

Water supply to PG Bison, eMkhondo

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Notification of intention to apply for environmental authorisations

Dear Interested and/or Affected Party (I&AP)

You are receiving this document as you have been identified as a person or organisation that might be affected by, or interested in, the above development.

This I&AP notification process is being carried out as part of the environmental impact assessment and Water Use Licence application processes being undertaken for the proposed development; and the purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to inform you of the proposed project and to provide you with the opportunity to register as an I&AP and/or to provide comments.

Should you wish to register or comment, kindly complete the registration form at the end of this document and return it to Zutari (contact details below) before 30 September 2023.

Contact details:

Jenny Youthed

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project involves the provision of water to the PG Bison facility near eMkhondo, Mpumalanga. Water will be abstracted from seven new boreholes and conveyed to the facility via two new rising mains where it will be treated and used for domestic and process purposes.

The water is primarily required as the existing water supply to the facility will be insufficient when the new Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF) plant comes on-line. The MDF plant represents a major economic investment for the area and is one of the projects identified in the national presidential economic recovery strategy that was implemented after the Covid-19 pandemic. Securing a sustainable source of water for the plant is therefore an economic priority. PG Bison would also like to secure their own water supply to reduce pressure on existing sources and to minimise the impacts of potential disruptions of external supply. The water will also be used to supplement existing domestic and process supply at the facility.

Details of the proposed activity are as follows:

- The equipping and abstracting of water (approx. 710kl/day) from 4 boreholes approximately 10km north of the facility.
- The construction of a 15km rising main (estimated 200mm diameter) from these boreholes to PG Bison. The pipeline will cross some watercourses.
- The equipping and abstracting of water (approx. 680kl/day) from 3 boreholes approx. 3km north-north-east of the facility.
- The construction of a 4.5km rising main (estimated 200mm diameter) from these boreholes to PG Bison.
- Water treatment facilities consisting of 1.5Ml/day package plant for domestic water and a reverse osmosis plant for process water
- Water storage facilities for raw water (approx.600m³), treated water (approx. 2222m³), process water and for firefighting.
- Associated infrastructure such as a pump room and internal pipelines.

The proposed activity requires authorisation in terms of the National Environmental Management Act and also in terms of the National Water Act. A public participation process is thus being carried out as part of the authorisation application procedures.

PROJECT LOCATION

The project is located near the town of Mkhondo (formerly Piet Retief) that is situated within the Mkhondo Local Municipal area in the Mpumalanga Province. The PG Bison facility is located about 8km north of Mkhondo along the N2 towards Ermelo as shown in Figure 1 below. For a map showing the location of the boreholes and proposed pipeline routes please refer to Annexure 1.

Co-ordinates for the boreholes are as follows:

- Borehole MP08-00017 - 26°55'6.49"S, 30°45'51.30"E
- Borehole MP08-00018 - 26°54'59.87"S, 30°45'59.22"E
- Borehole BHM03 - 26°54'55.18"S, 30°46'22.28"E
- Borehole MP08-00022 - 26°52'12.04"S, 30°44'44.56"E
- Borehole MP08-00024 - 26°52'4.04"S, 30°44'38.36"E
- Borehole MP08-00025 - 26°50'57.00"S, 30°44'12.15"E
- Borehole MP08-00027 - 26°51'50.64"S, 30°44'33.35"E

The rising mains run as follows:

- The 4.5km rising main taking water from boreholes MP08-00017, MP08-00018 and BHM03 to PG Bison will cross under the N2 and the railway line approximately 2.7km north of PG Bison. The pipeline will then run parallel to the railway line (outside the railway reserve) until opposite PG Bison, where it will cross under the railway line again to go to the new water treatment plant and storage tanks.
- The 15km rising main taking water from boreholes MP08-00022, MP08-00024, MP08-00025 and MP08-00027 will run east of the R33 and N2 towards the other three boreholes located closer to PG Bison. From these boreholes, it follows the same route as the 4.5km rising main and the pipes will be laid in the same trench.

The water treatment plants and storage tanks will be located at the PG Bison facility.

Erven affected by the project are: RE/2/445, RE/7/445, 3/493, 8/493, 9/493, 10/493, 36/494, 39/494, 43/494, RE/9/494, RE/26/494, 23/509 and RE/42/509.

