

**BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED  
PROSPECTING IN SEA CONCESSION AREA 14A BY TRANS  
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# MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR PROSPECTING RIGHTS APPLICATION: SEA CONCESSION AREA 14A, WEST COAST, WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the  
National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of a Basic Assessment

Prepared for

**Anchor Environmental Consultants (Pty) Ltd**

On behalf of

**Trans Atlantic Gem Sales DMCC**

Draft for Comment: 25 October 2021



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

ACO Associates cc has been commissioned by Anchor Environmental Consultants (Pty) Ltd on behalf of Trans Atlantic Gem Sales DMCC, to undertake a desktop maritime archaeological impact assessment to support a prospecting right application for Sea Concession Area 14A which extends from Doring Baai in the north to Kanon Point north of Donkin Bay in the south on the west coast of the Western Cape Province.

The proposed prospecting will entail geophysical surveys and core sampling. Of these activities the core sampling has the potential to affect submerged heritage resources. Core sampling to 3-5 m below seafloor will take place at between 100-200 locations across the concession area.

This desktop maritime heritage impact assessment provides an assessment of the maritime and underwater cultural heritage potential of the concession area, within a study defined as a 1 km buffer to the south, west and north of the seaward concession area boundary and, on the landward side, the high water mark.

### **Findings:**

Although there have been no specific studies of the submerged prehistory of the West Coast, the archaeological evidence for a hominin presence in the vicinity of the study area in the Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Age is plentiful. The past occupation and exploitation of the continental shelf by hominins during periods of lower sea level suggests that archaeological sites and materials can be expected on and within the current seabed that comprises the concession area.

Extensive cemented crusts or “hardgrounds” formed on formations exposed at the seabed during the Neogene and Quaternary. Sea level oscillated repeatedly, dropping to ice-age palaeoshorelines resulting in these hardgrounds being eroded during the ice-age/glacial shallowing episodes and re-cemented again during interglacial deepening. This has produced a wide array of multiphase phosphorite nodules and phosphatic shell casts of various ages. The bones and teeth of sharks and other fishes, the skulls of extinct whale species and the occasional remains of land-living animals that roamed the ice-age exposed shelf are also phosphatized and reworked into the latest, loose sediments from the Last Transgressive Sequence on the seabed.

The marine shell fossils which occur in the Last Transgression Sequence are predominantly the species expected on the West Coast Shelf, but unexpected species and “extralimitals” (species beyond their normal home range) are quite common. Cold water Agulhas extralimitals have mainly been found during diamond sampling/mining off northern Namaqualand but they can be expected to be more abundant further south such as in Concession Area 14A, as well as more species occurring. In addition to dating the incursions on Agulhas current influence, the individual shells are snapshot archives of the palaeoceanographic conditions at the time, as revealed by incremental analyses of stable isotopes and trace elements.

The maritime history of the West Coast dates back to almost the first days of the Dutch settlement in Table Bay but there are relatively few recorded wrecks in the vicinity of the concession area. Neither of the two historical wrecks in the vicinity – *Girl Devon* and *Elizabeth* – are within Concession Area 14A and while the possibility exists for the remains of currently unknown and unrecorded wrecks to be present in the concession area, this is so remote that it has been discounted.

### **Conclusions:**

This assessment of the heritage resources of Concession Area 14A indicates that there may be some potential for submerged prehistoric archaeological material in sediments to be affected by prospecting. Although the significance of any prospecting-related impacts on such material is assessed to be very low, it is recommended that:

- any core sample sections which contain alluvial material, particularly where organic remains are present, are retained for palaeoenvironmental assessment; and
- the possibility is considered of retaining samples of the coarser fraction (i.e. gravel and stone bigger than c. 20 mm) of sorted core sediment for assessment by an archaeologist for the presence of prehistoric lithic material.

These actions would result in the changing of the impact status from negative to positive because of a potential benefit to archaeological research and knowledge that could accrue from access to such information.

With regard to palaeontological resources, fossils found during the processing of the core samples must have the details of context recorded and be kept for identification by an appropriate specialist and if significant, to be deposited in a curatorial institution such as the IZIKO SA Museum. The identification of extralimital, Agulhas “sub-fossil” shell species in the loose shells of the Last Transgression Sequence requires a level of seashell knowledge. The best outcome for a set of cores from this poorly-known area is that they are the subject of a detailed study, possibly as for a B.Sc. Honours or M.Sc. project, with radiocarbon dates.

It is suggested that TAGS engage with the archaeologist and palaeontologist prior to the geotechnical campaign to discuss and agree these proposed mitigation measures.

There appears to be little or no potential for the presence of historical shipwrecks in the concession area and this heritage receptor was scoped out of the assessment of impact.

In the unlikely event that shipwreck material or seabed debris is identified in the geophysical data to be collected as part of the prospecting programme or during the prospecting itself, the find must be reported to the archaeologist and SAHRA and then avoided during the core sampling.

It is our reasoned opinion that the proposed prospecting activities in Concession Area 14A are likely to have a very low impact on submerged prehistoric and palaeontological heritage resources, and no impact on maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources.

Provided the recommendations to mitigate and offset potential impacts are implemented, the proposed prospecting can be considered to be archaeologically and palaeontologically acceptable.

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## SPECIALIST DECLARATION

I, John Gribble, declare that:

- I act as the independent specialist in this application;
- I will perform the work relating to the application in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favourable to the applicant;
- There are no circumstances that may compromise my objectivity in performing such work;
- I have expertise in conducting the specialist report relevant to this application, including knowledge of the Act, Regulations and any guidelines that have relevance to the proposed activity;
- I will comply with the Act, Regulations and all other applicable legislation;
- I have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity;
- I undertake to disclose to the applicant and the competent authority all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing any decision to be taken with respect to the application by the competent authority; and the objectivity of any report, plan or document to be prepared by myself for submission to the competent authority;
- All the particulars furnished by me in this form are true and correct; and I realise that a false declaration is an offence in terms of regulation 48 and is punishable in terms of section 24(F) of the Act.



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Signature of the specialist

ACO Associates cc

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Name of company (if applicable):

25 October 2021

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Date



## **GLOSSARY**

**Archaeology:** Remains resulting from human activity which are in a state of disuse and are in or on land and which are older than 100 years, including artefacts, human and hominid remains and artificial features and structures.

**Early Stone Age:** The archaeology of the Stone Age between 700 000 and 2 500 000 years ago.

**Heritage:** That which is inherited and forms part of the National Estate (Historical places, objects, fossils as defined by the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999).

**Holocene:** The most recent geological time period which commenced 10 000 years ago.

**Hominin:** A member of the tribe Hominini which comprises those species regarded as human, directly ancestral to humans, or very closely related to humans.

**Late Stone Age:** The archaeology of the last 20 000 years associated with fully modern people.

**Marine Isotope Stages:** Alternating warm and cool periods in the Earth's paleoclimate, deduced from oxygen isotope data reflecting changes in temperature derived from data from deep sea core samples.

**Middle Stone Age:** The archaeology of the Stone Age between 20 000-300 000 years ago associated with early modern humans.

**Pleistocene:** A geological time period (of 3 million – 10 000 years ago).

**Quaternary:** The current and most recent of the three periods of the Cenozoic Era spanning the period from  $\pm 2.5$  million years ago to the present.

**SAHRA:** South African Heritage Resources Agency – the compliance authority which protects national heritage.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>BA</b>     | Basic Assessment   |
| <b>DMRE</b>   | Department of Mineral Resources and Energy                             |
| <b>EA</b>     | Environmental Authorisation  |
| <b>EEZ</b>    | Exclusive Economic Zone  |
| <b>HIA</b>    | Heritage Impact Assessment   |
| <b>LSA</b>    | Late Stone Age   |
| <b>MPRDA</b>  | Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (No. 28 of 2002) |
| <b>MSA</b>    | Middle Stone Age   |
| <b>NEMA</b>   | National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998)                |
| <b>NHRA</b>   | National Heritage Resources Act  |
| <b>SAHRA</b>  | South African Heritage Resources Agency                                |
| <b>SAHRIS</b> | South African Heritage Resources Information System                    |
| <b>UNCLOS</b> | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea                        |

## 1 INTRODUCTION

ACO Associates cc has been commissioned by Anchor Environmental Consultants (Pty) Ltd (Anchor) on behalf of Trans Atlantic Gem Sales DMCC (TAGS), to undertake a desktop maritime archaeological impact assessment to support a prospecting right application for Sea Concession Area 14A which extends from Doring Baai in the north to Kanon Point north of Donkin Bay in the south on the west coast of the Western Cape Province (Figure 1).

TAGS is applying to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) for a right to undertake offshore prospecting activities, in terms of Section 16 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (No. 28 of 2002) (MPRDA), as amended. The proposed prospecting activities require Environmental Authorisation (EA) in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), as amended, and an applicant must also comply with Chapter 5 of NEMA with regards to consultation and reporting. For DMRE to consider an application for EA for the proposed prospecting operations, a Basic Assessment (BA) process must be undertaken.

