



Red Sands Photovoltaic 1 (PV1) Facility – Agricultural Compliance Statement

Mgcawu District Municipality, Northern Cape

November 2021

Client



Prepared by:

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Red Sands Solar PV2 Facility




Report Name	Red Sands Photovoltaic 1 (PV1) Facility – Agricultural Compliance Statement
Reference	Red Sands Solar PV2 Facility
Submitted to	
Report Reviewer	<p>Andrew Husted </p> <p>Andrew Husted is Pr Sci Nat registered (400213/11) in the following fields of practice: Ecological Science, Environmental Science and Aquatic Science. Andrew is an Aquatic, Wetland and Biodiversity Specialist with more than 12 years' experience in the environmental consulting field.</p>
Report Writer and Fieldwork	<p>Ivan Baker </p> <p>Ivan Baker is Cand. Sci Nat registered (119315) in environmental science and geological science. Ivan is an experienced wetland and ecosystem service specialist, a hydrogeologist and pedologist. He completed his MSc in environmental science and hydrogeology at the North-West University of Potchefstroom.</p>
Declaration	<p>The Biodiversity Company and its associates operate as independent consultants under the auspice of the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions. We declare that we have no affiliation with or vested financial interests in the proponent, other than for work performed under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2017. We have no conflicting interests in the undertaking of this activity and have no interests in secondary developments resulting from the authorisation of this project. We have no vested interest in the project, other than to provide a professional service within the constraints of the project (timing, time and budget) based on the principals of science.</p>

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Document Guide

According to the Government Notice 320 dated 20 March 2020 and the procedures for the assessment and minimum criteria for reporting on identified environmental themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for environmental authorisation, the following criteria is applicable to that of an agricultural compliance statement;

Requirement	Reference
Specialist Details and CV	Appendix A
Locality of the proposed activity	Section 2
Sensitivity verification	Section 8.2
Acceptability of impacts towards agricultural production capability associated with proposed activities	Section 9
Declaration of specialist(s)	Page vi
Project components with 50 m regulated area superimposed to that of the agricultural sensitivities of the screening tool	Section 8.2
Confirmation from specialist that mitigation to avoid fragmentation has been considered	Section 9.1
Statement from specialist regarding the acceptability and approval of proposed activities	Section 9.2
Conditions to acceptability of proposed activities	
Probability of land being returned to current state after decommissioning	N/A
Monitoring requirements and/or any inclusions into EMPr	Section 9.1
Assumptions and uncertainties	Section 4

DECLARATION

I, **Ivan Baker** declare that:

- I act as the independent specialist in this application;
- I will perform the work relating to the application in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favourable to the applicant;
- I declare that there are no circumstances that may compromise my objectivity in performing such work;
- I have expertise in conducting the specialist report relevant to this application, including knowledge of the Act, regulations and any guidelines that have relevance to the proposed activity;
- I will comply with the Act, regulations and all other applicable legislation;
- I have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity;
- I undertake to disclose to the applicant and the competent authority all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing any decision to be taken with respect to the application by the competent authority; and the objectivity of any report, plan or document to be prepared by myself for submission to the competent authority;
- all the particulars furnished by me in this form are true and correct; and
- I realise that a false declaration is an offence in terms of Regulation 71 and is punishable in terms of Section 24F of the Act.



Ivan Baker

Soil Specialist

The Biodiversity Company

December 2021

1 Introduction

AGV Projects (Pty) Ltd is proposing the development of a solar PV facility (known as the Red Sands PV2 facility) and associated infrastructure on a site located approximately 26km northeast of Groblershoop, within the Tsantsabane Local Municipality and the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality in the Northern Cape Province. The project is to be known as Red Sands PV2 and will have a contracted capacity of up to 75MW

The Biodiversity Company was appointed to compile a pedology compliance statement for the proposed Red Sands Solar PV2 Facility near Groblershoop, Northern Cape.

A preferred project site with an extent of ~7023ha and a development area of ~220 ha within the project site has been identified by AGV Projects (Pty) Ltd as a technically suitable area for the development of the Red Sands PV2 facility. The development area for the PV facility is located on Portion 2 of the Farm Tities Poort 386. The project site is accessible via an existing gravel farm road from an existing main gravel road off the N8 which is located southeast of the project site.

The Red Sands PV2 project site is proposed to accommodate the following infrastructure, which will enable the PV facility to supply a contracted capacity of up to 75MW_{AC}:

- Solar PV array comprising PV modules and mounting structures.
- Inverters and transformers.
- Low voltage cabling between the PV modules to the inverters
- Fence around the project development area
- Camera surveillance
- Internet connection
- 33kV cabling between the project components and the facility substation
- 33/132kV onsite facility substation¹.
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).
- Site offices and maintenance buildings, including workshop areas for maintenance and storage.
- Laydown areas.
- Access roads (up to 6m) and internal distribution roads (up to 4m).

The solar PV facility is proposed in response to the identified objectives of the national and provincial government and local and district municipalities to develop renewable energy facilities for power generation purposes. It is the developer's intention to bid the Red Sands PV2 Facility under the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's (DMRE's) Renewable Energy

¹ A 132kV powerline will be assessed through a separate Basic Assessment Process

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Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) Programme (or a similar programme), with the aim of evacuating the generated power into the national grid. This will aid in the diversification and stabilisation of the country’s electricity supply, in line with the objectives of the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) with the Red Sands PV2 Facility set to inject up to 75MW into the national grid.

