

# Palaeontological Impact Assessment for the proposed Moretele 465m MV powerline to a borehole on the Farm Rhenostervalei 47- JR (Moretele Village), Limpopo Province

## SWA382191205 - PALEONTOLOGICAL DESKTOP STUDY

**SAHRA CASE ID: 16506**

16 August 2021

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## **Expertise of Specialist**

The Palaeontologist Consultant: Prof Marion Bamford  
Qualifications: PhD (Wits Univ, 1990); FRSSAf, ASSAf  
Experience: 32 years research; 24 years PIA studies

## **Declaration of Independence**

This report has been compiled by Professor Marion Bamford, of the University of the Witwatersrand, sub-contracted by Archaeological and Heritage Services (Pty) Ltd, Pretoria, South Africa. The views expressed in this report are entirely those of the author and no other interest was displayed during the decision making process for the Project.

Specialist: Prof Marion Bamford

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M Bamford". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature:

## **Executive Summary**

A Palaeontological Impact Assessment was requested for the an electrification of the a new 465m MV which will be connected from pole number WP192/38/63 and will be supplying a borehole in the village (Farm Rhenostervalei 47- JR) in the Moretele Local Municipality of Bojanala District Municipality of North West Province (SAHRA CaseID:16506).

To comply with the regulations of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) in terms of Section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) (NHRA), a desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) was completed for the proposed development.

The proposed route lies on the fine-grained sandstones of the Clarens Formation (Stormberg Group, Karoo Supergroup) that could potentially preserve vertebrate fossils or silicified wood. No fossils have been reported from this area and are not likely to be preserved in the soils covering the route. Nonetheless, a Fossil Chance Find Protocol should be added to the site monitoring programme. Based on this information it is recommended that no palaeontological site visit is required unless the environmental officer or responsible person finds fossils once excavations for the six poles have commenced.

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# 1. Background

Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd, Limpopo Operating Unit (LOU) intends to construct a powerline for the Moretele Local Municipality of Bojanala District Municipality of North West Province. The powerline will include new 465m MV that will be connected from pole number WP192/38/63 and will be supplying a borehole in the village in Moretele.

Eskom has submitted an application in terms of section 38(1) of the National Heritage Resources Act, Act 25 of 1999 (NHRA) for this powerline. The proposed powerline will be connected to pole WP192/38/63 which is close to the road and will run east toward the bushes and a vegetated area that looks moderately disturbed in some parts and less so in other parts. According to the SAHRA Interim report (Case ID: 16506), the impact of the proposed development to archaeological resources is unlikely. The proposed development is located in an area of high palaeontological sensitivity as per the SAHRIS PalaeoSensitivity map, therefore a desktop study is required.

A desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment was completed for the Moretele 465m MV line in order to comply with regulations of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) in terms of Section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) (NHRA), and is reported herein.

Table 1: Specialist report requirements in terms of Appendix 6 of the EIA Regulations (amended 2017)

	<b>A specialist report prepared in terms of the Environmental Impact Regulations of 2017 must contain:</b>	<b>Relevant section in report</b>
ai	Details of the specialist who prepared the report	Appendix B
aii	The expertise of that person to compile a specialist report including a curriculum vitae	Appendix B
b	A declaration that the person is independent in a form as may be specified by the competent authority	Page 2
c	An indication of the scope of, and the purpose for which, the report was prepared	Section 1
ci	An indication of the quality and age of the base data used for the specialist report: SAHRIS palaeosensitivity map accessed – date of this report	Yes
cii	A description of existing impacts on the site, cumulative impacts of the proposed development and levels of acceptable change	Section 5
d	The date and season of the site investigation and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment	N/A
e	A description of the methodology adopted in preparing the report or carrying out the specialised process	Section 2

