



BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

PROPOSED FLOOD PROTECTION BERM – SAPPI SAICCOR MILL



INTRODUCTION

WSP Environmental (Pty) Ltd (WSP) was commissioned by Sappi Southern Africa Limited (Sappi) to undertake a Basic Assessment (BA) Process for the proposed flood protection berm at the Saiccor Mill (the Mill) located approximately 50km south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

The Saiccor Mill was established in the 1950's in close proximity to, and within the floodplain of, the uMkhomazi River. Sappi Saiccor proposes to raise an existing flood protection berm around their site to reduce the risk of inundation during an extreme flood event. As the berm is proposed to be established close to the channel of the uMkhomazi River its construction requires authorisation in terms of both the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), as amended (NEMA) and the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) (NWA). To obtain such authorisations, it is necessary that the impacts of the berm and its construction process be assessed.

AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT

The aim of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) with:

- Notification on the proposed projects;
- A description of the BA Process and Public Participation Process (PPP) that will be undertaken for the project
- Details on how I&APs can become involved in the proposed project by registering their interest in the project, raising issues of concern or interest, and receiving further information.

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As a registered I&AP, there will be opportunities for involvement in the BA process by receiving information, the contribution of issues and commenting on the draft report. The input received from I&APs together with the information and assessment provided by the EAP, will assist the Competent Authority, the Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), with their decision making process.

If you would like to participate in the process, please confirm your interest in this project by registering as a stakeholder. You can register by providing your full contact details to the WSP by return email or at the details provided below.

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NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The need to raise the flood protection berm is due to the fact that historical flood records for Umkhomazi River suggest a trend of increased flood levels and peak flows. The existing flood berm has its crest at 12m above mean sea level (amsl), and the September 1987 flood reached a level of 11.5m amsl, almost overtopping the existing flood berm. These flooding events have raised concerns as to the adequacy of flood protection measures at the site.

The uMkhomazi River has a catchment area of some 4 287 km², and the location of the Mill in an oxbow of this river is associated with a significant, although manageable, element of risk from the following identified hazards:

- Overtopping of the existing levee;
- Breach of existing earth berm by scouring action;
- Scour and undermining of the alluvial flood plain on which the mill is built;
- Seepage underneath the levee;
- Backwater inundation; and
- Unprotected access road.

