



BACKGROUND INFORMATION
REGARDING CLEARING OF
VEGETATION ON PTN 18
(PTN OF PTN 15) OF FARM
UITDRAAI NO. 33, PRIESKA

UITDRAAI BOERDERY (PTY) LTD

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PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide all I&AP's with information about the intent of Uitdraai Boerdery (Pty) Ltd to clear about 111.22 Ha of vegetation to establish a vineyard on Portion 18 (Portion of Portion 15) of Farm Uitdraai no. 33, Prieska in the Northern Cape Province.

As an identified I&AP, you are invited to register and comment on any aspect related to the proposed development between the 7th of June 2021 and 8th of July 2021.

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The site is situated east from Prieska in the Northern Cape ($29^{\circ}41'11.33''S$; $22^{\circ}50'85''E$ - centre point of the development) on Portion 18 (Portion of Portion 15) of the Farm Uitdraai No. 33 & Erf 1, within the Siyathemba Local Municipal area. The farm can be reached by traveling along the R357 east from Prieska for about 10km until the farm road is reached.



Figure 1: Site location

The majority of the property involve, belongs to Uitdraai Boerdery (Pty) Ltd, the P.A. le Roux Trust and a small section is situated on commonage land of the Siyathemba Local Municipality and a lease is in process. In principle the municipality has agreed to the leasing of the property, but it will depend on the success of the environmental authorisation application and soil report findings.

Digital Soils Africa (Pty) LTD (DSA) was tasked by Uitdraai Boerdery (Pty) Ltd to conduct environmental investigations and complete the environmental application for the clearing of 163.82 Ha of natural veld used for grazing purposes, to establish a vineyard for the production of dried vine fruit, i.e. raisin production.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT (ACT NO. 107 OF 1998) AS AMENDED

Environmental Assessment

DSA was appointed by Uitdraai Boerdery (Pty) Ltd as the independent environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) to undertake the Environmental Application and apply for GNR 325 listed activities and the submission of a Scoping Report and Environmental Impact Assessment.

According to the latest Government Notice No. 324; 325 & 327, the following Listed Activities were triggered:

<i>GNR 325 (15) – Clearing of vegetation of 20 Ha or more of indigenous vegetation.</i>	<i>The site is 163.82 Ha in size and vegetation will be permanently cleared for the establishment of a vineyard. Therefore the transformation of grazing land to cropland will be applicable.</i>
<i>GNR 324 (12) g.ii. – Clearing of vegetation of 300m² or more of indigenous vegetation in the Northern Cape within a critical biodiversity area identified in bioregional plans.</i>	<i>Although the threshold for clearing of vegetation is covered in the GNR 325 (15) activity, the site does fall within a CBA 1 area.</i>

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The full impact on all environmental parameters will be concluded in the EIA and EMP phases. For background information, the most important potential environmental issues that will be addressed in the assessment include, but is not limited to:

Soil Suitability:

A soil survey was conducted on the farm to determine whether the land would be suitable for the cultivation of a vineyard. About 174 ha of land was investigated and soil forms included, Coega, Brandvlei, Glenrose, Olienhout and Prieska. Vineyards are best suitable for soil that has a pH between 5.5-6.5 and the required phosphorus should be between 40-50ppm.

The main risk for vineyard cultivation on the farm Uitdraai no. 33 study area is whether the underlying material being soft and hard carbonate will meet the depth requirements for vineyard cultivations and if not if those horizons could be ripped.

For Vineyards to be successful a topsoil depth of between 600-800mm is required. By breaking up the soil, deep ripping can free the way for roots to penetrate the soil and access water and nutrients, leading to yield increases.

The soil survey was carried out and it was found that about 145Ha of the 163.82Ha were suitable for the cultivation of vineyards according to the norms and standards provided by the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture. Drainage is of most importance and would require deep ripping of the soft and hard carbonate.

Loss of on-site fauna and flora:

A vegetation survey was completed by Dr. van Aardt and according to the vegetation report, the study site is not regarded as a site of ecological importance when studying the vegetation nor does the site have any high conservation value. Five different vegetation units were identified by Dr. van Aardt and are indicated in the below figure. These were:

Vegetation unit 1: Karroid component (proposed pivot area);

Vegetation unit 2: Karroid with scattered grass component;

Vegetation unit 3: Karroid grassland;

Vegetation unit 4: Karroid rocky component; and

Vegetation unit 5: Drainage line.

Several protected species were found, however, these species are also present and plentiful in the natural areas surrounding the site. It would however be recommended that some of the geophytes be transplanted in other natural areas. Several large trees of the protected *Boscia albitrunca* were found at the site. If development does take place, the botanist recommended that effort is made to protect as many as possible of these species. Permits need to be obtained before any of these species can be removed. No red data species were found to be present at the site.

All alien invasive species, especially the *Prosopis glandulosa* should be removed and eradicated from the site as a high priority.

