



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development

## Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3

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Volume 7  
Number 1 *January-February, 1958*

Article 22

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1-1958

### Farm planning - Fences and soil conservation.

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#### Recommended Citation

Marsh, B. a'B. (1958) "Farm planning - Fences and soil conservation.," *Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 3*: Vol. 7: No. 1, Article 22.

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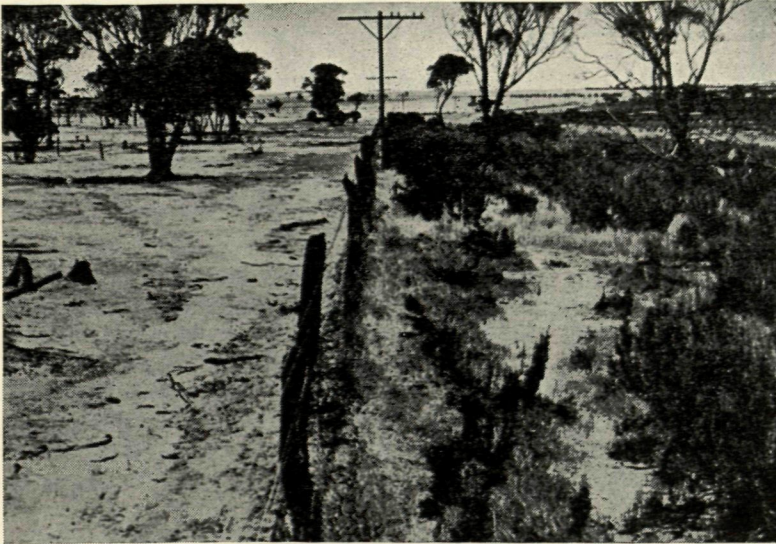
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Fences  
and  
Soil Conservation

# FARM PLANNING

By B. a'B. MARSH, Adviser, Soil Conservation Service



Salt land can grow  
something or nothing.  
Well-timed grazing is  
impossible without  
well-planned fences  
and water supplies

**O**N any wheatbelt farm it is easy to see the need for planning fences for future convenience. Without planning, fences can cause erosion, interfere with erosion control and prevent good stock management. A neat layout of straight fences on clean white paper can be transferred to hilly land to become a nightmare of narrow corners, eroding gateways, boggy and rutted wheeltracks, unsafe cultivation on paddocks which are either overgrazed or undergrazed. After 50 years of frustration waiting for the fence to fall down before it can be replaced, it is surely amazing that even now fences are being replaced along the old fence lines.

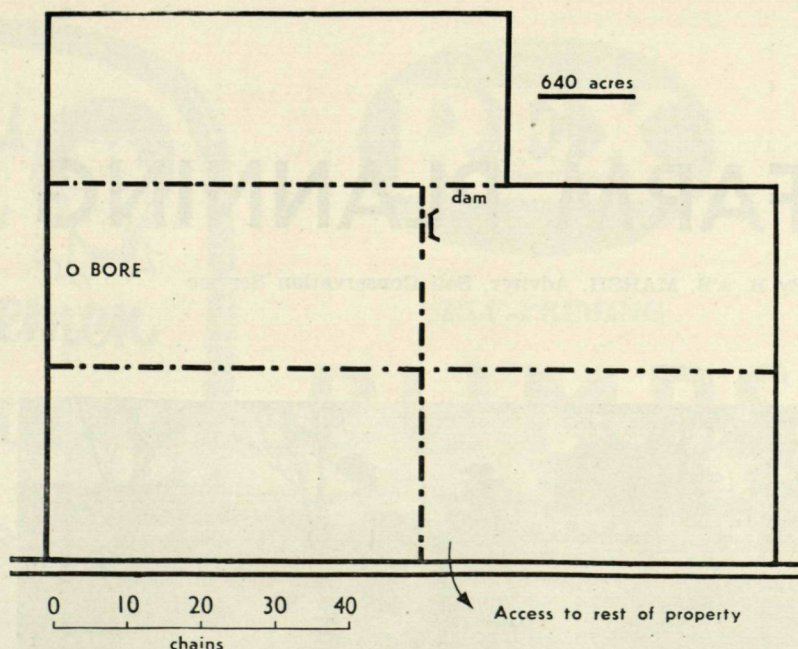
Fences can cause erosion because they are permanent features of a landscape and cause cultivation, tracks and fire-breaks to be in certain places and to travel in certain directions. If the fence is in the wrong place, so are the tracks, fire-breaks and cultivation.

