WETLAND ASSESSMENT

Waterkloof 214 and 269

Inflorescence of indigenous grass species *Imperata cylindrica* (Cottonwool Grass) at the site.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

NOVEMBER 2020

COMPILED BY:

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(M.Sc, *Cum Laude*; Pr.Sci.Nat, Reg. No. 400244/05)

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I) SPECIALIST EXPERTISE

SYNOPTIC CV: REINIER. F. TERBLANCHE

Reinier is an ecologist and in particular a habitat specialist with an exceptional combination of botanical and zoological expertise which he keeps fostering, updating and improving. He is busy with a PhD for which he registered at the Department of Conservation Ecology at the University of Stellenbosch in July 2013. The PhD research focuses on the landscape ecology of selected terrestrial and wetland butterflies in South Africa. Reinier's experience includes being a lecturer in ecology and zoology at the North West University, Potchefstroom Campus (1998-2008). Reinier collaborates with a number of institutes, organizations and universities on animal, plant and habitat research.

Qualifications:

Qualification	**Main subject matter**	**University**
M.Sc *Cum Laude*, **1998:** Botany: Ecology	Quantitative study of invertebrate assemblages and plant assemblages of rangelands in grasslands.	North-West University, Potchefstroom
B.Sc Honns *Cum Laude*, **1992** Botany: Taxonomy	Distinctions in all subjects: Plant Anatomy, Taxonomy, Modern Systematics, System Modelling, Plant Ecology, Taxonomy Project, Statistics Attendance Course.	North-West University, Potchefstroom
B.Sc Botany, Zoology	Main subjects: Botany, Zoology.	North-West University, Potchefstroom
Higher Education Diploma, 1990	Numerous subjects aimed at holistic training of teachers.	North-West University, Potchefstroom

In research Reinier specializes in conservation biology, threatened butterfly species, vegetation dynamics and ant assemblages at butterfly habitats as well as enhancing quantitative studies on butterflies of Africa. He has published extensively in the fields of taxonomy, biogeography and ecology in popular journals, peer-reviewed scientific journals and as co-author and co-editor of books (see 10 examples beneath).

Reinier practices as an ecological consultant and has been registered as a Professional Natural Scientist by SACNASP since 2005: Reg. No. 400244/05. His experience in consultation includes: Flora and fauna habitat surveys, Threatened species assessments, Riparian vegetation index surveys, Compilation of Ecological Management Plans, Biodiversity Action Plans and Status quo of biodiversity for Environmental Management Frameworks, Wetland Assessments, Management of Rare Wetland Species.

Recent activities/ awards: Best Poster Award at Oppenheimer De Beers Group Research Conference 2015, Johannesburg. One of the co-authors of Guidelines for Standardised Global Butterfly Monitoring, 2015, Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network, Leipzig, Germany (UNEP-WCMC), GEO BON Technical Series 1. Most recent award: Awarded the prestigious Torben Larsen Memorial Tankard in October 2017; one is awarded annually to the person responsible for the most outstanding written account on Afrotropical Lepidoptera. Lectured as Conservationist-in-Residence in the Wildlife Conservation Programme of the African Leadership University, Kigali, Rwanda, 9-23 February 2019.

EXPERIENCE

Lecturer: Zoology 1998-2008	Main subject matter and level	Organization
Lectured subjects	- 3rd year level Ecology, Plantparasitology - 2nd year level Ethology - *Master's degree* Evolutionary Ethology, Systematics in Practice, Morphology and Taxonomy of Insect Pests, Wetlands.	North-West University, Potchefstroom and University of South Africa
Co-promoter	PhD: Edge, D.A. 2005. Ecological factors that influence the survival of the Brenton Blue butterfly	North-West University, Potchefstroom
Study leader/ assistant study leader	Six MSc students, One BSc Honn student: Various quantitative biodiversity studies (terrestrial and aquatic).	North-West University, Potchefstroom
Teacher **1994-1998**	Biology and Science, Secondary School	Afrikaans Hoër Seunskool, Pretoria
Owned Anthene Ecological CC **2008 – present**	- Flora and Fauna habitat surveys - Highly specialized ecological surveys - Riparian vegetation index surveys - Ecological Management Plans - Biodiversity Action Plans - Biodiversity section of Environmental Management Frameworks - Wetland assessments	Private Closed Corporation that has been subcontracted by many companies
Herbarium assistant **1988-1991**	- Part-time assistant at the A.P. Goossens herbarium, Botany Department, North-West University, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 (as a student).	North-West University, Potchefstroom

10 EXAMPLES OF PUBLICATIONS OF WHICH R.F. TERBLANCHE IS AUTHOR/ CO-AUTHOR

(Three books, two chapters in books and five articles are listed here as examples)

1. HENNING, G.A., **TERBLANCHE, R.F.** & BALL, J.B. (eds) **2009.** *South African Red Data Book: butterflies*. *SANBI Biodiversity Series* 13. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. 158p. ISBN 978-1-919976-51-8
2. MECENERO, S., BALL, J.B., EDGE, D.A., HAMER, M.L., HENNING, G.A., KRÜGER, M, PRINGLE, E.L., **TERBLANCHE, R.F.** & WILLIAMS, M.C. (eds). 2013. *Conservation Assessment of Butterflies of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland: Red List and atlas.* Saftronics (Pty) Ltd., Johannesburg & Animal Demography Unit, Cape Town.
3. VAN SWAAY, C., REGAN, E., LING, M., BOZHINOVSKA, E., FERNANDEZ, M., MARINI-FILHO, O.J., HUERTAS, B., PHON, C.-K., KŐRÖSI, A., MEERMAN, J., PE'ER, G., UEHARA-PRADO, M., SÁFIÁN, S., SAM, L., SHUEY, J., TARON, D., **TERBLANCHE, R.F**. & UNDERHILL, L. 2015. Guidelines for Standardised Global Butterfly Monitoring. Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network, Leipzig, Germany. GEO BON Technical Series 1.
4. **TERBLANCHE, R.F.** & HENNING, G.A. **2009.** *A framework for conservation management of South African butterflies in practice.* In: Henning, G.A., Terblanche, R.F. & Ball, J.B. (eds). *South African Red Data Book: Butterflies. SANBI Biodiversity Series 13.* South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. p. 68 – 71.
5. EDGE, D.A., **TERBLANCHE, R.F**., HENNING, G.A., MECENERO, S. & NAVARRO, R.A. 2013. Butterfly conservation in southern Africa: Analysis of the Red List and threats. In: Mecenero, S., Ball, J.B., Edge, D.A., Hamer, M.L., Henning, G.A., Krüger, M., Pringle, E.L., Terblanche, R.F. & Williams, M.C. (eds). *Conservation Assessment of Butterflies of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland: Red List and Atlas.* pp. 13-33. Saftronics (Pty) Ltd., Johannesburg & Animal Demography Unit, Cape Town.
6. **TERBLANCHE, R.F.**, SMITH, G.F. & THEUNISSEN, J.D. **1993.** Did Scott typify names in *Haworthia* (Asphodelaceae: Alooideae)? *Taxon* **42**(1): 91–95. (International Journal of Plant Taxonomy).
7. **TERBLANCHE, R.F.**, MORGENTHAL, T.L. & CILLIERS, S.S. **2003.** The vegetation of three localities of the threatened butterfly species *Chrysoritis aureus* (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae). *Koedoe* **46**(1): 73-90.
8. EDGE, D.A., CILLIERS, S.S. & **TERBLANCHE, R.F. 2008**. Vegetation associated with the occurrence of the Brenton blue butterfly. *South African Journal of Science* **104**: 505 - 510.
9. GARDINER, A.J. & **TERBLANCHE, R.F. 2010.** Taxonomy, biology, biogeography, evolution and conservation of the genus *Erikssonia* Trimen (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) *African Entomology* **18**(1): 171-191.
10. **TERBLANCHE, R.F.** 2016. *Acraea trimeni* Aurivillius, [1899], *Acraea stenobea* Wallengren, 1860 and *Acraea neobule* Doubleday, [1847] on host-plant *Adenia repanda* (Burch.) Engl. at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa. *Metamorphosis* 27: 92-102.

* A detailed CV with more complete publication list is available.

