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**MAITLAND RIVER MOUTH STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT-
PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Prepared For:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Albany Museum was appointed to undertake a specialist study of the heritage resources in the Maitlands River Mouth area in order assist in identifying the opportunities and constraints these may place on the development of the area.

1.1. Background

The terms of reference of this study are to:-

1. Identify all heritage sites in the coastal zone from Van Staden's River Mouth to the Maitlands River Mouth, and in the immediate vicinity of the proposed resort development.
2. Develop a management plan for the archaeological heritage sites.
3. Identify a possible location for the establishment of a trail to educate the general public as to the value of our cultural heritage.
4. Provide spatial information on the distributions and zonations present that can be incorporated into a GIS map.

1.2. Study Area

The Maitland River Mouth Resort is situated on portion 35 of the farm Maitland Mines No. 478, and the entire area measures 38,99 ha in extent.

1.3. Approach to study

A one day survey, together with other members of the team, was undertaken on the 12th March 2003. Only a limited area around the Maitlands River Mouth Resort could be covered during this visit. Unfortunately the coastal zone from Van Staden's River Mouth to the Maitlands River Mouth could not be surveyed and would probably require an additional two days of fieldwork.

It is clear that the 38,99 ha of the farm could not be surveyed during this period because of limitations of time as well as the dense coastal vegetation. A number of assumptions had to be made regarding the possible location of archaeological sites in the area. It was assumed that archaeological sites would not be found on the flood plain and that they would be found within easy walking distance of the river and on the higher lying areas around the river estuary. Therefore, the eastern banks of the river, upstream of the present resort were examined. This area is covered in dense vegetation. The deflation hollows between the sand dunes on the western banks of the river were also examined.

2. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE AREA

No archaeological investigations or surveys have been undertaken in the Maitlands River Mouth area in the past. There is a brief reference in Rudner (1968) "Strandloper Pottery from South and South West Africa" as follows, "on the western side of the river mouth there is a plateau with dunes and middens circa 150-200 feet above sea level". This area was apparently visited by an amateur archaeologist in 1963 who reported on a Mossel Bay Industry and a Magosian Industry. There is also a reference to the remains of 8 pots collected in 1963. The descriptions of the decoration on the potsherds suggests that they are typically associated with the Khoekhoen (Khoikhoi).

Rudner (1968) has also reported many middens from Sea View, which extends eastward from the Maitlands River Mouth towards Port Elizabeth. Both "old Patella and fresh-looking Donax middens" are reported some 3-5 km west of the Sea View Hotel, some 30-100 feet above the seal level. There are also other "old Patella" middens some 500 m east of the Hotel which have now been destroyed by development. These middens are reported to have contained pottery.

In addition, the archaeologists at the Albany Museum have undertaken a coastal survey between the Gamtoos River Mouth and Van Staden's River Mouth in December 2000 for Western District's Council. In excess of 55 Later Stone Age archaeological sites were recorded. A short survey was also undertaken between Blue Horizon Bay and Van Staden's River Mouth in 1998, and a number of sites recorded. It is therefore possible to extrapolate from these surveys to comment on the archaeology of the area (Kaplan 1993).

Middle Stone Age (see Terminology): there are scatters of Middle Stone Age implements in the dune areas all along the coast. Rudner (1968) referred to the Mossel Bay and Magosian, which are early terms for the MSA. These scatters are generally located on calccrete platforms between the dunes and are regularly covered by moving dunes. In some areas, around St Francis Bay, these stone scatters are associated with fossilized bone. Unfortunately, no bone has been recorded in the Maitlands area.

Later Stone Age (see Terminology): sites along the coastal strip consist mainly of shell middens (see Terminology). The shell middens (see Terminology) can be divided into 3 groups.

The shell middens, without pottery and with large quartzite implements, are classified as belonging to the **Kabeljous Industry** (first identified at a site on the Kabeljous River near Jeffrey's Bay). Sites of this industry date to between 3000 and 1800 years ago.

A second group of shell middens, also without pottery but with microlithic tools, is referred to as the **Wilton Industry**. These shell middens date between 5180 and 1900 years ago.

A third group of middens relates to **pastoralist (herding)** settlement. Sheep and pottery were introduced to Southern Africa some 2000 years ago, and middens with pottery are clear proof of settlement within the last 2000 years.

