

New EPA chief sees boom as a challenge

AMANDA BANKS

Striking a balance between exploiting the resources boom and protecting the environment is the major challenge lying ahead in WA which has helped attract the new head of the State's environmental watchdog.

Paul Vogel, whose appointment as chairman of the WA Environmental Protection Authority will be announced today, said extracting resources and creating more wealth for community was putting more pressure on the environment.

"The challenge is how you ensure that happens in a sustainable way which has an end benefit for the environment," Dr Vogel said.

He has been lured from a similar position as the head of South Australia's environmental watchdog to return to WA. He has previously worked as director of environment policy with the Department of Premier and Cabinet during former premier Geoff Gallop's leadership between 2001 and 2002.

He was also the director of environmental systems for the then Department of Environmental Protection under the previous Liberal government between 1995 and 2001.

Dr Vogel said the recent State of the Environment report in which the EPA identified air pollution as a major health threat and called for urgent action to tackle an alarming loss of biodiversity, including degradation of wetlands, climate change and an



Paul Vogel: Protection of the biodiverse South-West will be a priority.

increasing consumption of natural resources, provided a clear statement on environmental priorities in WA.

He said the South-West, recognised as one of the most biodiverse areas in the world, was an icon which "well and truly" needed protection.

Environment Minister David Templeman said Dr Vogel would provide strong leadership and independent advice on maintaining the fine balance between promoting sustainable industry and preserving the environment.

"I am extremely pleased we were

able to secure someone of Dr Vogel's calibre to head up this important body," Mr Templeman said. "He has vast experience in environmental issues and will bring a fresh perspective to this challenging role."

Dr Vogel replaces former chairman Wally Cox, who left in May to join a Federal task force investigating the potential to create a new food bowl for the nation by tapping into water supplies in the north.

Dr Vogel will take up his five-year appointment in November. Former EPA chief Barry Carbon is acting in the position for three months.