Government of Western Australia
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 6947/2
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: **AWE Perth Pty Ltd**

1.3. Property details

Property: Petroleum Production Licence L4
Local Government Area: Shire of Carnamah
Colloquial name: Woodada Gas Field

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
5.75		Mechanical Removal	Rehabilitation

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 6 May 2021

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description

The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation associations:

377: Mosaic: Shrublands; scrub-heath on limestone in the northern Swan Region / Sparse low woodland; illyarrie; and

378: Shrublands; scrub-heath with scattered Banksia spp, *Eeucalyptus todtiana* & *Xylomelum angustifolium* on deep sandy flats in the Geraldton Sandplain Region (GIS Database).

Clearing Description

Woodada Gas Field
AWE Perth Pty Ltd (AWE) proposes to clear up to 5.75 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 25.297 hectares, for the purpose of rehabilitation. The project is located approximately 13 kilometres north-east of Eneabba, in the Shire of Carnamah.

Vegetation Condition

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

To:

Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

Comment

The vegetation condition was derived from a review of available imagery (GIS Database).

The proposed clearing is for AWE to conduct some decommissioning and rehabilitation work around areas of the Woodada Gas Field operations which are no longer in use.

The application area is predominantly located on previously cleared land consisting of native vegetation regrowth, however up to 5 metres of native vegetation surrounding the infrastructure area may need to be disturbed as part of the rehabilitation process.

Clearing permit CPS 6947/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now known as the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 14 April 2016 and was valid from 7 May 2016 to 7 May 2021. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 3 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 7.88 hectares, for the purpose of rehabilitation.

On 2 March 2021, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 6947/1 to extend the permit duration by up to 5 years, increase the area authorised to clear by 2.75 hectares and increase the permit boundary by 17.417 hectares.

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

Comments

The permit holder has applied to increase the amount of clearing authorised by 2.75 hectares and increase the permit boundary by approximately 17.414 hectares, to enable additional decommissioning and rehabilitation work of the Woodada Gas Field infrastructure (AWE, 2021). Rehabilitation activities at Woodada-05 well pad and the Main Camp area were undertaken in March 2017 under CPS 6947/1 (Mitsui, 2020). The Woodada-05 well pad portion of the current clearing permit has been removed from the amendment application area, as no further disturbance is planned for that area (AWE, 2021). The proposed clearing will involve disturbing vegetation (mainly regrowth) within the area to be rehabilitated and a band up to approximately five metres wide around the edges of the rehabilitation areas, to be mulched and respread once earthworks have been completed (AWE, 2021).

The application area occurs within the Lesueur Sandplains (GS3) subregion of the Geraldton Sandplain Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) bioregion (GIS Database). This sub-region is comprised of coastal Aeolian and limestones, Jurassic siltstones and sandstones of the central Perth Basin (CALM, 2002). There are extensive yellow sandplains in the south-eastern parts and shrub-heaths rich in endemics occur on a mosaic of lateritic mesas, sandplains, coastal sands and limestones (CALM, 2002). The application area has been mapped as Beard vegetation associations 377 and 378, which respectively retain approximately 99 and 64% of their pre-European vegetation extent at a state and bioregional level (Government of Western Australia, 2019).

No recent flora or fauna surveys have been completed over the amendment application area, however a number of biological assessments have previously been conducted over portions of the Woodada Gas Field operational area (AWE, 2016; AWE, 2018b; Bamford, 2017). The majority of the amendment application area consists of native vegetation regrowth as a result of previous vegetation clearing (AWE, 2016; AWE, 2021). No Threatened Ecological Communities or Priority Ecological Communities are known to occur within the application area (GIS Database) and none were recorded during previous inspections of the surrounds (AWE, 2016; AWE, 2021).

Two sections of the amendment application lie directly on the edge of the Lake Logue Nature Reserve, a DBCA (formerly DPaW) managed Land, which extends approximately eight kilometres to the south and contains a majority of the Woodada Gas Field infrastructure (managed under clearing permit CPS 8207/1). The small scale and nature of the clearing is unlikely to impact on the conservation values of the Lake Logue Nature Reserve. No water courses or wetlands have been mapped within the application area (GIS Database) and the nature of the clearing required to rehabilitate areas is unlikely to impact surface water or groundwater quality.

No Threatened or Priority flora have been identified within the application area (AWE, 2016) however desktop searches and available records indicate that several Threatened and Priority flora species have previously been recorded within 10 kilometres of the amendment application area (AWE, 2018; DBCA, 2007-; Western Australian Herbarium; 1998-). Notably, *Eremophila glabra subsp. chlorella* (T), a species more likely to be present in areas of disturbance and high moisture content soils, has previously been collected around the Woodada Gas Field operational area (AWE, 2018b).

The vegetation associations within the application area are common and widespread within the region (AWE 2018a; AWE 2018b; AWE 2016; GIS Database), and the vegetation proposed to be cleared is unlikely to be necessary for the continued existence of any species of Threatened or Priority flora.

