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Protecting the remnants

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By Glenis Ayling, Adviser, Information Branch, South Perth

Our native flora and fauna do best in their own environment, so one way of protecting them is to conserve and maintain areas of remnant vegetation throughout our farmlands.

This is the aim of the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme in which the State Government helps private landholders to voluntarily fence off and manage areas of native vegetation on farms.

This vegetation on private land is an important natural resource that contributes to the conservation of flora and fauna, soil and water, and which has aesthetic and amenity value. The protected patches also show us what the land was like before extensive clearing for agriculture.

Areas that have been protected include a 20 ha patch of karri and red and yellow tingle on private property near Walpole. The patch adjoins the Walpole-Nornalup National Park which has good stands of healthy red tingle.

Further north at Waddi Forest north of Coorow, a fenced-off area of northern sandplain mallee country contains a poorly distributed eucalypt, Eucalyptus stowardii.

In 1988-89, the first year of the scheme, 110 farmers received subsidies totalling $290,000 to fence off 7,855 ha of remnant vegetation and to manage it for 30 years. Three-hundred-and-fifty nominations were received, an indication of the tremendous interest in the scheme.

Applications for 1989-90, the second year, closed on February 2, 1990, with some $500,000 being set aside.

Who can nominate?

All Western Australian farmers are entitled to nominate one or more areas of remnant vegetation on their farms. If they are unsuccessful in one year, they can re-nominate the same area in the next year.

Under the terms of the scheme, the State Government contributes a 50 per cent subsidy for the cost of materials and erection of fencing (based on four standard types) to help landholders protect and manage areas of native vegetation on farms. Fencing nominated can be standard cattle fencing, standard sheep fencing, suspension fencing or electric fencing.
The area to be fenced must be five hectares or more, with the remnant vegetation in good condition or able to be regenerated to good condition. Land fenced under the scheme should not be grazed by livestock or managed in any other way that would degrade the conservation value of the vegetation.

Landholders are responsible for the management of these remnant areas, which are protected by a special provision under the Soil and Land Conservation Act. Details are registered as a Heritage Agreement on the land title.

The scheme is supported by the Department of Agriculture, the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committee, Land Conservation District Committees and the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

A total of $1.5 million has been set aside for this three-year Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme, which forms part of an overall land and water care plan for Western Australia's farming areas.

Nomination forms for the 1990-91 year are available from offices of the Department of Agriculture, from Land Conservation District Committees or from Shire Council offices.

All photographs from CALM Research.