

Appendix C3
Background Information Letter



MAY
2022



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

DEVELOPMENT OF AN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED
INFRASTRUCTURE, SOUTHWEST OF LUCKHOFF AND KOFFIEFONTEIN

FREE STATE PROVINCE

JN Venter Beleggings Trust proposes agricultural development and associated infrastructure on a site located Southwest of Luckhoff and Koffiefontein in the Free State Province. The development will take place on a project area of approximately 2690ha in extent across 10 interlinked properties within the Letsemeng Local Municipality of the Xhariep District Municipality.

The applicant proposes to cultivate crops (wheat, maize, soya and peanuts) and potential for agricultural development (crop cultivation) in the area is apparent as several commercial agricultural developments are already occupying the neighbouring properties. The soil and climate are suited to crops cultivation, and it is anticipated that the crops yield, and quality will be fit for export and domestic distribution.

An Environmental Authorisation (EA) from the Free State Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (GNR 326), 2014, as amended is required as part of this process.

AIM OF THIS BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

This document aims to provide you, as an Interested and Affected Party (I&AP), with:

- » An overview of the proposed development which form part of the Free State development, and their associated grid connection solutions.
- » An overview of the Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes for the solar PV facilities, associated infrastructures, and specialist studies being undertaken to assess the proposed development
- » An overview of the Water Use Licence Application process.
- » Details of how you can become involved in the S&EIA processes, receive information, raise comments that may concern and/or interest you.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECTS

A developable area(2690ha) has been considered within this Scoping Report with the aim of determining the suitability from an environmental and social perspective and identifying areas that should be avoided in development planning. Within this identified development area, a development footprint or development layout will be defined for assessment in the EIA Phase. The proposed site size is larger than what will be used by the proposed development, and this gives optimal placement of infrastructure, ensuring avoidance of major identified environmental sensitivities or constraints identified through this Scoping and EIA process.

The potential for agricultural development (crop cultivation) is apparent as several commercial agricultural developments are already occupying the neighbouring properties. The soil and climate are suited to crops cultivation, and it is anticipated that the crops yield, and quality will be fit for export and domestic distribution.

COMPONENTS OF THE JN VENTER BELEGGINGS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The project area is proposed to accommodate agricultural development (cultivation), as well as most of the associated infrastructure, which is required for such development, and this will include:

1. Crop cultivation (including center pivot irrigation system);
2. Two Underground 315mm PVC fiberglass pipes with 1.4m diameter on 5.3Km pipeline route Irrigation pipeline network to take water from the dams to the various centre pivot areas for irrigation;
3. Two water storage dams with capacity of 2 million cubic meters each; A new pump stations;
4. A 9ha solar PV with alternatives and a 5MW overhead power line of 6.9km in length;
5. A Battery Energy Storage System covering surface area of 0.36ha.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In accordance with the EIA Regulations, 2017 (as amended) published in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), the applicant requires Environmental Authorisation (EA) from the Free State Department of Economic, Small Enterprise, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA). In terms of Section 24(5) of NEMA, the EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Listing Notices (GNR 327, GNR 325, and GNR 324).

An EIA is an effective planning and decision-making tools. It allows for potential environmental consequences resulting from a proposed activity to be identified and appropriately managed during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of development. It also provides an opportunity for the project applicant to be forewarned of potential environmental issues and allows for the resolution of issue(s) identified and reported on as part of the EIA processes, as well as provides opportunity for dialogue with key stakeholders and Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs).

Savannah Environmental has been appointed as the independent environmental consultant responsible for managing the application for EA and undertaking the supporting EIA processes required to identify and assess potential environmental impacts associated with the projects detailed above, as well as propose appropriate mitigation and management measures to be contained within the Environmental Management Programmes (EMPrs).

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECTS?

The development area will be assessed by independent environmental specialists to identify the potential for environmental impacts. Specialist studies that are proposed as part of the EIA processes include the following:

- » Biodiversity Impact Assessment – includes ecology, fauna and flora and assesses the potential impact and the associated disturbance of vegetation on the biodiversity of the area (including critical biodiversity areas and broad-scale processes).
- » Heritage Impact Assessment (Archaeology and Palaeontology) – which includes archaeology and palaeontology and assesses the potential of disturbance to or destruction of heritage sites and fossils during the construction phase through excavation and ploughing activities.
- » Social Impact Assessment – which assesses the positive and negative social impacts associated with the construction and operation of the JN Venter Beleggings Trust Agricultural Development.

