

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT



THE PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON PORTION 1 & 2 OF THE FARM KWADE HOEK 52 AND THE REMAINING EXTENT OF THE FARM SCHELM DRIFT 53, MAKANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, EASTERN CAPE

INTRODUCTION

Habitat Link Consulting (Pty) Ltd has been appointed by Seriso 661 (Pty) Ltd (the Proponent) to apply for an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the abovementioned project. Notice is hereby given in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended) of the proposed agricultural development on Portion 1 and Portion 2 of the Farm Kwade Hoek 52 and on the Remaining Extent of the Farm Schelm Drift 53, which is located approximately 50 km northwest of the town of Grahamstown, situated within the Makana Local Municipality, Eastern Cape province (Figure 1). The development will include the cultivation of approximately 150 hectares (ha) of land for lucerne including service tracks and irrigation pipelines within the same footprint and the installation of water supply pipelines from an existing water off-take point.

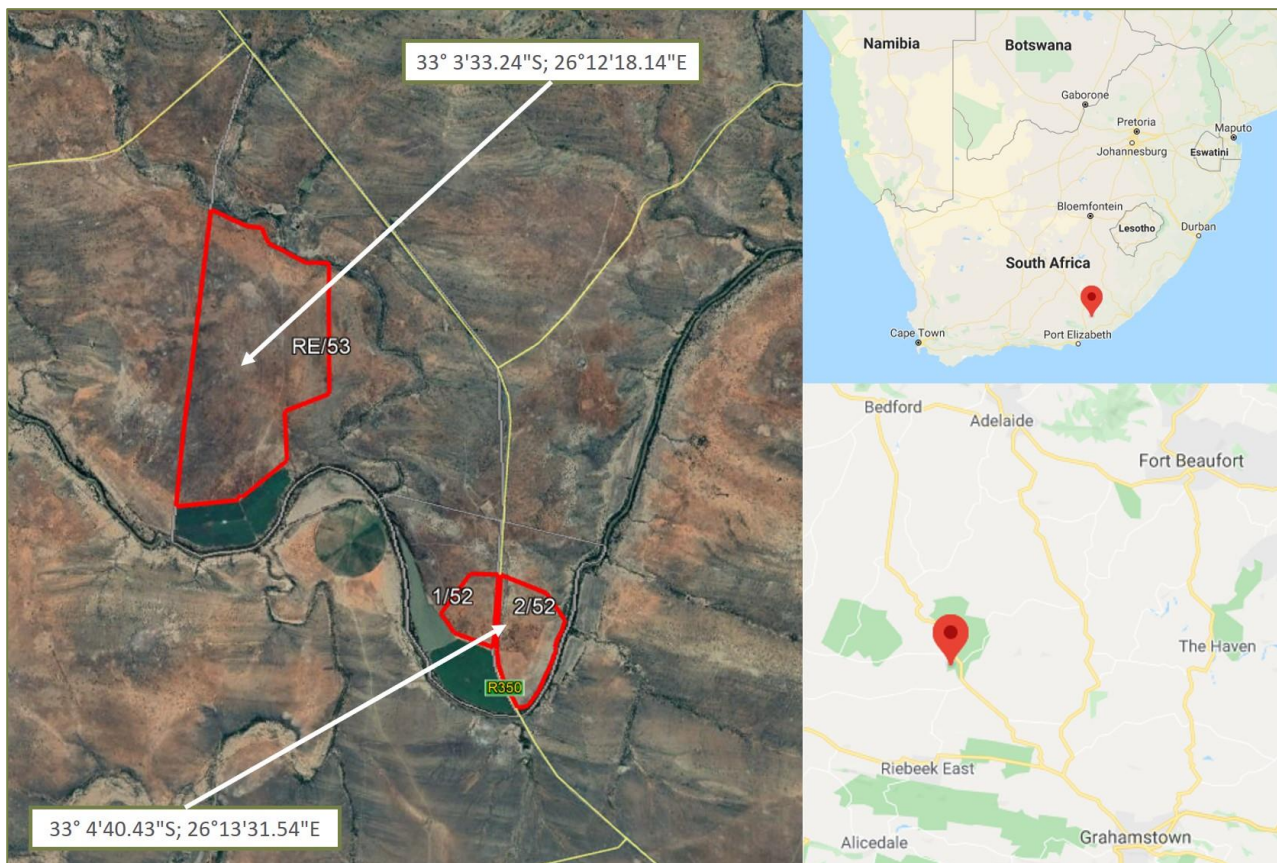


Figure 1: Locality map of the proposed Keur Kloof citrus development.

AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to ensure that people who are interested in, or affected by, the proposed project are provided with the relevant information, including the process being followed. Registering as an Interested and/or Affected Party (I&AP) allows individuals or groups to contribute ideas, issues, and concerns relating to the proposed project. I&APs also have an opportunity to review all of the reports and submit their comments on these reports. All of the comments that are received will be included in the final reports that are submitted to the Competent Authority (CA). All I&APs are hereby invited to register their interest and submit initial comments on any aspect of the project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development includes the clearance of approximately 150 ha of the 700-ha properties for the establishment of lucerne, as well as the routing of water pipelines for irrigation purposes (Figure 2). The area of cultivation will be laid out in several crop circles and will be separated by service tracks that will double as routes for the irrigation pipelines. It is anticipated the main service tracks amongst cultivated area will remain unpaved and no new access tracks leading to the orchards will be required as there are a number of existing tracks currently present within the property. It is proposed that there will be up to four (4) crop circles that will utilise circular sprinkler systems for irrigation of crops.

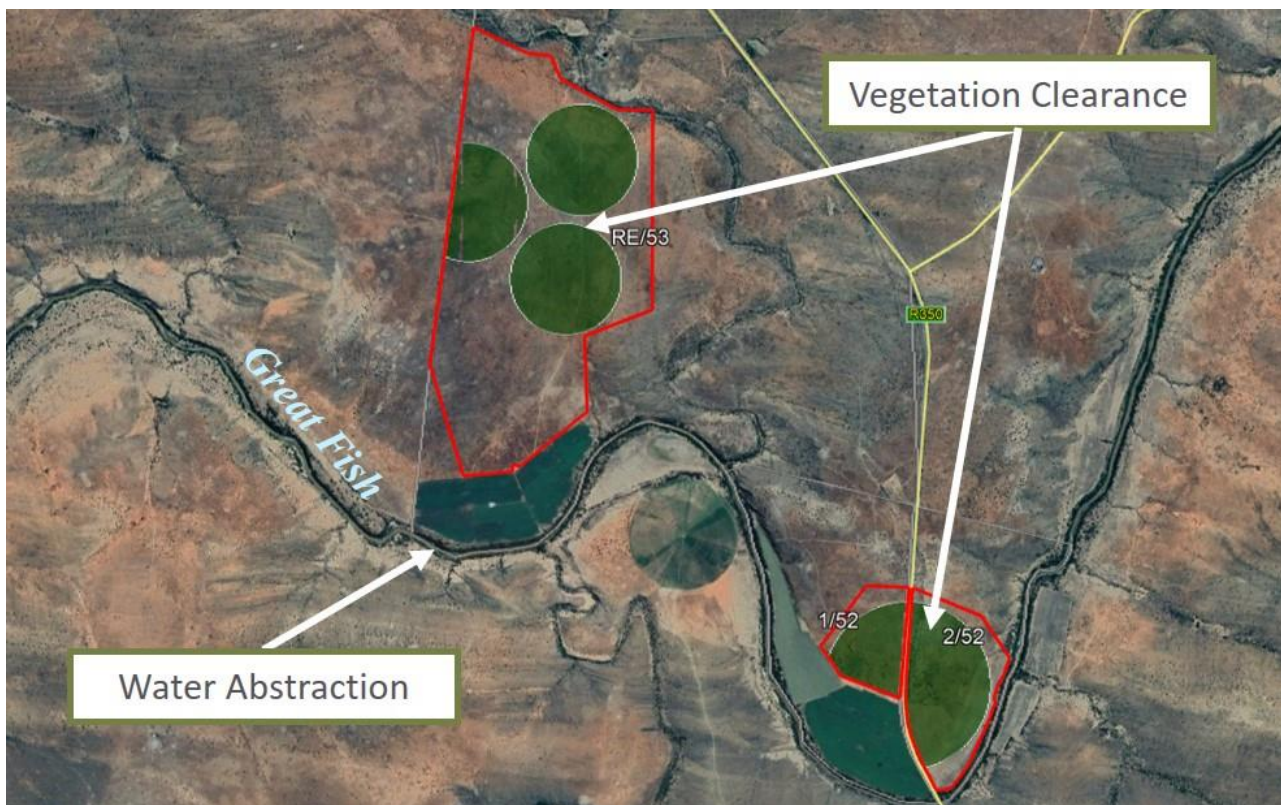


Figure 2: Proposed cultivation of lucerne.