Many middens contain human remains. These are usually of Khoisan individuals who were frequently buried in a flexed position. They may be buried with grave goods such as grindstones, pottery or ostrich eggshell beads.

3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF THE 12TH MARCH 2003

3.1 Site 1

This damaged midden was shown to me by Mr Derek Langman (?) of the Nelson Mandela Metropole. It is located next to the road, where the turn off takes visitors down to the beach at Maitlands River Mouth. The road, as well as the pipeline, have partially destroyed the midden. The midden is situated on top of the first ridge, overlooking the sea, and appears to have been extremely large. Even now, it stretches some 16 m along the edge of the ridge. There appears to have been 2 periods of occupation, with an upper layer consisting mainly of white mussel (*Donax serra*). The lower layer, some 30 cm beneath the upper layer, is more mixed and contains Patella sp, Oxystelesp, some Turbo sp and Burnapena sp. Sections of this lower level, seem to have solidified into chunks. Only tiny fragments of bone were observed and there is no sign of any pottery. A few flaked quartzite cobbles were found but not in sufficient number to reach any conclusions about the date of occupation (Fig. 1 & 2). The site is clearly of Later Stone Age date and may relate to the Kabeljous Industry.

The absence of pottery suggests that the site is older than 2000 years.

GPS: S 33.98677
E 25.29416

3.2 Site 2

Immediately across the river, and over the large dune to the west, is a large calcrete horizon containing scatters of Middle Stone Age implements. They tend to consist of quite small flakes and snapped blades, and to be made predominantly on fine-grained raw materials such as silticretes and chalcedonies. These scatters do not include many cores and there is no clear indication of manufacture on site, suggesting that the implements may have been introduced from elsewhere. Some scatters are quite dense, indicating occupation over an extended period of time. There is no evidence of any fossilized bone and very little shell (Fig. 3).

GPS: S 33.98075
E 25.29151

3.3 Site 3

This site is possibly an extension of Site 2 above. It comprises a widely scattered horizon of white mussel shells (*Donax serra*), together with quartz and silcrete. Some of the stone artifacts can definitely be ascribed to the MSA. It is not clear whether the shell constitutes a genuine midden and whether the shell and stone are associated. This site is spread over an area of at least 20 square metres (no photo).

GPS: S 33. 98075
E 25.28991

3.4 Site 4

This site is located a few metres from Site 2, and consists of a dense scatter of white mussel shell (*Donax serra*) concentrated over an area of about 10 square metres. While the concentration of shell resembles a midden, it is still very deflated with no depth of deposit. A few silcrete and chalcedony flakes were found in the shallow depression containing the shell, it is not clear if they are associated (Fig. 4)

GPS: S 33.98116
E 25.28979

3.5 Site 5

This site is located on the sea facing side of the large bushy area in the dunes. The calcrete capping exposed here, contains isolated white mussel shell fragments and pieces of broken bottles. However, against the slope, ridging up along the dune, is a slightly thicker concentration of white mussel (*Donax serra*), although once again this does not constitute a midden. It is spread over an area of some 10 square metres and contains very few rough stone (quartzite) flakes.

GPS: S 33. 98316
E 25.29250

3.6 Site 5 b

The calcrete capping seems to extend into the bush, at the rear of the site, forming clumps of shell and stone between the vegetation. One such floor is represented by:

GPS: S 33. 98305
E 25.29208

3.7 Site 6

Over the dune, is another calcrete capping, this time associated with more prominent rock formations. There is also some water seepage (fresh?) along the one side of the calcrete floor. There is a very distinctive small hollow, between two ridges of calcrete, containing a faint scatter of white mussel.

GPS: S 33.98394
E 25.29098

As you walk down the slope, towards the sea, there are several large stone cores, representing human activity, but no signs of settlement.

4.SOURCES OF RISK, IMPACT IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT: ARCHAEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

All archaeological sites are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb archaeological sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

It is important to note that permits for mitigation are needed when sites are threatened by development. Where possible, arrangements should be made to conserve and protect sites of significance rather than allowing their destruction by development. Where this is not possible, mitigation must be arranged. Even ephemeral sites may have significance and should be sampled and recorded. A permit is also needed for the destruction of a site if this is deemed necessary.

For the purposes of this report, I have divided the study area into two. The one area is the coastal dunes on the western side of the river, the other is the Maitlands River estuary and eastern banks.

