

## **South West Water Forum**

### **Response to concerns regarding boundaries for South West Regional Water Plan**

**24 March 2006**

The question of boundaries for the South West Regional Water Plan was raised several times during the first meeting of the South West Water Forum in Bunbury. The Office of Water Strategy (OWS) undertook to consider the issue again and report to the Forum.

The OWS has met with Minister Kobelke and representatives from the Department of Water to discuss the merits of natural resource management (NRM) boundaries (Figure 1) over Regional Development Commission (RDC) boundaries (Figure 2).

The following provides a summary of the respective merits of these two options, together with a diagrammatic representation:

1. NRM boundaries – NRM or catchment boundaries offer an advantage in being able to take a catchment perspective on water resource availability, dependent aquatic ecosystems, and pressures on these. Extending the South West plan boundary to meet the NRM boundary would result in a considerable expansion of the area covered by the Plan (including 33 local government areas). This would increase the amount of information and consultation required for the plan with a significant delay for delivery of the final plan by 6 – 12 months. The federal NRM boundaries also amalgamate the Goldfields, Gascoyne, Wheatbelt, Pilbara and Kimberley regions into one Rangelands zone. This single zone would be too large for a single regional water plan with water issues varying widely between these regions.
2. RDC boundaries - The current Regional Development Commission boundary (with a deviation to include the Harvey Irrigation area) does reflect a community of interest within the south west of common concerns, and development pressures. Expanding this community of interest would result in a need to expand stakeholder and particularly local government representation in the Forum. The current boundary incorporates 12 local government areas.

After consideration of all these issues, it has been confirmed that the Plan will continue to use the modified Regional Development Commission boundary for the South West. However, it was emphasised that recognition will be given in the Plan to the broader NRM zone of influence on the South West, and catchment scale issues and solutions for the South West. The OWS will work closely with stakeholders and agencies to ensure that any boundary issues are identified and proactively managed. It will also be vital to ensure that future adjoining regional plans are able to integrate with the South West Regional Water Plan.

**Figure 1: NRM Boundaries**

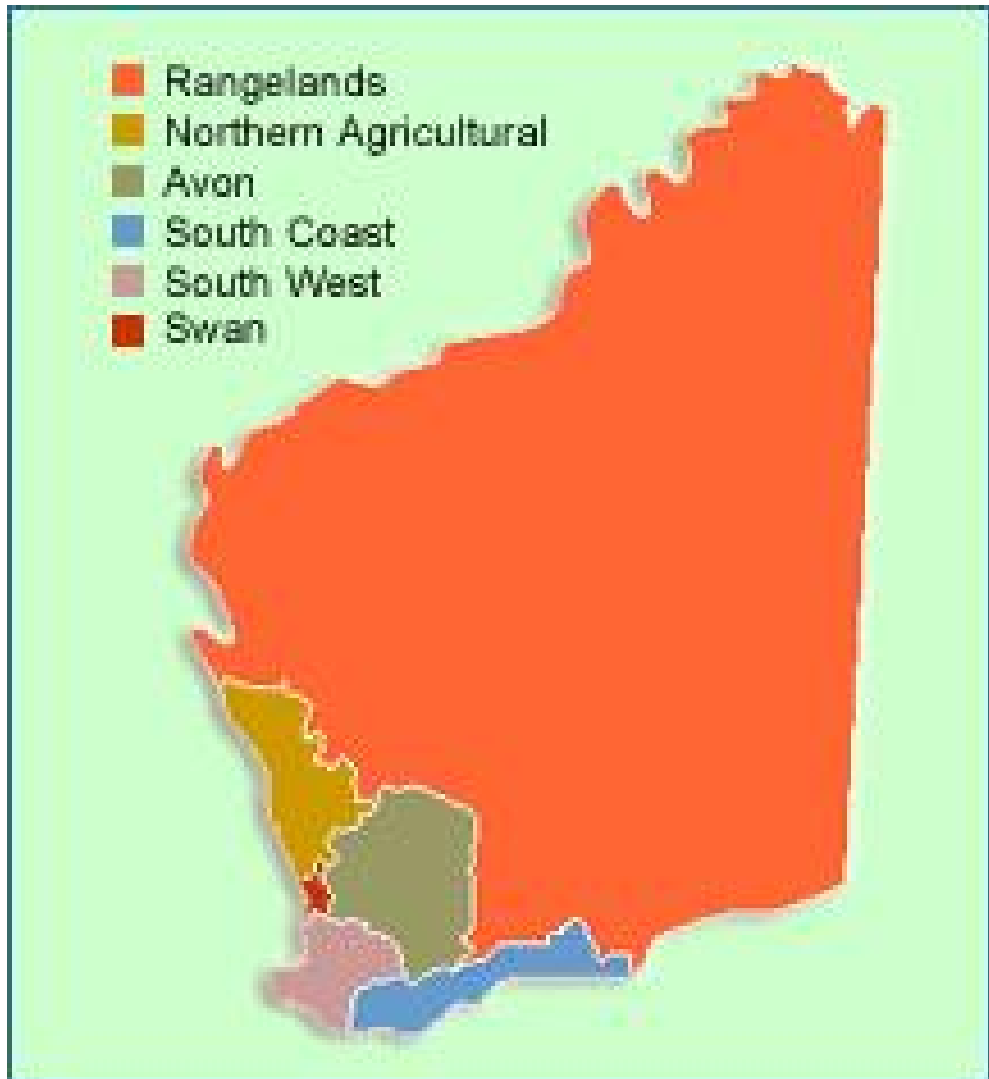


Figure 2: Regional Development Commission Boundaries

