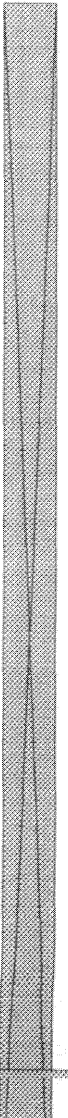


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# **Conservation Plan**

## **Klasies River archaeological sites**

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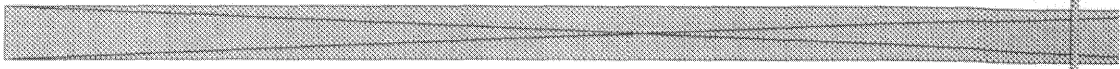
Prepared for the Struwig Trust and  
concerned parties

September 2001

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Compiled by  
Prof HJ Deacon BSc, BA(Hons), MA , PhD  
and  
Dr SJD Wuriz BA, BA(Hons), MA, DPhil

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49 van Riebeeck Street, Matieland-  
Stellenbosch 7602  
tel/fax 021 887 1540  
email [hjdeacon@iafrica.com](mailto:hjdeacon@iafrica.com)

## **Klasies River Archaeological sites Conservation Plan**

### **Summary**

The section of coast, south of the Klasies River Mouth on the Tsitsikamma coast near Humansdorp, includes several archaeological sites and has been proclaimed as a National Monument and as a Natural Heritage Area. A Conservation Plan has been drawn up for the owners of the properties on which the sites occur. The purpose of the Conservation Plan is to detail the understanding of the sites, assess their significance and vulnerability and provide guidelines for the treatment of the sites and their setting in the interests of preservation.

The most important and best known of the sites is main site, closest to the river mouth. It is a 20 m deep sequence of archaeological deposits piled against a cliff face. The deposits mainly date to between 120 000 and 60 000 years ago and contain Middle Stone Age artefacts and hearths, shellfish and fish and mammal bones accumulated by people, birds and carnivores. There are early modern human remains that are among the oldest known anywhere. The finds from main site has been extensively studied and reported in the literature. Other sites on the coast include mostly younger but still important materials.

The significance of the sites can be rated as extremely high and this applies in particular to main site. Main site is one of the major archaeological occurrences known. However, the significance lies in the detail of the contents of the deposits and this is not directly accessible to a visitor. The sites are set on an aesthetically attractive section of coast but that is

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**secondary to their being a source of information. The sites are vulnerable to the impact of visitors because the deposits are unconsolidated and erodable and there is no infrastructure to manage visitors. The care of the sites so that no damage is done to them through misuse is the paramount objective. This makes it necessary to adopt a policy for conservation.**

The policy proposed takes into account the following considerations.

- The overriding consideration is the care of the resource identified as significant at the highest order. The resource is non-renewable and any damage through misuse permanent.
- The section of coast making up the National Monument is primarily a scientific resource. The information gained through scientific studies does have educational value
- The area is sensitive and vulnerable to the impact of visitors particularly in absence of any facilities for access and control.
- The significance is not obvious to the visitor without explanation

The policy for the immediate future should be to limit access to minimise visitor impact. This would allow the completion of scientific studies and stabilisation of erodable deposits. It would limit the impact on the shore life, a valuable reference to species occurring in the deposits. Restricting access does not mean restricting the availability of information and the policy here should be to develop an offsite educational facility. The cultural centre at Humansdorp could address educational needs through displays, audio-visual presentations and literature. The implementation of a policy of minimal access poses management problems for individual landowners. These need to be addressed through a separate Management Plan drawn up in consultation with the community.

In the long term, perhaps in the next ten years, it can be anticipated that

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there may be wider interest in the area for scientific and not simply for recreational reasons. This may create a need for a policy of easier access but such a policy could only be implemented with the provision of adequate infrastructure and management provisions. It would entail upgrading of roads, paths, walkways, fencing, signage, comfort facilities and the training of guides. A major capital investment would be required and would only be warranted in the context of a regional development. The guiding principle for any future planning on whatever scale must remain the safeguarding of the archaeological and natural resource.