Department of Environment
Government of Western Australia

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 697/1
Permit type: Area Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: **City of Geraldton**

1.3. Property details

Property: LOT 940 ON PLAN 27829 (WEST END 6530)
LOT 2333 ON PLAN 91857 (Lot No. 2333 WILLCOCK BEACHLANDS 6530)
LOT 3134 ON PLAN 26442 (House No. 80 WILLCOCK WEST END 6530)
Local Government Area: City Of Geraldton
Colloquial name: Willcock Drive - Reserves 2562 and 27529

1.4. Application

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

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description	Clearing Description	Vegetation Condition	Comment
Beard vegetation association 440: Shrublands; Acacia ligulata open scrub (Hopkins et al 2001, Shepherd et al 2001)	The vegetation to be cleared has been described as open heath and shrubland over low open heath. Dominated by Acacia rosteliffera, Olearia axillaris, Scavolea crassifolia, and Tetragonia decumbens (Van der Moezel 2005).	Excellent: Vegetation structure intact; disturbance affecting individual species, weeds non-aggressive (Keighery 1994)	Comments from site visit: The area of vegetation will be cleared to construct a dual use pathway by the City of Geraldton, referred to as Stage 1. The pathway will be constructed through the dune system between Separation Point Way, for 1.1km, to a new car park at Greys Beach. A 12m wide strip of vegetation will need to be removed for the pathway and additional vegetation will be removed to provide strategic access points to the beach. The existing vegetation is in good condition and is providing substantial cover and stability for dunes. There is a small amount of weed infestation (Site visit photos, TRIM - GD 477).

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

(a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.

Comments

Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle

The vegetation occurs within the Geraldton Sandplains Bioregion, a region known for its high species diversity. In the Geraldton Greenough Coastal Strategy and Foreshore Management Plan the Point Moore/Greys Beach area has been noted as having a high number of vegetation types. The scientific and educational value of the vegetation in this area is high from this point of view (Van der Moezel 2005). On the other hand the area of vegetation to be removed is small (1.5ha) and therefore unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the biodiversity of the area. In addition, the installation of a pathway through this area will control access to the area and therefore abate the problem of loss of vegetation through uncontrolled access. Therefore the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology GIS Databases: Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia-EA 18/10/00.
Site visit
Van der Moezel 2005

(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.

Comments

Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle

Advice provided by CALM indicates that in 1983 Idiosoma nigrum Shield Backed Trapdoor Spider (vulnerable) was recorded within 3km of the site that is now proposed to be cleared. The primary coastal dune system

found at this site is unsuitable for this species to construct its burrow. Idiosoma nigrum is therefore unlikely to be found at this site. The listed marine-based fauna are not likely to be affected by the proposed clearing. The record of Macropus irma Western Brush Wallaby is historic (1954), and the likelihood of Macropus irma being extant at the site is now considered to be low, due to the significant changes associated with urban development and related infrastructure. The proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology CALM's Threatened and Priority Fauna Database - It should be noted that the supplied data do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of the Threatened and Priority Fauna of the area in question. Its comprehensiveness is dependent of the amount of survey carried out within a specified area.
Calm Advice
Site Visit

(c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, significant flora.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**
The advice provided by CALM indicates it is likely that the soil types found at the site of the proposed clearing would be a typical primary coastal dune system, and therefore unsuitable to support the P2 taxon Eremophila brevifolia, which is known from heavier soil types, typically found further inland. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance with this Principle (CALM 2005).

Methodology CALM's Threatened and Priority Flora Data Management System [The comprehensiveness of the database is dependent on the amount of survey carried out in the area and does not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing. The determination of the presence of rare or priority flora can only be made through appropriate flora survey (CALM, 2004)].
CALM 2005

(d) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of a significant ecological community.

Comments **Proposal is not at variance to this Principle**
There are no known Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC's) found within 10km of the proposed clearing. However within 32 km to the south there are 3 records of TEC 'Acacia rostellifera low forest.' In common with the site of the proposed clearing, they are in reasonable proximity to the coast, however the community description is dissimilar in terms of floristic and geomorphological composition. These TEC's are not likely to be found at the site of the proposed clearing (CALM 2005).

Methodology GIS Databases: Threatened Ecological Communities - CALM 15/07/03
CALM 2005

(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.

Comments **Proposal is not at variance to this Principle**
It should be noted that this area has been highly cleared recently due to the construction of the Southern Transport Corridor. Yet the statistics show the Geraldton Sandplains Bioregion and Beard vegetation association 440 have greater than 50% of the native vegetation remaining making them of least concern by conservation status standards. Therefore the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.

	Pre-European area (ha)	Current extent (ha)	Remaining %*	Conservation status**	Reserves/CALM-managed land, %
IBRA Bioregion Geraldton Sandplains					
	4,026,769	2,215,659	55.0	Least Concern	Not Available
Local Government Authority - City of Geraldton			Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
	Not Available	Not Available			
Beard Veg type 440	6670	3977	59.6	Least Concern	3.8

* (Shepherd et al. 2001)
** (Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002)

Methodology GIS Databases: Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia - EA 18/10/00, Pre-European Vegetation - DA 01/01, Local Government Authorities - DLI 08/07/04.
Shepherd et al, 2001.
Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2002

(f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.

