

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR THE PROPOSED VERLORENVLEI DIVERSION CANAL, CERES MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT, WESTERN CAPE

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the
National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of an EIA)

Prepared for

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by Aurecon to conduct an assessment of heritage resources that might be impacted by a proposed weir and diversion canal on the farm Laaste Drift 345 in the northern Hex River Mountains, Ceres Magisterial District. The weir (10 m wide x 1.5 m high) and canal (500 m long x 2 m wide) are required to capture a stream and divert some of its flow into an existing stream that leads into the existing Verlorenvlei farm dam, on the adjacent Verlorenvlei farm.

The project is subject to an EIA and HWC is required to provide comment on the proposed activities.

The study area is up in the mountains and the substrate is almost entirely rocky with very light vegetation cover. Heritage material was not expected in this context.

No heritage resources were identified and no impacts to heritage are expected to occur. Subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to proceed with no further heritage work required.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The UCT Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by Aurecon to conduct an assessment of heritage resources that might be impacted by a proposed weir and diversion canal on the farm Laaste Drift 345 in the northern Hex River Mountains, Ceres Magisterial District. The weir and canal are proposed to capture the headwaters from a small river system and divert some of the flow into the newly constructed dam in a neighbouring valley on the farm Verlorenvlei (Cape Farm “Verlorenvalley” 344).

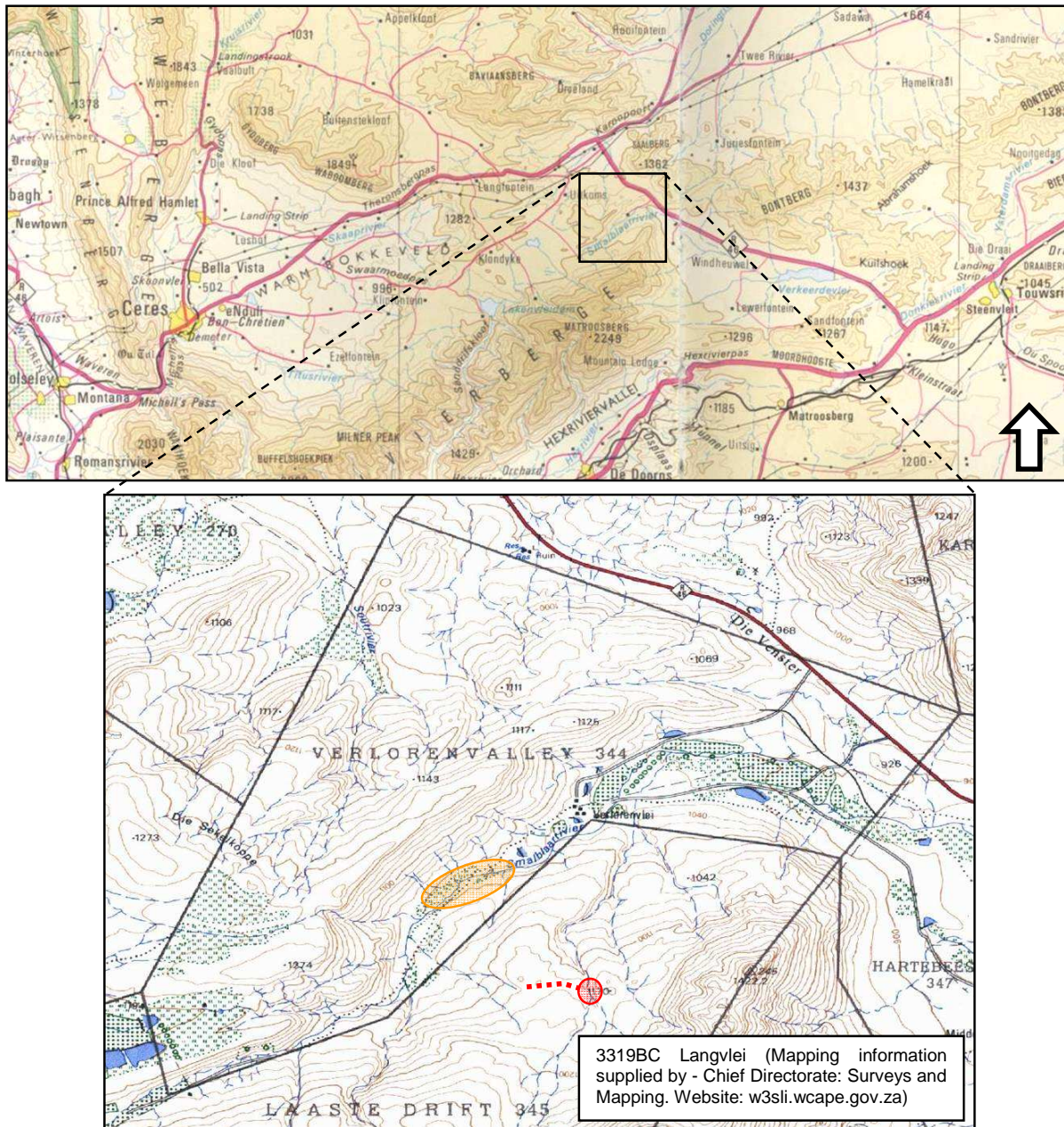


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the study site on the northern slopes of Matroosberg. The Orange oval shows the position of the new dam, the red circle the proposed weir site and the red dotted line the approximate line of the proposed canal.

