

Procedural guide

Visitor Management

Fossicking on QPWS managed areas

Procedural guides further define complex decision-making processes or requirements of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) of the Department of Environment and Science. Procedural guides provide guidance and information to assist staff in the completion of specific tasks or in making certain judgements. Procedural guides are for internal use only.

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Subject

This procedural guide addresses the administration and management of recreational or tourist fossicking for minerals, gemstones and ornamental stones on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) managed areas.

Purpose

The purpose of this procedural guide is to assist QPWS staff in the assessment, approval and maintenance of general permission areas (GPA) for the purpose of fossicking on QPWS managed areas. This procedural guide relates only to the hobby activity of fossicking, all other mineral collecting activities are not covered under this definition, and other legislation should be referred to.

This procedural guide is to be read and considered in conjunction with the *QPWS Operational policy: Fossicking on QPWS managed areas*.

Background

Fossicking is defined as either the systematic or unsystematic search for gemstones, ornamental stones, mineral specimens and alluvial gold or non-vertebrate fossils on the ground's surface or by digging with hand tools.

Fossicking licences are issued and administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) and are required prior to fossicking within QPWS managed areas.

Fossicking can occur on QPWS managed areas (namely regional park (resource use area) and State forests) where written permission of the landowner is granted. Due to the volume of requests to fossick, and the need to assess each area for suitability prior to giving written approval, fossicking can occur only where these areas have been approved as a General Permission Area (GPA).

A GPA is an area where the landowner has given general permission for fossicking to occur. Once a GPA has been approved, fossickers do not require the landowner's written permission to fossick within these areas, but they must abide by any conditions of access and may under some situations be required to pay a fee.

The DES website provides a current list of approved GPAs on QPWS managed areas where fossicking can occur.

Procedure

The following outlines the procedure for the assessment, approval and maintenance of GPAs. Appendix A presents a flow chart for assessing and approving fossicking areas.

Assessing potential fossicking areas

Prior to approving GPAs, QPWS must first assess the identified areas, with a focus on those that have known suitability and fossicking potential. DNRM may assist with providing information about the potential for fossicking value of the area, or there could be a request from fossicking clubs or individuals to open an area for fossicking. Although QPWS does not guarantee fossickers will find their favoured material, the goal is to assist as much as practicable to achieve desired outcomes. There is no benefit to either QPWS or the fossicker in opening areas where there is little chance of finding anything of value. There is no maximum or minimum size limit for a fossicking site on QPWS managed areas, providing it meets the required assessment criteria.

Once a potential fossicking site has been identified, QPWS must assess the site against a range of criteria (see Appendix B). This will determine if fossicking will be an acceptable activity for this area, or if the proposed site needs to be limited due to site specific constraints or conservation values.

Key issues considered when assessing areas are outlined below. Appendix B provides the full assessment criteria and a fossicking site assessment template for use by QPWS staff.

Access

Accessibility to the proposed fossicking site is an important factor for consideration. As GPAs on QPWS managed areas have very little (if any) facilities they are classed as 'day use' only. This means the proposed fossicking site needs to be within easy driving distance from the closest township offering accommodation. Camping is not permitted under a QPWS GPA. This was decided due to the limited facilities on the proposed sites, with most not having reliable fresh water or ablution amenities and also to help promote and assist the neighbouring regional townships that already provide a variety of accommodation services. Other accessibility issues for consideration when assessing potential sites include:

- The type of terrain and topography of both the land in general and the proposed fossicking site, to ensure that it is suitable for the activity and will not contribute to excess erosion or runoff.
- The condition of the existing roads and tracks including suitability for regular vehicle traffic or is restricted to 4WD access only.
- Other potential site or access restrictions (e.g. locked gates, closure for logging activities, etc.) that could impede fossickers accessing the GPA.
- The physical or natural boundaries present to visually assist in the easy identification of the actual fossicking site, thus negating the requirement to obtain GPS coordinates or pegging to segregate the area.

Compatibility

The proposed fossicking site needs to be assessed for its compatibility with the current management plans or statements for the area, and the 'Landscape Classification System' (available on Ranger Base: <http://qpws/qpws-policy-pages/visitor-management-planning>) to ensure that the activity is appropriate for the setting. Other considerations when determining compatibility for fossicking include the level of public interest, previous requests for fossicking at this location, and the predicted social, economic or tourism benefit it may bring to the local community. In contrast, any concerns from permit holders, lessees, existing land use or rights within the area and surrounding neighbouring properties need to be addressed prior to authorising the activity.

