

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED PHOTOVOLTAIC ENERGY PLANT ON FARM KLIPGATS PAN NEAR COPPERTON, NORTHERN CAPE



NOVEMBER 2011  
DEA REF. NO. 12/12/20/2501  
NEAS REF. NO. DEAT/EIA/0000611/2011



## SUMMARY DOCUMENT: DRAFT SCOPING REPORT

### Background

Mulilo Renewable Energy (Pty) Ltd (Mulilo) proposes to construct a photovoltaic (PV) solar energy plant on a farm, near Copperton in the Northern Cape. Aurecon South Africa (Pty) Ltd (Aurecon) has been appointed to undertake the requisite environmental process as required in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), as amended, on behalf of Mulilo.

The proposed project would take place on the farm Klipgats Pan (Portion 4 of Farm No. 117) near Copperton in the Northern Cape (see **Figure 1**). The site lies approximately 9 km to the south of Copperton and borders to the Kronos substation.

### Proposed project

Mulilo proposes to construct a photovoltaic (PV) solar energy plant to generate approximately 100 MW on the farm Klipgats Pan (Farm 117/4) near Copperton in the Northern Cape. The proposed PV plant would cover an area of approximately 300 ha, which is currently used for grazing. An alternative site for a 100 MW PV plant with a 300 ha footprint is also being considered. This site is located south of the R357.

In terms of associated infrastructures, the following would be required:

- Upgrade of existing internal farm roads and construction of new roads to accommodate the construction vehicles and access the site.
- Construction of a 132 kV transmission line, approximately 0.71 km (preferred alternative) or 2.14 km (alternative) in length, to connect the proposed PV plant with Eskom's grid via the Cuprum substation.
- Electrical fence to prevent illegal trespassing, as well as keeping livestock from roaming between the solar arrays and causing accidental damage.
- Other infrastructure includes an office, connection centre and a guard cabin.

The proposed PV plant would convert shortwave radiation (sunlight) directly into electricity via cells through a process known as the Photovoltaic Effect. The PV cells are made of silicone which acts as a semi-conductor. The cells absorb light energy which energises the electrons to produce electricity. Individual

### Purpose of this document

This document provides a summary of the Draft Scoping Report (DSR) and Plan of Study for EIA for the proposed PV plant on Klipgats Pan near Copperton, Northern Cape. It provides a brief background and overview of the proposed project, the list of project alternatives and potential impacts (together with proposed specialist studies where applicable) that are proposed to be investigated further in the EIA phase.

You are invited to comment on the Draft Scoping Report (DSR) for the proposed development. The DSR has been lodged at the Prieska (Elizabeth Vermeulen) Public Library, Ietzniets Guest House in Copperton and on the Aurecon website ([www.aurecongroup.com](http://www.aurecongroup.com)) - indicate "Current Location" as "South Africa" and follow the Public Participation link).

Please review this Summary Document and, preferably, the full Scoping Report, and submit your comments on the proposed project by **Thursday, 5 January 2012**. To comment, write a letter, call or e-mail the Public Participation office.

**Aurecon**  
**Franci Gresse or Louise Corbett**  
P O Box 494, Cape Town, 8000  
Tel: (021) 526 9400  
Fax: (021) 526 9500  
Email: [franci.gresse@aurecongroup.com](mailto:franci.gresse@aurecongroup.com)