## 2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

TAGS's proposed prospecting operations will consist of geophysical surveying and seabed sampling to identify and target potentially diamondiferous deposits within Concession Area 14A.

The following phases of prospecting activity are anticipated:

- Phase 1 will consist of a comprehensive literature review to investigate the depositional environments, sediment stratigraphy and geological units in the area, followed a geophysical survey to collect high-resolution seismic, multibeam echosounder and magnetometer seabed data.  
The literature review will allow the applicant to identify target prospecting sites within the concession area while the geophysical data will allow the identification and mapping of features and various rock formations and sedimentary types within the concession area.  
Based on the information about the geology of the seabed within Concession Area 14A generated in Phase 1, an appropriate sampling programme for Phase 2 will be developed.
- Phase 2 will comprise of programme of seabed core sampling activities using vibrocores and/or sonic drill cores – each of which is effective for different seabed sediment conditions.  
Between 100-200 core samples, each with a diameter of 10 cm, will be collected to depths of 3-5 m below the seabed surface.
- Phase 3 will draw the data generated by Phases 1 and 2 into a feasibility study that will estimate of the extent, distribution and the size of the mineral resource present and make recommendations regarding future mining of the concession area.

Of the prospecting activities to be undertaken as part of this application it is the seabed coring which has the potential to affect submerged heritage resources.

It is understood that the prospecting right will not provide the required environmental authorisation (EA) to TAGS for mining activities to be undertaken and that any future intention to undertake mining within the application area will require a further application for EA, accompanied by the necessary impact assessment and public consultation process.



Figure 1: The location of Concession Area 14A on the West Coast. The yellow line seaward of the concession area is the outer limit of South Africa's territorial waters (Source: Google Earth).

### 3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

As part of the BA process, TAGS has appointed specialists to assess the potential risks of prospecting on the marine environment, heritage resources, commercial fisheries and socio-economic resources within Concession Area 14A.

ACO Associates has been commissioned to produce a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) to identify heritage resources which may be impacted by the prospecting activities in the concession area, to assess their significance and provide recommendations for mitigation, as required by the NEMA, as amended.

This document therefore includes the following:

- A desk-top level literature review to assess the potential for maritime archaeological sites, and submerged pre-colonial sites within the concession area; and
- A comment from a palaeontologist regarding the potential for impacts to palaeontological features and material arising from the prospecting in the concession area.

The results of the studies listed above are integrated in this HIA report, along with an assessment of the sensitivity and significance of any heritage resources, an evaluation of the potential impacts on them arising from prospecting activities in and on the seabed, and recommendations for measures to mitigate any negative impacts of these activities on them.

The HIA must be submitted for comment to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), the relevant statutory commenting body under the NEMA.

## **4 RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

### **4.1 National Heritage Resources Act (No 29 of 1999)**

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) came into force in April 2000 with the establishment of SAHRA, replacing the National Monuments Act (No. 28 of 1969 as amended) and the National Monuments Council as the national agency responsible for the management of South Africa's cultural heritage resources.

The NHRA reflects the tripartite (national/provincial/local) nature of public administration under the South African Constitution and makes provision for the devolution of cultural heritage management to the appropriate, competent level of government.

Because national government is responsible for the management of the seabed below the mean high water mark, however, the management of maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources under the NHRA does not devolve to provincial or local heritage resources authorities but remains the responsibility of the national agency, SAHRA.

The NHRA gives legal definition to the range and extent of what are considered to be South Africa's heritage resources. According to Section 2(xvi) of the Act a heritage resource is "any place or object of cultural significance". This means that the object or place has aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological value or significance.

In terms of the definitions provided in Section 2 of the NHRA, maritime and underwater cultural heritage can include the following sites and/or material relevant to this assessment:

- Material remains of human activity which are in a state of disuse and are in or on land [which includes land under water] and which are older than 100 years, including artefacts, human and hominid remains and artificial features and structures (Section 2(ii));
- Wrecks, being any vessel or aircraft, or any part thereof, which was wrecked in South Africa, whether on land, in the internal waters, the territorial waters or in the maritime culture zone of the Republic, as defined respectively in sections 3, 4 and 6 of the Maritime Zones Act, 1994 (Act No. 15 of 1994), and any cargo, debris or artefacts found or associated therewith, which is older than 60 years or which SAHRA considers to be worthy of conservation (Section 2(ii)); and
- Any movable property of cultural significance which may be protected in terms of any provisions of the NHRA, including any archaeological artefact or palaeontological specimen (Section 2(xxix)).

Of the heritage resource types protected by the NHRA, the proposed prospecting in Concession Area 14A has the potential to impact the following:

- Submerged pre-colonial archaeological sites and materials;
- Maritime and underwater cultural heritage sites and material, which are principally historical shipwrecks; and
- Palaeontological features and material, which are defined by the NHRA as the fossilised remains or fossil trace of animals or plants which lived in the geological past.

As per the definitions provided above, these cultural heritage resources are protected by the NHRA and a permit from SAHRA is required to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any such site or material.

It is also important to be aware that in terms of Section 35(2) of the NHRA, all archaeological objects and palaeontological material is the property of the State and must, where recovered from a site, be lodged with an appropriate museum or other public institution.

#### **4.2 Maritime Zones Act (No 15 of 1994)**

South Africa's Maritime Zones Act of 1994 is the national legislative embodiment of the international maritime zones set out in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Act defines the extent of the territorial waters, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf (which together comprises of some 4.34 million square kilometres of seabed) and sets out South Africa's rights and responsibilities in respect of these various maritime zones.

Under the terms of Sections 4(2) and 6(2) of the Maritime Zones Act respectively, "any law in force in the Republic, including the common law, shall also apply in its territorial waters" and "subject to any other law the Republic shall have, in respect of objects of an archaeological or historical nature found in the maritime cultural zone, the same rights and powers as it has in respect of its territorial waters". The NHRA applies, therefore, within South Africa's territorial

waters (12 nautical miles seaward of the baseline) and to the outer limit of the maritime cultural zone (24 nautical miles seaward of the baseline) (see Figure 1 above).

Concession Area 14A lies wholly within the territorial waters and is thus subject to the NHRA. Any offshore activities that have the potential to disturb or damage cultural heritage resources located in or on the seabed within the territorial waters and maritime cultural zone require the involvement of SAHRA, as a commenting body in respect of the NEMA basic assessment process (see below) and as permitting authority where impacts to sites or material cannot be avoided and damage or destruction will occur.

#### **4.3 National Environmental Management Act (Act No 107 of 1998)**

The National Environmental Management Act (No 107 of 1998) (NEMA) provides a framework for the integration of environmental issues into the planning, design, decision-making and implementation of plans and development proposals that are likely to have a negative effect on the environment.

Regulations governing the environmental authorisation process have been promulgated in terms of NEMA and include the EIA Regulations (GNR R326/2017) and Listing Notices (LN) 1-3 (R327, R325 and R324) that list activities requiring an EA.

The proposed prospecting in Concession Area 14A triggers activities listed in LN3 and requires an application for EA that follows the Basic Assessment process.

The BA process aims to identify and assess all potential environmental impacts (negative and positive) and the BA report should recommend how potential negative impacts can be effectively mitigated and how benefits can be enhanced.

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

This desktop HIA provides an assessment of the maritime and underwater cultural heritage potential of Concession Area 14A within the study area defined in Section 5.1 below.

The report includes a short description of what comprises South Africa's maritime and underwater cultural heritage and the maritime history of West Coast, and a discussion of potential maritime heritage resources of the concession area within that wider context. This includes potential pre-colonial archaeological sites and materials in offshore, submerged contexts.

The HIA draws information from readily available documentary sources and databases, including SAHRA's Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage database, a database of underwater heritage resources maintained by ACO Associates, and from relevant primary and secondary sources and aims to identify as accurately as possible the maritime heritage resources within the concession area.

Recent reports from the area by the palaeontologist Dr John Pether have been used to assess the potential for prospecting to impact on submerged palaeontological resources (see Section 6.2).

An assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed prospecting on maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources is provided and this is supported by recommendations for measures to mitigate possible impacts arising from prospecting operations in the concession area.

### 5.1 Maritime Study Area

The study area for this HIA is defined as a 1 km buffer to the south, west and north of the seaward concession area boundary and, on the landward side, the high water mark (Figure 2).

