

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

As part of the

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

For the

PROPOSED RIVERSIDE CEMETERY, WITHIN THE UMZIMKHULU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

1. Introduction

The Umzimkhulu Local Municipality has identified the need to establish a cemetery in the town of Riverside. Before the cemetery establishment can commence, environmental authorisation from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, in compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations of 2010, is required. In order to obtain this authorisation a Basic Assessment is currently being undertaken by Enviroedge on behalf of the Umzimkhulu Local Municipality.

2. The Project

Riverside is located in ward 2, in the northern region of the Umzimkhulu Municipality, near the Ngwangwane River which forms the northern boundary of the municipality. The proposed site is located to the west of the village centre on a vacant portion of land and measures approximately 2 hectares. The proposed site, which is now unoccupied, shows evidence of being previously utilised as a sportfield with remains of a toilet and change room facility present. A small grave yard exists on the site and the municipality have proposed to incorporate the existing grave yard into the establishment of the cemetery, thereby preserving the existing graves. The proposed cemetery establishment is aimed to provide burial sites which will directly cater to the Riverside and nearby communities for the next twenty (20) years. The project is planned to provide a burial location in close proximity for the local community, so as to prevent 'back yard burials' and also to help reduce the need to travel to district cemetery sites. The cemetery establishment aims to cater for all cultural needs within the municipal area. The site is located at 30°4'51.27"S 29°41'40.96"E.

3. The Biophysical Environment

Rivers and topography: The proposed cemetery establishment is located in the Mgwangwane River valley approximately 120 metres from the river edge. The proposed site has a gentle gradient and is situated on a previously levelled portion of land. A drainage feature and wetland area is located approximately 110 metres to the north east of the site. This system drains towards the Mgwangwane River in the north.

Vegetation: Riverside is situated within the Grassland Biome, and Mucina and Rutherford (2006) classify the vegetation group as Southern KwaZulu-Natal Moist Grassland (Gs 11). The vegetation group is describes as gently sloping valley bottoms of tall mixed veld dominated by *Hyparrhenia hirta* and sparsely scattered *Acacia sieberana*. *Themeda triandra* is the dominant grass on veld that has been well managed. Overgrazing has contributed to the dominance of wiry grass species. The existing grave site is edged with thorny hedge shrubs and *Acacia sp* trees on the western corner. The access road to the site has tall exotic pine trees and the general grass cover is sparse in the flat sportsfield area. Numerous bare patches of soil were noted. Beyond the sportsfield area there is a row of screen trees with some patches of quite dense veld grass, *Solanum sp* was noted, however, the area is grazed by livestock.

Geology and Soils: Mucina and Rutherford (2006) describe the geology as dominant Karoo Supergroup mudstones, those of the Volkrust Formation occurring to the south and those of the Adelaide Supergroup to the north. Jurassic dolerite dykes are also present. Dominant soils are mottled and poorly drained with depth of 300mm-500mm; the clay content ranges from 15-35%,

representing soil forms such as Wasbank, Wesselnek, Longlands and Cartref, and Oatsdale on well drained soils.

Conservation Value: The Southern KwaZulu-Natal Moist Grassland is classified as vulnerable with an associated target value of 23%.

Climate: The study area mainly receives summer rainfall with some winter rainfall. The Mean Annual Precipitation is 920mm. The area receives a cooler form of warm-temperate climate.

4. Public Participation

Members of the public have the opportunity to be consulted during the Public Participation Process. If you would like additional information or would like to be part of this process please register with Steven Whitaker using the contact details below.

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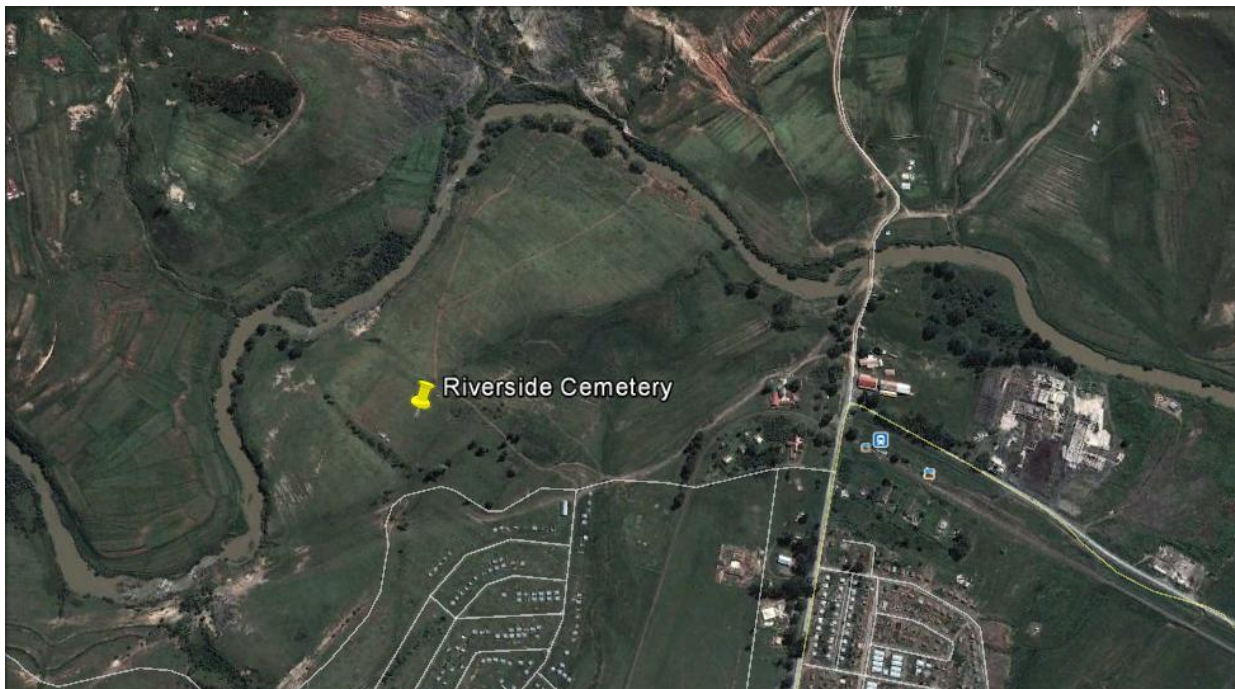