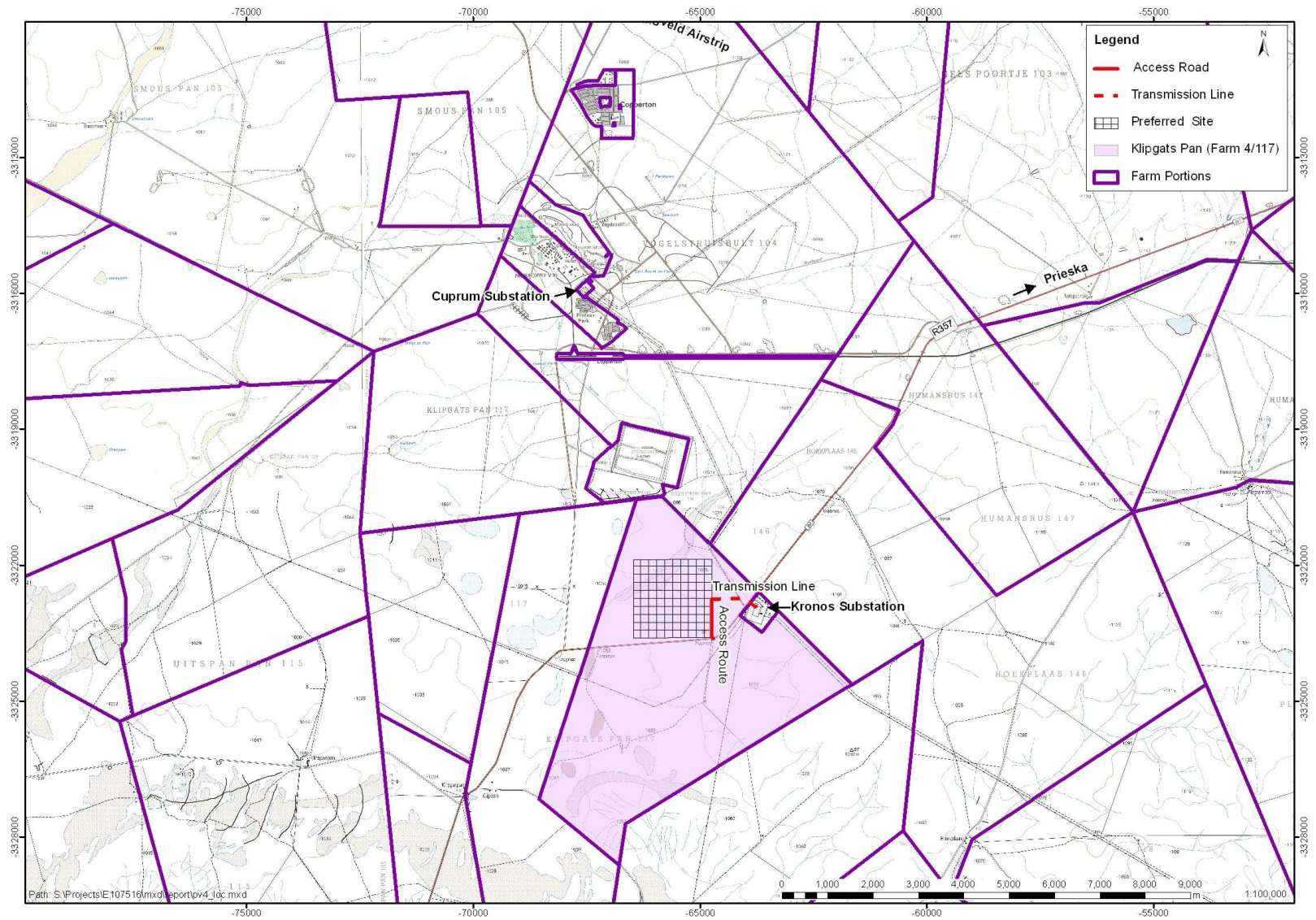
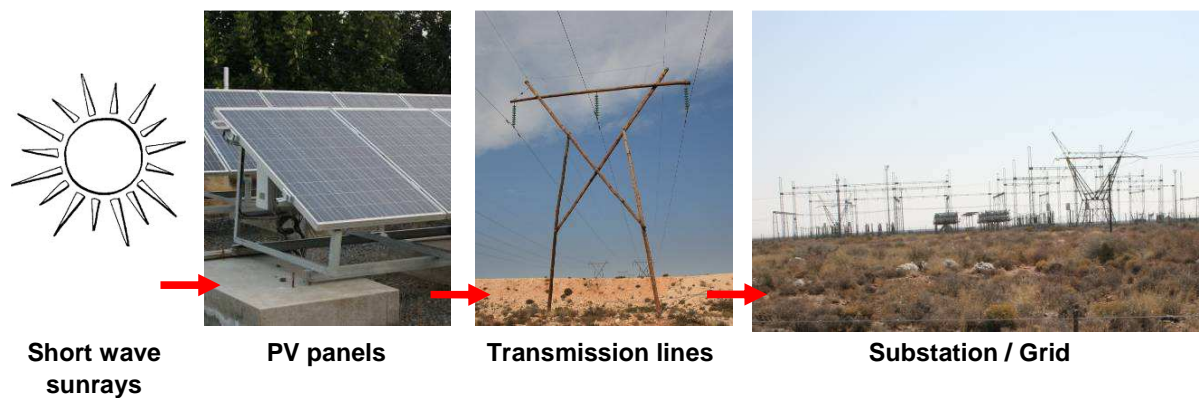