Comments

Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle

The Geraldton-Greenough Coastal Strategy and Foreshore Management Plan mentions the Sporobolus virginicus wetland at Greys beach to be one area of high conservation value as it is the only basin type wetland in the Geraldton/Greenough foreshore (Van der Moezel, 2005). The area mentioned is very small and the City of Geraldton have planned for the pathway to go around this wetland. The clearing will therefore have little impact on the wetland and its associated vegetation therefore it is unlikely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology

GIS Database: Hydrography, linear - DoE 01/02/04
Site Visit
Van der Moezel 2005

(g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.

Comments

Proposal is not at variance to this Principle

As this is a coastal area the only land degradation likely to occur if the vegetation is removed is erosion of the sand dune system. The City of Geraldton will address this issue by mulching dunes left bare from vegetation removal with seaweed and revegetating. This has been an effective method used in other dune restoration works in the City of Geraldton. Therefore the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.

Methodology

GIS Databases - Rainfall, Mean Annual - BOM 30/09/01, Salinity Risk LM 25m - DOLA 00 , Soils, Statewide - DAWA 11/99
Site Visit

(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.

Comments

Proposal is not at variance to this Principle

Geraldton Townsite Lot 2623 Crown reserve 33799 is situated in very close proximity (50metres) to the proposed clearing. This reserve is significantly degraded and is unlikely to be further impacted by the proposed clearing (CALM 2005). Therefore the clearing is not at variance to this Principle

Methodology

GIS Databases - CALM Regional Parks - CALM 12/04/02, WRC Estate - WRC 05/99, CALM Managed Lands & Waters - CALM 01/06/04, Proposed National Parks FMP-CALM 19/03/03, Register of National Estate - EA 28/01/03
CALM 2005

(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.

Comments

Proposal is not at variance to this Principle

Due to the proximity of the area to the coast it is highly unlikely that the proposed clearing will have an impact on the quality of surface or underground water.

Methodology

GIS Databases - Current WIN data sets, PDWSA Protection Zones - DOE 07/01/04, Public Drinking Water Sources (PDWSAs) - DOE 29/11/04, Hydrographic Catchments - Catchments - DOE 03/04/03.
Midwest Gascoyne Hydro Unit, 2005.

(j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence of flooding.

Comments

Proposal is not at variance to this Principle

Due to the proximity of the area to the coast it is highly unlikely that the proposed clearing will have an impact on the peak flood height of this area.

Methodology

GIS Databases - Rainfall, Mean Annual - BOM 30/09/01
Midwest Gascoyne Hydro Unit, 2005

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

Comments

A native title claim has been registered over the entire area by the Naaguja (WC97/73) native title claimants therefore the granting of a permit to clear vegetation may constitute a Future Act. The City of Geraldton is vested with the management of these Crown reserves for the purposes of 'esplanade and recreation'. Clearing native vegetation for a bike path appears to fall within the scope of these purposes. Provided the City of Geraldton carries out the clearing in accordance with the conditions of the Crown reserves' management orders, the grant of a clearing permit will not be a future act under the Native Title Act 1993.'

In response to the Departments of Environments request as to whether to City of Geraldton had any planning requirements that may be effected by this proposal the City of Geraldton indicated that the City is in total support of the application.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructures response to the proposal in regards to coastal planning policy requirements indicates that although the clearing may fall in the setback zone there would be no concern from a planning and environmental view. In addition the Western Australian Planning Commission is unlikely to require a development application as the Local Government Authority have given their support to the proposal.

The Geraldton-Greenough Coastal Management Strategy and Foreshore Management Plan (Van der Moezel 2005) does not promote nor reject the proposal of a shared pathway through the area. It does recommend that pedestrian access in the vicinity of Greys Breach should be rationalised.

There is no other RIWI Act Licence, Works Approval or EP Act Licence that will affect the area that has been applied to clear.

Methodology Van der Moezel 2005
City of Geraldton - Submission
DPI Submission
Yamatji land and Sea Council - Submission

4. Assessor's recommendations

Purpose	Method	Applied area (ha)/ trees	Decision	Comment / recommendation
Recreation	Mechanical Removal	1.5	**Grant**	The assessable criteria have been addressed and no objections were raised. The assessing officer therefore recommends that the permit should be granted.

5. References

CALM (2005) Land clearing proposal advice. Advice to A/Director General, Department of Environment (DoE). Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia, DoE TRIM ref GD475

Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002) Biodiversity Action Planning. Action planning for native biodiversity at multiple scales ; catchment bioregional, landscape, local. Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria.

Hopkins, A.J.M., Beeston, G.R. and Harvey J.M. (2001) A database on the vegetation of Western Australia. Stage 1. CALMScience after J. S. Beard, late 1960's to early 1980's Vegetation Survey of Western Australia, UWA Press.

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

Shepherd, D.P., Beeston, G.R. and Hopkins, A.J.M. (2001) Native Vegetation in Western Australia, Extent, Type and Status. Resource Management Technical Report 249. Department of Agriculture, Western Australia.

Van der Moezel, P (2005) Geraldton-Greenough Coastal Strategy and Foreshore Management plan

6. Glossary

Term	Meaning
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management
DAWA	Department of Agriculture
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection (now DoE)
DoE	Department of Environment
DoIR	Department of Industry and Resources
DRF	Declared Rare Flora
EPP	Environmental Protection Policy
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community
WRC	Water and Rivers Commission (now DoE)