

EPA sets public review timeline for Alcoa assessments

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has reached a key stage in its assessment of Alcoa's Bauxite mining on the Darling Range for the periods [2022-2026](#) and [2023-2027](#).

Today the EPA has published the [environmental scoping document](#) (ESD) related to the proposals, outlining the requirements and timing for the proponent's environmental review.

EPA deputy chair Lee McIntosh said a bespoke approach to scoping had been necessary to take into account the complexity of the proposals, known as Mining and Management Programs (MMPs), and their relationship to other previous and current proposals.

"Noting that there is an exemption order (issued under section 6 of *the Environmental Protection Act 1986*) in place that permits the proponent to continue mining activities within the proposal areas, the EPA has decided to provide alternative pathways for assessment if all relevant information isn't supplied in the stipulated timeframe," Ms McIntosh said. "At this stage, however, we are on target to publish the environmental review document (ERD) for a 10-week public consultation in January."

While the MMPs were referred separately, the EPA has decided to consider both under a single ESD. The proposals comprise different physical elements but they share the same mining development envelope. They relate to Alcoa's mining operations within the Huntly and Willowdale areas, about 100km south-east of Perth, and include the production, processing and transport of wet bauxite ore, the abstraction of water, exploration drilling, and rehabilitation works.

The EPA is separately considering another proposal by Alcoa to increase production at its Pinjarra refinery and transition mining at the existing Huntly Mine to the Myara North and Holyoake regions. The [Pinjarra Alumina Refinery Revised Proposal](#) is being assessed at the level of public environmental review.

Ms McIntosh said it was the EPA's preference for the public review for both the Pinjarra Alumina Refinery Revised Proposal and the MMP proposals to be progressed simultaneously.

“It’s our hope that all these proposals will both be published in January for public review at the same time,” she said. “And for the sake of efficiency and the consideration of cumulative impacts to the Northern Jarrah Forest, that the EPA’s assessment could be delivered in a single report with a single set of recommendations.

“However, amalgamating them into a single proposal is a course of action (under the EP Act) for the proponent.”

The scoping document for the MMPs also highlights the EPA’s desire for future Alcoa mining operations to be considered as amendments to longer term mining proposals rather than referred in as individual new proposals.

“This will avoid the need for incremental and annual assessment of MMPs which is not consistent with the efficient, modern environmental assessment processes that can consider cumulative effects,” Ms McIntosh said.

EPA Media Contact: Jenni.Storey@dwer.wa.gov.au 0434 734 997