



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 2551/4
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Robe River Limited

1.3. Property details

Local Government Area: Iron Ore (Robe River) Agreement Act 1964 Mineral Lease 248SA (AML 70/248)
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: |
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| 32.1 | | Mechanical Removal | Mineral exploration |

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 16 April 2020

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation association:
583: Hummock grasslands, sparse shrub steppe; kanji & *Acacia bivenosa* over hard spinifex *Triodia basedowii* & *Triodia wiseana* (GIS Database).

A flora survey was conducted over the application area by Biota during November, 2007. The following vegetation types were recorded within the application area (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* (*Acacia bivenosa*) shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.

Flats

3. *Acacia xiphophylla* open shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.
4. *Corymbia zygomphyla* low open woodland over *Acacia trachycarpa* open shrubland over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland.
5. *Corymbia candida* scattered low trees over *Acacia ancistrocarpa*, *Acacia trachycarpa* open heath over *Triodia epactia*, *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.
6. *Acacia bivenosa*, *Acacia synchronicia* shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland.
7. *Acacia bivenosa*, *Acacia arida* (*Acacia ancistrocarpa*, *Acacia atkinsiana*) open heath over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland.

Flow Lines

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

Clearing Description

Mesa D and Mesa E Exploration Drilling.
Robe River Limited proposes to clear up to 32.1 hectares of native vegetation within a 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.

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| Vegetation Condition | Excellent: Vegetation structure intact; disturbance affecting individual species, weeds non-aggressive (Keighery, 1994). |
| Comment | <p>The vegetation condition was derived from a vegetation survey conducted by Biota (2008). 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.</p> <p>Clearing permit CPS 2551/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 7 August 2008 and was valid from 6 September 2008 to 31 July 2012. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 32.1 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 447.3 hectares, for the purpose of mineral exploration.</p> <p>CPS 2551/2 was granted on 11 March 2010, amending the permit to extend the timeframe to complete rehabilitation from 6 months to 12 months following clearing and to extend the permit duration from 31 July 2012 to 31 July 2015. The size of the area approved to clear (32.1 hectares), the permit boundaries and the permit purpose remained unchanged.</p> <p>CPS 2551/3 was granted on 23 July 2015, amending the permit to extend the duration from 31 July 2015 to 31 July 2025. The size of the area approved to clear (32.1 hectares), the permit boundaries and the permit purpose remained unchanged.</p> <p>On 3 March 2020, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 2551/3 to extend the period in which clearing is authorised from 31 July 2020 to 31 July 2023 and to extend the permit duration from 31 July 2025 to 31 July 2028. The size of the area approved to clear (32.1 hectares), the permit boundaries and the permit purpose remain unchanged.</p> |

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

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| Comments | <p>The permit holder has applied to amend the clearing permit to extend the permit duration and the period in which clearing is authorised by three years, as the project is ongoing.</p> <p>The proposed amendment is unlikely to result in any significant change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing (GIS Database).</p> <p>The amendment application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i>. Environmental information has been reviewed, and the assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision reports CPS 2551/1, 2551/2, and 2551/3.</p> |
| Methodology | <p>GIS Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DPaW Tenure - Hydrography, Lakes - Hydrography, Linear - IBRA Australia - Imagery - Landsystem Rangelands - Pre-European Vegetation - Public Drinking Water Source Areas - Soils, Statewide - Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities boundaries - Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities buffers - Threatened and Priority Flora - Threatened Fauna |

Planning Instrument, Native Title, previous EPA decision or other matter.

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| Comments | <p>There is one native title claim (WC1999/012) over the area under application (DPLH, 2020). This claim has been determined by the Federal Court on behalf of the claimant group. However, the mining tenure has been granted in accordance with the future act regime of the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> 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 <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>.</p> <p>There is one registered Aboriginal Site of Significance within the application area (DPLH, 2020). It is the</p> |
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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 Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

The amendment application was advertised on 23 March 2020 by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

Methodology DPLH (2020)

4. References

- 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.
- DPLH (2020) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. <http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 31 March 2020).
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

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| BoM | Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government |
| DAA | Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia (now DPLH) |
| DAFWA | Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (now DPIRD) |
| DBCA | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia |
| DEC | Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DBCA and DWER) |
| DoEE | Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government |
| DER | Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia (now DWER) |
| DMIRS | Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia |
| DMP | Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia (now DMIRS) |
| DPIRD | Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia |
| DPLH | Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia |
| DRF | Declared Rare Flora |
| DoE | Department of the Environment, Australian Government (now DoEE) |
| DoW | Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER) |
| DPaW | Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA) |
| DSEWPaC | Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DoEE) |
| DWER | Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia |
| 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 |
| TEC | Threatened Ecological Community |

Definitions:

{DBCA (2019) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia}:-

T Threatened species:

Listed by order of the Minister as Threatened in the category of critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable under section 19(1), or is a rediscovered species to be regarded as threatened species under section 26(2) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act).