II) SPECIALIST DECLARATION

I, Reinier F. Terblanche, as the appointed independent specialist, in terms of the 2014 EIA Regulations (as amended), hereby declare that I:

- I act as the independent specialist in this application;
- I 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;
- regard the information contained in this report as it relates to my specialist input/study to be true and correct, and do not have and will not have any financial interest in the undertaking of the activity, other than remuneration for work performed in terms of the NEMA, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (as amended) and any specific environmental management Act;
- 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 have no vested interest in the proposed activity proceeding;
- 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;
- I have ensured that information containing all relevant facts in respect of the specialist input/study was distributed or made available to interested and affected parties and the public and that participation by interested and affected parties was facilitated in such a manner that all interested and affected parties were provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate and to provide comments on the specialist input/study;
- I have ensured that the comments of all interested and affected parties on the specialist input/study were considered, recorded and submitted to the competent authority in respect of the application;
- all the particulars furnished by me in this specialist input/study are true and correct; and
- I realise that a false declaration is an offence in terms of regulation 48 and is punishable in terms of section 24F of the Act.

Name of Specialist: Reinier F. Terblanche

Signature of the specialist
Date: 11 November 2020

1 INTRODUCTION

A wetland assessment is required for a Waterkloof 214 and 269 approximately 9 km south of the centre of Rustenburg in the North West Province, South Africa (elsewhere referred to as the site). If wetlands would be present at the site the assessment further focuses on the hydro-geomorphic setting, an estimate of the properties of the wetlands, an assessment of the functional aspects of wetlands and an impact assessment to wetlands, should the development be approved. If riparian zones would be present an indication of the active channel and riparian zone is given.

Kindly see the Ecological Habitat Survey Report which accompanies this report and which focuses on likely presence or absence of animal and plant species of particular conservation concern and species lists in more detail.

1.1 Wetlands in South Africa

Wetlands are defined by the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) as:
"land which is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is periodically covered with shallow water, and which land in normal circumstances supports or would support vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil".

According to *A practical field procedure for identification and delineation of wetlands and riparian areas* (DWAF 2005) wetlands must have one or more of the following attributes:

- Wetland (hydromorphic) soils that display characteristics resulting from prolonged saturation
- The presence, at least occasionally, of water loving plants (hydrophytes)
- A high water table that results in saturation at or near the surface, leading to anaerobic conditions developing in the top 50cm of the soil

Wetlands, according to the definition of DWAF (2005) are at the interface of aquatic systems and the terrestrial environment. As such the characteristics of the surface water or near surface water in space and time at this interface between the terrestrial and aquatic environment are fundamental to understand the functioning of a particular wetland. At the higher elevations of South Africa surface water at wetlands are characterised by considerable contrasts between seasons and periodic precipitation events. Generally accepted definitions of wetlands which focus on the wetland attributes of soil and vegetation are therefore useful because of its consistency despite seasonal fluctuations.

The Classification System for Wetlands and other Aquatic Ecosystems in South Africa (Ollis *et al.*, 2013) includes wetland ecosystems defined by the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) as well as those "wetland sytems" defined by the Ramsar Convention. The broader definition of wetlands, according to the Ramsar Convention is that wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water to the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres (cited by Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2011). This Ramsar definition of "wetlands" overlaps broadly with the definition of aquatic systems according to the South African system of classifying wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems. In South Africa an aquatic ecosystem is an ecosystem that is permanently or periodically inundated by flowing or standing water, or which has soils that are permanently or periodically saturated within 0.5 m of the soil surface (Ollis *et al*., 2013). Therefore an important consideration of the Classification System for Wetlands and other Aquatic Ecosystems in South Africa (Ollis *et al*., 2013) is that a wetland (narrow definition according to water act and not Ramsar definition) is taken to be a unique type of aquatic system.

1.2 Importance of wetlands

The importance of wetlands for human well-being and the conservation of biodiversity are recognised world-wide. Ecosystem services which directly or indirectly benefit human well-being are of particular importance when wetlands are considered. Wetlands play a major role to enhance supporting services such as nutrient cycling and primary production, which in turn is the basis for other ecosystem services. Wetlands are very important to regulating services such as maintaining water flow and water quality by processing water and regulating water run-off, provisioning services such as providing freshwater, cultural services such as appreciating the landscape and biodiversity. Overall wetlands play a major role in the sustainability of land use from socio-economic and biodiversity conservation perspectives. The setting and function of wetlands at each site should therefore be evaluated to inform land use management.

Wetland vegetation is of significant importance for wetlands to play a role in valuable ecosystem services. Vegetation plays an important role in natural wetland ecosystems. It holds soil together and slows down the flow of water, reducing the risk of erosion and promoting sediment deposition. Plants are the source of organic material in wetland soils, and form the organic soil in peat wetlands. Vegetation also has an impact on the quality of surface and subsurface water as it (1) provides organic soil matter required by microbes in order to assimilate nutrients and toxicants (2) provides habitat for the microbes in the soil immediately surrounding the roots, and (3) contributes through direct uptake of nutrients and toxicants and incorporation of these into plant tissues (Sieben *et al.* 2009).

1.3 Aims and objectives of the survey

A survey to investigate key elements of habitats on the site, relevant to the conservation of wetlands is conducted. The importance and significance of the site with special emphasis on the current status of biodiversity and ecological services of the wetland are evaluated. Literature investigations are integrated with field observations to identify potential ecological impacts that could occur as a result of the development and to make recommendations to reduce or minimise impacts, should the development be approved.

The objectives of the wetland habitat assessment are to provide:

- An indication of the existence of wetlands at the site and if so:
- An identification of major aspects of the hydro-geomorphic setting and terrain unit at which the wetland occur;
- An estimate of the size and roughness of the wetland
- An indication of the hydric soils at the site;
- An indication of erodability;
- An indication of the presence or absence of peat at the site;
- An outline of hydrological drivers that support the existence and character of the wetland;
- An assessment of the possible presence or absence of threatened or localised plant species, vertebrates and invertebrates of the region, at the site;
- A description of the functions provided by the wetland at the site;
- An interpretation of the priority of the wetland for local communities in the area;
- An interpretation of the priority of the wetland to biodiversity at the site;

2 STUDY AREA

The study area is at Waterkloof 214 and 269, which are located approximately 9 km south of the centre of Rustenburg, North West Province, South Africa. Site is situated at the Savanna Biome which is represented by Moot Plains Bushveld (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006). A brief overview of the vegetation type, serves as an outline of the ecological context of the site, follows.

SVcb 8 Moot Plains Bushveld

In South Africa Moot Plains Bushveld is found in North-West and Gauteng Provinces. Main belt of this vegetation type occurs immediately south of the Magaliesberg from the Selons River Valley in the West through Maanhaarrand, filling the valley bottom of the Magalies River, proceeding east of the Hartebeestpoort Dam between the Magaliesberg and Daspoort mountain ranges to Pretoria. It also occurs as a narrow belt immediately north of the Magaliesberg from Rustenburg in the west to just east of the Crocodile River in the east; also south of the Swartruggens-Zeerust line. Altitude at this vegetation type is typically about 1050-1450 m.

Vegetation and landscape features comprise open to closed, low, often thorny savanna dominated by various species of *Acacia* in the bottomlands and plains as well as woodlands of varying height and density on the lower hillsides. Herbaceous layer is dominated is dominated by grasses (Mucina & Rutherford, 2009).