Figure 1 Location of the proposed PV plant on the farm Klipgats Pan near Copperton, Northern Cape (2922 CD)

solar cells can be connected and packed into standard modules behind a glass sheet to protect the cells from the environment while obtaining desired currents and voltages. These modules are grouped together to form a panel and can last up to 30 years due to the immobility of parts, as well as the sturdiness of the structure.

Grid-connected PV Power Systems (PVPS) are made up of a variety of components, which aside from the PV modules, include conductors, fuses, disconnect controls, trackers, and power conditioning units (i.e. inverters). The PVPS requires transmission infrastructure to feed electricity into the grid, unlike the Stand-alone PV Power System that requires batteries to store electricity for use later. The electricity is generated from solar energy which is transformed by the PV modules (arranged in arrays). The maximum power point tracker (MPPT) ensures that power coming from the PVs are maximised by determining the current that the inverter should draw from the PV panel. The inverter converts the direct current (DC) to an alternating current (AC) to allow the electricity to be fed into the grid. **Figure 2** below illustrates the components of the process of generating electricity from solar energy (sun) and fed into the grid.



**Figure 2 Basic PV system layout**

**Construction phase**

The proposed facility would be constructed over a period between 18 and 30 months. During the Construction Phase between 200 and 900 individuals would be employed depending on the procurement method used as well as the primary contractor. If non-locals are employed they would be housed in temporary dwellings on site or in accommodation within Copperton and Prieska.

**Operational phase**

The project is expected to last the full period of the Power Purchase Agreement which is approximately 20 years. Regular cleaning of the panels to remove dust, dirt, pollen, and bird excretions would be required to ensure that the maximum quantity of sunrays can be captured by the PV panels. The frequency of panel cleaning would depend on the site conditions. Panels would be washed with water and a mild, organic, and non-abrasive detergent.

**Decommissioning phase**

The PV site would be decommissioned at the end of the Power Purchase Agreement (20 years from the date of commissioning). The decommissioning is expected to take between 6 to 12 months. The module components would be removed and recycled as the silicon and aluminum can be re-used in the production of new modules.

**Site description**

The site consists of the farm Klipgats Pan (Farm 117/4). This portion is privately owned by Ms B.J. Josina, who has entered into a long term agreement with Mulilo for the proposed project.

Klippgats Pan lies approximately 9 km to the south of Copperton and borders to the Kronos substation. The farm is approximately 2 620 ha in size and split into two portions by the R357.

The surrounding land uses are mainly agricultural, consisting mostly of sheep grazing. At the abandoned Copperton mine a PV power generation facility is proposed by Mulilo and recently received an Environmental Authorisation (DEA Ref. No. 12/12/20/1722). Further west of the site is Alkantpan, a weapons testing range, used by many countries for weapons testing. Other proposed activities in the area include a wind energy facility to the east proposed by Plan 8 (Pty) Ltd (DEA Ref. No. 12/12/20/2099), two PV plants to the west and north of the site on farms Hoekplaas (DEA Ref. No. 12/12/20/2503) and Struisbult (DEA Ref. No.12/12/20/2502) and wind and solar energy facilities proposed by Mainstream Renewable Energy (Pty) Ltd (DEA Ref. No. 12/12/20/2320/1 and 12/12/20/2320/2) of which the one site (Farm 118/1) borders directly to Klippgats Pan and the remaining two sites are approximately 5 km (Farm 118/3) and 8 km (Farm 102/RE) to the south. Please refer to **Figure 3** for map showing the locations of the above mentioned renewable energy projects.