Site-specific studies will be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposed development, to delineate areas of sensitivity within the affected farm portions, assess impacts associated with the projects and make recommendations regarding avoidance, management, and mitigation of impacts. Studies will be informed by available information and detailed field investigations undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidelines and protocols. Once the constraining environmental factors have been determined, the layouts for the proposed development can be determined and presented in the EIA reporting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The sharing of information forms the basis of the public participation process and offers I&APs the opportunity to become actively involved in the EIA processes. Comments and inputs from I&APs are encouraged to ensure that potential impacts are considered throughout the EIA processes. The public participation process aims to ensure that:

- » Information containing all relevant facts in respect of the application are made available to I&APs for review and inputs.
- » I&AP participation is facilitated in such a manner that they are provided with reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed projects.
- » Adequate review periods are provided for I&APs to comment on the findings of the Scoping and the EIA Reports.

In order to ensure effective participation, the public participation processes include the following:

- » Identifying I&APs, including affected and adjacent landowners and occupiers of land, and relevant Organs of State, and recording details within a database.
- » Notifying I&APs of the commencement of the EIA processes in the local printed media and distributing this Background Information Document (BID) to registered I&APs.
- » Providing access to registered parties to an online stakeholder engagement platform, which centralises project information and stakeholder input in a single digital / multi-media (WhatsApp) platform.
- » Providing an opportunity for I&APs to engage with the project team.
- » Placing site notices at the affected project development properties.
- » Placing an advertisement in a local newspaper and using a local radio station announcing the availability of the reports' review and comment period.
- » Notifying I&APs of the release of the Reports for review and comment, by which dates written comments must be received and inviting them to attend the public meetings to be held.
- » Virtual meetings with key stakeholders to be held.
- » Providing an opportunity to engage with the project team via appropriate virtual platform (MS Teams / Zoom, etc), multi-media (i.e., SMS / WhatsApp) (to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19) or telephone.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN I&AP

In terms of the EIA Regulations, 2017, as amended,) and the DFFE Public Participation Guidelines, 2017, your attention is drawn to your responsibilities as an I&AP:

- » To participate in the EIA processes, you must register yourself on the I&AP database by completing the Registration and Comment Form included in the BID.
- » You are required to disclose any direct business, financial, personal, or other interest that you may have in the approval or refusal of the application.
- » You must ensure that any comments regarding the proposed projects are submitted within the stipulated timeframes.

