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PO Box 7296
Thohoyandou
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South Africa

Archaeo-Info Northern Province

Heritage Impact Assessment for the Middle Letaba Weir

Evaluation of the heritage component of the Environmental Impact Assessment for a water flow-measuring weir in the Klein Letaba river, Northern Province

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

approved

Middle Letaba Weir

Evaluation of the Heritage Potential of the Project

Executive Summary

Site name and location: Klein Letaba weir, Giyani, Northern Province

Magisterial district: Giyani

Developer: Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

Consultant: AINP, PO Box 7296, Thohoyandou, 0950, South Africa

Date development was mooted: November, 2001

Date of Report: 05 January 2002

Proposed date of commencement of development: February 2002

Findings: **No sites of any heritage potential were identified**

Introduction

Archaeo-Info Northern Province (AINP) was contracted by Christo Gagiano to conduct a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) on the proposed Middle Letaba Weir within the Klein Letaba river.

This HIA forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as required by the Environmental Conservation Act (ECA) 73 of 1989, the Minerals Act, 50 of 1991 and the Development Facilitation Act (DFA), 67 of 1995. The HIA is performed in accordance with section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), 25 of 1999 and is intended for submission to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

Location

The proposed weir is located approximately 3km downstream from the Middle Letaba dam wall. Within the Klein Letaba river valley. The main purpose of the weir would be to determine the flow rate of the river during different times. For this reason the weir would not be a large structure but will consist mainly of a small divertive wall in the river flow of approximately 30 metres. It is not foreseen that the weir would have any major impact on the width of the river flow during normal rainfall seasons. The position of the weir is indicated on photo 1.

The specific locations of the site are indicated on the orientation map (Fig. 1).

Fieldwork

Members of AINP met with Mr. C. Gagiano as well as members of the DWAF and the consultant's team during December 2001 on site. Following this the survey was performed later the same month by a professional archaeologist assisted by a fieldworker.

The extent of the site was determined as well as the extent of the areas to be affected by secondary activities during the construction of the weir. Sites were plotted with GPS readings and photographed using colour prints in 100 ASA format. All sites apart from those directly beside the road were surveyed on foot.

The main possible heritage component that could be encountered in this type of environment (contained river valley) is the remains of Stone Age deposits. All material that cold possibly be indicative of such deposits were investigated as well as some subsurface test pits to determine if any deposits were covered by the alluvial sand deposits of the river (photo2).

Areas with deposits could also have been eroded away by the river in the past and for this reason the adjacent banks of the river was investigated to determine if any deposits were present here. These are indicated in photo 3 & 4.

Some interesting geological formations were encountered during the survey, although none of these had any connection to heritage components. Most interesting of these were the magnetite rifts found within the dolerite deposits of the river. One of these is shown in photo 5.

Methodology

The area was surveyed using standard archaeological surveying methods. The area was surveyed using directional parameters supplied by the GPS and surveyed by foot because of the inaccessibility of the area due to the undulating terrain. This technique has proven to result in the maximum coverage of an area.

Parts of the slopes on different sides of the river valley were also surveyed in an effort to cover a larger area to determine the extent of the archaeological evidence found.

Standard archaeological documentation formats were employed in the description of sites. Using standard site documentation forms as comparable medium, it enabled the surveyors to evaluate the relative importance of sites found. Furthermore GPS (Global Positioning System) readings of all finds and sites were taken. This information was then plotted using a ***Magellan 2000 XL*** GPS (*Cape* datum).

Indicators such as surface finds, plant growth anomalies, local information and topography were used in identifying sites of possible archaeological importance. Test probes were done at intervals to determine sub-surface occurrence of archaeological material. The importance of sites was assessed by comparisons with published information as well as comparative collections. All sites or possible sites found were classified using a hierarchical system wherein sites are assessed using a scale of zero to four according their importance. These categories are as follows;

Degree of significance	**Justification**	Score
Exceptional significance	Rare or outstanding, high degree of intactness. Can be interpreted easily.	4
High significance	High degree of original fabric. Demonstrates a key element of item's significance. Alterations do not detract from significance.	3
Moderate significance	Altered or modified elements. Element with little heritage value, but which contribute to the overall significance.	2
Little significance	Alterations detract from significance. One of many. Alterations detract from significance.	1
Intrusive	Damaging to the item's heritage significance.	0

Cultural Importance and Oral History

The investigation of site for heritage components should not only look at the material remains that are found on sites, but there should also be looked at the intangible aspects of cultural importance for the local communities. Furthermore there should also be looked at the possibility of culturally important areas being found in the study area. These could include graves, places of power or initiation schools and any other area that is seen as culturally sensitive to the local communities.