Biodiversity values

To assist in the identification of any environmental or conservation concerns that may be negatively affected by fossicking, or have the potential to be significantly impacted on from fossicking, the biodiversity values within the proposed fossicking site and surrounding areas are assessed with consideration being given to:

- The presence of significant and endangered regional ecosystems.
- The presence of threatened species and key habitat for threatened species.
- Water quality, soil type and quality and erosion susceptibility or soil loss.
- Compliance with management, conservation or recovery plans for specific species.
- Biodiversity significance at a State, regional and local level (including remnant vegetation).
- Contribution to corridors of State and regional significance.
- Suitable typography.

Safety

Regional staff need to identify if there are any known hazards within proximity to the proposed fossicking site that visitors to the area may not be aware of (e.g. old mine shafts, sink holes, flash flooding tendencies, etc.) or any long term management programs (such as feral animal trapping/baiting, regular planned burns or logging operations, etc.) that may impact visitor access to the site.

It is preferred that areas containing such hazards be excluded from the site altogether. At the very least any known hazards need to be communicated to visitors via the information sheets, and if possible easily identified on the ground with the use of signage or barriers so that access to the hazard is avoided.

Cultural heritage and Native Title

QPWS will identify and assess any cultural heritage and Native Title impediments that may be within the proposed fossicking area (e.g. existing Native Title determination and/or land use agreement). The location, type and significance of the cultural heritage or Native Title impediment will determine if fossicking can occur in the area. Information on Native Title can be provided by in-house QPWS staff, whereas, cultural heritage sites and assessments (if not already known) may be provided by the cultural heritage section within the Department of Environment and Science (DES).

Other considerations

Depending on the location, there may be a number of potential impediments that require further investigation. Impediments could be any third party interest (this could be an individual, organisation or even an activity administered by QPWS or another Government department) and may include the following:

- Mining leases and associated infrastructure (wells/pipelines).
- Prospecting or extracting type permits.
- Grazing leases and permits (including watering points/constructed dams; fences; gates; mustering activities).
- Apiary and beekeeping activities.
- Telecommunication or electricity towers and corridors.
- Plantation activities.
- Transport corridors (rail/roads).
- Commercial visitor activities (tourist groups).
- Day use capacity limitations.
- Compatibility with neighbouring properties.
- Future costs of management of the area (signage, patrols, ability to enforce).

Approving new general permission areas for fossicking

Once all considerations have been identified and assessed using the fossicking site assessment template a recommendation can be made to either support or reject the proposed fossicking area.

Following support for the proposed fossicking site, QPWS will give permission to fossick under a GPA.

There are standard QPWS fossicking conditions to be used across the State for all new and existing fossicking sites. The QPWS conditions are in addition to the standard DNRM fossicking licence conditions, and are enforceable whilst fossicking within GPAs on QPWS managed areas (refer to Appendix C).

Approval process

The DES Director-General (DG) is responsible for final approval of new GPAs on QPWS managed areas.

The briefing note is to include:

- A summary of the site assessment undertaken and any key issues or constraints identified and how these will be managed.
- Details of any concerns raised by permit holders, lessees, existing land use or rights within the areas and surrounding properties and how these will be addressed.
- The quote for the fossicking signage and hardware, including approximate timeframe to have the signs installed.

The following attachments are to be included with this briefing note:

- A draft information sheet on the newly proposed fossicking area - using the information sheet template in Appendix D which includes the standard QPWS conditions, as well as any site specific conditions that may be required. The Major Projects and Estate Management Unit (MPEM) and the Parks Communication Unit will assist to ensure that it meets QPWS standards for public release.
- Request assistance from the Spatial Information Services Unit and Parks Communication Unit to produce a QPWS standard map of the area.
- Appendix E provides details to complete the letter (ready to sign) from the DG to the relevant Mining Registrar providing written permission to have the area made available for fossicking as a GPA – a 'final' map of the proposed area needs to be provided as an attachment to the letter.

