forest Products exports commence

Negotiations with Melbourne-based company Pentarch Forest Products, regarding the export of radiata pine logs from Bunbury and Albany, have concluded. Harvesting for export commenced in March with the first shipment departing in June 2003. Export products included logs of pulpwood quality beyond local processor needs and sawlogs from species not desired by local sawmills. This has enabled the removal of more log residues from clearfell areas and the thinning of young stands to promote sawlog growth. Pentarch Forest Products is also taking deliveries from private plantation owners who have previously had difficulty finding markets.

Wespine sawmill extended

The Commission sold 291,758 cubic metres of radiata pine and Maritime pine to the Wespine sawmill during 2002/03, for distribution within WA and in the eastern states. WA Premier Dr Geoff Gallop, opened a new extension at the Wespine sawmill during the year which will see it increase its production capacity to 340,000 cubic metres. The extension has included the installation of a new optimising curved gang saw, mechanical stress grader and bin stacking and sorting equipment. These investments are anticipated to improve the recovery of high value products from sawlogs.

LVL plant progress

Negotiations regarding the Laminated Veneer Lumber plant at Neerabup have concluded. An Agreement has been entered into by WA Premier Dr Geoff Gallop, and the Chairman of Wesbeam, Mr Dennis Cullity. The plant will produce structural timbers suitable for building and construction, which will reduce the need for large volumes of native timbers. The Commission will supply predominantly Maritime pine logs, which will initially come from the Gngarara watermound and later from Infnitree™ plantations. The venture will help alleviate Perth's water supply problems. It is anticipated construction of the plant will be completed mid 2004.



*(top) Wesbeam LVL - to be used in structural applications.
(middle) Wespine's drymill stacker at Dardanup.
(bottom) Goldfields eucalypts are put to use on a vineyard in Margaret River.*

Various timber species are made available through Commission auctions.



Hansol Australia chipmill

The Commission has continued to plant and manage over 15,000 hectares of Tasmanian bluegums on South-West farmlands in preparation of the construction of the Hansol Australia chipmill. The mill is expected to process up to 500,000 cubic metres of wood for export to paper mills in Korea, when construction is completed next year.

Pinetec sawmill to relocate

The government announced the proposed move of the Pinetec sawmill from its Bassendean site to the South-West. The Commission offered Pinetec a contract of 80,000 cubic metres of small pine sawlogs, on the basis it will relocate to the South-West. The Bassendean operation will remain as a treatment and distribution centre. Pinetec will use the resource for the manufacture of pallets and packaging materials, and timbers for outdoor use.

Pemberton sawmill

In July 2002, the government announced a \$2.5 million assistance package for the Pemberton sawmill. The key components of the package included a karri sawlog commitment of 45,000 cubic metres a year for 2002 and 2003, and a minimum of 40,000 cubic metres per year from 2004 to 2013 (subject to the sustained yield delivered in the Forest Management Plan).

The Commission assisted the government in its discussions with buyer AusWest Timbers with a view to maintaining an ongoing business at the sawmill and future employment. AusWest Timbers, agreed to retain the existing staff of 52 people and employ a further 21, by 2007. The sale of the sawmill was concluded in April 2003.

Specialty timber auctions

During the year, the Commission continued to conduct auctions as a part of its commitment to provide the broader public with access to the State's unique timbers.

Three auctions were held, two of which were at the Timber Technology Centre in Harvey, during August and December 2002. More recently an auction was held in Kalgoorlie in June 2003.

The auctions included a range of Goldfields and South-West timbers in both log and rough sawn form. Approximately 570 tonnes of timber was offered for sale.