The existing area located to the south of the proposed development area is currently under cultivation subject to the outcome of a separate authorisation process. Water is abstracted from the Great Fish River and is reticulated via several pumps to be utilised on the farm. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) have granted combined irrigation rights of 1 350 000 m³ per annum for the purpose of irrigation of 150 ha lucerne, as stated in the Water Use Licence (WUL).

The study area consists of a combination of natural riverine vegetation associated with the Great Fish River, agricultural land and natural Karoo vegetation. The surrounding land uses include several existing irrigated pastures and natural areas. Several smaller artificial wetlands occur throughout the farm with one natural wetland located in the southern section in close proximity to the Great Fish River.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) (Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended)

The proposed development constitutes a number of listed activities in terms of the 2014 EIA Regulations (as amended in 2017) as promulgated under NEMA. As such, the proposed development requires an EA prior to commencement of construction and operation. The following listed activities published in GN R. 983, 984 and 985 (as amended in GN R. 327, 325 and 324) are triggered:

No.	Description	Triggering activity
LISTING NOTICE 1 – GN R. 983 (GN R. 327)		
Activity 19	The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse.	The proposed development involves the removal and depositing of soil over a 150 ha area that traverses a number of non-perennial drainage line as defined by the National Geospatial Information (NGI) database.
LISTING NOTICE 2 – GN R. 984 (GN R. 325)		
Activity 15	The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation.	The proposed development site will require clearance of approximately 33.8 ha of indigenous vegetation.

Based on the listed activity identified in **Listing Notice 2**, the proposed project will be **subject to scoping and environmental impact reporting (S&EIR) process**. In order to comply with the NEMA, the impacts associated with the activities listed above will need to be identified and assessed during this process and will include the necessary specialist studies. The Competent Authority (CA) for this project is identified as the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT).

National Water Act (NWA) (Act No. 36 of 1998, as amended)

The NWA is the primary regulatory legislation for the control, management and use of water resources. Section 21 of the NWA sets out water uses that may require registration or licencing. This includes any development activities that may impact upon the flow and function of watercourses. The proposed development may occur within 500 m of a wetland and/or may cross a natural drainage line. As such, the need for a Section 21 (c) and (i) water use authorisation (WUA) will need to be discussed with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). Should a WUA be required, this will be undertaken in parallel with the S&EIR process. In addition, the storage of additional water in the existing farm dams as well as its abstraction for the irrigation of pastures, are defined water uses according to the NWA. Section 21 of the NWA water use activities include:

- (a) *taking water from a water resource – **currently authorised***
- (b) *storing water*
- (c) *impeding or diverting the flow of water in a water course*
- (i) *altering the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse*

National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) (Act No. 25 of 1999, as amended)

The NHRA provides for the protection and management of South Africa's heritage resources. Section 38 of the NHRA notes that '*any person who intends to undertake a development categorised as—*

- (c) *any development or other activity which will change the character of a site—*
 - (i) *exceeding 5 000 m² in extent*

must at the very earliest stages of initiating such a development, notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.'

The proposed 150 ha development will change the character of the site. As such, a Heritage Notice of Intent to Develop (NID) will thus need to be submitted to the provincial heritage authority, along with a Heritage Assessment. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the NEMA process.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT

The following preliminary environmental issues have been identified and will be investigated during the application process:

- Loss of vegetation communities;
- Impacts on biodiversity and plant Species of Conservation Concern;
- Disruption of ecosystem function and processes (e.g. invasion of alien plant species);
- Impact on faunal habitats;
- Impact on water availability and water resources;
- Soil compaction and erosion;
- Dust, noise and other nuisance aspects;
- Generation of waste (e.g. fruit waste);
- Impact on visual aesthetics;
- Loss of sites of archaeological and/or palaeontological importance;
- Employment creation and socio-economic benefits; and
- Improvement in food security.

These and other impacts will be assessed in detail during the S&EIR process and mitigation measures to reduce the significance of the negative impacts will be provided in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr).

SCOPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The listed activities trigger the requirement of an S&EIR process (Figure 3). This process is initiated through a scoping phase as dictated by Section 21 of the 2014 NEMA EIA Regulations (as amended in 2017). The scoping process serves to bring stakeholders on board by means of consultation with relevant government departments, allowing for the identification of potential issues and concerns at the onset of the study. After completion of the scoping phase, detailed specialist studies will be undertaken in order to address issues identified during the scoping phase. The drafting of the EIA report is then undertaken in accordance with Section 23 of the 2014 NEMA EIA Regulations (as amended in 2017). All draft reports are submitted for public review as per Section 41 of the regulations. The recommendations cited in the EIA report are detailed in an EMPr, which defines the actions to be implemented, and is required to be submitted alongside the EIA report.