Communications process

Once approval has been granted by the DG, the following communications actions are to be undertaken in conjunction and consultation with MPEM:

- Draft a Ministerial Briefing note (Appendix F) and Ministerial media release (Appendix G) in collaboration with the DES Media Unit to provide an opportunity for the Minister to formally announce and promote the new fossicking area.
- Order and install signage for the fossicking area - determine the required number of fossicking signs. Generally signage is placed at all entrances to the State forest or regional park (resource use area) that lead to the fossicking site. Obtain a quote for signage Appendix J and associated hardware from the preferred supplier as per the QPWS sign manual.
- MPEM will work with the Parks Communications Unit and Web Publishing to load the information sheet and map document/s for public release on the DES inter and intra nets. Ensuring the information is available publicly after the Minister's media release.
- The Web Publishing team will provide the necessary hyperlinks for the fossicking information sheet and maps so that MPEM can advise DNRM that the link to the DES webpage is now active. This allows QPWS control over the information sheets and associated information.

Maintaining fossicking areas

It is expected that there will be a spike in fossicking activity immediately following the announcement and opening of a new GPA. Depending on regional budgets, increased patrols may be recommended to ensure any initial problems are identified and rectified promptly. This will also provide a visual presence for new fossickers to the area, should they need guidance or assistance with the activity.

There are a number of compliance options available for QPWS staff to utilise. QPWS officers with the appropriate delegations can issue warnings and infringement notices under the *Forestry Act 1959* and the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* for transgressions of QPWS conditions or violations of the legislation.

Only DNRM officers are currently delegated to issue infringements under the *Fossicking Act 1994*. If the situation arises that breaches are occurring under the *Fossicking Act 1994*, QPWS may request assistance and compliance from DNRM officers.

If problems arise or the situation changes within the QPWS managed areas, the DG can withdraw their general permission in writing to the relevant Mining Registrar and revoke the existing GPA.

Reference materials

- Fossicking safety guidelines (Department of Natural Resources and Mines publication).
- *Operational policy: Fossicking on QPWS managed areas* details the policy and legislative requirements to select, approve and maintain new GPAs for fossicking on QPWS managed areas.

Further Information

Information on the current fossicking sites within QPWS managed areas, including information sheets and conditions can be found on our web page: <http://www.des.qld.gov.au/>

Fossicking licences are issued by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, and list of fossicking areas within Queensland (excluding some private fossicking area) can be found on their web page: <http://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/mining/fossicking>

Disclaimer

While this document has been prepared with care it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

