

Development of Lapalala Founders Lodge, Located in the Lephalale Local Municipality, Limpopo Province

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Section 24 (G) rectification of unlawful commencement or continuation of listed activities

Reference No. 12/1/9/S24g-W18

APRIL 2016

INTRODUCTION

Late in 2015, Lapalala Wilderness Pty Ltd (the registered land owners) unwittingly carried out activities listed under Listing Notice 3 (GN R985) as per the 2014 EIA Regulations unaware that Environmental Authorization was required. The affected property is Landmans Lust 595 LR located in Lapalala Wilderness in the Lephalale Local Municipality in Limpopo Province.

In terms of the 2014 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations published in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (NEMA), as well as, Section 24(G) of the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (NEMA) as amended, the Project Applicant, Lapalala Wilderness Pty Ltd, hereby gives notice of its intention to apply for Environmental Authorisation from the **Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET)** as the Competent Authority, for the development of the Lapalala Lodge facilities in the Lephalale Local Municipality, Limpopo Province.

By virtue of location, you have been identified as a potential **Interested and / or Affected Party** (I&AP) to this process, and are hereby invited to participate.

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT TELLS YOU

This Background Information Document (BID), provides you, as a potential I&AP, with **background information** on the project, the activities associated thereof, as well as information regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment process to be undertaken to

assess the potential impacts (i.e. positive and negative, as well as direct, indirect, and cumulative) of the project.

It further indicates how you can participate in the assessment process, receive information and raise issues that may concern and / or interest you. The sharing of information forms an important component of the Public Participation Process as it not only provides I&APs with the opportunity to become actively involved, but also provides information that may be of value for the proposed development.

PROPERTY & PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The affected property, Landmans Lust 595 LR, is situated within Lapalala Wilderness in the Lephalale local Municipality, in the Waterberg District Municipality, approximately 60 Km south east of Lephalale.

The 2014 EIA Regulations and its associated Listing Notices: Listing Notice 3 (GN R985) specify the activities that require a Basic Assessment. The activities triggered by the development include the following listed activities:

Indicate the number and date of the relevant notice: e.g. R. 983, 08 December 2014	Activity No (s) (in terms of the relevant notice) e.g. 1(a)	Describe each listed activity as per project description: e.g. Construction of a 600 mW generator
R 985, 08 December 2014	6(a)(ii)(ee)	The development of hospitality facilities that sleep 15 people or more within a Critical Biodiversity Area. The lodge falls within the Lapalala Wilderness which falls in Waterberg Bioregion, which along with the Limpopo C-plan, has identified the area as a Critical Biodiversity Area.
R 985, 08 December 2014	12(a)(iv)	The clearance of 300 square m or more of indigenous vegetation on land zoned as open space or conservation. Critical Biodiversity Area
R 985, 08 December 2014	4 (a) (ii) (ee)	Development of a road wider than 4 meters with a reserve less than 13,5 m in critical biodiversity areas. A 7 Km gravel road of approximately 4 meters wide has been constructed which extends from the main road. The site falls within the Lapalala Wilderness which falls in Waterberg Bioregion, which along with the Limpopo C-plan, has identified the area as a Critical Biodiversity Area.
R 985, 08 December 2014	18 (a) (ii) (ee)	The widening of a road by more than 4 meters, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre in critical biodiversity areas.

		A 7 Km gravel road of approximately 4 meters wide has been constructed which extends from the main road. The site falls within the Lapalala Wilderness which falls in Waterberg Bioregion, which along with the Limpopo C-plan, has identified the area as a Critical Biodiversity Area.
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In summary, the activities described above comprised the development of an **interim non-commercial lodge** inclusive of a main area, 4 staff tents, 4 guest tents, 7 Km access road and other associated infrastructure. The lodge is located within the Waterberg Bioregion and in an area classified as a **Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA)**. These have all been constructed on wooden boardwalks to minimize any impact and in a way that all of the infrastructure can be removed.

Once the landowners became aware of the infringement, further development of the facility was suspended, pending the outcome of this Section 24(G) application.

PROJECT MOTIVATION

The motivation and reasoning behind the development of the Lapalala Founders Lodge is to further develop the growing tourism industry and possible tourism linkages within the area. The vision of Lapalala Wilderness is to build awareness of the interdependence between mankind and nature to deliver lasting benefits for communities, the environment and the country as a whole. In order to realize this vision, a strategic plan has been compiled of which tourism enhancement plays a vital role. The construction of a safari lodge forms part of this strategic plan.

The application for the 8 bed Lapalala Founders Lodge, as it currently stands, is seen as an interim facility. It is the Applicants future intent to locate a 24 bed commercial lodge on the site. It is possible that the 8 bed interim facility is removed in its entirety. The new lodge will be the first commercial lodge located within Lapalala Wilderness. This will provide public access to the reserve, create new jobs, skills transfer and contribute to the sustainability of Lapalala in meeting its conservation objectives.

Additionally, it is important that the natural recreational potential of this region be explored, and in order to do this, accommodation facilities need be developed in the greater region that will help to unlock the natural potential of the region.