Geology and soils at the Moot Plains Vegetation type are clastic sediments and minor carbonates and volcanics of the Pretoria Group (including the Silverton Formation) and some Malmani dolomites in the west, all of the Transvaal Supergroup (Vaalian). There is also some contribution from mafic Bushveld intrusives. Soils often stony with colluvial clay-loam but varied, including red-yellow apedal freely drained, dystrophic and eutrophic catenas, vertic and melanic clays, and some less typical Glenrosa and Mispah forms. Land types Ae, Ba, Ea, Bc, Ac and less typically Fb (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

Climate: Summer rainfall with very dry winters. Mean annual precipitation (MAP) form about 550 mm in the west to about 700 mm in the east. Frost frequent in winter. Mean monthly maximum and minimum temperatures for Pretoria-Pur 33.6°C and -3.6°C for January and June respectively (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

Important taxa: Small trees: *Acacia nilotica*, *Acacia tortilis* subsp. *heteracantha, Searsia lancea.* Tall shrubs: *Buddleja saligna, Euclea undulata, Olea europaea* subsp. *africana, Grewia occidentalis, Gymnosporia polyacantha, Mystroxylon*

aethiopicum subsp. *burkeanum.* Low shrubs: *Aptosimum elongatum, Felicia fascicularis, Lantana rugosa, Teucrium trifidum.* Succulent shrub: *Kalanchoe paniculata.* Woody Climber: *Jasminum breviflorum.* Herbaceous climber: *Lotononis bainesii.* Graminoids: *Heteropogon contortus, Setaria sphacelata, Themeda triandra, Aristida congesta, Chloris virgata, Cynodon dactylon, Sporobolus nitens, Tragus racemosus.* Herbs: *Achyropsis avicularis, Corchorus asplenifolius, Evolvulus alsinoides, Helichrysum nudifolium, Helichrysum undulatum, Hermannia depressa, Osteospermum muricatum, Phyllanthus maderaspatensis* (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

Note: Not all of the above listed plant species for the vegetation types occur at the site in the study area.

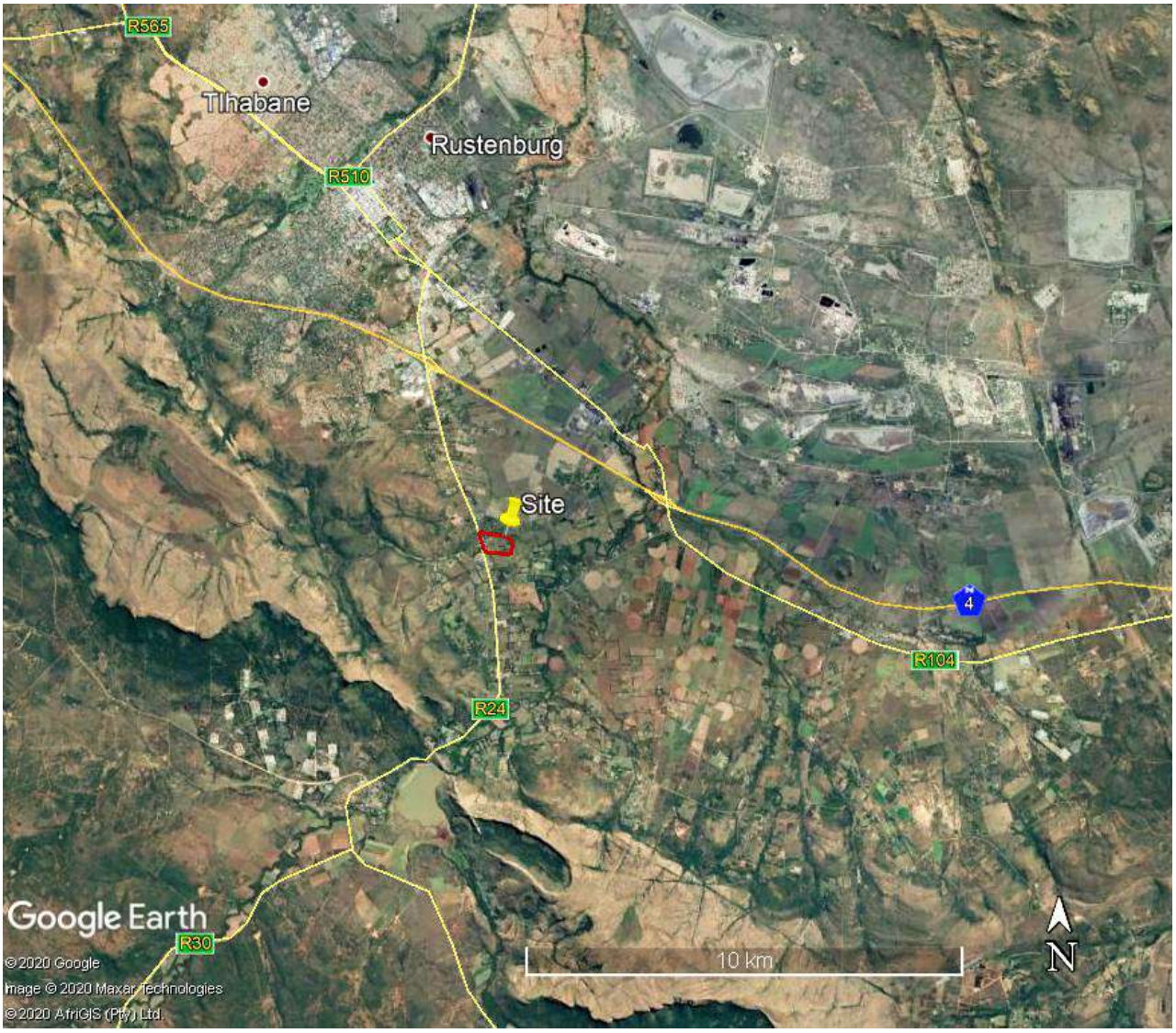

Figure 1 Map with an indication of the location of the site.

Map information were analysed and depicted on Google images with the aid of Google Earth Pro (US Dept. of State Geographer, MapLink/ Tele Atlas, Google, 2020).

3 METHODS

A desktop study comprised not only an initial phase, but also it was used throughout the study to accommodate and integrate all the data that become available during the field observations.

A survey consisted of visits by R.F. Terblanche during October 2020 to note key elements of habitats on the site, relevant to the conservation of wetlands and riparian zones.

Classification of any inland wetland systems that could be present at the site is according to the Classification System for Wetlands and other Aquatic Ecosystems in South Africa (Ollis *et al*., 2013). One of the major advantages of the Classification System for South Africa (Ollis *et al*., 2013) is that the functional aspects of wetlands are the focal point of the classification. Wetlands are very dynamic systems and their functionality weighs high against the rapid changes in their appearance, as could be seen from wetland butterfly studies (Terblanche *In prep*). In this document the main guideline for the delineation and identification of wetlands where present is the practical field procedure for identification and delineation of wetlands by DWAF (2005).

The following sections highlight the materials and methods applicable to different aspects that were observed.

3.1 Classification of wetlands (SANBI: Ollis *et al*., 2013)

3.1.1 System, regional setting and landscape unit (Levels 1, 2 and 3)

Three broad types of Inlands Systems are dealt with in the Classification System namely rivers, open waterbodies and wetlands. These Inland Systems are then classified according to a six-tiered structure that includes six levels.

At the systems level (Level 1) of wetland classification, a distinction is made between Marine, Estuarine and Inland ecosystems using the level of connectivity to the open ocean as discriminator of the biophysical character of each (Ollis *et al*., 2013). Inland wetland systems are aquatic ecosystems with no no existing connection to the ocean (i.e. characterised by the complete absence of marine exchange and/ or tidal influence (Ollis *et al*., 2013). In this case if any wetland is present it obviously qualifies as an Inland wetland system.

At Level 2 the regional setting is a spatial framework that is preferred by the investigator to allow for gaining an understanding of the broad ecological context within which an aquatic system occurs (Ollis *et al*., 2013). A regional setting can be identified according to the DWA ecoregion classification of Kleynhans *et al.* (2005).

A distinction is made between four landscape units at Level 3 of the Classification System for Inland Systems on the basis of the landscape setting (i.e. topographical position) (Ollis *et al*., 2013). Four landscape units are recognized: slope, valley floor, plain and bench.

3.1.2 Hydrogeomorphic units (Level 4)

Seven primary hydrogeomorphic (HGM) units are recognised for Inland Systems at Level 4A of the Classification System for Wetlands and other Aquatic Ecosystems in South Africa, on the basis of hydrology and geomorphology (Ollis *et al*., 2013). These are a River, Channeled valley-bottom wetland, Unchannelled valley-bottom wetland, Floodplain wetland, Depression, Seep and Wetland flat.

