

Comments on the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million

The State Government has released a Draft Green Growth Plan for public review until 8 April 2016. This plan has some positive and negative features as explained below.

Positive Features

1. It provides a strategic assessment of the reserve system for Perth and Peel. This is better than a piecemeal, project-by-project review.
2. In stage 1, 80,000 ha will be converted to Land Act reserves. All of this land is already in the conservation estate and was identified in the System Six Report (1983) and the Bush Forever Report (1997). Some of the proposed new reserves (30,000 ha) are outside the Perth and Peel Regions (eg. Sea Bird, Julimar, Boonanarring)
3. The Peel Regional Park will be established in stages over the next 25 years. This Park has been promised by successive Governments since 1990.
4. The GGP includes expansion of the Canning River Regional Park and extensions to several nature reserves (eg. Forrestdale Lake, Yeal, Wilbinga, etc) This land is already effectively part of these reserves and the only change proposed is to incorporate the additional land into the existing reserves by means of a Reserves Act.
5. The GGP promises 71,000 hectares of land in stage 1 for Carnaby's cockatoo habitat. This land is already in the conservation estate and is part of the 80,000 ha to be converted to secure tenure via a Reserves Bill.
6. Conservation category wetlands will have better protection via the new Wetland Buffers Policy (which has been in preparation since 1997).
7. In stage 2 a further 18,000ha of conservation reserves will be created in every 5-year period up to a total of 90,000 ha over 25 years. 20,000 ha of this land is in private ownership and will be purchased with funds from the MRIF and offsets from developers. The remaining 70,000 ha will be selected from 160,000ha of land that is already in Bush Forever or Regional Parks or vacant crown land.
8. Overall, 80,000ha will be converted to reserves in stage 1, of which 30,000ha is outside the Perth and Peel Region. In stage 2, 70,000 ha of public land, plus 20,000ha of private land will be converted to reserves by 2040. The 70,000ha will be selected from 160,000ha of land held by the Government for conservation purposes and the remaining 90,000ha of Regional Parks and Bush Forever will be rezoned for housing, mining and industry. The net loss will be 70,000ha and the actual loss to the current conservation estate will be 90,000ha.
9. The GGP promises that the conservation estate will be well managed and revegetated where necessary. The source of funds is not specified.
10. 5,000ha of pines will be planted at Yanchep to replace the loss of Carnaby's habitat when the Gngangara Pine Plantation is cleared. More than half of the Carnaby's cockatoos in the Metropolitan Region are currently found in the Gngangara Pine Plantation. The GGP also promises 700 artificial hollows will be created in the wheatbelt for Carnaby's breeding habitat.

Negative Features

1. There will be a loss of 90,000ha of Bush Forever and Regional Parks land in stage 2 of this program. Most of this land is currently managed for conservation and was bought by the WAPC using the MRIF. This land was identified as important for conservation in the System Six and Bush Forever studies. The GGP is not specific about which pieces of conservation land will be lost but all of the land coloured in light blue in the map on page 19 is vulnerable.
2. There is very little new land in the GGP, most of the proposed conservation estate is existing Government land purchased by the WAPC and is already in Regional Parks or Bush Forever but not yet converted to Land Act Reserves. The 170,000ha of “new reserves” is an illusion as most of this land is already being managed for conservation.
3. The new purchases (20,000ha in stage 2 over 25 years) appear to be coming from the MRIF and offsets applied to developers through the EIA process.
4. The land for Carnaby’s habitat is double counted, it is just part of the 170,000ha of conservation land that will be converted to reserves by 2040. There is very little new habitat involved.
5. There will be a huge loss of current Carnaby’s habitat when the 24,348ha of the Gngangara Pine Plantation is cleared. The GGP proposes replacing it with 5,000ha of new pine plantations at Yanchep. This represents a huge loss of food supply for this endangered black cockatoo.
6. A lot of the new land is outside the Perth and Peel Regions (30,000ha in stage 1 plus an unstated amount of stage 2). This will not contribute to biodiversity conservation in the Perth and Peel Regions.
7. The timeframe for the establishment of the Peel Regional Park is too long. It is needed now.
8. The wetland buffer policy should apply to all wetlands in the Perth and Peel Regions, not just to conservation category wetlands as these are just 17% of the remaining wetlands. We have already lost 80% of the original wetlands in this region.
9. There is no mention of the Gngangara Regional Park or the Lower Serpentine Regional Park, both of which have been under discussion for decades.
10. The composition of the Coordination Group that will oversee the implementation of this Plan is not specified. The community should be strongly represented on this Group.
11. The funding mechanism for the management of the conservation estate is not clearly specified. It seems to rely heavily on the MRIF and offset funds from developers. Following the recent heavy cutbacks in the staffing of DPAW this is a matter of great concern.

Suggested Responses

1. The plan is lacking in detail about which Bush Forever and Regional Parks land will be excised for development. The maps provided are quite inadequate for us to carry out this necessary assessment and there is no list provided of the proposed changes to the conservation estate. This makes it almost impossible for the public to adequately assess the Green Growth Plan. A properly detailed map and list of excisions and additions should be provided well before the close of the public comment period.
2. All of the light blue shaded land in stage 2 should be included in conservation reserves as it was selected through careful studies in System Six and Bush Forever.
3. The wetland buffer guidelines should apply to all wetlands in the Swan Coastal Plain Lakes EPP that was recently revoked by the Minister.
4. The Government should commit to establishing the Peel, Gngangara and Lower Serpentine Regional Parks by 2020.
5. The Gngangara Pine Plantation should not be cleared until the Yanchep Pine Plantation is fully established and producing an adequate food supply for the black cockatoos
6. The Coordination Group should contain at least one representative each from the Urban Bushland Council and the Conservation Council and the Peel Preservation Group.
7. The funding for the management of the conservation estate should come from consolidated revenue and should be stated clearly in the GGP and guaranteed for 25 years.
8. Include any local observations you have about missing reserves in your area or threats to existing ones. Some sites may have been omitted entirely (see Beeliar example attached)
9. You could compliment them on any additions to the conservation estate that affect your local area.

Submissions close at 5pm on Friday 8 April 2016

Email to: consultation@dpc.wa.gov.au

Implications for the Beeliar Regional Park

The GGP does not provide any detailed mapping, so it is difficult to assess the proposed inclusions and excisions precisely. According to the text there are no proposed extensions to the Beeliar Regional Park and no specific excisions have been mentioned in the GGP text. However many areas are coloured in light blue, which means that their future is uncertain. Most of the extensions proposed in the 2005 Management Plan are not marked on the map, so this probably means that they will not be conserved.

Areas to remain in the conservation estate (colour code green)

Thomsons lake
Lake Banganup
Brownman Swamps (part) Mt Brown (part)

Areas to be immediately converted to conservation reserves (colour code dark blue)

North Lake (part)
South Lake
Lake Kogolup
The Spectacles (part)

Areas that may be converted to conservation reserves by 2040 (colour code light blue)

Piney Lakes
Lake Booragoon
Blue Gum Park
Murdoch University reserves (3)
North Lake (part)
Bibra Lake
Little Rush Lake
Lake Yangebup
The Spectacles (part)
Manning Lake
Lake Coogee
Brownman Swamps (part)

Areas that are not included in the maps (possible excisions?)

Bollard Bulrush Swamp
Wattleup Lake
Wattleup Swamps
Long Swamp
Fiona Stanley offsets
Market garden swamps
Henderson foreshore reserve