



Quarterly performance report

Contaminated sites

1 July to 30 September 2012

October 2012



Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future 

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Contents

Contaminated sites performance reporting.....	1
First quarter 2012–2013.....	1

Figures

Figure 1 Number of sites reported and classified each period.....	3
Figure 2 Distribution of classified sites and parcels across the seven classification categories ...	4

Contaminated sites performance reporting

First quarter 2012–2013

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) classifies 'known or suspected contaminated sites' reported to it, in consultation with the Department of Health, under the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*.

The Contaminated Sites Act commenced on 1 December 2006 and introduced mandatory reporting of 'known or suspected contaminated sites'. Owners and occupiers of such sites, any person who caused or contributed to the contamination and contaminated sites auditors engaged to report on such sites have a duty to report known contaminated sites within 21 days, and suspected contaminated sites as soon as practicable. As a transitional provision, the Act provided a six-month 'period of grace' from its commencement, during which penalties for not reporting within the required timeframes did not apply. This 'period of grace' for reporting historical sites expired on 31 May 2007.

By 30 September 2012, DEC had received 3,218 reports of known or suspected contaminated sites since the Act commenced. Of the total number of reports, 62 per cent were received over the three-month period April to June 2007. Reporting of sites continues with, on average, 14 reports being received each month. Eighty sites were reported between 1 July and 30 September 2012.

After receiving a report of a 'known or suspected contaminated site' DEC, in consultation with the Department of Health, assigns one of seven possible classifications (set out in Schedule 1 of the Act) to the site based on the risk the contamination poses to human health and the environment. Under the Act, sites must be classified within 45 days of receiving the report, unless there are particular circumstances which make it necessary to extend the time (such as where investigation of the site is underway, but DEC is awaiting submission of the resulting technical report). If DEC wishes to extend the classification timeframe, DEC must give written notice, within 45 days of receiving the report, of its decision to extend the timeframe to all parties who must be notified of the site classification (that is, owners and occupiers of the site, relevant public authorities such as the Western Australian Planning Commission and local government authority, the person who reported the site, each person who may be responsible for remediation and any other person whom there is particular reason to notify). By 30 September 2012, DEC had classified a total of 2,327 sites (made up of 14,638 individual lots or land parcels) under the Act. A total of 159 sites were classified between 1 July and 30 September 2012.

Due to the very large peak in the number of sites reported over the period April to June 2007, DEC was unable to classify all the 'peak period' sites within the statutory 45-day timeframe, and it is likely to take a number of years to process this backlog. DEC has prioritised classification of the 'peak period' sites, based on a screening review of the information submitted. Priority was accorded to sites where the available information indicated there may be an immediate or serious risk to human health or the environment that was not being appropriately managed. All

reports received from July 2007 onwards are processed in accordance with the Act's timeframes.

Mandatory auditor's reports (MARs) are required under the Act for some sites, for example, where a site is a source of contamination that has moved offsite to affect other properties or if a site is subject to a regulatory notice or investigation and remediation is conducted to comply with a planning or Ministerial condition.

DEC received nine MARs between 1 July and 30 September 2012. Three MARs have been processed by DEC. The average classification time for these sites was 19 days. DEC is awaiting advice from the Department of Health on five MARs. The one remaining MAR is being processed and is still within the target 21-day processing time.

Figure 1 shows the number of sites reported and classified each financial year until June 2010, and quarterly since July 2010, as well as the steady increase in the total number of classified sites at the end of each period.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of classified sites and parcels across the seven classification categories as at 30 September 2012.

Figure 1 Number of sites reported and classified each period

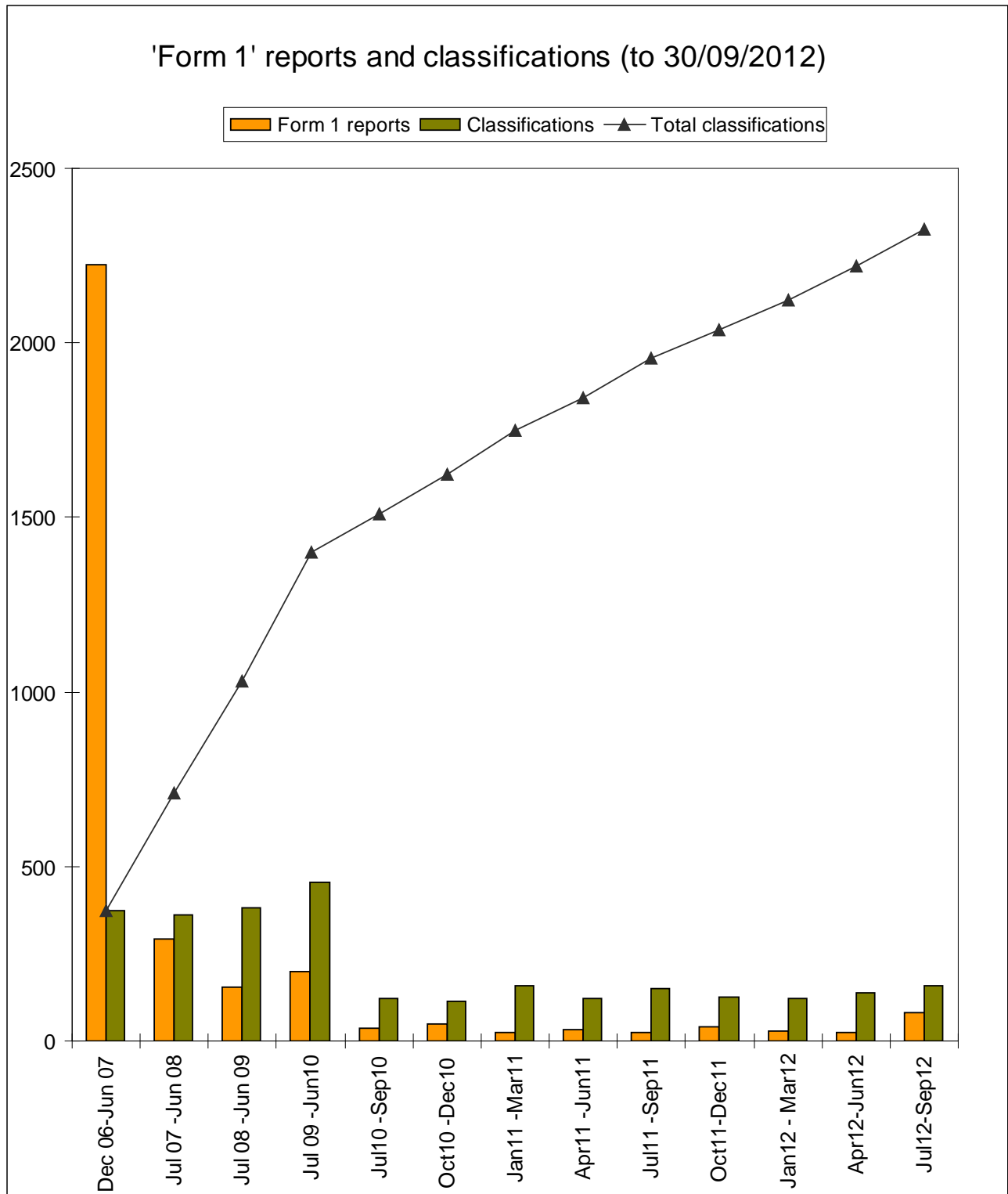


Figure 2 Distribution of classified sites and parcels across the seven classification categories

