

Huntly and Willowdale current mining operations

Environmental assessment



Flora and vegetation



Alcoa has been operating in Western Australia since 1963. Our Huntly and Willowdale mines send mined bauxite to our Pinjarra and Wagerup refineries where it's refined into alumina, the material used to make aluminium.

Aluminium plays a key role in decarbonisation. It's found in solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, medical equipment and more. We continue to rely on it every day.

The assessment

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is reviewing some of the current mining activities at the Huntly and Willowdale mines to ensure they meet State environmental standards and minimise impacts to the environment, cultural values and surrounding communities.

While the EPA completes its assessment, Alcoa will continue to operate under an exemption granted by the WA Government – maintaining bauxite supply and supporting thousands of local jobs.

EPA environmental objective aims to

protect flora and vegetation to maintain biodiversity and keep ecosystems healthy.

Proposed activities

Alcoa's proposed mining activities that could impact flora and vegetation include:

- Extending mining areas into new locations.
- Clearing land for roads, infrastructure, and mining areas.
- Operating mining and haulage equipment.
- Storing and handling hazardous substances.

Key terms

- Flora** – Native plants found in a specific area.
- Vegetation** – How different plant species group together across the landscape based on environmental conditions.
- Riparian vegetation** – Plants that are adapted to grow along the banks of rivers and streams.
- Threatened ecological communities** – groups of native plants, animals, and other organisms that are listed as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered under conservation laws.
- Priority ecological communities** – those that are rare but not threatened, meet criteria for Near Threatened, or have been recently removed from the threatened list.

Potential impacts

Mining activities have the potential to impact local flora and vegetation in the following ways:

Disturbance – Clearing of vegetation.

Weeds and disease – Spread of weeds and dieback from soil disturbance.

Groundwater changes – Changes to groundwater flow and availability.

Dryland salinity – Rising groundwater levels may increase salinity levels of the soil.

Dust and chemicals – Dust emissions and spills or leaks from hazardous materials.

Managing impacts

Since Alcoa's operations commenced in 1963, clearing has occurred on approximately 2% of Jarrah Forest. We only clear areas for mining that have been previously logged.

Alcoa manages potential impacts on flora and vegetation through application of the mitigation hierarchy – avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation.



Avoid

- No clearing occurs in areas identified as high-conservation value. This includes old growth forests, national parks and conservation reserves.
- No clearing of threatened flora or Threatened Ecological Communities
- No clearing for mining within Priority Ecological Communities, stream zones and large rocky outcrops with high-value flora habitat.
- Maintain 100m buffers around mapped riparian vegetation near rivers, streams, and wetlands for mining.
- Weed and disease assessments are undertaken, and appropriate management implemented before clearing to prevent the spread of invasive species and dieback.
- Hygiene measures like vehicle and equipment cleaning and restricting the movement of soil are implemented to minimise the spread of dieback.



Minimise

- Clearing footprint limited to 4119 ha across the proposal.
- Clearing in sensitive areas is restricted to essential infrastructure, such as roads and haul routes, with careful planning to reduce impacts on significant vegetation.
- Pre-clearance surveys identify conservation significant species and habitat.



Rehabilitate

For decades, we have continued to develop and follow leading science-based rehabilitation practices.

- As part of this proposal, we will rehabilitate a minimum of 3,159 ha between 2024 and 2027.
- This progressive rehabilitation will use native seeds collected from within the Northern Jarrah Forrest and nursery-grown seedlings sourced from Alcoa's nurseries.
- Rehabilitation will be prioritised near environmentally significant areas.

How Alcoa monitors potential impacts

Flora and vegetation monitoring – Weed assessments at select high-traffic locations; vegetation composition and condition monitoring at impacted and non-impacted sites for comparison.

Rehabilitation tracking – Monitoring rehabilitation growth to check against completion criteria.

Clearing limits/extent – Clearing reconciliation conducted to ensure we comply with our clearing limits and extents.



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