

The Golden Beach Gas Project

Flora and Fauna

The Golden Beach Gas Project (Project) involves the development of the Golden Beach Gas Field in the Gippsland Basin to provide critical gas supply and storage infrastructure that will materially benefit the Victorian energy market.

Once in operation, the Project will initially increase the domestic gas supply before transitioning to storage operations which will enhance the energy market security and efficiency while supporting Victoria's transition to renewables.

Environmental Effects Statement Process

The Minister for Planning determined that an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) is required for the Project under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. The EES process is underway and is assessing any potential environmental, social, economic and planning impacts of the Project. An EES will be prepared setting out these assessments and our approach to mitigating any impacts.

As part of the EES process, an assessment of the impact of the Project on flora and fauna has been undertaken. GB Energy has prepared this fact sheet to explain the flora and fauna assessment and welcomes any feedback. The final report will be made available for comment through the EES public exhibition process anticipated in late 2020.

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GB Energy remains committed to preventing or minimising impacts from our Project on the environment and terrestrial biodiversity, and will continue to refine the Project design to ensure that any impact to flora and fauna is minimised as far as practicable. A significant amount of work has been done to date to refine the pipeline alignment to ensure that, where possible, the pipeline avoids large areas of bushland to avoid fragmentation and it follows along existing tracks, pre-disturbed areas and along fence lines within farmland.

Ecologists have surveyed native flora and fauna along the proposed pipeline alignment over the past 12 months to provide advice on how to minimise the impacts associated with the Project. These surveys were conducted over a 12-month period to ensure that data was obtained for each of the seasons. The study also involved a review of existing literature and information available in respect of the flora and fauna presenting in the Project area.

Field surveys recorded:

- 204 flora species comprising 152 indigenous species, 48 exotic species and 3 native species outside of natural range; and
- 123 fauna species including 4 amphibians, 94 birds, 3 invertebrates, 17 mammals and 5 reptiles. 14 of the recorded fauna were introduced species.

Targeted surveys were also undertaken for flora and fauna species listed and listed threatened in both Commonwealth and Victorian legislation. The surveys recorded:

- 15 listed flora species and listed threatened flora species including the Maroon Leek-orchid and the Gippsland Lakes Peppermint; and
- Listed fauna species and listed threatened fauna species comprising 3 mammals (including the New Holland Mouse and the Southern Brown Bandicoot), 12 shore or sea birds, 3 waterbirds, 3 reptiles, 4 amphibians (including the Southern Toadlet and Martin's Toadlet), 2 fish species, the Lace Monitor and the Emu.

Key findings

The key findings of the flora and fauna assessment include:

- There will be significant short-term impact to flora and fauna during the construction phase of the Project. Avoidance measures will be implemented to reduce the impacts to sensitive areas and additional refinement of the Project design will be conducted to further minimise any impact as far as practicable.
- The impacts to flora and fauna during the construction phase of the Project are likely to be temporary.
- Although there may be short-term impacts, the Project is unlikely to have a significant impact on listed threatened fauna species or migratory species which frequent the Project area.
- There are no significant impacts to the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site if mitigation measures are applied.
- Offset requirements will be required for the Project resulting from impacts to vegetation, threatened species habitats but that GB Energy has already commenced discussions with respect to securing these offset requirements.