

PART II

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Objective: To implement, monitor and maintain conservation measures in order to prevent natural and unnatural deterioration of the *SPITSKOP 1* rock art site at the Spitskop plantation, Sabie.

- **Current Status:**

SPITSKOP 1 is painted on loose standing sandstone rocks on a small rocky outcrop near the familiar *Spitskop* landmark close to Sabie. The site is situated in a section of grassland next to drainage lines which form the source of the *Spitskopspruit* stream. The outcrop is surrounded by Pine plantations on the north and west. The panels are small and close to ground / surface level, which is typical of most of the rock art sites on the escarpment. Both are extensively faded as a result of natural exposure.

The panels at *SPITSKOP 1* are monochrome paintings, done entirely in light red ochre.

The art is currently vulnerable and threatened by vegetation growing against the rock surface which will brush against the paintings if it is not monitored. Uncontrolled visits to these sites are obvious and the following actions are proof thereof. There is broken glass near the site and a GEOCACHE was found at the site. The GEOCACHE is named “Sabie Bushman Paintings” and people who participate in the GEOCACHE, visit the site without permission. At least no scratch or chip marks were observed on the paintings. No digging has taken place at the site as is the case at many of the rock art sites in Mpumalanga.

- **Current Management Actions:**

Brief management prescriptions are recorded in Komatiland Forests' *Areas of Special Interest* register, and Annual Plan of Operations (APO), for each financial year. The prescriptions state the following:

- *A buffer zone of 5 metres be maintained around the site;*
- *The area be kept free of weeds;*
- *The paintings should be checked by an expert;*
- *Protection from intense fires;*
- *Additional information to be captured.¹*

Please note that SAHRA's specifications require a 15m buffer zone.

The ASI state further that sites should be recorded on the harvesting and silvicultural plans and demarcated as “No-Go” zones.

¹C. Foster, e-mail correspondence 2008-10-25.

Future Priorities

The responsibility by Komatiland Forests' officials and the plantation manager of this specific section, is crucial to implementing the recommendations in the management guidelines. It is recommended that a yearly audit by a heritage specialist be done to prevent further deterioration of the site and to recommend immediate action and remedial measures, if necessary.

- **Inventory**

The frequent updating of the rock art inventory, their content and significance will contribute to the cultural heritage responsibility of all institutions (Komatiland Forests) as specified by the NHRA (section 5), and will also contribute to crucial research and general knowledge of the rock art in the area. This site will also be listed in the SAHRA database for Rock art sites.

- Hard copies of the information contained in the survey should be made available to each plantation manager for implementation.
- The rock art sites within its control should be recorded on 1:50 000 maps which are kept at each station.
- Each station is required to send details of all new sites discovered to a heritage specialist who will notify SAHRA for inclusion in the provincial and national databases.

- **Site Monitoring**

Sites within Komatiland Forests' jurisdiction should be monitored at least quarterly by the plantation manager and annually by a heritage specialist to determine whether impacts (if any) are having an unacceptable effect upon the rock art sites and to take appropriate action thereafter. These measures are crucial as uncontrolled visits to the sites already take place.

The plantation manager and a heritage specialist should have a set of the site record forms (see **Appendix 2**), and photographs pertaining to the known site under its administration as well as a map with the exact locations. It is recommended that the management status for monitoring *SPITSKOP 1*, be assessed by a heritage specialist before each winter season, in order to guide the fire management control.

- An annual plan should be developed to ensure the quarterly and annual visits as required. This should be tasked to the responsible official who will also arrange with a heritage specialist.
- Site monitors should be aware that they are not allowed to interfere with cultural resources in any way at the sites.
- Photographs of the sites should be taken during each visit.
- Photographs should indicate damage and seep lines and should be done by a specialist.
- An evaluation report should be sent to the responsible official in charge.
- A buffer zone of at least 15 meters (as specified in the NHRA, section 2) must be maintained around

the site.

- **Site Interventions**

Various forms of intervention are appropriate for rock art sites which include removal of bird and insect nests or vegetation to reduce risk of fire damage. The removal of graffiti should only be executed by a rock art specialist. All interventions should be done in consultation with a cultural heritage resources specialist.

- **Site Vegetation**

Vegetation surrounding sites should be retained unless it poses a direct threat to the rock art. Natural vegetation has value as a shield to reduce the impact of direct sunlight, for site microclimate control, to buffer daily extremes in temperature and humidity and for the consolidation of shelter deposits and soils for assistance in the suppression of airborne dusts.