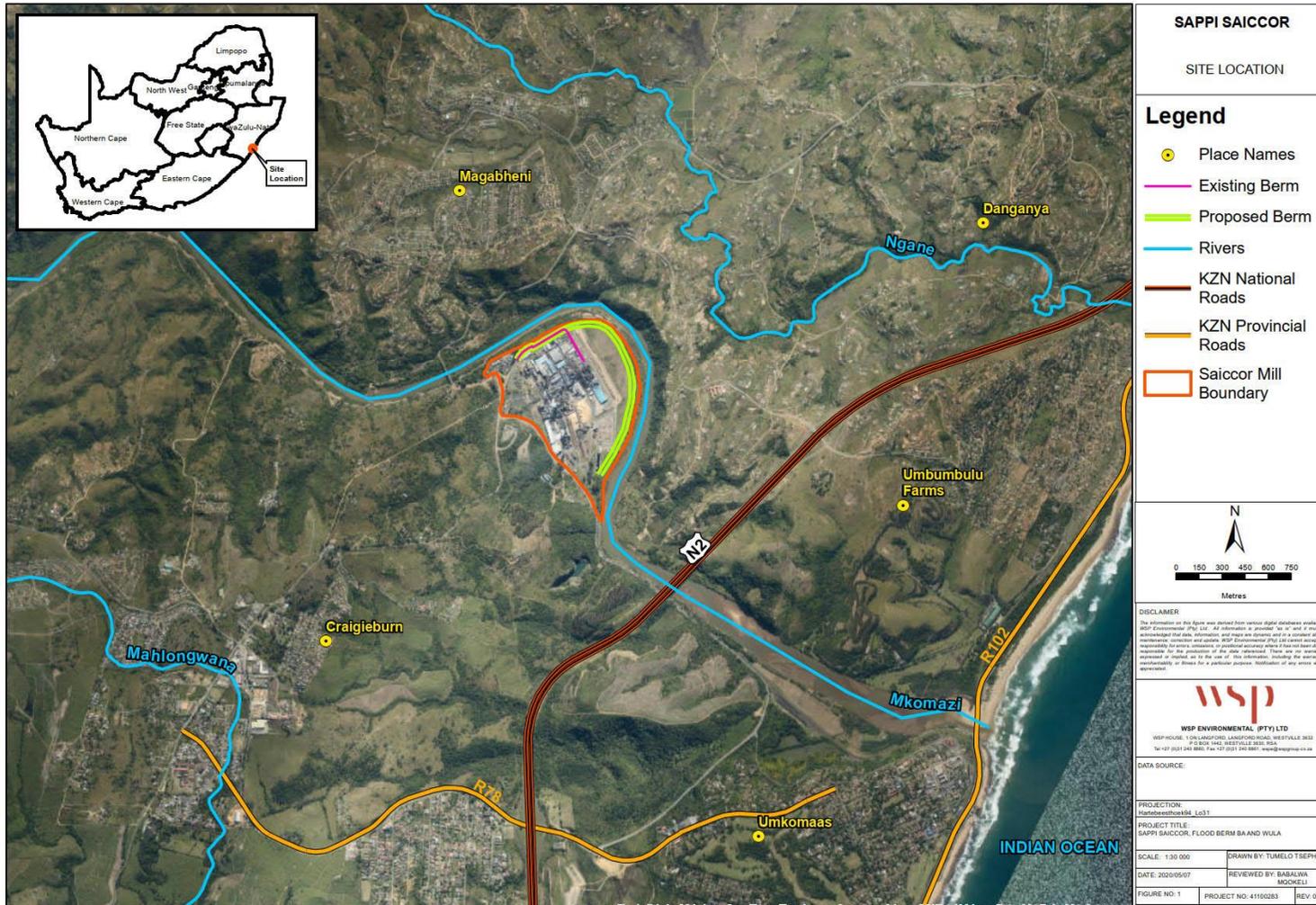


Figure 1: Locality Setting of the Saiccor Site and Berm Positions

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PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The existing flood protection measures at the Mill includes a flood berm, comprising of a concrete retaining wall and a partially enclosed earth fill berm located along the western and northern boundaries, having a top level of 12m amsl.

The development which is the focus of this study consists of a proposed extension to the flood protection measures by way of raising the existing concrete and earth flood walls as well as extending the existing earth berm. The purpose of the new berm is to serve as a further flood protection measure for the Mill. Typically, the structure will have a base width of approximately 14.5 m and a crest height of 4 m above ground level. The extent of the berm will be from near the northern end of the Mill around to the southern end of the site. The route will parallel the edge of the uMkhomazi River channel but will not intrude into the channel.

SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The 2014 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, as amended, contain three listing notices (GNR 327, 325 and 324) which identify activities that are subject to either a BA or Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (S&EIA) in order to obtain an EA. **Table 1** outlines the listed activities that are triggered by the proposed project. Based on the determination below, activities listed in GNR 327 and 324 are applicable. A BA must be completed if the proposed project triggers activities listed in GNR 327 (Listing Notice 1) or GNR 324 (Listing Notice 3).

Table 1: Determination of Applicable GNR 327 and GNR 324 Listed Activities

LISTED ACTIVITY	APPLICABILITY TO THE PROJECT
Listing Notice 1 (GNR 327)	
<p>Activity 19A: The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 5 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from— (ii) the littoral active zone, an estuary or a distance of 100 metres inland of the high-water mark of the sea or an estuary, whichever distance is the greater;</p>	The proposed new flood protection berm may result in the removal of 5 cubic metres or more of material within a distance of 100 metres inland of the high-water mark of an estuary.
<p>Activity 48: The expansion of— (i) infrastructure or structures where the physical footprint is expanded by 100 square metres or more; or where such expansion occurs— (c) if no development setback exists, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse</p>	The proposed flood protection berm extension/expansion will be built within 32m of the uMkhomazi River.
Listing Notice 3 (GNR 324)	
<p>Activity 14:</p>	The proposed new flood protection berm will be built within 32m of the uMkhomazi River.

LISTED ACTIVITY

APPLICABILITY TO THE PROJECT

<p>The development of— (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more; where such development occurs— (c) if no development setback has been adopted, within 32 watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse; d. KwaZulu-Natal i. In an estuarine functional zone vii. Critical biodiversity areas or ecological support areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional plans;</p>	<p>Based on the initial screening, the site is located within an identified estuarine functional zone (EFZ), as well as within an Irreplaceable Critical Biodiversity Area identified as part of the KwaZulu-Natal Biodiversity Sector Plan.</p>
<p><u>Activity 23</u> The expansion of – (ii) infrastructure or structures where the physical footprint is expanded by 10 square metres or more; where such expansion occurs- (c) within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse d. KwaZulu-Natal iii. In an estuarine functional zone</p>	<p>The proposed development involves the extension/expansion of the existing flood berm by more than 10 square metres. Based on the initial screening, the site is located within an identified estuarine functional zone (EFZ)</p>

The BA process that will be undertaken for this project is summarised in the following steps:

Step 1: Notify Authorities and potential Interested and affected parties (I&APs)

The first stage in the process entails notifying all potential I&APs of the proposed project, by sending out notification regarding the proposed project, and providing I&APs with an opportunity to register as an I&AP

Step 2: Basic Assessment Report for Public Comment (30 days)

The BA process is undertaken in order to identify and assess potential environmental impacts, both positive and negative, that may be associated with the project. Mitigation and management measures will be identified to reduce potential negative impacts and will be included in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) for this project. The Basic Assessment Report will include comments received from all I&APs on this document and findings of the specialist study. All registered I&APs on the project database will be notified in writing of the 30 day comment period for the BAR.

Step 3: BAR to be submitted to GDARD for decision-making

The BAR will be drafted and will be submitted to EDTEA for decision-making. The comments and issues raised will be included in the BAR. All I&APs will be provided with written notification on whether the project has been granted or refused EA and about the appeal process.