The approach adopted for the assessments has taken cognisance of the recently published Government Notice 320 in terms of NEMA dated 20 March 2020: “Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on Identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation”.

This report aims to present and discuss the findings from the soil resources identified within the regulated 50 m, the agricultural and land potential of these resources, the land uses within the regulated area and also the risk associated with the proposed structure.

The project area is located approximately 27 km north of Groblershoop, 100 km east of Upington and 120 km east of Postmasburg. The surrounding land uses predominantly include farming (grazing) and non-perennial/ephemeral watercourses (see Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2).

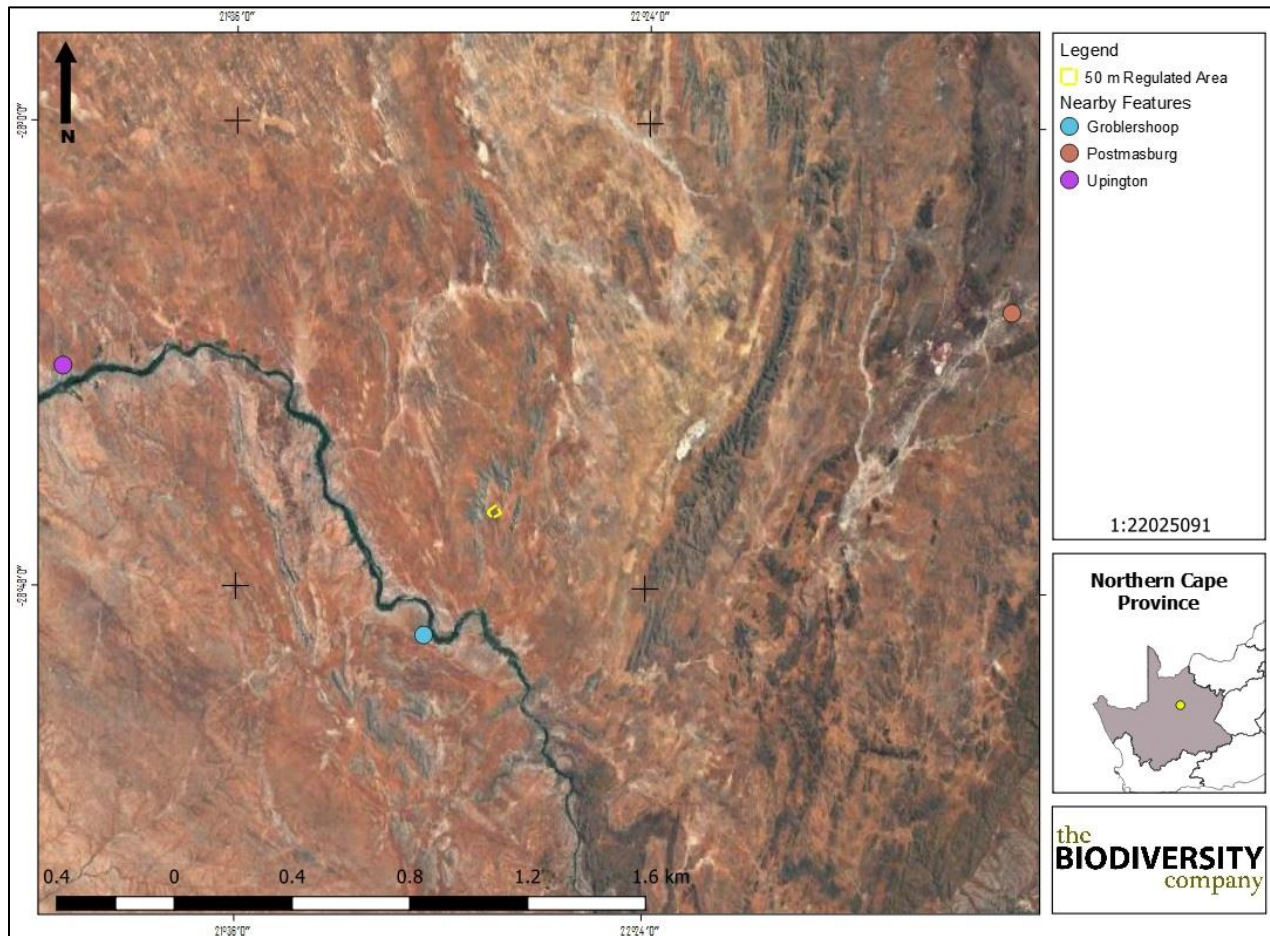


Figure 1-1 **Locality map of the project area**

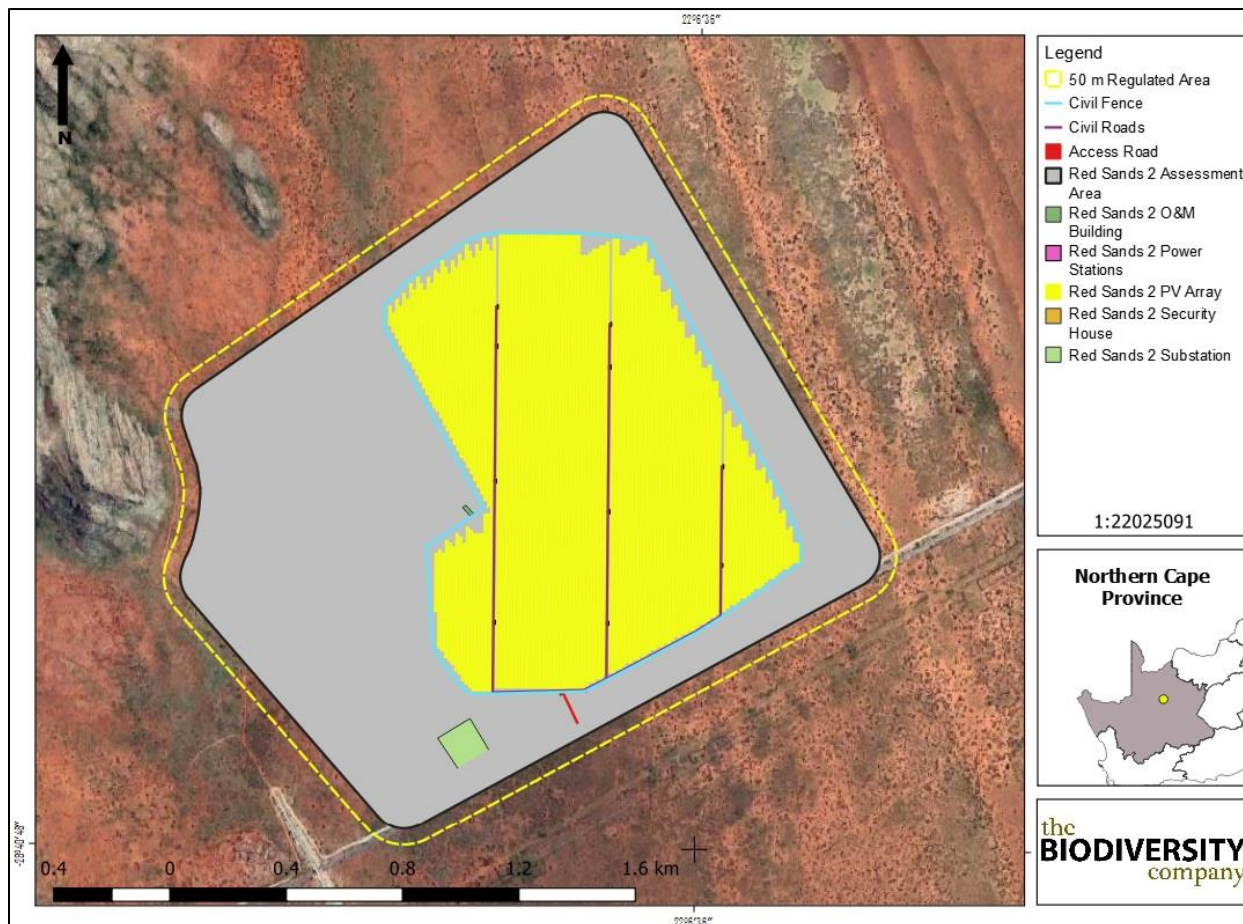


Figure 1-2 Proposed layout

2 Scope of Work

According to the National Web based Environmental Screening Tool, the proposed development is located within a “Low” sensitivity land capability area. The protocols for minimum requirements (DEA, 2020)² stipulates that in the event that a proposed development is located within “Low” or “Medium” sensitivities, an agricultural compliance statement will be sufficient. It is worth noting that according to these protocols, a site inspection will still need to be conducted to determine the accuracy of these sensitivities. After acquiring baseline information pertaining to soil resources within the 50 m regulated areas, it is the specialist’s opinion that the soil forms and associated land capabilities concur with the sensitivities stated by the screening tool. Therefore, only an agricultural compliance statement will be compiled. This includes:

- The feasibility of the proposed activities;
- Confirmation about the “Low” and “Medium” sensitivities;