Approved By

Ben Klaassen

Signature

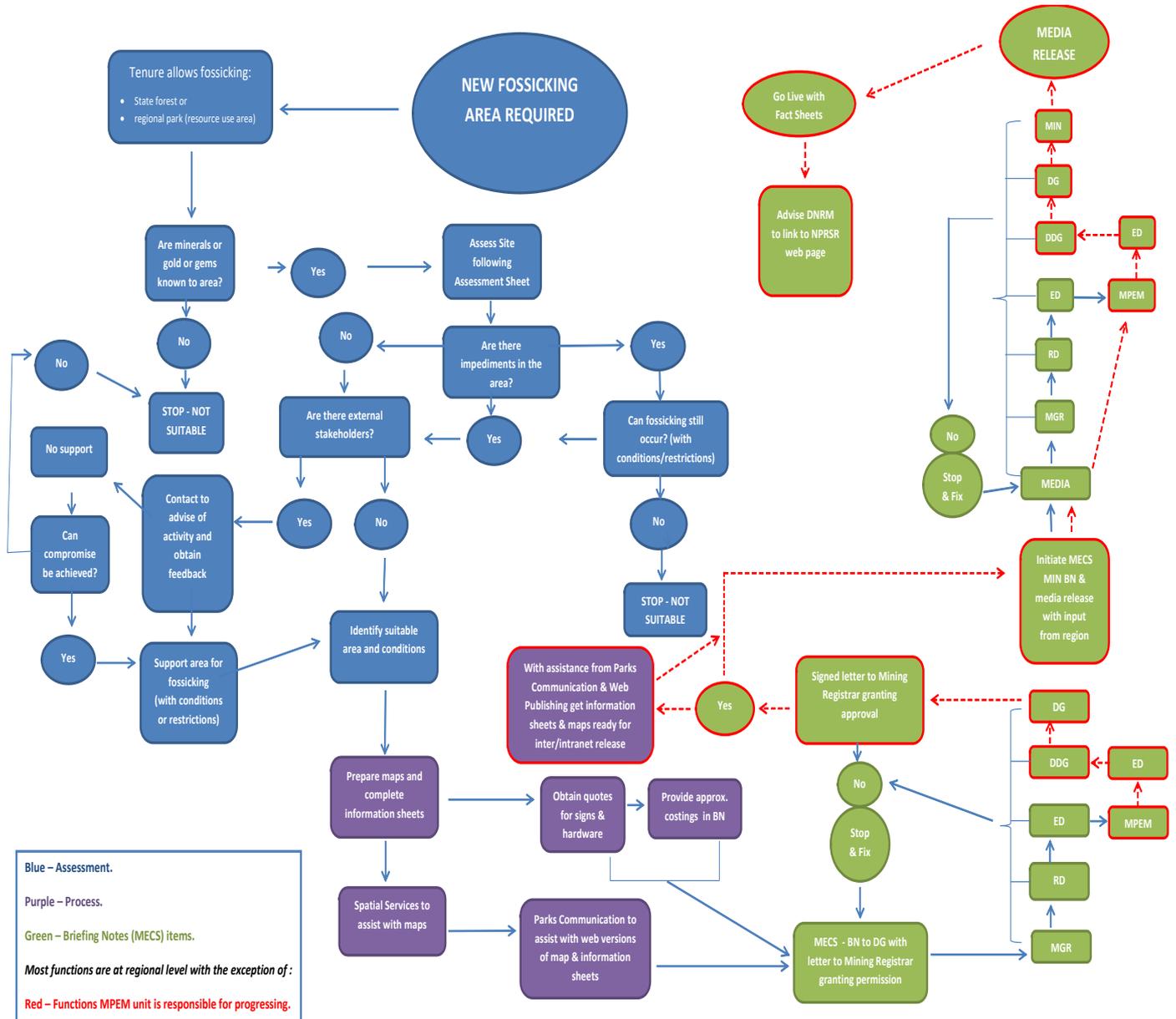
23 June 2014

Date

Deputy Director General
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Enquiries:
Major Projects and Estate Management Unit
ParksPolicy@des.qld.gov.au

Appendix A: Flowchart for creating a GPA fossicking site on QPWS managed areas



Appendix B: Fossicking site assessment template

Template for assessing future fossicking sites as General Permission Areas on QPWS managed areas.

Neighbouring properties	<<Yes/No>> include details below: Do they support the proposed activity? Consultation with neighbouring property holders is strongly recommended prior to opening the area to fossicking.
Other management issues (fire/camping/day use capacity future costs)	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day use only – camping is not permitted however private accommodation may be available at local townships. (Indicate if there is a designated QPWS carrying camp in close proximity). Include the standard fossicking conditions from QPWS. Site specific conditions. Compatibility with existing management plans. Signage costs. Included use of area and upkeep. Staff presence, monitoring and enforceability.
RECOMMENDATION	<<Yes/No>> include details below: Details regarding the overall recommendation for the site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate areas that are excluded from activity with information as to why. Also specify any site-specific management concerns and justification for site specific conditions.

Map 1: Constraint mapping <<Attach a map of the area from either MapMaps or CoMaps or similar>>
Please indicate on the attached map (or attach a new map) where the proposed fossicking area will be.

Fossicking site assessment <<QPWS managed area name>> <<Bioregion name>> Bioregion

State forest/resources reserve name	<<Lock up using MapMaps or EcoMaps>>
Bioregion	Whole / Partial xxx km (Refer to map)
Area of proposal (hectares whole parcel or partial)	General Permission Area (GPA).
Fossicking category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known fossicking areas (advised by DNRM) surrounding activities. Frequently requested site.
Proposal justification	-- / / --
Date of report	<<Good/Bad>>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to towns. Condition of roads/tracks (both off and on QPWS managed area). Waterways and crossings.
Compatibility	<<Good/Bad>>
Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriateness to setting (landscape classification system). Public interest (demand for the proposed activity, social/economic/tourism benefit) Conflicts with existing land use or rights within area. Surrounding tenure and land use.
Biodiversity values	<<Are there concerns>> include details below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant and endangered regional ecosystems. Species values. The presence of threatened species. The presence of key habitat for threatened species. Remnant vegetation. Water quality, soil type and quality and erosion susceptibility or soil loss. Compliance with management, conservation or recovery plans for specific species. Biodiversity significance at a State, regional and local level. Contribution to corridors of State and regional significance. Suitable topography.
Safety issues (known hazards)	<<Are there concerns>> include details below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known hazards (old mine workings/sink holes, flash flooding, landslides). Long term management issues (access, logging, fires, feral animal control/baiting).
OTHER IMPEDIMENTS/CONSIDERATIONS:	
Native title	<<Yes/No>> include details below: Are there any existing native title determinations and/or land use agreement. Include details below:
Cultural Heritage (Indigenous and European)	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <<EHP to investigate and advise type and conditions>>
Extractive uses (mining/husks/ing/ quarrying)	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <<DNRM to investigate and advise for type and contract details>>
Forest Special Management Area	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <<QPWS/DAFF to investigate and advise type and conditions>>
Grazing lease	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <<QPWS/DAFF to investigate and advise for type and contract details>> Consultation with the grazing lessees must occur prior to opening the area to fossicking.
Apiary/Beekeeping	<<Yes/No>> include details below: <<DAFF to investigate and advise>>

