



# Clearing Permit Decision Report

## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 4984/3  
Permit type: Purpose Permit

### 1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Atlas Iron Limited

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 45/1179  
Miscellaneous Licence 45/204  
Miscellaneous Licence 45/207  
Local Government Area: Shire of East Pilbara  
Colloquial name: Abydos Project

### 1.4. Application

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

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant  
Decision Date: 21 September 2017

## 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. One Beard vegetation association has been mapped within the application area (GIS Database):

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

A Level 2 flora survey was conducted by Woodman Environmental Consulting (Woodman) over the larger Abydos area during 26-30 May 2011, 7-11 July 2008, 24 May-2 June 2011, 28 July-4 August 2011, 16-23 August 2011 and 22 September 2011. There were seven floristic community types recorded within the application area (Woodman, 2012):

**FCT 1:** Low isolated trees of *Corymbia hamersleyana* over tall sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Acacia tumida* var. *pilbarensis*, *Acacia pyrifolia* var. *pyrifolia* and *Grevillea wickhamii* subsp. *hispidula* over low sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Corchorus laniflorus* and *Bonamia rosea* over low grassland dominated by *Triodia epactia* and/or *Chrysopogon fallax* on red-brown sandy and clay loam on floodplains and in broad drainage lines;

**FCT 2a:** Tall open shrubland of mixed species dominated by *Grevillea wickhamii* subsp. *hispidula*, *Acacia tumida* var. *pilbarensis* and *Acacia orthocarpa* over low sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Dampiera candidans*, *Goodenia stobbsiana* and *Corchorus laniflorus* over low hummock grassland dominated by *Triodia epactia* or *Triodia bitextura* on red-brown silty loams over ironstone on hill crest and slopes;

**FCT 4:** Low isolated trees of *Corymbia hamersleyana* or *Eucalyptus leucophloia* subsp. *leucophloia* over tall sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Acacia inaequilatera*, *Acacia acradenia* and *Grevillea wickhamii* subsp. *hispidula* over low sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Acacia ptychophylla*, *Acacia spondylophylla*, *Acacia hilliana* and *Dampiera candidans* over low hummock grassland of mixed *Triodia* species dominated by a combination of *Triodia wiseana*, *Triodia brizoides* and *Triodia lanigera* on brown sandy clay loams over ironstone, calcrete or sandstone on hill crests and slopes, and occasionally on undulating plains and low rises;

**FCT 5:** Low isolated trees of *Corymbia hamersleyana* over tall sparse shrubland of mixed species dominated by *Acacia inaequilatera* and *Acacia acradenia* over low isolated shrubs of mixed species including *Corchorus parviflorus* and *Ptilotus astrolasius* var. *astrolasius* over low hummock grassland of mixed *Triodia* species dominated by *Triodia* aff. *basedowii* and *Triodia wiseana* on brown sandy clay loams over calcrete or ironstone on undulating plains, low rises and low hills;

**FCT 6:** Low isolated trees of *Eucalyptus leucophloia* subsp. *leucophloia* over tall sparse shrubland of mixed *Acacia* species including *Acacia tumida* var. *pilbarensis* over low sparse shrubland of mixed species including *Acacia ptychophylla* over low hummock grassland dominated by *Triodia brizoides* with *Eriachne mucronata* also common on red to red-brown sandy and clay loams over ironstone on hill slopes, crests and in gorges;

**FCT 7:** Tall sparse shrubland of mixed species dominated by *Grevillea wickhamii* subsp. *hispidula*, *Acacia ancistrocarpa* and/or *Acacia acradenia* over low isolated shrubs of mixed species over low hummock grassland dominated by *Triodia lanigera* or occasionally *Triodia epactia* on red-brown sandy and clay loams, occasionally with ironstone or quartz pebbles, on undulating plains and flats; and

**FCT 10:** Mid woodland of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* subsp. *obtusa*, *Eucalyptus vitrix* and *Melaleuca argentea* over tall shrubland of mixed species including *Acacia ampliceps*, *Acacia trachycarpa*, *Acacia pyrifolia* var. *pyrifolia*, *Acacia tumida* var. *pilbarensis*, *Atalaya hemiglaucula*, *Melaleuca glomerata* and *Melaleuca linopylla* over low open grassland and sedgeland of mixed species including *Triodia epactia*, *Triodia longiceps*, *Cenchrus ciliaris* and *Cyperus vaginatus* on red and brown sands, loams and silts in river and major creek channels and gorges.