For this reason the investigators arranged a meeting with the cultural leaders to determine the possibility of such sites being present within the study area. Members of the Civic Association, the local Kgota and TLC were met and given two weeks to identify any such sites within the area. After the indicated time another meeting was held with the community leaders and they indicated that they could not identify any such sites in the study area.

The Sites

After extensive investigations, both on the surface and subterranean, no indication could be found to suggest that any sites of cultural or historical value was or is present in the proposed area to be developed for the weir.

Recommendations

No sites of cultural or historical value were identified in the proposed area and it is the conclusion of AINP that the development can continue.

Conclusion

No indications of traditional structures such as initiation schools or places of power were documented and the locals interviewed had no objections from a cultural side to the proposed construction on this site.

From a cultural heritage perspective the construction can continue.

References

1. Hammond-Tooke, W.D. 1981. *Boundaries and Belief: The structure of a Sotho worldview.* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University press.

2. Huffman, T.N. and Steel, R.H. 1996. *Salvage excavations at Planknek, Potgietersrus, Northern Province.* Southern African Field Archaeology, 5: 45-58.

3. Loubser, J.H.N. 1994. *Ndebele archaeology of the Pietersburg area.* Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein. 10(2): 61-147.

ADDENDUM A

PHOTOGRAPHS

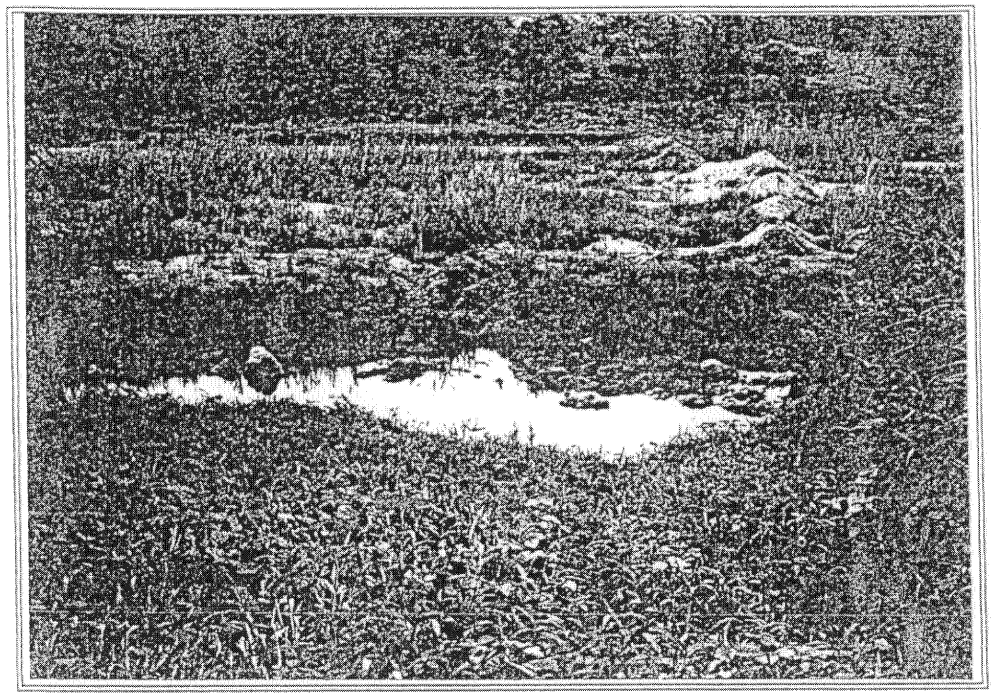


Photo 1. Position of proposed weir.

