



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 3901/3
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: GME Resources Limited

1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 39/717
Mining Lease 39/819
Miscellaneous Licence 39/177
Local Government Area: Shire of Leonora
Colloquial name: Hepi Trail Mine

1.4. Application

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

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 24 September 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 WA, and are a useful tool to examine the vegetation extent in a regional context. One Beard vegetation association is located within the area proposed to be cleared (GIS Database):

- Vegetation association 18: Low woodland; mulga (*Acacia aneura*).

A vegetation survey of the project area was completed in April 2007 by Paul Armstrong & Associates (2007). As a result of the survey, five different vegetation communities were identified within the project area. These are:

1. Mulga Scrub on uplands and slopes: The upper stratum was Scrub, dominated by *Acacia aneura* growing 3 to 5 metres tall; over Open Low Scrub with no species dominating; over Open Dwarf Scrub, dominated by *Scaevola spinescens* growing to 0.7 metres tall; over Open Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Eremophila pantonii* growing to 0.4 metres tall;

2. Low Shrubland on plain: The upper stratum was scattered patches of Scrub dominated variously by *Acacia aneura* or *Hakea preissii* growing 2 to 4 metres tall; over Open Dwarf Scrub with no species dominating growing to 1.5 metres tall; over Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Maireana triptera* and *Frankenia georgei* growing to 0.3 metres tall;

3. Mulga Scrub on plains: The upper stratum was Scrub with occasional patches of Thicket dominated by *Acacia aneura* growing 3 to 5 metres tall; over Open Low Scrub dominated by *Acacia tetragonophylla* and *Eremophila georgei* growing to 1.5 metres tall; over Open Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Scaevola spinescens* growing to 0.6 metres tall; over Very Open Low Grass dominated by *Enneapogon caeruleus* growing to 0.2 metres tall;

4. Mulga Open Scrub at base of hills: This association occurred at the base of the hills where runoff was greater than that which occurs on the low plains. The dominant and upper stratum was Open Scrub dominated by *Acacia aneura* growing to 3 metres tall; over Open Low Scrub with no species dominating; over Open Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Scaevola spinescens* growing to 0.5 metres tall; and

5. Mulga Thicket along drainage lines: The upper stratum was Thicket dominated by *Acacia aneura* growing 4 to 6 metres tall; over Low Heath dominated by *Scaevola spinescens* growing to 0.7 metres tall; over Open Dwarf Scrub D dominated by *Eremophila pantonii* growing to 0.4 metres tall.

The application area shows signs of disturbance in the form of exploration gridlines, laydown area and access tracks (Paul Armstrong & Associates, 2007). The entire application area has been subject to grazing as it is located within the Minara Pastoral Station (GIS Database).

Three weeds of significance were identified during the flora survey. These were: Pie Melon (*Citrullus lanatus*),

Black Berry Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*) and Prickly Paddy Lemon (*Cucumis myriocarpus*) (Paul Armstrong & Associates, 2007).

Clearing Description	Hepi Trial Mine Project. GME Resources Limited (GME) has applied to clear up to 47 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 49.5 hectares for the purpose of Mineral Production. The application area is approximately 45 kilometres east of Leonora, in the Shire of Leonora.
Vegetation Condition	Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994).
Comment	Clearing permit CPS 3901/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum on 30 December 2010 and authorised the clearing of 47 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 47 hectares for the purpose of mineral production. On 15 September 2011, the permit was amended to increase the clearing permit boundary by 2.5 hectares.

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

Comments

GME has applied to amend CPS 3901/2 for the purpose of extending the permit expiry date from 30 September 2015 to 30 September 2018.

The amendment to extend the permit duration by three years is unlikely to result in any significant change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing. The size of the area approved to clear (47 hectares) and the permit boundary remain unchanged.

The assessment against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision report CPS 3901/2.

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

Comments

There are no native title claims over the application area (Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), 2015). 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 (ie. 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 no registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance occurring in the vicinity of the application area (DAA, 2015). 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, the Department of Water, and the Department of Parks and Wildlife, 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 DAA (2015)

4. References

DAA (2015) Aboriginal Heritage Enquiry System. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Western Australia.
<http://maps.dia.wa.gov.au/AHIS2/default.aspx>.

Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.

Paul Armstrong & Associates (2007) Vegetation Survey and Rare Flora Search of the Hepi Project Area - Niwest Laterite Project. Unpublished report prepared for GME Resources Pty Ltd.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

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.