f	The specific identified sensitivity of the site related to the activity and its associated structures and infrastructure	Section 4
g	An identification of any areas to be avoided, including buffers	N/A
h	A map superimposing the activity including the associated structures and infrastructure on the environmental sensitivities of the site including areas to be avoided, including buffers;	N/A
i	A description of any assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps in knowledge;	Section 5
j	A description of the findings and potential implications of such findings on the impact of the proposed activity, including identified alternatives, on the environment	Section 4
k	Any mitigation measures for inclusion in the EMPr	Section 8, Appendix A
l	Any conditions for inclusion in the environmental authorisation	N/A
m	Any monitoring requirements for inclusion in the EMPr or environmental authorisation	Section 8, Appendix A
ni	A reasoned opinion as to whether the proposed activity or portions thereof should be authorised	N/A
nii	If the opinion is that the proposed activity or portions thereof should be authorised, any avoidance, management and mitigation measures that should be included in the EMPr, and where applicable, the closure plan	N/A
o	A description of any consultation process that was undertaken during the course of carrying out the study	N/A
p	A summary and copies if any comments that were received during any consultation process	N/A
q	Any other information requested by the competent authority.	N/A

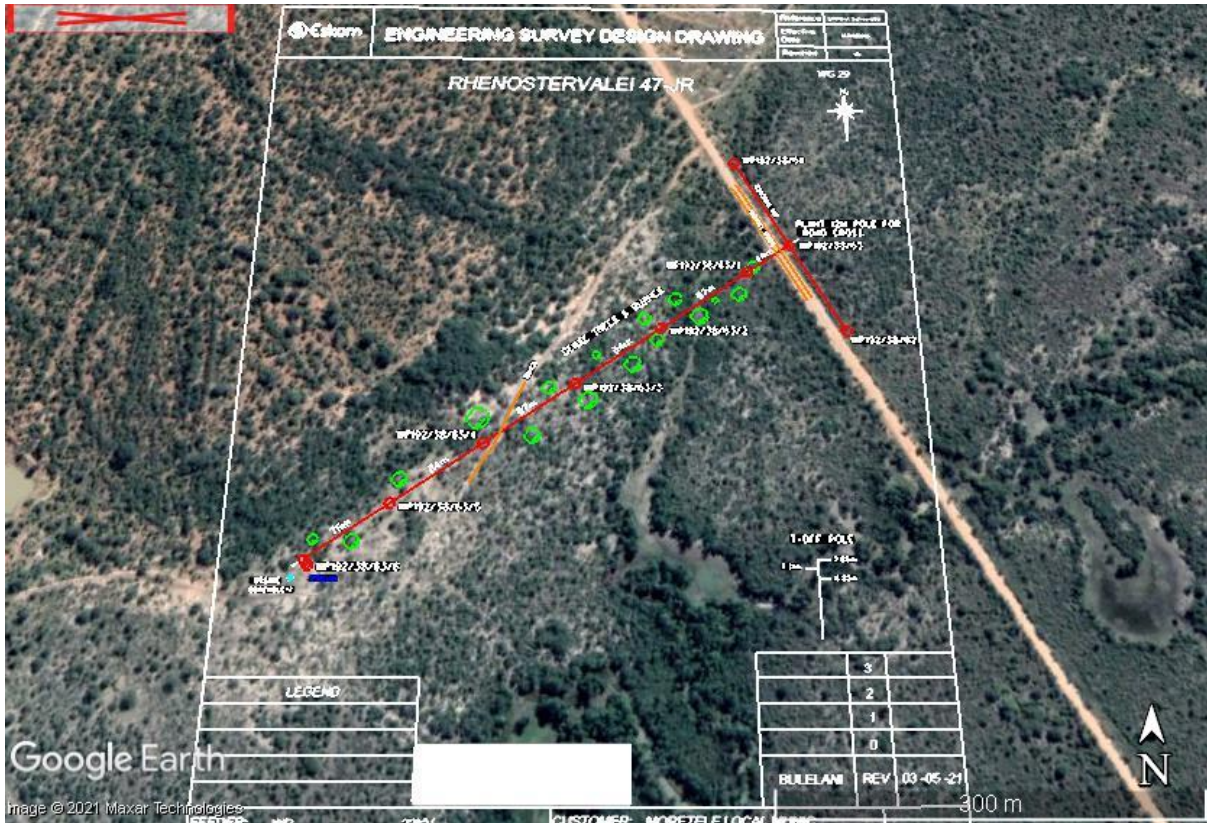


Figure 1: Google Earth map of the proposed construction of a 465m MV powerline from the existing line alongside the road, to a borehole pump to the southwest for Moretele village. Map supplied by TAP.