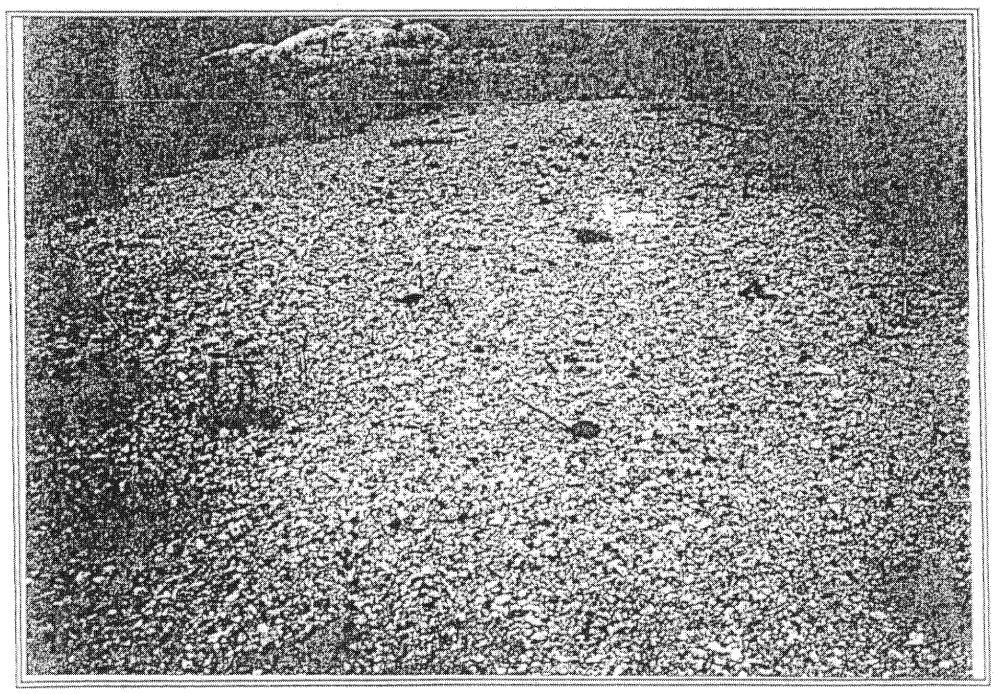


Photo 2. Alluvial deposits (possibly stone tool bearing).

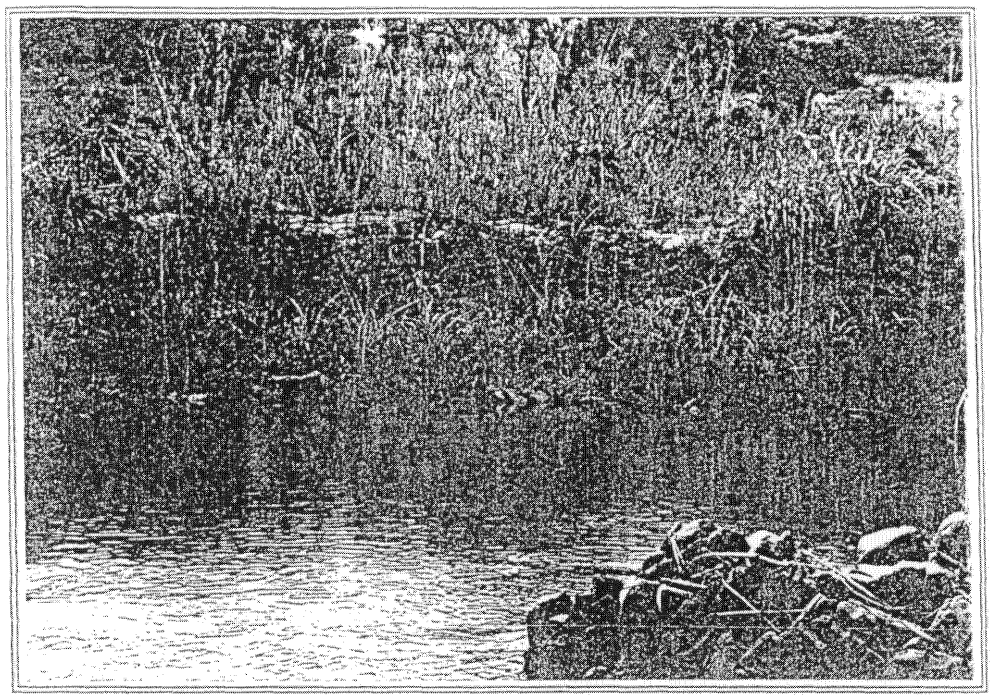


Photo 3. Stratified banks of river.