The canal (500 m long, 2 m wide) would link a new weir (10 m wide, 1.5 m high) with the watershed that feeds their new dam. A mechanical excavator will be required to excavate the canal which will not be lined but left as an earthen canal.

2. HERITAGE LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) No. 25 of 1999 protects a variety of heritage resources including palaeontological, prehistoric and historical material (including ruins) more than 100 years old (Section 35), human remains (Section 36) and non-ruined structures older than 60 years (Section 34). Landscapes with cultural significance are also protected under the definition of the National Estate (Section 3 (3.2d)). Under Section 38 (1) of the act the project requires heritage assessment based on the length of the canal being greater than 300 m.

Since the project is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) is required to provide comment on the proposed project in order to facilitate final decision making by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP).

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed weir lies immediately below the confluence of two small, unnamed streams in the mountains above the farm. The canal will run across the slope to the edge of the watershed where the water will then run naturally down an existing stream channel. The general area is very rocky (sandstone) with only small plants present. The mechanical excavator that will be used to dig the canal will drive up a disused jeep track for some distance then cut across to the weir and canal site. Figures 2 to 5 show the affected environment.



Figure 2: View down the disused jeep track.



Figure 3: View of the stream valley in which the weir will be constructed.



Figure 4: View of the area that will be traversed by the canal.

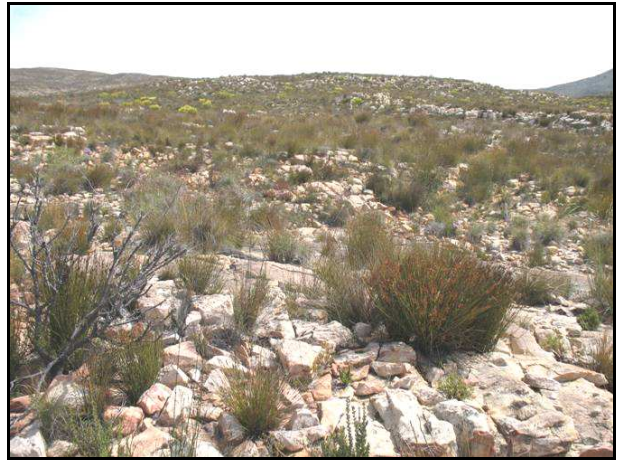


Figure 5: View of the typical substrate through which the canal will be excavated.

4. HERITAGE CONTEXT

Being high up in the mountains and on a very rocky substrate Stone Age material is very unlikely to be encountered. However, isolated Stone Age artefacts have been seen elsewhere in the Hex River Mountains at similar elevations (personal observation). Historical material is highly unlikely in this context but down in the valleys artefacts and old farmsteads do occur (Orton 2006). Old Anglo-Boer War fortifications are present in the surrounding mountains as well. Palaeontological material is also known from this area but only from the shales which occur on the valley floor. A small collection of fossils made on the farm is stored in the homestead.

The area has high scenic value for its mountains and fruit and vegetable farms and is much visited during the winter months by snow-seekers.

5. METHODS

A foot survey was conducted on 25th September 2009 in the company of the farm manager (Verlorenvlei 344) Mr Tikkie Swart. Since the canal will only cross the ridge separating the two watersheds, we walked along the approximate line that would be used to drive the mechanical excavator up to the site. The area around the proposed weir site was checked but, since the canal alignment had not yet been pegged out, it was not possible to search the footprint. A representative sample of the kind of substrate that will be crossed was examined though. With the large amount of exposed bedrock and very limited vegetation cover on the ridge, visibility was considered excellent there. On the lower slopes (where the excavator would drive) the surface was covered by loose stones and low vegetation with similarly high visibility.

5.1. Limitations

The inability to examine the footprint of the canal is not deemed to be a significant limitation since the likelihood of finding archaeological resources in that environment is considered extremely low.

6. FINDINGS

6.1. Archaeology

No archaeological material or artefacts were seen during the survey. There is no chance at all of intersecting unmarked burials since the substrate is all rocky.

6.2. Cultural landscapes

Aside from the disused jeep track on the lowermost slopes, no sign of human intervention in the natural landscape of the study area was seen. No cultural landscape issues are present.

6.3. Visual impacts

The project site is well up the mountain 3.7 km from the nearest public road (the R46) and neither the weir nor the canal will be visible. The weir will be well hidden within the valley in which it will be built.

7. CONCLUSIONS

No impacts to heritage resources of any sort are expected from the proposed project.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to proceed with no further heritage work being required.

9. REFERENCES

Orton, J. 2006. Archaeological Impact Assessment for the construction of a dam on the Verlorenvlei Farm "Verlorenvalley" 344) near Touwsrivier. Unpublished report prepared for Ninham Shand Consulting Services. University of Cape Town, Archaeology Contracts Office.