

Our reference: 230607-01

Your reference: EMPr Amendment

Date: August 2023

Physical address:

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
Attention: Chief Director: Integrated Environmental
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ATTENTION: CHIEF DIRECTOR: INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATIONS - DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT (DFFE)

REQUEST FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (EMPr) AMENDMENT FOR THE VIRGINIA 1 SOLAR PV PARK, LOCATED IN THE MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, FREE STATE PROVINCE

On behalf of the **Applicant:**

URSA Energy (RF) (Pty) Ltd

Please find attached to this cover letter, the completed **EMPr Amendment Application** and **associated appendices**, and the **Amended EMPr** for the above-mentioned Project.

The Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) wishes to apply to amend the approved Photovoltaic Solar Energy Facility (PVSEF) EMPr and Generic Substation EMPr and the approved layout for the Virginia 1 Solar PV Park. The purpose of the amendment is to update to enhance the resolution of the EMPrs and layout to reflect the current EA. The project was awarded Preferred Bidder Status under the 6th round of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) and is listed as a Strategic Infrastructure Project (SIP) 8.

We provide the following pre-amble as context for this EMPr Amendment Process:

1. An Environmental Authorisation (EA) (DFFE Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/2/2099, dated 19 May 2022) was granted for the Virginia 1 Solar PV Park.
 - a. An amendment was made to the EA and approved on 8 June 2023 (DFFE Ref No. 14/12/16/3/3/2/2099/AM1, 28 June 2023) to for several non-substantial administrative amendments.
2. Please note that a Part 1 Amendment Process is running concurrently to this EMPr Amendment process. The purpose of the Part 1 Amendment is to split ownership of the the

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132kV step-up and switching station on site of the Virginia 1 Solar Park is made up of two technical components: the 132kV step-up substation and the 132kV switching station. :

- The 132kV step-up substation will remain under the current Applicant for the Virginia Solar Park (URSA Energy (RF) (Pty) Ltd) and EA.
 - The 132kV switching station will be split out of the Virginia 1 Solar Park and into its own EA under a new Applicant: Norma Energy (Pty) Ltd.
3. The DFFE requires that the Part 1 AA is ideally decided on prior to the EMPr Amendment and Final Layout being decided on (this process has already commenced). This Project is a BID winning project with restrictive timeframes, therefore, the proposed submission sequence discussed with the DFFE is provided below:
- a. The Part 1 AA will be submitted, reflecting the changes required by the DFFE.
 - b. Whilst this submission and decision is in process we will proceed with the PPP for the EMPr Amendment and Final Layout.
 - c. Given the 30-day decision timeframe on the Part 1 AA, this decision will be reached before the Final EMPr and Final Layout are received by the DFFE for a decision, which will likely be almost immediately after the Part 1 AA Decision
 - d. The I&APs and commenting authorities will be notified that a dovetailed process is underway for the P1AA and they will be informed of the outcome of the P1AA.
4. The **current Application** for the **EMPr Amendment** process proposes to undertake the following amendments:
- a. The Final layout and EMPr are approved as per Conditions 13 and 14 of the EA (14/12/16/3/3/2/2099/AM1, 28 June 2023) respectively. The EMPr amendment is conducted according to Regulation 37, and to ensure that Specific conditions of the EA, Conditions 33 to 38, are addressed in the EMPr.
 - b. **Updating of the approved Generic Substation EMPr** to reflect construction and operation mitigation measures and Specialist recommendations and mitigation measures (which are currently absent from the EMPr).
 - The original Generic Substation EMPr was only 12 pages long and did not contain adequate specialist recommendations nor mitigation measures for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the project. Therefore, Terramanzi reformatted the original EMPr into the DFFE Generic Substation Template.
 - c. **Updating of the approved Virginia 1 Solar Park EMPr** to remove reference to the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (and its replacement with the approved temporary construction camp), and the 132kV switching station to align the EMPr with the current EA and project scope, and to ensure that all Specialist recommendations and mitigations and special requirements of the EA are included in the EMPrs. Please note that on completion of construction the temporary construction camp area will be replaced with Solar Panels. This will not increase the initially assessed impact nor will it increase the maximum generating output capacity at the point of delivery.
 - **Two versions of the Solar Park EMPr have been submitted:**

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- '230607-01 Virginia 1 Amended EMPr with changes': The amended EMPr showing all the changes. Added information is underlined and removed information is crossed out/~~strikethrough~~.
 - '230607-01 Virginia 1 Amended EMPr – CLEAN': This version is the EMPr above which has been tidied up. The strikethrough information has been removed to make the EMPr more user friendly.
 - '230607-01 Virginia EMPr - Management Plans' - These management plans are not new information. They were extracted from the original EMPr and placed into their own document in order to make the EMPr more streamlined. This document must be read in conjunction with the Management plan reports (Annexure 1A, 2A, 3A, 5A, 5B) of the original BAR process (February 2022).
- d. **Updating the approved layout** to reflect the removal of the BESS and 132kV switching station and the incorporation of the approved 10ha temporary construction camp in the place of the BESS. Once construction is complete, this area will be replaced by Solar Panels. The Applicant wishes to revise the approved Virginia 1 Layout to align with the current EA and project scope.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any clarification or additional information.

Yours Faithfully,



FABIO VENTURI

Certified Environmental Scientist (SAIEES)

Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa (Founding Member, Reg #2021/4088)

On behalf of The Terramanzi Group (Pty) Ltd