## 2. Methods and Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this study were to undertake a PIA and provide feasible management measures to comply with the requirements of SAHRA.

The methods employed to address the ToR included:

1. Consultation of geological maps, literature, palaeontological databases, published and unpublished records to determine the likelihood of fossils occurring in the affected areas. Sources included records housed at the Evolutionary Studies Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand and SAHRA databases;
2. Where necessary, site visits by a qualified palaeontologist to locate any fossils and assess their importance (*not applicable to this assessment*);
3. Where appropriate, collection of unique or rare fossils with the necessary permits for storage and curation at an appropriate facility (*not applicable to this assessment*); and
4. Determination of fossils' representivity or scientific importance to decide if the fossils can be destroyed or a representative sample collected (*not applicable to this assessment*).

### 3. Geology and Palaeontology

#### i. Project location and geological context

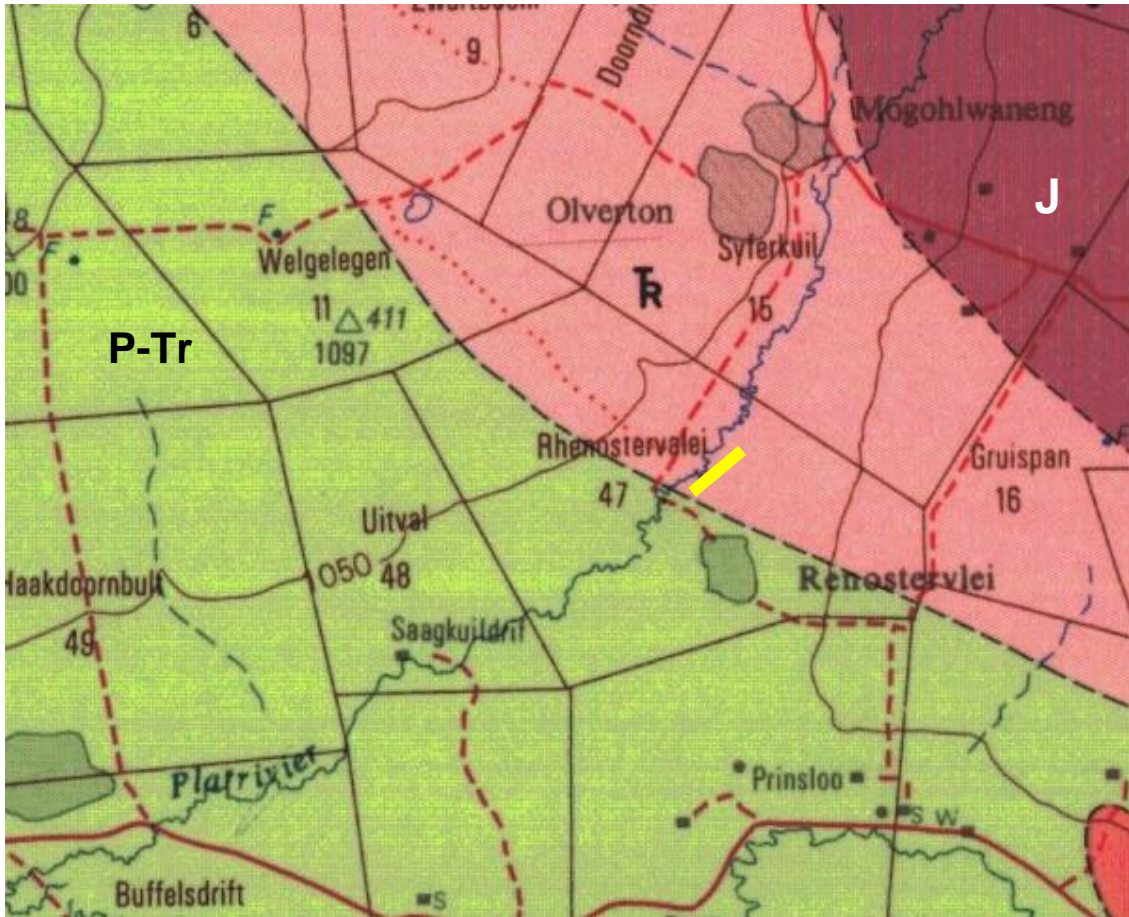


Figure 2: Geological map of the area around the Moretele Villages in Limpopo and North West Provinces. The location of the proposed project is indicated by the yellow line on Farm Renostervlei 47 JR. Abbreviations of the rock types are explained in Table 2. Map enlarged from the Geological Survey 1: 250 000 map 2528 Pretoria.

Table 2: Explanation of symbols for the geological map and approximate ages (Duncan & Marsh, 2006; Johnson et al., 2006; McCarthy et al., 2006; Robb et al., 2006; van der Westhuizen et al., 2006). SG = Supergroup; Fm = Formation; Ma = million years; grey shading = formations impacted by the project.

Symbol	Group/Formation	Lithology	Approximate Age
J	Letaba Fm, Lebombo Group, Karoo Igneous Province	Volcanic rocks, sandstone	Early Jurassic 195-190 Ma
Tr	Clarens Fm, Stormberg Group, Karoo SG	Fine-grained sandstone	Jurassic



Symbol	Group/Formation	Lithology	Approximate Age
P-Tr	Irrigasie Fm, Beaufort Group, Springbok Flats Basin, Karoo SG	Multi-coloured sandstone, siltstone, marl, mudstone and shale	Mid Triassic

The site lies in the Springbok Flats Basin and has sediments of the Karoo Supergroup but the thicknesses of these unites, and the names, differ somewhat from the Main Karoo Basin.

The oldest strata in this area are the mid Triassic sediments of the Irrigasie Formation that were probably laid down by sluggish, ephemeral, suspension-load rivers and deposited on floodplains (Johnson et al., 2006). Overlying these sandstones are the aeolian sandstones of the Clarens Formation. The sediments were capped by the volcanic outpouring of picritic basalt, known as the Letaba Formation (Lebombo Group).