Appendix C: Standard general conditions for fossicking on QPWS managed areas

- Fossicking must only occur within the general permission area as per the attached map.
- Fossickers must not enter private property.
- Use only safe working practices.
- Hand tools only are permitted (including metal detectors). Educator dredges, sluices, dry blowers or machinery of any other type are not permitted.
- The use of generators is not permitted.
- Do not interfere with or fossick within 10 metres of any stock, infrastructure or improvements (including but not limited to fences, water bores, pump equipment, telecommunication towers, electricity transmitting towers, and gas, oil, or water pipelines).
- Remain at least 100 metres from registered apiary sites (whether hives are present or not). Apiary sites are indicated by signage.
- Carry all water supplies. No permanent potable water supply is available, and no water may be taken from dams, water bores, pump equipment, etc.
- Ensure children are supervised by an adult at all times. Hazards include old workings.
- Leave gates as they are found (i.e. if gate is open – leave it open, if gate is closed, then open it to gain access then close immediately ensuring no animals pass through while open).
- Do not interfere with any vegetation, stock or wildlife.
- Keep noise and dust to a minimum.
- Where dogs are permitted, they must be on a lead and under control at all times. Dogs are not to cause nuisance, or annoy other visitors, stock or wildlife. All dog faeces must be removed from the area and disposed of legally.
- All rubbish (including organics) must be removed from the area and disposed of legally.
- As no ablution facilities are available, bury human toilet waste in a hole dug into the topsoil at least 10-15cm deep and 100m away from watercourses (or any body of water) or walking tracks. Please fill, cover and disguise the hole.
- Do not excavate at the toe of the bank of a stream or in a gully.
- Do not excavate an earth face or create overhangs on steep land or river banks.
- Ensure excavations do not exceed dimensions of 2 metres x 1 metre and a depth of 0.5 metre. Refill excavations immediately after use to make them safe for other visitors and stock and contour excavations to the surrounding land surface. Replace material that came from depth at depth, and replace surface material on the surface.
- Keep motor vehicles to formed roads and tracks only, and bring no other machinery.
- Fires are not permitted and should not be lit under any circumstances in a State forest or regional park (resource use area).
- Comply with any directions given by a sign or notice or by a QPWS or authorised officer.

Appendix D: Fossicking information sheet template

The highlighted text indicates where site specific regional input is required.

Talgai State Forest Fossicking Area

The Site

The State has now released sections of the Talgai State Forest as a general permission area for fossicking.

Access

The Talgai State Forest Fossicking Area is around 35km north-west of the city of Warwick. Fossickers should take the Cunningham Highway west from Warwick for 8km before turning right into Sandy Creek Road which turns into the Leyburn Cunningham Road and head to the town of Pratten (27km).

Passing through Pratten, take Macalister Street which turns into Margetts Street. Turn left into Big Hill Road which will take you straight through the Talgai State Forest.

Once inside the general permission areas, use only formed roads and tracks to access creek areas where alluvial deposits are found. General permission areas are marked clearly on the attached map.

Be aware that State forests are multiple use land types and fossickers must obey instructions from authorised officers and official signs. In addition to timber harvesting, many State forests are also allocated to purposes such as beekeeping, grazing and commercial mineral and gas extraction. Fossickers must not interfere with existing infrastructure or activities associated with such uses when utilising the State forest.

Fossickers must ensure they only fossick within the general permission area and do not enter lease areas when traversing the State forest.

A current mining authority exists within the boundaries of Talgai State Forest. This area is not included in the general permission area and fossickers must not undertake fossicking in this area.

Fossicking

Colours of gold can be obtained from alluvial sediments within stream channels, from gravel layers in low banks, or possibly from crevices in rock bars.

