

Report on an archaeological assessment of the proposed Juno - van Rhynsdorp line
66kv line

Summary

The route for the Juno-Vanrhynsdorp 66kV line as proposed will have a minimum impact on archaeological resources. There are low density stone artefact occurrences along the route but potentially significant concentrations of artefacts around pans and along drainage courses are avoided. Archaeological considerations merit no changes in the proposed route.

introduction

As stone artefact occurrences had been noted in gypsum prospecting pits between Vanrhynsdorp and Vredendal it was recommended that the route of the 66kV line be inspected. The archaeological assessment was carried out on 8 November 1991 in the company of Mr Brian Kruger and Mr Tom Bezeidenhout of Escom.

inspection of the route

The proposed route is some 25 km long and it was possible to walk 9 km of this total distance and visit other points by vehicle. An attempt was made to traverse the potentially sensitive areas near water courses on foot and to examine all the different terrain types.

The kinds of archaeological occurrences that would be rated sensitive in this situation are clusters of stone artefacts that preserve something of the original contextual information. This requires that the artefacts have been little disturbed since they were discarded. Such clusters or groups of artefacts, described as archaeological sites, can mark the position of former activity areas or encampments of Stone Age people. Sites can be of high antiquity and in the course of this investigation the majority of the artefacts noted belonged to older rather than younger stages of the Stone Age. It is a rule of thumb that the older the sites the more chance there is of their having been disturbed and this seems to hold here. More recent sites can include occurrences of pottery and stone or other artefacts and mark the location of stock posts or settlements of herders. Khoi/Nama herders have inhabited the area for almost 2 000 years and the possibility that significant traces of such people could be encountered was a consideration in planning the survey.

The most sensitive area was presumed to be close to Vanrhynsdorp where the line crosses the Dro% River. From the Vanrhynsdorp substation on the boundary of the town, past the river crossing to the fence line near the Troe-Troe farm house, sheet erosion is pronounced. Much of the top soil has been stripped and the subsurface quartz rubble overlying the bedrock is exposed. There is a very low density of stone artefacts in this general area. No in situ artefacts were observed but they appear to be eroding out of the top soil. In lag concentrates of stony material it is very easy to recognize artefacts of exotic materials like silcrete and quartzite. Some quartz has been worked but given the quantities of quartz rubble on surfaces worked quartz is less obvious. The original context of these artefacts has been lost through colluviation and sheet erosion and for this reason these artefact occurrences are not rated as significant. Along the route as a whole there is a similar occurrence.

The position where the line crosses the Dro% River was given special attention. There was a concern that early herder settlements could be encountered here for reason that the farm has a Khoi name, Troe-Troe. It is probable that there are traces of old herder stock posts both upstream and downstream of the crossing point. The site of the proposed crossing, in a section with steep banks to the river, is an unlikely location for any settlement, however, and no evidence of any was recorded.

Beyond the Dro% River the route crosses a series of terrace-like landforms. There is a thick sand cover and visibility of any subsurface features is restricted to animal burrows and the like. There are scattered artefacts exposed in rare gullies but none that can be assessed as significant. A special effort was made to locate the only distinctive pan feature shown on the map near the line. It

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