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

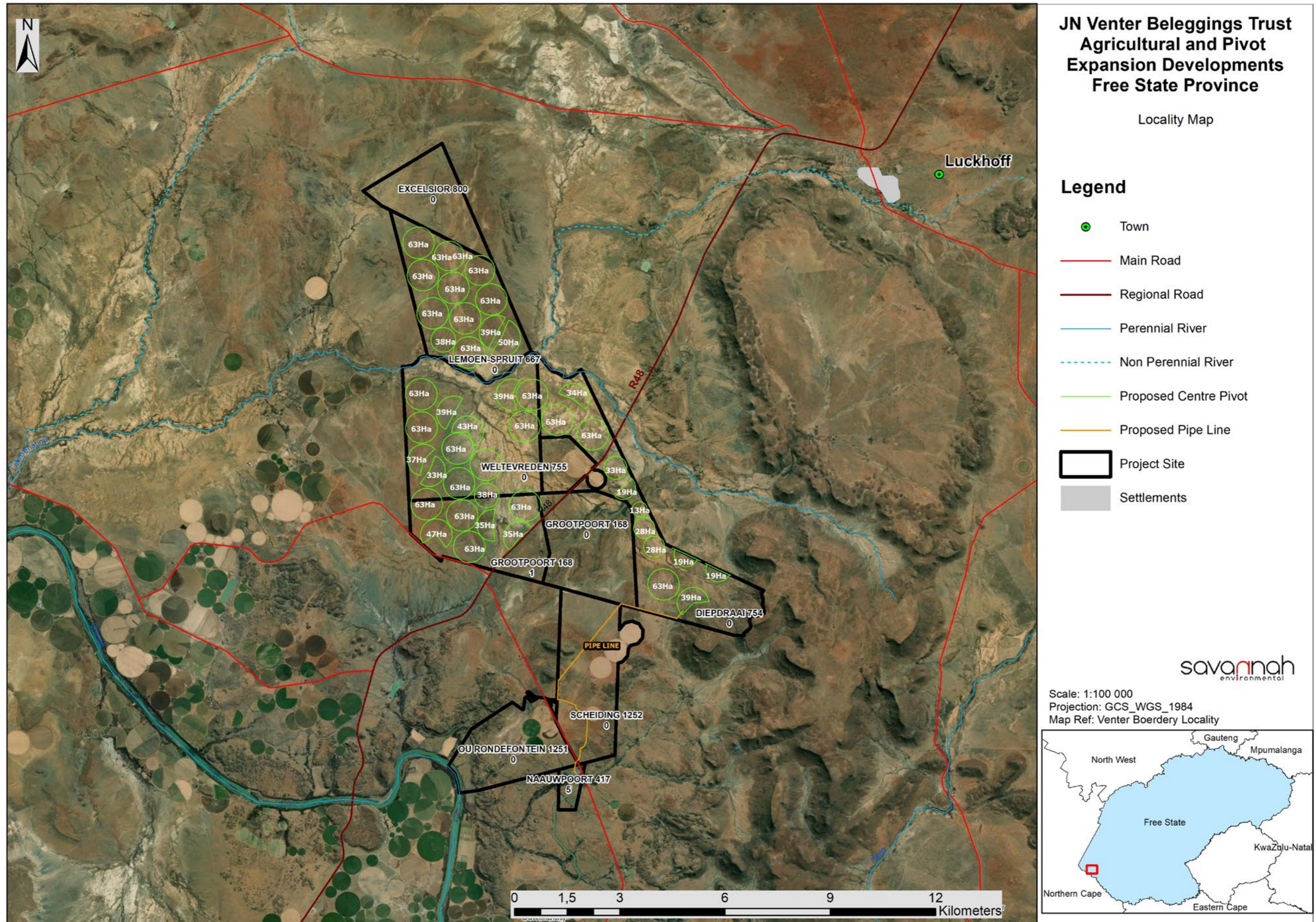
- » By responding by phone, fax, or e-mail to the invitation for your involvement.
- » By returning the reply form to the relevant contact person.
- » By engaging with the project team during the EIA processes.
- » By contacting the environmental consultant with technical queries or comments.
- » By reviewing and commenting on the reports within the stipulated review and comment periods.

If you consider yourself and I&AP for the proposed projects, we urge you to make use of the opportunities created by the public participation process to provide comment, raise issues and concerns which affect and/or interest you, or request further information. Your input forms a key element of the EIA processes.

By completing and submitting the accompanying reply form, you automatically register yourself as an I&AP for the proposed projects, and are ensured that your comments, concerns, or queries raised regarding the projects will be noted. Please note that all comments received will be included in the project documentation, and this may include personal information.



Figure 1: Locality map





COMMENTS AND QUERIES

Direct all comments, queries or responses to:

Nondumiso Bulunga at
Savannah Environmental (Pty) Ltd

P.O. Box 148, Sunninghill, 2157

Tel: 011 656 3237

Mobile number: 060 978 8396 (including "please call me")

Fax: 086 684 0547

Email: publicprocess@savannahsa.com

To view project documentation, visit

www.savannahsa.com/public-documents/energy-generation/



MEI
2022



OMGEWINGSIMPAKASSESSERING EN OPENBARE DEELNAMEPROSESSE

ONTWIKKELING VAN 'N LANDBOU-ONTWIKKELING EN VERWANTE
INFRASTRUKTUUR, SUIDWES VAN LUCKHOFF EN KOFFIEFONTEIN

VRYSTAATPROVINSIE

JN Venter Beleggings Trust stel 'n landbou-ontwikkeling en verwante infrastruktuur voor op 'n terrein suidwes van Luckhoff en Koffiefontein in die Vrystaatprovinsie. Die ontwikkeling sal plaasvind op 'n projekgebied met 'n omvang van omtrent 2690ha, wat strek oor 10 aaneengeskakelde eiendomme binne die Letsemeng- plaaslike munisipaliteit van die Xhariep-distriksmunisipaliteit.