It is possible to plan the fences so that they do not cause erosion, but to do this, the position of the fence has to bear certain relationships to the slopes and natural features.

Fences can interfere with erosion control when placed with little regard to the natural creeks and rocky ridges. Contour working is impossible where fences and rocky ridges or creeks enclose small portions of awkwardly shaped land. Contour banks to help reclaim eroded land cannot conveniently be taken through fences; some fences, therefore, make contour banks impossible. Contour working is often inconvenient when confined by straight fences not situated well with respect to the slope of the land. This



Fig. 1.—Typical fence system



does not mean that a well-planned farm will have contour fences; it is more usual to have the fences placed along natural boundaries, down ridges and along water-courses

As the normal farm has developed in the past, the fences have been placed along survey boundaries or their position

has been determined by the pattern of the clearing, presence of poison, etc. Now that those farms are developed it is possible to see that the fences are not related to topography and convenience.

Most farms are divided into natural clear cultivation areas by a combination of creeks, watercourses, gullies, grassed

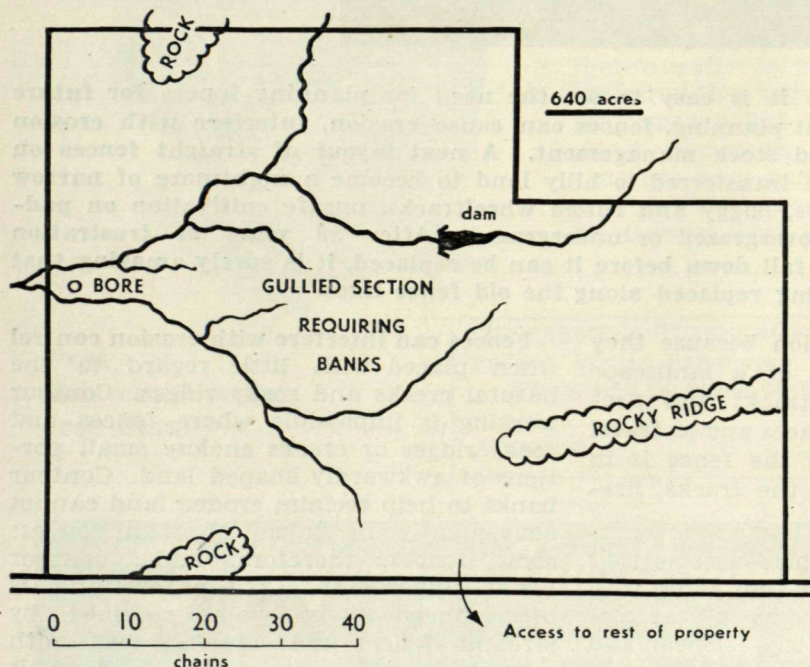


Fig. 2.—Gullies and rocky ridges also divide the farm into irregularly-shaped areas



