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Department of Planning and Environment

LEARD FOREST REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY STAGE 1 –SCOPING REPORT

FINAL

July 2015

Department of Planning and Environment

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FINAL

July 2015

Prepared by
Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited

on behalf of
Department of Planning and Environment

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Report No.	**3338/R01/V6**
Date:	**July 2015**

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

The abbreviations and acronyms as listed in the table below have been used throughout this report.

Abbreviation	Definition
BOMF	Biodiversity Offset Management Framework
BSAL	Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land
BTM complex	Collective term for Boggabri Coal Project, Tarrawonga Coal Project and Maules Creek Coal Project
CCC	Community Consultative Committee
CMA	Catchment Management Authority (now LLS)
DoE	Department of the Environment (Commonwealth)
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment (NSW)
DRE	Division of Resources and Energy (NSW)
DTIRIS	Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services (NSW)
EL	Exploration Lease
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regions of Australia
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KTP	Key Threatening Process
LGA	Local Government Area
LLS	Local Land Services (formerly CMA)
OEH	Office of Environment and Heritage (NSW)
PAC	Planning Assessment Commission
PEL	Petroleum Exploration Lease
RBS	Regional Biodiversity Strategy
SAL	Strategic Agricultural Land
SCA	State Conservation Area
Study Area	Geographic extent to which the Regional Biodiversity Strategy applies
TARP	Trigger, Action, Response Plan

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Leard State Forest Area

The Leard State Forest is located approximately 16 kilometres north-east of Boggabri, in the Narrabri Local Government Area (LGA) of northern New South Wales (**Figure 1.1**). The town of Narrabri lies approximately 46 kilometres to the north-west, and the town of Gunnedah approximately 45 kilometres to the south-east. The Kamilaroi Highway runs in a north-west/south-east direction approximately 12 kilometres to the west of Leard State Forest.

Leard State Forest itself is a sizeable remnant (7458 hectares) of native vegetation surrounded primarily by agricultural lands. The Leard State Conservation Area (SCA) is approximately 2 kilometres to the west of the Leard State Forest. Mount Kaputar National Park lies approximately 20 kilometres to the north (**Figure 1.1**), and Pilliga Nature Reserve is approximately 45 kilometres to the south-west.

Three coal mines have approval to operate within, or adjoining to, Leard State Forest, comprising the Boggabri Coal Project (Boggabri Coal Pty Limited), Tarrawonga Coal Project (Tarrawonga Coal Pty Limited) and Maules Creek Coal Project (Aston Coal 2 Pty Limited). For the purposes of this project, these are collectively referred to as the BTM complex. These mines each have biodiversity offsets that have been required by their respective project approvals. **Figure 1.2** shows the location of the mines and their approved biodiversity offsets. This figure also identifies those offsets that are relevant to this project which have been proposed, but are not yet approved.

1.2 Statutory Requirement for the Regional Biodiversity Strategy

The Leard Forest Regional Biodiversity Strategy (RBS) is required to provide a framework for the development, implementation and management of biodiversity offset programs resulting from expanding coal mining operations in the region. Each of the mines within the BTM complex have approved offset areas with additional offset areas required under the relevant approvals also identified for the Maules Creek and Boggabri Coal Mines. Consistent management of these offsets will ensure they achieve the best possible biodiversity outcomes from a regional perspective.

The NSW Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) Reports for the Boggabri Coal Project (February 2012) and the Maules Creek Coal Project (March 2012) recognise the need for the mines of the BTM complex to prepare a coordinated and jointly-funded Regional Biodiversity Strategy (RBS), specifically to:

> *Set out the long-term framework of management, monitoring and land-use security to be applied consistently across all biodiversity conservation areas in the region[1]. It should have the scope and flexibility to accommodate new areas, as they may need to be provided to respond to future mining proposals or other significant land use changes[2].*
>
> 1 – Common to Boggabri and Maules Creek PAC Reports;
> 2 – From Maules Creek PAC Report only.

The Project Approval for the Tarrawonga Coal Project States:

> *The proponent shall contribute to the funding and preparation of the Leard Forest Mining Precinct Regional Biodiversity Strategy...*

