

Andrew Tankey

A/g Assistant Director
Environment Assessment Branch
Department of Environment
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

18 December 2013

Our reference: 5598

Dear Andrew,

Re: Habitat suitability for Golden Sun Moth within the southern half of the proposed Rosenthal Estate

Thank you for the request to provide advice regarding habitat suitability for Golden Sun Moth (GSM) in the southern half of the proposed Rosenthal Estate development, 100 Vineyard Road, Sunbury, Victoria. The advice is required to clarify why previous investigations were not conducted for GSM in the southern half of the site, as well as to provide an opinion on the suitability of the area in its current condition for GSM.

Please note: Whilst no Ecology and Heritage Partners' staff have formally surveyed or set foot in the southern half of the study area, we have broadly appraised the land from both the adjacent fence lines and from a distance while standing on the northern slopes of the greater site.

Study area

The study area in question is essentially the southern portion of the 'U' shaped Rosenthal Estate land parcel, or all land south of the Harpers Creek corridor (approximately 43 hectares).

Site History

It is our understanding that the land has been repeatedly cropped with either pasture grasses or cereal grains at least irregularly for greater than 50 years, as evidenced by the historical aerial photograph of the site dated 1960 (as provided by Tom Milinkovic - Urban Design and Management).

Although we were not present at the particular meeting with DSE (now DEPI) it is our understanding that the aerial image of the site showing historical cropping was the primary reason for a concession to be granted from DEPI for no flora and fauna surveys to be required (thereby excluding the EPBC Act listed Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain and Golden Sun Moth), as it was concluded that the area did not contain suitable habitat for any state or commonwealth matters of environmental significance.

Since our involvement with the site from approximately 2012 onwards we can confirm that the southern section in question has been subject to regular agricultural use and is unlikely to have provided habitat for local GSM populations in recent times. The photograph below provided by Tom Milinkovic (Urban Design and Management) shows a portion of the land in question dated 17 December 2013 with a recently harvested crop.



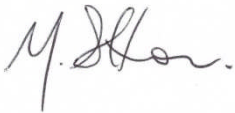
Plate 1: Cropped land unsuitable for Golden Sun Moth, Vineyard Rd, Sunbury

Conclusion

We are confident to state that in its current condition (recently cropped) the land in question does not provide suitable habitat for GSM. Furthermore, aerial photographic evidence suggests that the land in question has been disturbed and cropped for greater than 50 years with a wide range of introduced pasture grasses and cereal species, therefore it is unlikely that GSM have utilised this area as habitat for a significant period of time.

I hope that the advice above is helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Matt Hatton – Consultant Botanist
Ecology and Heritage Partners Pty Ltd