In the case of *SPITSKOP 1*, grass and low bushes is threatening the rock with the floating figure (Fig. 1). This may cause damage in future by brushing on the paintings, or in case of a fire, the rock art will be damaged from direct and indirect heat and a carbon deposit over the paintings.

- The vegetation which is directly damaging the painted surfaces by rubbing contact, must be removed at the *SPITSKOP 1* site;
- All other natural vegetation should be retained to shield the paintings against extremes in temperature and humidity.
- The impact of vegetation should be monitored by a heritage specialist on an annual basis to prevent out of control growth of vegetation;
- The alien vegetation, wattle, black wood and black wattle must be removed in the direct area of the paintings.



Fig. 1: The rock on the left with the floating figure. Grass and low bushes should be cut away.

- **Fire Management**

Vegetation surrounding rock art sites should always be protected from both scheduled and unscheduled burns, to prevent fire damage to the sites.

- When doing a pre-burn assessment of the rock art sites, the responsible officer should take steps to eliminate fire damage by burning a firebreak around the site;
- Immediate steps should be taken by the responsible official to avoid potential damage by unscheduled burns;
- Vegetation (for example grass) should be cut with slashers to keep it short. No brushcutter equipment should be used, as stones may damage the painted surfaces and dust will be deposited on the art;
- Long term strategies for the protection of the rock art sites from fire damage should be developed due to the frequency of uncontrolled fires;
- Rock art sites must be placed on the list of vulnerable features for all management sections.
- The dead trees (and other dead branches) behind the rock art site must be selectively removed. Two of the trees have fallen in between the two rocks and would have damaged the paintings in case of a fire. During the site visit the KLF officials removed the trees.



Fig. 2: This photo was taken in 2012 just after winter and after the veld has burnt. The small tree in the front should be monitored and trimmed if necessary, as it has already burnt close to the paintings.



Fig. 3: Currently the veld is dry and vegetation is in between the painted rocks. In case of a fire the rock art will be damaged.

- **Animals in shelters**

Rock art sites, paintings and archaeological deposits are easily damaged by animals rubbing against the rock and trampling shelter floors. This is especially problematic where domestic animals graze close to the sites, or where the site provides an overhang which may be used for protection against the elements. As far as could be established, *SPITSKOP 1* is not currently affected by such actions.

There are observations of bird droppings and lizard faeces on or close to the rock art, as Fig. 4 & 5 show. This should currently NOT be removed as the process of removal may damage the art. It will however have to be monitored and specialist intervention should take place if it affects the art more.

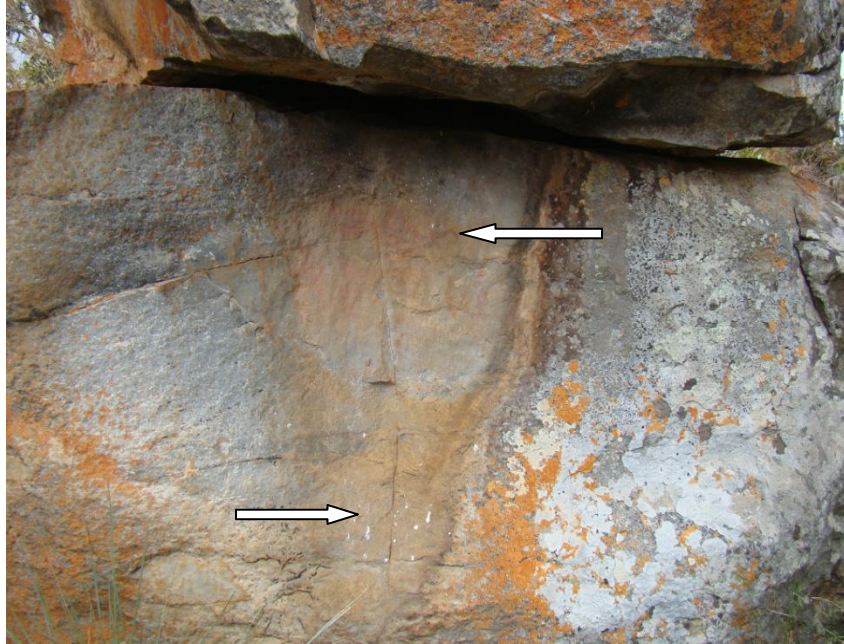


Fig. 4: Small specks of white lizard faeces were observed on the horizontal figure.