Figure 1. Google Earth Image showing location of the proposed cemetery site establishment.

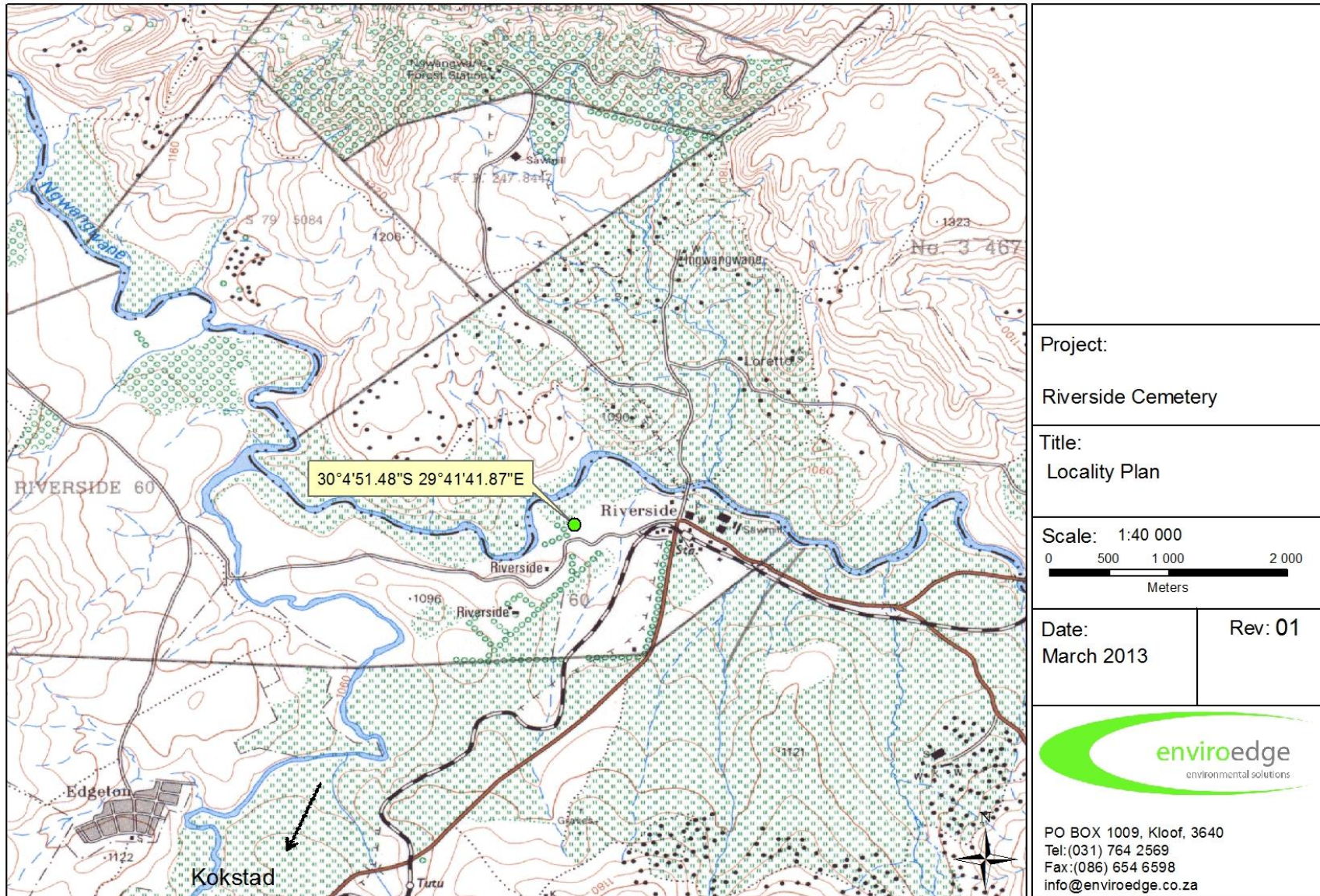


Figure 2. Topographical Plan showing the Riverside cemetery site location.