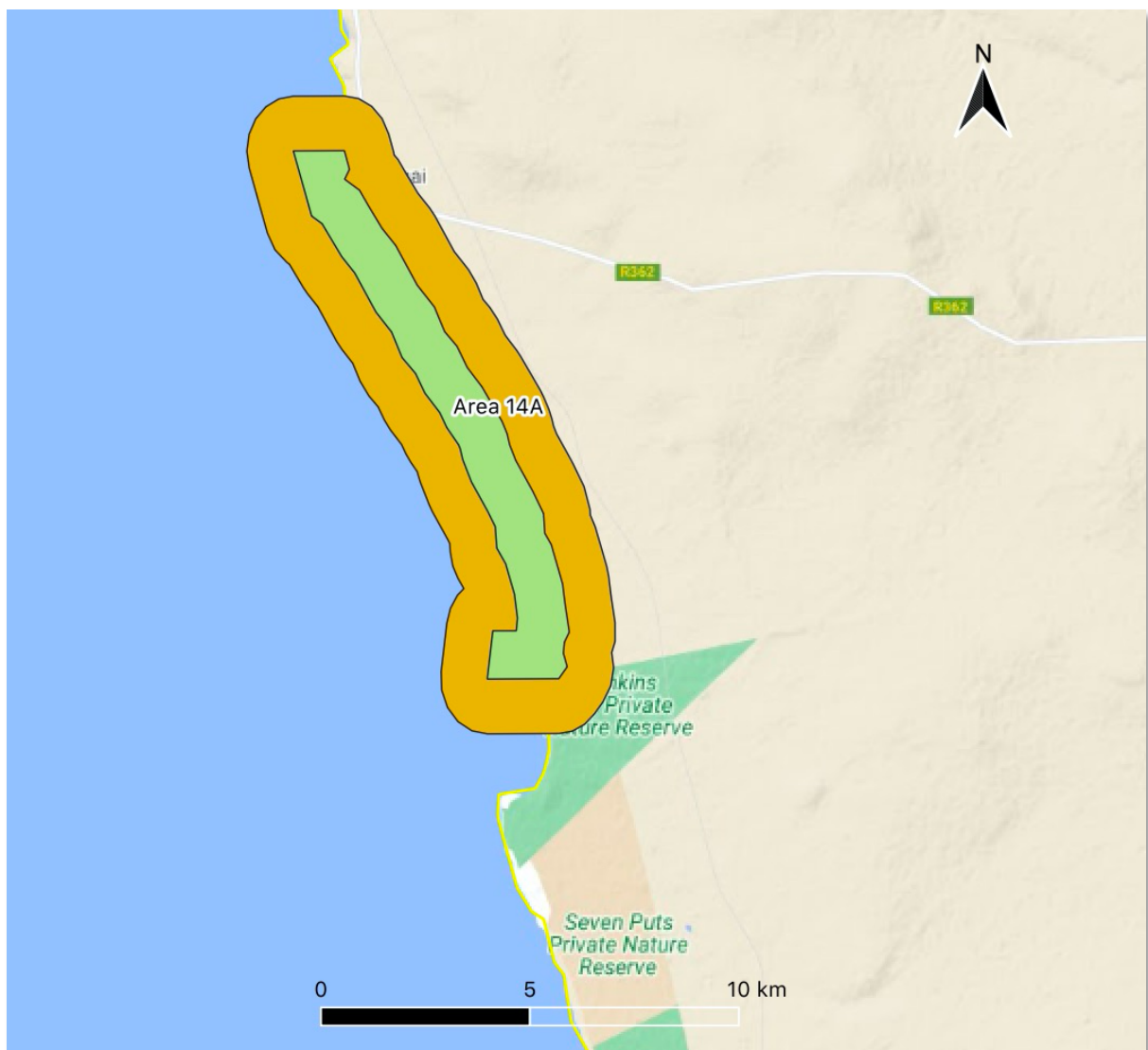


Figure 2: The 1 km buffer (orange polygon) around Concession Area 14A that defines the Study Area used for this HIA (Source: Google Earth).



## **5.2 Limitations**

South Africa's record of maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources is based on a mix of information derived in the main from historical documents and other secondary sources and from very limited primary sources such as geophysical data and other field-based observations and site recordings. Similarly, direct evidence for submerged pre-colonial archaeological sites and materials on the South African continental shelf is very limited, but sites found in similar offshore contexts elsewhere in the world and the known terrestrial archaeology of the West Coast illustrate the potential for such sites around our coast.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented below, the reliance on secondary data sources means that there are considerable gaps and inaccuracies in this record and the locations of most of the wrecks referred to in the following sections are approximate. The potential also exists for currently unknown and/or unrecorded maritime heritage sites to be encountered within the concession area in the course of prospecting activities.

## **6 UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE**

South Africa has a rich and diverse underwater cultural heritage. Strategically located on the historical trade route between Europe and the East, South Africa's rugged and dangerous coastline has witnessed more than its fair share of shipwrecks and maritime dramas in the last 500 years. At least 2,400 vessels are known to have sunk, grounded, or been wrecked, abandoned or scuttled in South African waters since the early 1500s. This doesn't include the as yet unproven potential for shipwrecks and other sites that relate to pre-European, Indian Ocean maritime exploration, trade and interactions along the South African east coast, or the potential for wrecks of vessels which disappeared between Europe and the East to be present in our waters.

The record of South Africa's long association with the sea is much broader than historical shipwrecks and extends far back into prehistory and is represented around the South African coast by thousands of pre-colonial shell middens and large numbers of tidal fish traps, which reflect prehistoric human exploitation of marine resources since the Middle Stone Age (MSA), more than 150,000 years ago. This element of our maritime heritage has a largely unexplored, but increasingly acknowledged manifestation in the submerged, offshore environment, consisting of pre-colonial terrestrial archaeological sites and palaeolandscapes which are now inundated by the sea.

This assessment considers the potential for submerged prehistoric archaeological resources, palaeontological resources and historical shipwrecks in Concession Area 14A.

### **6.1 Submerged Prehistory**

Since the start of the Quaternary, approximately 2.6 million years ago, the world has been subject to a series of cooling and warming climatic cycles in which sea level was mainly lower than it is today. During the last 900,000 years, global sea levels have fluctuated substantially on at least three occasions, the result of increased and decreased polar glaciation. The

dropping of sea levels was caused by the locking up in the polar ice caps of huge quantities of seawater as global temperatures cooled. The most extreme recent sea level drop occurred between circa 20,000 and 17,000 years ago when during Marine Isotope Stage 2 (MIS) at the height of the last glaciation, the sea was more than 120 m lower than it is today (Waelbroeck *et al*, 2002; Rohling *et al*, 2009).

As with the MIS 2 low sea level stand, those which corresponded with MIS 4 (~70,000 years ago), MIS 6 (~190,000 years ago), MIS 8 (~301,000 years ago) and MIS 12 (~478,000 years ago) would have “added a large coastal plain to the South African land mass” (Van Andel, 1989:133) where parts of the continental shelf were exposed as dry land (see Cawthra *et al*, 2016) (Figure 3).

The exposure of the continental shelf would have been most pronounced on the wide Agulhas Bank off the southern Cape coast, and it is estimated that a new area of land, as much as 80,000 km<sup>2</sup> in extent, was exposed during the successive glacial maxima (Fisher *et al*, 2010) Figure 4 gives an indication of the likely extent of the continental shelf exposure on the south and west coasts during the second to last glaciation (MIS 6).

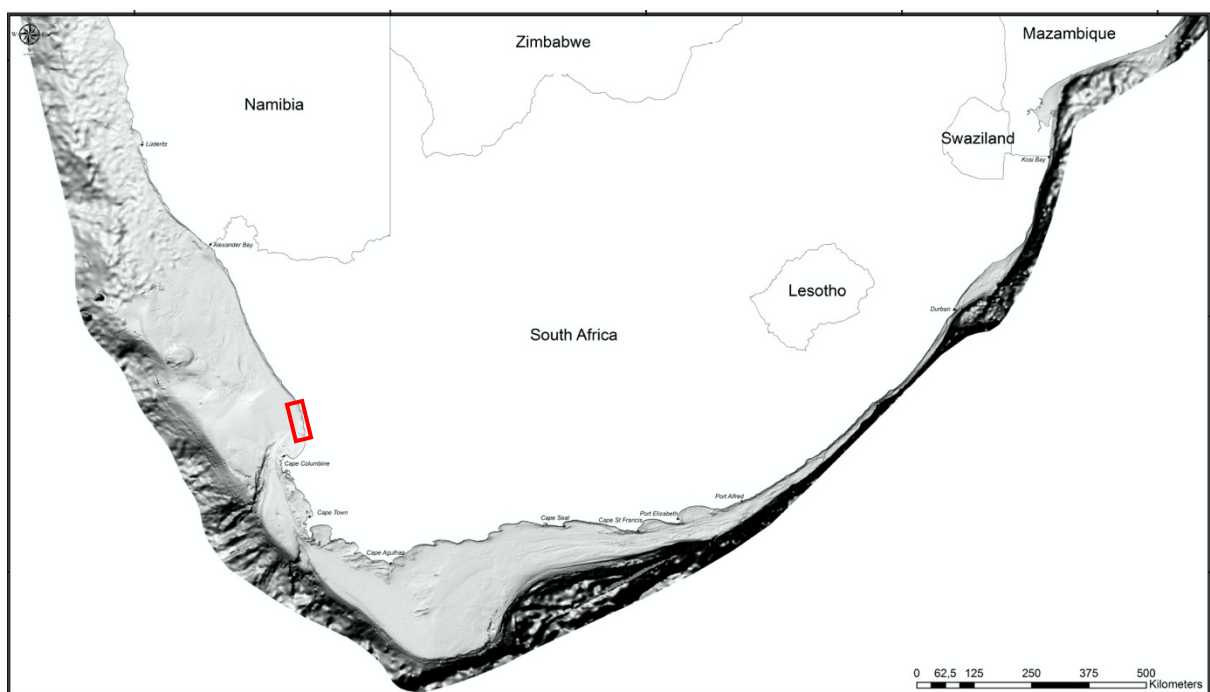


Figure 3: Shaded relief map showing the entire extent of the South African continental shelf. The approximate location of Concession Area 14A is marked by the red box (After De Wet 2012:106).

