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South West native forests for conservation and timber

The South West native forest area is managed in accordance with a 10-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) which is developed by the Conservation and Parks Commission of Western Australia.

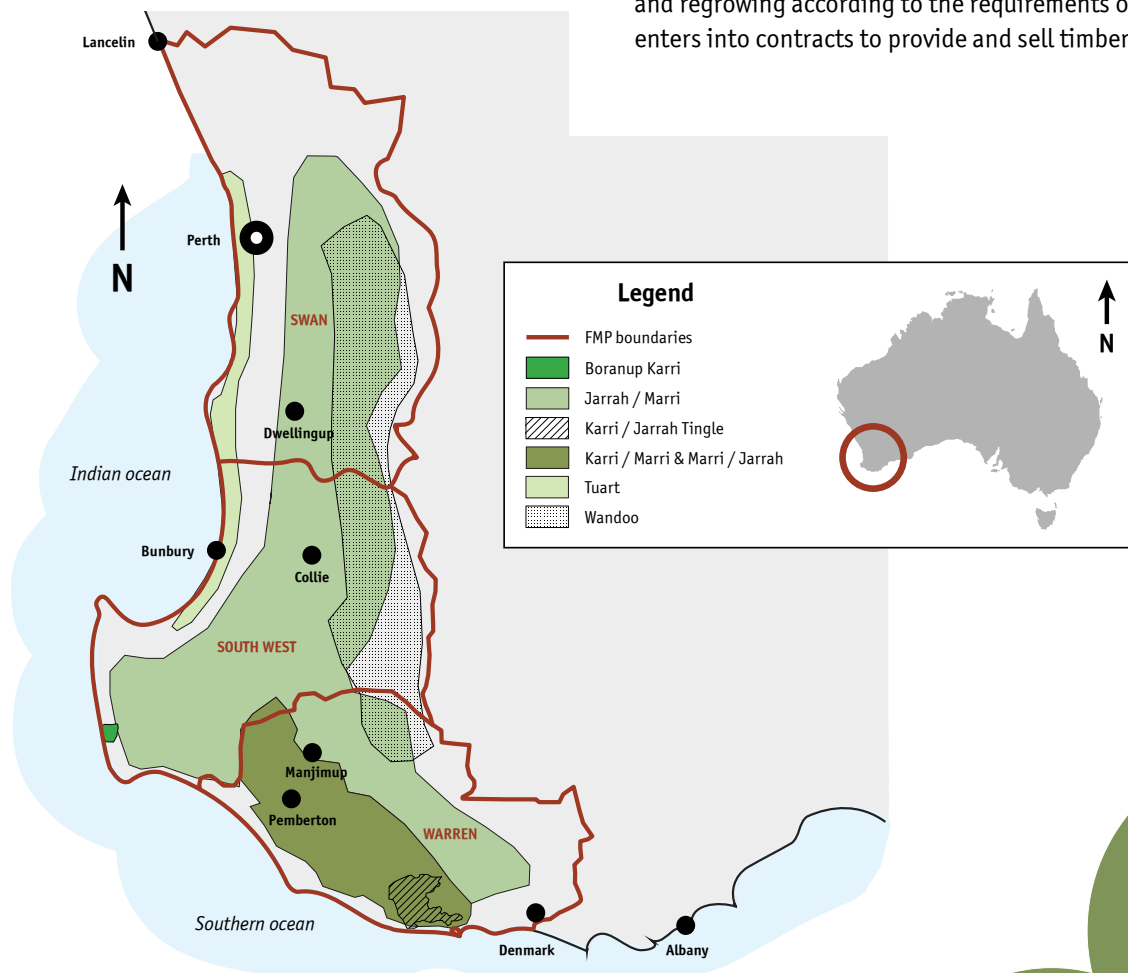
The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has overall forest management responsibility. The FMP's objective is to conserve biodiversity and to sustain the health, vitality and productive capacity of the ecosystems. Under the FMP, the forest produces social, cultural and economic benefits.

The 2014–2023 FMP covers 2.5 million hectares of land in the geographic areas of the Swan, South West and Warren regions.¹

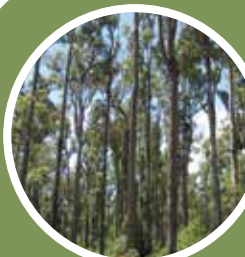
Approximately 62% or 1.5 million hectares is protected in national parks, reserves and other areas not available for harvest.¹ This reserved area includes all old-growth forests.