3.1.3 Hydrological regime (Level 5)

While the hydrogeomorphic unit (HGM) is influenced by the source of water and how it moves into, through and out of an Inland System, the hydrological regime (as catergorised by the Classification System) describes the behaviour fo the water within the system and, for wetlands, in the underlying soil (Ollis *et al.,* 2013). Together with the hydrogeomorphology the hydrological regime are used to describe the wetland as a functional unit (Ollis *et al.*, 2013). In the case of Inland wetlands which are classified as rivers, perenniality is an important characteristic to describe the hydrological regime. For Inland Systems other than rivers, five categories relating to the frequency and duration of inundation have been provided: Permanently inundated, Seasonally inundated, Intermittently inundated, Never inundated/ rarely inundated and unknown (Ollis *et al*., 2013). Period of saturation within the upper 0.5 m of the soil is a very important discriminator that also links to the wetland delineation system of DWAF (2005). The following categories for saturation of wetland soils are recognised: Permanently saturated, Seasonally saturated, Intermittently saturated and unknown. These categories of period of saturation correspond to the permanent, seasonal and temporary zones of wetlands respectively.

3.1.4 Wetland descriptors (Level 6)

At Level 6 several “descriptors” are included for the structural/ chemical/ biological characterisation of Inland Systems (Ollis *et al.,* 2013). These descriptors are non-hierarchical to one another and can be applied in any order depending on the purpose of a study and the availability of information. Descriptors include natural vs. artificial, salinity, substratum type, pH, geology and vegetation cover (Ollis *et al*., 2013). Various definitions are given for the descriptors which are likely to increase the consistency and use of the system.

3.2 Delineation of wetland

Together with terrain unit, indirect indicators of prolonged saturation by water: wetland plants (hydrophytes) and wetland (hydromorphic) soils are identified and used to delineate the wetland (DWAF 2005). Three zones, which may not all three be present in all wetlands, namely the permanent zone of wetness, the seasonal zone and the temporary zone are identified. The temporary zone is the outer zone and is saturated for only a short period of the year that is sufficient, under normal circumstances, for the formation of hydromorphic soils and the growth of wetland vegetation (DWAF 2005). Hydromorphic soils must display signs of wetness within 50cm of the soil to qualify as wetland soil that can support hydrophytic vegetation. Grid references and altitudes are taken on site with a GPS Garmin E-trex 20 ® instrument. Map information are analysed and depicted on Google images with the aid of Google Earth Pro (US Dept. of State Geographer, MapLink/ Tele Atlas, Google, 2012).

3.3 Vegetation at and near wetland

Though vegetation is a key component of the wetland definition in the Water Act, using vegetation as a primary indicator requires undisturbed conditions and expert knowledge (DWAF 2005). Modern wetland classification systems in South Africa therefore place more emphasis on the soil wetness indicators. It remains however, that plant assemblages undergo distinct changes in species composition from the centre of a wetland to the edge, and into adjacent terrestrial areas (DWAF 2005). This change in species composition of vegetation provides valuable clues for determining the wetland boundary and wetness zones (DWAF 2005).

Apart from botanical aspects which are integrated into the description of a wetland it is imperative to note the existence or not of threatened plant species or other plant species of conservation concern, such as near-threatened, data deficient or declining species at a wetland. Floristic composition is therefore also considered during the wetland assessment. Voucher specimens of plant species are only taken where the taxonomy is in doubt or where the plant specimens are of significant relevance for invertebrate conservation. Field guides such as those by Germishuizen (2003), Manning (2003), Manning (2009), Van Oudtshoorn (1999), Van Wyk (2000), Van Wyk & Malan (1998) and Van Wyk & Van Wyk (1997)

were used to confirm the taxonomy of the species. Works on specific plant groups (often genera) such as those by Goldblatt (1986), Goldblatt & Manning (1998), Jacobsen (1983), McMurtry, Grobler, Grobler & Burns (2008), Smit (2008), Van Jaarsveld (2006) and Van Wyk & Smith (2003) were also consulted to confirm the identification of species. An important source of identifications of plant species for the wetland survey is Van Ginkel, Glen, Gordon-Gray, Cilliers, Muasya & Van Deventer (2011). In this case no plant specimens were needed to be collected as voucher specimens or to be send to a herbarium for identification. For the most recent treatise of scientific plant names and broad distributions, Germishuizen, Meyer & Steenkamp (2006) or Raimondo *et al*. (2009) or updated lists on SANBI websites are followed to compile the lists of species.

3.4 Fauna at and near wetland

Species composition of fauna is not used in wetland characterization and assessments. However, it is important to note species that favour wetlands and especially whether threatened animal species are present at a wetland or not.

Mammals are noted as sight records by day. For the identification of species and observation of diagnostic characteristics Smithers (1986), Skinner & Chimimba (2005), Cillié, Oberprieler and Joubert (2004) and Apps (2000) are consulted. Sites are been walked, covering as many habitats as possible. Signs of the presence of mammal species, such as calls of animals, animal tracks (spoor), burrows, runways, nests and faeces are recorded. Walker (1996), Stuart & Stuart (2000) and Liebenberg (1990) are consulted for additional information and for the identification of spoor and signs. Trapping is only done if necessary. Habitat characteristics are also surveyed to note potential occurrences of mammals. Many mammals can be identified from field sightings but, with a few exceptions bats, rodents and shrews can only be reliably identified in the hand, and even then some species needs examination of skulls, or even chromosomes (Apps, 2000).

Birds are noted as sight records, mainly with the aid of binoculars (10x30). Nearby bird calls of which the observer was sure of the identity were also recorded. For practical skills of noting diagnostic characteristics, the identification of species and observation techniques Ryan (2001) is followed. For information on identification, biogeography and ecology Barnes (2000), Hockey, Dean & Ryan, P.G. (2005), Cillié, Oberprieler & Joubert (2004), Tarboton & Erasmus (1998) and Chittenden (2007) are consulted. Ringing of birds falls beyond the scope of this survey. Sites are walked, covering as many habitats as possible. Signs of the presence of bird species such as spoor and nests are additionally been recorded. Habitat characteristics are surveyed to note potential occurrences of birds.

Reptiles are noted as sight records in the field. Binoculars (10x30) can also be used for identifying reptiles of which some are wary. For practical skills of noting diagnostic characteristics, the identification of species and observation techniques, Branch (1998), Marais (2004), Alexander & Marais (2007) and Cillié, Oberprieler and Joubert (2004) are followed. Sites

are walked, covering as many habitats as possible. Smaller reptiles are sometimes collected for identification, but this practice was not necessary in the case of this study. Habitat characteristics are surveyed to note potential occurrences of reptiles.

Frogs and toads are noted as sight records in the field or by their calls. For practical skills of noting diagnostic characteristics, the identification of species and observation techniques Carruthers (2001), Du Preez (1996), Conradie, Du Preez, Smith & Weldon (2006) and the recent complete guide by Du Preez & Carruthers (2009) are consulted. CD's with frog calls by Carruthers (2001) and Du Preez & Carruthers (2009) are used to identify species by their calls when applicable. Sites are walked, covering as many habitats as possible. Smaller frogs are often collected by pitfall traps put out for epigeal invertebrates (on the soil), but this practice falls beyond the scope of this survey. Habitat characteristics are also surveyed to note potential occurrences of amphibians.

Invertebrates of which enough information is available to be integrated into an assessment, such as butterflies, are recorded as sight records, photographic records or voucher specimens. Voucher specimens are mostly taken of those species of which the taxa warrant collecting due to taxonomic difficulties or in the cases where species can look similar in the veldt. Many butterflies use only one species or a limited number of plant species as host plants for their larvae. Myrmecophilous (ant-loving) butterflies such as the *Aloeides*, *Chrysoritis*, *Erikssonia, Lepidochrysops* and *Orachrysops* species (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae), which live in association with a specific ant species, require a unique ecosystem for their survival (Deutschländer & Bredenkamp, 1999; Terblanche, Morghental & Cilliers, 2003; Edge, Cilliers & Terblanche, 2008; Gardiner & Terblanche, 2010). Known food plants of butterflies are therefore also recorded. Other invertebrate groups such as fruit chafer beetles and mygalomorph spiders are also investigated where relevant.