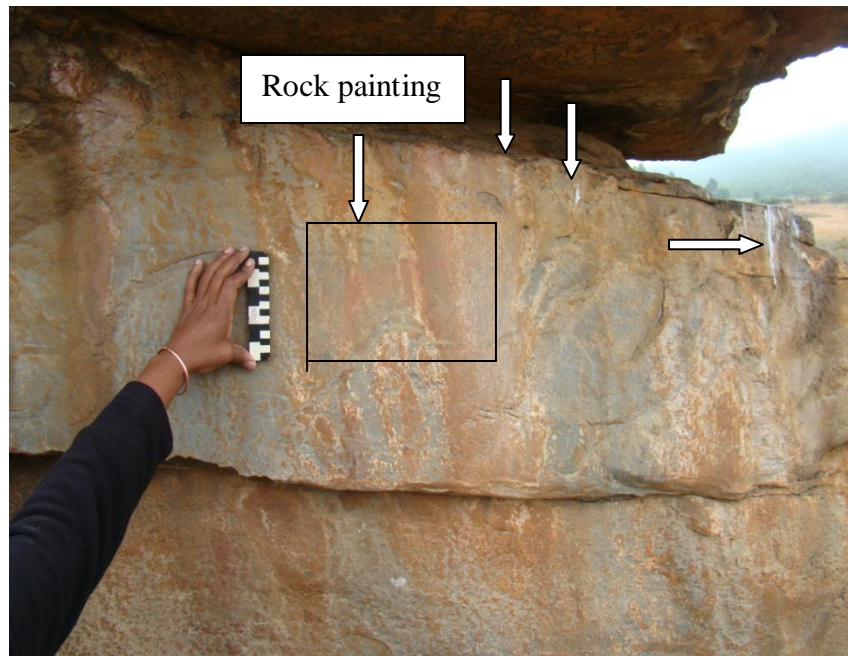


Fig. 5: The gap in the rock provides shelter for birds. Bird droppings were observed but none is currently on the rock art.



Fig. 6: A swallows' nest was observed close to the markings underneath the big boulder. It is however not threatening the art but should be removed by a specialist in order to discourage the birds to breed in the same place.

- **General Visitor Management**

Uncontrolled use of rock art sites is undesirable as it may result in unnecessary and often irreversible deterioration of such sites.

- Visitors to the sites should be managed, monitored and regulated;
- The GEOCACHE visitors should be made aware that they need a permit to visit this site.
- Visible paths to the sites should be allowed to overgrow and be closed;
- Directions to the sites should not be made public;
- Site information is kept confidential and is not made available to the public.

- **Staff Education & Site Visits**

Public visitation should not be allowed at the rock art sites without the company of the responsible official for the plantation / environmental officer. Field staff should not be allowed to direct people to the sites. *SPITSKOP 1* is situated on KLF property and this in itself is to the benefit of the rock art site as it is not well known or visited, in general.

- Staff working in the area should be made aware of the sensitivity of rock art sites;
- Staff should be made aware of the SAHRA's principles of what is, and is not allowed at rock art sites (see Appendix 6: SAHRA's principles for rock art conservation);
- A copy of SAHRA's principles should be visible at each office;
- Site visits should take place by prior arrangement;
- Field staff should not supply directions to specific sites;

- Visitors should be accompanied by a responsible official of Komatiland Forests;
- Researchers should provide details of their institutional affiliation and a motivation for the visit;
- Researchers may be allowed to visit a site unaccompanied.
- **SAHRA's principles for rock art conservation includes:**
 - The National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999 protects all rock art sites. Anyone found guilty of removing or damaging rock paintings can be fined or imprisoned or both;
 - Water and any other substance will destroy the paintings. Salts are drawn to the rock surface by water. The salts then expand and weathering is accelerated;
 - Touching the painted surfaces, rubbing or chipping at paintings will destroy them;
 - Do not put your name or any other writing on or near the rock art;
 - Rock art must not be removed from its original setting as this destroys its meaning;
 - Dust and soot from fires obscure rock paintings, so avoid using rock art sites as camping places;
 - Rock shelters with paintings should not be used as kraals since animals rub against the painted surfaces.²

These management guidelines were compiled with the assistance of the *Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Natal Drakensberg Park*,³ although most of it is specific to the rock art site at Spitskop plantation.

²SAHRA, Rock Art, <http://www.sahra.org.za/rockart.htm> Access: 2008-10-16.

³E.J. Wahl, A.D. Mazel & S.E. Roberts, *Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Natal Drakensberg Park*, pp. 6-23.