## ii. Palaeontological context

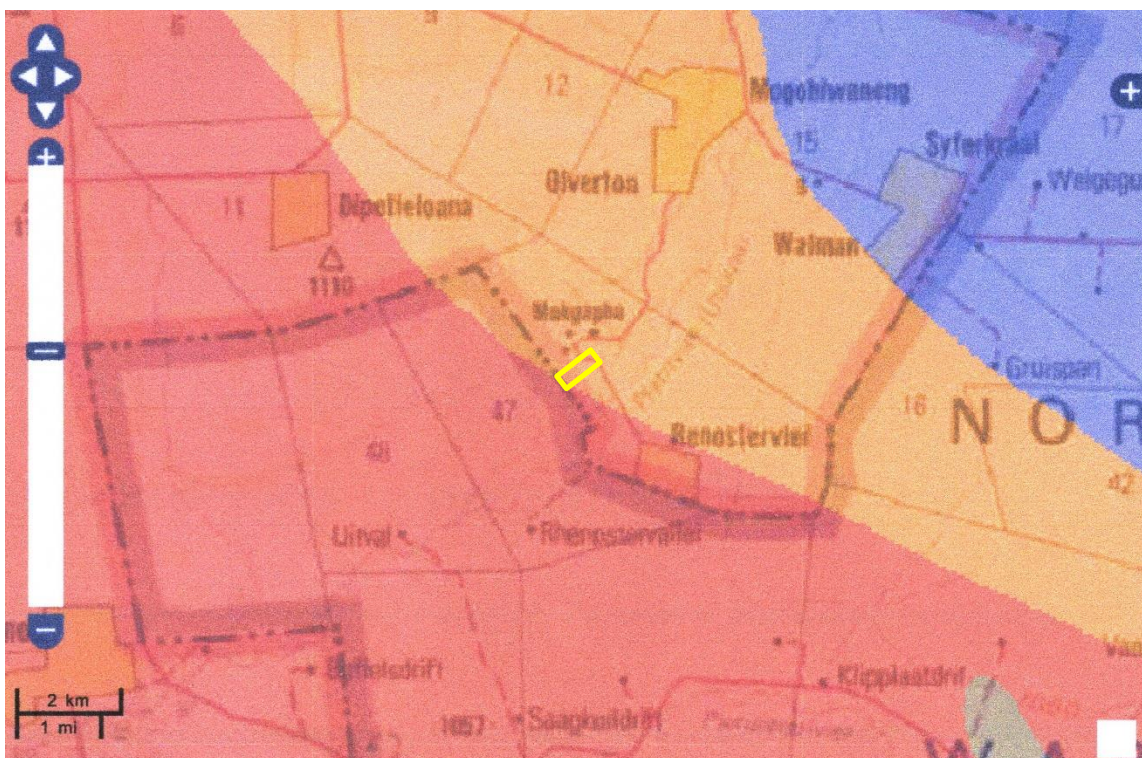


Figure 3: SAHRIS palaeosensitivity map for the site for the proposed route for the Moretele village 465m MV line shown within the yellow rectangle. Background colours indicate the following degrees of sensitivity: red = very highly sensitive; orange/yellow = high; green = moderate; blue = low; grey = insignificant/zero.

The palaeontological sensitivity of the area under consideration is presented in Figure 3. The route for the powerline is on the Clarens Formation (Figures 2-3) and indicated highly

sensitive (orange) on the SAHRIS map. The Irrigasie formation is indicated as very highly sensitive (red) while the Letaba Formation has low sensitivity because it is volcanic in origin.

Most of the Clarens Formation is composed of aeolian sands that were deposited in arid conditions but there are rare playa lake deposits that might preserve bones of therapsids, sauropods or early mammals but these are extremely rare. In the Main Karoo Basin around the town of Clarens and in the foothills of the Drakensberg where there are extensive exposures of Clarens Formation sandstones, only a few pieces of silicified wood, *Podocarpoxylon* sp. (Bamford, 1999, 2004) and *Equisetum* (Plumstead, 1969; Anderson and Anderson, 1985) have been recorded. Vertebrates from the Clarens Formation are the Eureptiles *Massospondylus*, *Lycorhinus*, *Ngwevu*, *Notochampsia*, and *Erythrotherium*, an early mammal (Smith et al., 2020). Trace fossils, foot prints and invertebrate burrows, may also be present.

The older Irrigasie Formation has a narrow coal zone at the base (Johnson et al., 2006) and so is expected to have an associated *Glossopteris* flora with *Glossopteris* leaves, lycopods, sphenophytes, ferns and early gymnosperms.

