

Submission Cover Sheet

Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project Inquiry and Advisory
Committee - EES

743

Request to be heard?: Yes

Full Name: Alison Ann Waller

Organisation:

Affected property: [REDACTED] Fernbank Vic 3864

Attachment 1: AW_mine_submis


Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached

Submission from:

Alison Waller


Walpa Vic 3875

Key points

- Scientific detail in the EES is often of a low standard with limited controls
- Rehabilitation and dam planning has not taken into account a highly variable climate including unpredictable and unforecast high rainfall/floods, and droughts that will seriously impede any rehabilitation effort
- Rehabilitation plans do not take into account threat and control of weeds, particularly African lovegrass, Chilean needle grass and serrated tussock that are prevalent in the area and if allowed to invade the rehabilitated area will significantly degrade the productivity of that pasture
- The economic impact described in the agriculture report seriously undervalues and underestimates current agricultural values and talks up the mine benefits
- From a personal perspective we returned to East Gippsland in 2015 with a plan to significantly improve and expand our agriculture business, and ensure that it would provide return for generations to come. Whilst we have been able to do this on our home farm at Walpa the mine has been a significant deterrent to investment for the past six years
- Our current business model relies on our Nindoo property to grow our cattle. They are then finished at our property in Walpa. The ability to have two blocks close together is essential to the profitability of our business. Currently there is a shortage of land within the area, due to the demand for vegetable production and it would be almost impossible to find another parcel of land in close proximity.

The agriculture report

As a farm animal veterinarian, I have chosen this report to be my prime focus. As a general observation this report significantly underestimates the productivity and potential of this area

- The DSE estimates do not represent the area or take account for the recent drought
- The indicative grazing enterprise gross margins in table 6 of the agriculture report is based on our five-year averages for 2012 to 2016. Since 2016 has been a significant increase in both cattle and sheep prices and these figures significantly underestimate the current and potential income/gross margins of the area.
- Historical 10-year average gross margins for Gippsland for Beef \$484/ha, Prime Lamb \$585/ha, and Wool \$318/ha. With farm average stocking rate of 19DSE/ha 2018-19 year¹. Even this does not take into account the current prices of fat lambs and beef
- The GM estimates also do not take into account how properties at the fingerboard integrate into the bigger picture of other properties in those farming businesses, and how the loss of that will have a significant decrease on farm profitability
- The area was damaged by fire in 2014, which seriously affected many of the properties in the proposed mine site. At this stage producers were told that the land would be mined in 2 to 3 years and consequently producers have not invested in rebuilding either the land or the infrastructure to the level that would otherwise have occurred.

- Changes in on-farm practice – as discussed changes in the past 6 years have been limited by the threat of the mine hanging over our heads. The report details work re a mineral that fixes potassium (P 36) but does not mention what this mineral is or site where or when the work was done. Yes some post mine practical source research and extension would be great, but as it is already plan to mix the topsoil with other compost etc, would it not be better to do research prior to commencing the mine to determine which ameliorants would be best to apply.
- The agriculture report does not address any impact of the mine on animals in the surrounding area, apart from one paragraph in appendix 6. Impact could be noise, dust or water contamination affecting saleability of product and causing stress on animals.
- Many landholders within the project area were not consulted during the research for this report

The rehabilitation report

- African lovegrass is a weed of major concern within the area and present on some of the farms and roadsides of the proposed mine site. This weed will easily take over land area and have a significant impact on ongoing productivity and profitability. (See article at <https://mailchi.mp/ab27242eb3d2/gippsland-agricultural-group-e-news-9418133?e=474d30c0b0>) The rehabilitation report does not mention this weed at any point. If the plan is to move topsoil from one property to another this will just spread this weed as the seed remains viable in the soil for at least 10 years. Currently there is no plan in place to control African Lovegrass in the rehabilitation report. Moreover, the herbicide that is best to control this weed (Flupropanate) has a permanent meat withhold of 14 days such that once used stock cannot be sold for slaughter from the property unless fed supplementary feed for two weeks before slaughter. This is a permanent withhold. If it is necessary to control African lovegrass using this chemical then the future productivity and profitability of the land area will be compromised.
- The rehabilitation report also does not take into account the difficulty in establishing perennial pastures in the area. Much of the area has a high level of annual ryegrass seed, such that once disturbed the annual ryegrass will germinate after the autumn break and smother out any perennial plantings. Consequently for successful establishment of perennials it is important to do want to 2 years of cropping. This has not been considered at all in the rehabilitation report.
- There are a bit the rehabilitation plan is also not adequately account for the high winds in the area and the sandiness of the soils. In the recent drought soil that was not stabilised by ground cover blew in significant amounts at multiple sites in proximity to the proposed mine site. It is essential that any rehabilitation plan takes the level of wind into account

I request that the rehabilitation report be reviewed and contain realistic estimates of what it will take to rehabilitate this land.

Water

- The EES does not adequately add risk to stock and domestic bores and irrigation water supplies. Local shallow aquifers are critical for livestock producers to provide water for stock, and lactating cows will drink up to 120 L per day. Any impact on this will have significant effects on farms and animals in the area and the recent drought has demonstrated that surface water is not adequate on most farms. Local farmers have reported an impact on their bores after the limited test pumping that calibre has done .

Many local producers can tell of times when pumping from one bore has impacted other bores in the area despite the fact that they are not meant to be connected . If this mine is to go ahead, it is essential that further investigation into the aquifer and water systems are carried out. And significantly more test pumping needs to be carried out.

- the region has experience significant water restrictions over the past three years . this is had a serious impact on agricultural production as well as agricultural sustainability and development . producers have been waiting for the 6 GL of water that is apparently available, since a moratorium was applied in 2011. If 3GL water is to be redirected to the mine, then the estimates of the financial impact of the mine on agriculture production in the region are seriously underestimated

Compensation

- Producers and residents in the area close to the mine should be compensated for the impact of dust, noise road changes, decreased property values, impact on pasture, crops and livestock and overall farm productivity

ⁱ (Table C15 & C4 Live Stock Farm Monitor Project, Victoria, Annual Report 2018-19

https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/537757/Livestock-Farm-Monitor-Project-2018-2019.pdf)