Die applikant stel die verbouing van gewasse (koring, mielies, soja en grondboontjies) voor, en die potensiaal vir landbou-ontwikkeling (gewasverbouing) in die gebied kan gesien word, aangesien verskeie kommersiële landbou-ontwikkelings reeds op die naburige eiendomme bedryf word. Die grond en klimaat is geskik vir gewasverbouing, en daar word ver wag dat die opbrengs en gehalte van die gewasse geskik sal wees vir uitvoer en vir binnelandse verspreiding.

'n Omgewingsmagtiging (OM) van die Vrystaatse Departement van Kleinsake-ontwikkeling, Toerisme en Omgewingsake (DESTEA) in ooreenstemming met die vereistes van die Wet op Nasionale Omgewingsbestuur, 1998 (Wet 107 van 1998) (NEMA) en die Omgewingsimpakassessering- (OIA) regulasies (GNR 326), 2014, soos gewysig, word vereis as deel van hierdie proses.

DOEL VAN HIERDIE INLIGTINGSDOKUMENT

Hierdie dokument is saamgestel om jou, as Belanghebbende en Geraakte Party (B&GP), te voorsien van:

- » 'n Oorsig van die voorgestelde ontwikkeling wat deel uitmaak van die Vrystaat-ontwikkeling, en die verwante netwerkverbindingsooplossings.
- » 'n Oorsig van die Omvangbepaling- en Omgewingsimpakassessering (OIA)-prosesse vir die sonkrag-PV-fasiliteite, verwante infrastrukture en spesialisstudies wat onderneem word om die voorgestelde ontwikkeling te assesseer.
- » 'n Oorsig van die Watergebruik-lisensie-aansoekproses.
- » Besonderhede van hoe jy betrokke kan raak by die O&OIA-prosesse, inligting kan bekom, kommentare kan lewer oor bekommernisse en/of waarin jy belangstel.

OORSIG VAN DIE VOORGESTELDE PROJEKTE

'n Ontwikkelbare gebied (2690ha) is oorweeg in hierdie Omvangbepalingverslag met die doel om vas te stel wat die volhoubaarheid is vanuit 'n omgewings- en sosiale perspektief en om gebiede te identifiseer wat vermy moet word gedurende die ontwikkelingsbeplanning. Binne hierdie geïdentifiseerde ontwikkelingsgebied sal 'n ontwikkelingsvoetspoor of ontwikkelingsuitleg bepaal word wat gedurende die OIA-fase geassesseer sal word. Die voorgestelde terrein is groter as wat deur die voorgestelde ontwikkeling gebruik sal word vir die optimale plasing van infrastruktuur wat sal verseker dat belangrike geïdentifiseerde omgewingsensitiwiteite en -beperkings wat deur hierdie Omvangbepaling- en OIA-prosesse geïdentifiseer word, vermy sal word.

Die potensiaal vir landbou-ontwikkeling (gewasverbouing) kan gesien word, aangesien verskeie kommersiële landbou-ontwikkelings reeds op die naburige eiendomme bedryf word. Die grond en klimaat is geskik vir gewasverbouing en daar word ver wag dat die opbrengs en gehalte van die gewasse geskik sal wees vir uitvoer en vir binnelandse verspreiding.

KOMPONENTE VAN DIE JN VENTER BELEGGINGS-LANDBOU-ONTWIKKELING

Daar word voorgestel dat die projekgebied landbou-ontwikkeling (verbouing) sal huisves, asook die meeste van die verwante infrastruktuur wat nodig is vir so 'n ontwikkeling, en dit sal insluit:

1. Gewasverbouing (insluitend spilpuntbesproeiingstelsel);
2. Twee ondergrondse 315mm-PVC-veselglaspype met 'n deursnee van 1.4m op 'n 5.3km lange pyplynroete; die besproeiingpyplynnetwerk sal die water van die damme na die verskillende spilpuntgebiede vir besproeiing neem;
3. Twee wateropgaardamme met 'n kapasiteit van 2 miljoen kubieke meter elk; 'n nuwe pompstasie;
4. 'n 9ha-sonkrag PV met alternatiewe en 'n 5MW- oorhoofse kragdraad van 6.9km lank;
5. 'n Battery-energie-bergingstelsel wat 'n gebied van 0.36ha beslaan.