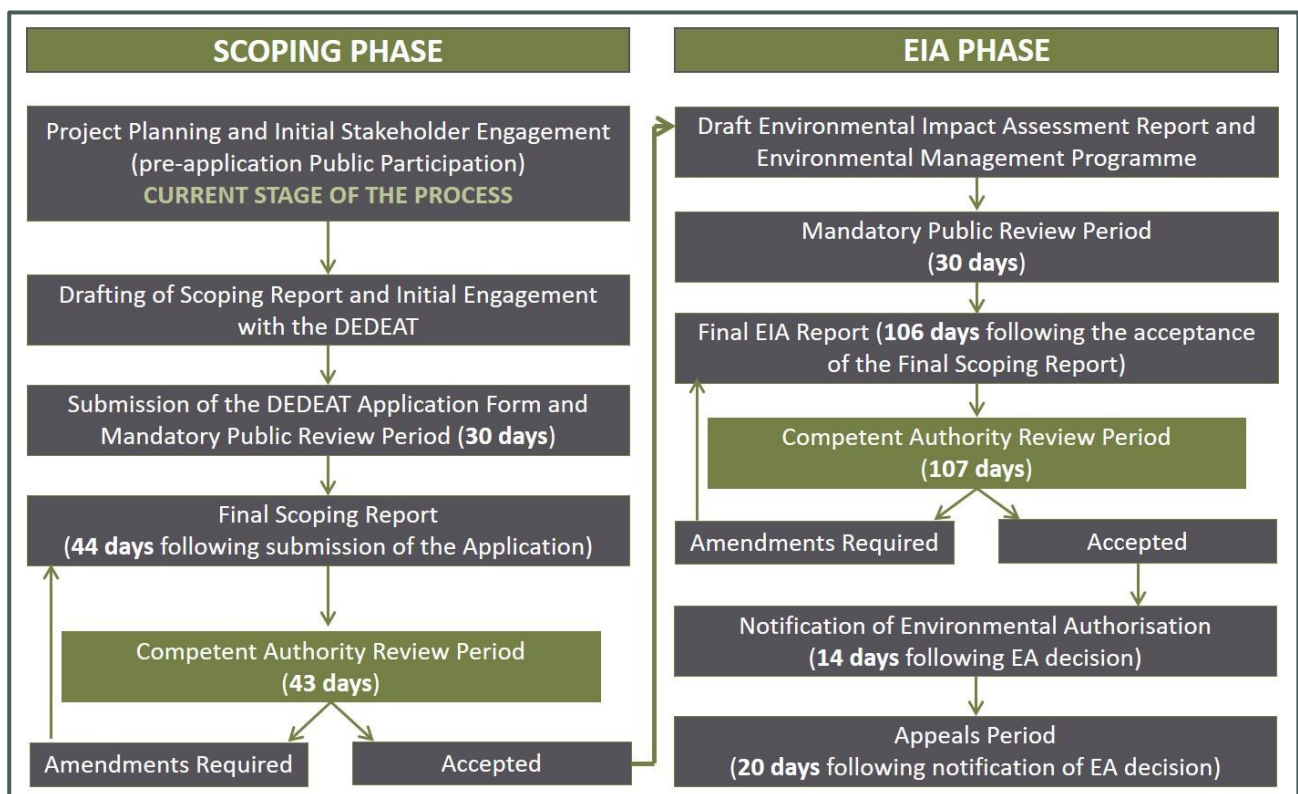


Figure 3: Scoping and Environmental Impact Reporting (S&EIR) process.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

In terms of NEMA, public participation forms an integral part of the S&EIR process. The Public Participation Process (PPP) provides people who may be affected by the proposed development with an opportunity to provide comment and to raise issues of concern about the project, or to make suggestions that may result in enhanced benefits for the project. Comments and issues raised during the PPP will be captured, evaluated and included in an Issues and Responses Trail (IRT). These issues will be addressed and included in the final versions of the S&EIR reports, which will be submitted to the DEDEAT.

INVITATION TO COMMENT

Should you wish to express your views regarding this proposed development, please send us your written comments. The names of all registered Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), together with the comments received, will be incorporated into the IRT and will be submitted to the competent authority (DEDEAT). Please note that I&APs must provide their name, contact details (postal address, telephone number and email address) and an indication of any direct business, financial, personal, or other interest they may have in the approval or refusal of the proposed development.

Please submit your name, contact information (address, telephone number, email address, postal address) and any written comments to Habitat Link Consulting:



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