

April 2013

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REPORT:

**Proposed cultivation of 33ha of indigenous grassland on Newfields Farm near Underberg,
KwaSani Municipality**

1 INTRODUCTION

To fulfil the necessary public participation required as part of the Basic Assessment (BA) Process, the following methods of stakeholder engagement were conducted by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP), as outlined below.

2 NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

A newspaper advertisement was published at the outset of the project to inform the general public of the BA Process for the proposed cultivation of indigenous grassland on Newfields Farm, KwaSani Local Municipality. The advertisement was published in English on 14 December 2012 in the Mountain Echo newspaper. A copy of the advertisement is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

3 SITE NOTICE BOARDS

One (1) site notice board was placed on-site and one (1) notice was placed at the Underberg Spar on 24 November 2012. The notices were in English and isiZulu.

The purpose of the notice boards was to inform neighbours, community members and passers-by of the proposed development. Copies of the notice boards and photographs thereof are included in Appendix 2 of this report.

4 WRITTEN NOTIFICATION TO AUTHORITIES AND NEIGHBOURS

4.1 Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs)

A register of Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) was compiled as per Section 55 of the EIA Regulations, 2010. This included all relevant authorities, Government Departments, the Local Municipality, the District Municipality, relevant conservation bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGO's), as well as neighbouring landowners and the local Farmers' Association. This register was regularly updated to include those IAPs responding to the newspaper advertisements, site notice boards and Background Information Document (BID). A copy of the IAP Register is included as Appendix 3 of this report.

4.2 Background Information Document (BID)

A BID was compiled and circulated to all IAPs by email and post on 26 November 2012. The purpose of the BID was to provide preliminary information regarding the project and its location, as well as to explain the BA Process. Furthermore, the BID invited preliminary comments from IAPs. A copy of the BID is included as Appendix 4 of this report.

Comments received from IAPs following circulation of the BID are included Appendix 5 and are summarized and responded to in Table 1.

5 Public Meeting

A public meeting was not held due to limited interest in the activity.

TABLE 1: COMMENTS AND RESPONSES RECEIVED IN TERMS OF THE BID, SITE NOTICES AND NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

DATE RECEIVED	IAP	COMMENT	RESPONSE
05/12/2012 received via fax	R. James – Underberg Farmers Association	We have no objections.	Noted.
07/12/2012 received via fax	K.P. Methula – Department of Water Affairs	<p>The Water Quality Management Component of this Department would like the following matters to be addressed in the BAR:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Management of solid and hazardous waste generated on site. 2) Identification of any environmentally sensitive areas and water resources such as wetlands, streams, rivers, etc. as well as possible pollution impacts and proposed mitigation measures to protect such water resources. 3) Stormwater treatment and disposal i.e. wastewater management. 4) Information regarding the 1:50 and 1:100 year floodlines. This must be clearly demarcated on a map. 5) Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment. 	<p>As the activity is the cultivation of virgin land, no waste will be generated on site.</p> <p>The Wetland Specialist noted that no wetland habitat was identified within the boundaries of the proposed site. The site does, however, form the catchment for two wetland systems. As such, it is the recommendation of the Wetland Specialist (Appendix D of the BAR), to institute a 50 metre buffer to prevent any disturbance to this sensitive area.</p> <p>Noted. Wastewater management is not applicable to this Application.</p> <p>As noted, the Wetland Specialist has instituted a 50 metre buffer, due to the steep footslope evident on site (Appendix D of the BAR). In addition, the Biodiversity Specialist (Appendix D of the BAR) has recommended that an 80 metre buffer be implemented to protect corridors for the movement of fauna and flora. The wetland buffer will be incorporated into the Biodiversity buffer and as such this should negate the need for a 1:50 and 1:100 year floodline. The buffer from the farm dam will therefore be 80 metres. The Applicant will not be permitted to utilise this buffer area for cultivation.</p> <p>Noted. Please refer to Appendix D of the BAR. The Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment noted that no wetlands exist within the boundaries of the site. However, it was identified that the catchment for two wetland systems does exist on site. In this regard, the Specialist has recommended that a 50 metre buffer be delineated and that no cultivation occurs within this buffer.</p>

