

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Disco 2 Solar Photovoltaic Facility: Proposed Construction of a Solar Photovoltaic Facility and Associated Infrastructure, on a portion of Farm 713, Hopefield, Sundays River Valley Municipality.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT, April 2022

INTRODUCTION

The project proponent, The Venter Wildlife Trust, proposes the construction and operation of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Facility, including associated infrastructure, capable of producing 3.4MW of AC electricity, on a portion of Farm 713, known as Hopefield, in the Sundays River Valley Municipality. The farm measures approximately ~554ha in extent and is currently zoned Agriculture 1. Farm 713 is a working farm and is currently used for commercial production of citrus and a Poultry Broiler Facility.

The proposed PV facility will consist of a solar panel array, measuring approximately 3.5ha in extent, as well as associated infrastructure (battery container facility and powerlines), totalling a combined development footprint of ~3.57ha. The PV facility will be grid tied meaning electricity produced at the facility will be fed back into the Eskom grid as part of a Wheeling Agreement with the electricity utility. It is proposed that the solar panel array (PV component) will be constructed adjacent to the existing Poultry Broiler Facility, adjacent to the northern boundary of the farm and within an already transformed area. Therefore, it is not anticipated that any indigenous vegetation will be removed for the proposed development.

In addition to the solar PV area, electrical cables must be installed from the PV panels and the battery container facility to the existing Eskom transformers on site, as well as to an MV (Medium Voltage) point. The exact footprint size and location of the various components of the PV facility will be confirmed through this assessment process.

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), published in GN R326, 327, 325 and 324, promulgated under Chapter Five of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMAA), and published in Government Gazette 40772 on the 7 April 2017, the project requires a Basic Assessment Report (BAR). The proponent has appointed Public Process Consultants as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake this BAR assessment, including public participation for this project.

PROJECT LOCALITY

Farm 713 is located ~ 7km north of Sunland and approximately 8.5km north-west of Addo, in the Sundays River Valley Municipality. The farm can be accessed via the DR02006 gravel road (Enon Road), at its intersection with the Slagboom road (MN50605). The nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park is approximately ~5.4km from the boundary of the farm and ~7.6km from the proposed development footprint. The attached locality map provides an overview of the location of the proposed development (see attached locality map).

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN THIS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

In terms of regulation 42(b) of Government Notice R326, Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) are to request in writing, that their names be placed on the register of I&APs. To register on the database, complete the comment and registration form included with this correspondence or submit your contact details (via email), stating your full name, address and contact numbers, to the consultant indicated in this documentation. In terms of regulation 43(1), a registered I&AP is entitled to comment in writing on all reports and plans submitted as part of the Public Participation Process and raise any issues which may be of significance to the consideration of the application. Additionally, I&APs are required to disclose any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which they may have in the approval or refusal of the application. By registering on the project database, you will be notified as and when information on the project is available for I&AP review and comment.

Compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013

The Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA) was enacted to give effect to the constitutional right to privacy by safeguarding personal information processed by a responsible party. You have been identified as a potential Interested and Affected Party (I&AP) for this assessment process. As required by Regulation 42 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), your name and interest in this assessment process, as well as your contact information (e.g., telephone number, email address and postal address) will be placed on a register of I&APs for the duration of the assessment process, which must be submitted to the competent authority, DEDEAT (Sarah Baartman Region). The I&AP register will not be included in the reports which will be released for public review, nor will it be provided to any other third parties without your explicit consent. However, please be aware that, in terms of Regulation 4 (1) of the National Appeal Regulations, 2014, the I&AP register must be supplied to any individual who lodges an appeal against an Environmental Authorisation. Therefore, if an individual appeals the Environmental Authorisation, should one be granted, Public Process Consultants will be legally required, to supply the appellant with the I&AP register, including your contact information, as outlined above. Should you not want your name to be included in the I&AP register, please specifically request to be de-registered. In which case you will no longer receive correspondence regarding this assessment process. In compliance with Regulation 44 of the EIA Regulations, any information contained in comments made during the assessment process must be included in the reports that are made available for public review. However, this will not include your personal contact information. Therefore, please note that should you wish to remain on the register and/or make comments during the assessment process it will be accepted that you have given consent for your name and interest in the assessment to be included in reports and for your contact information to be provided to DEDEAT as well as an appellant, should an appeal be lodged.