Panning is the simplest recovery method. The pan is filled with soil or gravel that has been sieved to remove the coarse fraction and water added. The material is mixed to slurry then the pan is gently tilted and rotated at the same time so that the over-flowing water carries off the lightest material. The pan is then swirled to spread out the residue containing the heavy material for close inspection.

Requirements

To fossick you need to hold a Fossickers Licence. Individual or family licences can be obtained for this area or for the whole of the State for periods between one and twelve months, with fees varying accordingly.

To obtain a Fossickers Licence, print and fill out the application form available at www.mines.industry.qld.gov.au/mining/fossicking-licences.htm, then contact your nearest Department of Natural Resources and Mines Regional or District Office, or visit a fossicking licence agent near you.

Licencees must comply with the code of conduct and conditions for entry and fossicking at all times.

Accommodation

Accommodation is available in Warwick at several motels, hotels and caravan parks. There are no facilities in Talgai State Forest and Fossickers Licences do not permit camping in this area.

Code of conduct and conditions

- To protect the area for the future and to minimise inconvenience to others:
 - Fossicking must only occur within the general permission area as per the attached map.
 - Fossickers must not enter private property.
 - Use only safe working practices.
 - Do not undermine a stream bank or earth face or create overhangs.
 - Hand tools only are permitted (including metal detectors). Eductor dredges, sluices, dty blowers or machinery of any other type are not permitted.
 - The use of generators is not permitted.
 - Do not interfere with or fossick within 10 metres of any stock infrastructure or improvements (including but not limited to fences, water bores, pump equipment etc or obtain water from them, telecommunication towers, electricity transmitting towers and gas, oil, or water pipelines).
 - Remain at least 100 metres from registered apiary sites (whether hives are present or not). Apiary sites are indicated by signage.
 - Carry all water supplies. No permanent potable water supply is available, and no water may be taken from dams, water bores, pump equipment etc.
 - Ensure children are supervised by an adult at all times. Hazards include old workings.
 - Leave gates as they are found (ie if gate is open – leave it open, if gate is closed, then open it to gain access then close immediately ensuring no animals pass through while open).
 - Do not interfere with any vegetation, stock or wildlife.
 - Keep noise and dust to a minimum.
 - Ensure that dogs are on a lead and under control at all times. They are not to cause nuisance, or annoy other visitors, stock or wildlife. All animal faeces must be removed from the area and disposed of legally.
 - All rubbish (including organics) must be removed from the area and disposed of legally.
 - As no abatement facilities are available, bury human toilet waste in a hole dug into the topsoil at least 10-15cm deep and 100m away from watercourses (or any body of water) or walking tracks. Please fill, cover and disguise the hole.
 - Ensure excavations do not exceed dimensions of 2 metres x 1 metre and a depth of 0.5 metre. Refill excavations to make

- Items safe for other visitors and stock and be contoured to the surrounding land surface.
- Keep motor vehicles to formed roads and tracks only and bring no other machinery.
- Fires are not permitted and should not be lit under any circumstances in a State forest.
- Comply with any directions given by a sign or notice.

For further information:

The Mining Registrar
Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Podium 2, Ground Floor
Cnr Main and Vulture Streets
Woolloongabba Qld 4117
(PO Box 1475 Coorparoo DC Qld 4151)
Telephone: (07) 3238 3733
www.mines.industry.qld.gov.au/mining/fossicking.htm

Southern Downs Regional Council
64 Fitzroy Street
Warwick Qld 4370
(PO Box 26 Warwick Qld 4370)
Telephone: (07) 4667 0300
www.southerndowns.qld.gov.au/

Appendix E: DG Letter to Mining Registrar granting general permission for fossicking site/s template

(TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DG BRIEFING NOTE TO APPROVE NEW GPA FOR FOSSICKING)

Using the current MECS “DG letter” template¹: Complete the template using the following details as a guide:

Name and Address details of relevant Mining Registrar²

Dear <<SALUTATION>>

The Department of Environment and Science (the department) has assessed <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area) >> to allow fossicking under section 27 of the *Fossicking Act 1994*.

In undertaking this assessment, the department has reviewed existing rights and interests such as grazing leases and mining interests on these lands and sought the advice of the holders of these interests regarding the proposed fossicking activities. As a consequence of this review, <<an area / number of areas>> within <<name of>> State forest <<has/have>> been identified as being available for future fossicking activities.

Therefore, I am writing to you, pursuant to section 28 of the *Fossicking Act 1994*, providing my general permission for fossicking to occur on the land within <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> identified in attachment 1.