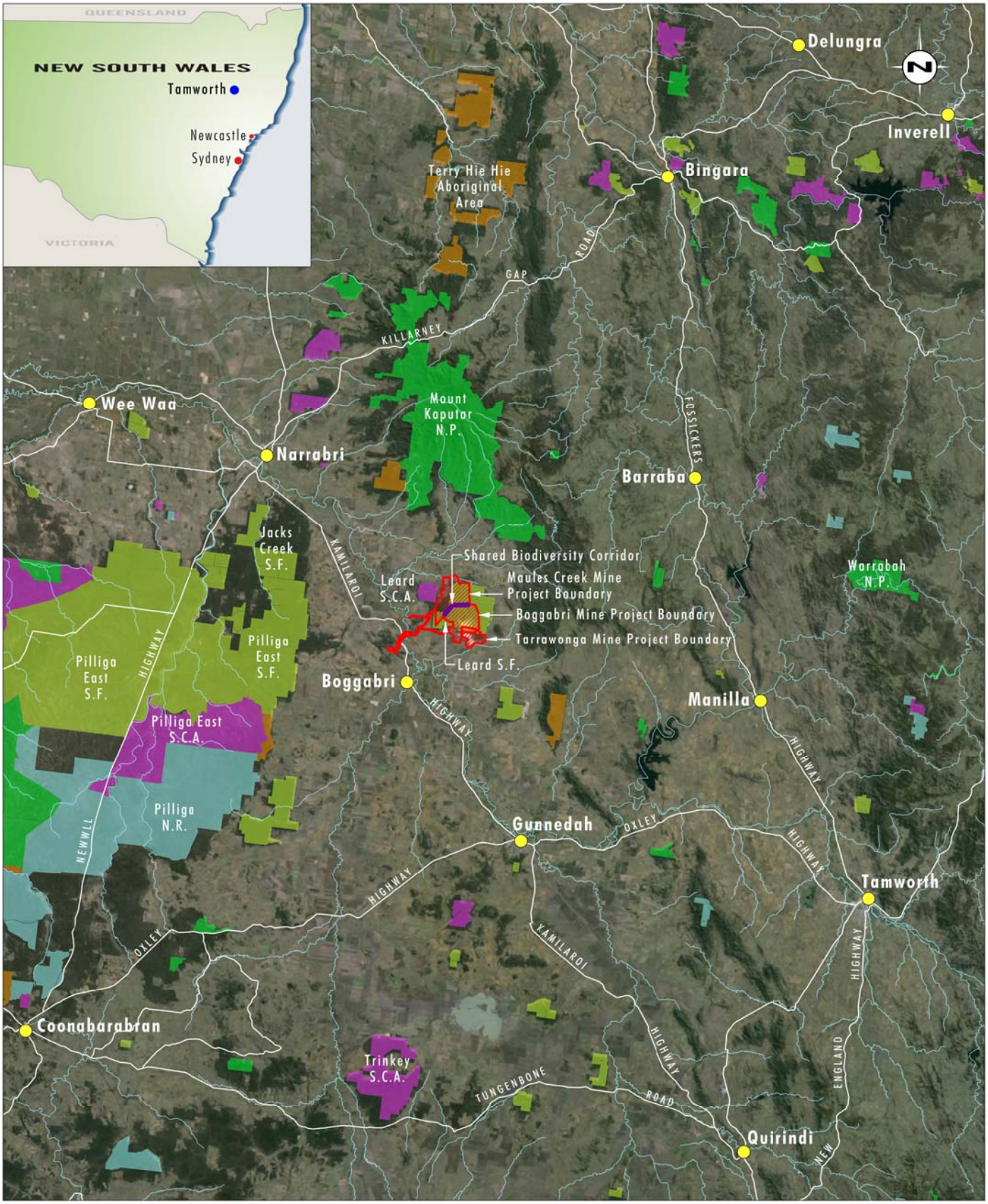

Image Source: Google Earth (2013)
Data Source: DP&I (2014), MinView (2014), OEH (2013)

0 10 20 40km
1:1 000 000

Legend

- Mine Project Boundary
- Shared Biodiversity Corridor
- State Forest
- National Park
- State Conservation Area
- Aboriginal Area
- Nature Reserve
- Road
- Drainage

