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**ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - MOLONGLO VALLEY FORB  
ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM – ESO202400008**

In accordance with section 140 (4) of the *Planning Act 2023* (the Act), I provide the following environmental significance opinion:

**APPLICANT**

ACT Parks and Conservation Service, as represented by Richard Milner, Senior Ecologist.

**APPLICATION and DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

The applicant has applied under section 140 (4) of the Act to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna for an environmental significance opinion to the effect that the development proposal set out in the submission is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact (the application).

The development proposal is for Forb enhancement and restoration works as described in the submission.

**LOCATION**

Block 1419, District of Belconnen within the Kama Nature Reserve.  
Block 78, District of Molonglo Valley.

**MATTERS TO WHICH THIS OPINION APPLIES**

This opinion applies only to the development proposal as described in the application.

**OPINION**

Provided the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the following conditions in addition to the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

This opinion is granted subject to the following conditions made under s140 (4)(b) of the Act:

1. No work is permitted on site when a Total Fire Ban is declared.
2. On days of High fire danger rating (FBI 25 or greater) all hot works and works that could emit a spark must cease.

Hot works activities must otherwise be deferred to be undertaken under less risky conditions and consideration given to what mitigations measures such as fire suppression equipment can be implemented. The daily rating and a four day outlook are available during the declared bushfire danger period at <https://esa.act.gov.au/for> the proponent to assess risks.

Hot works includes; welding, cutting, grinding, or other works involving open flames or which emit a spark such as excavating hard rock, slashing and brush-cutting

3. The proposed works may be subject to random compliance inspection by Conservation Officials as requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

Bren Burkevics  
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

April 2024

**STATEMENT OF REASONS  
REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

The proposed development is a proposal mentioned in Schedule 1 of the *Planning (General) Regulation 2023* – requiring environmental impact statement, being:

***Part 1.2, item 16 - proposal that is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact on 1 or more of the following:***

- (a) a critically endangered species;***
- (b) an endangered species;***
- (c) a vulnerable species;***
- (d) a conservation dependent species;***
- (e) a regionally threatened species;***
- (f) a regionally conservation dependent species;***
- (g) a provisionally listed threatened species;***
- (h) a listed migratory species;***
- (i) a threatened ecological community;***
- (j) a protected native species;***
- (k) a Ramsar wetland;***
- (l) any other protected matter***

The location of the development contains:

Two ecological communities listed as threatened:

- Natural Temperate Grassland of the South Eastern Highlands (NTG)
- Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (box-gum woodland)

One animal species listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*:

- Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*)

Two plant species listed as threatened

- Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*)
- Hoary Sunray (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*)

***Part 1.2, item 18 - proposal for development in a reserve, unless the proposal is for minor public works to be carried out by or for the Territory in accordance with a minor public works code approved by the conservator of flora and fauna under the Nature Conservation Act 2014, section 318A;***

Parts of the proposed works are within Kama Nature Reserve.

The proponent wants the application for the development approval assessed in the merit track on the grounds that the proposal is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, and has applied to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to that effect.

### **Meaning of *significant* adverse environmental impact**

An adverse environmental impact is *significant* if—

- (a) the environmental function, system, value or entity that might be adversely impacted by a proposed development is significant; or
- (b) the cumulative or incremental effect of a proposed development might contribute to a substantial adverse impact on an environmental function, system, value or entity.

In deciding whether an adverse environmental impact is *significant*, the following matters must be taken into account:

- (a) the kind, size, frequency, intensity, scope and length of time of the impact;
- (b) the sensitivity, resilience and rarity of the environmental function, system, value or entity likely to be affected.

In deciding whether a development proposal is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact it does not matter whether the adverse environmental impact is likely to occur on the site of the development or elsewhere.

It has been determined that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant environmental impact, based on the documentation submitted, known values of the site, and provided the works and ongoing management are carried out in accordance with the conditions attached to this ESO.

### **Project description**

In November 2022 contaminated material was found to have been deposited into the Molonglo River Reserve. Approximately 0.65ha of native grassland vegetation within the Reserve was impacted.

In May 2023 it was determined that rehabilitating the site back to native grassland was not feasible given the slope of the site, soil compaction and extremely low phosphorus, nitrogen and carbon levels. It was therefore agreed that the impacts to the native ground storey would be best mitigated by rehabilitating an equivalent sized area within the Reserve in an area more suitable for ground storey rehabilitation.

It was agreed that the restoration works would be managed by ACT Parks and Conservation Service and funded by the Suburban Land Agency and will be undertaken in the Molonglo River Reserve.

This project proposes grassland restoration works using soil scraping and direct seeding within the Molonglo Valley across approximately 0.5ha across two sites.

The scrape treatment will involve the removal of 10-15cm of topsoil using a grader. The depth of scrapes will be determined by Phosphorous and Nitrogen levels following soil testing. Following the removal of the topsoil, the sites will be direct seeded with a high diversity of native grasses and forbs. Seeding rate will be 50kg/ha with a ratio of 20:80 forbs: grasses.

Spoil will be managed by spreading the soil to a depth of approximately 40cm outside the restoration site within an exotic dominated site. The spoil site (approximately 0.15ha) will then be planted with a range of Box-Gum woodland tree and shrub species. The spoil site will be kept within conservation areas or Reserve.

The project will be implemented and managed by ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

#### **Documentation Submitted**

- ESO Molonglo River reserve forb enhancement program;
- CEMP Molonglo Valley forb enhancement program 2024-25;
- ESO Molonglo River reserve forb enhancement program Heritage Values;
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

#### **Natural conservation values present**

The Molonglo River Reserve supports several threatened and endangered species and communities including Box Gum Woodland, Natural Temperate Grassland, Button Wrinkelwort (*Rutidosis leptorhynchoides*), Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*) and Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia Parapulchella*).

The sites proposed for all restoration work are currently heavily infested with exotic weeds. The dominant species on the site include *Avena sp.* as well as *Phalaris aquatica*, *Setaria sp.*, *Paspalum dilatatum*, *Carthamus lanatus*, *Hypericum perforatum* and other introduced weeds.

#### **Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts**

The works as proposed will disturb approximately 0.5ha of vegetation across two sites. The locations proposed for the works have been chosen as they are currently heavily infested with exotic weeds and the works are likely to enhance ecological values.

All works avoid areas of mapped Pink Tail Worm Lizard habitat zones, threatened plant species and riparian areas. No trees will be impacted. This restoration work will

help establish more resilient ecological communities within the Molonglo Valley, facilitating ongoing protection of matters of national ecological significance.

Conditions have been included to ensure that works comply with the current standard conditions relating to bushfire risk.

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2. On days of High fire danger rating (FBI 25 or greater) all hot works and works that could emit a spark must cease.

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Hot works includes; welding, cutting, grinding, or other works involving open flames or which emit a spark such as excavating hard rock, slashing and brush-cutting

3. The proposed works may be subject to random compliance inspection by Conservation Officials as requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

It has been determined that if the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the above conditions attached to the ESO in addition to the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.