

Wild Rivers—Guide for Mining Exploration

Purpose of this guide

This guide is a summary of the wild river requirements for mining exploration activities. Please refer to the relevant wild river declaration and legislation for further details.

This guide does not relate to exploration for gas or petroleum.

Background information

Wild rivers are important. Queensland has a number of river systems which are relatively untouched by development and are therefore in near natural condition, with all, or almost all, of their natural values intact. One way of preserving these valuable river systems as a part of our natural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations, is to declare them as a 'Wild River Area'. Wild River areas include some of Australia's most unique ecosystems, rare and threatened plants, birds and marine and estuarine species.

However, the Queensland Government recognises and acknowledges the importance of the mining industry to the state. It is significant to note that mineral exploration can continue in wild river areas.

Wild rivers management areas

The location of the mining exploration activity in relation to the wild river management areas and nominated waterways determines whether or not the activity is subject to wild river requirements. Management areas and nominated waterways are shown in each wild river declaration.

Development activities may have different impacts depending on where they occur within a catchment. Management areas regulate development impacts in the proposed wild river areas. The following management areas are identified in wild river areas and apply to mining exploration activities;

High Preservation Area (HPA)—an area within and immediately adjacent to the wild river, its major tributaries and any identified special features, such as wetlands.

Special Floodplain Management Area (SFMA)—in addition to high preservation areas, special floodplain management areas have also been identified for this proposed wild river area. This type of management area is designated to preserve the natural values of the network of interconnected channels of the Lake Eyre Basin river systems.

Preservation Area (PA)—the wild river area excluding the high preservation area and special floodplain management area. New activities in this area will have a less direct impact on the natural values of the wild river/s. Therefore, most new development activities can occur in this area provided wild river requirements are met. Exploration activities are generally unaffected but some requirements do apply in the nominated waterways in the preservation area.

Wild river areas also contain **nominated waterways**. These are secondary tributaries or streams in a preservation area that have been designated for wild river purposes. In the preservation area, most wild river requirements apply for development activities in and adjacent to nominated waterways, but not to other watercourses.

Mineral Exploration in High Preservation Areas and Special Floodplain Management Areas

Mineral exploration can continue in HPAs and SFMAs under an exploration permit; a mineral development lease or a mining lease. The extent of activity will be constrained by the conditions of the tenement, however the following exploration activities can occur in these areas:

- Aerial surveys, for example, geological, geophysical, photogrammetric and topographic aerial surveys
- Geological and surveying field work that does not involve clearing, for example, flagging of sites and sample locations, geological reconnaissance and field mapping and surveying that does not involve clearing.
- Hand-sampling, including:
 - grab sampling
 - mine tailings and mine mullock sampling
 - panning and sieving
 - rock chip sampling
 - stream sediment sampling (disturbed and undisturbed samples)
 - soil sampling (disturbed and undisturbed samples)
 - water sampling
- Ground-based geophysical surveys that do not involve clearing, including:

- potential-field methods of surveying, including, for example, gravity, magnetic and radiometric surveys
- electrical methods of surveying, including, for example, electromagnetic, ground penetrating radar
- seismic methods of surveying
- Drilling and activities associated with drilling that—
 - do not include clearing or excavation, other than the minimum necessary to establish a drill pad for a mobile rig
 - do not include clearing or excavation for access to a drill site
 - do not include side hill excavation for access or drill pads as would be necessary on steep slopes
 - do not include drilling in a watercourse or stream diversion
 - do not include clearing in densely vegetated areas
- Environmental field work that does not involve clearing, for example, cultural heritage, environmental and geo-botanical surveys and environmental monitoring.

Note: Within watercourses located in an HPA or SFMA, or within **nominated** waterways, limited hand sampling only is permitted.

Mapping

A mapping service on the wild rivers website allows you to create and print maps of mining tenements to show the location and the extent of management areas in both declared and proposed wild river areas:
<www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildrivers/wildrivers-map.php>.

Wild rivers spatial information is also available through the Interactive Resource and Tenure Mapping system available at: <www.mines.industry.qld.gov.au/geoscience/interactive-resource-tenure-maps.htm>.

More information about requirements for mining tenements is available at:
<www.mines.industry.qld.gov.au/mining/default.htm>.

Environmental authorities

Environmental authorities for mining activities are regulated under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*.

Mining exploration activities carried out in a wild river may be a Level 1 or Level 2 mining project depending on the environmental impact, though they will generally be Level 2 mining projects as defined under the Environmental Protection Act.

Level 2 mining projects

There are no wild river requirements for a Level 2 mining project that is code compliant.

When deciding if an environmental management plan is required for a non-code compliant exploration application for an environmental authority, prospecting permits and

mining claims the relevant decision maker must consider the wild river declaration.

Additional conditions can be imposed on an environmental authority in a wild river area. When deciding whether to impose additional conditions on non-code compliant Level 2 mining exploration permits, the decision maker must consider the wild river declaration. In doing so the administering authority must consider the potential for contaminated wastewater to enter receiving waters and the impact of contaminated wastewater on the relevant natural values.

When deciding whether to grant or refuse an environmental authority, the decision maker must also consider the wild river declaration.

Level 1 mining exploration projects

When deciding if an environmental impact statement is required, the decision maker must consider the wild river declaration.

An environmental management plan is required for all Level 1 mining exploration projects in a wild river area.

The decision maker can also impose additional conditions on an environmental authority in a wild river area.

Specific requirements relating to additional conditions in wild river areas are set out in each declaration. Examples of matters that must be considered by the decision maker when imposing conditions include the potential for:

- contaminated wastewater to enter receiving waters
- the impact of contaminated wastewater on the relevant natural values

and if mining underground:

- impacts on the relevant natural values
- collapse or subsidence of the land above
- impacts on hydraulic connections between groundwater aquifers and watercourses and lakes in the HPA or nominated waterway
- contamination of hydraulically linked groundwater.

Moratorium

During the period that a proposed wild river declaration is under consideration, a moratorium applies to dealings with mining tenements in the proposed wild river area.

While dealings are not suspended, the wild river rules will apply to mining tenement dealings as if the wild river area had been declared.

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For general enquiries contact the
Queensland Government call centre 13 QGOV (13 7468)
or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au