The occurrence of faunal species within the proposed area is likely, however, it is farm properties and generally fenced-in camps, which will hinder the mobility of some of the larger wildlife that cannot jump a fence or the smaller wildlife that cannot borrow. Typically, many of the species encountered in the region are species such as the Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), Springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*), Steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*), Blesbok, (*Damaliscus pygargus phillipsi*), Smiths red rock rabbit (*Pronolagus rupestris*), Scrub Hare (*Lepus saxatilis*), Spring Hare (*Pedetes capensis*), Meerkat (*Suricata suricatta*), Ground Squirrel (*Xerus inauris*), Rock elephant shrew (*Elephantulus myurus*), Suricate or Stokstertmeerkat (*Suricata suricatta*), Rock dassie (*Procavia capensis*), Yellow Mongoose (*Cynictis penicillata*), and Aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*).

The clearing of vegetation would be restricted to limited areas and the slow clearance rate would provide adequate time for migration of any animals remaining on-site to be sustained in similar adjoining habitats. Also, noise generated by vehicles will cause most animals to vacate the site temporarily. If certain species were to be affected they would simply vacate the proposed cleared areas during the day and return during the night. Since the clearing of vegetation will not occur within the drainage channel, impact on amphibian species is not expected.

Sensitive Sites:

According to the Northern Cape Biodiversity Conservation Plan, the site falls within both a Terrestrial CBA 1 area.

According to the Spatial Development Framework environmental sensitivity of the municipal area has been mapped and the site falls within an environmental area that is rated between 1&2 and thus low sensitivity.

To assess the sensitivity of the environment the onsite verification is therefore essential. According to the vegetation survey report, the study site is not regarded as a site of ecological importance when studying the vegetation nor does the site have any high conservation value, thus the SDF rating is applicable and the CBA 1 status of the NCBCP could not be fully aligned with onsite conditions.

The clearing of vegetation will be restricted to approved areas and a 100m buffer area between the clearance and drainage lines will be maintained, a 500m buffer area will be maintained between the clearance and the Nama-Karoo Bushmanland Floodplain wetland. The site is also 360m south of the Orange River, thus no surface water systems will be impacted.

Structures of Archaeological and Cultural Interest:

These sites represent the heritage of communities and are therefore protected in terms of current legislation. In addition, all materials/buildings older than 60 years are protected. The Northern Cape is rich in fossils and archaeological heritage and therefore the area will be subject to a Phase 1 Archaeological and Paleontology Report will be completed by Dr. Lloyd Rossouw who has a BA Hons (SU), MSc (Wits), and Ph.D. (UFS). In summary, the report indicated that the site is capped by variable clasts of bedrock-derived gravels, surface limestones / reworked calcretes, and well-developed Quaternary sand. No fossils or potential fossil exposures were observed within superficial sediments or within rarely exposed and moderately significant Mbizane Formation deposits. There was no evidence of *in situ* Stone Age archaeological material, either as capped assemblages or distributed as surface scatters on the landscape within the boundaries of the proposed development footprint.

There are also no indications of rock art (engravings), stonewalled structures or historically significant buildings older than 60 years, or aboveground evidence of graves within the boundaries of the site. The proposed development will largely affect geologically recent and well-developed superficial overburden. These deposits are generally not expected to be fossiliferous in the absence of pans, springs or well-developed alluvial deposits. Although the farm is located within a region that has previously yielded ample archaeological evidence of prehistoric human occupation, visible evidence of Stone Age/Prehistoric occupation at the site is negligible.

The survey area is assigned an archaeological site rating of Generally Protected C (low significance) but it is noted that the potential occurrence of isolated and unmarked graves or intact subsurface archaeological finds not recorded during the survey can never be excluded.

Dr. Lloyd advised that the development can proceed, provided that the relevant heritage authority (SAHRA) and a qualified archaeologist be informed immediately in the event of potential archaeological exposure during the construction phase of the proposed vineyard development.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In terms of the NEMA, public participation forms an integral part of the environmental assessment process. The public participation process provides people who may be affected by the proposed development with an opportunity to provide comments and raise issues of

concern about the project or to make suggestions that may result in enhanced benefits for the project.

For this application, there will be two phases of public participation.

1. **Scoping Phase**
2. **EIA Phase.**

During the **Scoping Phase**, *potential* interested and affected parties (I&APs) are given notice via a notice board and local newspaper advertisement informing the public of the application. The *registered* I&APs are considered directly abutting neighbours and organs of state that have jurisdiction of the area, e.g. the Municipality, Ward counsilar, etc. and would be provided with a Background Information Document and given access to a digital copy of the Scoping Report on Digital Soils website for comment.

Comments and issues raised during the Scoping Phase of the public participation process will be captured, evaluated, and included in a Public Participation Report. These issues will be addressed and included in the final Scoping Report, which will be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development, and Land Reform.

During the **EIA Phase** of public participation, only those I&AP's that are registered would be given notice and access to a digital copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report on Digital Soils website for comment.

Comments and issues raised during the EIA Phase of the public participation process will be captured, evaluated, and included in a Public Participation Report. These issues will be addressed and included in the final EIA Report, which will be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development, and Land Reform.

To register and/or submit a comment as an Interested and Affected Party, please respond in writing to the following email: natalie@dsafrica.co.za on or before **8 July 2021**.

Alternatively, a copy of the Draft Scoping Report is also available on the DSA website at www.dsafrica.co.za. Please follow the link to Services, Environmental Services, Documents and choose the Uitdraai Boerdery link. To access the loaded documents use the password: U1tdra@i33.

If you have any other questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate the contact the office at 067 622 5687. If no comments are received from you, it will then be regarded that you do not have any comments.