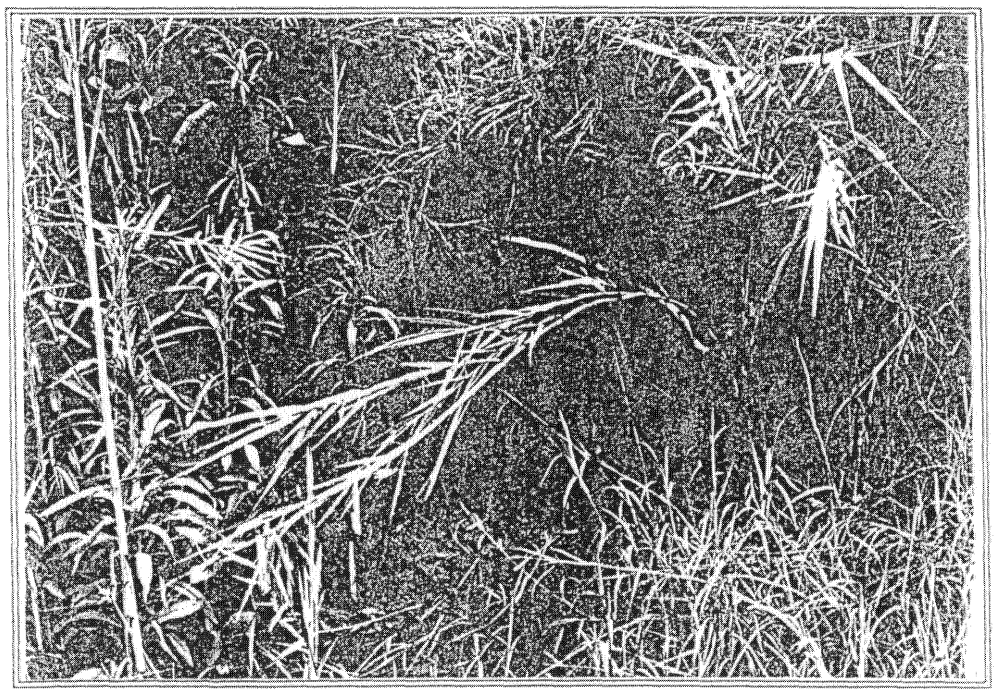


Photo 4. Stratified banks of river.