WHAT DOES THIS DOCUMENT TELL YOU?

This document provides you, as an I&AP, with background information on the proposed Solar Photovoltaic Facility development, as well as the Basic Assessment and Public Participation Process. It indicates how you can become involved in the assessment process, receive information and raise issues that may interest and/ or concern you. The sharing of information forms an important component of the Public Participation Process and provides you with the opportunity to become actively involved in the EIA Process from the outset. The input received from I&APs together with scientific and technical investigations assists the competent authority, in this instance the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), Sarah Baartman Region, with their decision-making.

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT ENTAIL?

It is the intention of the proponent to construct and operate a 3.4MW solar Photovoltaic (PV) facility, including associated infrastructure, on a portion on Farm 713. The PV facility will consist of a solar panel array, with an anticipated footprint of ~3.5ha and associated infrastructure (i.e., battery container facility and power cables), totalling a combined development footprint of ~3.57ha. In addition to the solar PV area, electrical cables must be installed from the PV panels and the battery container facility to the existing Eskom transformers on site, as well as to an MV (Medium Voltage) point.

Associated with the proposed PV Facility are the following project activities:

- Preparation of the site, levelling, runoff control measures, and stormwater management
- Installation of the solar Photovoltaic array (panels) (~3.5ha)
- Establishment of battery container facility, and possible installation of inverter in container (~300m²)
- Installation of underground cables connecting the PV facility with existing transformers on the farm
- Establishment of 22kV overhead private powerline (~2.2km) connecting the PV facility with an existing MV point
- Establishment/ expansion of internal access roads
- Securing the facility including erection of a fence

The location and size of the preferred development footprints will be determined through specialist and technical input, authority consultation, as well as consultation with I&APs. However, it is proposed that the facility and associated components will be constructed within a portion of the farm that has already been transformed and therefore it is anticipated that no additional indigenous vegetation will be cleared in order to accommodate the various components described above.

ALTERNATIVES AND SITE SELECTION

A key component of the EIA Process is the identification and assessment of reasonable and feasible alternatives. The following alternatives have been identified and will be considered in the assessment process:

- No-go alternative
- Layout/ footprint alternatives
- Alternatives as identified by I&APs

Reasonable and feasible alternatives as raised by I&APs, specialists and the technical team will be considered in the assessment process.

OVERVIEW OF THE SCOPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended), published in GN R326, 327, 325 and 324, promulgated under Chapter Five of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMAA), and published in Government Gazette 40772 on the 7 April 2017, the project requires a Basic Assessment, and Environmental Authorisation is required prior to the commencement of any activities on site. The table below lists potential listed activities in GN R327, 325 and 324, which trigger the need for a Basic Assessment. A cautious approach has been adopted towards the identification of listed activities. Where there is currently uncertainty with regards to the applicability of a listed activity, it has been included in the table below.

EIA Regulations (2014), as amended	Project Component
GN R327 (Listing Notice 1)	
<p><i>"1. The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where—</i></p> <p><i>(ii) the output is 10 megawatts or less but the total extent of the facility covers an area in excess of 1 hectare;</i></p>	<p>It is proposed that the solar photovoltaic facility will be constructed with a capacity to produce ~3.4MW of AC electricity. It is proposed that the footprint of the PV array area will be ~3.55ha in extent and, including associated infrastructure, will total a combined development footprint of ~3.57ha.</p> <p>This listed activity will require Environmental Authorisation</p>
<p><i>"24. The development of a road—</i></p> <p><i>(ii) with a reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 metres;</i></p> <p><i>but excluding a road—</i></p> <p><i>(c) which is 1 kilometre or shorter."</i></p>	<p>It is anticipated that the PV facility will require the construction of internal roads in order to gain access to the project components and solar panels for maintenance and cleaning purposes.</p> <p>The internal access roads are anticipated to range between 4 and 8 meters in width, and the combined length of the roads could exceed 1 kilometre in length. The exact dimensions of internal roads will be confirmed through the assessment process.</p>