3.5 Present Ecological Status

Ecological status of wetlands are based on models such as the modified Habitat Integrity approach developed by Kleynhans (1996, 1999). Present ecological status PES methodology is then largely based on criteria for assessing the habitat integrity of floodplain wetlands and notes for allocating a score to attributes and rating the confidence level associated with each score (DWAF 1999). Such criteria are selected on the assumption that anthropogenic modification can generally be regarded as the primary causes of degradation of the ecological integrity of a wetland (see DWAF 1999). This is done by using Table W4-1 given by DWAF (1999):

- Score each attribute according to the guidelines provided in the footnote.
- Calculate a mean score for Table W4-1 using the individual scores for all attributes.

- Provide a confidence rating for each score according to the guidelines provided in the footnote to indicate the areas of uncertainty in the determination.

Table W4-2 provides guidelines for the determination of the Present Ecological Status Class (PESC), based on the mean score determined for Table W4-1. If any of the attributes scores < 2 (i.e., it is considered to be seriously or critically modified) this score and not the mean should be taken into consideration. This approach is based on the assumption that extensive degradation of any of the wetland attributes may determine the Present Ecological Status Category (PESC). In any case, the mean on which the assessment of the PESC is based should be regarded as a guideline and should also be tested against the opinion of local experts (DWAF 1999).

Biological integrity is not directly estimated through this approach though in some systems or parts of systems, information on biological integrity is available. In such cases, the information on biological integrity can be used as a check of the PES Category determination. The mean is used to relate the ecological state of the wetland to a particular PES Category (Table W4-2) (DWAF 1999).

3.6 Ecological Importance and Sensitivity

The assessment of the ecological importance and sensitivity is according to DWAF (1999) which in turn is adapted from Kleynhans (1996) and Kelynhans (1999). "Ecological importance" of a water resource is an expression of its importance to the maintenance of ecological diversity and functioning on local and wider scales. "Ecological sensitivity" refers to the system's ability to resist disturbance and its capability to recover from disturbance once it has occurred. The Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS) provides a guideline for determination of the Ecological Management Class (EMC) DWAF (1999).

In the method outlined here, a series of determinants for EIS according to Table W5-1 of DWAF (1999) are assessed on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 indicates no importance and 4 indicates very high importance. The method is used as a guideline for the professional judgement of individuals familiar with an area and its wetlands. The assessors must substantiate and document their judgement as far as possible for future reference and revision (DWAF 1999).

3.7 Risk Rating

The risk matrix is based on the DWS publication: Section 21 c and 1 water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa). Risk is determined after considering all listed control and/ or mitigation measures. Borderline low/ moderate risk scores can be manually adapted downwards up to a maximum of 25 points (from a score of 80) subject to listing of additional mitigation measures considered and listed in red font. Construction is here interpreted in accordance with the definition provided in Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229, p.107) to mean "any works undertaken to initiate or establish impeding or diverting or modifying resource quality, for the first time, including vegetational removal, site preparation and ground levelling".

3.8 Limitations

Wetlands or riparian zones are very dynamic systems and owing to time constraints a glimpse of conditions at wetlands are taken, even though the hydrogeomorphological setting, soil wetness characteristics and established vegetation constitute some long-term features of a wetland. For each site visited, it should then be emphasized that surveys can by no means result in an exhaustive list of wetland plants and animals present on the site, because of the time constraint. A desktop study comprised not only an initial phase, but also it was used throughout the study to accommodate and integrate all the data that become available during the field observations.

The survey at the site was conducted during October 2020 to note key elements of habitats on the site, relevant to the conservation of wetlands and riparian areas. The focus of the survey remains a habitat survey that concentrates on the hydrogeomorphological, hydrological and additional descriptors to classify and assess wetlands where present and to assess for the likelihood of occurrence or not of any wetland fauna and flora of particular conservation concern.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Assessment of presence of wetlands or rivers at the site

Figure 2 Indication of non-perennial river (active channel, riparian zone, buffer zone) that enters the northwestern corner of the site as well as running outside the northern boundary of the site.

Light blue outline	Route of active channel at the site
Green outline and shading	Riparian zone
Orange outline	Outer edge of buffer zone

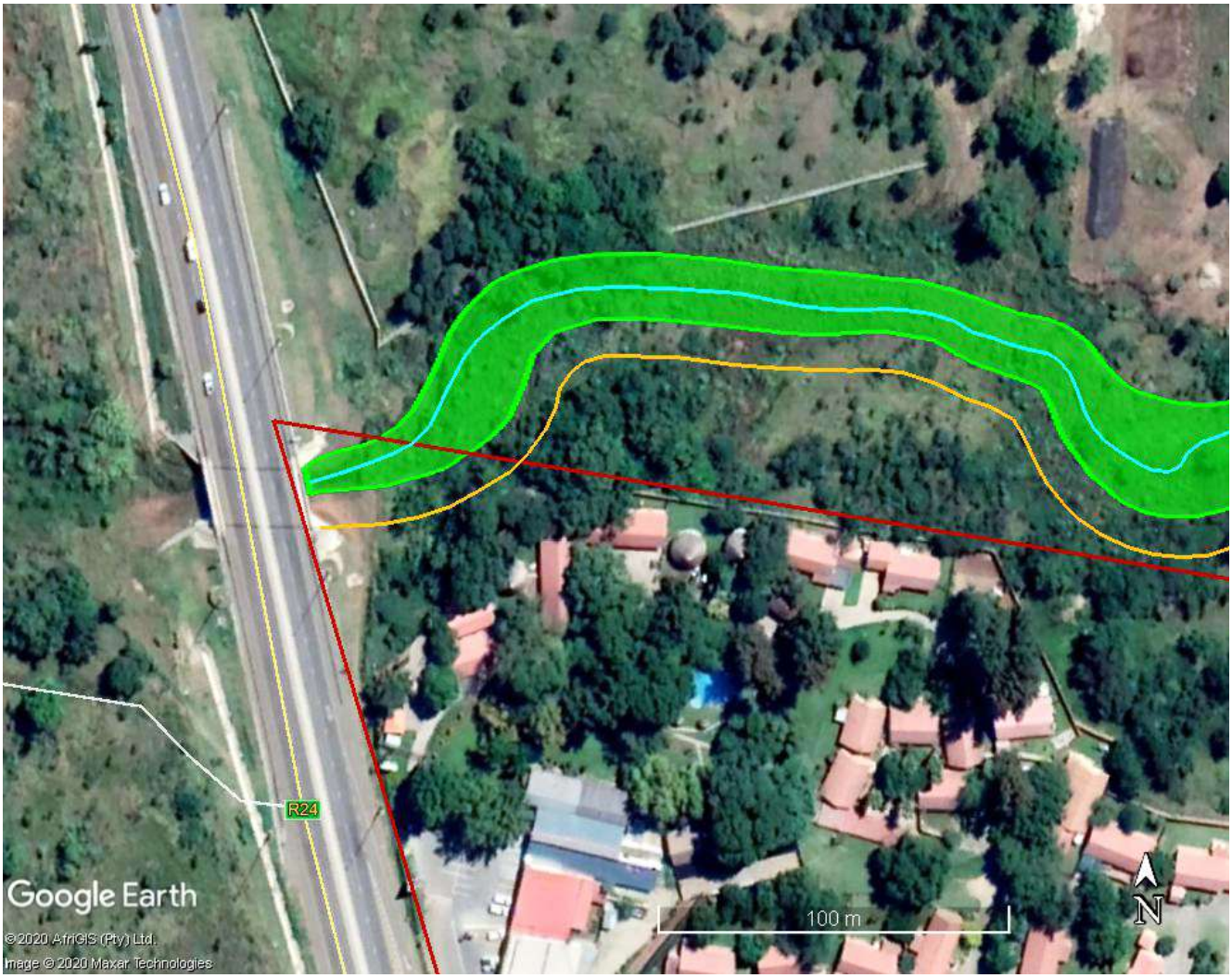

Figure 3 Indication of non-perennial river (active channel, riparian zone, buffer zone) at the northwestern corner of the site as well as outside the northern boundary of the site.

Light blue outline	Route of active channel at the site
Green outline and shading	Riparian zone
Orange outline	Outer edge of buffer zone

Photo 1 The active channel and narrow riparian zone of the Waterkloofspruit enter the northwestern corner of the site from underneath a bridge of the R24 road.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche.