The coast from the Maitlands River Mouth to the Van Staden's River Mouth is rich in archaeological sites. This area is therefore particularly sensitive to any kind of development and archaeological sites in this area have a low tolerance to any kind of disturbance. While the dune area is not under threat from development, an increase in visitor numbers will inevitably impact on the sites which are located between the dunes. Visitors walking over shell middens or stone tool concentrations are often tempted to collect interesting items, so that sites are often stripped of material in a short space of time. Fortunately, the ban on 4x4 vehicles on the beach does mean that sites which are located more than 5 km from a holiday resort are likely to be protected from day-trippers.

The estuary of the Maitlands River is densely vegetated and it is more difficult to determine archaeological concentrations. No sites were found on the flood plain which is currently being used for recreational purposes. It is unlikely that any *in situ* material will be found here and the impact of development in this area will not be significant.

From an archaeological perspective, it is more likely that sites will be located on top of the ridge of vegetated dunes running along the eastern banks of the river. A disturbed shell midden was discovered located alongside the road, on the edge of the vegetated dune (Site 1). This site had already been damaged during the construction of the road and nearby pipeline. A short section of the river bank was surveyed but no sites were found. The probability that sites will be situated in this area is high. It is not possible to speculate on their significance rating as no sites have been excavated in this area.

The duration of impact of any development in the area with regards archaeological sites is permanent. This is because archaeological sites are non-renewable and once destroyed, the information is lost forever.

The degree of confidence for this prediction is high for the coastal dune area, but less so for the estuary because of the difficulty in identifying sites.

5.RECOMMENDED MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

5.1 East Bank development: It is recommended that development of a resort area on the eastern banks of the Maitlands River estuary may proceed. However, it is recommended that the contractors be made aware of the possibility that archaeological sites may be uncovered during bulldozing for access roads or for the resort itself. While the presence of an archaeologist during the development would be ideal, it is recognized that this is not always feasible. It is very difficult to train bulldozer drivers to the level of identifying sites and they frequently find it difficult to spot archaeological sites until the damage has already been done. If archaeological sites are uncovered during development, all further work will have to cease so that the archaeologist can excavate the site if this is required. It is important to note that this is a time-consuming process which can delay operations for several days.

5.2 Heritage Trail: One of the terms of reference of this project was identifying the possible location of a trail to educate the public as to the value of our cultural heritage. The survey of the dune area immediately across to the western side of the river resulted in the identification of a number of open MSA sites as well as a few scatters of shells which may be deflated shell middens. None of them are particularly striking in terms of tourism appeal. There may be more impressive sites further toward Van Staden's River Mouth, but this were not identified during this survey of the 12 March. If there are sites, similar to those identified by Binneman and Webley (2000) between the Gamtoos and Van Staden's Rivers, then the development of a heritage trail would have to be discussed with the relevant municipal authorities, Nature Conservation and SAHRA.

5.3 Development of heritage site: The partially disturbed shell midden (Site 1) offers some potential for educational opportunities. Mr Langman, of the Nelson Mandela Metropole, has identified the site because of easy access (next to the road) and the fact that it is large and easily identifiable. He has proposed that a small car park area be developed next to the road, and that a wooden walkway be constructed to run along the

bottom of the midden. In this way, visitors would be able to view the site, without actually climbing up the bank and destroying it. It would be possible to erect a noticeboard at the site to inform the public as to the meaning of the site.

However, the biggest deterrent to developing this site is the issue of conservation. Since the area is exposed to strong, gusting winds, the site is threatened with gradual erosion. The sand capping will in time be removed by the wind, and the midden itself will collapse. It is not possible to project how long this will take but it could happen within a few years. There is no short term solution to preserving the site. There are no chemicals or glues which have been developed which may stabilise the deposit. The only long-term solution is to construct a building around the site, so that it is protected from the elements. This would be costly and I am of the opinion that the site would not warrant such expense. If serious consideration is given to opening Site 1 to the public, then a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) would have to be established, line with the guidelines set out below.

5.4 General guidelines for developing a Conservation Management Plan: The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 encourages local communities to become involved in the management of heritage sites and recognizes that this may have positive spin-offs for the community in terms of revenue generated by tourism.

However, SAHRA recommends that a Conservation Management Plan be implemented before heritage sites are opened to the public (Section 47(3)). The aim of such a heritage plan is to retain the significance of the heritage resource. Unfortunately, norms and standards for the management of heritage resources have not yet been set by SAHRA (consult Mrs Mary Leslie – archaeologist at SAHRA)..