The Applicant has also indicated a desire to possibly declare Lapalala wilderness as a Protected Area in the future.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

NuLeaf Planning and Environmental (Pty) Ltd has been appointed by the Lapalala Wilderness Pty Ltd to compile an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and to facilitate the Section 24 (G) application for the development of the Lapalala Lodge facilities. The process going forward is as follows:

- An independent **Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP)** must undertake the process on behalf of the applicant to ensure objectivity.
- The first step of the process is to submit an **Application for Environmental Authorization in terms of Section 24 G** to the Competent Authority, which in this case is LEDET.
- The EAP must conduct a **Public Participation Process**, and afford any and all persons interested and /or affected by the development an opportunity to register and participate in the process. A **30 day registration period** is allowed for, as well as, an opportunity to ask questions, submit concerns etc.
- The EAP must then prepare a **Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)**, inclusive of specialist reports and a draft Environmental Management Programme (EMPr), which describes both the project and the environment and assesses the anticipated impact of the project on the environment, and makes recommendations in terms of mitigation and management.
- Once complete, the Draft EIR will be circulated to all registered I&APs who are entitled to submit written comments in respect thereof. A **30 day comment period** is allowed for in terms of Regulation 40 (1) of the 2014 EIA Regulations.
- Once all comments from registered I&APs have been addressed, the EAP will submit the **Final EIR** to the Competent Authority (LEDET) for consideration.
- The Competent Authority is then required to make a decision on the application for Environmental Authorization (i.e. either positive or negative).
- After consideration of the reports, LEDET will issue the owner with an Administrative Fine.
- Once the Competent Authority has made a decision on the Final EIR, the EAP must communicate the outcome thereof to all I&APs who registered during the Public Participation Process.

- I&AP's have the right to **Appeal** against the decision of the Competent Authority should they feel the need to do so, in which case, the Competent Authority will review and reconsider the application. The appeal process is regulated in terms of the 2014 National Appeal Regulations published in terms of GN R993 on 8 December 2014 under NEMA.

ROLE OF INTERESTED AND AFFECTED PARTIES
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You have been identified as a potential Stakeholder or I&AP, and are hereby invited to participate in this EIA Process. If you would like to be involved in this process, comment on draft reports, provide input, raise concerns, or simply remain informed of the project process, please register as a Stakeholder via a return email, fax or post to the contact details provided below.

Registration as a Stakeholder must reach the Environmental Assessment Practitioner listed below by no later than Wednesday 18th May 2016

Bryony van Niekerk

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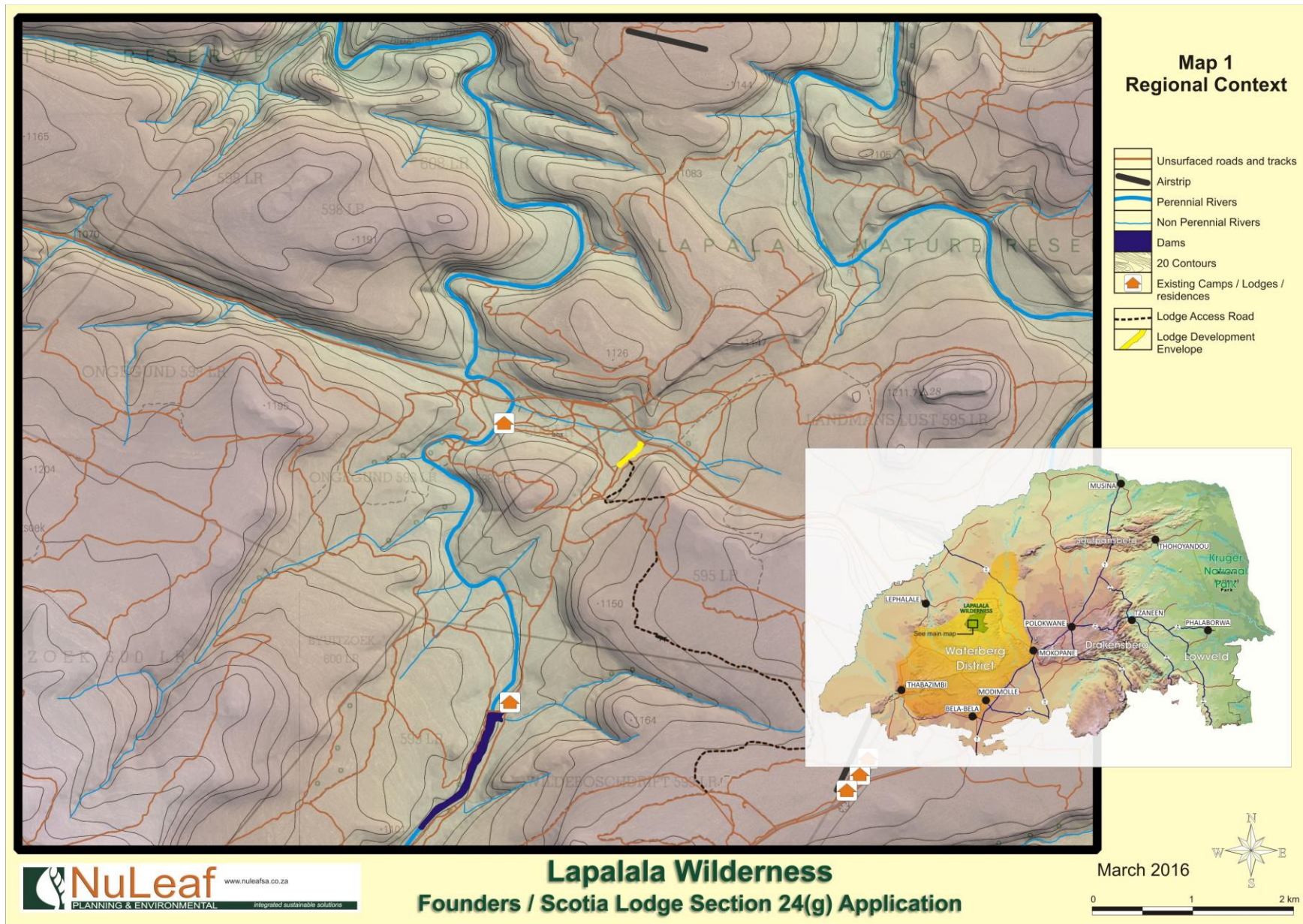


Figure 1: Orientation Map