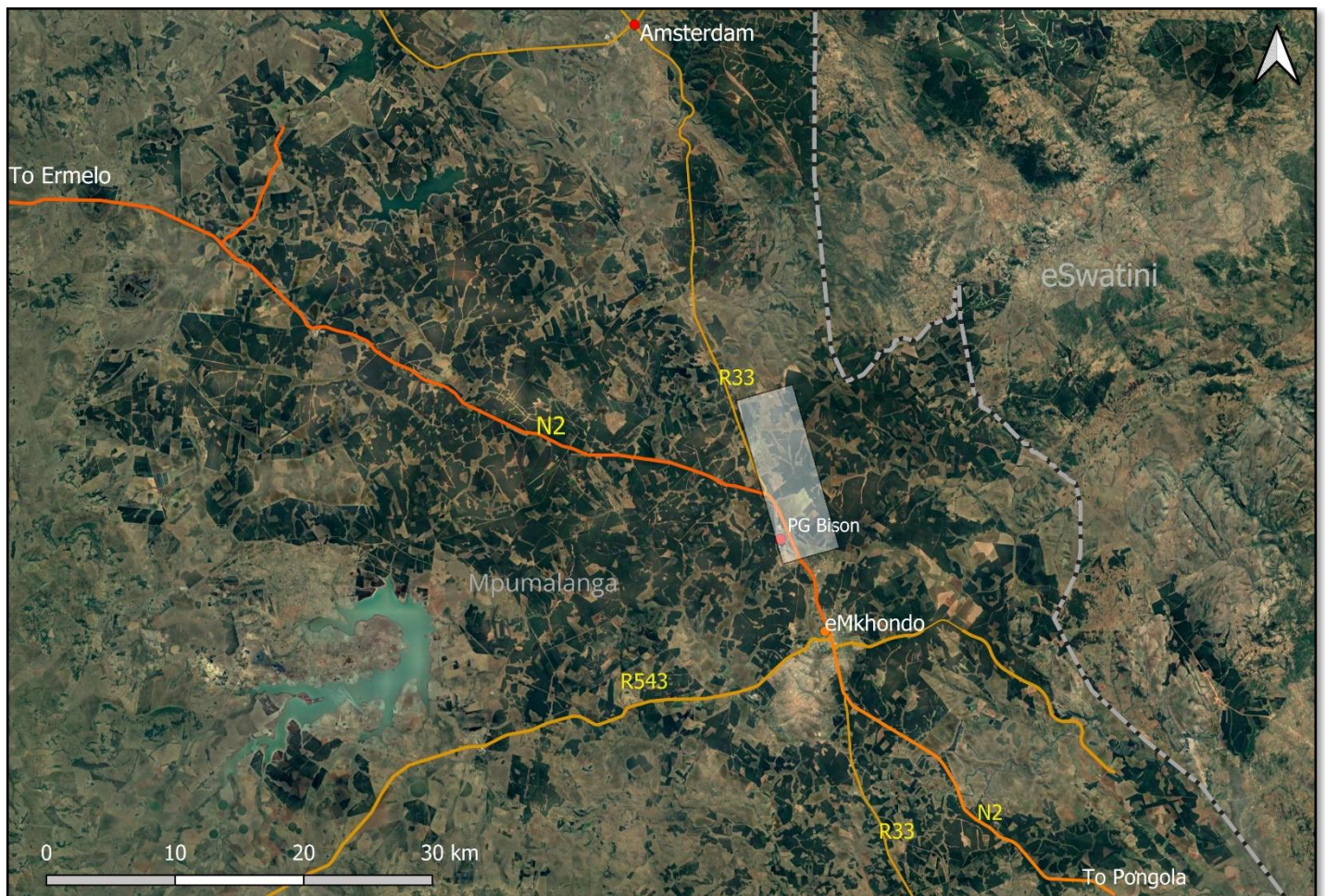


Figure 1. Location of PG Bison in relation to Mkhondo (project area highlighted)

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposed development requires environmental approval before it may proceed, and the following legal requirements are triggered:

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (No. 107 of 1998) – The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations of 2014 (as amended), identify certain activities which could have a substantial detrimental effect on the environment and which therefore require authorisation from the relevant environmental authority before they may proceed. The proposed development potentially triggers a number these activities (as listed in Table 1 on the following page), and application for environmental authorisation is thus being made to the relevant environmental authority i.e. the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (MDARDLEA): Gert Sibande region. A basic environmental assessment process will be followed.

National Water Act (NWA) (No. 36 of 1998, as amended) – abstraction of groundwater, working within the regulated area of a watercourse, crossing of watercourses by the pipelines and potential discharge of treated

effluent into a watercourse will trigger the following water uses, which will require application for a Water Use Licence:

- S21(a) – abstraction of water
- S21(c) – impeding or diverting flow in a watercourse
- S21(i) – altering, impacting or disturbing the bed, banks and/or flow of a watercourse.
- S21(f) – discharging waste or water containing waste into a water resource via a pipe, canal, sewer or other conduit
- S21(h) – disposing in any manner water which contains waste from or has been heated in, any industrial or power generation process

Application for authorisation would be submitted to the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency.

Protected species - should any species of special concern be detected during the specialist environmental assessments, then the necessary permits to disturb and/or relocate these species will be applied for.

