

The Proposed Implementation of a Wetland Rehabilitation Programme as Part of the Offset Requirements on Fairbreeze Mine, near Port Dunford (Kraal Hill), KwaZulu-Natal

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

The purpose of this document is to:

- ◆ Inform Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) about the proposed project, and to invite them to participate;
- ◆ Provide a brief background on the proposed project; and
- ◆ Explain the aims and objectives of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.



WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND TO THIS DEVELOPMENT?

As part of the Offset Requirements on Fairbreeze Mine, near Port Dunford, KwaZulu-Natal the Applicant, Tronox KZN Sands Pty Ltd, proposes to rehabilitate a floodplain wetland system located within the broader Kraal Hill offset site. The floodplain wetland covers an area of approximately 141 ha and is currently used for sugarcane cultivation. The extent of such cultivation has declined in recent years but still covers much of the floodplain system.

The proposed offset site is located on Rem of Farm Kraal Hill No 15971 and covers an area of approximately 442 ha. The site is located on Ingonyama Trust land with the areas identified falling under the Mkhwanazi Community. The Ingonyama Trust, in consultation with the Mkhwanazi Community, have agreed to a long term lease with Tronox for the area. Further engagement with the community is planned to refine this conceptual plan and to develop a Management Plan for the area that seeks to balance protection requirements with the needs of the local community.

In terms of the EIA Regulations promulgated in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), the proposed activities will trigger the following Listed Activities published within GN R 544:

GNR 544	11	The construction of: ii) channels; iii) bridges; v) weirs; where such construction occurs within a watercourse or within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse...
GNR 544	18	The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 5 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand ... from i) a watercourse...

A Basic Assessment will therefore be required. The Applicant, Tronox KZN Sands Pty Ltd, is required to appoint an independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP), Green Door

Environmental, to conduct the necessary process. During the process all the relevant Listed Activities, in terms of NEMA will be identified.



WHAT IS PROPOSED?

As part of the Offset Requirements on Fairbreeze Mine, near Port Dunford, KwaZulu-Natal, the Applicant, in conjunction with a wetland specialist, proposes to implement a Wetland Rehabilitation Programme.

The offset site is located within the uMlalazi River catchment, immediately east of the uMlalazi Estuary and west of Port Durnford, and approximately 10km north-east up the coast from Mtunzini town on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast. The site extends from the Umlalazi Estuary in the west to low-density communal residential areas in the east. Included within this target area is a large central peat swamp forest that is fed by inter-dunal valley bottom wetland areas to the east and adjoins a heavily cultivated floodplain wetland system in the west. Coastal dune forest occurs along the northern bank of uMlalazi Estuary and extends eastwards along the frontal dune system. Pockets of forest occur along sections of the estuary while the coastal dune forest transitions to grassland inland from the coast (refer to Figure 1).



WHERE IS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT?



Figure 1: Aerial Map showing the area where the Rehabilitation Programme is proposed and the surrounding area (Source: Google Earth).



WHAT IS THE AIM OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process aims to:

- ◆ Inform and involve all potentially Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) of the proposed development;
- ◆ Identify the potential impacts (positive and negative) that the proposed development may have on the ecological and socio-economic environment;
- ◆ Provide recommendations based on the identified impacts and conduct further specialist studies if necessary; and
- ◆ Provide the Competent Authority with enough information to make an informed decision regarding the proposed development.



WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE EIA PROCESS FOR A BASIC ASSESSMENT?

The EIA Basic Assessment process can be described as follows:

1. Application Form:

An official Application Form is required to be completed and circulated with the Basic Assessment Report to a number of Authorities, including the Department of Water Affairs, EKZN Wildlife, and the District Municipality. It provides information on the property, a description of the proposed development and lists the relevant Listed Activities which are triggered by this proposed development.

2. Public Participation:

The general public and relevant Authorities are notified of the proposed development through newspaper adverts, site notices and direct consultation. This Background Information Document will be circulated to neighbouring landowners, relevant Authorities and any other persons registered as I&APs following the adverts and site notices.

3. Identification of Impacts and Alternatives

Environmental issues, concerns, development constraints and possible development alternatives will be identified using professional judgement, project information, experience of similar projects, a review of available literature, site visits, and consultation with Authorities and the public.

4. Impact Evaluation

The significance of environmental issues will be evaluated in terms of their expected extent, intensity, duration and probability of occurrence.

5. Mitigation and Management Measures

Measures to manage and minimise impacts to within acceptable levels, as well as measures to maximise the socio-economic benefits associated with the development, will be identified and recorded in the Basic Assessment Report. An Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) will be compiled to facilitate the implementation of mitigation measures.

6. Reporting

The Basic Assessment Report and Draft EMPr will be made available for review and comment by all I&APs and relevant Authorities. A Final Basic Assessment Report and EMPr will be compiled and will include comments received on the circulated Basic Assessment Report.

7. Authority Decision

The Final Basic Assessment Report and EMPr will be used by Competent Authority as the basis for the decision on whether the proposed development should be approved or not.



WHAT POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS HAVE INITIALLY BEEN IDENTIFIED?

The following issues have been identified as potentially problematic and will, amongst other issues, be investigated during the Basic Assessment Process:

- ◆ Negative impacts on fauna and flora during the construction process;
- ◆ Negative impacts on water quality (sedimentation) during the construction process; and
- ◆ Failure of interventions leading to further degradation of wetland areas.