I note the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) will continue to be responsible for all compliance under the *Fossicking Act 1994* within the new fossicking areas, as well as ensuring that general fossicking conditions and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) specific conditions are adhered to.

QPWS has standard signage and fact sheets that will be used to provide information to the community regarding these new fossicking areas. I suggest the fact sheets be finalised and all signs be installed before any announcement by either QPWS or DNRM is made regarding the availability of these areas for fossicking. I have asked the department to liaise with you to ensure this occurs at the earliest opportunity.

I appreciate your assistance with this matter and should you have any further enquiries, please contact <<relevant Regional Director of the proposed fossicking area>>, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, on telephone <<contact phone number>>.

Yours sincerely

Dr John Glaister
Director-General

Attachment 1 Map – Fossicking opportunities in <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>>.

¹ A ‘DG letter’ template is not provided here as templates for MECS items are constantly being improved and updated. Please ensure that you use the current one as provided by the MECS system.

² NOTE: Mining Registrars are location based and their contact details can be found on the DNRM web site: <http://mines.industry.qld.gov.au/mining/contacts.htm>

Appendix F: Briefing Note to Minister advising new GPA for fossicking

(TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MEDIA RELEASE – APPENDIX G)

Using the current MECS “Ministerial briefing note” template³: Complete the template using the following details as a guide:

SUBJECT:

Fossicking on <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>>.

TIMEFRAME:

Approval of this briefing note is required <<as soon as possible or by indicate specific timeframe if required>> to allow a joint media release between the Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts and the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to declare parts of <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> available for fossicking.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Minister:

- Approve the attached media release that fossicking will now be a permitted activity in parts of <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND/KEY ISSUES:

- Fossicking activities may occur on private freehold and leasehold lands across Queensland, subject to the consent of the owner.
- Fossicking activities are governed by the *Fossicking Act 1994* (FA), which is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM).
- DES and DNRM have worked together to review potential new fossicking sites within Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) managed areas.
- The Director-General DES has granted approval to the Mining Registrar <<insert which region>> on <<date>> to allow fossicking to occur within <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> (CTS: <<MECS number>>).
- Access to new fossicking areas is of great interest to fossickers.
- A review of existing interests on the land revealed <<insert impediments as identified in the assessment process e.g.: grazing, mining, beekeeping and other activities>> and subsequent correspondence sought the views of these parties and the <<insert the relevant departments eg Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry for apiaries and grazing, Environment and Heritage Protection for cultural heritage etc. >> on the proposal to allow fossicking.
- Following departmental consideration of the views from existing interest holders, <<an area / a number of areas>> were identified within <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area) >> that could support fossicking activities.
- DES has produced a map indicating the general permission areas for fossicking within <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> (**Attachment 2**).
- DES has produced a fact sheet, to be available through the DES website <www.des.qld.gov.au>, <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> fossicking area/s (**Attachment 3**).
- The fact sheet provides general information for the public, listing the conditions for using the land and delineates the general permission areas using features such as roads and GPS coordinates. This is considered workable as most fossickers use GPS units.
- Signage advising that fossicking activities are permitted within the <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> has been produced by DES and will be erected by staff at entrances to the <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area) >>.

³ A ‘MIN briefing note’ template is not provided here as templates for MECS items are constantly being improved and updated. Please ensure that you use the current one as provided by the MECS system.

- A Ministerial announcement that fossicking may commence in parts of <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area >> is recommended once signs indicating the general permission areas are installed. The installation of these signs is expected to occur in <<Month and Year signage will be installed>>.
- The license conditions proposed for fossicking within <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> will:
 - maintain public safety; for example, restrict access to a forest during timber harvesting, and prohibit fires
 - minimise impacts on land and ecosystems, for example by not permitting camping, motorised machinery including generators and blowers, and restricting excavations to 0.5m depth
 - minimise conflicts with other land uses by requiring reasonable distances be kept from residences, infrastructure, stock and apiary sites and not allowing access to private land or mining lease areas.

CONSULTATION:

- Consultation commenced with <<List interested parties that were contacted for input regarding the proposed fossicking site eg: grazing lessees, mining tenement holders, DNRM, Department of Environment and Science, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, any regional departmental staff, Mining Registrar, etc>>.
- DES has set out the general permission areas based on its consultation. Areas within <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> have been restricted << list reasons for restrictions to certain areas eg: to avoid the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board Fence and a departmental wild dog trapping area>>.
- Fossickers may desire access to some non-permission areas, however the fossicking areas have been allocated to minimise the potential for conflicts with other land uses and to restrict substantial land degradation that may be expected from unfettered access.