<b>Clearing Description</b>	Abydos Project. Atlas Iron Limited proposes to clear up to 282 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 480 hectares, for the purposes of mineral production. The project is located approximately 65 kilometres west of Marble Bar, in the Shire of East Pilbara.
<b>Vegetation Condition</b>	Pristine: No obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994);  to  Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994).
<b>Comment</b>	Clearing permit CPS 4984/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS)) on 30 August 2012 and was valid from 22 September 2012 to 22 September 2017. The permit authorised the clearing of 282 hectares of native vegetation, within a permit boundary of approximately 282 hectares, for the purposes of mineral production.  CPS 4984/2 was granted on 6 December 2012, increasing the permit boundary to approximately 480 hectares to allow more flexibility in the location of the proposed clearing. The area approved to clear remained unchanged.  On 18 September 2017 the permit holder applied to amend CPS 4984/2 to extend the permit duration to 31 December 2019. The area approved to clear, and permit boundaries are to remain unchanged.

### 3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

#### Comments

Atlas Iron Limited has applied to amend the clearing permit to extend the permit duration to 31 December 2019. The size of the area approved to clear (282 hectares), and the permit boundaries remain unchanged.

The amendment is unlikely to result in any significant change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing (GIS Database). The assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in previous versions of the decision report.

#### Methodology

GIS Database:  
- Hydrography, linear  
- Pre-European Vegetation  
- Threatened and Priority Flora  
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities (TEC/PEC) - Boundaries  
- Threatened Fauna

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

#### Comments

There are two native title claims over the area under application (DPLH, 2017). These claims have been registered with the Native Title Tribunal on behalf of the claimant group (DPLH, 2017). However, the mining tenements have 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 is one registered Aboriginal Site of Significance within the application area (DPLH, 2017). 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.

**Methodology** DPLH (2017)

## 4. References

- DPLH (2017) Aboriginal Heritage Enquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.  
<http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 19 September 2017).
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Woodman (2012) Atlas Iron Limited Abydos Direct Shipping Ore Project Flora and Vegetation Studies. Report prepared for Atlas Iron Ltd, by Woodman Environmental Consulting, March 2012.

## 5. Glossary

### Acronyms:

<b>BoM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
<b>DAA</b>	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia (now DPLH)
<b>DAFWA</b>	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (now DPIRD)
<b>DBCA</b>	Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
<b>DEC</b>	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DBCA and DWER)
<b>DEE</b>	Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government
<b>DER</b>	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia (now DWER)
<b>DMIRS</b>	Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia
<b>DMP</b>	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia (now DMIRS)
<b>DPIRD</b>	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
<b>DPLH</b>	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
<b>DRF</b>	Declared Rare Flora
<b>DoE</b>	Department of the Environment, Australian Government (now DEE)
<b>DoW</b>	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
<b>DPaW</b>	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
<b>DSEWPaC</b>	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DEE)
<b>DWER</b>	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
<b>EP Act</b>	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
<b>EPBC Act</b>	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Federal Act)
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information System
<b>ha</b>	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
<b>IBRA</b>	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
<b>PEC</b>	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
<b>RIWI Act</b>	<i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> , Western Australia
<b>TEC</b>	Threatened Ecological Community

### Definitions:

{DPaW (2017) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia}:-

**T** **Threatened species:**  
Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedules 1 to 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).

**Threatened fauna** is that subset of 'Specially Protected Fauna' declared to be 'likely to become extinct' pursuant to section 14(4) of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

**Threatened flora** is flora that has been declared to be 'likely to become extinct or is rare, or otherwise in need of special protection', pursuant to section 23F(2) of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

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. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.

- EN Endangered species**  
Threatened species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
- VU Vulnerable species**  
Threatened species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
- EX Presumed extinct species**  
Species which have been adequately searched for and there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Presumed Extinct Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Presumed Extinct Flora.
- IA Migratory birds protected under an international agreement**  
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 the Bonn Convention, relating to the protection of migratory birds. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- CD Conservation dependent fauna**  
Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- OS Other specially protected fauna**  
Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- P Priority species**  
Species which are poorly known; or  
Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, and 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.