	This listed activity may require Environmental Authorisation.
<p>“27. The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation, except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for— “</p>	<p>The total development footprint for the PV Facility, including associated infrastructure, is estimated to be ~3.57ha. The PV facility is proposed to be constructed on a portion of Farm 713, adjacent to the northern boundary within existing cleared areas, and therefore, it is not anticipated that additional indigenous vegetation will be required to be cleared for the development, however, this will be confirmed by the terrestrial biodiversity specialist.</p> <p>The applicability of this listed activity will be determined through this assessment process</p>
<p>“28. Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture, game farming, equestrian purposes or afforestation on or after 01 April 1998 and where such development:</p> <p>(ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare;”</p>	<p>The PV facility will be grid-tied as part of a wheeling agreement with Eskom and will provide electricity security for existing operations on the farm. The farm is currently utilized for agriculture (citrus, and a Poultry Broiler Facility) and the solar PV facility might be considered to be an “industrial” development. The farm falls outside of an urban area. The combined development footprint is proposed to be bigger than 1 hectare (~3.57ha).</p> <p>This listed activity may require Environmental Authorisation.</p>
<p>“56. The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre—</p> <p>(ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres;”</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the PV facility will require internal roads in order to gain access to the project components and solar panels for maintenance and cleaning purposes. These may tie in with existing internal access roads provided for the Poultry Broiler facility. Therefore, existing internal access roads for the Broiler facility may be expanded to connect to the PV facility, and the combined length may exceed 1 kilometer in length.</p> <p>The exact dimensions of internal roads for the PV facility will be confirmed through the assessment process.</p> <p>The applicability of this listed activity will be determined through the assessment process.</p>
GN R324 (Listing Notice 3)	
<p>“4. The development of a road wider than 4 metres with a reserve less than 13,5 metres.</p> <p>a. Eastern Cape</p> <p>i. Outside urban areas:</p> <p>(gg) Areas within 10 kilometres from national parks or world heritage sites or 5 kilometres from any other protected area identified in terms of NEMPAA or from the core areas of a biosphere reserve, excluding disturbed areas;</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the PV facility will require internal roads in order to gain access to the project components and solar panels for maintenance and cleaning purposes. It is expected that the internal roads will range between 4 and 8 meters in width.</p> <p>The area proposed for development is in the Eastern Cape, falls outside of an urban area and within 7.6 kilometers of the nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park.</p> <p>The applicability of this listed activity will be determined through the assessment process.</p>
<p>“18. The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre.</p> <p>a. Eastern Cape</p> <p>i. Outside urban areas:</p> <p>(gg) Areas within 10 kilometres from national parks or world heritage sites or 5 kilometres from any other protected area identified in terms of NEMPAA or from the core area of a biosphere reserve;</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the PV facility will require internal roads in order to gain access to the project components and solar panels for maintenance and cleaning purposes. These may tie in with existing internal access roads provided for the Poultry Broiler facility. Therefore, existing internal access roads for the Broiler facility may be expanded to connect to the PV facility, and the combined length may exceed 1 kilometer in length.</p> <p>The area proposed for development is in the Eastern Cape, falls outside of an urban area and within 7.6 kilometers of the nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park.</p> <p>The exact dimensions of internal roads for the PV facility will be confirmed through the assessment process.</p> <p>The applicability of this listed activity will be determined through the assessment process.</p>

The applicability of all the listed activities indicated above will be determined through the assessment process. The listed activities require Environmental Authorisation from the DEDEAT, prior to the commencement of any activities on the site.

