



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 4912/3
Permit type: Purpose

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: **Whitfield Minerals Pty Ltd**

1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 63/148
Mining Lease 63/170
Mining Lease 63/528
Local Government Area: Shire of Dundas
Colloquial name: Lake Cowan Gypsum Operations

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
40		Mechanical	Gypsum Mining

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 12 March 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. Three Beard vegetation associations have been mapped within the application area (GIS Database):

9: Medium woodland; coral gum (*Eucalyptus torquata*) & goldfields blackbutt (*E. lesouffii*);

125: Bare areas; salt lakes; and

3106: Medium woodland; salmon gum & Dundas blackbutt.

A level 1 desktop and reconnaissance flora survey of the application area was undertaken by Native Vegetation Solutions (2012) which identified the following five vegetation types within the application area:

- *Eucalyptus salicola* woodland on gypsum dunes;
- *Casuarina pauper* and *Callitris columellaris* over *Melaleuca quadrifaria* and *Darwinia* sp. Karonie shrubland;
- *Tecticornia* shrubland;
- *Eucalyptus salicola* open woodland over *Casuarina pauper*, *Callitris columellaris* and *Melaleuca quadrifaria* shrubland; and
- *Casuarina pauper* and *Callitris columellaris* over *Melaleuca quadrifaria* shrubland.

Clearing Description Lake Cowan Gypsum Operations.
Whitfield Minerals Pty Ltd (Whitfield) proposes to clear 40 hectares of native vegetation within a total boundary area of approximately 170.8 hectares for the purpose of gypsum mining. The project is located approximately 5.6 kilometres south-west of Norseman, in the Shire of Dundas.

Vegetation Condition Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994).
To
Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

Comment

The vegetation condition was assessed during a flora survey of the application area conducted by Native Vegetation Solutions (2012).

Clearing Permit CPS 4912/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) on 5 July 2012 and authorised the clearing of 8 hectares of native vegetation within an area totalling approximately 170.8 hectares. Amended clearing Permit CPS 4912/2 was granted on 30 January 2014 increasing the area authorised to be cleared from 8 hectares to 20 hectares.

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

Comments

Whitfield has applied to increase the amount of clearing authorised from 20 hectares to 40 hectares and change the permit expiry date from 31 July 2017 to 31 July 2020. Whitfield is not proposing to amend the permit boundary.

As the permit boundary is not being amended, the assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles is consistent with the assessment contained in Decision Report CPS 4912/2. There were no significant environmental issues identified in the previous assessments of CPS 4912/1 or CPS 4912/2, therefore the clearing of an addition 20 hectares is not likely to have a significantly greater impact than what has already been approved.

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

Comments

There is one Native Title Claim (WC1999/002) over the area under application (GIS Database). This claim has been registered with the National Native Title Tribunal 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 no registered Aboriginal Sites 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, 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.

The amendment application was advertised on 16 February 2015 by the Department of Mines and Petroleum inviting submissions from the public. There were no submissions received.

Methodology GIS Database:

- Aboriginal Sites of Significance
- Native Title Claims – Registered with the NNTT

4. References

- Keighery, B.J. (1994) *Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community*. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Native Vegetation Solutions (2012) *Level 1 Flora and Vegetation Survey of Lake Cowan Gypsum Operations*. Prepared for Whitfield Minerals Pty Ltd. June 2012.

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.