



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 5926/7
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Iron Ore (Mount Newman) Agreement Act 1964, Mineral Lease 244SA (AML 70/244)
Iron Ore (McCamey's Monster) Agreement Authorisation Act 1972, Mining Lease 266SA (AM 70/266)
Miscellaneous Licence 52/199

Local Government Area: Shire of East Pilbara
Colloquial name: Western Ridge Project

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
400		Mechanical Removal	Mineral exploration, hydrogeological investigations, creek diversion, fly rock damage, geotechnical investigations and associated works

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 3 December 2020

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description The following two Beard vegetation associations have been broadly mapped within the existing clearing permit area:

18: Low woodland; mulga (*Acacia aneura*); and
82: Hummock grasslands, low tree steppe; snappy gum over *Triodia wiseana* (GIS Database).

Several flora and vegetation surveys have been conducted over the permit area. A total of 33 vegetation associations from 12 broad floristic communities have been mapped within the existing permit area (CPS 5926/6) (BHP Billiton Iron Ore, 2016; 2019; Biologic, 2019), and these are detailed in previous versions of the decision report.

Clearing Description Western Ridge Project.
BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd (BHP Billiton Iron Ore) proposes to clear up to 400 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 4,521 hectares, for the purpose of mineral exploration, hydrogeological investigations, creek diversion, fly rock damage, geotechnical investigations and associated works. The project is located immediately south-west of BHP Billiton Iron Ore's existing Mount Whaleback mining operations, approximately five kilometres south-west of Newman, in the Shire of East Pilbara.

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

To:

Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994).

Comment Clearing permit CPS 5926/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 1 May 2014 and authorised the clearing of 220 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 3,660 hectares.

Amended permit CPS 5926/2 was granted on 4 December 2014, increasing the amount of clearing authorised to 300 hectares, increasing the permit boundary to approximately 4,379 hectares, and extending the permit duration to 30 November 2024.

Amended permit CPS 5926/3 was granted on 18 February 2016, increasing the permit boundary to approximately 4,432 hectares, there was no change to the amount of clearing authorised.

Amended permit CPS 5926/4 was granted on 16 June 2016, increasing the amount of clearing authorised to 308 hectares, within the same permit boundary, and including "creek diversion" in the authorised clearing purposes.

Amended permit CPS 5926/5 was granted on 24 October 2019, increasing the amount of clearing authorised to 375 hectares, removing exclusion zones around populations of *Calotis latiuscula* as it had been removed from the Priority flora list, and extending the permit duration to 30 November 2029.

Amended permit CPS 5926/6 was granted on 2 April 2020, increasing the amount of clearing authorised from 375 hectares to 400 hectares, and increasing the permit boundary to include Miscellaneous Licence 52/199.

On 7 October 2020, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 5926/6 to include "fly rock damage" in the authorised purposes of clearing. The size of the area approved to clear, and the permit boundaries are to remain unchanged.

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

Comments

The Permit Holder has applied to amend the clearing permit to add "fly rock damage" into the purposes for which clearing is authorised. This change has been requested because there is a small risk that fly rock generated from the adjacent Orebody 35 mining operations (located within CPS 5617/5) may result in vegetation damage within the boundary of this clearing permit (BHP Billiton Iron Ore, 2020). The size of the area approved to clear (400 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 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 previous versions of the decision report.

Methodology BHP Billiton Iron Ore (2020)

GIS Database:

- DPaW Tenure
- Hydrography, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- IBRA Australia
- Imagery
- Landsystem Rangelands
- Pre-European Vegetation
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas
- 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 (WC2005/06) over the area under application (DPLH, 2020). This claim has been determined by the Federal Court on behalf of the claimant group. However, the 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 two registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance within the existing permit 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 9 November 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

- BHP Billiton Iron Ore (2016) Application to Amend CPS 5926/3: Western Ridge Exploration. Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Amendment Application Supporting Document. BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd, Western Australia, April 2016.
- BHP Billiton Iron Ore (2019) Application to Amend NVCP CPS 5926/5: Western Ridge. Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Application Supporting Document. BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd, Western Australia, November 2019.
- BHP Billiton Iron Ore (2020) BHP Billiton Iron Ore Mining Operations: Application to Amend Native Vegetation Clearing Permit CPS 5926/6 - Western Ridge. BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd, Western Australia, October 2020.
- Biologic (2019) Western Ridge Detailed Flora and Vegetation Survey. Report prepared for BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd, by Biologic Environmental Survey Pty Ltd, June 2019.
- DPLH (2020) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.
<https://espatial.dplh.wa.gov.au/AHIS/index.html?viewer=AHIS> (Accessed 23 November 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.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

BC Act	<i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> , Western Australia
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)
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australian Government
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
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)
DoEE	Department of the Environment and Energy (now DAWE)
DoW	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
DPaW	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
DPLH	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
DRF	Declared Rare Flora (now known as Threatened Flora)
DWER	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, 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.