The Basic Assessment Process (BA) needs to show the competent authority, DEDEAT, and the project proponent, what the consequences of their choices will be in biophysical, social and economic terms. Public involvement forms an important component of this process, by assisting in the identification of issues and alternatives to be evaluated. The Basic Assessment Process being implemented can be divided into the following phases, namely:

- **Pre-Application Phase**
 - Notification To DEDEAT
 - Project Announcement and Registration of I&APs (30 days) (**We Are Here**)
 - Preliminary Specialist input
- **Application and Basic Assessment Phase**
 - Submission of Application Form for Environmental Authorisation to the DEDEAT
 - Consultation Basic Assessment Report Review (30 days)
 - Submission of Final Basic Assessment Report to the DEDEAT
- **Decision Making and Appeal Period**
 - Notice to I&APs of decision and appeal period

To meet the timeframes as prescribed in the EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended), specialist studies to be included as part of this assessment process will commence in parallel to the application phase. The following specialist studies are proposed to be undertaken for this assessment:

- Terrestrial Biodiversity Compliance Statement
- Aquatic Biodiversity Compliance Statement
- Desktop Visual Impact Assessment

PHASE 1: PRE-APPLICATION PHASE (CURRENT STAGE)

- **Project Announcement and Registration of I&APs**

The first stage in the process entails notification to the DEDEAT, as well as interested and affected parties (I&APs) of the intention to proceed with the Basic Assessment Process. Identified I&APs are provided with a Background Information Document (BID) on the project, a locality map and a comment form. An advertisement will be placed in a local newspaper and a site notice board will be erected at the site. I&APs are required to register their interest in the project to receive further project information. I&APs will be provided with a **30-day** period in which to register their interest on the project database and raise any issues for inclusion in the Consultation Basic Assessment Report (CBAR).

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), the objective of the Basic Assessment Report is to amongst others, through a conservative process.

- Determine policies and legislation relevant to the activity
- Identify alternatives considered
- Describe the needs and desirability of the proposed alternatives
- Undertake an impact and risk assessment process focussing on the Geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage, and cultural sensitivity of the site
- Based on the impact assessment determine the prefer alternative, identify, suitable mitigatory measures and any residual risks that need to be managed or monitored

PHASE 2: APPLICATION AND BASIC ASSESSMENT PHASE

- **Application form and Consultation Basic Assessment Report**

In parallel with the compilation of and submission of the Application Form, the CBAR will be compiled, which will include a Comments and Responses Trail – Indicating the issues and concerns raised by I&APs during the 30-day project announcement period (PHASE 1: Pre-Application Phase).

Subsequent to the submission of the Application Form to the competent authority, the CBAR will be released for a minimum, legislated 30-day comment period. All registered I&APs will be notified in writing of the opportunity to comment. In order to assist I&APs with their understanding of the project and to facilitate the identification of issues for inclusion in the Final Basic Assessment Report (FBAR), I&APs will be provided with an executive summary of the CBAR, as well as a comment form. Copies of the report will also be made available on the project website www.publicprocess.co.za.

- **Final Basic Assessment Report submission**

The FBAR, including the Comments and Responses Trail and EMPr, will be compiled for submission to the competent authority (DEDEAT: Sarah Baartman District) for their consideration. Where a BA is applied to an application, *the applicant must within 90 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, submit to the competent authority a BA Report, inclusive of specialist studies, which have been subjected to a 30-day Public Participation Process*. This BA Report should include all comments received during the 30-day comment period. All I&APs on the project database will be notified in writing of the submission of the FBAR.

PHASE 3: DECISION MAKING AND APPEAL PERIOD

The competent authority must, within 107 days of receipt of the BA Report, grant of refuse Environmental Authorisation. The applicant must, within 14 days of the date of the decision, notify all registered I&APs of the decision and provide them access to the decision and reasons for the decision and reasons for the decision, as well as indicate the manner of appeal.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS AN I&AP?

1. I&APs are required to respond to the letters of notification and/ or newspaper advertisements and register their interest on the project database.
 - By emailing or mailing a comment form to the Environmental Impact Assessment Practitioner (EAP) indicated below.
 - By registering your interest in the project, you will be kept informed throughout the Scoping and EIA Process and will be notified of any opportunities to comment.
2. I&APs are required to state their area of interest and/ or concern in the matter.
 - By emailing or mailing a comment form to the EAP indicated below.
 - By telephonically contacting the EAP if you have a query, comment, or require further project information.
 - By reviewing the Draft Reports and submitting any comments/ issues within the specified comment periods.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT?