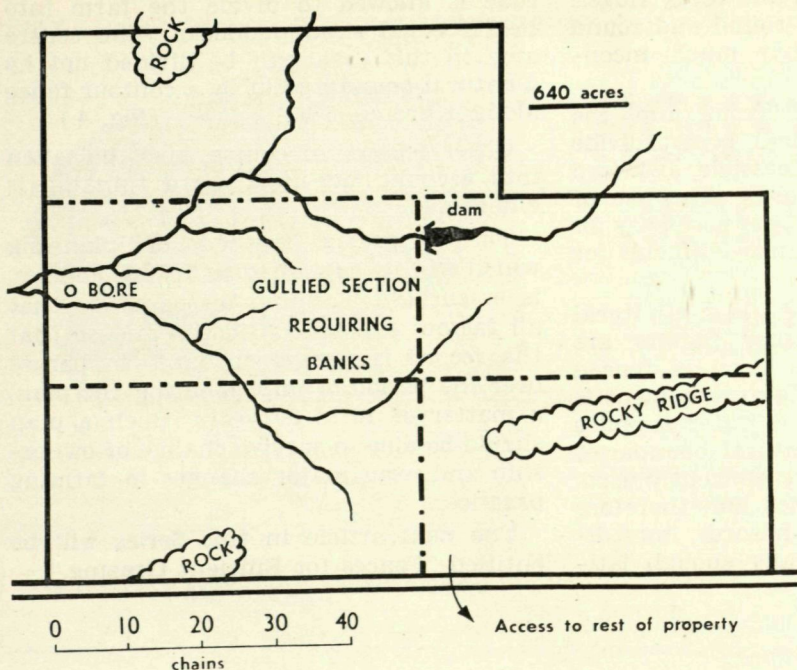


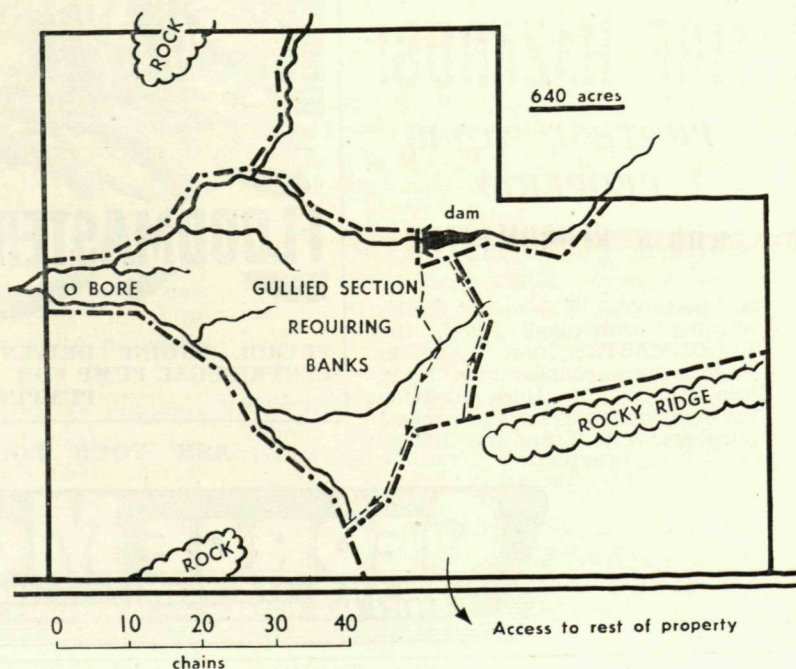
Fig. 3.—Fences plus natural features create cultivation problems

waterways, rocky ridges, trees left for shade and surveyed roads and farm boundaries. As if this isn't enough, most farms are further subdivided and complicated by fences which cut across these natural paddocks.

This diagram shows a typical paddock layout on a 640 acre portion of a farm. The arrangement looks simple and convenient. (Fig. 1.)

A map of the same farm showing the natural features, shows irregularly shaped

Fig. 4.—Fences planned to follow the natural features, where possible, with facilitate erosion control measures





areas bounded by creeks and rocky ridges. These can be cultivated round and round or on the contour without much inconvenience. (Fig. 2.)

Usually the natural layout and the superimposed conventional layout divide the farm into many inaccessible, awkward shaped, small bits of land. The use of contour banks, if they are necessary or become necessary, is made difficult or impossible. (Fig. 3.)

It is possible to fence along natural boundaries providing other factors are also considered. If this farm is fenced by natural boundaries the arrangement is at once less complex and water supplies which often occur on natural boundaries immediately become more efficiently used. The number of boundaries and therefore the number of erosion hazards immediately becomes less. Usually enough lati-

tude is allowed to divide the farm into nearly equal sized paddocks. The centre area in this case, can be divided not by a natural boundary but by a contour fence along a proposed bank line. (Fig. 4.)

Other factors, of course, must be taken into account but much hard thinking is eliminated.

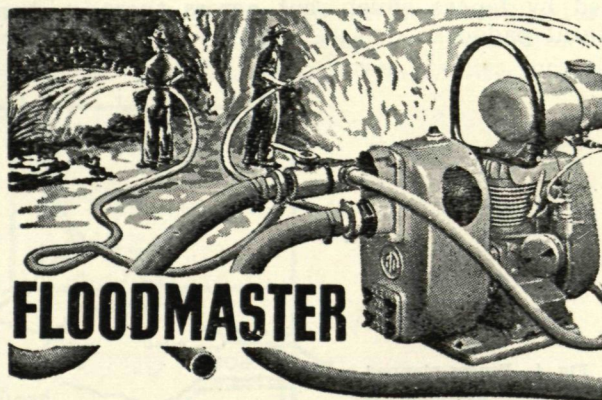
The suggested method of planning which will be explained in future articles, is essentially planning on paper so that all factors can be considered and so that the record is always at hand to peruse over the period of implementing the plan, a matter of 10 to 20 years. Such a plan should be able to survive change of ownership and even major changes in farming practice.

The next article in this Series will be entitled "Fences for Efficient Grazing."

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