The main forest tree species that dominate in this area are jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) and wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*). Other species include marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), blackbutt (*Eucalyptus patens*), sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*), tingle and a small area of tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*).

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) manages the harvesting and regrowing according to the requirements of the FMP. The FPC enters into contracts to provide and sell timber products.



1. Conservation Commission of Western Australia. 2013. Forest Management Plan 2014–2023. Conservation Commission of Western Australia, Perth.





The principal timber species are jarrah, karri and marri – all unique to Western Australia. The timbers are internationally renowned for their beauty and particularly in the case of jarrah and karri, their strength.

Jarrah

Jarrah is a medium to tall tree growing up to 50 metres in height. It occurs where the annual rainfall exceeds 600 mm per annum. Jarrah trees can be found from just north of Perth to Manjimup and across to the Stirling Ranges near Albany. However, the best development occurs on the lateritic (gravelly) soils of the Darling Scarp where annual rainfall exceeds 900 mm. In this zone the forest may consist of pure jarrah.

Jarrah is very resilient in harsh conditions partly as a result of its unique root system. A young jarrah seedling develops a woody swelling (lignotuber) at ground level which provides a nutrient store and contains many dormant buds. If a jarrah seedling is damaged by fire or grazing by wild animals, it can quickly reshoot from the lignotuber. In the jarrah forest it is common for a pool of lignotubers to be lying dormant on the forest floor awaiting their chance to grow into trees.

Jarrah often grows in conjunction with marri. In the higher rainfall more fertile landscape, Western Australian blackbutt may also occur with jarrah. However, in the drier conditions to the east of the Darling Scarp, wandoo woodland gradually replaces the jarrah forest.

Karri

On the richer soils in the South West corner of the State, where the rainfall is higher, the jarrah forest is replaced with karri.

Karri grows up to 90 metres in height making it the tallest tree in Western Australia and one of the tallest in the world. It has a long straight trunk and its smooth bark is shed each year. On the best sites it may form pure stands, however on the drier sites it is often found with marri.

Much of the stately karri forests — as seen at Boranup and Big Brook — are in fact regrowth forests, which means they have previously been harvested and regenerated.

Karri is different to jarrah in that it does not form a lignotuber and grows directly from seedlings. For a karri seedling to grow into a sapling, it too requires disturbance, such as fire or windstorm, at the time of establishment.

Marri

Marri is widespread in the South West scattered in amongst the jarrah and karri forests.

Marri is a medium to tall tree growing up to 40 metres in height. It readily regenerates from either seed or lignotubers.

It is commonly known as 'red gum' due to the gum (or kino) that occurs extensively throughout the wood. This unique and natural characteristic makes sawn timber production more difficult than jarrah or karri. However, the intricate patterns of the gum are a desirable feature for furniture and flooring manufacturers.

Silviculture

Silvicultural management of the forest varies depending on the forest type, site and forest structure, as well as the forest management objectives.

What is silviculture?

Silviculture is the practice of managing the establishment, growth, composition, health, and quality of forests to meet diverse needs and values.

Harvesting for timber products occurs on a rotational basis in patches throughout the South West region. The different aged patches create a mosaic of forests at different stages of growth, providing a range of habitat. The total amount of timber removed from the State forest each year is less than the annual growth, making timber management in Western Australia a sustainable activity.

Every tree in a forest competes for sunlight, water and nutrients. Thinning or selective harvesting improves the growth and health of the remaining trees, in turn producing better quality trees for timber production.

Fire also plays an important role in regeneration. It is used to stimulate seed germination, release important nutrients back into the soil and temporarily remove understorey competition so that seedlings can grow.

Where seeds are collected during harvesting, seedlings are used for regeneration. Seedlings can be grown and planted into the same general area following harvest.

Consumers can be confident that Western Australian timber products come from regrowth forests that are ecologically and sustainably managed to international standards for sustainability.²



2. FPC holds internationally recognised certification in Australian Forestry Standards (AFS) and Environmental Management Systems (EMS).