



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 2552/8
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: Bungaroo Mineral and Hydrological Exploration

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
150		Mechanical Removal	Mineral exploration, hydrological drilling, geotechnical investigations, bore field and associated activities.

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 30 April 2020

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 in a regional context. Two Beard vegetation associations are mapped within the application area (GIS Database):

82: Hummock grasslands, low tree steppe; snappy gum over *Triodia wiseana*; and

609: Mosaic: Hummock grasslands; open low tree steppe; bloodwood with sparse kanji shrubs over soft spinifexes / Hummock grasslands, open low tree steppe; snappy gum over *Triodia wiseana* on a lateritic crust.

Several vegetation and flora surveys have been carried out over the Bungaroo project area by Biota Environmental Sciences (2007). Biota Environmental Sciences reported 21 vegetation associations within the previous permit boundary which are detailed in Decision Report 2552/4.

A review of flora surveys in 2015 identified the following vegetation associations within the additional area which was added to the permit boundary for CPS 2552/5 (Rio Tinto, 2015):

Vegetation of Plains and Rises

ChAbTe: *Corymbia hamersleyana* scattered low trees over *Acacia bivenosa* open shrubland over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

ChAiApyTe: *Corymbia hamersleyana* open woodland over *Acacia inaequilatera*, *A. pyrifolia* tall open shrubland over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

ChAiTe: *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland over *Acacia inaequilatera* tall open shrubland over mixed scattered shrubs over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

ChAiTw: *Corymbia hamersleyana* scattered low trees over *Acacia inaequilatera* scattered tall shrubs over mixed scattered shrubs over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland;

ChAiTw/ChAiApyT: *Corymbia hamersleyana* scattered low trees over *Acacia inaequilatera* scattered tall shrubs over mixed scattered shrubs over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland / *Corymbia hamersleyana* open woodland;

ChAiTw/ChAiTe: *Corymbia hamersleyana* scattered low trees over *Acacia inaequilatera* scattered tall shrubs over mixed scattered shrubs over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland / *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland;

Vegetation of Tall Stony Hills and Breakaways

AiT_w: *Acacia inaequilatera* tall open shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland;

EIAiAbT_w: *Eucalyptus leucophloia* subsp. *leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia inaequilatera*, *A. bivenosa* scattered tall shrubs over *Triodia wiseana* hummock grassland;

EIAiAprT_w: *Eucalyptus leucophloia* subsp. *leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia inaequilatera*, *A. pruinocarpa* scattered tall shrubs over *Triodia wiseana* (*Triodia* sp. Robe River (M.E. Trudgen et al. MET 12367)) open hummock grassland;

EIAmaT_w: *Eucalyptus leucophloia* subsp. *leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia maitlandii* open heath over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland;

Vegetation of Drainage Areas (Major Creeklines)

ChGpT_e: *Corymbia hamersleyana* scattered low trees over *Grevillea pyramidalis* scattered tall shrubs over *Tephrosia rosea* var. *glabrior* scattered low shrubs over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

EvApyAtrT_e: *Eucalyptus victrix* scattered low trees over *Acacia pyrifolia*, *A. trachycarpa* open shrubland over *Tephrosia rosea* var. *glabrior* low shrubland over *Triodia epactia* very open hummock grassland;

EvC_v: *Eucalyptus victrix* open forest over *Cyperus vaginatus* sedgeland;

Vegetation of Drainage Areas (Minor Flowlines)

AcT_e: *Acacia coleii* var. *ileocarpa* tall open shrubland over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

ApyGOaGpyTeT_w: *Acacia pyrifolia*, *Gossypium australe*, *Grevillea pyramidalis* shrubland to tall shrubland over *Tephrosia rosea* var. *glabrior* low open shrubland over *Triodia epactia*, *T. wiseana* open hummock grassland;

ChAeGwT_e: *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland over *Acacia elachantha*, *Grevillea wickhamii* tall open scrub over *Triodia epactia* hummock grassland;

ChAtuT_wT_e: *Corymbia hamersleyana*, *Eucalyptus leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia tumida* var. *pilbarensis*, *Petalostylis labicheoides* tall open scrub over *Triodia wiseana* open hummock grassland;

Cleared areas

Previously cleared or disturbed areas, such as tracks.

Clearing Description

Bungaroo Mineral and Hydrological Exploration.
Robe River Limited proposes to clear up to 150 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 3,086 hectares, for the purpose of mineral exploration, hydrological drilling, geotechnical investigations, bore field and associated activities. The project is located approximately 130 kilometres east of Onslow, within the Shire of Ashburton.

Vegetation Condition

Pristine: No obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994);

to

Completely Degraded: No longer intact; completely/almost completely without native species (Keighery, 1994).

Comment

Clearing permit CPS 2552/1 was granted by the Department of Industry and Resources (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 21 August 2008 and authorised the clearing of up to 21 hectares of native vegetation within an area totalling approximately 178 hectares.

Amended permit CPS 2552/2 was granted on 11 March 2010 to extend the timeframe to complete rehabilitation from 6 months to 12 months following clearing.

The Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) initiated an amendment (CPS 2552/3) to the permit on 30 October 2012 to correct an administrative error. The clearing area and permit boundary remained unchanged.

Amended permit CPS 2552/4 was granted on 23 October 2014, increasing the permit boundary from 178 hectares to approximately 2,307 hectares. The area of clearing authorised remained unchanged.

CPS 2552/5 was granted on 9 July 2015, increasing the authorised clearing from 21 hectares to 25 hectares, increasing the permit boundary from approximately 2,307 hectares to approximately 3,086 hectares, adding hydrological drilling, geotechnical investigations and associated activities to the purpose on the permit and extending the duration of the permit by an additional five years.

CPS 2552/5 was amended on 7 April 2016 to increase the area approved to clear from 25 hectares to 150 hectares, and to amend the annual reporting date from 31 July to 30 June each year. There was no change to the permit boundary.

CPS 2552/6 was amended 3 May 2018 to include bore field as a purpose of clearing. The amount of clearing authorised and the clearing boundary remained unchanged.

On 3 March 2020, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 2552/7 to extend the period in which clearing is authorised and extend the permit duration.

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

Comments

The Permit Holder has applied to amend the clearing permit to extend the period in which clearing is authorised by three years to 31 July 2023. Subsequently the permit duration also had to be extended by three years to allow for the completion of the rehabilitation requirements. The size of the area approved to clear (150 hectares) and permit boundary remain the same. The amendment is unlikely to result in any significant change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing (GIS Database).

The amendment application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. Environmental information has been reviewed, and the assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in the previous decision reports.

Methodology

GIS Database:

- Hydrography, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- IBRA Australia
- Imagery
- 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.

Comments

There is one native title claim/s over the area under application (DPLH, 2020). This claim has been registered 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 *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*.

There are eight registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance within the application area (DPLH, 2020). 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 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 6 April 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 (2007) A Vegetation and Seasonal Flora Survey of the Bungaroo Trial Pit and Transport Corridor to Mesa J, and Sampling of the Broader Bungaroo Valley. Report prepared for Robe River Limited, by Biota Environmental Sciences Pty Ltd.
- DPLH (2020) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. <http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 15 May 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.
- Rio Tinto (2015) Desktop Flora, Vegetation and Fauna Habitat Assessment at Bungaroo, Robe Valley. Supporting information for clearing permit amendment CPS 2552/5.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

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.