Sandy Wren,

Public Process Consultants

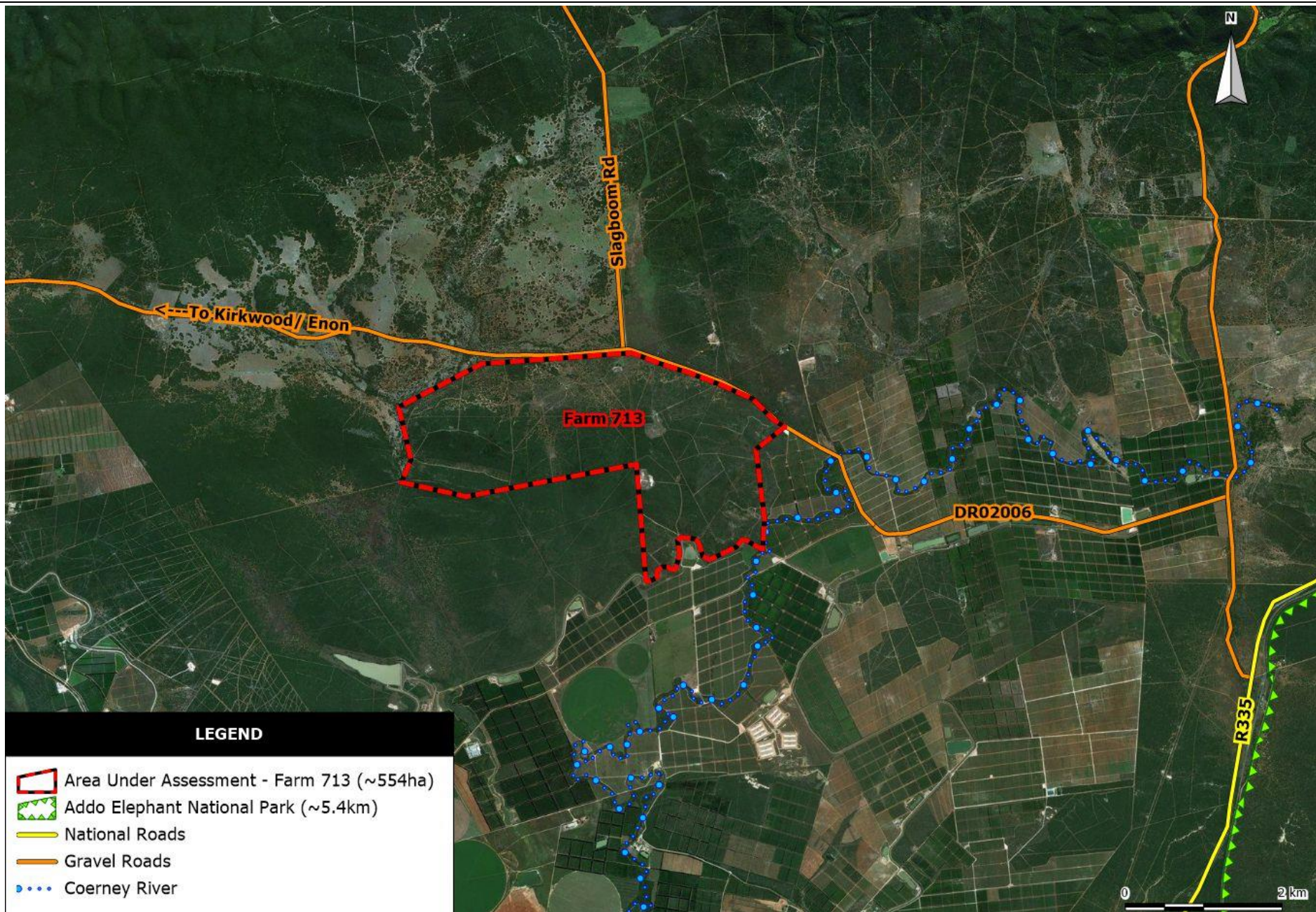
PO Box 27688,

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Information on the project can be downloaded from the following website: www.publicprocess.co.za



Locality of Farm 713, Hopefield, in relation to major roads, towns and the Addo Elephant National Park, in the Sundays River Valley Municipality.