



**SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY**  
BLOCK C, CASTLE OF GOOD HOPE, CAPE TOWN, 8001  
PO BOX 2771, CAPE TOWN, 8000  
TEL (021) 465 2189 – FAX (021) 465 5789

**Ref:**

**Enquiries: T Van Niekerk**

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### **SUBMISSION FOR DECLARATION AS NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE**

**SAS PIETERMARITZBURG SHIPWRECK, SIMONSTOWN, FALSE BAY, CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE**

#### **LOCATION OF SITE**

**Place/Coordinates: S 34° 13.303' E 018° 28.465'**

<b>Location</b>	<b>False Bay</b>
<b>City</b>	<b>Cape Town</b>
<b>Province</b>	<b>Western Cape</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>None</b>

#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The SAS Pietermaritzburg started out her career as the HMS Pelorus, an Algerine Class Ocean Minesweeper, in June 1943. On 6 June 1944, HMS Pelorus achieved prominence when, under the command of Captain George Nelson she led the Allied Armada in the D-Day invasion of Normandy. She was also one of the Allied vessels to first arrive in Singapore after the Japanese surrender in 1945.

In 1947, after the end of World War II, she was sold to the South African Navy and initially renamed the HMSAS Maritzburg. However, after submissions by the Council of Pietermaritzburg she was renamed the HMSAS Pietermaritzburg on 21 January 1948. She was used for the training of midshipmen and later refitted and used as a dormitory ship in Simon's town until 1991.

Due to the ship's historical significance a committee was formed and considerable effort was put into preserving the PMB, as she was affectionately known, in order to save her as a floating museum ship. However, the cost of berthing and refitting the PMB amounted to too much and the campaign abandoned. The ship was then scuttled off of Millers Point near Simon's Town in a ceremonial fashion on November 19, 1994.

The significance of the Pietermaritzburg is encapsulated in its historical value due to the roles she had played in World history during World War II and South African history during her time served in the South African Navy.

### **MOTIVATION FOR DECLARATION OF THE PIETERMARITZBURG WRECK SITE, SIMONSTOWN, FALSE BAY, CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE**

The wreck site of the Pietermaritzburg is being threatened by salvaging enterprises. Recently large chunks have been removed and this has greatly upset many stakeholders invested in the long term preservation of the site which is still used today as a popular diving site for recreational divers and as an artificial habitat for many marine species that have made their home on the remains of the PMB.

As a result of the current situation, Simon's Town Historical Society has put in an application to nominate the wreck the site as a National Heritage Site. The nomination is based on the historical value of the SAS Pietermaritzburg and its association with events that took place during World War II as well as the role it played in the young days of South Africa's navy.

Due to the wreck being less than 60 years old and not a natural resource it is currently afforded no legal protection under the National Heritage Act 25 of 1999 or the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998, respectively. Salvagers therefore with legal salvage permits can remove items or pieces from the wreck without any hindrance from local authorities. Wreck sites are non-renewable cultural resources and once it has been destroyed all that remains of them are photographs and memories.

In terms of section 29 (a) (i) and 35 (1) of the NHRA Act 25 of 1999, SAHRA may protect any wreck that lies within South Africa's territorial waters which it considers to be under threat. The Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit supports that the Pietermaritzburg site be declared a National Heritage Site due to its historical significance and the fact that it is currently under threat from salvaging exercises. If these salvage activities are allowed to continue to happen by the time the wreck site is old enough to fall under the protection of the National Heritage Resources Act, not much of this cultural resource will be left for future generations to benefit from.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The SAHRA's MUCH Unit after discussion with stakeholders and assessment of the current situation regarding the wreck site of Pietermaritzburg recommends that Council approve the nomination to declare the site of the Pietermaritzburg wreck as a National Heritage Site based on the above motivation. The wreck site being the wreck itself and any part thereof including 'any cargo, debris or artefacts found or associated' with it, as is defined in terms of Section 2 (ii) (c) of the NHRA Act 25 of 1999.

The MUCH Unit aims to complete the declaration within six months as this is a fairly straightforward case and at present has received no objections against the protection of the site.