



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 7422/3

Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Northern Star (Bronzewing) Pty Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 53/1099

Miscellaneous Licences 53/203, 53/204, 53/206

Local Government Area: Shire of Wiluna

Colloquial name: Julius Project

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)
486

No. Trees

Method of Clearing
Mechanical Removal

For the purpose of:
Mineral Production and Associated Activities

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant

Decision Date: 26 November 2020

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:
18: Low woodland; mulga (*Acacia aneura*);
29: Sparse low woodland; mulga, discontinuous in scattered groups;
39: Shrublands; mulga scrub;
389: Succulent steppe with open low woodland; mulga over saltbush; and
560: Mosaic: Shrublands; bowgada scrub / Succulent steppe; samphire (GIS Database).

Two flora and vegetation surveys have been conducted over different sections of the application area by Botanica Consulting (Botanica) during May 2016 and February 2017. The following vegetation associations were recorded within the application area (Botanica, 2016; Botanica, 2017):

CLP-AS1: Open scrub of *Acacia incurvaneura* over dwarf scrub of *Cratystylis subspinescens/ Maireana pyramidata/ Maireana georgei* on clay-loam floodplain/ stony flat.

CLP-AFW1: Low woodland of *Acacia incurvaneura* over low scrub of *Eremophila linearis/ Senna* sp. Meekatharra (E. Bailey 1-26) and dwarf scrub of *Maireana triptera* on clay-loam plain/ stony flat.

CLP-AFW2: Open low woodland of *Acacia pruniocarpa* over mid sparse shrubland of *Eremophila fraseri/ Eremophila paisleyi* and low open tussock grassland of *Eragrostis eriopoda* on clay-loam plain.

SLP-AFW1: Low woodland of *Acacia caesaneura/ A. incurvaneura* over low scrub of *Eremophila* spp. and low grass of *Eragrostis eriopoda/ mid-dense hummock grass of Triodia irritans* on sand-loam plain.

DD-AFW1: Open forest of *Acacia incurvaneura* over tall open shrubland of *Acacia ramulosa* var. *ramulosa* and low tussock grassland of *Eragrostis kennedyae* in drainage depression.

QRP-AFW1: Low woodland of *Acacia incurvaneura* over mid open shrubland of *Senna* sp. Meekatharra (E. Bailey 1-26) and low open tussock grassland of *Eragrostis eriopoda* on quartz-rocky plain.

QRP-AFW2: Low woodland of *Acacia incurvaneura* over mid open shrubland of *Senna* sp. Meekatharra (E. Bailey 1-26) and low open shrubland of *Ptilotus obovatus* on quartz-rocky plain.

RH-AFW1: Low woodland of *Acacia incurvaneura/ A. pruniocarpa* over mid open shrubland of *Scaevola spinescens* and low open tussock grassland of *Eriachne mucronata/ Eragrostis eriopoda* on rocky hillslope.

RH-AFW2: Low woodland of *Acacia balsamea* over mid open shrubland of *Senna* sp. Meekatharra (E. Bailey 1-26) and low open shrubland of *Ptilotus obovatus/ Solanum lasiophyllum* on rocky hillslope.

Clearing Description	Julius Project. Northern Star (Bronzewing) Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 486 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 534 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities. The project is located approximately 70 kilometres southeast of Wiluna, within the Shire of Wiluna.
Vegetation Condition	Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994). to Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994).
Comment	The vegetation condition was derived from vegetation surveys conducted by Botanica (2016; 2017). The proposed clearing is for a mine site development, a connecting access road running west from the mine site, and haul road running south from the mine site. Clearing permit CPS 7422/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 16 February 2017 and was valid from 11 March 2017 to 31 March 2021. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 406 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 406 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production. CPS 7422/2 was granted on 22 February 2018, amending the permit to increase the amount of clearing authorised to 486 hectares, and increase the permit boundary to approximately 534 hectares. The amendment was to allow for the construction of a haul road. The purpose for which clearing may be done was amended to 'mineral production and associated activities', and Miscellaneous Licences 53/204 and 53/206 were added to the permit. On 13 October 2020, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 7422/2 to extend the permit duration by five years, and to update the Permit Holder name from Echo Resources Limited to Northern Star (Bronzewing) Pty Ltd.

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

Comments

The permit holder has applied to extend the duration of the permit to 31 March 2025. The size of the area approved to clear and permit boundary remain the same. The duration extension is to allow for the commencement of the Julius Project, as no mining has been conducted to date. 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 decision reports CPS 7422/1 and 7422/2.

Methodology

GIS Database:

- DPaW Tenure
- Hydrography, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- IBRA Australia
- Imagery
- 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 are three native title claims (WC1999/024; WR2016/001; WC2018/007) over the area under application (DPLH, 2020). These claims have been determined by the Federal Court 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*.

There are no registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance within the application 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 2 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

- Botanica (2016) Julius Project Level 1 Flora and Fauna Survey. Report prepared for Echo Resources Limited by Botanica Consulting, July 2016.
- Botanica (2017) Level 1 Flora and Fauna Survey of the Julius Project Proposed Haul Road (L53/206). Report prepared for Echo Resources Limited by Botanica Consulting, April 2017.
- DPLH (2020) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.
<https://espatial.dplh.wa.gov.au/AHIS/index.html?viewer=AHIS> (Accessed 4 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.