Photo 2 Disturbed area at and near riparian zone at northwestern limits and outside the northwestern limits of the site.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

Photo 3 Narrow riparian zone outside the northern boundary of the site consists of a mixture of alien invasive and indigenous plant species. Bush encroachment of *Asparagus laricinus* (in the foreground) occurs at some parts of the riparian zone.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche.

Photo 4 Soil at riparian zone. Small pebbles and sand particles are visible.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

Photo 5 Alien invasive tree *Melia azedarach* (Syringa Berry Tree) at riparian zone.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche.

Photo 6 Foliage of indigenous *Ziziphus mucronata* (Buffalo-thorn) at the riparian zone.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

Photo 7 Inflorescence of indigenous grass species *Imperata cylindrica* at riparian zone.

Photo 8 Inflorescence of the rush *Juncus oxycarpus* at riparian zone at the site.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

Photo 9 Flowers and foliage of alien invasive *Sesbania punicea* at the site.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche.

Photo 10 Flowers and foliage of alien invasive shrub *Cestrum laevigatum* at the riparian zone at the site.
Photo: R.F. Terblanche

4.1.1 Absence of wetlands

Wetlands such as floodplain wetlands, channelled valley-bottom wetlands, unchannelled valley-bottom wetlands, depressions, seeps and wetland flats appear to be absent at the site. In conclusion no wetlands are found at the site.

4.1.2 Presence of non-perennial river at the site

A non-perennial river, including its narrow active channel and riparian zone, is present at the site. Riparian vegetation at the site is ecologically disturbed but contains a number of indigenous plant species. Indigenous graminoid species at the riparian zone include the rush *Juncus oxycarpus*, the reed *Phragmites mauritianus* and the grass species *Imperata cylindrica*. Conspicuous indigenous tree species at the riparian zone are *Ziziphus mucronata* and *Combretum erythrophyllum.* Some bush encroachment by *Asparagus laricinus* occur along the riparian zone. Alien invasive trees *Melia azedarach* and *Morus alba* are present at the riparian zone. Various alien invasive heraceous plant species such as listed for the terrestrial zone are also present at the riparian zone. The alien invasive shrub *Cestrum laevigatum* is also visible at some parts of the riparian zone.

Present ecological status (PES) of the Non-perennial River at the site is CATEGORY C which means the watercourse is moderately modified but with some loss of natural habitats (Table 4.2 and Table 4.3). Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS) at the site is Category B which is High and refers to watercourses that are considered to be ecologically important and sensitive. The biodiversity of these floodplains may be sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of the major rivers (Table 4.4 and Table 4.5).

Table 4.1 Classification and outline of characteristics of **Non-perennial River** at the site according to the Classification System for Wetlands and other Aquatic Ecosystems in South Africa (Ollis *et al.*, 2013).

CHARACTERISTIC TYPE WETLAND DISCRIMINATORS AND DESCRIPTORS	**DESCRIPTION**
System (level 1)	Inland watercourse
Regional setting (level 2)	Bushveld Basin (Kleynhans *et al.,* 2005)
Landscape unit (level 3)	Valley
Hydrogeomorphic unit (level 4)	River
Hydrological regime (Level 5)	Non-perennial river with an active channel of which the gradient is relatively low. When the river is flowing the flow is concentrated and unidirectional.
Additional descriptors (Levels 5,6)	Riparian vegetation at the site is ecologically disturbed but contains a number of indigenous plant species. Indigenous graminoid species at the riparian zone include the rush *Juncus oxycarpus*, the reed *Phragmites mauritianus* and the grass species *Imperata cylindrica*. Conspicuous indigenous tree species at the riparian zone are *Ziziphus mucronata* and *Combretum erythrophyllum.* Some bush encroachment by *Asparagus laricinus* occur along the riparian zone. Alien invasive trees *Melia azedarach* and *Morus alba* are present at the riparian zone. Various alien invasive heraceous plant species such as listed for the terrestrial zone are also present at the riparian zone. The alien invasive shrub *Cestrum laevigatum* is also visible at some parts of the riparian zone.

Table 4.2 Scoresheet with criteria for assessing habitat integrity of the **Non-perennial River** at the site according to DWAF (1999) such as adapted from Kleynhans (1996).

Criteria and attributes	**Relevance**	**Score**	**Confidence**
Hydrologic			
Flow modification	Consequence of abstraction, regulation by impoundments or increased runoff from human settlements or agricultural land. Changes in flow regime (timing, duration, frequency), volumes, velocity which affect inundation of wetland habitats resulting in floristic changes or incorrect cues to biota. Abstraction of groundwater flows to the wetland.	3	4
Permanent inundation	Consequence of impoundment resulting in destruction of natural wetland habitat and cues for wetland biota.	3	4
Water Quality			
Water quality modification	From point or diffuse sources. Measure directly by laboratory analysis or assessed indirectly from upstream agricultural activities, human settlements and industrial activities. Aggravated by volumetric decrease in flow delivered to the wetland.	3	3
Sediment load modification	Consequence of reduction due to entrapment by impoundments or increase due to land use practices such as overgrazing. Cause of unnatural rates of erosion, accretion or infilling of wetlands and change in habitats.	3	3
Hydraulic/Geomorphic			
Canalisation	Results in desiccation or changes to inundation patterns of wetland and thus changes in habitats. River diversions or drainage.	3	4
Topographic alteration	Consequence of infilling, ploughing, dykes, trampling, bridges, roads, railway lines and other substrate disruptive activities which reduce or change wetland habitat directly or through changes in inundation patterns.	2	4
Biota			
Terrestrial encroachment	Consequence of desiccation of wetland and encroachment of terrestrial plant species due to changes in hydrology or geomorphology. Change from wetland to terrestrial habitat and loss of wetland functions.	2	4
Indigenous vegetation removal	Direct destruction of habitat through farming activities, grazing or firewood collection affecting wildlife habitat and flow attenuation functions, organic matter inputs and increases potential for erosion.	3	4
Invasive plant encroachment	Affect habitat characteristics through changes in community structure and water quality changes (oxygen reduction and shading).	2	4
Alien fauna	Presence of alien fauna affecting faunal community structure.	3	4
Overutilisation of biota	Overgrazing, over-fishing etc.	4	4
TOTAL **MEAN**		**31** **x=2.8**	42 x=3.8

Scoring guidelines per attribute:
natural, unmodified = 5; Largely natural = 4, Moderately modified = 3; largely modified = 2;
seriously modified = 1; Critically modified = 0.
Relative confidence of score:
Very high confidence = 4; High confidence = 3; Moderate confidence = 2; Marginal/low confidence = 1.

Table 4.3 Interpretation of scores for determining present ecological status **(PES)** of the **Non-perennial River** at the site according to DWAF (1999) such as adapted from Kleynhans (1999). Present ecological status of watercourse is indicated in blue font.

Interpretation of Mean* of Scores for all Attributes: Rating of Present Ecological Status Category (PES Category)
WITHIN GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE RANGE
CATEGORY A >4; Unmodified, or approximates natural condition.
CATEGORY B >3 and <=4; Largely natural with few modifications, but with some loss of natural habitats.
CATEGORY C **>2 and <=3; moderately modified, but with some loss of natural habitats.**
CATEGORY D =2; largely modified. A large loss of natural habitats and basic ecosystem functions has occurred.
OUTSIDE GENERAL ACCEPTABLE RANGE
CATEGORY E >0 and <2; seriously modified. The losses of natural habitats and basic ecosystem functions are extensive.
CATEGORY F 0; critically modified. Modifications have reached a critical level and the system has been modified completely with an almost complete loss of natural habitat.

* If any of the attributes are rated <2, then the lowest rating for the attribute should be taken as indicative of the PES category and not the mean.

Table4.4 Score sheet for determining ecological importance and sensitivity for floodplains of **Non-perennial River** at the site (DWAF 1999, adapted from Kleynhans 1996, 1999).