The Letaba Formation is composed of picritic (olivine-rich) lavas that intruded through the Karoo sequence. Since it is volcanic (igneous) in origin the Letaba formation does not preserve any fossils.

## 4. Impact assessment

An assessment of the potential impacts to possible palaeontological resources considers the criteria encapsulated in Table 3:

**TABLE 3A: CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING IMPACTS**

<b>PART A: DEFINITION AND CRITERIA</b>		
<b>Criteria for ranking of the SEVERITY/NATURE of environmental impacts</b>	<b>H</b>	Substantial deterioration (death, illness or injury). Recommended level will often be violated. Vigorous community action.
	<b>M</b>	Moderate/ measurable deterioration (discomfort). Recommended level will occasionally be violated. Widespread complaints.
	<b>L</b>	Minor deterioration (nuisance or minor deterioration). Change not measurable/ will remain in the current range. Recommended level will never be violated. Sporadic complaints.
	<b>L+</b>	Minor improvement. Change not measurable/ will remain in the current range. Recommended level will never be violated. Sporadic complaints.
	<b>M+</b>	Moderate improvement. Will be within or better than the recommended level. No observed reaction.
	<b>H+</b>	Substantial improvement. Will be within or better than the recommended level. Favourable publicity.
<b>Criteria for ranking the DURATION of impacts</b>	<b>L</b>	Quickly reversible. Less than the project life. Short term
	<b>M</b>	Reversible over time. Life of the project. Medium term
	<b>H</b>	Permanent. Beyond closure. Long term.
<b>Criteria for ranking the SPATIAL SCALE of impacts</b>	<b>L</b>	Localised - Within the site boundary.
	<b>M</b>	Fairly widespread – Beyond the site boundary. Local
	<b>H</b>	Widespread – Far beyond site boundary. Regional/ national
<b>PROBABILITY</b>	<b>H</b>	Definite/ Continuous