² A site identified by the screening tool as being of ‘High’ or ‘Very High’ sensitivity for agricultural resources must submit a specialist assessment unless the impact on agricultural resources is from an electricity pylon (item 1.1.2).

- The effects that the proposed activities will have on agricultural production in the area;
- A map superimposing the proposed footprint areas, a 50 m regulated area as well as the sensitivities pertaining to the screening tool;
- Confirmation that no agricultural segregation will take place and that all options have been considered to avoid segregation;
- The specialist's opinion regarding the approval of the proposed activities; and
- Any potential mitigation measures described by the specialist to be included in the EMPr.

3 Limitations

The following limitations are relevant to this agricultural potential assessment;

- The handheld GPS used potentially could have inaccuracies up to 5 m. Any and all delineations therefore could be inaccurate within 5 m.

4 Expertise of the Specialists

4.1 Andrew Husted

Mr. Andrew Husted is an aquatic ecologist, specializing in freshwater systems and wetlands, who graduated with a MSc in Zoology. He, is Pr Sci Nat registered (400213/11) in the following fields of practice: Ecological Science, Environmental Science and Aquatic Science. Mr Husted is an Aquatic, Wetland and Biodiversity Specialist with 12 years' experience in the environmental consulting field.

4.2 Ivan Baker

Ivan Baker is Cand. Sci Nat registered (119315) in environmental science and geological science. Ivan is a wetland and ecosystem service specialist, a hydrogeologist and pedologist that has completed numerous specialist studies ranging from basic assessments to EIAs. Ivan has carried out various international studies following FC standards. Ivan completed training in Tools for Wetland Assessments with a certificate of competence and completed his MSc in environmental science and hydrogeology at the North-West University of Potchefstroom.

