

5 May 2016

Draft Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Locked Bag 3001
WEST PERTH WA 6872
Email: consultation@dpc.wa.gov.au



Outdoors WA submission for the Perth and Peel Green Growth 3.5 Million Feedback.

Outdoors WA would like to thank Premier and Cabinet for the opportunity to comment on the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 Million. We know that there many people that actively participate in outdoor recreation across Western Australia. Given the growth projections within this planning process it is expected that active recreation participation in the outdoors may double within this area. We look forward to outdoor recreation being an integral part of any future planning consideration.

Outdoors WA is the peak body for outdoor recreation and education in WA along with camping and adventure tourism.

Outdoors WA supports the opportunity developed for change. An initial review of the Green Growth 3.5 Million Perth and Peel consultation documentation identifies that the changes proposed may provide a set of conditions where the community can benefit from more appropriate management of the land and also increased access for pursuits such as outdoor recreation.

However these opportunities are not enshrined in this legislative proposal and we would like to see the prospect for public access to the conservation areas and outdoor recreation development strengthened.

Outdoors WA hosted a forum attended by twenty key representatives from across the outdoors sector including activity areas of mountain biking, four wheel driving, bushwalking, horse riding and provides the following feedback to the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 Million process.

At the forum there was a presentation from Premier and Cabinet and a range of issues were tabled, these issues are outlined below and a summary document is attached.

The consultation process has outlined a number of responses across three key areas: planning, nature and recreation. The response is primarily in response to Action Plan H.

Planning

Positives:

The process advocates for a holistic approach to planning that is integrated and takes into account the size of the process and the complexity of managing potentially conflicting land use. This process advocates for a responsible use of resources rather than the piecemeal planning that has not allowed for the collective impacts of land development removing natural areas from conservation or recreational use.

Challenges:

Office: 7 Irvine St BAYSWATER 6053

p: 08 9468 0102

e: admin@outdoorswa.org

www.outdoorswa.org

Facebook: [Outdoors WA Inc](#)

Twitter: [outdoorswa](#)

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The Phase 2 land allocation proposed focuses on the northern section of Perth. However there is no specific plan that is developed on what will happen in the southern areas with population increase i.e. an area like Armadale which is predicted to have significant population growth does not have similar allocated protected nature areas.

The plan does not appear to correlate the land allocation to public accessibility to natural spaces. So how can it be ensured that the conservation reserves will have manageable public usage?

Lack of recreation planning within the whole process:

It is of significant concern that this process has not identified outdoor recreation as a priority land usage to have specific consideration and consultation within the whole process. There is no priority or definition of recreational usage within the 'conservation reserves'.

Consultation

There was also a concern raised that was echoed by a number of stakeholders about the difficulty of community access to the process. The size and complexity of the documentation makes it difficult for small organisations to provide an adequate response that may impact the process. The process and reports presented show a lack of consideration within the whole process for land usage that extends beyond conservation or exploitation for extraction, housing or commercial development.

There is an inherent unfairness in the planning process in putting forward a position of change without consulting all community stakeholders and without giving an equal share of resources towards how this will impact the community.

Flexibility

In addition there is no clear risk mitigation strategy contained within the plan that shows how the process may adapt to changes in knowledge, catastrophic natural events e.g. biosecurity or cultural, social, environmental changes due to climate change.

Nature

The plan sets aside new areas for protection. This will provide a mechanism to identify conservation areas and ensure the conservation of future natural environments. The potential also exists for increased outdoor recreation if the right tenure is utilised in the process. There is incentives within the process for private land owners to link conservation reserves for recreation and nature.

Challenges:

It is unclear within the plan (Action Plan H – Conservation areas) how the areas of conservation value have been identified? Where is the determination of high or low value conservation areas? As this plan is rolled out, how will the Phase 2 and beyond areas be protected before they are acquired in the future? There is risk within this process that the minerals and development areas will be exploited as soon as possible and that later on when the process gets to the phase 2 areas that they may have been degraded in between. How will these areas be protected in the short term?

'Conservation' is a word utilised within the plan that has no clear definition. The presentation from Premier and Cabinet identified that outdoor recreation use 'may' fall into that definition. However this is far from identifying a mechanism to protect the rights of the community to being able to access the outdoors for recreation.

Within the 'Draft Action Plan B Rural Residential 4.2.1 Elevating nominally protected sites' it clearly presents that 'There will however, be instances where the level of protection already afforded by the reserve purpose or classification set out in a management order may not be adequate to ensure protection of the value. For example, if a value falls within a Crown reserve for the purpose of 'recreation' (i.e. Carnaby's feeding vegetation located within a playing fields reserve managed by a local government), the nominal protection of the 'recreation' reserve may not be enough to safeguard the conservation of the environmental value. In such instances, it may be necessary to consider 'elevating' the protection afforded by the reserve.'

In this case, outdoor recreation should not be seen in opposition to the preservation of environmental values, but as an opportunity to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the environment.

It is easy for the word 'conservation' to have a singular meaning that is the sole protection of the original environment and to rule out additional community usage. This would be unsatisfactory to the WA community. If this is what is proposed, then the areas allocated that hold natural recreation value, but not conservation values would need to be sizeably increased. Outdoors WA would seek a more managed view. This could be easily accomplished within this plan by identifying outdoor recreation as a core land use that must be considered and accommodated within any tenure management plan and as a core consideration for any changing tenure or land elevation.