A 1.7 km airstrip (owned by the Alkantpan weapon testing facility), is also located to the north of the site and is used by a number of aeroclubs (e.g. Aeroclub SA). Copperton town, consisting of a few dwellings and a small shop is also located immediately west of the site. It is proposed to move this airstrip approximately 7 km east of its current location as part of the Plan 8 wind energy facility. The site itself is used for agriculture (grazing).

### Scoping Process in terms of EIA Regulations

EIA Regulations (Government Notice (GN) No. 544, 545 and 546) promulgated in terms of NEMA, identify certain activities, which “could have a substantial detrimental effect on the environment”. These listed activities require environmental authorisation from the competent environmental authority, i.e. the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in the case of energy applications, prior to commencing.

This proposed project triggers a number of listed activities (see **Table 1**) in terms of NEMA and accordingly requires environmental authorisation from DEA via the EIA process outlined in GN. No 543 of NEMA.

**Table 1: Listed activities in terms of NEMA GN No. 544, 545 and 546, 18 June 2010, to be authorised for the proposed wind energy facility**

LISTED ACTIVITY	
<b>GN No. R544, 18 June 2010</b>	
10	The construction of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 , but less than 275 kilovolts; or</li> <li>• inside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of 275 kilovolts or more.</li> </ul>
<b>GN No. R545, 18 June 2010</b>	
1	The construction of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more.
<b>GN No. R546, 18 June 2010</b>	
14	The clearance of an area of 5 hectares or more of vegetation where 75 % or more of the vegetation cover constitutes indigenous vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) in the Northern Cape               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) All areas outside urban areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Aurecon has been appointed to undertake the required environmental processes on Mulilo's behalf.