5 Methodology

5.1 Desktop Assessment

As part of the desktop assessment, baseline soil information was obtained using published South African Land Type Data. Land type data for the site was obtained from the Institute for Soil Climate and Water (ISCW) of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) (Land Type Survey Staff, 1972 - 2006). The land type data is presented at a scale of 1:250 000 and comprises of the division of land into land types. In addition, a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) as well as the slope percentage of the area was calculated by means of the NASA Shuttle Radar Topography Mission Global 1 arc second digital elevation data by means of QGIS and SAGA software.

5.2 Field Survey

An assessment of the soils present within the project area was conducted during a field survey in June 2021. The site was traversed on foot. A soil auger was used to determine the soil form/family and depth. The soil was hand augured to the first restricting layer or 1,5 m. Soil survey positions were recorded as waypoints using a handheld GPS. Soils were identified to the soil family level as per the “Soil Classification: A Taxonomic System for South Africa” (Soil Classification Working Group, 2018). Landscape features such as existing open trenches were also helpful in determining soil types and depth.

5.3 Land Capability

Given the nature of the compliance statement and the fact that baseline findings correlate with the screening tool’s sensitivities, land capability was solely determined by means of the National Land Capability Evaluation Raster Data Layer (DAFF, 2017). Land capability and land potential will also briefly be calculated to match to that of the screening tool to ultimately determine the accuracy of the land capability sensitivity from (DAFF, 2017).

Land capability and agricultural potential will briefly be determined by a combination of soil, terrain and climate features. Land capability is defined by the most intensive long-term sustainable use of land under rain-fed conditions. At the same time an indication is given about the permanent limitations associated with the different land use classes.

Land capability is divided into eight classes and these may be divided into three capability groups. Table 5-1 shows how the land classes and groups are arranged in order of decreasing capability and ranges of use. The risk of use increases from class I to class VIII (Smith, 2006).

Table 5-1 Land capability class and intensity of use (Smith, 2006)

Land Capability Class	Increased Intensity of Use									Land Capability Groups
	W	F	LG	MG	IG	LC	MC	IC	VIC	
I	W	F	LG	MG	IG	LC	MC	IC	VIC	Arable Land
II	W	F	LG	MG	IG	LC	MC	IC		
III	W	F	LG	MG	IG	LC	MC			
IV	W	F	LG	MG	IG	LC				
V	W	F	LG	MG						Grazing Land
VI	W	F	LG	MG						
VII	W	F	LG							
VIII	W									Wildlife
W - Wildlife		MG - Moderate Grazing			MC - Moderate Cultivation					
F- Forestry		IG - Intensive Grazing			IC - Intensive Cultivation					
LG - Light Grazing		LC - Light Cultivation			VIC - Very Intensive Cultivation					

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The land potential classes are determined by combining the land capability results and the climate capability of a region as shown in Table 5-2. The final land potential results are then described in Table 5-3.

Table 5-2 The combination table for land potential classification

Land capability class	Climate capability class							
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
I	L1	L1	L2	L2	L3	L3	L4	L4
II	L1	L2	L2	L3	L3	L4	L4	L5
III	L2	L2	L3	L3	L4	L4	L5	L6
IV	L2	L3	L3	L4	L4	L5	L5	L6
V	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei	Vlei
VI	L4	L4	L5	L5	L5	L6	L6	L7
VII	L5	L5	L6	L6	L7	L7	L7	L8
VIII	L6	L6	L7	L7	L8	L8	L8	L8

Table 5-3 The Land Potential Classes.

Land potential	Description of land potential class
L1	Very high potential: No limitations. Appropriate contour protection must be implemented and inspected.
L2	High potential: Very infrequent and/or minor limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Appropriate contour protection must be implemented and inspected.
L3	Good potential: Infrequent and/or moderate limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Appropriate contour protection must be implemented and inspected.
L4	Moderate potential: Moderately regular and/or severe to moderate limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Appropriate permission is required before ploughing virgin land.
L5	Restricted potential: Regular and/or severe to moderate limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall.
L6	Very restricted potential: Regular and/or severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable
L7	Low potential: Severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable
L8	Very low potential: Very severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable

6 Project Area

6.1 Soils and Geology

According to the land type database (Land Type Survey Staff, 1972 - 2006) the assessment corridor to be focused on falls within the Ae 4 land types. The Ae land type consists of red-yellow apedal soils which are freely drained. The soils tend to have a high base status and is deeper than 300 mm. The terrain units and expected soils for the Ae 4 land type is illustrated in Figure 6-1 and Table 6-1 respectively.

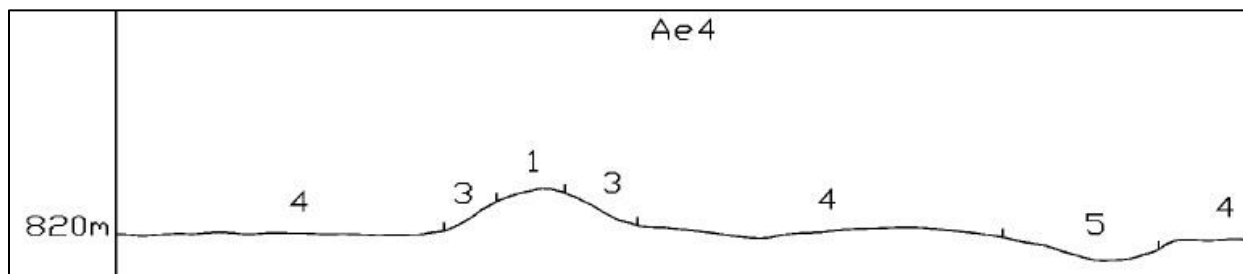


Figure 6-1 Illustration of land type Ae 4 terrain units (Land Type Survey Staff, 1972 - 2006)