Recreation opportunities

We know that research has shown that connecting to nature can address a range of social conditions and improve people's wellbeing.

Recent studies such as the Beyond Blue to Green report has revealed that there is growing evidence that access to the natural environment improves health and well-being, prevents disease and helps people recover from illness. The report advised that "environmental psychologists have studied the health effects of contact with nature and concluded that humans depend on nature not simply for material requirements – such as water, food and shelter – but also for emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. The range of psychological benefits for people who visit green, open spaces is vast and includes improved mood, lower levels of anxiety, lower stress levels, lower levels of depression and increased physical activity."

With the predicted rise in population, it is essential that the developments proposed take into consideration the need for connection to nature and the need for a close proximity to being able to participate in getting into the natural environment. The plan would be enhanced if there was an implicit understanding of the social and health benefits of nature.

There were also certain opportunities identified that the plan may enhance:

The process may provide for the expansion of additional outdoor recreation places and spaces, such as the ability to link up public riverside access along both Swan and Canning River systems for a continuous waterfront trail.

The larger areas identified within the conservation zones can identify where trailbike and mountain bike facilities particularly north of the Swan River can be placed.

There is opportunity to develop decentralised urban satellite areas in the Hills – sequential urban development's so people can live nearby these special environmental areas. The proximity to green space can provide for increased health and well being of the community.

The plan currently fits within the WA Perth and Peel Mountain Bike Master Plan and may if the process of consultation continues provide increased outdoor recreation opportunities in the long term with community involvement.

Outdoors WA would support the plan to increase outdoor recreation in line with supportive tenure arrangement conditions as outlined below:

Tenure

Outdoors WA supports the development of tenure arrangements that support and maintain historical outdoor recreation and provide for the increased participation that is expected with the 3.5 Million population increase. However in the plan put forward there is no clear process to identify what tenure is going to be allocated for each area. Outdoors WA would like to see additional community consultation with outdoor recreation providers on the potential tenure proposed and the impacts that this may create.

The table below outlines the different tenure and the purpose that each is currently managed under the CALM Act 1984.

Outdoors WA would support those tenure arrangements that allow for historical and increased outdoor recreation opportunities.

These include tenures of State Forest, National and Conservation Parks and Marine parks.

Unfortunately the proposal falls far short in ensuring that any specific outdoor recreation usage will be preserved or developed. There has also to our knowledge not been any process undertaken so far to harmonise existing outdoor recreation infrastructure plans or to consider beyond a tenure allocation as to how appropriate facilities will be developed to support a diversity of community users.

Tenure	Purpose
Indigenous State forests or timber reserves	to achieve the purpose, or combination of purposes, provided for in the proposed management plan under section 55(1a), this can include outdoor recreation.
State forest or timber reserves planted with exotic species	to achieve the optimum yield in production consistent with the satisfaction of long-term social and economic needs
National parks and Conservation parks	to fulfil so much of the demand for recreation by members of the public as is consistent with the proper maintenance and restoration of the natural environment, the protection of indigenous flora and fauna and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest
Nature reserves	to maintain and restore the natural environment, and to protect, care for, and promote the study of, indigenous flora and fauna, and to preserve any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest
Marine nature reserves	the conservation and restoration of the natural environment; and the protection, care and study of indigenous flora and fauna; the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest. NO aquaculture, commercial fishing, recreational fishing and pearling activity shall be carried

	out in a marine nature reserve.
Marine park	allowing only that level of recreational and commercial activity which is consistent with the proper conservation and restoration of the natural environment, the protection of indigenous flora and fauna and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest.
Marine management area	shall be for the purpose of managing and protecting the marine environment so that it may be used for conservation, recreational, scientific and commercial purposes.

Outdoor recreation is further impacted by the additional land use and control imposed by other government departments and lease holdings. For example the Department of Water exercises responsibility over water catchment areas and has determined that there will be no growth in recreation activities within these areas. This thinking is in stark contrast to the predicted population growth and subsequent demand for outdoor recreation spaces. Unless there is a shift in policy then we will see more unauthorised land access and subsequent impact. The same can be said for mining and extractive leases that cross over and sit alongside conservation tenures, unless priority is given for community usage then the community will lose out to commercial development.

It is suggested that as alternative models of use are developed that supportive funding is released to ensure that the land that is secured can have supportive infrastructure to increase participation in the outdoors.

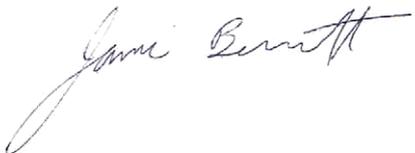
The group

The plan (Action Plan H, Section 4.1) identifies the development of a 'coordination group' that will oversee the Conservation Program. Outdoors WA would strongly encourage that this group has community representation from outdoor recreation groups so that there is a clear mechanism of accountability of feedback on the impacts that the changes are having on participation in the outdoors. We would be interested in providing support by representation on that group.

Outdoors WA would encourage the further development of outdoor recreation opportunities within the Perth and Peel areas. The opportunities may exist within this plan, but a more comprehensive approach to community use should be developed to ensure that the areas set aside are appropriate to accommodate the diverse outdoor activities that the WA landscape affords and should be enjoyed by as much of the community as possible.

We look forward to seeing the development of opportunities for the advancement of outdoor recreation to enable a happier, healthier and active WA community.

Sincerely



Jamie Bennett
Executive Officer
Outdoors WA