FIGURE 1.1
Locality Map

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20140410 10.58

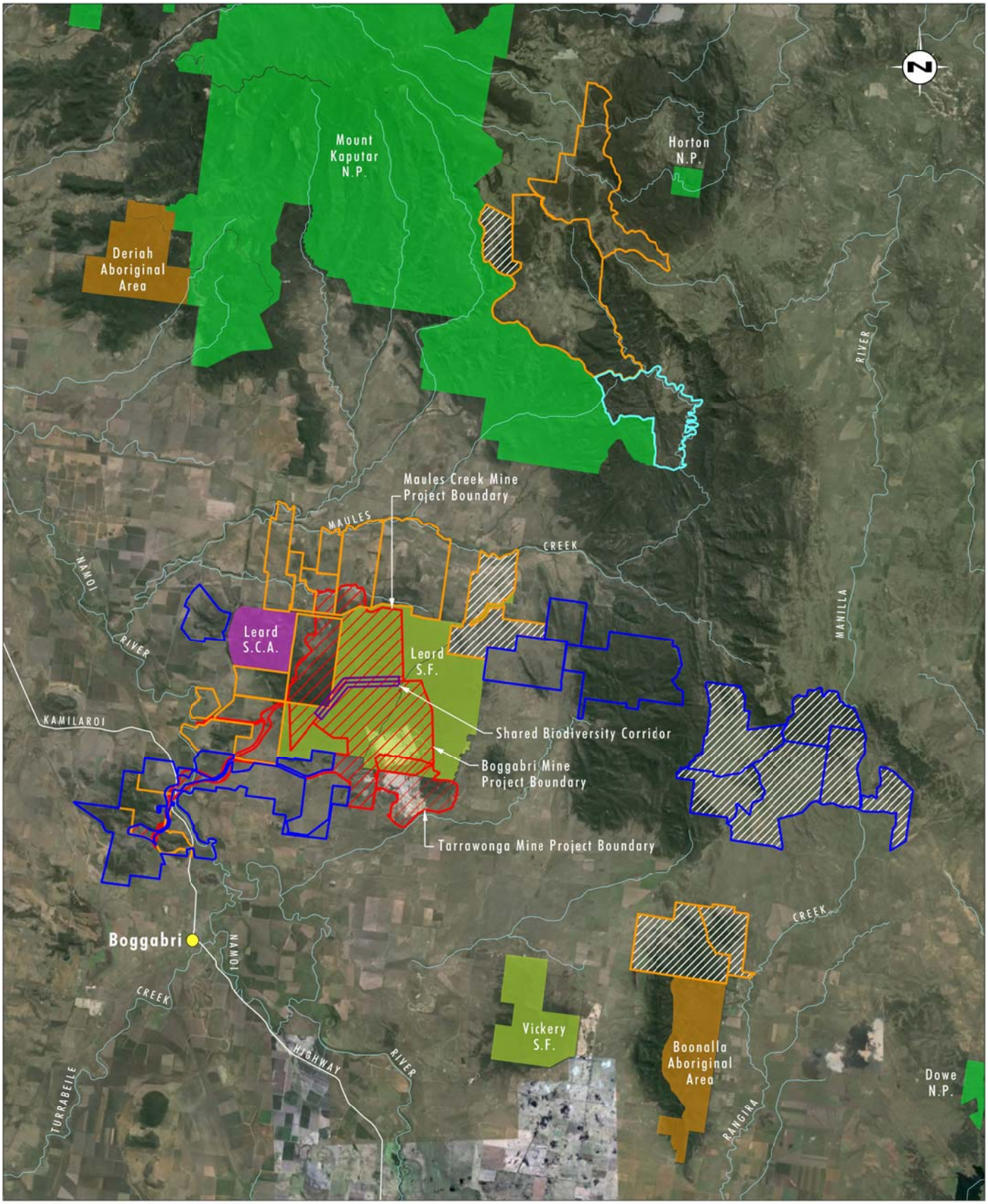


Image Source: Google Earth (2013)
Data Source: DP&I (2014), MinView (2014), OEH (2013)

0 5 10 15km
1:300 000

Legend

- Mine Project Boundary
- Shared Biodiversity Corridor
- State Forest
- National Park
- State Conservation Area
- Aboriginal Area
- Boggabri Offset Property - Approved
- Boggabri Offset Property - Not Yet Approved
- Tarrawonga Offset Property - Approved
- Maules Creek Offset Property - Approved
- Maules Creek Offset Property - Not Yet Approved
- Road
- Drainage

FIGURE 1.2

Geographic Context of Disturbance and Offset Areas of the BTM Complex

File Name (A4): R01/3338_002.dgn
20140729 11.27

In addition to this, the Commonwealth Approvals for the three mines in the BTM complex state that:

> *The person taking the action must implement the regional biodiversity strategy as required under...of the NSW state government project approval dated.... The required scoping report for the development of the strategy must be submitted to the Minister for approval...The approved strategy must be implemented.*

The State-based project approvals for the BTM complex require the RBS to be approved by the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), following endorsement from the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), as outlined in **Section 1.3** below.

The PAC reports and approvals variously require the establishment of governance, consultation and reporting arrangements for the RBS. These are documented in **Section 6** of this report.

1.3 Required Staging of Regional Biodiversity Strategy

In accordance with the requirements of the project approvals for the mines of the BTM complex, the RBS is to be prepared in the following stages:

- **Stage 1 – Scoping Report (this report):** to include the terms of reference, scope and objectives for the RBS, including recommendations for a geographic extent (study area) for the RBS. This report is also required to:
  - identify the functions and the members of the RBS Steering Group;
  - plan the project management of the RBS, particularly the timing, indicative dates for Steering Group meetings, review and completion milestones;
  - identify the funding program for the development of the RBS; and
  - include a consultation/communications program for the RBS.
- **Stage 2 – Strategy Document:** to be developed according to the process set out in the approved Scoping Report.
- **Stage 3 – Strategy Review:** to be completed by the end of December 2018, following the completion of the required rehabilitation and offset area audits. These are to be completed by suitably qualified, experienced and independent person/s whose appointment has been endorsed by OEH and subsequently approved by DPE.

The content and outcomes of the Stage 1 Scoping Report and Stage 2 Strategy Document are to be endorsed by OEH and approved by the Secretary of DPE. The Stage 1 report is required to be approved by the Minister for the Commonwealth Department of the Environment (DoE).

Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited (Umwelt) has been engaged by DPE to prepare the Stage 1 Scoping Report in consultation with the DPE (including OEH), the BTM complex mines and DoE (see **Section 6.1**) and the Stage 2 Strategy Report upon the finalisation of the Stage 1 Scoping Report.

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 Purpose of Regional Biodiversity Strategy

The primary purpose of the RBS is to provide a strategic framework for the management and implementation of the biodiversity offset programs associated with the BTM complex. The RBS will also identify opportunities for co-ordinated management with other land managers within the precinct area.

In addition, the RBS will also:

- provide a strategic framework for additional biodiversity offsets associated with any future relevant coal, gas and major infrastructure projects to contribute to the regional conservation outcomes; and

- consider further biodiversity conservation opportunities within the study area in the context of the regional landscape, based on the broader Interim Biogeographic Regions Australia (IBRA) sub-regions.

