



Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund

Overview

A transformational approach to achieving large-scale environmental conservation outcomes

The Pilbara

The 179,000 square kilometre Pilbara bioregion has ancient and striking landscapes and diverse habitats, including mangroves, grassland savannahs, mountain ranges, gorges, wetlands and tropical woodlands.

It has high biodiversity value, with 150 conservation-significant flora species and the greatest reptile diversity in Western Australia. It is also an international hotspot for subterranean fauna.

The Pilbara has a rich Aboriginal heritage, with more than 31 Aboriginal cultural groups in a region where Indigenous culture still follows traditional lore patterns, processes and custodian duties.

The Pilbara is also one of Australia's most important regions for mineral wealth, and generates about 40 per cent of Western Australia's gross domestic product. Due to industrial development, the region is identified as one of 15 national biodiversity hotspots – areas with many endemic species where the levels of stress or future threat are high.

While industry is vital to Western Australia's economic progress, its impacts need to be balanced with the conservation of the diverse natural environment and exceptional biodiversity of the Pilbara.

Environmental offsets in the Pilbara

Environmental offsets have helped mining companies and other development proponents meet their environmental obligations under state and federal legislation for many years. They enable sustainable mining development by offsetting impacts that can't be avoided or mitigated. Offset activities are undertaken outside a specific project area rather than onsite.

To date, the effective implementation of offsets in the Pilbara has been hampered by the challenge of working on crown land with overlapping pastoral, mining and native title interests. This makes land acquisition and access difficult, and past offset activities have not always been deployed where they were needed most.

The Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund

The Pilbara Environmental Offset Fund is truly transformational in that it streamlines regulation to deliver environmental offset outcomes through a strategic, large-scale approach.

It is an ongoing program that aims to deal with the Pilbara's specific challenges and has the potential to create new jobs, particularly for Aboriginal people.

The fund allows multiple offset payments to be combined for larger conservation projects or to expand successful regional initiatives, enabling landscape-scale projects with widespread environmental benefits, rather than many smaller and isolated activities.

The fund is forecast to deliver more than \$90 million of projects over the next 40 years. It has strict principles for what can and can't be funded, underpinned by legislation to ensure that impacts to flora, fauna and habitat are avoided, minimised and offset.

The fund's success will be measured by the extent to which projects improve environmental values impacted by development, and are delivered in collaboration with traditional owners and other regional land managers.



Fund implementation plan

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has developed an implementation plan that sets the fund's strategic focus and describes how it will be delivered over the next five years.

Fund investment will target areas with a high density of both state and federal environmental matters, and where land tenure enables legal access and longevity for offset outcomes. Projects will be delivered at different scales.

- Landscape-scale programs address threats like weeds, feral animals, and inappropriate fire across the landscape.
- Priority area programs build on the landscape-scale outcomes to further improve and protect vegetation and species habitat in identified priority areas.
- Site-specific projects protect and improve specific environmental matters such as Priority Ecological Communities or a particular habitat with unique attributes.

Three priority areas for the first five years have been identified and are the starting point for the fund. They have been selected based on the data available on the location of conservation-significant species required to be offset. In the first grant round we will be focusing investment on priority areas 1 and 2 – see the map on the back cover.