The exposed continental shelf was quickly populated by terrestrial flora and fauna, and also by our human ancestors who were dependant on these resources (Compton, 2011). As a result, for periods numbering in the tens of thousands of years, on at least three occasions during the last 500,000 years, our ancestors inhabited areas of what is now seabed around the South African coast. This means that a large part of the archaeological record of the later Earlier, Middle and early Late Stone Age is located on the continental shelf and is now

“inundated and for all practical purposes absent from [that] record” (Van Andel, 1989:133-134).

Until relatively recently there was little or no access to the submerged prehistoric landscapes and sites on the continental shelf, although discoveries in various parts of the world of drowned, formerly terrestrial landscapes is providing increasing evidence for the survival of prehistoric archaeological sites on and within the current seabed.



Figure 4: Possible extent of the South African continental shelf c.137,000 years ago. The approximate location of Concession Area 14A is marked by the red box (After Franklin et al, 2015)

Well-known example of such evidence include archaeological material and late Pleistocene faunal remains recovered in the nets of fishing trawlers in the North Sea between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands throughout the 20th century (Peeters *et al*, 2009; Peeters, 2011) and the University of Birmingham’s recent archaeological interpretation of 3D seismic data, collected in the same area by the oil and gas industry, which has revealed well-preserved prehistoric landscape features across the southern North Sea (Fitch *et al*, 2005, Gaffney *et al*, 2010).

Closer to home, there is archaeological evidence for a prehistoric human presence in what is now Table Bay. In 1995 and 1996 during the excavation of two Dutch East India Company shipwrecks, the *Oosterland* and *Waddinxveen*, divers recovered three Early Stone Age (ESA)

handaxes from the seabed under the wrecks. The stone tools, which are between 300,000 and 1.4 million years old, were found at a depth of 7-8 m below mean sea level and were associated with Pleistocene sediments from an ancient submerged and infilled river channel (Figure 5). Their unrolled and unworn condition indicate that they had not been carried to their current position by the ancient river and suggests that they were found more or less where they were dropped by ESA hominins more than 300,000 years ago (possibly during MIS 8 (~301,000 years ago) or MIS 12 (~478,000 years ago)), when the sea level was at least 10 m lower than it is today (Werz and Flemming, 2001; Werz *et al*, 2014).

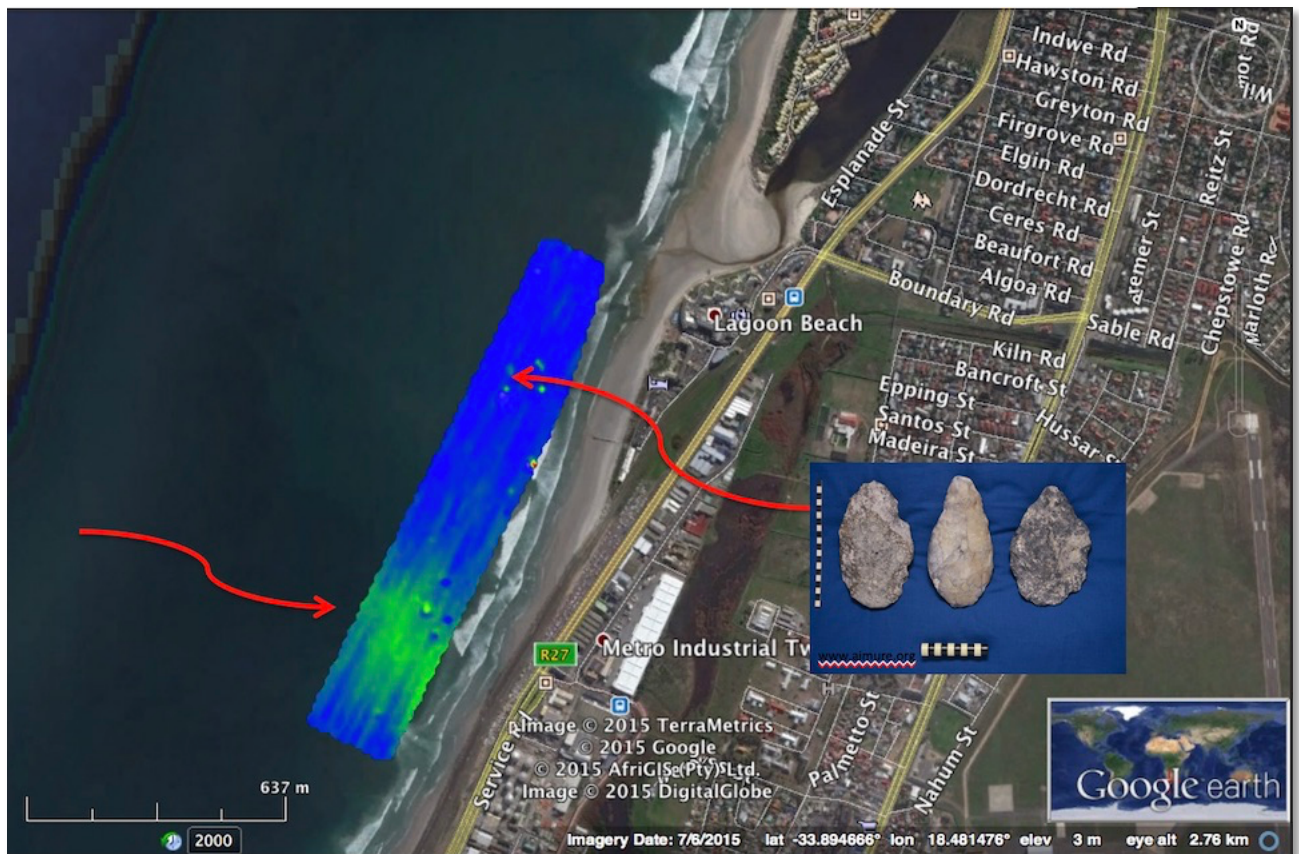


Figure 5: Location of the find of Table Bay ESA handaxes (inset) off Milnerton (top arrow) overlain on magnetometer data which shows the submerged palaeo-channel (green) of the Salt River (bottom arrow).

### 6.1.1 Submerged Prehistory Potential of Concession Area 14A

There have, to date, been no specific studies of the submerged prehistory of the West Coast. However, the archaeological evidence for a hominin presence along the coast in the vicinity of the study area in the Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Age (LSA) is plentiful.

Diepkloof Rock Shelter, inland of Elands Bay and south-east of the concession area, for example, contains evidence of a nearly continuous human occupation for nearly 85,000 years (see Parkington and Poggenpoel, 1987; Texier *et al*, 2010), while Elands Bay Cave, on the coast at the mouth of the Verloren Vlei, preserves archaeological evidence of the Pleistocene / Holocene transition during the LSA (Parkington, 1988).

Further south at Hoedjiespunt in Saldanha Bay, four hominid teeth, four or five small fragments of cranium, and two postcranial bones from one or two individuals have been found in an ancient hyena lair and are associated with uranium series dates on ostrich eggshell fragments which imply an ESA / MSA age of 130,000 to 180,000 years for the hominids (Berger and Parkington, 1996).

Nearby, at Churchaven on the Langbaan Lagoon a set of fossilized human footprints were discovered in an aeolianite slab in 1995. They are thought to be those of a female human (hence their nickname “Eve’s footprints”) and have been dated to approximately 117,000 years ago, during the MSA and very close to the start of the last glaciation when sea levels would have been starting to drop (see <http://www.sawestcoast.com/fossileve.html>).

LSA coastal shell middens are ubiquitous along the West Coast, as are numerous MSA shell middens; the latter being some of the earliest evidence in the world for the exploitation by our ancestors of marine resources. Older, ESA lithics are also commonly found along on the West Coast (David Halkett, pers. comm.).

As discussed in the previous section, the maximum sea level low stand during the Quaternary, when hominins would have been present in and on the South African landscape, was -120 m. Any areas of South Africa’s current seabed shallower than -120 m thus have the potential to have been used by our ancestors and to preserve the archaeological evidence of that use. Concession Area 14A, with a maximum depth of less than 30 m, falls squarely within this range.