Nevertheless, SAHRA has identified the following points when developing a CMP for a site:

- A general conservation policy statement for the site
- An assessment of the current condition, management realities, threats and opportunities relevant to conserving the place
- Conservation processes which may be required for maintenance, protection and monitoring
- Conditions under which intervention may be permitted
- Strategies, procedures and processes to be followed for interventions such as mitigation, research, recording, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, renewal, adaptation or enhancement
- Recommendations for presentation of the place to the public so that the significant values are understood by visitors and local communities
- Recommendations on applications for permits to use images of the place for profit (Section 27(23))
- A schedule for implementing the various elements of the plan with a clear indication of who is responsible for specific decisions and actions, including reports

- A schedule and budget for maintenance, monitoring results and reviewing and up-dating the plan.

The main purpose of monitoring the impact of the CMP, or other management plan, is to ensure that the strategies being used continue to retain the significance of the site.

Monitoring needs baseline information on the existing situation against which the new data can be compared at regular intervals. These comparisons can be made on a weekly, monthly or annual basis, depending on the sensitivity of the site.

Monitoring can include:

- Number of visitors
- Weathering, erosion
- Security, including littering and vandalism
- Public response to information provided (opinion surveys)

A schedule of monitoring and review must be included in the CMP which is submitted to SAHRA.

6. CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological sites of significance were discovered during the survey of the Maitlands River mouth on the 12th March 2003. A total of 6 archaeological sites were discovered. This included a number of shell middens and a few scatters of Middle Stone Age artifacts. None of these sites will be threatened by the development of a holiday resort in the area. However, increases in visitor numbers is expected to impact adversely on the archaeological heritage of the area.

Despite the paucity of visible archaeological sites, however, it is possible that important sites may be buried under the soil surface. For this reason, every care should be taken during the bulldozing of the area. Archaeological sites, including fossilized bone or human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

A single, disturbed site was found on the eastern banks of the River mouth and a proposal has been made by local conservation bodies that this site be developed to educate visitors to the area. The development of an open station shell midden for tourism presents very specific technical problems and this report suggests that further research will be needed in order to open the midden to the public.

Further, in response to the suggestion (in the terms of reference) that a possible heritage trail be developed, it is noted that the sites in the vicinity of the river mouth are not particularly interesting. This may be the consequence of being picked over by members of the public for the last 30 years or more. Rudner (1968), for example, reported the remains of 8 clay pots from these site, but no pottery remains could be found in the most recent survey. The danger of opening heritage sites to the public, without adequate

management plans, is that sites will be stripped of their archaeological content in a very short space of time. A management plan which involves opening archaeological sites to the public requires that a trained guide or guard be present at all times.

7. TERMINOLOGY

Middle Stone Age: Stone tools consist mainly of long blades or triangular flakes and reflect the more controlled use of flaking properties. They are frequently made on fine-grained raw materials such as silcretes. These tools date between 200 000 and 40 000 years ago. In some circumstances, fossil bones and marine shells have been found in association.

Later Stone Age: LSA peoples were ancestral to the San (Bushmen) and Khoekhoen (Hottentots) and lived in South Africa between 40 000 years ago and colonial times. During most of the Holocene (last 10 000 years) southern Africa was occupied by small bands of mobile hunter-gatherer groups. Sheep and pottery were introduced some 2000 years ago by the ancestors of the Khoekhoen.

Middens: the most common archaeological sites along the coast are open-air shell middens. A midden is a heap of shell which has accumulated as a result of the actions of people. These middens may measure anything between 1m and 20m in diameter. They consist primarily of shellfish. Generally there is a correlation between the shellfish in the midden and what is available on the rocks nearby. Middens may also contain bone remains such as seals, fish and a large variety of buck. Cultural remains may include stone tools, pottery, ostrich eggshell beads, shell and bone pendants, etc.

8. REFERENCES

- Kaplan, J. 1993. The state of archaeological information in the coastal zone from the Orange River to Ponta do Oura. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.
- Rudner, J. 1968. Strandloper pottery from South and South-West Africa. *Annals of the South African Museum* 49:441-663.

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- Fig. 1: Site 1
Fig. 2: Site 1
Fig. 3: Site 2
Fig. 4: Site 4