Delivery of the program

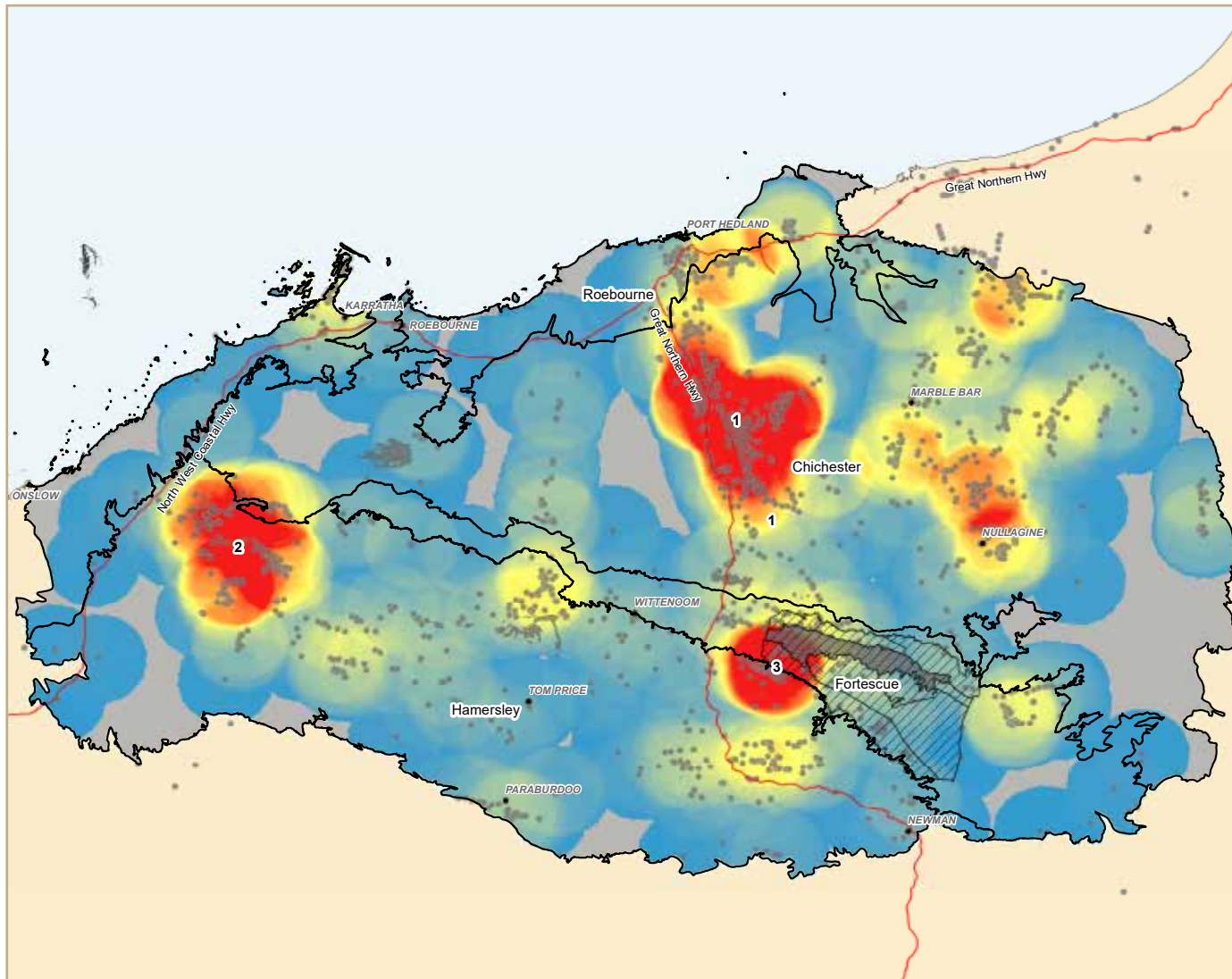
The Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund will be adaptively managed to adjust its delivery over time as more information and opportunities become available.

With advice from the fund's implementation advisory group, the department will design the scope of each call for projects and seek funding applications. The Minister for Environment will select the projects to be funded, with advice from a project recommendation group

The department will investigate new ways to achieve long-term security for offset outcomes and, if possible, expand delivery of the fund through policy, legislative and land tenure reform dwer.wa.gov.au/peof/.

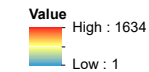


High priority areas for offset investment

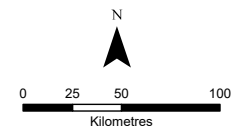


Legend

Density of priority fauna required to be offset, in close proximity to one another



- Fortescue Marsh management zone
- Environmental matter - threatened and priority fauna species
- Environmental matter - priority ecological communities
- Towns
- Roads overview
- Pilbara bioregion
- Coastline overview



Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia, 1994
Scale: 1:2,100,000 at A3