(of exposure to impacts)	<b>M</b>	Possible/ frequent
	<b>L</b>	Unlikely/ seldom

**TABLE 3B: IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>PART B: ASSESSMENT</b>		
<b>SEVERITY/NATURE</b>	<b>H</b>	-
	<b>M</b>	-
	<b>L</b>	Soils do not preserve plant fossils; so far there are no records from the Clarens Fm of plant or animal fossils in this region so it is very unlikely that fossils occur on the site. The impact would be very unlikely.
	<b>L+</b>	-
	<b>M+</b>	-
	<b>H+</b>	-
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>L</b>	-
	<b>M</b>	-
	<b>H</b>	Where manifest, the impact will be permanent.
<b>SPATIAL SCALE</b>	<b>L</b>	Since the only possible fossils within the area would be fossil plants or vertebrates from the Clarens Fm in the sandstones, the spatial scale will be localised within the site boundary.
	<b>M</b>	-
	<b>H</b>	-
<b>PROBABILITY</b>	<b>H</b>	-
	<b>M</b>	-
	<b>L</b>	It is extremely unlikely that any fossils would be found in the loose soils and sand that will be excavated but there might be fossils below ground. Therefore, a Fossil Chance Find Protocol should be added to the eventual EMPr.

Based on the nature of the project, surface activities may impact upon the fossil heritage if preserved in the development footprint. The geological structures suggest that the rocks are the correct age and type to contain fossils in the Clarens Formation but their occurrence is very rare and sporadic. Furthermore, the material to be excavated for pole foundations is soil, and this does not preserve fossils. Since there is an extremely small chance that fossils from the Clarens Formation may be disturbed a Fossil Chance Find Protocol has been added to this report. Taking account of the defined criteria, the potential impact to fossil heritage resources is very low.

## 5. Assumptions and uncertainties

Based on the geology of the area and the palaeontological record as we know it, it can be assumed that the formation and layout of the lavas, sandstones, shales and sands are typical for the country and only sedimentary rocks might contain fossil plant, insect, invertebrate and vertebrate material. The sands of the Quaternary period would not preserve fossils. It is not known if the Clarens Formation in this area has fossils but none has been reported to date.

## 6. Recommendation

Based on experience and the lack of any previously recorded fossils from the area, it is extremely unlikely that any fossils would be preserved in the overlying sands and soils of the Quaternary. There is a very small chance that fossils may occur in the sandstones of the late Triassic Clarens Formation so a Fossil Chance Find Protocol should be added to the site monitoring programme. If fossils are found by the environmental officer or other responsible person once excavations for or construction of the six poles have commenced, then they should be rescued, photographed, and a palaeontologist contacted to assess and collect a representative sample.

## 7. References

Anderson, J.M., Anderson, H.M., 1985. Palaeoflora of Southern Africa: Prodrum of South African megaflores, Devonian to Lower Cretaceous. A.A. Balkema, Rotterdam. 423 pp.

Bamford, M.K., 1999. Permo-Triassic fossil woods from the South African Karoo Basin. *Palaeontologia africana* 35, 25-40.

Bamford, M.K. 2004. Diversity of woody vegetation of Gondwanan southern Africa. *Gondwana Research* 7, 153-164.

Duncan, A.R., Marsh, J.S., 2006. The Karoo Igneous Province. In: Johnson, M.R., Anhaeusser, C.R. and Thomas, R.J., (Eds). *The Geology of South Africa*. Geological Society of South Africa, Johannesburg / Council for Geoscience, Pretoria. Pp 501-520.

