

REVEGETATION AND HABITAT REHABILITATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the rehabilitation plan is to ensure that areas cleared or impacted during construction activities of the Komsberg West Wind Energy Facility are rehabilitated with plant cover that reduces the risk of erosion from these areas as well as restores some ecosystem function. The purpose of the rehabilitation plan for the site can be summarised as follows:

- » Achieve long-term stabilisation of all disturbed areas to minimise erosion potential.
- » Re-vegetate all disturbed areas with suitable local plant species.
- » Minimise visual impact of disturbed areas.
- » Ensure that disturbed areas are safe for future uses.

This Revegetation and Rehabilitation Plan should be closely aligned with other site-specific plans, including the Erosion Management Plan, Alien Invasive and Open Space Management Plan, and Plant Rescue and Protection Plan.

1.1 **Map and create management areas**

The project infrastructure footprint area must be mapped and divided into management areas indicating:

- » Current land cover;
- » Roads and residential;
- » Areas with AIPs, subdivided further into sparse/dense infestations;
- » Transformed areas; and
- » Untransformed indigenous vegetation.

For every one of the management areas, the project proponent or contractor, in consultation with the landowner, will have to decide what intervention will be necessary, desirable, and feasible to enable the development of the project and long-term sustainable maintenance of infrastructure. Thus for every management area there must be an operational outline on:

- what will happen there;
- what needs to be mitigated – including storm water- and erosion management;
- which management units need priority intervention/mitigation;
- how will this mitigation be done (method statements) including schedule of work;
- realistic and desirable end states including list of species that should be established to initiate rehabilitation after initial revegetation;
- approximate timeframes;
- monitoring protocol to evaluate success or failures of interventions;
- establish permanently marked transects and monitor with fixed-point photography who will be responsible for doing what how will different actions be integrated to achieve and maintain or improve the desirable end state of the environment of that management unit.

Special attention will have to be given to drainage zones, as these not only have very active morphodynamics, but are also distributors of seeds – both indigenous and of IAPs. Thus clearing a

downstream invasion of aliens to enable maintenance of the development will be futile if the upstream IAPs are not cleared or at least aggressively controlled.

1.2 Setting realistic rehabilitation goals

Rehabilitation efforts typically aim at improving ecosystem function that consists of a series of processes, which can in the end be evaluated against a desired outcome or reference state of the vegetation and environment.

Attainable goals of rehabilitation on the project area should be possible and viable for at least the following:

- » Stabilisation of soils;
- » Stabilisation of riparian areas;
- » Storm water reduction through management and wetland integrity; and
- » Clearing of AIPs.

The degree to which AIPs can be cleared from the project area needs to be determined according to desirability, available project funding, personnel and project requirements.

Restoring and/or rehabilitating vegetative cover on non-transformed areas to obtain an acceptable vegetation cover that can be maintained or persists on its own indefinitely.

9.1 Remove or ameliorate the cause of degradation

This will include:

- » Physical rehabilitation of topsoil where it has been removed.
- » Topsoil on areas that have not been cultivated are considered as the upper 20 - 30 cm only. These contain the most important nutrients, micro flora and –fauna essential for nutrient cycling processes. Topsoils are also an important source of seeds.
- » Subsoils and overburden substrata lack the above elements and will first have to be used for physical rehabilitation of landscapes as and where necessary, and then overlain with topsoils
- » Stabilisation of topsoils and prevention of erosion – refer to the Erosion Management Plan.
- » Removal of all invasive vegetation – refer to the Alien Invasive Management Plan.
- » Where it is desirable to use brush or logs of the cleared vegetation for soil stabilisation, such material must be free of regenerative material – e.g. seeds or root suckers.

9.2 Initial Revegetation

Immediately after clearing of vegetation, the soil surface must be inspected for signs of erosion and stabilised as soon as possible. After completion of construction, such erosion stabilisation should preferably be with a cover of vegetation. A dense initial grass or other perennial cover will be desirable. The appropriate seed mix should be determined in consultation with an ecologist familiar with the area. The aim of the first vegetation cover is to form a protective, relatively dense indigenous layer to slow runoff, increase moisture infiltration into the soil, and gradually change the soil nutrient status in order for it to be more favourable for other desirable indigenous vegetation to become established.