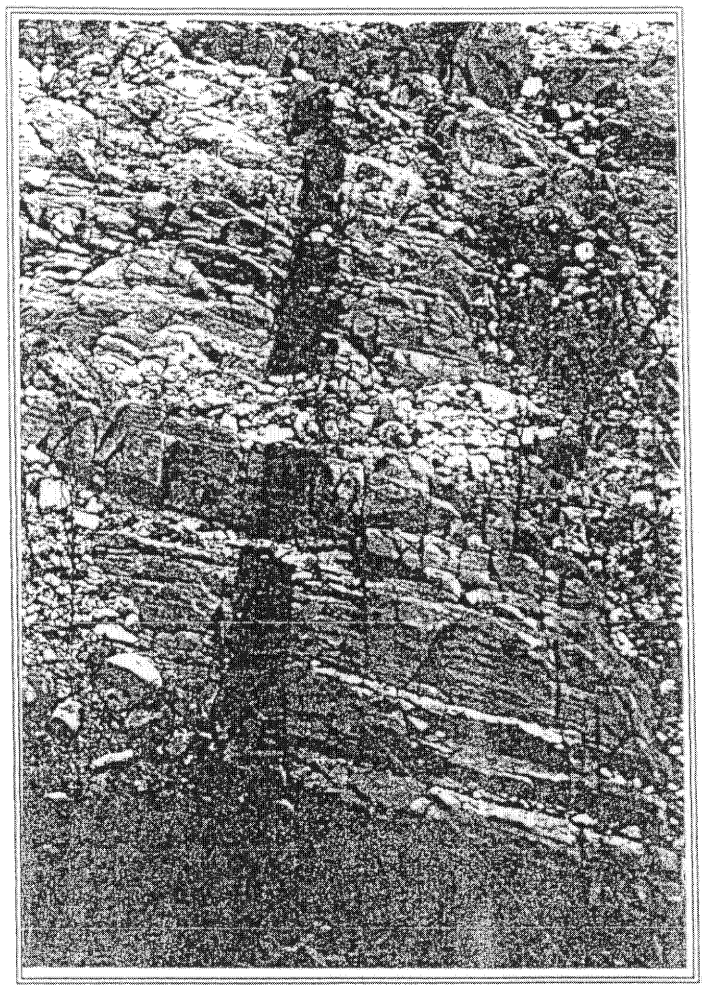
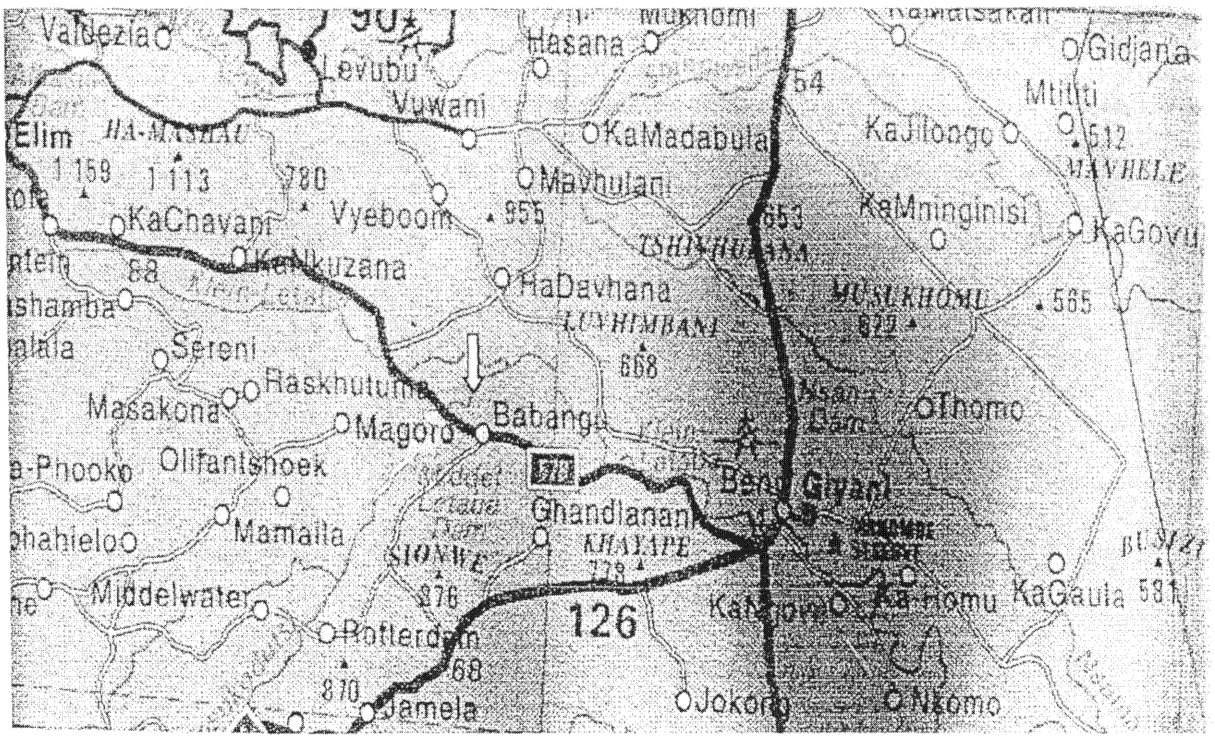


Photo 5. Geological intrusion.

ADDENDUM B

LOCATION MAP



Valdezia
Levubu
Hasana
Vuwani
Elim
KaMadabula
KaJiloogo
Gidjana
Mtititi
MAVHELE
KaChavani
Vyeboom
Mavhulani
KaMninginisi
KaGovu
HaDavhana
Sereni
Raskhutuma
Masakona
Magoro
Babangu
Thomo
Olifantshoek
Ghandlanani
Giyani
Mamaila
KHAYAPE
Middelwater
Rotterdam
KaGaula
Jamela
Jokoro
Nkomo
126