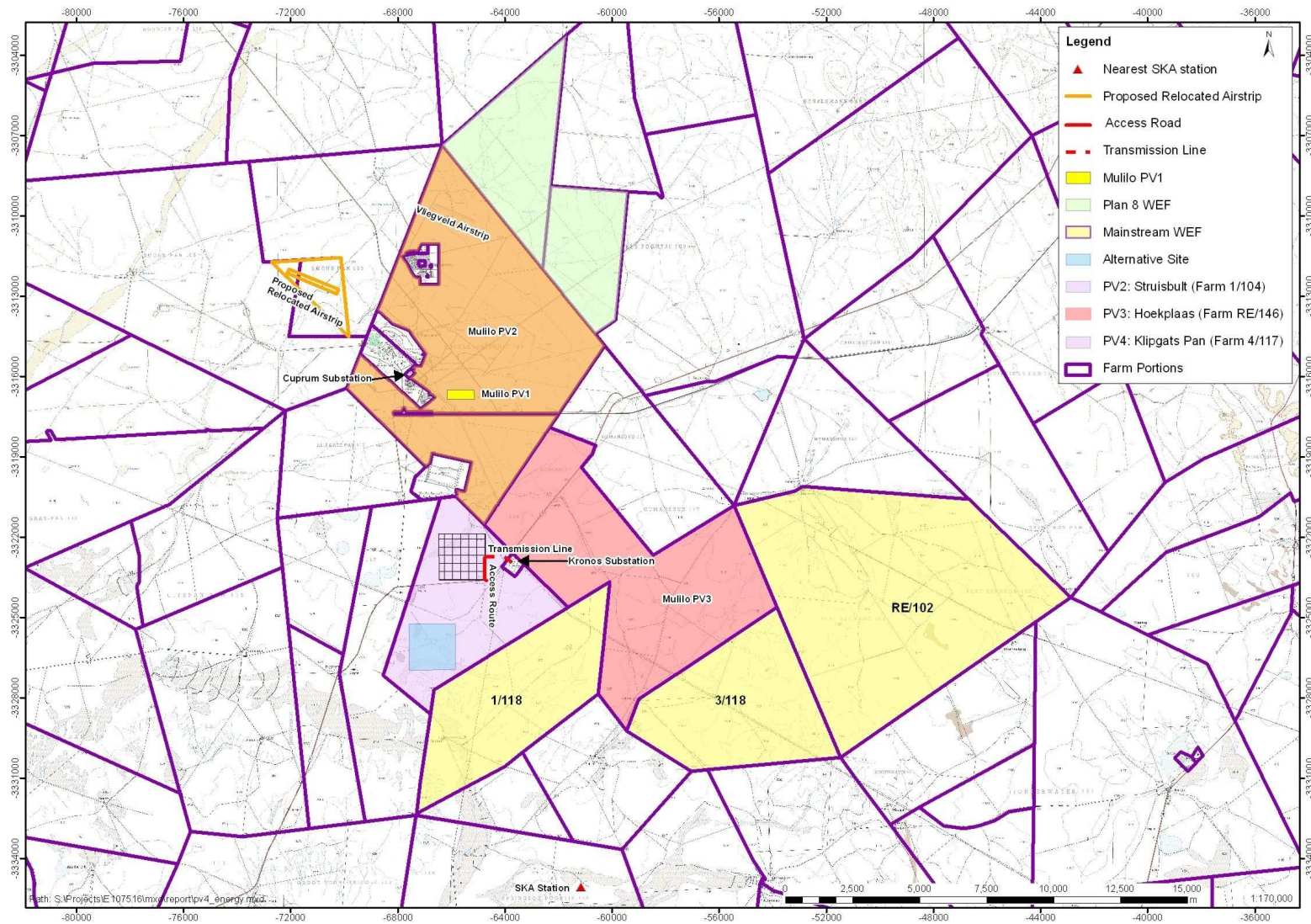


Figure 3 Other renewable energy projects (solar and wind) proposed for the Copperton area

## EIA Process

The EIA process consists of an Initial Application Phase, a Scoping Phase and an EIA Phase. The purpose of the Initial Application Phase is to commence the project *via* the submission of the relevant department's application forms. The purpose of the Scoping Phase is to identify and describe potential positive and negative environmental impacts, (both biophysical and socio-economic), associated with the proposed project and to screen feasible alternatives to consider in further detail.

The purpose of the EIA Phase is to comprehensively investigate and assess those alternatives and impacts identified in the Scoping Report and propose mitigation to minimise negative impacts.

The acceptance of the Scoping Report and the Plan of Study for EIA by DEA would allow the process to continue to the EIA Phase.

## Project alternatives

The following feasible alternatives have been identified for further consideration in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR):

- **Location alternatives:**
  - Two locations for the proposed Klipgats Pan PV plant; and
  - Electricity distribution via a 0.71 km or 2.14 km 132 kV connection to Kronos substation.
- **Activity alternatives:**
  - Solar energy generation via a PV plant; and
  - "No-go" alternative to solar energy production.
- **Site layout alternatives:**
  - One layout
- **Technology alternatives:**
  - One technology alternative in terms of the solar panel type (PV);
  - Single or Dual or Concentrated Dual axis tracking systems to mount the panels; and
  - Four foundation options.

## Identified impacts

The proposed PV plant could impact on a range of biophysical and socio-economic aspects of the environment. Impacts can result from the construction phase as well as the operational phase. While the construction phase impacts are usually short term, some may have longer lasting effects. A construction phase Environmental Management Programme (EMP) will be compiled to be implemented during the construction phase to manage these aspects.

The operational phase impacts are usually considered to be the long term impacts associated with the project and these will be considered by a suite of specialists during the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Phase. The specialists will also consider ways to manage these potential impacts and these mitigation measures will be included in an operational phase EMP.