Table 6-1 Soils expected at the respective terrain units within the Ae 4 land type (Land Type Survey Staff, 1972 - 2006)

Terrain units							
1 (1%)		3 (2%)		4 (94%)		5 (3%)	
Bare Rock	80%	Bare Rock	80%	Hutton	45%	Mispah	90%
Mispah	20%	Mispah	20%	Mispah	40%	Hutton	10%
				Hutton	15%		

6.2 Terrain

The slope percentage of the project area has been calculated and is illustrated in Figure 6-2. The majority of the regulated area is characterised by a slope percentage between 0 and 2%, with some smaller patches within the project area characterised by a slope percentage up to 6. This illustration indicates a uniform, relatively gentle topography with gentle slopes being present. The Digital Elevation Model (DEM) of the project area (Figure 6-3) indicates an elevation of 999 to 1 021 Metres Above Sea Level (MASL).

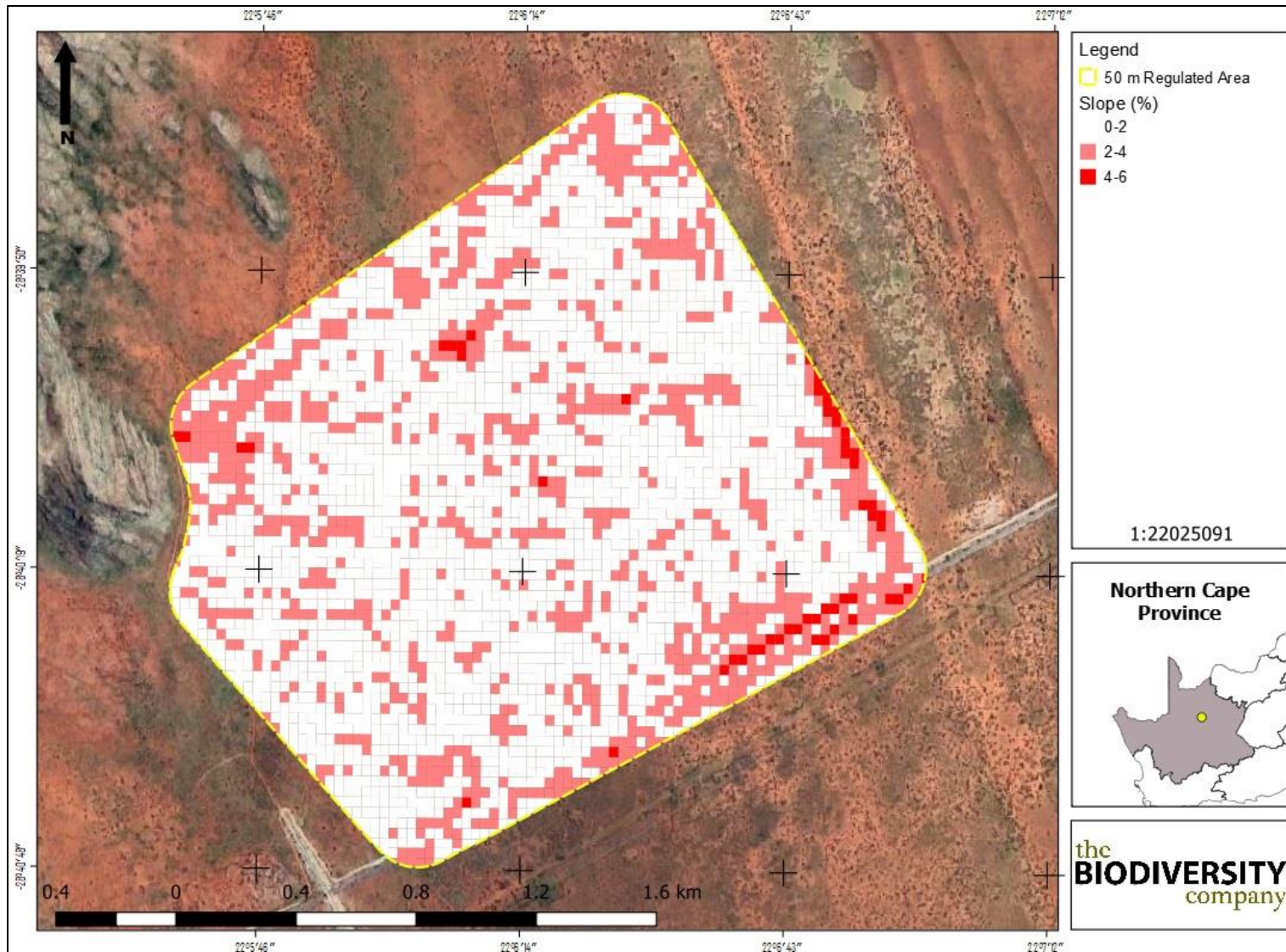


Figure 6-2 Slope percentage map for the regulated area

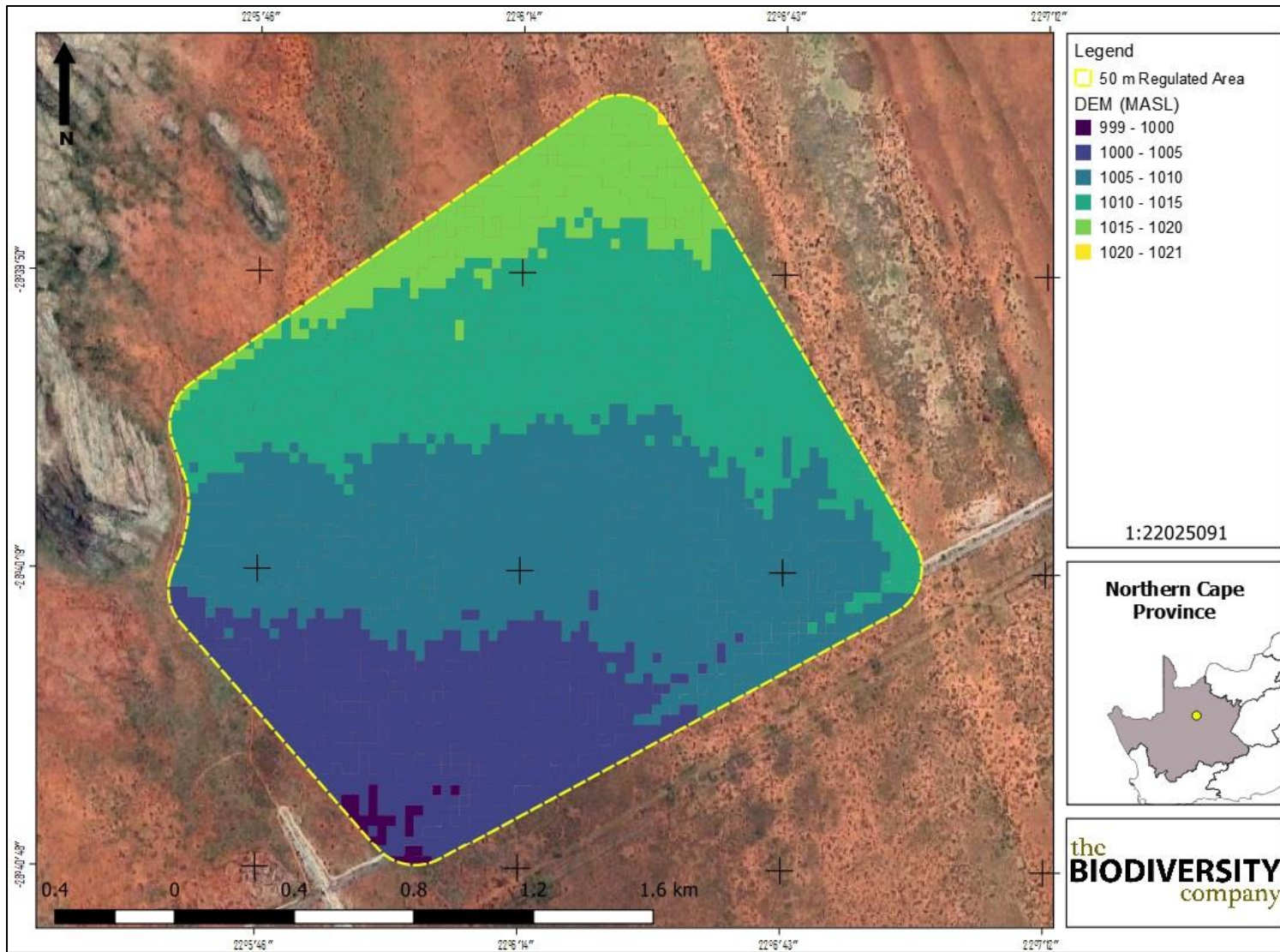


Figure 6-3 Digital Elevation Model of the regulated area (metres above sea level)

7 Results and Discussion

7.1 Baseline Findings

One dominant soil form was identified throughout the 50 m regulated area, namely the Hutton soil form (see Figure 7-1). The Hutton soil form consists of an orthic topsoil on top of a red apedal horizon.

The abovementioned soil has been determined to have a land capability of class “III” and “IV” as well as a climate capability level 8 given the low Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) and the high Mean Annual Potential Evapotranspiration (MAPE) rates. The combination between the determined land capabilities and climate capabilities results in a land potential of “L6”, which is defined as having *very restricted potential. Regular and/or severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable.* The sensitivity of this land potential is characterised by a “Low Sensitivity”.



Figure 7-1 *Transition between the orthic topsoil and the red apedal horizon*

7.2 Sensitivity Verification

The following land potential level has been determined;

- Land potential level 6 (this land potential level is defined as having very restricted potential. Regular and/or severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable. The sensitivity of this land potential is characterised by a “Low Sensitivity”).

Fifteen land capabilities have been digitised by (DAFF, 2017) across South Africa, of which three potential land capability classes are located within the proposed footprint area’s assessment corridor, including;

- Land Capability 1 to 5 (very low to low).

The baseline findings and the sensitivities as per the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF, 2017) national raster file concur with one another. It therefore is the specialist’s opinion that the land capability and land potential of the resources in the regulated area is characterised by “Low” sensitivities (see Figure 7-2), which conforms to the requirements of an agricultural compliance statement only.