9.3 Natural seed banks and improvement of plant structural and compositional diversity

It is expected that soil seed banks of indigenous vegetation will be present to initiate initial vegetation cover, but may not be sufficient to establish an acceptable cover of desirable species. After deciding which

indigenous species should be re-introduced, seed should be ideally collected from site or an environmentally-matched site nearby.

Seed collection may be done throughout the year as seed ripens, but can also be restricted to summer, when a large amount of the perennial seed should have ripened. Seeds should be stored in paper or canvas bags dusted with insecticide, and sown at the onset of the rainy season.

Alternatively, slower-growing perennials may be raised from seed or cuttings in a nursery and then transplanted once established. It will be beneficial to investigate if community members would be able to create and maintain such a nursery, or if there are nurseries in the area, that raise indigenous flora from the area.

The final vegetation cover should resemble the original (non-encroached) vegetation composition and structure as far as practicable possible or permissible within each management unit.

9.4 For drainage areas

First restore drainage line morphology following the guidelines of the Erosion Management Plan – without that ecological recovery cannot be initiated.

Determine if natural seed sources may be present further upstream.

If such upstream seed sources are still present, rehabilitation of riparian vegetation after soil erosion management will most likely occur naturally, PROVIDED that follow-up monitoring of the establishment of vegetation is carried out, and all invasive species eradicated as they emerge. This can only be achieved with a long-term commitment (> 5 years minimum).

Should no upstream seed resources be available, suitable species (as determined in consultation with an ecologist) should be sown or planted.

9.5 Monitoring and follow-up action

Throughout the lifecycle of the development, regular monitoring and adaptive management must be in place to detect any new degradation of ecosystems affected by the development, and remedy these as soon as detected.

During the construction phase, the ESO, ECO and contractor will be responsible for initiating and maintaining a suitable monitoring system. Once the development is operational, the project proponent will have to identify a suitable entity that will be able to take over and maintain the monitoring cycle and initiate adaptive management as soon as it is required. Monitoring personnel must be adequately trained.

The following are the minimum criteria that should be monitored:

- » Composition and density of replanted vegetation, distinguishing between species introduced for initial revegetation only and species that are part of the pre-determined desirable end state;
- » Associated nature and stability of surface soils;
- » It is recommended that permanent transects are marked and surveyed annually according to the LFA technique¹ adapted to integrate both surface soil characteristics and the vegetation to be monitored;
- » Re-emergence of AIPs;
- » If noted, remedial action must be taken immediately according to Working for Water specifications;

¹ Tongway and Hindley 2004.

- » Nature and dynamics of riparian zones;
- » Stability of riparian vegetation;
- » Any form of bank erosion, slumping or undercutting; and
- » Stability of channel form and width of streams – if this increase, it shows that vegetation on plains and/or riparian areas and upper drainage lines are not yet in a stable enough state to be fully functional in reducing excess runoff and the ecosystem overall is losing valuable resources.

9.6 Timeframes and duration

Rehabilitation will occur during construction, as areas for the re-application of topsoil and revegetation become available or where revegetation can be initiated after clearing of invasives or to stabilise erosion.

The initial revegetation period post construction is estimated to be over a period of 6 (minimum) to 12 months (maximum), or a time period specified by the appointed specialist and/or ECO, particularly if planting of trees and shrubs occurs.

The rehabilitation phase (including post seeding maintenance) should be at least 12 months (depending on time of seeding and rainfall) to ensure establishment of an acceptable plant cover is achieved (excluding invasive plant species or weeds).

If the plants have not established and the acceptable plant cover is not achieved within the specified maintenance period, maintenance of these areas shall continue until at acceptable plant cover is achieved (excluding alien plant species or weeds).

Additional seeding or planting may be necessary to achieve acceptable plant cover. Hydroseeding may have to be considered as an option in this case.

Any plants that die, during the maintenance period, shall be replaced.

Succession of natural plant species should be encouraged.

Monitoring of rehabilitation success and follow-up adaptive management, together with clearing of emerging invasives shall be carried on until the decommissioning phase has been completed.