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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INVESTIGATION OF THE PROPOSED ERECTION OF A WEIR AT ORANJEDRAAI 383, ZASTRON

INVESTIGATION

The site for the proposed erection of a water-measuring weir at Oranjedraai 383 near Zastron was visited on 12 December 2004. Elbi Erasmus of Enviroworks Environmental Consults, Bloemfontein, Danie Krynauw and Pierre de Villiers from Environmental Conservation were present during the inspection. Dr Piet Wessels, Jackie van Bosch and Llewellyn Biggs from the Department of Water Affairs were present.

The site was examined for any possible traces of cultural and historical remains to establish the potential impact of the developments on any archaeological and cultural historical material.

The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

LOCALITY

The farm Oranjedraai 383, where the proposed weir is planned, is located on the north bank of the Orange River near Zastron (30°20'11"S 027°21'32"E Altitude 1396m).

The farm is reached from the turn-off on the R26 between Wepener and Zastron onto the R726 to Sterkspruit. The S368 secondary gravel road is then followed past Bergkloof until the sign board to Oranjedraai is reached (Surveyor-General O.F.S. 1973).

Tree alternative positions for the placing of the weir were indicated by the officials from Water Affairs.

The following GPS co-ordinates (Cape) were taken on the alternative sites:

Alternative One (Existing weir) 30°20'11"S 027°21'32"E Altitude 1396m)

Alternative Two (Preferred position) 30°20'16"S 027°21'45"E Altitude 1408m)

Alternative Three 30°20'29"S 027°21'59"E Altitude 1387m)

DESCRIPTION

Three different sites on the Free State side (north bank) of the Orange River were inspected. According to the officials from Water Affairs the opposite bank of the river is inaccessible as no roads exist on the former Transkei side. Due to good rains prior to our visit the flow of the river was also too strong to allow passage to the south bank.

The area consists of a deep sandy soil from the alluvial sediment deposited by the river. The deep sandy deposit is clearly visible from the north bank. In the riverbed stone banks were obvious here and there at strategic places.

Along the north side of the river bank there is a heavy growth of indigenous trees. On the higher banks and flood plain along the river the soil surface is grass covered with scattered clusters of shrubs.

Indications of agricultural activities along the riverbank and flood plain were evident from the contour walls and stalks of remains from several previous seasons.

FINDS

During the investigation of the area no remains of archaeological and other material of cultural historical importance could be found.

DISCUSSION

It is unlikely that any prehistoric human occupation could have taken place on the riverbank and floodplain. It is also most probable that the agricultural activities on the floodplain have destroyed all remains of human cultural activities and early human occupation in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No obvious reasons could be found to delay the commencement of further planning and development of the site. It is recommended that the proposed developments at the preferred site may proceed.

MITIGATION

Concerning the area for the proposed development, no mitigation measures are needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Elbie Erasmus of Enviroworks Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, took me to the site and also supplied information on this investigation. I have benefited from discussions with Dr Karel Zietsman, Botanist, and officials from the Free State Department of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Water Affairs from Bloemfontein.

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