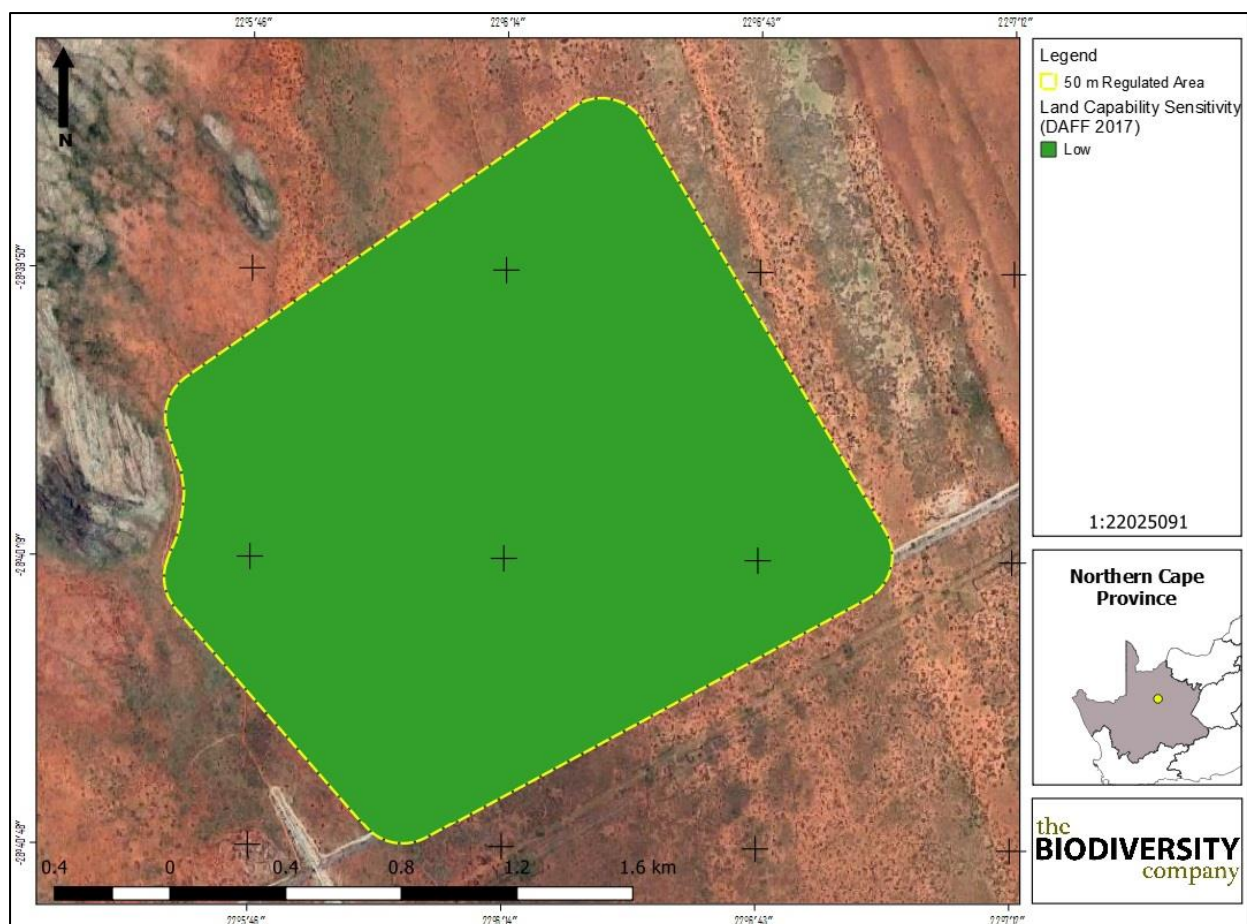


Figure 7-2 Land Capability Sensitivity (DAFF, 2017)

8 Conclusion

One soil form was identified within the assessment corridor, namely the Hutton soil form. The land capability sensitivities (DAFF, 2017) indicate land capabilities with “Low” sensitivities, which correlates with the findings from the baseline assessment.

The regulated area is not associated with any arable soils, due to the type of soil as well as the climate, which in itself limits crop production significantly. The land capabilities associated with the regulated area are only suitable for grazing, which corresponds with the current land use.

It is the specialist’s opinion that the proposed developments will have no impacts on the agricultural production ability of the land. Therefore, the proposed development may be favourably considered.

9 References

Land Type Survey Staff. 1972 - 2006. Land Types of South Africa: Digital Map (1:250 000 Scale) and Soil Inventory Databases. Pretoria: ARC-Institute for Soil, Climate, and Water.

Mucina, L., & Rutherford, M. C. 2006. The Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Strelitzia 19. Pretoria: National Biodiversity Institute.

SASA, S. A. 1999. Identification & management of the SOILS of the South African sugar industry. Mount Edgecombe: South African Sugar Association Experiment Station.

Smith, B. 2006. The Farming Handbook. Netherlands & South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press & CTA.

Soil Classification Working Group. 1991. Soil Classification A Taxonomic system for South Africa. Pretoria: The Department of Agricultural Development.

Soil Classification Working Group. 2018. Soil Classification A Taxonomic system for South Africa. Pretoria: The Department of Agricultural Development.

Appendix A- Specialist CV

**Masters in Environmental Science and
Hydropedology**



Cell: +27 79 898 4056

Email: ivan@thebiodiversitycompany.com

Identity Number: 9401105251087

Date of birth: 10 January 1994

Profile Summary

Working experience throughout Southern Africa

Working experience in West-Africa

Specialist experience with mining, construction and agriculture.

Specialist expertise include hydrogeology, pedology, land contamination, agricultural potential, land rehabilitation, rehabilitation management and wetlands resources.

Experience hydrogeological modelling (HYDRUS model)

Areas of Interest

Mining, Oil & Gas, Renewable Energy & Bulk Services Infrastructure Development, Farming, Land contamination, Sustainability and Conservation.