Although no geophysical data are yet available for Concession Area 14A, seabed sediment mapping by O’Shea (1971) further up the coast at Kleinzee indicates that a channel cut by the palaeo-Buffels River extends offshore to the west of Kleinzee while further up the coast, “submerged fluvial channels extending seawards from Langklip Bay and between Hondeklip Bay and the Swartlintjies River are clearly indicated by the bathymetry” (Hattingh, 2015:5).

These channels and their associated sediment bodies have the potential for associated, now submerged, archaeological material and palaeoenvironmental evidence and are illustrative of the likely situation with many of the other major rivers that feed into the Atlantic along the West Coast and which have submerged palaeo-channels extending offshore, including the Olifants River north of Concession Area 14A, and potentially the Jakkalsrivier to the south at Lamberts Bay. These channels are an important target for diamond mining as they are the source of and contain diamondiferous gravel.

During times of lower sea level in the past, the palaeo-rivers along the West Coast would have flowed across the exposed continental shelf and these ancient river courses, whose channels are today buried under more recent seabed sediment, would have been an important focus for hominin activity on the exposed continental shelf.

As demonstrated in Table Bay, there is the potential for the occurrence of ancient, submerged archaeological material in association with palaeo-river channels. This may take the form of archaeological artefacts or, where ancient alluvial sediment within these channels has

survived post-glacial marine transgressions, there is the potential to recover palaeoenvironmental data (pollens, foraminifera and diatoms, for example) which can contribute contextual information to our understanding of the ancient human occupation of South Africa.

## **6.2 Seabed Geology and Palaeontology**

The following description of the geology of the affected formations on the continental shelf and their palaeontological potential in the vicinity of the concession area is drawn from previous reports and comments provided by Dr John Pether (2021a & b).

The seabed geology of the continental shelf within Concession Area 14A shows successively younger formations seawards from the coast. Cretaceous and Paleogene units comprise the main bulk of the bedrock geology of the area and are succeeded by cappings of Miocene and Pliocene units.

These bedrock formations comprise the “footwall” to overlying, much younger late Quaternary to present-day deposits which, for the most part, form a more or less soft veneer over the continental shelf.

Seabed sediment distribution on the inner continental shelf is patchy and largely determined by the topography of the bedrock, with mini-basins of sediments interspersed by bedrock high outcrops. The oldest seabed deposits preserved occur in deeper, local bedrock depressions and palaeochannels in the Precambrian bedrock, beneath the latest Quaternary basal gravels.

Pether (2021b) suggests that there are several permutations for what type of seabed deposits might be preserved, and these largely depend on the space (depth) within the depressions and position on the shelf. These may include earlier-Quaternary marine conglomerates and sandstones as remnants that escaped erosion during the latest transgression from the Last Ice Age (Last Glacial Maximum) low sea level.

Pether’s idealized sequence in a deeper bedrock depression on the inner shelf may include all or part of the following (refer to Figure 6):

- Unit 1 - a gravel deposited during the MIS5/6 transgression ~135 ka.
- Unit 2 - a succeeding muddy shelf sand deposited during the Last Interglacial sea level highstand.
- Unit 3 - a shelly, variously-cemented sandstone deposited during the subsequent regression (MIS 5a and 4), constituting the basal unit of the Last Regression Sequence.
- Unit 4 - Subsequent terrestrial deposits that may include colluvium, pan deposits and dune sands, with land snails, possible animal remains and perhaps archaeological material, capped by a soil and/or incipient calcrete (MIS 3 and 2).
- Unit 5 - an erosion surface overlain by the basal gravel of the Last Transgression Sequence (early MIS 1).
- Unit 6 - succeeding shelly sand fining up to muddy shelf sand (current interglacial highstand, later MIS 1).

For the most part, however, the inner-shelf bedrock is overlain only by the Last Transgression Sequence basal gravel (Unit 5) and the shelf upward-fining sediments (Unit 6).

### 6.2.1 Palaeontology of Concession Area 14A

During the later Neogene and Quaternary, the continental shelf was dominated by upwelling processes, with high organic productivity and authigenic mineralization of seabed rocks, clays and biogenic particles by phosphatization and glauconization. Extensive cemented crusts or “hardgrounds” formed on formations exposed at the seabed.

Sea level oscillated repeatedly, during the period, dropping to ice-age palaeoshorelines as much as 140 m below present sea level. The seabed hardgrounds were eroded during the ice-age/glacial shallowing episodes and re-cemented again during interglacial deepening.

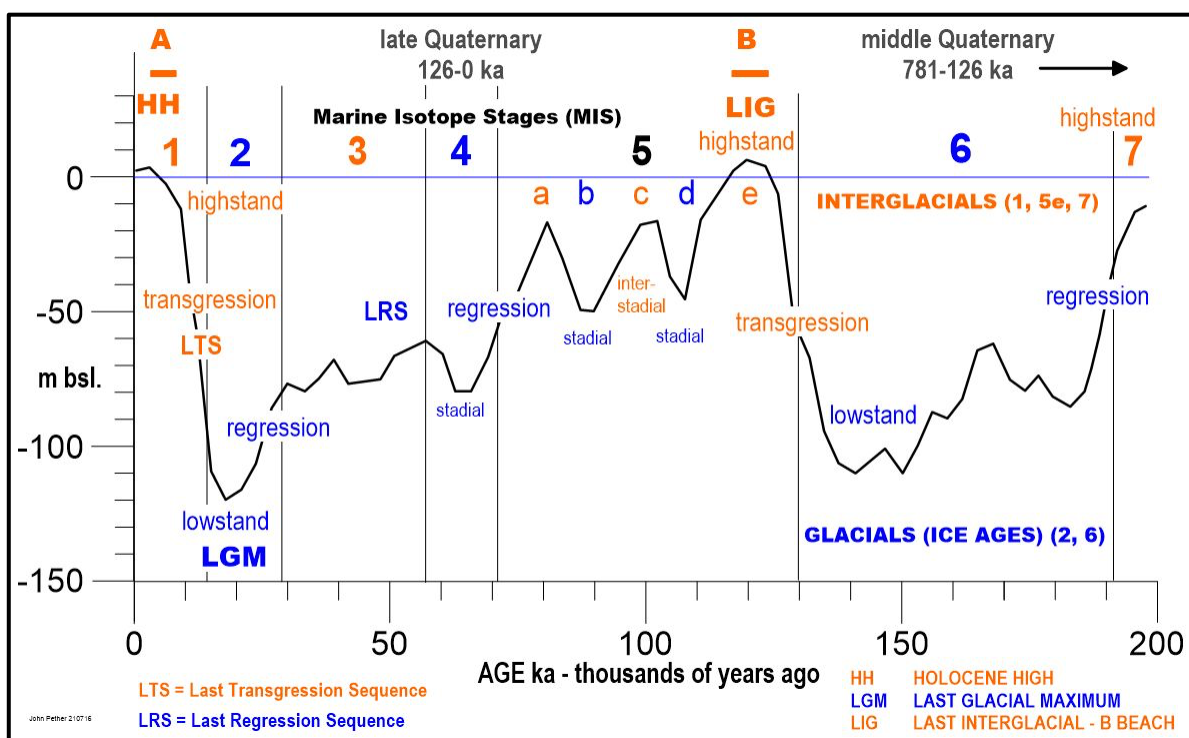


Figure 6: Sea level history and palaeoclimatic nomenclature for the last 200 ka (After Pether, 2021b)

This has produced a wide array of multiphase phosphorite nodules and phosphatic shell casts of various ages. The bones and teeth of sharks and other fishes, the skulls of extinct whale species and the occasional remains of land-living animals that roamed the ice-age exposed shelf are also phosphatized and reworked into the latest, loose sediments from the Last Transgressive Sequence (Unit 5) on the seabed.

Samples of this reworked material turns up in bottom-trawl fishnets, scientific dredging and during diamond-mining operations and the specimens which have been donated to scientific institutions have been invaluable contributions to our knowledge of the palaeontological potential of the continental shelf.

The marine shell fossils which occur in the Last Transgression Sequence are predominantly the species expected on the West Coast Shelf, but unexpected species and “extralimitals” (species beyond their normal home range) are quite common. For instance, the Last Ice Age palaeoshoreline gravels are dominated by a “Venus shell” clam, *Tawera philomela*. This cold-water species, along with others, reached the Cape coast from the mid-Atlantic islands of Tristan da Cunha and Gough, apparently thrived here and then became extinct locally during the last deglaciation (Pether, 1993). During the subsequent deglaciation/warming, several warm-water species from the south and east coasts “invaded” the western shelf temporarily.

This shows a more marked influence of Agulhas water rounding the Cape and affecting the Benguela System during the global-warming steps of the last deglaciation (Pether, 1994). These Agulhas extralimitals have mainly been found during diamond sampling/mining off northern Namaqualand but they can be expected to be more abundant further south such as in Concession Area 14A, as well as more species occurring. In addition to dating the incursions on Agulhas influence, the individual shells are snapshot archives of the palaeoceanographic conditions at the time, as revealed by incremental analyses of stable isotopes and trace elements.