OMGEWINGSIMPAKASSESSERINGPROSES

In ooreenstemming met die OIA-regulasies, 2017 (soos gewysig) en gepubliseer ingevolge Afdeling 24(5) van die Wet op Nasionale Omgewingsbestuur (107 van 1998) (NEMA), benodig die applikant Omgewingsmagtiging (OM) deur die Vrystaatse Departement van Ekonomiese, Kleinsake-ontwikkeling, Toerisme en Omgewingsake (DESTEA). Ingevolge Afdeling 24(5) van NEMA, die OIA-regulasies 2017 (soos gewysig) en Lyskennisgewings (GNR 327, GNR 325 en GNR 324).

'n OIA is doeltreffende beplanning- en besluitneminginstrumente. Daardeur kan potensiële omgewingsgevolge geïdentifiseer word wat kan voortspruit uit 'n voorgestelde aktiwiteit, en dit kan dan op 'n gepaste wyse bestuur word gedurende die konstruksie-, bedryf- en buitediensstellingfases van die ontwikkeling. Dit bied ook geleentheid dat die projekapplikant bewus gemaak word van potensiële omgewingskwessies en laat toe dat kwessie(s) wat as deel van die OIA-prosesse geïdentifiseer en gerapporteer word, opgelos kan word, en dit gee geleentheid vir dialoog met sleutelbelanghebbendes en Belanghebbende en Geraakte Partye (B&GP's).

Savannah Environmental is aangestel as die onafhanklike omgewingskonsultant wat verantwoordelik is vir die bestuur van die aansoek vir OM en om die ondersteunende OIA-prosesse te onderneem wat vereis word om potensiële omgewingsimpakte te identifiseer en te assesseer wat met die projekte wat hierbo uiteengesit is, verband hou, en hulle moet gepaste mitigerings- en bestuursmaatreëls voorstel wat binne die Omgewingsbestuursprogramme (OBP's) vervat moet word.

WAT IS DIE POTENSIËLE OMGEWINGSIMPakte WAT MET DIE VOORGESTELDE PROJEKTE VERBAND HOU?

Die ontwikkelingsgebied sal geassesseer word deur onafhanklike omgewingspesialiste om die potensiaal vir omgewingsimpakte te identifiseer. Spesialisstudies wat voorgestel word as deel van die OIA-prosesse sluit die volgende in:

- » Biodiversiteit-impakassessering – sluit in ekologie, fauna en flora, en assesseer die potensiële impak en die verwante versteuring van plantegroei op die biodiversiteit van die gebied (insluitend kritieke biodiversiteitsgebiede en wyeskaal-prosesse).
- » Erfenis-impakassessering (argeologie en paleontologie) – wat argeologie en paleontologie insluit en wat die potensiaal assesseer vir die versteuring of vernietiging van erfenisgebiede en fossiele tydens die konstruksiefase deur uitgrawings en ploegaktiwiteite.
- » Sosiale impakassessering – wat die positiewe en negatiewe sosiale impakte assesseer wat verband hou met die konstruksie en bedryf van die JN Venter Beleggings Trust-landbou-ontwikkeling.

Terreinspesifieke studies sal onderneem word om die potensiële impak van die voorgestelde ontwikkeling te assesseer, sensitiewe gebiede binne die geraakte plaasgedeeltes uit te beeld, impakte te assesseer wat met die projek verband hou en om aanbevelings te maak oor vermyding, bestuur en mitigerings van impakte. Studies sal ingelig wees deur beskikbare inligting en gedetailleerde veldondersoeke wat onderneem sal word ooreenkomstig die relevante riglyne en protokolle. Wanneer die beperkende omgewingsfaktore eers bepaal is, kan die voorgestelde ontwikkeling vasgestel word en in die OIA-verslag voorgelê word.

OPENBARE DEELNAMEPROSES

Die deel van inligting vorm die grondslag van die openbare deelnameproses en bied B&GP's die geleentheid om aktief betrokke te raak by die OIA-prosesse. Kommentare en insette van die B&GP's word aangemoedig om te verseker dat potensiële impakte regdeur die OIA-prosesse in ag geneem word. Die doel van die openbare deelnameproses is om te verseker dat:

- » Inligting wat alle relevante feite bevat ten opsigte van die aansoek beskikbaar gemaak word vir B&GP's vir hersiening en insette.
- » B&GP-deelname op so 'n wyse gefasiliteer word dat hulle voorsien word van 'n redelike geleentheid om kommentaar te lewer oor die voorgestelde projekte.
- » Genoegsame hersieningstydperke voorsien word sodat B&GP's kommentaar kan lewer oor bevindings van die Omvangbepaling- en OIA-verslae.