Key Experience

- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)
- Environmental Management Programmes (EMP)
- Wetland delineations and ecological assessments
- Rehabilitation Plans and Monitoring
- Soil-and rock classification
- Level 1, 2 and 3 hydrogeology assessments
- Agriculture potential assessments
- Land contamination assessments
- Modulation of surface- and subsurface flows (HYDRUS model)

Countries worked in

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| South Africa | Mozambique |
| Swaziland | Zimbabwe |
| Guinea | |

Nationality

South African

Languages

English – Proficient

Afrikaans – Proficient

Qualifications

- MSc (North-West University of Potchefstroom) – Hydrogeology
- BSc Honours (North-West University of Potchefstroom) – Environmental geology- Pedology and rehabilitation
- BSc Environmental sciences
- Pr Sci Nat candidateship

SELECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Project Name: Environmental impact assessment for the construction of Road DR08606 leading to Mlamli Hospital, Sterkspruit

Personal position / role on project: Wetland ecologist

Location: Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Main project features: To conduct a wetland assessment, as a component of the environmental authorisation process and Water Use Licence Application (WULA) for the construction of Road DR08606 leading to Mlamli Hospital

Project Name: Biodiversity Baseline & Impact Assessment Report for the proposed Nondvo Dam Project

Personal position / role on project: Wetland ecologist

Location: Mbabane, Swaziland

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Main project features: To conduct various assessments according to IFC standards in regard to delineation of wetlands and assessing ecosystem services.

Project Name: Agricultural Potential Assessment - Proposed Kalabasfontein Coal Mining Project Extension

Personal position / role on project: Project Manager and Soil Specialist.

Location: Bethal, Mpumalanga, South Africa

Main project features: To conduct a soil assessment to identify any sensitive resources that might be affected by the proposed mining activities and associated infrastructure as part of an environmental impact assessment.

Project Name: Soil assessment for the closure of the St Helena Shaft, Harmony

Personal position / role on project: Soil specialist

Location: Welkom, Free State, South Africa

Main project features: To conduct a thorough soil and fertility assessment to recommend relevant mitigation and rehabilitation measures to finalise closure at the relevant mine

Project Name: Wetland Functionality Assessment for the Environmental, Health and Socio-Economic Baseline Studies for Block 2 at Siguiru Gold Mine

Personal position / role on project: Wetland ecologist

Location: Siguiru, Guinea, West-Africa

Main project features: To conduct various assessments according to IUCN standards in regard to delineation of wetlands and assessing ecosystem services.

Project Name: Level 3 Hydropedological Assessment for the Sara Buffels Mining Project

Personal position / role on project: Hydropedologist

Location: Ermelo, Mpumalanga, South-Africa

Main project features: To conduct various assessments to determine the hillslope hydrology and to acquire information relevant to the vadose zone's hydraulic properties to quantify sub-surface flows by means of modelling.

Project Name: Level 3 Hydropedological Assessment for the Buffalo Coal Mining Project

Personal position / role on project: Hydropedologist

Location: Dundee, KwaZulu-Natal, South-Africa

Main project features: To conduct various assessments to determine the hillslope hydrology and to acquire information relevant to the vadose zone's hydraulic properties to quantify sub-surface flows by means of modelling

Project Name: Biodiversity Baseline & Impact Assessment for the proposed Teterane 15MW Solar PV Plant

Personal position / role on project: Ecosystem Services Specialist

Location: Cuamba, Mozambique, Southern-Africa

Main project features: To conduct various assessments according to IUCN standards in regard to ecosystem services

Project Name: Land contamination assessment for the proposed Fleurhof Development

Personal position / role on project: Soil Specialist

Location: Fleurhof, South Africa

Main project features: To conduct assessments relevant to the determination of land contamination, including recommendations, mitigations and risk assessments.

OVERVIEW

An overview of the specialist technical expertise include the following:

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- Ecological wetland assessment studies, including the integrity (health) and functioning of the wetland systems.
- Wetland offset strategy designs.
- Wetland rehabilitation plans.
- Monitoring plans for wetland systems.
- Soil classification and agricultural assessments.
- Stripping and stockpiling guidelines.
- Soil rehabilitation plans.
- Soil and stockpile monitoring plans.
- Hydropedological assessments.

TRAINING

Some of the more pertinent training undergone includes the following:

- Tools for a Wetland Assessment (Certificate of Competence) – Rhodes University 2018; and
- Workshop on digital soil mapping.

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE**Internship at SRK consulting (January 2017-August 2017)**

- Field assistant for SRK consulting during 2017 included the sampling of surface and groundwater as well as on site tests, the accumulation of various different data sets from field loggers, presenting and arranging the relevant data and ultimately using it for my own personal post-graduate studies.

Internship at The Biodiversity Company (August 2017-December 2017)

Employed as an intern (wetland and soil scientist) during the last few months of 2017. During this period, I was part of a variety of soil- and wetland projects, both as report writer and/or field assistant.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT: The Biodiversity Company (January 2018 – Present)

- Scientific report writing to ensure that the relevant standards and requirements have been attained, namely local country legislation, as well as WB, EP and IFC requirements.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

North-West University of Potchefstroom: MAGISTER SCIENTIAE (MSc) - Hydropedology:

Title: Characterisation of vadose zone processes in a tailings facility

North-West University of Potchefstroom (2016): BACCALAUREUS SCIENTIAE HONORIBUS (Hons) – Environmental Geology- Pedology and rehabilitation

North-West University of Potchefstroom (2015): BACCALAUREUS SCIENTIAE IN NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES. Majors: Geology and Geography