LEGISLATION:

- The Fossicking Act 1994 (FA) (Section 28) provides that a land owner may give the NRM mining registrar a general permission for fossicking to occur on the land.
- DES's Chief Executive gave a general permission to the NRM Mining Registrar for fossicking within <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> via (CTS <<MECS Reference>>).
- Fossicking licenses, compliance monitoring and enforcement are provided for, under the FA by DNRM.

KEY COMMUNICATION MESSAGES:

- A media statement by Minister <<Dickson>> and quoting the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines is recommended.
- The attached draft media release has been prepared in consultation with DES's and DNRM's media and communications teams (**Attachment 1**).

ATTACHMENTS:

- **Attachment 1:** Draft media announcement of new fossicking areas in <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>>
- **Attachment 2:** Map of <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> indicating the general permission area(s) for fossicking.
- **Attachment 3:** <<Name of State Forest/ Regional Park (resource use area)>> fact sheet with information and conditions for fossicking licence holders.

Appendix G: QPWS Draft Ministerial media release

(TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BRIEFING NOTE TO MIN ADVISING NEW GPA FOR FOSSICKING – APPENDIX F)

NOTE: The DES Media Unit is the lead unit for all media releases. Contact and liaise closely with the Media Unit for details, format and templates for the new Media Release. This includes giving access to the MECS “Ministerial briefing note”, so that the Media Unit can contribute to the media release and the briefing note information.

The following is a guide only as each media release will be different and include site specific information as requested by the Media Unit.

SUBJECT:

Fossicking areas released on <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>>.

Licensed fossickers can now search for gems and minerals on defined areas of <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> <<Location of area from main town eg: west of Warwick>>.

<<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> is on the <<name of major road/highway>> <<details of distance eg: 27km west of Warwick or 35km north-west of Warwick near the town of Pratten>>.

Environment and Great Barrier Reef Minister, Science Minister, Arts Minister <<Minister name>> and Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Minister <<Minister name>> said the Government departments have been working closely to identify locations with high fossicking potential and where increased access would not compromise forest harvesting activities, the rights of existing users or areas of habitat value.

Following assessment of existing interests and uses on these lands we have released <<number of fossicking areas>> fossicking areas on <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> comprising a combined area of almost <<5500>> hectares.

There are now <<total number of GPAs>> general permission areas or GPAs on Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service-managed areas where licensed fossickers can carry out this popular pursuit.

<<Tenure type eg: State forests/regional park (resource use area)>> are multiple-use areas, and QPWS had taken into account existing grazing, mining, bee-keeping and other uses at <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>> in making the decision to declare these new general permission areas.

In common with fossicking elsewhere in Queensland, fossicking on the <<State forest/regional park (resource use area) >> is only permitted within the general permission areas, and only hand tools, including metal detectors, are allowed.

QPWS has installed information signage at entry points about the obligations of fossickers under their licence. Fossickers will be responsible for their own safety and not harming the environment or other forest users’ interests. For example, they must observe a 100-metre exclusion area around beekeeping sites.

As there are no facilities on the <<Name of State Forest/Regional Park (resource use area)>>, camping under fossicking licences will not be permitted. There is camping and accommodation in nearby towns, and visitors who come to fossick will assist in boosting these local economies.

Fossicking is a fun hobby and a great family activity, and we are looking at other State forest and regional park (resource use area) to see whether this recreational opportunity can be offered elsewhere.

A fossicker's licence is required, and maps showing the areas where fossicking is permitted are available from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

Fossicking is permitted subject to the terms and conditions specified in the licence and information sheet for each area.

The provisions of the <<Depending on tenure: *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, *Forestry Act 1959*>> and *Fossicking Act 1994* apply, and on-the-spot fines may be issued for offences.

Officers from the Department of Environment and Science and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines will continue to work together to identify new opportunities for fossicking on other State forests across the State, with further releases expected in the future.

More information regarding fossicking can be found at www.des.qld.gov.au and www.nrm.qld.gov.au

ENDS

[add date]

Appendix H: Generic fossicking signs

For fossicking areas within State Forests use sign reference number Si4691:



For fossicking areas within regional park (resource use area) use sign reference number Si4692:

