

INTER DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP MEETING
LAND CLEARING PROPOSAL ADVICE

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

16 OCTOBER 2003 (73RD MEETING)

Agenda Item 21

Proponent: OWEN AND MARCIA FINGER (DEBESA STATION)

Location: Fitzroy Location 268, Lot 268 on DP 93392, located on Great Northern Highway, approximately 60 km southeast of Derby (Shire of Derby-West Kimberley)

Date NOI received: Registered 12 September 2003 (90 days ends 11 December 2003)

Notified to Clear: 100 ha

Intended use: Pasture production

CALM's Final Advice to the Commissioner:

Rare and Priority Flora

CALM's Rare Flora Database indicates that there are no known populations of the Declared Rare and/or Priority Flora species in the local area (local area is defined as a 50 km radius of the NOI).

CALM's Herbarium Specimen Collection Database indicates that there are 2 specimens of Priority Flora collected within the local area. These include two species of Priority 2 flora: *Erpodium australiense* and *Nymphoides beaglensis*.

Given the above there is a low likelihood of Declared Rare and/or Priority flora occurring within the NOI area.

Threatened Ecological Communities

CALM's Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) Database indicates that there are no known occurrences of Threatened Ecological Communities in the local area.

Threatened fauna and fauna habitat

Search of the CALM's Threatened and Priority Fauna Database indicates that the following 5 species of threatened and priority fauna have been recorded in the local area (50 km radius of the NOIC). These include 1 species of S1 (Rare or is likely to become extinct fauna specifically protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act (WCA)) fauna – Bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*), Black-footed Rock-wallaby (WK ssp) (*Petrogale lateralis* West Kimberley ssp), Orange Leaf-nosed Bat (*Rhinonictus aurantius*); and 4 species of Priority Four fauna – Lakeland Downs Mouse (Kerakenga) (*Leggadina lakedownensis*), Flock Bronzewing (Phaps histrionica), Pictorella Mannikin (*Heteromunia pectoralis*) Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (western ssp) (*Malurus coronatus coronatus*).

Vegetation representation

The vegetation in the area has been mapped as broad vegetation types (Shepherd, D.P, Beeston, G.R. and Hopkins, A.J.M. (2002). "Native Vegetation in Western Australia. Extent, Type and Status". Technical Report 249. Department of Agriculture, Western Australia).

The proposed works are within the following broad vegetation association:

Vegetation Association
Pre-European extent
Current extent
Remaining %
ICUN Class I-IV Reserves %
Other Reserves %

No 764 Shrublands; pindan; Acacia eriopoda, & A. tumida shrubland with scattered low bloodwood & Eucalyptus setosa over ribbon & curly spinifex

581,958

581,958

100

0.0

0.0

The 'National Objective and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation 2001-2005' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, AGPS, Canberra) recognises that the retention of 30% or more of the pre-clearing extent of each ecological community is an appropriate target. This is consistent with the targets recommended in the EPA's Position Statement No 2 ("Environmental Protection of Native Vegetation in Western Australia. Position Statement No. 2." (December 2000).

Given the relatively large portion of No. 764 vegetation association is remaining, the proposed clearing may not have significant impact on these vegetation representations and/or reservation.

Site Visit Report

On 21 October 2003, [REDACTED] (Conservation Officer, Broome, CALM) inspected the area proposed for clearing at Debesa. The area proposed for clearing lies a short distance west of the Debesa Homestead. Proponent said that Debesa is a Special Grazing Lease, i.e. not a standard pastoral lease. The proponent has owned the property for 8 years. Debesa originally ran sheep until the early 1970s. Current operation is cattle grazing. The proponent advised that he plans to grow irrigated sorghum and siratro for hay-making on the proposed cleared area, both for his own use and possibly for sale to other properties.

The proponent proposes to use as the centre-point for his first pivot irrigation system, whose radius is 280m. The pivot will use 30,000 gals/hr. Bore salinity was reported to be c. 100ppm. It is a naturally low point in the landscape and probably represents a partially-infilled swale in the surrounding dunefield. This circular area will have to be cleared of all trees for the operation of the pivot. However, there are very few trees of any size in the affected area. Most of the area to the north and south of the bore is bare and open with minor shrubs. Outside the pivot circle, the proponent advised that it is his intention to retain the principal trees for shade, as he intends to graze cattle on the irrigated hay stubble.

Based on the inspection undertaken, no rare or priority flora species were observed. However, as the inspection was undertaken in the late dry season in a known drought year, it was not possible to assess significant understorey components of the vegetation - notably ephemeral herbs, sedges and annual grasses. The vegetation of the area proposed for clearing has also been negatively affected by heavy cattle grazing and hot fires.

CONCLUSIONS:

CALM advises that proposed clearing has the potential for an impact on the biodiversity values primarily in the area:

- Potential impact Priority flora growing and flowering during the wet season.
- Potential impact on threatened fauna species and fauna habitat. It is noted that the habitat value of the area proposed to be cleared might be low due to its degradation
- Further clearing of native vegetation

Reporting Officer and Phone Number: [REDACTED]
05 December 03