2.2 Objectives of Regional Biodiversity Strategy

To facilitate the achievement of the purposes documented above, the objectives of the RBS are to:

- identify existing conservation areas including offsets from the three coal projects within the study area (required under the relevant conditions of approval under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*);

- allow consideration of other strategic regional priorities such as linkages from the Nandewar range to the Namoi and strategic additions to regional conservation estates. In this case, the regional reference area (as identified in **Figure 2.1**) includes the Liverpool Plains, Kaputar and Peel IBRA sub-regions. This regional reference area provides broader focus for conservation outcomes, while providing context for the precinct study area for the RBS;

- identify the key regional biodiversity values of the study area, primarily relying on the analysis of existing mapping products to be provided by OEH, ensuring the broader regional reference area is considered for context;

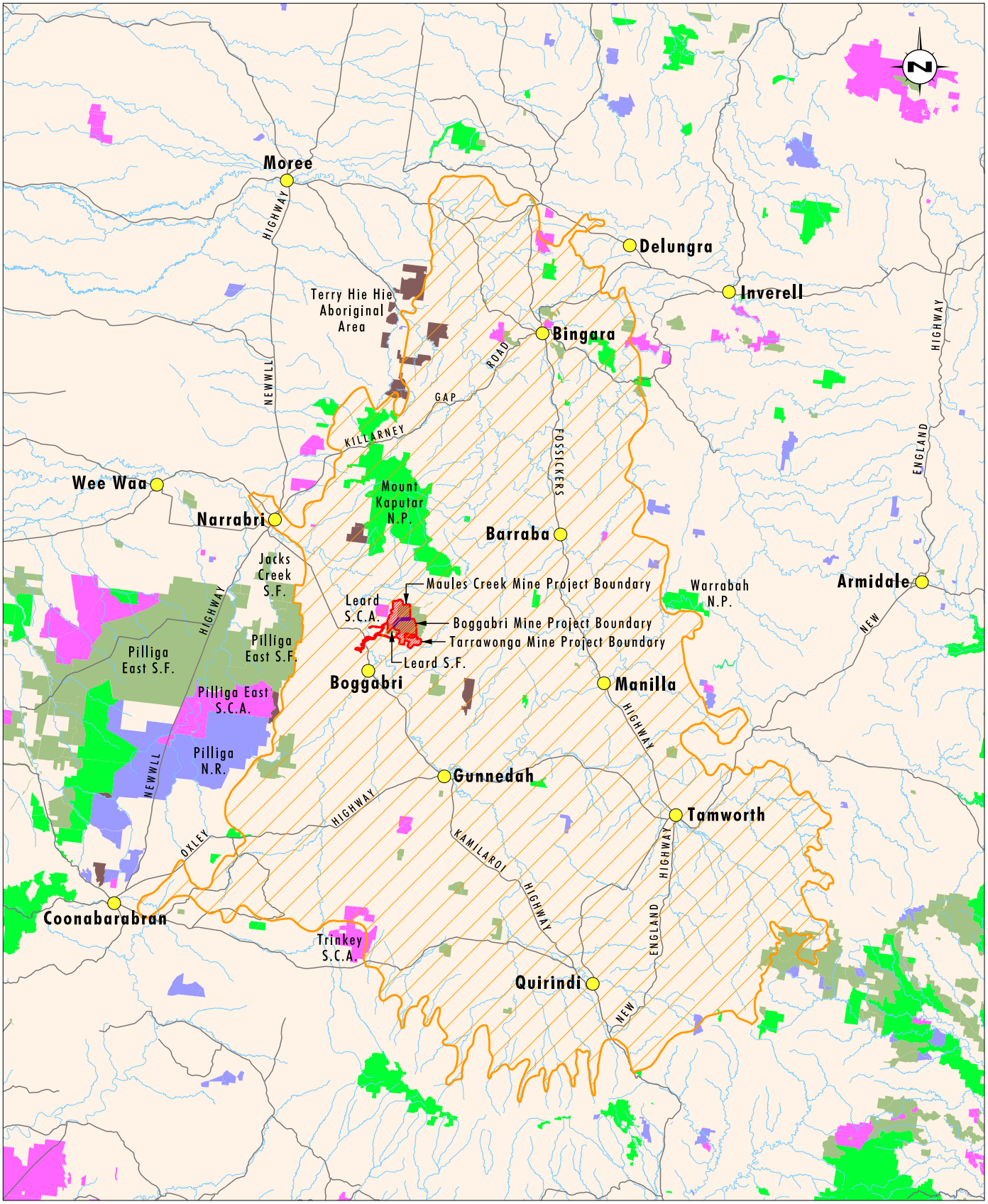
- develop key factors to determine where in the landscape any additional future offsets and corridors are best placed within the study area;

- involve relevant stakeholders in strategy development and implementation;

- assess land uses that may be incompatible with biodiversity conservation (e.g. strategic agricultural land, current mining interests), primarily relying on the analysis of existing mapping products;

- provide a spatial framework to facilitate strategic placement of offsets for future proposals in the study area (see **Section 4.0**);

- develop a regional biodiversity offset management framework, including recommended complex-wide performance and completion criteria and complex-wide trigger, action and response plan;



Data Source: DP&I (2014), MinView (2014), OEH (2013)
Australian Government Department of the Environment (2012)

0 25 50 75km
1:1 500 000

Legend

- Mine Project Boundary
- Regional Reference Area
- Shared Biodiversity Corridor
- State Forest
- National Park
- State Conservation Area
- Aboriginal Area
- Nature Reserve
- Road
- Drainage

FIGURE 2.1

Regional Reference Area

File Name (A4): R01/3338_005.dgn
20150212 11.15

- identify opportunities for cross-tenure/jurisdictional land management issues (such as weed, feral animal and bushfire management) to be managed in a coordinated manner across the BTM complex, in order to achieve maximum biodiversity gain in the most efficient manner;
- identify options for offset security mechanisms considering project approval requirements and current NSW government policy
- identify threatening processes that may hinder the achievement of conservation outcomes, and relevant actions to address such processes; and
- identify funding mechanisms and management responsibilities to ensure that ongoing, long-term improve or maintain conservation outcomes are achieved.