Determinant	Score	Confidence
PRIMARY DETERMINANTS		
1. Rare & Endangered Species	0	3
2. Populations of Unique Species	1	3
3. Species/taxon Richness	3	3
4. Diversity of Habitat Types or Features	3	3
5. Migration route/breeding and feeding site for wetland species	2	3
6. Sensitivity to Changes in the Natural Hydrological Regime	3	3
7. Sensitivity to Water Quality Changes	3	3
8. Flood Storage, Energy Dissipation & Particulate/Element Removal	3	3
MODIFYING DETERMINANTS		
9. Protected Status	1	4
10. Ecological Integrity	2	4
TOTAL	**21**	32
MEAN	**2.1**	3.2

Score guideline Very high = 4; High = 3, Moderate = 2; Marginal/Low = 1; None = 0
Confidence rating Very high confidence = 4; High confidence = 3; Moderate confidence = 2; Marginal/low confidence = 1

Table 4.5 Ecological importance and sensitivity categories. Interpretation of median scores for biotic and habitat determinants (DWAF 1999, adapted from Kleynhans 1996, 1999). Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS) of **Non-perennial River** at the site is indicated in blue font.

Ecological Importance and Sensitivity Category (EIS)	Range of Median	Recommended Ecological Management Class
Very high Floodplains that are considered ecologically important and sensitive on a national or even international level. The biodiversity of these floodplains is usually very sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a major role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of major rivers.	>3 and <=4	A
High **Floodplains that are considered to be ecologically important and sensitive. The biodiversity of these floodplains may be sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of major rivers.**	**>2 and <=3**	**B**
Moderate Floodplains that are considered to be ecologically important and sensitive on a provincial or local scale. The biodiversity of these floodplains is not usually sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a small role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of major rivers.	>1 and <=2	C
Low/marginal Floodplains which are not ecologically important and sensitive at any scale. The biodiversity of these floodplains is ubiquitous and not sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play an insignificant role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of major rivers.	>0 and =1	D

5 IMPACTS, MITIGATION AND RATING OF RISKS

5.1 Identification of potential impacts and risks

The potential impacts identified are:

Construction Phase

- Potential impact 1: Loss of wetland habitat owing to the removal of vegetation at the proposed footprint for development.
- Potential impact 2: Changes in flow regime.
- Potential impact 3: Exposure of soil leading to soil compaction and/ or erosion.
- Potential impact 4: Loss of sensitive wetland species (Threatened, Near-Threatened, Rare, Declining or Protected species) during the construction phase.
- Potential impact 5: Loss of riparian connectivity and conservation corridor networks in the landscape.
- Potential impact 6: Contamination of riparian soil during construction in particular by hydrocarbon spills.
- Potential impact 7: Contamination of habitat by littering and dumping of rubble/ construction material.

Operational Phase

- Potential impact 8: An increased infestation of exotic or alien invasive plant species owing to disturbances associated with the proposed development.
- Potential impact 9: Poor recovery of soils that were exposed and compacted during the construction phase.

5.2 Site specific considerations of risks and impacts

Gabions are inserted outside the active channel, riparian zone and buffer zone for proposed develpments further up on the slope north of the watercourse and for stabilizing the slope where some excavations took place in the past.

5.2.1 Riparian vegetation and habitat

A non-perennial river, including its narrow active channel and riparian zone, is present at the site. Riparian vegetation at the site is ecologically disturbed but contains a number of indigenous plant species. Indigenous graminoid species at the riparian zone include the rush *Juncus oxycarpus*, the reed *Phragmites mauritianus* and the grass species *Imperata*

cylindrica. Conspicuous indigenous tree species at the riparian zone are *Ziziphus mucronata* and *Combretum erythrophyllum.* Some bush encroachment by *Asparagus laricinus* occur along the riparian zone. Alien invasive trees *Melia azedarach* and *Morus alba* are present at the riparian zone. Various alien invasive heraceous plant species such as listed for the terrestrial zone are also present at the riparian zone. The alien invasive shrub *Cestrum laevigatum* is also visible at some parts of the riparian zone.

Present ecological status (PES) of the Non-perennial River at the site is CATEGORY C which means the watercourse is moderately modified but with some loss of natural habitats (Table 4.2 and Table 4.3). Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS) at the site is Category B which is High and refers to watercourses that are considered to be ecologically important and sensitive. The biodiversity of these floodplains may be sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of the major rivers (Table 4.4 and Table 4.5).

Conspicuous current impacts on the active channel and riparian zone at the site are 1) infestation by alien invasive plant species in particular *Melia azedarach* (Syringa Berrytree) and 2) possible sedimentation from the roadside.

Proposed footprint is located outside the watercourse and bufferzone. The watercourse and bufferzone are considered a no-go zone for any developments so that indigenous vegetation will not be removed. Alien invasive plant species such as *Melia azedarach* (Syringa Berrytree) are to be eradicated at the watercourse and buffer zone.

5.2 2 Flow Regime

The non-perennial river at the site, with its riparian zone and buffer zone, is unlikely to be significantly impacted by the proposed developments when the watercourse and bufferzone are set aside as a no-go zone for developments. If the development is approved the construction should be planned in such a manner that surface flow function well while erosion is limited. There is no distinct indication that interflow plays an important role in the maintenance of the non-perennial river. The geomorphological setting and flow regime would be similar post development as to prior the development, if the development is approved.

Active channel and riparian zone with 10 m bufferzone are excluded from the development. Given the likely absence of sensitive species as well as the location, setting and current ecological status of slope north of watercourse at the larger site a 10 m buffer zone from the edge of the riparian zone is recommended as a practical buffer zone for the conservation of the non-perennial river and riparian zone at the site.

5.2.3 Likely absence of sensitive species

Loss of Threatened or Near-Threatened Plants, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Invertebrates at the proposed footprint appears to be unlikely. The proposed footprint is unlikely to harbour any sensitive species, so that impact risk to any sensitive species is very low.

5.2.4 Connectivity

The non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and buffer zone, at the site is a corridor of particular conservation importance. This non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and buffer zone, is excluded from the proposed developments.

5.2.5 Pollution

Rubble or waste could lead to infiltration of unwanted pollutants into the soil which could filter into the watercourse system lower down at the site. Spilling of petroleum fuels and unwanted chemicals onto the soils that infiltrate these soils could lead to pollution of soils and also impact on water quality when the stream flows. Rubble or waste that could accompany the construction effort, if the development is approved, should be removed during and after construction. Measures should be taken to avoid any spills and infiltration of petroleum fuels or any chemical pollutants into the soil during construction phase at slopes north of the watercourse.

5.2.6 Alien invasive plant species

A rehabilitation plan which include the combating of alien invasive plant species at the watercourse is essential. Infestation by alien invasive species could replace indigenous vegetation or potential areas where indigenous vegetation could recover. Once established combatting these alien invasive plant species may become very expensive in the long term. It is in particular alien invasive plant species such as *Melia azedarach* (Syringa Berrytree) which should be eradicated and continuously controlled at the watercourse and buffer zone. Continued monitoring and eradication of alien invasive plant species are imperative.

5.3 RISK RATING ASSESSMENT

Potential impacts, mitigations and site-specific considerations have been taken into account to arrive at risk ratings relevant to the site which follow.

The risk matrix is based on the DWS publication: Section 21 c and (i) water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa). Risk is determined after considering all listed control and/ or mitigation measures. Borderline low/ moderate risk scores can be manually adapted downwards up to a maximum of 25 points (from a score of 80) subject to listing of additional mitigation measures considered and listed in red font. Construction is here interpreted in accordance with the definition provided in Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229, p.107) to mean "any works undertaken to initiate or establish impeding or diverting or modifying resource quality, for the first time, including vegetational removal, site preparation and ground levelling".

Table 5.3.1 A summary of the phases, activities, aspects, impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed development at the site. This summary is part of the breakdown analyses to inform the risk matrix (based on Section 21 c and (i) water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa). The relevant mitigations are added to register the availability of practical solutions to minimize any negative impacts and because the residue following the mitigation is important in the risk assessment.

