

August 2023

Frequently asked questions

Review of environmental factors OPA 4

Lightning Ridge Mineral Claims District

What is the review of environmental factors (REF)?

The REF is a preliminary study of area 1 of Narran-Warrambool Reserve, known as OPA 4. The REF gives an overview of the potential environmental impacts of opal mining in OPA 4. You can access the full REF and technical appendices on the department's [website](#).

The land in OPA 4 was assessed to map specific environmental factors that show areas where potential opal mining activity would have a higher likelihood or degree of environmental impact.

The REF includes identifying and mapping biodiversity, soil capability, heritage, and acoustic and visual impacts.

Landholders and key stakeholders were consulted throughout the process.

The REF is essential for the department to consider the environmental impacts before issuing the approval for a mineral claim or licence to meet its role as a determining authority under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Who prepared the REF?

Specialist environmental consultants prepared the OPA 4 REF. The consultants assessed and considered environmental factors across the study area against the likely impacts of standard opal mining activities on the environment.

Standard opal mining activities include drilling, shafting and tunnelling. Ancillary opal mining activities include dry puddling, construction and operation of buildings.

Open-cut and trenching activities were not considered as part of this REF and will require further site-specific environmental assessment information supporting applications for these activities.

Where can I see the REF maps?

You can view the maps online at [MinView](#).

The maps inform the assessment of the environmental impacts of potential applications for opal mining activities. The mapping of key environmental factors was compiled into cumulative environmental factors mapping and is colour-coded.

The cumulative environmental factors can be viewed in [MinView](#) layers are listed below:

- **MEG_Bio** = ecological constraint ratings
- **MEG_Visual** = visual constraint ratings
- **MEG_NoiseD** = Noise (day) constraint ratings
- **MEG_NoiseN** = Noise (night) constraint ratings
- **MEG_HerInd** = Heritage (Indigenous) constraint ratings

- **MEG_HerHis** = Heritage (Historic) constraint ratings
- **MEG_LSC** = Land and Soil Capability constraint ratings
- **MEG_Total** = Sum of the above constraint ratings for each polygon
- **Cumulative** = Final traffic light categories based on cumulative weight thresholds from MEG_Total above

What do the cumulative environmental factors mean?

The cumulative environmental factors rating is based on a weighted score of individual environmental impact factors. It is shown on the map with a colour to explain the weighting to the area.

Specialist consultants mapped the environmental factors for OPA 4 and developed a rating of the potential impact that standard opal mining activity could have on the environment. Areas of higher environmental significance have been mapped so that they can be considered when applications for opal mining are received in these areas.

You can access the different layers of constraints mapping that shows the environmental considerations in Minview. It is important to note that although in a few areas, the environmental constraints may be significant enough to limit mining, the large majority show environmental constraints that require consideration, and some areas have no environmental constraints identified. For the majority, it may mean higher levels of environmental assessment need to be undertaken by any mineral claim applicant, mitigations put in place on mineral claim conditions, higher security payable or on-ground inspection by the Resources Regulator.

What do the colours in the REF maps mean?

The cumulative weighting thresholds on the maps are shown in red, amber, green or no colour.

Colour	Rating	Description of cumulative weighting threshold	Weighting
Red	High	High potential constraints present, detailed further consideration and likely site-specific information required prior to support activity approval.	=> 6
Amber	Medium	Medium potential constraint, further consideration – and possibly further site-specific information – required to support activity approval.	= 4 or 5
Green	Low	Low potential constraints, activity approval to be granted with general conditions to mitigate environmental impacts.	<= 3
No Colour		Score of 0	0

How does the REF impact my mineral claim or opal prospecting licence in OPA4?

There is no impact on current, existing mineral claims however the REF can be used to determine the appropriateness of a mineral claim location and any other environmental considerations as outlined above.

There is no impact on current valid mineral claims. Title holders must follow the conditions of their mineral claims or licences to minimise the impact of the prospecting operations on the environment.

For new applications and renewals, the REF will need to be considered when assessing applications.

Do you need assistance?

Please get in touch with our Small-Scale Titles project team for assistance at sstproject@regional.nsw.gov.au or by phone: 02 4063 6900.

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