### **6.3 Maritime History of the South African Coast**

In 1498 the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama finally pioneered the long-sought sea route around Africa from Europe to the East. Since then, the southern tip of the African continent has played a vital role in global economic and maritime affairs, and until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, represented the most viable route between Europe and the markets of the East (Axelson, 1973; Turner, 1988; Gribble, 2002; Gribble and Sharfman, 2013).

The South African coast is rugged, and the long fetch and deep offshore waters mean that the force and size of seas around the South African coast are considerable, a situation exacerbated by prevailing seasonal winds.

The geographical position of the South African coast on the historical route to the East and the physical conditions mariners could expect to encounter in these waters have, in the last five centuries, been responsible for the large number of maritime casualties which today form the bulk of South Africa’s maritime and underwater cultural heritage (Gribble, 2002).

At least 2,500 vessels are known to have sunk, grounded, or been wrecked, abandoned or scuttled in South African waters since the early 1500s. More than 1,900 of these wrecks are more than 60 years old and are thus protected by the NHRA as archaeological resources. This list is by no means complete and does not include the as yet unproven potential for shipwrecks and other sites that relate to pre-European, Indian Ocean maritime exploration, trade and interactions along the South African east coast.

For obvious historical reasons, the earliest known South African wrecks are Portuguese, dating to the sixteenth century when that country held sway over the route to the East. Due to the later, more prolonged ascendancy of first the Dutch and then the British in European trade with the East and control at the Cape, the majority of wrecks along the South African coast



are Dutch and British. However, at least 36 other nationalities are represented amongst the other wrecks that litter the coast.

Da Gama's maritime incursion into the Indian Ocean laid the foundation for more than 500 years of subsequent European maritime activity in the waters off the South African coast. The Portuguese and other European nations who followed their lead around the Cape and into the Indian Ocean, however, joined a maritime trade network that was thousands of years old and in which east and south-east Africa was an important partner.

This trade spanned the Indian Ocean and linked the Far East, South-East Asia, India, the Indian Ocean islands and Africa. Archaeological evidence from Africa points to an ancient trade in African products – gold, skins, ivory and slaves – in exchange for beads, cloth, porcelain, iron and copper. The physical evidence for this trade includes Persian and Chinese ceramics excavated sites on African Iron Age like Khami, Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe (see Garlake, 1968, Huffman, 1972, Chirikure, 2014), glass trade beads found in huge numbers on archaeological sites across eastern and southern Africa (Wood, 2012).

There is shipwreck evidence on the East African coast for this pre-European Indian Ocean trade (see for example Pollard et al 2016) and clear archaeological and documentary evidence that this trade network extended at least as far south as Maputo in Mozambique. This suggests that there is the potential for shipwrecks and other sites that relate to pre-European, Indian Ocean maritime exploration, trade and interactions to exist along the South African east coast and offshore waters.

The more than 2,500 historical shipwrecks that make up the bulk of South Africa's underwater cultural heritage are a thus huge, cosmopolitan, repository of information about mainly global maritime trade during the last five centuries and potentially much further back into the past. These sites contain a wealth of cultural material associated with that trade and clues to the political, economic, social and cultural changes that accompanied this trade, and which contributed to the creation of the modern world.

### **6.3.1 Maritime Heritage of the West Coast and Concession Area 14A**

The maritime history of the West Coast dates to almost the first days of the Dutch settlement in Table Bay. The Dutch settlers were quick to recognise and exploit the rich marine resources of the West Coast and fishing and sealing flourished, with the catches transported down the coast to supply the VOC settlement in Table Bay. This industry led to the development of fishing villages at Saldanha Bay and Lamberts Bay: the former, together with places like Elands Bay, also later becoming ports for the export of grain and other produce from the Swartland and Cederberg (Ingpen 1979).

During the early nineteenth century the West Coast islands became the focus of an international 'white gold' rush to exploit their rich guano resources. The guano was soon depleted but the discovery of rich copper deposits in Namaqualand and the Richtersveld led to the use of Alexander Bay, Robbe Bay (now Port Nolloth) and Hondeklip Bay by the early 1850s and the development of local, coasting shipping services to support this new industry (The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle 1855: 297-303; Ingpen 1979).

Except for Saldanha Bay, the West Coast historically lacked good harbours. Combined with the regular coastal fogs, a largely rocky shoreline and dangerous inset currents this took its toll on shipping over the years.

According to SAHRA's Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage database, the national record of underwater cultural heritage curated on the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS) (<http://www.sahra.org.za/sahris>), there are at least 89 shipping casualties recorded between the Berg and Orange Rivers, many of which were vessels involved in coastal trade and fishing.

Only one of these maritime casualties, the *Girl Devon*, took place within or close to Concession Area 14A (Figure 7). A second wreck, the *Elizabeth*, is located approximately 4,6 km north of the northern boundary of the concession area. Although only the *Girl Devon* falls within the study area defined for this assessment, both wrecks are discussed below and included in Table 1.

Table 1: Shipwrecks in the vicinity of Concession Area 14A.

| Ship Name         | Approximate Position | Place                 | Event Type | Vessel Category       | Nationality   | Year      | Notes                       |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Girl Devon</i> | -31.8202<br>18.2165  | Off Doring Baai       | Foundered  | Sailing vessel        | South African | 1971      | 19 lives lost when she sank |
| <i>Elizabeth</i>  | -31.7745<br>18.2216  | Mietjie Frans se Baai | Wrecked?   | Wooden sailing vessel | British       | 1817/1818 | -                           |

Very little information is available for either of these wrecks but what is known is that the *Girl Devon* was a sailing cutter of unknown tonnage which sank off Doring Bay in January 1971 with the loss of 19 lives. The date of her loss means that this wreck is not currently old enough to be protected by the NHRA, but the loss of life associated with her sinking suggests that if the wreck is found it should be treated with respect. The exact location of this wreck is also not known and the co-ordinates given in Table 1 are an approximate position. It is possible therefore that the wreck may be present within the concession area.

The *Elizabeth* is recorded as having been wrecked at Mietjie Frans se Baai, north of Doring Baai in either late 1817 or early 1818. She was a British registered wooden sailing vessel under the command of a Captain White but no other information is available.

Lastly, it must be stated that although unlikely, the possibility does exist for the remains of currently unknown and unrecorded wrecks to be present in the concession area. The historical records contain many references to vessels that were lost without trace between their points of departure and arrival. Where survivors of such events were subsequently rescued, the loss was recorded, but in many cases, vessels simply never arrived at their destination and could thus lie anywhere along their intended route. The potential for the occurrence of such unrecorded wrecks was illustrated in 2008 when a 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese wreck, since identified as the *Bom Jesus*, was unexpectedly found during the diamond mining south of Oranjemund in Namibia (see Alves 2011).