Specifically the following potential environmental impacts have been identified for further consideration in the EIAR:

- Operational phase impacts on the biophysical environment:
  - Impact on flora;
  - Impact on fauna (including avifauna); and
  - Impact on freshwater resources.
- Operational phase impacts on the social environment:
  - Impact on heritage resources (including palaeontology);
  - Visual impacts;

- Impact on energy production;
- Impact on local economy (employment) and social conditions;
- Impact on agricultural land; and
- Impact on surrounding land uses.
- Construction phase impacts on the biophysical and socio-economic environments:
  - Disturbance of flora and fauna;
  - Sedimentation and erosion of water ways;
  - Impact on traffic;
  - Storage of hazardous substances on site;
  - Noise pollution; and
  - Dust impact.

The following specialist studies and specialists will be commissioned to provide more detailed information on those environmental impacts which have been identified as potentially being of most concern, and/or where insufficient information is available, namely:

Study	Consultant and Organisation
Botanical assessment	Dr Dave MacDonald, Bergwind Botanical Tours and Surveys
Agriculture potential assessment	Mr Kurt Barichiev of SiVEST
Aquatic assessment Hydrology	Mr James Mackenzie, Mackenzie Ecological & Development Services Mr Richard Hirst, SiVEST
Avifauna assessment	Dr Andrew Jenkins of Avisense Consulting
Heritage Impact Assessment Archaeology Cultural heritage Palaeontology	Mr Jayson Orton of ACO Associates  Dr John Almond of Natura Viva
Visual Impact Assessment	Mrs Karen Hansen

## Public Participation

Public participation is a key component of this EIA process and will take place at various stages throughout the project. The approach adopted for the current investigation was to identify as many I&APs as possible initially, through a suite of activities, as follows:

- Placing advertisements in local newspapers on 2 November 2011 (the Gemsbok);
- Placing a notice board at the site (8 November 2011);
- Providing written notice and an Executive Summary to potential I&APs, including surrounding landowners, organs of state, ward councillors and relevant authorities (8 November 2011);
- Informing I&APs registered for existing projects in the area on which Aurecon is involved with about the project and providing them with an opportunity to register for this project as well; and
- Requesting potential I&APs to recommend other potential I&APs to include on the database (chain referral process).

## Way forward

All registered I&APs were notified of the meetings by means of a letter sent by post, fax or e-mail on 4 November 2011. The notification letters also included a copy of the Executive Summary of the DSR in English and Afrikaans. Copies of this DSR have been lodged in Prieska (Elizabeth Vermeulen) Public Library, Ietznietz in Copperton and on the Aurecon website ([www.aurecongroup.com](http://www.aurecongroup.com) - indicate "Current Location" as "South Africa" and follow the Public Participation link).

I&APs have 40 days, **8 November 2011** until **5 January 2011**, to submit their written comments on the DSR. Cognisance will be taken of all comments in compiling the final report, and the comments, together

with the project team and proponent's responses thereto, will be included in the final report. Where appropriate, the report will be updated.

Once the Final Scoping Report has been completed and all I&AP comments have been incorporated into the report, and the client has approved the report, it will be submitted to DEA and the Northern Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Nature Conservation for their review and comment, respectively. DEA will either reject the application or instruct the applicant to proceed to the EIA Phase, either as proposed in the Plan of Study for EIAR, or direct that amendments are made before continuing.

### **Public Participation Office**

#### **Aurecon**

Franci Gresse / Louise Corbett

Tel: (021) 526 9400

Fax: (021) 526 9500

Email: [franci.gresse@aurecongroup.com](mailto:franci.gresse@aurecongroup.com)

PO Box 494 Cape Town 8000

### **List of Acronyms**

DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DSR	Draft Scoping Report
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EMP	Environmental Management Programme
ha	Hectare
I&AP	Interested and Affected Party
km	Kilometer
kV	Kilovolt
MW	Megawatts
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act