



Ord-East Kimberley Expansion Project

October 2009

FACT SHEET

Environmental Approvals Process

Introduction

The Ord-East Kimberley Expansion Project aims to increase the size of the irrigated farmland around Kununurra to about 22,000ha. The project will focus on developing about 8,000ha in Weaber Plains along with progressing the approvals for a further three areas, 4,000ha in Mantinea, 1,300ha in the Ord West Bank and 1,380ha in Packsaddle.

Initial development across the Weaber Plains area will extend the main irrigation (M1) channel by about 25km, and will be known as the M2 channel. In addition more than 30km of supply channels and associated drains and levee banks will be constructed as well as roads. The first agricultural land release in this area is expected in 2011.

The Western Australian Government is committed to ensuring the expansion of the irrigation area will preserve the biodiversity and integrity of the natural landscape and cultural heritage. A key part of this is to ensure a strong environmental management approach is taken. Numerous environmental studies have already been conducted and further studies and ongoing environmental monitoring programs are planned.

What has been achieved so far?

In 2002, the Northern Territory and Western Australian (WA) Governments considered a proposal to develop 34,000ha across the Weaber Plains, Keep River and Knox Creek Plains primarily for sugar production.

The WA component of this proposal was granted approval by the WA

Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) which required environmental surveys and the preparation of management plans to minimise the environmental impacts of the development.

In January 2007, the Minister for Environment extended the WA approval until February 2012.

The current proposal to develop 8,000ha in the Weaber Plains area lies within the footprint of the existing environmental approval and is therefore subject to the same conditions of the approval.

The remaining areas in Mantinea, Ord West Bank and Packsaddle do not yet have environmental approvals. Baseline environmental studies are currently underway.



The Pygmy Long-eared Bat (*Nyctophilus walkeri*), one of the species identified in one of the pre-existing fauna studies.



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What environmental studies have already been conducted?

Environmental studies are an essential component of the environmental approvals process. They provide local knowledge and baseline data that helps environmental agencies determine appropriate conditions to be placed on project developments as well as management strategies to help minimise the impact on the environment. Studies conducted to date include:

- Flora surveys
- Fauna survey including bats, frogs, reptiles, subterranean fauna and aquatic fauna surveys
- Groundwater sampling
- Surface water sampling
- Hydrodynamic modeling including flood and flow studies



Groundwater sampling studies and monitoring may include the use of a bore and groundwater pumps.

What is happening now?

LandCorp is assisting the Department of Regional Development and Lands to facilitate the implementation of the environmental approvals. LandCorp is working closely with the WA EPA and the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the

Arts (DEWHA) to determine what further works are required to finalise the environmental approvals process.

Currently LandCorp is working to finalise specific environmental management plans for the Weaber Plains, including the buffer area which surrounds the land release. The plans include:

- Groundwater Management Plan
- Surface Water Management Plan
- Flora and Fauna Protection Plan
- Biodiversity Management Plan
- Fire Management Plan

Who will monitor and manage the land?

An environmental management entity (EME) will be established to monitor and implement the environmental management plans. These plans will apply to the agricultural land and surrounding conservation buffer area before, during and after construction of the agricultural infrastructure and farm development.

The EME will comprise landowners, industry, members of Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation and other relevant stakeholders. Its role will be to undertake the ongoing environmental management of farming operations.

How do I find out more information?

For more information on the Ord-East Kimberley Expansion Project visit www.RoyaltiesforRegions.wa.gov.au/ord or email ordexpansion@rdl.wa.gov.au.

For more information on the environmental approvals process visit www.dec.wa.gov.au or www.epa.wa.gov.au.