Johnson, M.R., van Vuuren, C.J., Visser, J.N.J., Cole, D.I., Wickens, H.deV., Christie, A.D.M., Roberts, D.L., Brandl, G., 2006. Sedimentary rocks of the Karoo Supergroup. In: Johnson, M.R., Anhaeusser, C.R. and Thomas, R.J., (Eds). *The Geology of South Africa*. Geological Society of South Africa, Johannesburg / Council for Geoscience, Pretoria. Pp 461 – 499.

Plumstead, E.P., 1969. Three thousand million years of plant life in Africa. Geological Society of southern Africa, Annexure to Volume LXXII. 72pp + 25 plates.

## 8. Chance Find Protocol

**Monitoring Programme for Palaeontology – to commence once the excavations / drilling activities begin.**

1. The following procedure is only required if fossils are seen on the surface and when drilling/excavations commence.

2. When excavations begin the rocks and must be given a cursory inspection by the environmental officer or designated person. Any fossiliferous material (plants, insects, bone, coal) should be put aside in a suitably protected place. This way the project activities will not be interrupted.
3. Photographs of similar fossils must be provided to the developer to assist in recognizing the fossil plants, vertebrates, invertebrates or trace fossils in the shales and mudstones (for example see Figures 4, 5). This information will be built into the EMP's training and awareness plan and procedures.
4. Photographs of the putative fossils can be sent to the palaeontologist for a preliminary assessment.
5. If there is any possible fossil material found by the developer/environmental officer then the qualified palaeontologist sub-contracted for this project, should visit the site to inspect the selected material and check the dumps where feasible.
6. Fossil plants or vertebrates that are considered to be of good quality or scientific interest by the palaeontologist must be removed, catalogued and housed in a suitable institution where they can be made available for further study. Before the fossils are removed from the site a SAHRA permit must be obtained. Annual reports must be submitted to SAHRA as required by the relevant permits.
7. If no good fossil material is recovered then no site inspections by the palaeontologist will be necessary. A final report by the palaeontologist must be sent to SAHRA once the project has been completed and only if there are fossils.
8. If no fossils are found and the excavations have finished then no further monitoring is required.

## **Appendix A – Examples of fossils from the Clarens Formation.**



Figure 4: Partially prepared foot bones of a large eureptile from the Stormberg Group.



Figure 5: Silicified wood from the Karoo Basin.

## Appendix B – Details of specialist

### Curriculum vitae (short) - Marion Bamford PhD June 2021

#### I) Personal details

Surname : **Bamford**  
First names : **Marion Kathleen**  
Present employment : Professor; Director of the Evolutionary Studies Institute.  
Member Management Committee of the NRF/DST Centre of Excellence Palaeosciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa-

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**ii) Academic qualifications**

Tertiary Education: All at the University of the Witwatersrand:  
 1980-1982: BSc, majors in Botany and Microbiology. Graduated April 1983.  
 1983: BSc Honours, Botany and Palaeobotany. Graduated April 1984.  
 1984-1986: MSc in Palaeobotany. Graduated with Distinction, November 1986.  
 1986-1989: PhD in Palaeobotany. Graduated in June 1990.

**iii) Professional qualifications**

*Wood Anatomy Training (overseas as nothing was available in South Africa):*  
 1994 - Service d'Anatomie des Bois, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium, by Roger Dechamps  
 1997 - Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris, France, by Dr Jean-Claude Koeniguer  
 1997 - Université Claude Bernard, Lyon, France by Prof Georges Barale, Dr Jean-Pierre Gros, and Dr Marc Philippe

**iv) Membership of professional bodies/associations**

Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa  
 Royal Society of Southern Africa - Fellow: 2006 onwards  
 Academy of Sciences of South Africa - Member: Oct 2014 onwards  
 International Association of Wood Anatomists - First enrolled: January 1991  
 International Organization of Palaeobotany – 1993+  
 Botanical Society of South Africa  
 South African Committee on Stratigraphy – Biostratigraphy - 1997 - 2016  
 SASQUA (South African Society for Quaternary Research) – 1997+  
 PAGES - 2008 –onwards: South African representative  
 ROCEEH / WAVE – 2008+  
 INQUA – PALCOMM – 2011+onwards

**vii) Supervision of Higher Degrees**

All at Wits University

Degree	Graduated/completed	Current
Honours	11	0
Masters	10	4
PhD	11	4
Postdoctoral fellows	10	5

**viii) Undergraduate teaching**

Geology II – Palaeobotany GEOL2008 – average 65 students per year

Biology III – Palaeobotany APES3029 – average 25 students per year  
Honours – Evolution of Terrestrial Ecosystems; African Plio-Pleistocene Palaeoecology;  
Micropalaeontology – average 2-8 students per year.