Table 1: Activities potentially triggered in terms of the EIA regulations (2014, as amended)

GN R983 Activity No.	Description of the listed activity	Portion of the development triggering the listed activity
16	<i>The development and related operation of facilities for the desalination of water with a design capacity to produce more than 100 cubic metres of treated water per day</i>	<i>A Reverse Osmosis plant will be used to treat water required for the MDF process. Design capacity approx. 600m³/day</i>
19	<i>The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse; ...</i>	<i>The water supply pipelines will cross three watercourses. Excavation for the pipe trenches will result in the disturbance of more than 10m³ of soil</i>
GN R985 Activity No.	Description of the listed activity	Portion of the development triggering the listed activity
12	<i>The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation... <u>F Mpumalanga</u> i. within any critically endangered or endangered ecosystem listed in terms of S52 of the NEMBA</i>	<i>The project area falls within the KaNgwane Montane Grassland vegetation type which is listed as an endangered ecosystem in terms of S52 of NEMBA (GG No. 2747 of Nov 2022). Cumulatively, more than 300 square metres of vegetation will be cleared.</i>
14	<i>The development of— (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more; where such development occurs— (a) within a watercourse; or (c) if no development setback has been adopted, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse ... <u>f Mpumalanga</u> i. Outside urban areas: ... (ff) Critical biodiversity areas or ecosystem service areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority; ...</i>	<i>The pipeline crosses several watercourses which lie within aquatic CBAs or ESAs. Five of the boreholes also lie within aquatic CBA/ESA areas. and the construction footprint for the pump houses and reticulation may potentially exceed 10m².</i>

THE BASIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The purpose of the basic assessment is to identify and describe potential positive and negative environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and its feasible alternatives, and to investigate and assess those alternatives and impacts. A simplified flow chart of the process is shown below.

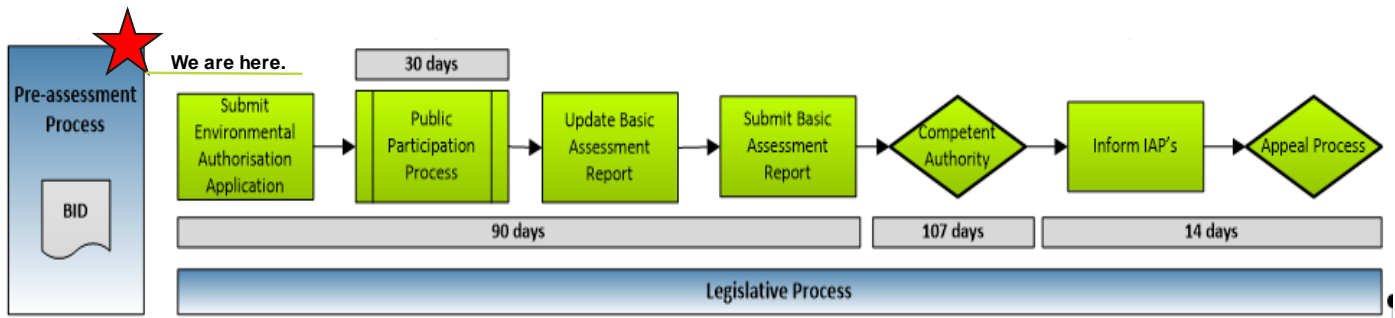


Figure2: Basic Assessment Process (2014 EIA regulations, as amended)

Stakeholder engagement is a key component of the environmental assessment process, and is incorporated in the following stages:

- Pre-application stakeholder notification (advertises, notices, this BID document) with provision of a 30-day comment/registration period.
- Providing all registered I&APs with a 30-day opportunity to comment on the Draft Basic Assessment Report (DBAR)
- Incorporating all I&AP comments into the final Basic Assessment Report;
- Informing stakeholders of the decision taken by MDARDLEA to approve or not approve the project and of the opportunity for appeal.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS

As a potentially Interested and/or Affected Party (I&AP), you may become involved in the process by registering your interest in the project and/or providing comments. A registration form is provided on the following page. Alternatively, you may email us directly, but please ensure that you provide all of the information required in the form.

Should you wish to become involved, please be aware of the following responsibilities that the EIA regulations (2014, as amended) places on I&APs:

- a) Comments must be submitted within the approved timeframes (30 days) or within any extension of a timeframe agreed to by the applicant or EAP;
- b) Any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which that party may have in the approval or refusal of the application must be disclosed.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)

Please note that by requesting to be registered as an I&AP or by submitting comments, your name, organisation, contact details and comments will be captured to allow us to comply with the requirements of the EIA regulations and to contact you going forward. The full register of contact details is not released into the public domain; but will be provided to the relevant environmental authorities. Comments (and names/organisations of commenting parties) are included in the environmental reports, which are public documents and are submitted to the relevant environmental authorities to enable informed decision-making. Should you have any objections to this, kindly let us know.

Interested and/or Affected Party Response Form
Water supply to PG Bison, eMkhondo

NAME		DESIGNATION	
ORGANISATION		TEL	
FAX		EMAIL	
POSTAL ADDRESS			
INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENT			
COMMENTS			

Contact details

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Annexure 1 – location of the boreholes and proposed pipeline route

