



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 7680/1
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Nifty Copper Pty Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Western Mining Corporation Limited (Throssell Range) Agreement Act 1985, Mining Lease 271SA (AM 70/271)
Local Government Area: Shire of East Pilbara
Colloquial name: Nifty Copper Operation

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
3.23		Mechanical Removal	An Airstrip

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 14 September 2017

2. Site Information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description	<p>The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation association (GIS Database):</p> <p>134: Mosaic: Hummock grasslands, open low tree steppe; desert bloodwood and feathertop spinifex on sandhills / Hummock grasslands, shrub steppe; mixed shrubs over spinifex between sandhills.</p> <p>Several flora and vegetation surveys have been undertaken over the broader Nifty Copper Operations with surveys undertaken 1992, 2004, 2006, and 2014 (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, 2017). Only the original survey undertaken in 1992 covers the permit area.</p> <p>Nifty Copper Pty Ltd (2017) describes the landforms of the greater Nifty area as supporting <i>Triodia</i> hummock grasslands associated with sandplains (dune swales and flats) and sand dunes. The sandplains are dominated by <i>Triodia basedowii</i> hummock grasslands with scattered shrubs grading to shrublands of <i>Acacia</i> species, most commonly <i>Acacia stellaticeps</i>.</p>
Clearing Description	<p>Nifty Copper Operation.</p> <p>Nifty Copper Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 3.23 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 3.23 hectares, for the purpose of airstrip visibility maintenance. The project is located approximately 150 kilometres east of Nullagine, within the Shire of East Pilbara.</p>
Vegetation Condition	<p>Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994);</p> <p>to</p> <p>Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).</p>
Comment	<p>The vegetation condition was derived by the assessing officer using aerial imagery.</p>

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

Comments

Nifty Copper Pty Ltd is proposing to clear up to 3.23 hectares for the purpose of airstrip maintenance. The permit area is located adjacent to the existing Nifty Copper Operation airstrip. The clearing is required to improve the visibility of large fauna that may be within the vegetation and reduce the risk of collision with aircraft. The airstrip is also fenced to limit access from large fauna to the airstrip area.

According to available databases, there are not records of any Threatened or Priority Ecological Communities (TEC/PEC) or Threatened or Priority flora species within the permit area (GIS Database). Flora surveys undertaken at the Nifty Copper Operations indicated that it is unlikely that any TECs, PECs or Threatened flora would be present within the permit area (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, 2017). The Priority 2 flora species *Goodenia hartiana* has been recorded 350 metres from the permit area (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, 2017). The habitat within the permit area is common in the local area, and the proposed clearing of 3.23 hectares is not likely to have a significant impact on this species if it were present.

There are a number of conservation significant fauna that have been recorded at the Nifty Copper Operation including the Greater Bilby (*Macrotis lagotis* – Vulnerable), Brush-tailed Mulgara (*Dasycercus blythi* – Priority 4) and the Northern Marsupial Mole (*Notoryctes caurinus* – Priority 4). Preferred habitat for these species is not present within permit area so it is not likely to represent significant habitat for these species (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, 2017). Other fauna species may utilise the vegetation within the permit area however, it not likely to represent significant habitat for native fauna as there are large areas of similar habitat in the local area in better condition not located adjacent to exiting operational areas (GIS Database).

There are no watercourses within the permit area and the proposed clearing will not impact any riparian vegetation (GIS Database). The proposed clearing of 3.23 hectares adjacent to the existing airstrip is not likely to have an impact on surface or groundwater quality or quantity in the local area (GIS Database). There is unlikely to be an increase in incidence or intensity of flooding as a result of the proposed clearing.

The permit area consists predominately of sandy plains (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, 2017; Northcote et al., 1960-68). The proposed clearing method will remove the vegetation but keep the topsoil in-situ, which will reduce the risk of erosion (Nifty Copper Pty Ltd).

The nearest conservation area is Karlamilyi National Park that is located approximately 73 kilometres south of the permit area (GIS Database). The proposed clearing will not impact on the environmental values of this area, nor is it a remnant that forms part of an ecological linkage to any conservation areas (GIS Database).

The application area 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 to Principles (a), (b), (c), (d), (g), (h), (i) and (j) and is not at variance to Principles (e) and (f).

Methodology Nifty Copper Pty Ltd (2017)
Northcote et al. (1960-68)

GIS Database:
- DPaW Tenure
- Hydrography, Linear
- Imagery
- Pre-European Vegetation
- Soils, Statewide
- Threatened and Priority Flora
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities boundaries
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities buffered
- Threatened Fauna

Planning Instrument, Native Title, previous EPA decision or other matter.

Comments

There is one native title claim over the area under application (DPLH, 2017). 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, 2017). 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 31 July 2017 by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

4. References

- DPLH (2017) Aboriginal Heritage Enquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. <http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 12 September 2017).
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Nifty Copper Pty Ltd (2017) Supporting information for clearing permit application CPS 7680/1. Prepared by Nifty Copper Pty Ltd, July 2017.
- Northcote, K. H. with Beckmann G G, Bettenay E., Churchward H. M., van Dijk D. C., Dimmock G. M., Hubble G. D., Isbell R. F., McArthur W. M., Murtha G. G., Nicolls K. D., Paton T. R., Thompson C. H., Webb A. A. and Wright M. J. (1960-68): 'Atlas of Australian Soils, Sheets 1 to 10, with explanatory data'. CSIRO and Melbourne University Press: Melbourne.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

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)
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DBCA and DWER)
DEE	Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government
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)
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
DPLH	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
DRF	Declared Rare Flora
DoE	Department of the Environment, Australian Government (now DEE)
DoW	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
DPaW	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
DSEWPac	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DEE)
DWER	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , 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:

{DPaW (2017) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia}:-

T

Threatened species:

Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, listed under Schedules 1 to 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).

Threatened fauna is that subset of 'Specially Protected Fauna' declared to be 'likely to become extinct' pursuant to section 14(4) of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

Threatened flora is flora that has been declared to be 'likely to become extinct or is rare, or otherwise in need of special protection', pursuant to section 23F(2) of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

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. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
- EN Endangered species**
Threatened species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
- VU Vulnerable species**
Threatened species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
- EX Presumed extinct species**
Species which have been adequately searched for and there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Presumed Extinct Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Presumed Extinct Flora.
- IA Migratory birds protected under an international agreement**
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 the Bonn Convention, relating to the protection of migratory birds. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- CD Conservation dependent fauna**
Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- OS Other specially protected fauna**
Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- P Priority species**
Species which are poorly known; or
Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, and 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.