

FACT SHEET – BIODIVERSITY

This fact sheet has been prepared by Monaro Rock to provide information about biodiversity around the project site, and the management measures to be implemented by Monaro Rock throughout the life of the project.

Monaro Rock is aware that many community members care deeply about biodiversity in the region. We do too and will carefully assess any potential risks to biodiversity that may result from the project.

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity relates to the variety of life on earth – the different plants, animals and micro-organisms and the terrestrial, marine and freshwater systems they inhabit¹.

Biological diversity includes regional diversity, ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity. Biodiversity is constantly changing – it is increased by evolutionary processes and reduced by things such as habitat degradation, population decline and extinction².

BIODIVERSITY RISKS

Risks to biodiversity due to the project would principally occur as a result of clearing vegetation and removing individual plants and habitat area. This includes the removal of habitat features that are not limited to vegetation (such as exposed rocky outcrops). Indirect impacts may also occur to biodiversity through physical barriers such as fences as well as dust, noise and light exposure.

BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT HIERARCHY

When planning for biodiversity constraints, the following hierarchy of management is applied.

1. Avoidance – Risks to biodiversity are first avoided where reasonable and feasible to do so.
2. Mitigation – Predicted impacts may then be mitigated by the implementation of specific measures to reduce impact risks.
3. Offset – Residual impacts are then offset in accordance with the relevant government policies and procedures.

Monaro Rock has considered the above hierarchy in planning for the quarry project. The location of infrastructure has been undertaken with careful consideration of existing biodiversity.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The Monaro Rock property is currently used for grazing with passive biodiversity conservation in areas that contain remnant vegetation. The land within the proposed site has undergone some historical vegetation clearing, however large areas of native vegetation have been retained, including native grasses. The project has been designed to minimise impacts to remnant trees and structurally complex vegetation. For example, the extraction area will be located where the canopy and midstory vegetation have been historically thinned.

¹NSW DCCEEW (2023) *About Biodiversity* <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/about-biodiversity> [Accessed 04/06/2024]

²Queensland Government (2023) *What is Biodiversity* <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/biodiversity/about> [Accessed 04/06/2024]

Preliminary ecological surveys of the property identified the presence of two plant communities within the Monaro Rock property:

- Norton's Box Peppermint Open Forest
- Yellow Box Grassy Woodland (Box Gum Woodland).

When in suitable condition, Box Gum Woodland is listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC) under both NSW and Commonwealth legislation.

Threatened flora species identified during preliminary surveys within the Monaro Rock property included the Silky Swainson-pea (*Swainsona sericea*) and the Pale Pomaderris (*Pomaderris pallida*). Most of the identified habitat was located outside the quarry disturbance area. A population of Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*) was recorded in the rail corridor adjacent to the proposed access road.

Threatened fauna identified during preliminary surveys within the Monaro Rock property included:

- Pink-tailed Legless Lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*)
- Dusky Woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*)
- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)
- Varied Sittella (*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*)

No Pink-tailed Legless Lizards were detected in or near the proposed disturbance area, and the project is therefore unlikely to impact the species. No breeding observations for the identified bird species were recorded within the proposed disturbance area, but vegetation in the proposed disturbance area and wider site support suitable breeding habitat for all species.

The attached figure presents the outcomes of ecological field surveys and the locations in which threatened flora and fauna were identified.

BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is Australia's national environmental legislation for protecting biodiversity, including nationally and internationally important plants, animals, habitats and places, as well as migratory species.

Within NSW, the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) is the legislation that aims to maintain a healthy, productive and resilient environment and regulates a range of development activities and their impacts on the natural environment. It also identifies and protects threatened species populations and ecological communities in NSW.

Within the ACT, the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NC Act) establishes the legislative framework for the protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity of the ACT. The administrative functions of the NC Act relevant to development are to establish the appointment of a Conservator of Flora and Fauna, provide for the regulation of biodiversity impacts and to establish the Nature Conservation Threatened Ecological Communities List.

BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The quarry has been designed to minimise and avoid impacts on the existing environmental setting as far as practicable. Where possible, the extraction area and access road to the site have been located to avoid impacts to high-density vegetation that is in good condition.

Construction and operating procedures will be designed to minimise impacts on the environment. A summary of the industry-standard biodiversity management and mitigation measures is provided below. Additional measures may be recommended during the environmental impact assessment.

- Clear designation of operating areas to separate these from areas that are not to be impacted.
- Development of a vegetation clearing protocol to guide all vegetation removal activities.
- Establishment of a biodiversity offset strategy.
- Tree planting in completed areas and progressive rehabilitation.
- Implementation of a comprehensive biodiversity, weed, and pest monitoring program.

PROJECT ASSESSMENTS RELATING TO BIODIVERSITY

Impacts on biodiversity cannot be completely avoided and therefore residual risks must be assessed in accordance with the relevant legislation, policies and guidelines. All possible impacts are considered, including physical disturbance, habitat fragmentation, wildlife corridor changes and the overall significance of predicted impacts.

A Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) will be completed to identify and assess risks to vegetation communities and individual species within the area to be disturbed. The BDAR will quantify residual biodiversity impacts and the associated biodiversity offset requirements under the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method.

Outcomes of the BDAR will be communicated through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and other community consultation avenues. Monaro Rock will continue to engage with the community and provide updates as the EIS is developed.

Within the ACT, an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed to identify and assess risks to vegetation communities and individual species within the area to be disturbed. The EIA will be the key document that assesses the impact of the project on ecological values in the ACT.

The project will likely be considered a controlled action under the EPBC Act and therefore approval from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment will be required. The project is likely to be assessed via either preliminary documentation, a public environment report, or an environmental impact statement.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Community members are encouraged to contact us with any project-related questions or to ask to be included in ongoing consultation.

Enquiries may be sent directly to the project team via the Monaro Rock website (<https://monarorock.com.au/>) or to Nicholas Warren either by email at nick@rwcorkery.com or by calling 0437 635 975.