3.0 Key Information Sources Used

A number of information sources have been consulted in the preparation of this Stage 1 Scoping Report. Those key sources have been listed below:

- Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) Version 7 mapping layers;
- Wildlife Corridors for Climate Change - Nandewar and New England Tablelands Bioregions, Department of Environment and Climate Change (2007 mapping);
- Strategic Agricultural Lands (SAL) spatial data, as used within the Strategic Regional Land Use Plan – New England North West, Department of Planning and Infrastructure (September 2012);
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Estates (National Parks, State Conservation Areas, Nature Reserves), NPWS (2013 spatial data);
- Namoi Native Vegetation Mapping (Roff *et al.* 2012);
- State Forest boundaries, Forestry Corporation NSW (2014 spatial data);
- Mitchell Landscapes, NPWS (2002 spatial data);
- Existing project area and biodiversity offset area boundaries for the mines of the BTM complex (provided by DPE);
- Catchment Management Authority area and sub-catchment boundaries (taken to be representative of the new LLS boundaries - NSW Community Access to Natural Resources Information (CANRI) (2002)); and
- Local Government Area boundaries (Department of Lands (Sept 2003)).

The Stage 2 report will also make use of the Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Vegetation Classification and Mapping (to be provided by OEH).

4.0 Geographic Extent of Regional Biodiversity Strategy

4.1 The Regional Biodiversity Strategy Study Area

The RBS study area covers approximately 294,500 hectares and is displayed in **Figure 4.1**. **Sections 4.2** and **4.3** describe the key drivers behind the study area delineation and the specific criteria used to map the study area boundary.

4.2 Key Drivers for Study Area Delineation

The majority of the key ecological features (species, habitats, communities and corridors) that will be impacted by the mines of the BTM complex are dependent on woodland or woodland/grassland interfaces. Approval conditions require the offset strategies to include habitat for a variety of woodland/grassland dependent species, however some cave-dependent and aquatic species are also identified as requiring habitat provision. As such, an overarching driver for the delineation of the study area was the provision of an area dominated by woodland habitat with grassland interfaces, and the potential presence of aquatic areas and cave habitat.

Considering the objectives (as defined in **Section 2.2**), the key drivers for the delineation of the study area are listed below:

- ensure the study area is situated such that it is relevant to the impacts of, and offsets created by, the mines of the BTM complex, within a broader biophysical landscape in which regional conservation priorities can be assessed to provide suitable context;
- provide an area dominated by woodland habitat with grassland interfaces, and opportunities for the restoration of derived native grasslands and, where possible, the presence of aquatic areas and cave/escarpment habitat;
- provide offsetting opportunities that facilitate the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity values of the region in the medium to long term;
- provide offsetting opportunities that mirror those threatened ecological communities, endangered populations, threatened and migratory species (or their habitats) that are predicted to be impacted by mining operations at the BTM complex;
- identify offsetting opportunities that are strategically located or in regionally significant positions, including in particular through the establishment of regional corridors; and
- identify offsetting opportunities in which regional environmental gain can be made via coordinated management strategies across the BTM complex.

The methods used during the definition of the study area for the RBS are documented in **Section 4.3**.