Om doeltreffende deelname te verseker, sluit die openbare deelnameprosesse die volgende in:

- » Die identifisering van B&GP's, insluitend geraakte en naburige grondeienaars en grondbewoners en relevante Staatsorgane, en die vaslegging van besonderhede op 'n databasis.
- » In kennisstelling van B&GP's van die aanvang van die OIA-prosesse in die plaaslike gedrukte media en die verspreiding van hierdie Agtergrondinligtingdokument (AID) aan geregistreerde B&GP's.
- » Die voorsiening van toegang aan geregistreerde partye tot 'n aanlynplatform vir belanghebbende-deelname, wat projekinligting en belanghebbende-insette sentraliseer in 'n enkele digitale/multi-media- (WhatsApp) platform.
- » Die voorsiening van 'n geleentheid aan B&GP's om betrokke te raak by die projekspan.
- » Die plasing van terreinkennisgewings by die geraakte projek se ontwikkelingseiendom.
- » Plasing van 'n advertensie in 'n plaaslike koerant en dat 'n plaaslike radiostasie die beskikbaarheid van die verslag se hersienings- en kommentaartydperk aankondig.
- » Stel B&GP's in kennis van die vrystelling van die Verslae vir hersiening en kommentaar, sowel as teen watter datums skriftelike kommentaar ingedien moet wees, en nooi hulle om die openbare vergaderinge by te woon wat gehou gaan word.
- » Virtuele vergaderings met sleutelbelanghebbendes sal gehou word.
- » Bied geleentheid om betrokke te raak by die projekspan deur die gepaste virtuele platform (MS Teams / Zoom, ens.), multi-media (d.w.s., SMS / WhatsApp) (om die risiko's ten opsigte van COVID-19 te verminder) of telefonies.



JOU VERANTWOORDELIKHEDE AS 'N B&GP

Ingevolge die OIA-regulasies, 2017, (soos gewysig) en die DFFE se Riglyne vir Openbare Deelname, 2017, word jou aandag gevestig op jou verantwoordelikhede as 'n B&GP:

- » Om aan die OIA-prosesse deel te neem, moet jy jou registreer op die B&GP-databasis deur die Registrasie- en kommentaarvorm in te vul wat by die AID ingesluit is.
- » Jy moet enige direkte sake-, finansiële, persoonlike of ander belange openbaar maak wat jy moontlik het in die goedkeuring of weiering van die aansoek.
- » Jy moet seker maak dat enige kommentare ten opsigte van die voorgestelde projekte binne die gestipuleerde tydramwerke ingedien word.

