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### Community supports iron ore expansion in Mid-West

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#### **EIGHT out of 10 respondents to a survey commissioned by the Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance (GIOA) support the iron ore industry expansion in Western Australia's Mid-West.**

An independent community survey by market research company, Patterson, also revealed 87% of respondents believed the iron ore industry would have an important economic flow-on to the Mid-West economy.

"Direct employment opportunities, positive flow-on effects to other business, retaining young people in the region, training programs, employment opportunities for indigenous people and helping make rural communities more sustainable, were the major positives that residents saw an iron ore industry providing," GIOA chairman Clive Brown said.

Patterson interviewed more than 300 people living in 18 local governments across the Mid-West.

The latest survey, where participants were asked for their perceptions across a range of issues, follows an economic and social benefits study by Economics Consulting Services released in May.

The study estimated an average expenditure of around \$2 billion a year in the region, over 25 years, if the planned iron ore projects get underway.

Only three of the seven GIOA members have started mining operations which have already delivered 527 jobs, over \$1 million paid to community groups, local governments and indigenous groups over the past year, and an estimated \$3.7 million a year towards maintenance of local and state roads.

Over \$1 million a year was spent on conservation and environment initiatives in the region.

Brown commented on some misconceptions surrounding environmental issues relating to GIOA member Mount Gibson Iron's namesake operation at Extension Hill.

The State Government gave the operation the go ahead earlier this month, following 32 appeals to the Environmental Protection Agency's recommendations on the project that were released in November 2006.

Brown said some key factors appeared to have been overlooked in parts of the public debate.

He said no flora and fauna will be threatened by the proposed mine and the total area to be taken up by mining in the banded ironstone formations is small, taking up less than 0.05% of the total banded ironstone ranges in the region.

Brown added mining companies are already making significant investments in research carried out by the Botanical Parks and Gardens Authority in translocating and regenerating plant species, which has had considerable success.

Although the Mount Gibson mine can go ahead, the GIOA and Association of Mining and Exploration Companies greeted government approval with mixed feelings, as concerns were voiced over the long-

term sustainability of iron ore mining in the region.

The EPA said in its November report that Mount Gibson should only proceed if areas outside the initial mine site were deemed an 'A' class reserve, to protect the native flora from future mining.