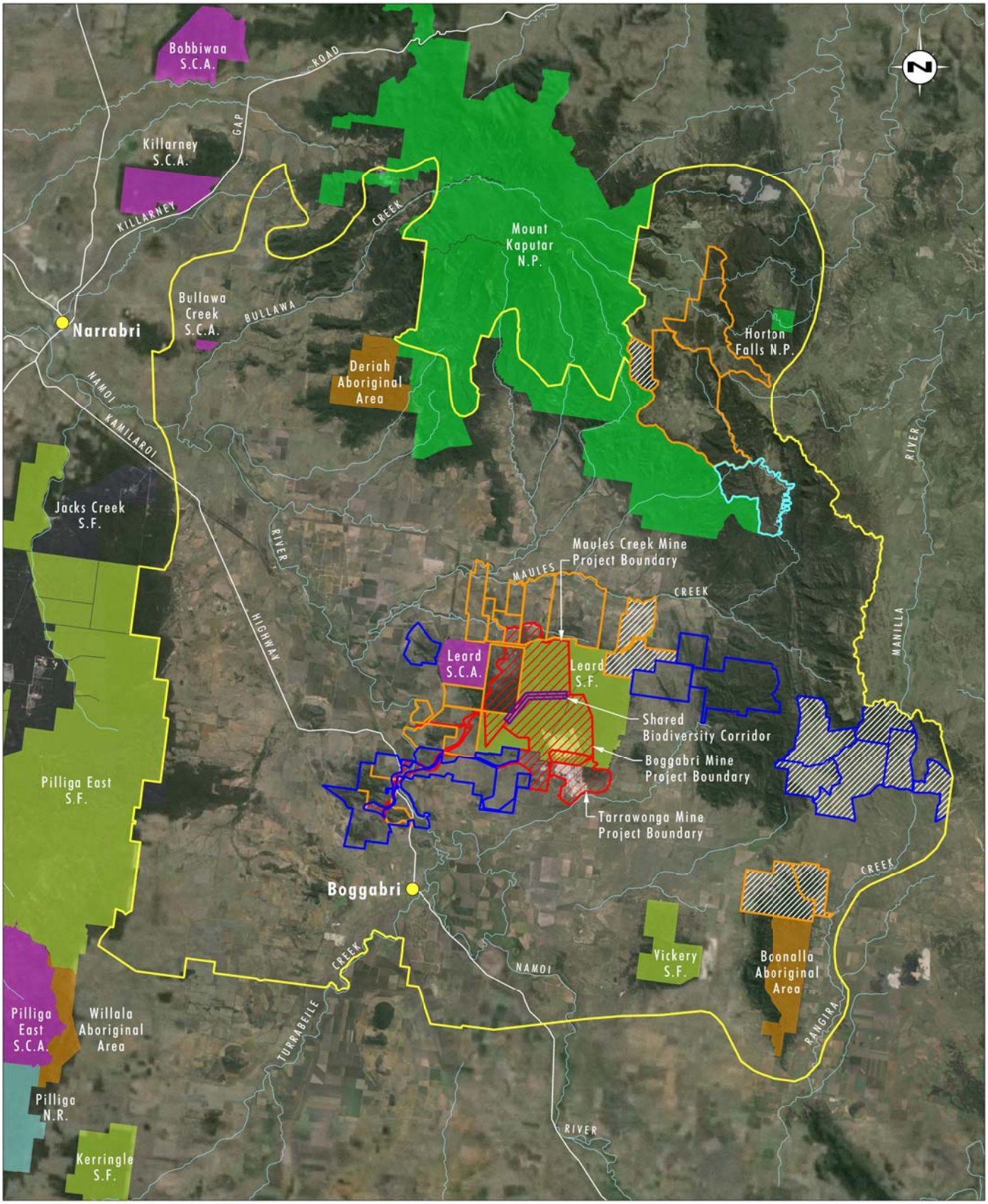


Image Source: Google Earth (2013)
Data Source: DP&I (2014), MinView (2014), OEH (2013), Australian Government Department of the Environment (2012)

0 5 10 20km
1:400 000

Legend

- Mine Project Boundary
- Shared Biodiversity Corridor
- Precinct Study Area
- State Forest
- National Park
- State Conservation Area
- Aboriginal Area
- Nature Reserve
- Boggabri Offset Property - Approved
- Boggabri Offset Property - Not Yet Approved
- Tarrawonga Offset Property - Approved
- Maules Creek Offset Property - Approved
- Maules Creek Offset Property - Not Yet Approved
- Road
- Drainage

FIGURE 4.1

Precinct Study Area

File Name (A4): R01/3338_003.dgn
20150727 13.40

4.3 Criteria for Study Area Delineation

An overarching principle in the development of the criteria used in the study area delineation was to use, to the greatest extent possible, recognised biophysical boundaries, and where these could not be relied upon to use other recognised planning boundaries. The biological features affected by the BTM complex occur within particular biophysical landscapes whose occurrence can be predicted within the broader region and, for some, are supported by existing mapping. Targeting areas with similar biophysical features (as much as possible) increases the likelihood of protection of similar features (e.g. soil types, vegetation types, fauna habitat types) to those being impacted. Selection criteria that were considered to guide the determination of the study area for the RBS were developed and are listed below:

- seek to include existing approved BTM offsets, or those proposed or required (but not yet approved), within the study area, wherever possible, or to adjoin to such;

- the study area should be geographically large enough to meet the strategy's objectives, that is, to contain options for providing (or enhancing) regional linkages through connecting remnant vegetation (or that will increase the area of isolated remnants), and also to ensure that the study area is not dominated by constrained areas (such as strategic agricultural land);

- the study area should be geographically small enough to be manageable and to ensure its relevance to the ecological matters affected by the mines;

- locate within the Brigalow Belt South (where the BTM complex and some of its associated offset properties are located) and Nandewar bioregions (where some of the offset properties are located), and use IBRA sub-regions wherever possible;

- locate within the Namoi CMA area (where the BTM complex is located), and use CMA sub-catchments wherever possible, and locate within the Maules, Bullawa, Tulla Mullen, Coxs Creek or Bluevale CMA sub-catchments if possible (following the IBRA sub-region approach above);

- the study area should include similar topographical features, soil types, soil landscapes (Mitchell landscapes) and land capability classifications equivalent to or similar to those being impacted in the BTM complex, in order to maximise the likelihood of capturing similar vegetation communities and fauna habitat types;

- use LGA boundaries where the above biophysical boundaries are not appropriate – noting that the impacts occur in Narrabri LGA;

- seek to include small reserved areas within the study area, but to abut/adjoin large formally/informally reserved areas (e.g. Mount Kaputar National Park and Pilliga State Forest);

- include existing or proposed offset areas from other mining projects in proximity to the BTM complex offsets such that there can be benefits from co-ordination of cross-tenure/ jurisdictional management; and

- use a combination of the above considerations, and slightly modify such boundaries to avoid perverse outcomes, and justify wherever adjustments are made.

The above criteria were used to delineate the study area presented in **Figure 4.1**. The mapping exercise considered the above criteria and used the following key boundaries to delineate the preliminary study area:

- IBRA sub-regional boundary along the western boundary and northern boundary (with subjective boundary cropping to remove irrelevant areas such as strategic agricultural land in the south-west and the town of Narrabri in the north-west). The study area boundary deviated from existing key boundaries in the north eastern and south eastern corners to include offset areas not yet approved for the Boggabri and Maules Creek Coal Mines. The eastern boundary broadly follows the Namoi River catchment boundary. Where logical, the study area boundary (initially defined by the IBRA sub-regional boundary) was adjusted to abut other significant regional boundaries, such as those of Mount Kaputar National Park in the north and to Pilliga East State Forest in the west); and

- Narrabri LGA boundary in the north-east, east and south.

5.0 Scope for Stage 2 – Strategy Report

5.1 Overview of Scope Elements

The Stage 2 Strategy Report is to be prepared over an approximate 5 month period (see **Section 8.0**) under the Project Coordination of DPE and with regular input from agency staff and BTM representatives through the Steering Group and through consultation with and feedback from the Working Group (see **Section 6.0**).

There are, essentially, four project components that are required during preparation of the Stage 2 Strategy Report, to meet the requirements of the Stage 1 Scoping Report.

- **Strategy framework** – the purpose, objectives, study area (as defined in Stage 1), policy context of the RBS;

- **Spatial framework** – within the broader regional reference area (see **Figure 2.1**), to ensure the conservation priorities identified at the precinct level are commensurate with conservation priorities in broader region; this will rely on the collation, analysis and assessment of existing map products;

- **Biodiversity Offset Management Framework** – incorporating strategic recommendations to provide consistency and efficiencies for complex-wide:

    - monitoring programs;
    - management measures;
    - performance and completion criteria;
    - trigger, action and response plans; and
    - reporting

- **Offset Security Framework** – identification of security mechanism options for biodiversity offsets.

These are all to be undertaken within the context of the RBS governance (Steering Group, Working Group and Project Coordination by DPE) and consultation program (see **Section 6.0**). The development of the RBS will require regular consultation with the Steering Group and Working Group.

The steps required for each of the project components are documented in the following sections.

5.2 Strategy Framework

The framework of the RBS will include the following:

- concise discussion of the approvals and policy context in which the RBS is prepared, including the RBS purpose, objectives and study area, consistent with the Stage 1 Scoping Report;

- consideration of regional conservation priorities to ensure that outcomes within the Precinct Study Area are commensurate with conservation goals at a broader scale;

- guidance to determine the nature of future projects that are likely to be included in the RBS and the manner in which they will contribute to the RBS (including through offsets/corridors and financial means), such as future coal mining, coal seam gas and infrastructure projects; and

- document the strategy review process, consistent with the commitment to review the strategy by the end of December 2018, following the completion of the required rehabilitation and offset area audits (see **Section 1.3).**

5.3 Spatial Framework

As stated in section 2.2, the RBS will provide a spatial framework to facilitate strategic placement of offsets for future proposals in the study area. The spatial framework will rely on the collation of existing map products including the following:

- obtain all relevant contemporary spatial information e.g. approved offsets, joint offsets, proposed mine rehabilitation, proposed additional offsets, and also offsets proposed for RBS study area from other projects;

- obtain vegetation mapping from BTM assessments and Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Vegetation Classification and Mapping (to be provided by OEH);

- develop simple decision-support tool to determine prioritisation of vegetation types, key habitats and high conservation value areas across the study area, using data sourced from the regional reference area for context;

- prepare strategic constraints mapping – potentially taking into account strategic agricultural land, infrastructure, mining leases, exploration leases, petroleum exploration leases, major riverine systems (especially broad floodplains), and areas of land capability (with defined land capability classes taken into account where relevant);

- prepare strategic opportunities mapping – existing and proposed biodiversity offsets, reserved areas, key habitats and corridors, land capability etc;

- prepare strategic 'offset focal areas' mapping – Mitchell soil landscapes, equivalent vegetation types and habitats, opportunities for regeneration/revegetation and connectivity establishment; and

- based on the above three spatial layers identify areas of obvious opportunity and undertake a prioritisation within the areas (focussing on opportunity and lower constraint areas) based on an agreed criteria weighting program.

Mapping of priority areas will be presented in the Strategy Report, together with summarised methods. More detailed methods and results, together with supporting maps, will be presented in a background document, or appendix, to accompany the Strategy Report.

Note that the intent of the Spatial Framework step is to rely upon, to the fullest extent possible, the Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Vegetation Classification and Mapping (to be provided by OEH)) product and other existing sources of information, including mapping undertaken by the mines of the BTM complex.

5.4 Development of Biodiversity Offset Management Framework

The RBS will document and guide the management and monitoring practices and approaches that will be undertaken within offset lands (including mine rehabilitation where appropriate) within the study area. To achieve this, the following needs to be completed:

- obtain all relevant reports, e.g. biodiversity management plans, rehabilitation plans, relevant management plans for protected areas and State Forests etc;

- undertake a desktop review of existing biodiversity management plans/ reports to assess consistency of approach in the management and monitoring of offsets;

- prepare a high level management and monitoring framework (the Biodiversity Offset Management Framework – BOMF) targeting efficiencies and consistency of approach across the complex and broader study area including:

    - recommendations for biodiversity monitoring;
    - recommendations for offset management measures;
    - complex wide performance and completion criteria against which the offsets will be measured;
    - complex wide trigger action, response plans (TARPs) for under-performance.

- identify offset funding and security options and arrangements – this will refer to the concurrent policy approach for offset security being undertaken by DPE.

Note that the BOMF will rely to the fullest extent possible on existing available material including information in the approved Biodiversity Management Plans prepared for the BTM complex.

6.0 Governance and Consultation

The preparation and implementation of the RBS will be overseen by DPE. In this role DPE will be supported by OEH and DoE, through the Steering Group, in addition to feedback provided by the Working Group. DPE will meet the required Project Coordinator role through the provision of a staff member. DPE will also oversee the relevant consultation required for the strategy development and implementation.

Input to the RBS is required from a number of parties, at a number of stages throughout the project. The following sections identify the anticipated development and consultation process for the RBS.