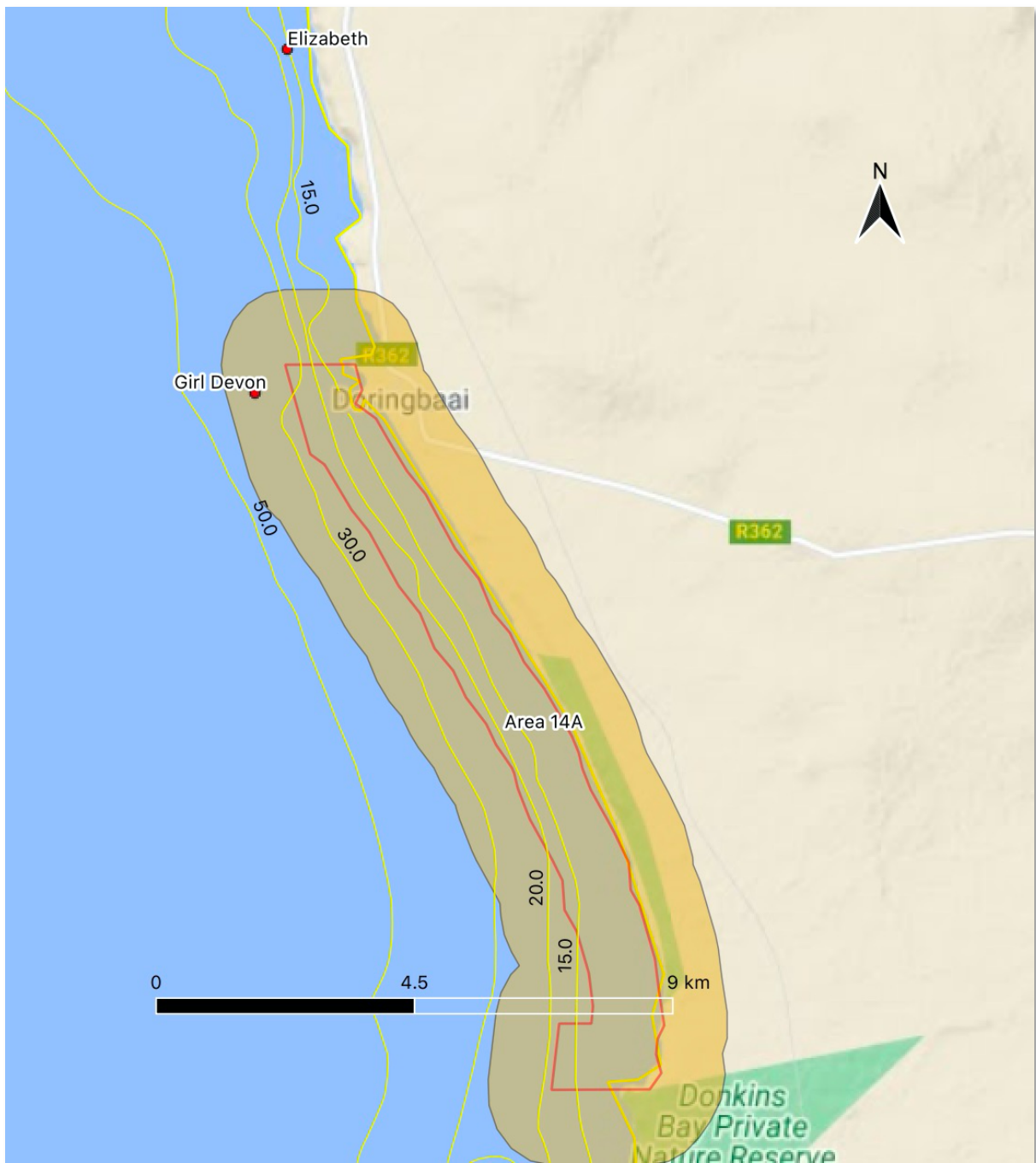


Figure 7: Known historical wrecks located within and just outside the Study Area around Concession Area 14A (Source: Source: Google Earth).

## 7 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Potential impacts associated with prospecting in Concession Area 14A relate to submerged prehistoric and maritime archaeological heritage resources, and possibly, palaeontological features and fossil material. In all cases impacts can arise where interventions on and in the seabed intersect with heritage resources – either directly where sites or material are damaged or disturbed by activities such as the core sampling being proposed, or indirectly where

downstream effects of seabed activities can affect sites or material. That said, the small footprint of the core sampling is very unlikely to cause any downstream effects on the surrounding seabed.

It is difficult to quantify the impacts on cultural heritage resources of seabed activities such as prospecting because the locations and extent of these resources – particularly submerged prehistoric and palaeontological resources - are generally poorly understood and the nature of the environment limits the potential for identifying such sites and monitoring the intrusive activities.

The potential impacts associated with seabed prospecting are assessed for the three heritage resource classes - submerged prehistory, palaeontology and shipwrecks/maritime heritage - in the following sections. The assessment is based on the methodology set out in Appendix 1 below.

## **7.1 Submerged Prehistory**

The past use by our hominin ancestors of the exposed continental shelf is beyond doubt and the evidence of this presence is possible wherever archaeological material and palaeoenvironmental evidence has survived post-glacial marine transgressions. Although no geophysical data for the concession area are presently available, there is the potential for this material to be found on, or associated with, just such surviving palaeo-landsurfaces or in association with any now submerged palaeo-channels within Concession Area 14A.

The small footprint of the seabed interventions associated with prospecting means that the potential for interaction with or impact on submerged prehistoric archaeological material in Concession Area 14A will be small, although the likelihood that prospecting will target features like the palaeo-beach deposits, as a source particularly of diamondiferous gravels, does increase the potential for interactions and impacts.

If impacts on submerged prehistoric archaeological resources occur, they will be negative because the finite and non-renewable nature of these resources means that they cannot recover if disturbed, damaged or destroyed.

### **7.1.1 Impacts of Seabed Coring**

Seabed core sampling will be undertaken using one or more of the coring tools described earlier, deployed from a dedicated sampling vessel. The coring methods are all based on the insertion of a plastic sleeve or casing, varying between 7 and 15 cm in diameter, into the seabed, using either high frequency, resonant energy generated inside the sonic head or vibration from the coring head. When the sleeve is extracted from the seabed it contains a sediment core which provides a record of the stratigraphy of the top 3-5 m of the seabed.

The physical intrusion of the cores into the seabed is very small, and the potential impacts of core sampling in Concession Area 14A on prehistoric heritage resources on or in the seabed will be localised. Where impacts do occur, they will be irreversible/permanent because the

finite and non-renewable nature of heritage resources means that they cannot recover if disturbed, damaged or destroyed.

The intensity of impact will be low, given the very limited physical intrusion into or disturbance of the seabed of the coring and the probability of occurrence is possible.

The significance of the impact is assessed to be very low but where impacts do occur their effects will be negative.

The lack of concrete information about the presence of submerged prehistoric resources in the concession area means that the level of confidence in this assessment of impacts is low.

In respect of mitigation measures, it is suggested that:

- any core samples sections which contain alluvial material, particularly where organic remains are present, are retained and are subject to palaeoenvironmental assessment; and
- the possibility is considered of retaining samples of the coarser fraction (i.e. gravel and stone (20 mm +)) of sorted seabed sediment for assessment by an archaeologist for the presence of prehistoric lithic material.

Access to such samples for palaeoenvironmental and archaeological assessment may offset the potential impacts of core sampling and would result in the changing of the impact status from negative to positive because of a potential benefit to archaeological research and knowledge that could accrue from access to such information. It is suggested that TAGS engage with the archaeologist and palaeontologist prior to the geotechnical campaign to discuss and agree this proposed mitigation.

The assessment of impacts on submerged prehistoric resources from core sampling can be summarised as follows:

|  | Extent     | Intensity | Duration                      | Consequence | Probability | Significance | Status | Confidence |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------------|
| Without mitigation   | Local<br>1 | Low<br>1  | Long-term (Irreversible)<br>3 | Low<br>5    | Possible    | VERY LOW     | -ve    | Low        |
| Proposed mitigation measures:  |            |           |                               |             |             |              |        |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core sample sections which contain alluvial material, particularly where organic remains are present, are retained and subject for palaeoenvironmental assessment. This could <u>offset</u> any potential impacts.</li> </ul> |            |           |                               |             |             |              |        |            |
| With mitigation  | 1          | 1         | 3                             | 5           | Possible    | VERY LOW     | +ve    | Low        |

## 7.2 Palaeontology

### 7.2.1 Impacts of Seabed Coring

The palaeontological impact of the coring in Concession Area 14A will be localised.

Where impacts do occur, they will be irreversible/permanent because the finite and non-renewable nature of heritage resources means that they cannot recover if disturbed, damaged or destroyed.

The intensity of impact will be low, given the very limited physical intrusion into or disturbance of the seabed of the coring and the probability of occurrence is possible.

The significance of the impact is assessed to be very low but where impacts do occur their effects will be negative.

The lack of concrete information about the possible presence or distribution of palaeontological resources in the concession area means that the level of confidence in this assessment of impacts is low.

In respect of mitigation measures, the small volumes of the core samples greatly reduce to likelihood of capturing the sparse fossils reworked from the older, pre- late Quaternary formations and the “extralimitals” in the Last Transgression Sequence. However, the potential for extralimital Agulhas species to be present in the cores is important as these specimens have context in the geological and faunal succession in the core, unlike the specimens usually selected from the loose, mixed shells crossing the oversize screens on sampling/mining vessels. It is also possible that a core or two might intersect rarely preserved lagoonal deposits which are important for providing points on the sea-level curve applicable to the West Coast (Runds *et al.*, 2018).

It is therefore suggested that a set of cores from this poorly-known area are the subject of a detailed study (possibly as a B.Sc. Honours or M.Sc. project), with radiocarbon dates.

Any fossils such as petrified bone and teeth and shell casts, usually phosphatic, found during the processing of the cores must have the details of context recorded and must be kept for identification by an appropriate specialist and if significant, to be deposited in a curatorial institution such as the IZIKO SA Museum.

Such work would offset the potential impacts of the prospecting activities and would result in the changing of the impact status from negative to positive because of a potential benefit to palaeontological research and knowledge that could accrue from such information. It is suggested that TAGS engage with the archaeologist and palaeontologist prior to the geotechnical campaign to discuss and agree this proposed mitigation.

