



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 2551/3
Permit type: Purpose

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Robe River Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Iron Ore (Robe River) Agreement Act 1964, Mineral Lease 248SA (AML 70/248)
Local Government Area: Shire of Ashburton
Colloquial name: Mesa D and Mesa E Exploration Drilling

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
32.1		Mechanical Removal	Mineral Exploration

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 23 July 2015

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description

Beard vegetation associations have been mapped for the whole of Western Australia and are useful to look at vegetation extent in a regional context. One Beard vegetation association is located within the application area (GIS Database):

583: Hummock grasslands, sparse shrub steppe; kanji and *Acacia bivenosa* over hard spinifex *Triodia basedowii* and *T.wiseana*.

A flora survey conducted over the application area in November 2007 identified nine vegetation types (Biota, 2008):

Mesa Crests

1. *Acacia arida* shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland.

Stony Slopes

2. *Eucalyptus leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia arida* (*A. bivenosa*) shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.

Flats

3. *Acacia xiphophylla* open shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.

4. *Corymbia zygophylla* low open woodland over *Acacia trachycarpa* open shrubland over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland.

5. *Corymbia candida* scattered low trees over *Acacia ancistrocarpa*, *A. trachycarpa* open heath over *Triodia epactia*, *T. wiseana* hummock grassland.

6. *Acacia bivenosa*, *A. synchronicia* shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland.

7. *Acacia bivenosa*, *A. arida* (*A. ancistrocarpa*,

Clearing Description

Mesa D and Mesa E Exploration Project.
Robe River Ltd have applied to clear up to 32.1 hectares of native vegetation within a total boundary of approximately 447.3 hectares for the purpose of exploration drilling and maintenance of an existing track. The project is located approximately 38 kilometres west of Pannawonica within the Shire of Ashburton.

Vegetation Condition

Excellent: Vegetation structure intact; disturbance affecting individual species, weeds non-aggressive (Keighery, 1994).

Comment

Vegetation condition was assessed by Biota (2008) as in very good condition using a modified Trudgen (1988) scale. This is described as 'some relatively slight signs of damage caused by the activities of European man. For example, some signs of damage to tree trunks caused by repeated fire, the presence of relatively non-aggressive weeds or occasional vehicle tracks'. This description, and photographs supplied by Biota (2008) suggest the vegetation could be ranked as Excellent using the Keighery (1994) scale.

Robe River Ltd intend to develop a total of 309 drill pads of 20 x 20 metres across the two application areas. Clearing will be via bulldozer with the blade up where practicable.

Clearing permit CPS 2551/1 was granted by the Department of Industry and Resources (now the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP)) on 7 August 2008 and authorised the clearing of up to 32.1 hectares of native vegetation within an area totalling approximately 447.3 hectares. CPS 2551/1 was amended on 10 March 2010 to extend the timeframe to complete rehabilitation from 6 months to 12 months following clearing.

A. atkinsiana) open heath over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.

Flow Lines

8. *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland over *Grevillea wickhamii*, *Gossypium robinsonii*, *Acacia tumida*, *A. inaequilatera* tall shrubland over mixed *Acacia* low shrubland over *Triodia epactia* and/or *T. wiseana* hummock grassland.

9. *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland over *Acacia arida* open shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland.

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

Comments

Robe River Ltd has applied to extend the duration of the permit by an additional five years. A further five years has been added to the permit to allow for rehabilitation of cleared areas.

The proposed amendment is unlikely to result in any change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing. The assessment against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision report CPS 2551/2.

Methodology

Planning instrument, Native Title, Previous EPA decision or other matter.

Comments

There is one native title claim over the area under application (WC1999/012) (Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2015). However, the mining tenure has been granted in accordance with the future act regime of the *Native Title Act 1993* and the nature of the act (i.e. the proposed clearing activity) has been provided for in that process, therefore the granting of a clearing permit is not a future act under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

According to available databases, there is one registered Aboriginal Site of Significance within the application area (GIS Database). It is the proponent's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and ensure that no Aboriginal Sites of Significance are damaged through the clearing process.

It is the proponent's responsibility to liaise with the Department of Environment Regulation, Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Water, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

Methodology Department of Aboriginal Affairs (2015)
GIS Database:
- Aboriginal Sites Register System

4. References

- Department of Aboriginal Affairs (2015) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Accessed on 9 July 2015.
- Biota (2008). Vegetation and Flora Survey of AR-07-02502, AR-07-02496 and AR-07-02499 (Mesa D and E) for 2008 drilling. Unpublished report prepared for Pilbara Iron Company by Biota Environmental Sciences.
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Trudgen, M.E. (1998) A Report on Flora and Vegetation of the Port Kennedy Area. Unpublished report prepared for Bowman Bishaw and Associates, West Perth.

5. Glossary

BoM	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DPaW and DER)
DER	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia
DMP	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia
DRF	Declared Rare Flora
DotE	Department of the Environment, Australian Government
DoW	Department of Water, Western Australia
DPaW	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia
DSEWPaC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DotE)

EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Federal Act)
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
PEC	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
RIWI Act	<i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> , Western Australia
s.17	Section 17 of the <i>Environment Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

Definitions:

{DPaW (2013) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia}:-

- T Threatened species:**
Specially protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna or the Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).

Threatened Fauna and Flora are further recognised by DPaW according to their level of threat using IUCN Red List criteria. For example Carnaby's Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus latirostris* is specially protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* as a threatened species with a ranking of Endangered.

Rankings:
CR: Critically Endangered - considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
EN: Endangered - considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.
VU: Vulnerable - considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.
- X Presumed Extinct species:**
Specially protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Presumed Extinct Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Presumed Extinct Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).
- IA Migratory birds protected under an international agreement:**
Specially protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
Birds that are subject to an agreement between governments of Australia and Japan, China and The Republic of Korea relating to the protection of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction.
- S Other specially protected fauna:**
Specially protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- P1 Priority One - Poorly-known species:**
Species that are known from one or a few collections or sight records (generally less than five), all on lands not managed for conservation, e.g. agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, Shire, rail reserves and Main Roads WA road, gravel and soil reserves, and active mineral leases and under threat of habitat destruction or degradation. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more localities but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes.
- P2 Priority Two - Poorly-known species:**
Species that are known from one or a few collections or sight records, some of which are on lands not under imminent threat of habitat destruction or degradation, e.g. national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, State forest, unallocated Crown land, water reserves, etc. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more localities but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes.
- P3 Priority Three - Poorly-known species:**
Species that are known from collections or sight records from several localities not under imminent threat, or from few but widespread localities with either large population size or significant remaining areas of apparently suitable habitat, much of it not under imminent threat. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from several localities but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and known threatening processes exist that could affect them.
- P4 Priority Four - Rare, Near Threatened and other species in need of monitoring:**
(a) Rare. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed, or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and that are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection, but could be if present circumstances change. These species are usually represented on conservation lands.
(b) Near Threatened. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed and that do not qualify for Conservation Dependent, but that are close to qualifying for Vulnerable.
(c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.
- P5 Priority Five - Conservation Dependent species:**

Species that are not threatened but are subject to a specific conservation program, the cessation of which would result in the species becoming threatened within five years.

Principles for clearing native vegetation:

- (a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.
- (b) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia.
- (c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, rare flora.
- (d) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of a threatened ecological community.
- (e) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.
- (f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.
- (g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.
- (h) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to have an impact on the environmental values of any adjacent or nearby conservation area.
- (i) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.
- (j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding.