



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 5089/2
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Iron Ore (Hamersley Range) Agreement Act 1963, Mineral Lease 4SA (AML 70/4)
Local Government Area: Shire of Ashburton
Colloquial name: Western Turner Syncline Project

1.4. Application

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

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 6 December 2012

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. The following Beard vegetation associations are located within the application area (GIS Database):

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

567: Hummock grasslands, shrub steppe; mulga and kanji over soft spinifex & *Triodia basedowii*.

The application area was covered by a Phase 2 vegetation and flora survey by Biota Environmental Sciences (Biota) (Biota, 2012). Biota (2012) incorporates the results of six surveys undertaken in 2007 and 2011. In total these surveys cover approximately 22,308 hectares over the Western Turner Syncline area (West Turner area). According to Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) (2012a), the following eight vegetation units identified by Biota occur within the application area:

Vegetation of Creeks, Flowlines, Floodplains and Gullies

1. AanAciTssp: *Acacia aneura*, *A. citrinoviridis* tall open scrub over mixed *Triodia* open hummock grassland. This vegetation unit occurred in gullies, creeklines and floodplains.

2. CfAanAciTbrTeERIm: *Corymbia ferritcola* low open woodland over *Acacia aneura*, *A. citrinoviridis* tall shrubland over *Triodia brizoides*, *T. epactia* open hummock grassland with *Eriachne mucronata* very open tussock grassland.

3. ElChAciApyAmoTe: *Eucalyptus leucophloia*, *Corymbia hamersleyana* low open woodland over *Acacia citrinoviridis*, *A. pyrifolia*, *A. monticola* tall open scrub over *Triodia epactia* open hummock grassland.

Vegetation of Stony Plains and Low Spurs

4. AanApr: *Acacia aneura* (*A. pruinocarpa*) tall shrubland over mixed scattered hummock grasses. This vegetation unit was predominantly recorded from plains.

Vegetation of Stony Hills and Slopes

5. AanAprTbr: *Acacia aneura* (*A. pruinocarpa*) low open forest over *Triodia brizoides* open hummock grassland. This vegetation unit occurred broadly over the south-facing slopes of the range of hills.

6. ElAmTbr: *Eucalyptus leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Acacia maitlandii* tall shrubland over *Triodia brizoides* hummock grassland. This vegetation type occurred on hillslopes.

7. EIEgAsppTbr: *Eucalyptus leucophloia*, *E. gamophylla* low open woodland over mixed Acacia open shrubland over *Triodia brizoides* open hummock grassland.

8. EITbr: *Eucalyptus leucophloia* scattered low trees over *Triodia brizoides* hummock grassland. This vegetation type occurred on broad gullies, on low rises and on the lower slopes of tall hills.

Clearing Description Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd has applied to clear 30 hectares within an application area of approximately 506 hectares (GIS Database). The application area is located approximately 30 kilometres west of Tom Price and 13 kilometres west, south west of the Rio Tinto Western Turner Syncline iron ore mine (GIS Database; RTIO, 2012a).

The purpose of the application is to undertake evaluation and exploration programs for the West Turner Syncline Stage 2 Project and involves the construction of drill holes/lines, drill pads and access tracks (RTIO, 2012a). Clearing will be by bulldozer using a raised blade clearing technique where possible and blade down where required in steep or rough terrain to provide a safe working environment. Vegetation and topsoil will be stockpiled for use in rehabilitation.

Vegetation Condition Pristine: No obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery 1994)

To

Excellent: Vegetation structure intact; disturbance affecting individual species, weeds non-aggressive (Keighery 1994)

Comment The condition of each vegetation unit was determined using a scale based on Trudgen (1988). These condition ratings have been converted to the Keighery (1994) scale.

Aerial imagery shows numerous tracks in the application area (GIS Database).

Clearing Permit CPS 5089/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) on 13 September 2012 and authorised the clearing of up to 30 hectares or native vegetation within an area totalling approximately 506 hectares. On 11 October 2012 Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd applied to increase the boundary of Clearing Permit CPS 5089/1 by 0.58 hectares to align with the tenement boundary.

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

Comments

Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd has applied to increase the clearing permit boundary by 0.58 hectares.

There are no flora or fauna of conservation significance within the proposed amendment application area (Biota, 2012).

The proposed amendment is not likely to have any significant environmental impacts above those already assessed under Clearing Permit CPS 5089/1. Therefore, the assessment against the clearing principles has not changed and can be found in clearing permit decision report CPS 5089/1.

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

Comments

There is one native title claim over the area under application: WC10/16 (GIS Database). This claim has been registered with the Native Title Tribunal on behalf of the claimant groups. 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*.

According to available databases, there are two 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 and Conservation and the Department of Water 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 clearing permit application was advertised on 12 November 2012 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

- Biota (2012) West Turner Syncline Phase 2 Vegetation and Flora Report. Unpublished report prepared for Rio Tinto dated January 2012.
- Government of Western Australia (2011) 2011 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). WA Department of Environment and Conservation, Perth.
- 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:

BoM	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management (now DEC), Western Australia
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage (federal based in Canberra) previously Environment Australia
DEP	Department of Environment Protection (now DEC), Western Australia
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs
DLI	Department of Land Information, Western Australia
DMP	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia
DoE	Department of Environment (now DEC), Western Australia
DoIR	Department of Industry and Resources (now DMP), Western Australia
DOLA	Department of Land Administration, Western Australia
DoW	Department of Water
EP Act	Environmental Protection Act 1986, Western Australia
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (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
RIWI Act	Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914, Western Australia
s.17	Section 17 of the Environment Protection Act 1986, Western Australia
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

Definitions:

{Atkins, K (2005). *Declared rare and priority flora list for Western Australia, 22 February 2005. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia*} :-

- P1** **Priority One - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from one or a few (generally <5) populations which are under threat, either due to small population size, or being on lands under immediate threat, e.g. road verges, urban areas, farmland, active mineral leases, etc., or the plants are under threat, e.g. from disease, grazing by feral animals, etc. May include taxa with threatened populations on protected lands. Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in urgent need of further survey.
- P2** **Priority Two - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from one or a few (generally <5) populations, at least some of which are not believed to be under immediate threat (i.e. not currently endangered). Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in urgent need of further survey.
- P3** **Priority Three - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from several populations, at least some of which are not believed to be under immediate threat (i.e. not currently endangered). Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in need of further survey.
- P4** **Priority Four – Rare taxa:** taxa which are considered to have been adequately surveyed and which, whilst being rare (in Australia), are not currently threatened by any identifiable factors. These taxa require monitoring every 5–10 years.
- R** **Declared Rare Flora – Extant taxa (= Threatened Flora = Endangered + Vulnerable):** taxa which have been adequately searched for, and are deemed to be in the wild either rare, in danger of extinction, or otherwise in need of special protection, and have been gazetted as such, following approval by the Minister for the Environment, after recommendation by the State's Endangered Flora Consultative Committee.
- X** **Declared Rare Flora - Presumed Extinct taxa:** taxa which have not been collected, or otherwise verified, over the past 50 years despite thorough searching, or of which all known wild populations have been destroyed more recently, and have been gazetted as such, following approval by the Minister for the Environment, after recommendation by the State's Endangered Flora Consultative Committee.

{Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2005} [Wildlife Conservation Act 1950] :-

- Schedule 1** **Schedule 1 – Fauna that is rare or likely to become extinct:** being fauna that is rare or likely to become extinct, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 2** **Schedule 2 – Fauna that is presumed to be extinct:** being fauna that is presumed to be extinct, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 3** **Schedule 3 – Birds protected under an international agreement:** being birds that are subject to an agreement between the governments of Australia and Japan relating to the protection of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 4** **Schedule 4 – Other specially protected fauna:** being fauna that is declared to be fauna that is in need of special protection, otherwise than for the reasons mentioned in Schedules 1, 2 or 3.

{CALM (2005). *Priority Codes for Fauna*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia} :-

- P1** **Priority One: Taxa with few, poorly known populations on threatened lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from one or a few localities on lands not managed for conservation, e.g. agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, active mineral leases. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P2** **Priority Two: Taxa with few, poorly known populations on conservation lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from one or a few localities on lands not under immediate threat of habitat destruction or degradation, e.g. national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, State forest, vacant Crown land, water reserves, etc. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P3** **Priority Three: Taxa with several, poorly known populations, some on conservation lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from several localities, some of which are on lands not under immediate threat of habitat destruction or degradation. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P4** **Priority Four: Taxa in need of monitoring:** Taxa which are considered to have been adequately surveyed, or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and which are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection, but could be if present circumstances change. These taxa are usually represented on conservation lands.
- P5** **Priority Five: Taxa in need of monitoring:** Taxa which are not considered threatened but are subject to a specific conservation program, the cessation of which would result in the species becoming threatened within five years.

Categories of threatened species (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

- EX** **Extinct:** A native species for which there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died.
- EX(W)** **Extinct in the wild:** A native species which:
(a) is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; or
(b) has not been recorded in its known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite exhaustive surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form.
- CR** **Critically Endangered:** A native species which is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- EN** **Endangered:** A native species which:
(a) is not critically endangered; and
(b) is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- VU** **Vulnerable:** A native species which:
(a) is not critically endangered or endangered; and
(b) is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- CD** **Conservation Dependent:** A native species which is the focus of a specific conservation program, the cessation of which would result in the species becoming vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered within a period of 5 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.