The assessment of impacts on palaeontological resources from core sampling can be summarised as follows:

|                                | Extent     | Intensity                | Duration                         | Consequence | Probability | Significance | Status | Confidence |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------------|
| Without mitigation             | Local<br>1 | Negligible<br>(Low)<br>1 | Long-term<br>(Irreversible)<br>3 | Low<br>5    | Possible    | VERY LOW     | -ve    | Low        |
| Suggested mitigation measures: |            |                          |                                  |             |             |              |        |            |

- Any fossils found during the processing of cores must have the details of context recorded, must be kept for identification by an appropriate specialist and, if significant, be deposited in a an appropriate institution;
- The possible detailed study and dating of a set of cores, possibly as a B.Sc. Honours or M.Sc. project should be considered.

|                 |   |   |   |   |          |          |     |     |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|----------|----------|-----|-----|
| With mitigation | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | Possible | VERY LOW | +ve | Low |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|----------|----------|-----|-----|

### 7.3 Maritime Heritage

For the purposes of this impact assessment and based on the discussion of maritime heritage resources in and around Concession Area 14A above, it appears that a) neither of the two recorded wrecks in the vicinity is likely to be within the concession area and b) the possibility that currently unknown historical wrecks or maritime debris are present on the seabed in the concession area is so low that it can probably be discounted.

There is thus unlikely to be any impact arising from prospecting activities on maritime heritage resources and they are scoped out of this impact assessment.

### 7.4 Summary of Impact Significance Ratings for Heritage Receptors

The results of the impact assessment for the heritage receptors in Concession Area 14A can be summarised as follows:

| Impact  | Consequence                      | Probability | Significance | Status | Confidence |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------------|
| Impacts on Submerged Prehistoric Heritage Resources – Core Sampling | Low<br>5                         | Possible    | VERY LOW     | -ve    | Low        |
| With Mitigation   | 5                                | Possible    | VERY LOW     | +ve    | Low        |
| Impacts on Maritime Archaeological Resources: Core Sampling         | No impacts expected - Scoped out |             |              |        |            |
| Impacts on Palaeontological Resources – Core Sampling               | Low<br>5                         | Possible    | VERY LOW     | -ve    | Low        |
| With Mitigation   | 5                                | Possible    | VERY LOW     | +ve    | Low        |

## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment of the heritage resources of Concession Area 14A indicates that there may be some potential for submerged prehistoric archaeological material in sediments to be affected by prospecting. Although the significance of any prospecting-related impacts on such material is assessed to be very low, it is recommended that

- any core sample sections which contain alluvial material, particularly where organic remains are present, are retained for palaeoenvironmental assessment; and
- the possibility is considered of retaining samples of the coarser fraction (i.e. gravel and stone bigger than c. 20 mm) of sorted core sediment for assessment by an archaeologist for the presence of prehistoric lithic material.

These actions would result in the changing of the impact status from negative to positive because of a potential benefit to archaeological research and knowledge that could accrue from access to such information.

With regard to palaeontological resources, fossils found during the processing of the core samples must have the details of context recorded and be kept for identification by an appropriate specialist and if significant, to be deposited in a curatorial institution such as the IZIKO SA Museum. The identification of extralimital, Agulhas “sub-fossil” shell species in the loose shells of the Last Transgression Sequence requires a level of seashell knowledge. The best outcome for a set of cores from this poorly-known area is that they are the subject of a detailed study, possibly as for a B.Sc. Honours or M.Sc. project, with radiocarbon dates.

It is suggested that TAGS engage with the archaeologist and palaeontologist prior to the geotechnical campaign to discuss and agree these proposed mitigation measures.

There appears to be little or no potential for the presence of historical shipwrecks in the concession area and this heritage receptor was scoped out of the assessment of impact.

In the unlikely event that shipwreck material or seabed debris is identified in the geophysical data to be collected as part of the prospecting programme or during the prospecting itself, the find must be reported to the archaeologist and SAHRA and then avoided during the core sampling.

### **8.1 Acceptability of the Proposed Activity with Respect to Heritage Resources**

It is our reasoned opinion that the proposed prospecting activities in Concession Area 14A are likely to have a very low impact on submerged prehistoric and palaeontological heritage resources, and no impact on maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources.

Provided the recommendations to mitigate and offset potential impacts are implemented, the proposed prospecting can be considered to be archaeologically and palaeontologically acceptable.



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## APPENDIX 1: IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The significance of all potential impacts that would result from the proposed project is determined in order to assist decision-makers. The **significance** of an impact is defined as a combination of the **consequence** of the impact occurring and the **probability** that the impact will occur. The significance of each identified impact was thus rated according to the methodology set out below:

**Step 1** – Determine the **consequence** rating for the impact by determining the score for each of the three criteria (A-C) listed below and then **adding** them. The rationale for assigning a specific rating, and comments on the degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources and be irreversible, must be included in the narrative accompanying the impact rating:

| Rating  | Definition of Rating  | Score |
|---|---|-------|
| <b>A. Extent – the area over which the impact will be experienced</b>   |   |       |
| Local   | Confined to project or study area or part thereof (e.g. limits of the concession area)                  | 1     |
| Regional  | The region (e.g. the whole of Namaqualand coast)  | 2     |
| (Inter) national  | Significantly beyond Saldanha Bay and adjacent land areas   | 3     |
| <b>B. Intensity – the magnitude of the impact in relation to the sensitivity of the receiving environment, taking into account the degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources</b> |   |       |
| Low   | Site-specific and wider natural and/or social functions and processes are negligibly altered            | 1     |
| Medium  | Site-specific and wider natural and/or social functions and processes continue albeit in a modified way | 2     |
| High  | Site-specific and wider natural and/or social functions or processes are severely altered               | 3     |
| <b>C. Duration – the time frame for which the impact will be experienced and its reversibility</b>  |   |       |
| Short-term  | Up to 2 years   | 1     |
| Medium-term   | 2 to 15 years   | 2     |
| Long-term   | More than 15 years (state whether impact is irreversible)   | 3     |

The combined score of these three criteria corresponds to a **Consequence Rating**, as follows:

| Combined Score (A+B+C) | 3 – 4    | 5   | 6      | 7    | 8 – 9     |
|------------------------|----------|-----|--------|------|-----------|
| Consequence Rating     | Very low | Low | Medium | High | Very high |

**Step 2** – Assess the **probability** of the impact occurring according to the following definitions:

| <b>Probability– the likelihood of the impact occurring</b> |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Improbable   | < 40% chance of occurring |

|          |                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Possible | 40% - 70% chance of occurring   |
| Probable | > 70% - 90% chance of occurring |
| Definite | > 90% chance of occurring       |

**Step 3** – Determine the overall **significance** of the impact as a combination of the **consequence** and **probability** ratings, as set out below:

|             |           | Probability   |               |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
|             |           | Improbable    | Possible      | Probable  | Definite  |
| Consequence | Very Low  | INSIGNIFICANT | INSIGNIFICANT | VERY LOW  | VERY LOW  |
|             | Low       | VERY LOW      | VERY LOW      | LOW       | LOW       |
|             | Medium    | LOW           | LOW           | MEDIUM    | MEDIUM    |
|             | High      | MEDIUM        | MEDIUM        | HIGH      | HIGH      |
|             | Very High | HIGH          | HIGH          | VERY HIGH | VERY HIGH |

**Step 4** – Note the **status** of the impact (i.e. will the effect of the impact be negative or positive?)

**Step 5** – State the level of **confidence** in the assessment of the impact (high, medium or low). Impacts are also considered in terms of their status (positive or negative impact) and the confidence in the ascribed impact significance rating. The prescribed system for considering impacts status and confidence (in assessment) is laid out in the table below. Depending on the data available, a higher level of confidence may be attached to the assessment of some impacts than others. For example, if the assessment is based on extrapolated data, this may reduce the confidence level to low, noting that further ground-truthing is required to improve this.

| Confidence rating        |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Status of impact         | + ve (beneficial) or – ve (cost) |
| Confidence of assessment | Low, Medium or High              |

The significance rating of impacts is considered by decision-makers, as shown below. Note, this method does not apply to minor impacts which can be logically grouped into a single assessment.

- **INSIGNIFICANT:** the potential impact is negligible and **will not** have an influence on the decision regarding the proposed activity.
- **VERY LOW:** the potential impact is very small and **should not** have any meaningful influence on the decision regarding the proposed activity.
- **LOW:** the potential impact **may not** have any meaningful influence on the decision regarding the proposed activity.
- **MEDIUM:** the potential impact **should** influence the decision regarding the proposed activity.
- **HIGH:** the potential impact **will** affect a decision regarding the proposed activity.
- **VERY HIGH:** The proposed activity should only be approved under special circumstances.

**Step 6** – Identify and describe practical **mitigation** and **optimisation** measures that can be implemented effectively to reduce or enhance the significance of the impact. Mitigation and optimisation measures must be described as either:

- **Essential:** must be implemented and are non-negotiable; and
- **Best Practice:** must be shown to have been considered and sound reasons provided by the proponent if not implemented.

Essential mitigation and optimisation measures must be inserted into the completed impact assessment table. The impact should be re-assessed with mitigation, by following Steps 1-5 again to demonstrate how the extent, intensity, duration and/or probability change after implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

**Step 7** – Prepare a summary table of all impact significance ratings.

Finally, indicate whether the proposed development alternatives are environmentally suitable or unsuitable in terms of the respective impacts assessed by the relevant specialist and the environmentally preferred alternative.