6.1 Steering Group

The function of the Steering Group will be to contribute to the development of the RBS by providing technical input or data as needed, review of the RBS from the position of their organisation and provide input into resolving matters. The Steering Group will be coordinated by DPE and will be attended by the consultant preparing the strategy. Representatives of the following groups will be members of the Steering Group:

- DPE;
- OEH;
- DoE; and
- BTM complex representatives.

6.2 Working Group

A Working Group will also be required to include broader consultation with government agencies and organisations. The following will be invited as members of the Working Group:

- Independent Chairperson;
- Members of the Steering Group (as above);
- Resources and Energy (within NSW Trade and Investment);
- Forestry Corporation of NSW;
- North West Local Land Services (LLS) (formerly Namoi CMA); and
- Narrabri Shire Council.

The Working Group may be extended to include additional agencies/organisations or relevant parties, as deemed necessary.

The Independent Chairperson is to be suitably qualified, experienced and independent, and their engagement must be approved by the Secretary of DPE. The Independent Chairperson, by agreement with the Working Group, may choose to consult with other relevant parties.

6.3 Consultation/ Communications Program

DPE will, with the input of the Steering and Working Groups, prepare a consultation/ communications program that ensures that relevant community members and interested organisations are made aware of the RBS development and implementation. This program may include targeted consultation with the local community and the Community Consultative Committees (CCC) associated with the mines.

Involvement from these groups will be coordinated by the DPE Project Coordinator (see below).

6.4 Project Coordinator

As per the project approvals for the Boggabri and Maules Creek mines of the BTM complex, a project coordinator role is required to manage the RBS, which itself will be:

> *...prepared by suitably qualified, experienced and independent person/s whose appointment has been endorsed by OEH and subsequently approved by the Director-General.*

The coordinator will be a DPE employee and therefore the cost of this role will be borne by DPE.

DPE has determined that a suitably qualified and experienced consultant be commissioned to prepare the draft RBS, under the guidance of the Project Coordinator, and in consultation with the Working Group and Steering Group. The consultant must report to the Project Coordinator and must be independent of the mine EIS development and project approvals for the BTM complex.

6.5 Planned Meetings and Workshops

Regular meetings and workshops will be held to ensure the successful development and completion of the RBS, and to ensure adequate and appropriate input from relevant parties. The following meeting schedule and locations are proposed:

- an Inception Meeting has already been held between the Consultant, DPE and representatives of the BTM complex;
- steering Group meetings (DPE, OEH, DoE and BTM representatives – proposed for Sydney) will be held on an as needed basis with indicatively three to four meetings required through the preparation of the strategy;
- two Working Group meetings (proposed for Narrabri or other local venue):
  - to be chaired by Independent Chairperson;
  - to involve members detailed in **Section 6.2** above;
  - one meeting will be held in early development of the Stage 2 Strategy to provide information and feedback on the overall strategy components and structure; and
  - second meeting held seeking input and comments on the draft Strategy document.

The timing and attendance at these meetings/workshops will be coordinated by the DPE Project Coordinator. DPE will also be responsible for reporting on minutes and actions for each of these meetings/workshops. The proposed schedule for the meetings and workshops is illustrated in **Section 8.0**.

7.0 Project Funding

The project approval conditions across the three mines require that the cost of the preparation of Stage 1, 2 and 3 of the RBS be shared proportionally between the members of the BTM complex, according to the total area of approved clearing of remnant vegetation.

This equates to:

- 36 per cent from Boggabri;
- 54 per cent from Maules Creek; and
- 10 per cent from Tarrawonga.

It was noted that these values were based on predicted clearing rates at the time of the approval, and that this funding arrangement could be subject to change, depending on the approval outcome of each project within the BTM complex.

This costing was to cover the involvement of the independent chairperson and a Project Coordinator to be employed by DPE. DPE now propose to allocate an existing appropriately experienced employee to fulfil the Project Coordinator role. The Project Coordinator will be assisted in the preparation of the RBS by a suitably qualified and experienced consultant. The costing for the consultant and the Independent Chairperson and Working Group meetings is still required to be covered by the members of the BTM complex.

8.0 Schedule

The planned schedule for the RBS is provided in **Table 8.1** below. This will be refined progressively in consultation with the Working Group prior to the commencement of the Stage 2 Strategy Report.

Table 8.1 – Anticipated Schedule for RBS Stage 2

	Aug 2015		Sep 2015		Oct 2015		Nov 2015		Dec 2015	
Confirmation of Stage 2 Preliminary Scope– as refined following Steering Group Meeting 1 and finalise draft table of contents (Note 1)										
Working Group Meeting 1 - Discuss Agreed Draft Table of Contents and Preliminary Mapping Products										
Steering Group Meeting 2 – (if needed) – Set Direction for Preparation of Draft Strategy following Working Group Feedback										
Collation of reports, data and mapping										
Preparation of Preliminary Draft Stage 2 Report										
Submission of Preliminary Draft Stage 2 Report to Steering Group										
Steering Group Meeting 3 – Review and Discuss Preliminary Draft Stage 2 Report										
Preparation of Draft Stage 2 Report										
Submission of Draft Stage 2 Report to Working Group										
Working Group Meeting 2 – Review and Discuss Draft Stage 2 Report										
Steering Group Meeting 4 – (if needed) – Set Direction for Preparation of Final Stage 2 Report following Working Group Feedback										
Preparation and Submission of Final Stage 2 Report										

Note 1: Steering Group Meeting (1) was held in March 2015 leading to revised Stage 1 scope and Table of Contents

9.0 References

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