

APPENDIX E

Flora and Fauna Report

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR TALBINGO VILLAGE

FLORA AND FAUNA ISSUES

May 2006



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FLORA AND FAUNA ISSUES

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Flora and Fauna Issues report has been commissioned as part of the planning investigations for a major expansion of the Talbingo Village, in the Tumut Local Government Area (LGA).

The study area for the investigations is Lots 35 and 36 DP 878862, located immediately to the west of the existing Talbingo village, with a combined area of 37.99 hectares.

The study area was formerly a construction base for the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Various buildings, roads and other infrastructure have been constructed on the site, with all buildings recently removed.

2 RESEARCH AND SITE INSPECTION

A desktop study was conducted prior to inspection of the study area, including:

- searches for relevant data (including records of threatened species) listed for the Tumut LGA on the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Atlas of NSW Wildlife;
- research into the habits and habitat requirements of threatened species known to occur in the locality;
- review of aerial photography of the study area;
- site maps prepared by various specialist consultants, including an open space plan, staging plan, site analysis plan, site survey plan, zoning plan and preliminary subdivision plan.

An inspection of the study area was conducted by Ms Rebecca Hayes of Hayes Environmental on Wednesday 15th of March 2006. The purpose of the inspection was to:

- visually assess the general nature and condition of vegetation present across the site;
- visually assess the nature and condition of habitats on the site;
- identify any features of particular interest or significance for threatened species; and
- consider the site in relation to flora and fauna values on surrounding lands.

The inspection was conducted with reference to aerial photos and site maps, and involved short walked forays across most parts of the study area.

A series of photographs were taken to record the nature and condition of the site during the site inspection. See Attachment 1.

3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

3.1 General Character and Surrounding Lands

The study area and surrounding lands consist of moderately undulating terrain, with several minor creeklines. The area has previously been cleared of virtually all native vegetation, for a variety of landuse purposes including agriculture, residential development, roads, public open space, and former Snowy Mountains Scheme developments.

The study area and surrounding lands are characterised by cleared open space, with occasional scattered remnant native trees, particularly along creeklines. A variety of ornamental deciduous trees (including Willows and Poplars) have been planted throughout, and have reached maturity.

3.2 Existing Vegetation

Existing vegetation present within the study area includes:

- scattered mature eucalypts in small groups and narrow linear stands, mainly in creeklines;
- scattered ornamental plantings including pines, Peppercorn Trees, Willows and Poplars;
- occasional regrowth native pioneering shrubs;
- weed-infested overgrazed pasture, including a variety of the hardier native and introduced grasses.

No native vegetation community occurs within the study area. The lands are considered to be Cleared/Disturbed.

3.3 Fauna Habitats

Fauna habitats on the site are essentially limited to grassland foraging for kangaroos and wallabies. The scattered eucalypts and shrubs provide some roosting resources and shelter for the more disturbance-tolerant and mobile native birds, including the Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Superb Fairy-wren and finches, and also provide some occasional small to medium hollows of potential value for a range of parrots, and for microchiropteran bats.

A range of common reptiles would be expected to occur in the study area over time, and similarly, a range of common amphibians would be expected to occur in some of the creeklines on the site, particularly following rain.

In general, habitats within the study area and on surrounding lands are of low value for native fauna, being highly disturbed, fragmented, and relatively isolated from more intact and continuous areas of natural habitat.

4 POTENTIAL ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

4.1 Threatened Species, Populations and Ecological Communities

It is possible that several highly mobile threatened fauna species known to occur in the locality (*ie* microchiropteran bats and the Gang Gang Cockatoo) could forage or roost within the study area on occasions.

Several other threatened and/or declining small woodland bird species (*eg* Diamond Firetail) are likely to occur in the vicinity of the Talbingo village, mainly in small woodland remnants, and in the ecotone between native woodland and unimproved grasslands. These species could also occur in the study area on occasions.

No threatened mammals, amphibians or reptiles would be expected to occur in the study area.

It is not expected that an assessment conducted under relevant environmental legislation would conclude that the habitats present are of high significance for any threatened native fauna, or that 'a significant effect' would be likely, based largely on the disturbed nature of habitats present, and the extent of potential habitat conserved in National Park surrounding the Talbingo township.

Further, many of the existing trees on the site would be retained in open space areas within the masterplan.

Detailed botanical surveys of the site have not been conducted. However, based on the extremely disturbed nature of the groundcover, that the shrub and canopy layers have essentially been cleared, and considering the disturbance history of the site, no threatened plant species would be expected to occur.

No endangered populations listed under the TSC Act are of relevance to the study area.

No ecological communities listed under either the TSC Act or the EPBC Act occur in the study area.

4.2 Other Protected Species

A number of migratory bird species listed under the Commonwealth EPBC Act are known to occur in the locality.

Most of these listed species are protected under international migratory bird agreements such as JAMBA (Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement) and CAMBA (China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement).

It is not likely that consideration of these species under the EPBC Act would conclude that the habitats present are of high significance, or that 'a significant effect' would be likely, based largely on the disturbed nature of habitats present, and the extent of potential habitat conserved in National Park surrounding the Talbingo township.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The whole of the study area has been extensively cleared and disturbed, with only occasional remnants of native vegetation scattered throughout. The habitats present within the study area are highly degraded, fragmented and isolated, and only likely to be of value for the more disturbance-tolerant and mobile native fauna. No significant or threatened native flora are likely to occur in the study area.

Threatened fauna potentially occurring in the study area on occasions include wide-ranging species such as microchiropteran bats and the Gang Gang Cockatoo, and several declining woodland birds such as the Diamond Firetail. Further surveys and assessment work may be required with respect to these species, however, it is not expected that an assessment conducted under relevant environmental legislation would conclude that 'a significant effect' would be likely.