Phase	Activity	Aspect	Impact	Mitigation
Construction	Clearing of vegetation at and in close proximity of watercourse at proposed footprint.	Clearing of vegetation at proposed footprint in preparation for construction and during construction will not take place at the watercourse because it is set aside as a no-go zone for development.	Loss of vegetation and riparian habitat.	Non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and 10 m buffer zone, is excluded from the proposed development and fenced off with appropriate material during the construction phase.
			Exposed soil at riparian zone; then soil prone to compaction or potential erosion.	Non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and 10 m buffer zone, is excluded from the proposed development and fenced off with appropriate material during the construction phase.
	Moving vehicles and working of equipment/ machinery at and in close proximity of watercourse.	Moving vehicles and working of machinery and equipment at site adjacent the watercourse.	Further loss of vegetation and riparian habitat.	Non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and 10 m buffer zone, is excluded from the proposed development and fenced off with appropriate material during the construction phase.
			Further exposure and compaction of soils.	Non-perennial river, its riparian zone and 10 m buffer zone, are excluded from the proposed development and

				fenced off with appropriate material during the construction phase.
		Vehicles and machinery could leak which then result in spilling of hydrocarbons.	Pollution of soils by hydrocarbon and unwanted chemical spills could infiltrate soils which could lead to pollution of watercourse down the slope at site.	Equipment to avoid any spills of fuels/ oils/ hydrocarbons should be available and at once implemented where necessary at the site. Regular inspections of machinery and equipment are essential to observe any leaks and should be serviced outside the proposed footprint.
	Generation of waste or building rubble materials at proposed footprint at watercourse.	Waste or building rubble are generated during the construction phase.	Potential contamination of the watercourse habitat by generated waste or building rubble.	Manage waste and take waste away to appropriate waste-disposal sites outside the watercourse. Non-perennial river, with its riparian zone and 10 m buffer zone, is excluded from the proposed development and fenced off with appropriate material during the construction phase. No waste or rubble whatsoever should be dumped at the watercourse and buffer zone.
	Clearing of vegetation at and in close proximity of access roads to construction site.	Creating access road(s) to construction area.	Loss of vegetation and habitat at and along access roads.	No access roads go through the watercourse and buffer zone.
			Exposure and compaction of soils.	No access roads go through the watercourse and buffer zone.
Operational	Establishment of alien invasive plant species at hitherto cleared areas.	Cleared areas where alien invasive plant species establish adjacent to the watercourse.	Alien invasive plant species infest hitherto cleared areas and occupy habitat which is then unavailable for indigenous species.	Watercourse and buffer zone are excluded from proposed development. Continued monitoring and eradication of alien invasive plant species are imperative. A rehabilitation plan would be necessary which include the combatting of alien invasive plant species.
	Poor recovery of soils that were exposed and compacted during	Compacted and exposed soils do not recover easily without rehabilitation adjacent to the watercourse.	Compacted and exposed soils are prone to further degradation and erosion.	Watercourse and buffer zone are excluded from proposed development. A rehabilitation plan would be necessary for establishing vegetation at areas

	the construction phase.			adjacent to the watercourse and buffer zone.

Table 5.3.2 Negative ratings of aspects for severity (flow regime, water quality, habitat, biota), spatial scale, duration and consequence. This table is part of a risk matrix (based on Section 21 c and (i) water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa).

		Severity							
Phase	**Aspect**	**Flow Regime**	**Water Quality**	**Habitat** Geomorph & Vegetation	**Biota**	**Severity**	**Spatial Scale**	**Duration**	**Consequence**
Construction	Vehicles and machinery could leak which then result in spilling of hydrocarbons.	1	2	1	1	**1,25**	1	1	**3,25**
	Waste or building rubble are generated during the construction phase (adjacent to watercourse).	1	2	1	1	**1,25**	1	1	**3,25**
Operational	Cleared areas where alien invasive plant species establish adjacent to watercourse.	1	1	2	2	**1,5**	1	1	**3,5**
	Compacted and exposed soils adjacent to watercourse do not recover easily without rehabilitation.	1	1	1	1	**1**	1	1	**3**

Table 5.3.2 Negative ratings of aspects for frequency of activity, frequency of impact, legal issues, detection, likelihood, significance and finally the Risk Rating. This table is part of a risk matrix (based on Section 21 c and (i) water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa).

Phase	Aspect	Frequency of activity	Frequency of impact	Legal Issues	Detection	Likelihood	Significance	Risk Rating
	Vehicles and machinery could leak which then result in spilling of hydrocarbons (though proposed construction is outside the watercourse and bufferzone such leaks could infiltrate soils end up at watercourse lower down).	1	1	5	2	9	**29,3**	**Low**
	Waste or building rubble are generated during the construction phase (watercourse excluded).	1	1	5	1	8	**26**	**Low**
Construction	Cleared areas where alien invasive plant species establish adjacent to the watercourse.	1	1	5	2	9	**31,5**	**Low**
	Compacted and exposed soils adjacent to the watercourse do not recover easily without rehabilitation.	1	1	5	2	9	**27**	**Low**

Consequence = Severity + Spatial Scale + Duration

Likelihood = Frequency of the activity + Frequency of the impact + Legal issues + Detection

Risk = Consequence X Likelihood

Table 5.3.3 Summary of Negative Risk Ratings overall for all the aspects as well as the PES and EIS of the watercourse at the site.

Risk Rating	Confidence Level	PES of watercourse	EIS of watercourse
26-31,5 Low	90%	Category C	Category B

6 CONCLUSION

- Wetlands such as floodplain wetlands, channelled valley-bottom wetlands, unchannelled valley-bottom wetlands, depressions, seeps and wetland flats appear to be absent at the site. In conclusion no wetlands are found at the site.
- A non-perennial river, including its narrow active channel and riparian zone, is present at the site. Riparian vegetation at the site is ecologically disturbed but contains a number of indigenous plant species. Indigenous graminoid species at the riparian zone include the rush *Juncus oxycarpus*, the reed *Phragmites mauritianus* and the grass species *Imperata cylindrica*. Conspicuous indigenous tree species at the riparian zone are *Ziziphus mucronata* and *Combretum erythrophyllum.* Some bush encroachment by *Asparagus laricinus* occur along the riparian zone. Alien invasive trees *Melia azedarach* and *Morus alba* are present at the riparian zone. Various alien invasive heraceous plant species such as listed for the terrestrial zone are also present at the riparian zone. The alien invasive shrub *Cestrum laevigatum* is also visible at some parts of the riparian zone.
- Conspicuous current disturbances at the active channel and riparian zone at the site are 1) infestation by alien invasive plant species in particular *Melia azedarach* (Syringa Berrytree) and 2) possible sedimentation from the roadside.
- Present ecological status (PES) of the Non-perennial River at the site is CATEGORY C which means the watercourse is moderately modified but with some loss of natural habitats (Table 4.2 and Table 4.3). Ecological Importance and Sensitivity (EIS) at the site is Category B which is High and refers to watercourses that are considered to be ecologically important and sensitive. The biodiversity of these floodplains may be sensitive to flow and habitat modifications. They play a role in moderating the quantity and quality of water of the major rivers (Table 4.4 and Table 4.5).
- Site is part of the Crocodile (West) and Marico Water Management Area (WMA 3). The site is part of a River Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (River FEPA) (Nel *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b). The stream network in the catchment therefore need to be managed in a way that maintains a good condition of the river reach (Nel et al., 2011). The River FEPA status also means that it is important to apply clearing of invasive alien plants and/or rehabilitation of river banks.
- No Threatened or Near Threatened wetland plant or wetland animal species or any other wetland plant or wetland animal species of particular conservation concern appear to be resident at the site.
- The non-perennial river, including its riparian zone and buffer zone, should be be viewed as an important conservation corridor in the larger area.
- Given the likely absence of sensitive species as well as the location, setting and current ecological status of the site a 10 m buffer zone from the edge of the riparian zone is strongly recommended as a practical buffer zone for the conservation of the non-perennial river and riparian zone at the site.

- No waste or rubble whatsoever should be dumped at the watercourse and buffer zone
- The non-perennial river at the site, with its riparian zone and buffer zone, is unlikely to be significantly impacted by the proposed developments when the watercourse and bufferzone are set aside as a no-go zone for developments. If the development is approved the construction should be planned in such a manner that surface flow function well while erosion is limited. There is no distinct indication that interflow plays an important role in the maintenance of the non-perennial river. The geomorphological setting and flow regime would be similar post development as to prior the development, if the development is approved.
- The Negative Risk Rating in accordance with a risk matrix based on Section 21 c and (i) water use Risk Assessment Protocol and Notice 509 of 2016 (Government Gazette No. 40229: 105-133; Republic of South Africa) at the site is Low.

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