### **ix) Editing and reviewing**

Editor: *Palaeontologia africana*: 2003 to 2013; 2014 – Assistant editor

Guest Editor: *Quaternary International*: 2005 volume

Member of Board of Review: *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology*: 2010 –

Review of manuscripts for ISI-listed journals: 25 local and international journals

## **x) Palaeontological Impact Assessments**

Selected – list not complete:

- Thukela Biosphere Conservancy 1996; 2002 for DWAF
- Vioolsdrift 2007 for Xibula Exploration
- Rietfontein 2009 for Zitholele Consulting
- Bloeddrift-Baken 2010 for TransHex
- New Kleinfontein Gold Mine 2012 for Prime Resources (Pty) Ltd.
- Thabazimbi Iron Cave 2012 for Professional Grave Solutions (Pty) Ltd
- Delmas 2013 for Jones and Wagener
- Klipfontein 2013 for Jones and Wagener
- Platinum mine 2013 for Lonmin
- Syferfontein 2014 for Digby Wells
- Canyon Springs 2014 for Prime Resources
- Kimberley Eskom 2014 for Landscape Dynamics
- Yzermyne 2014 for Digby Wells
- Matimba 2015 for Royal HaskoningDV
- Commissiekraal 2015 for SLR
- Harmony PV 2015 for Savannah Environmental
- Glencore-Tweefontein 2015 for Digby Wells
- Umkomazi 2015 for JLB Consulting
- Ixia coal 2016 for Digby Wells
- Lambda Eskom for Digby Wells
- Alexander Scoping for SLR
- Perseus-Kronos-Aries Eskom 2016 for NGT
- Mala Mala 2017 for Henwood
- Modimolle 2017 for Green Vision
- Klipootjie and Finaalspan 2017 for Delta BEC
- Ledjadja borrow pits 2018 for Digby Wells
- Lungile poultry farm 2018 for CTS
- Olienhout Dam 2018 for JP Celliers
- Isondlo and Kwasobabili 2018 for GCS
- Kanakies Gypsum 2018 for Cabanga



- Nababeep Copper mine 2018
- Glencore-Mbali pipeline 2018 for Digby Wells
- Remhoogte PR 2019 for A&HAS
- Bospoort Agriculture 2019 for Kudzala
- Overlooked Quarry 2019 for Cabanga
- Richards Bay Powerline 2019 for NGT
- Eilandia dam 2019 for ACO
- Eastlands Residential 2019 for HCAC
- Fairview MR 2019 for Cabanga
- Graspan project 2019 for HCAC
- Lieliefontein N&D 2019 for EnviroPro
- Skeerpoort Farm Mast 2020 for HCAC
- Vulindlela Eco village 2020 for 1World
- KwaZamakhule Township 2020 for Kudzala
- Sunset Copper 2020 for Digby Wells
- McCarthy-Salene 2020 for Prescali
- VLNR Lodge 2020 for HCAC
- Madadeni mixed use 2020 for EnviroPro

#### **xi) Research Output**

Publications by M K Bamford up to December 2019 peer-reviewed journals or scholarly books: over 150 articles published; 5 submitted/in press; 10 book chapters.

Scopus h-index = 29; Google scholar h-index = 35; -i10-index = 92

Conferences: numerous presentations at local and international conferences.

#### **xii) NRF Rating**

NRF Rating: B-2 (2016-2020)

NRF Rating: B-3 (2010-2015)

NRF Rating: B-3 (2005-2009)

NRF Rating: C-2 (1999-2004)