It is also unlikely that the small amount of clearing for rehabilitation purposes will significantly impact the conservation status of Priority flora species, however the potential of impacting Threatened flora protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* should not be discounted. Based on the above, the proposed clearing may be at variance to Principle (c). Potential impacts to Threatened flora within the application area, can be minimised by implementation of a flora management condition.

Several weed species have the potential to occur within the application area, particularly along disturbed pads and tracks (AWE, 2018a; AWE 2016; Woodman, 2014). Furthermore, the application area is considered to be at risk to *Phytophthora* Dieback (AWE, 2018a; Woodman, 2014). Weeds and dieback have the potential to significantly change the dynamics of a natural ecosystem and lower the biodiversity of an area. AWE have committed to implement their Field Rehabilitation, Weed and Dieback Management Plan (Woodman, 2014) as part of the proposed rehabilitation activities. Potential spread of weeds and dieback from the proposed clearing may be further minimised by the implementation of a weed and dieback management condition.

The vegetation associations, habitat types and landforms found within the amendment area are similar to the original permit area and are well represented in surrounding areas (AWE, 2018a; AWE, 2018b; AWE, 2016; GIS Database). Given the small scale of the proposed clearing for the purpose of rehabilitating sites, it is unlikely that it will have a significant impact on the biodiversity of the area, or on any significant fauna habitat.

The amendment application area is within the distribution range of Carnaby's Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*, T), and the neighbouring Lake Logue Nature Reserve potentially contains suitable breeding habitat for the species (AWE, 2018b; AWE, 2016; DBCA, 2007-). A survey for suitable habitat trees has been conducted over parts of the application area, however none were identified (Bamford, 2017). However, this does not discount the potential of suitable habitat trees being present in the remainder of the

amendment application area. Based on the above, the proposed clearing may be at variance to Principle (b). To minimise potential impacts to Carnaby's Black Cockatoo habitat, it is recommended the existing fauna management condition be maintained.

The application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, and the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance with Principles (a), (d), (f), (g), (h), (i) and (j), may be at variance with principles (b) and (c) and is not at variance to Principle (e).

Methodology

AWE (2016)
AWE (2018a)
AWE (2018b)
AWE (2021)
Bamford (2017)
CALM (2002)
DBCA (2007-)
Government of Western Australia (2019)
Mitsui (2020)
Western Australian Herbarium (1998 -)
Woodman (2014)

GIS Database:
- DPaW Tenure
- Hydrography, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- IBRA Australia
- Imagery
- Landsystem Rangelands
- Pre-European Vegetation
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas
- Soils, Statewide
- 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 (WC 2019/008) over the area under application (DPLH, 2021). This claim has been determined by the Federal Court (WAS345/2019) 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 (DPLH, 2021). 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 19 April 2021by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

Methodology DPLH (2021)

4. References

AWE (2016) Additional information received in relation to Clearing Permit Application CPS 6947/1. AWE Perth Pty Ltd, Western Australia

AWE (2018a) Hovea Production Facility, Woodada Gas Field & Mount Horner Field Care & Maintenance Environment Plan, Rev.0 – Production Licence L4. AWE Perth Pty Ltd, Western Australia, March, 2018.

AWE (2018b) Woodada Gas Field Clearing Permit Application. Supporting Documentation for CPS 8207/1. AWE Perth Pty Ltd, September 2018.

AWE (2021) Additional information received in relation to Clearing Permit Amendment Application CPS 6947/2. AWE Perth Pty Ltd, Western Australia

Bamford (2017) Additional information received in relation to Clearing Permit Application CPS 6947/1. Report Prepared for AWE Perth Pty Ltd, by M.J. & A.R. Bamford Consulting Ecologists, Western Australia, February 2017.

CALM (2002) A Biodiversity Audit of Western Australia's 53 Biogeographical Subregions. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia

DBCA (2007-) NatureMap: Mapping Western Australia's Biodiversity. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. https://naturemap.dbca.wa.gov.au/ (Accessed 4 May 2021).

DPLH (2021) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. (Accessed 4 May 2021).

Government of Western Australia (2019) 2018 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). Current as of March 2019. WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Perth. https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/dbca-statewide-vegetation-statistics

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

Mitsui (2020) Woodada-05 & Main Camp Clearing Permit CPS 6947/1 Annual Clearing Report FY20. Mitsui E&P Australia, Western Australia, July 2020.

Western Australian Herbarium (1998 -) FloraBase - the Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/ (Accessed 3 May 2021).

Woodman (2014) Woodada Gas Field Rehabilitation, Weed and Dieback Management Plan. Report Prepared for AWE Pty Ltd, by Woodman Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd, Western Australia, April 2014.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

BC Act	*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016,* 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	*Environmental Protection Act 1986*, Western Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, 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
PEC	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
RIWI Act	*Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*, 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.