DATE RECEIVED	IAP	COMMENT	RESPONSE
		<p>6) Environmental Management Programme.</p> <p>In addition the following points need to be taken into consideration:</p> <p>(a) There must be a buffer of 500 meters from the edge of the temporary wet zone of the wetland to the edge of any structural development.</p> <p>(b) Any development (structures, roads and other infrastructure) within a 500m radius of a wetland requires an authorisation in terms of Section 21 of National Water Act. Please contact this Office on (031) 336 2700 for further requirements.</p> <p>(c) The applicant may require an authorisation (e.g. licence, general authorisation, etc.) from Mr. Ward for any activity within the riparian habitat of 1: 100 floodline, whichever is the greatest distance from the watercourse. Development occurring within these areas is defined as a Section 21(c) [impeding or diverting the flow of a water course] and (i) [altering the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse] water use in terms of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998). Please refer to the definition of a watercourse provided below:</p> <p><i>A "watercourse" in terms of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998) is defined as:</i></p> <p><i>(a) A river or spring;</i></p> <p><i>(b) A natural channel in which water flows regularly or intermittently;</i></p> <p><i>(c) A wetland, lake or dam into which, or from which water flows; and</i></p> <p><i>(d) Any collection of water which the Minister may, by notice, declare to be a watercourse, and a reference to a watercourse includes, where relevant, its beds and banks.</i></p> <p>This Department awaits a copy of the Basic Assessment Report in order to provide more detailed comments.</p>	<p>Noted. Please find attached as Appendix F to the BAR.</p> <p>Noted. The application is for the cultivation of virgin grassland, thus no structural development will occur.</p> <p>Noted. No structural development is proposed to be developed on the site. The Application is for the cultivation of 33ha of virgin land, not infrastructure development.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. A hardcopy of the Draft Basic Assessment Report will be couriered to the Department of Water Affairs for comment. As per the EIA Regulations, the Stake Holder (i.e. DWA) has a period of 40 days on which to comment on the report.</p>

DATE RECEIVED	IAP	COMMENT	RESPONSE
11/12/2012 received via email	C. Schwegman - WESSA	<p>Thank you for the information and please register WESSA KZN as an IAP, in addition to WESSA Sani Branch should they have responded to the invitation to comment.</p> <p>The loss of indigenous grassland and impacts on the associated fauna is a concern and WESSA will be guided by the requirements of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) in this regard. This loss will need to be looked at in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provincial conservation targets; - Compensation for the loss. <p>We look forward to receiving more detail on the vegetation which will be affected by the proposed cultivation.</p>	<p>Noted. WESSA KZN has been registered as an IAP, as has WESSA Sani Branch.</p> <p>Noted. At this stage however, EKZNW has not yet commented on the initial documentation circulated (i.e. BID) for this application. However, as per the Biodiversity Assessment (see Appendix D of the BAR), the vegetation type has been identified and is classified as Drakensberg Foothill Moist Grassland.</p> <p>Furthermore, according to EKZNW's Targets, statistics and conservation status of vegetation types (Oct 2011), Drakensberg Foothill Moist Grassland, has a conservation target of 88 400ha, of which 25 500 falls within protected areas. The conservation target of this vegetation type is listed as 'Least Threatened'.</p>
12/12/2012 received via email	R. Baca – Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF)	<p>With reference to the above-mentioned application, this office would like the final EIA/EMP document to address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current land use of surrounding properties; - The impact that the proposed activity will have on the surrounding properties and the relevant mitigation measures; - Confirm the presence or absence of any forms of wetlands or streams on site, or those that can be affected nearby, and relevant mitigation measures; - Information on access road if it will be constructed; - Soil Survey Report on dominant soil forms, soil types, soil depth, colour, clay percentage and slope for the proposed site; and 	<p>Surrounding properties are comprised of cultivated lands and indigenous grasslands, predominantly used for the grazing of cattle.</p> <p>Please refer to the Construction and Operational Phases of the Basic Assessment Report and the EMP in Appendix F.</p> <p>As noted by the Wetland Specialist in his Report (Appendix D of the BAR), no wetlands were identified within the boundaries of the site – however the site does act as a catchment for two wetlands, thus placing importance on the site. As such a 50m buffer has been recommended to protect this identified feature.</p> <p>No access road is to be constructed. An existing farm track is to be utilised and all vehicle movement will be restricted to this track.</p> <p>Please refer to the Soil Survey Report as attached as Appendix D of the BAR.</p>

DATE RECEIVED	IAP	COMMENT	RESPONSE
		– Submission of a copy of the Final EIA/EMP document to this office will be highly appreciated.	Noted. A hard copy of the Draft Basic Assessment Report will be couriered to the DAFF for comment. Upon submission of the Final Basic Assessment Report to the DAEA, a digital copy of the report (by way of CD) can be posted to the DAFF for their records if requested.

6 CIRCULATION OF DRAFT BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR COMMENT

Copies of the Draft BA Report were circulated to the following I&APs for review and comment on 30 April 2013:

- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife: Mr. A. Blackmore;
- Amafa Heritage: Ms. W. Tshabalala
- Department of Water Affairs: Ms. R. Pillay;
- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: Mr. R. Baca;
- KwaSani Local Municipality: Mr. S. Mvelase;
- Sisonke District Municipality: Ms. B. Luthuli;
- Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA): Mrs. C. Schwegman;

All registered IAPs were notified of the availability of the Draft BA Report and their opportunity to comment before 11 June 2013.

7 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

The main issues raised to date, following notification of IAPs through advertisements, site notice boards, the circulation of the BID and the Public Meeting are as follows:

1. Grassland conservation;
2. Wetland disturbance;
3. Soil properties for agricultural use; and
4. Construction related impacts.

Appendix 1: Advertisement

Appendix 2: Site Notice Boards & Photographs

Appendix 3: IAP Register

Appendix 4: Background Information Document

Appendix 5: Comments received from IAPs on the BID, Advertisement and Site Notices