HOE OM BETROKKE TE RAAK

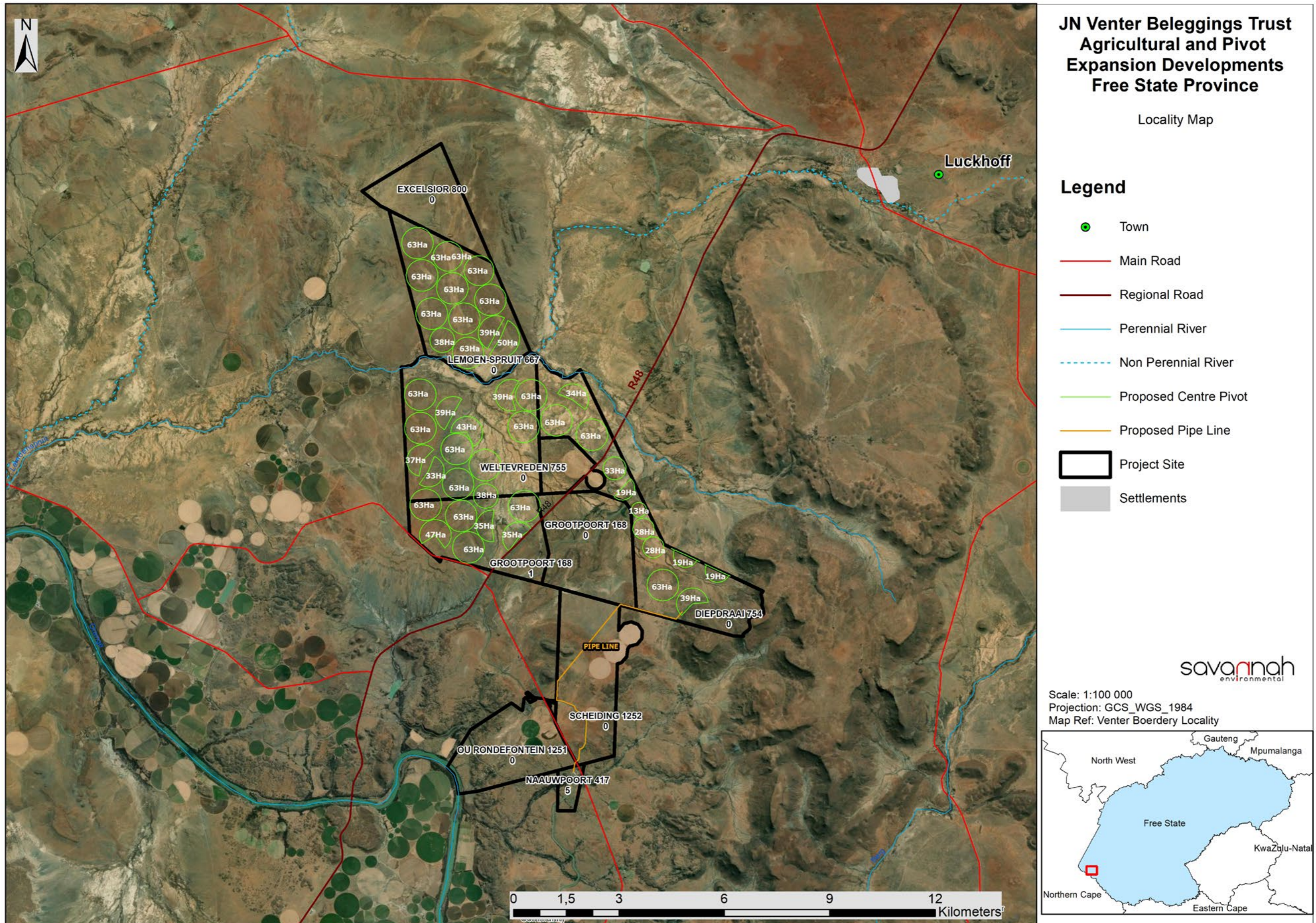
- » Deur telefonies, per faks of per e-pos te antwoord op die uitnodiging vir jou betrokkenheid.
- » Deur die antwoordvorm terug te besorg aan die relevante kontakpersoon.
- » Deur betrokke te raak by die projekspan gedurende die OIA-prosesse.
- » Deur die omgewingskonsultant te kontak oor tegniese kwessies of kommentare.
- » Deur die verslae te hersien en kommentaar te lewer binne die gestipuleerde tydperke vir hersiening en kommentaar.

Indien jy jousef as 'n B&GP vir die voorgestelde projekte beskou, spoor ons jou aan om gebruik te maak van die geleentheid wat geskep word deur die openbare deelnameproses deur kommentaar te lewer, kwessies en bekommernisse te opper wat jou raak en/of waarin jy belangstel, of om nog inligting te vra. Jou insette maak 'n sleutelement van die OIA-prosesse uit.

Deur die meegaande antwoordvorm te voltooi en in te dien, registreer jy jou outomaties as 'n B&GP vir die voorgestelde projekte, en verseker jy dat jou kommentaar, bekommernisse of navrae ten opsigte van die projek in aanmerking geneem sal word. Let asseblief wel dat alle kommentaar wat ontvang word, ingesluit sal word by die projekdokumentasie, en dit kan persoonlike inligting insluit.



Figure 1: Liggingskaart





KOMMENTAAR EN NAVRAE

Rig alle kommentaar, navrae of antwoorde aan:

Nondumiso Bulunga
Savannah Environmental (Edms.) Bpk.
Posadres: Posbus 148, Sunninghill, Johannesburg, 2157
Tel.: 011 656 3237
Selfoon: 060 978 8396 (insluitend "please call me")
Faks: 086 684 0547
E-pos: publicprocess@savannahsa.com

Besoek www.savannahSA.com om die aanlyn skakelingsplatform vir belanghebbers te besoek en om die projek se dokumentasie te besigtig.

Kopiereg: Savannah Environmental (Edms.) Bpk.