Threatened fauna is that subset of 'Specially Protected Fauna' listed under schedules 1 to 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for Threatened Fauna.

Threatened flora is that subset of 'Rare Flora' listed under schedules 1 to 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for Threatened Flora.

The assessment of the conservation status of these species is based on their national extent and ranked according to their level of threat using IUCN Red List categories and criteria as detailed below.

- CR Critically endangered species**
Threatened species considered to be “*facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.
- Listed as critically endangered under section 19(1)(a) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 20 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 1 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for critically endangered fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for critically endangered flora.
- EN Endangered species**
Threatened species considered to be “*facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.
- Listed as endangered under section 19(1)(b) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 21 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 2 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for endangered fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for endangered flora.
- VU Vulnerable species**
Threatened species considered to be “*facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.
- Listed as vulnerable under section 19(1)(c) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 22 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for vulnerable fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for vulnerable flora.

Extinct Species:

- EX Extinct species**
Species where “*there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 24 of the BC Act).
- Published as presumed extinct under schedule 4 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for extinct fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for extinct flora.
- EW Extinct in the wild species**
Species that “*is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; and it has not been recorded in its known habitat or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 25 of the BC Act).
- Currently there are no threatened fauna or threatened flora species listed as extinct in the wild. If listing of a species as extinct in the wild occurs, then a schedule will be added to the applicable notice.

Specially protected species:

Listed by order of the Minister as specially protected under section 13(1) of the BC Act. Meeting one or more of the following categories: species of special conservation interest; migratory species; cetaceans; species subject to international agreement; or species otherwise in need of special protection.

Species that are listed as threatened species (critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable) or extinct species under the BC Act cannot also be listed as Specially Protected species.

- MI Migratory species**
Fauna that periodically or occasionally visit Australia or an external Territory or the exclusive economic zone; or the species is subject of an international agreement that relates to the protection of migratory species and that binds the Commonwealth; and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 15 of the BC Act).
- Includes birds that are subject to an agreement between the government of Australia and the governments of Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA) and The Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA), and fauna subject to the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals* (Bonn Convention), an environmental treaty under the United Nations Environment Program. Migratory species listed under the BC Act are a subset of the migratory animals, that are known to visit Western Australia, protected under the international agreements or treaties, excluding species that

are listed as Threatened species.

Published as migratory birds protected under an international agreement under schedule 5 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

CD Species of special conservation interest (conservation dependent fauna)
Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 14 of the BC Act).

Published as conservation dependent fauna under schedule 6 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

OS Other specially protected species
Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 18 of the BC Act).

Published as other specially protected fauna under schedule 7 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

P Priority species:

Possibly threatened species that do not meet survey criteria, or are otherwise data deficient, are added to the Priority Fauna or Priority Flora Lists under Priorities 1, 2 or 3. These three categories are ranked in order of priority for survey and evaluation of conservation status so that consideration can be given to their declaration as threatened fauna or flora.

Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, or meet criteria for near threatened, or that have been recently removed from the threatened species or other specially protected fauna lists for other than taxonomic reasons, are placed in Priority 4. These species require regular monitoring.

Assessment of Priority codes is based on the Western Australian distribution of the species, unless the distribution in WA is part of a contiguous population extending into adjacent States, as defined by the known spread of locations.

P1 Priority One - Poorly-known species
Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less) which are potentially at risk. All occurrences are either: very small; or on lands not managed for conservation, e.g. agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, road and rail reserves, gravel reserves and active mineral leases; or otherwise under threat of habitat destruction or degradation. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.

P2 Priority Two - Poorly-known species
Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less), some of which are on lands managed primarily for nature conservation, e.g. national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other lands with secure tenure being managed for conservation. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.

P3 Priority Three - Poorly-known species
Species that are known from several locations, and the species does not appear to be under imminent threat, or from few but widespread locations 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 locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and known threatening processes exist that could affect them. Such species are in need of further survey.

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 are close to qualifying for vulnerable but are not listed as Conservation Dependent.
(c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.

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.