

# **PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**For**

**The Proposed Wildfontein  
Coal Mining Development on  
a Portion of the Remaining  
Extent of the Farm  
Wildfontein 420 JS, District  
Middelburg, Mpumalanga**

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**March 2022**

A Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment for the Proposed Wildfontein  
Coal Mining Development on a Portion of the Remaining Extent of the Farm  
Wildfontein 420 JS, district Middelburg, Mpumalanga

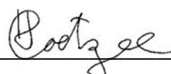
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I, Tobias Coetzee, declare that –

- I act as the independent specialist;
- I am conducting any work and activity relating to the proposed Wildfontein MPs Project in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favourable to the client;
- I declare that there are no circumstances that may compromise my objectivity in performing such work;
- I have the required expertise in conducting the specialist report and I will comply with legislation, regulations and any guidelines that have relevance to the proposed activity;
- I have not, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity;
- I undertake to disclose to the applicant and the competent authority all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing - any decision to be taken with respect to the application by the competent authority; and - the objectivity of any report, plan or document to be prepared by myself for submission to the competent authority;
- All the particulars furnished by me in this declaration are true and correct.



Date: 15 March 2022

## List of Abbreviations

**AIA** – Archaeological Impact Assessment

**CRM** – Cultural Resource Management

**EIA** – Environmental Impact Assessment

**ECO** – Environmental Control Officer

**ESA** – Early Stone Age

**GPS** – Global Positioning System

**ha** – Hectare

**HIA** – Heritage Impact Assessment

**km** – Kilometre

**LSA** – Later Stone Age

**m** – Metre

**MASL** – Metres Above Sea Level

**MEC** – Member of the Executive Council

**MSA** – Middle Stone Age

**NHRA** – National Heritage Resources Act

**SAHRA** – South African Heritage Resources Agency

**WMA** – Water Management Area

## Executive Summary

The author was appointed by Eco Elementum (Pty) Ltd to undertake a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment for the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development on a portion of the Remaining Extent of the Farm Wildfontein 420 JS in the Magisterial District of Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province. The proposed mining development is located approximately 27 km southwest of Belfast / eMakhazeni and falls within the eMakhazeni Local Municipality. The aim of the study is to determine the scope of archaeological resources that could be impacted by the proposed mining development.

The study area consists of three areas (Kapalpa MP, Sastrobuzz MP & Peacanwood MP) bordering each other. The majority of the study area consists of open veldt, while a section is cultivated. The entire area, however, used to be cultivated in the past. No potential sites were observed on historical aerial images, topographical maps or on contemporary satellite images. During the pedestrian survey, one drill site was observed on the demarcated Kapalpa MP area. According to a plaque, the site dates 2018 and is not significant from a heritage perspective.

It should also be noted that a small section to the west of the Sastrobuzz MP area and a small section to the northwest of the Kapalpa MP area were not surveyed due to the proposed infrastructure layout only becoming available after the completion of the fieldwork component. However, no obvious structures were noted in the general vicinity during the site visit and historical aerial images and topographical maps indicate that the concerned sections were cultivated in the past as well. Although it is unlikely that heritage resources will be impacted, a qualified archaeologist must be contacted should potential heritage sites be observed in the vicinity of the concerned sections.

From a heritage perspective, the three demarcated areas (Kapalpa MP, Sastrobuzz MP & Peacanwood MP) are not considered to be sensitive.

Subject to adherence to the recommendations and approval by SAHRA, the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development as per the indicated boundaries may continue. Should skeletal remains be exposed during development and construction phases, all activities must be suspended and the relevant heritage resources authority contacted (See National Heritage and Resources Act, 25 of 1999 section 36 (6)). Also, should culturally significant material be discovered during the course of the said development, all activities must be suspended pending further investigation by a qualified archaeologist.

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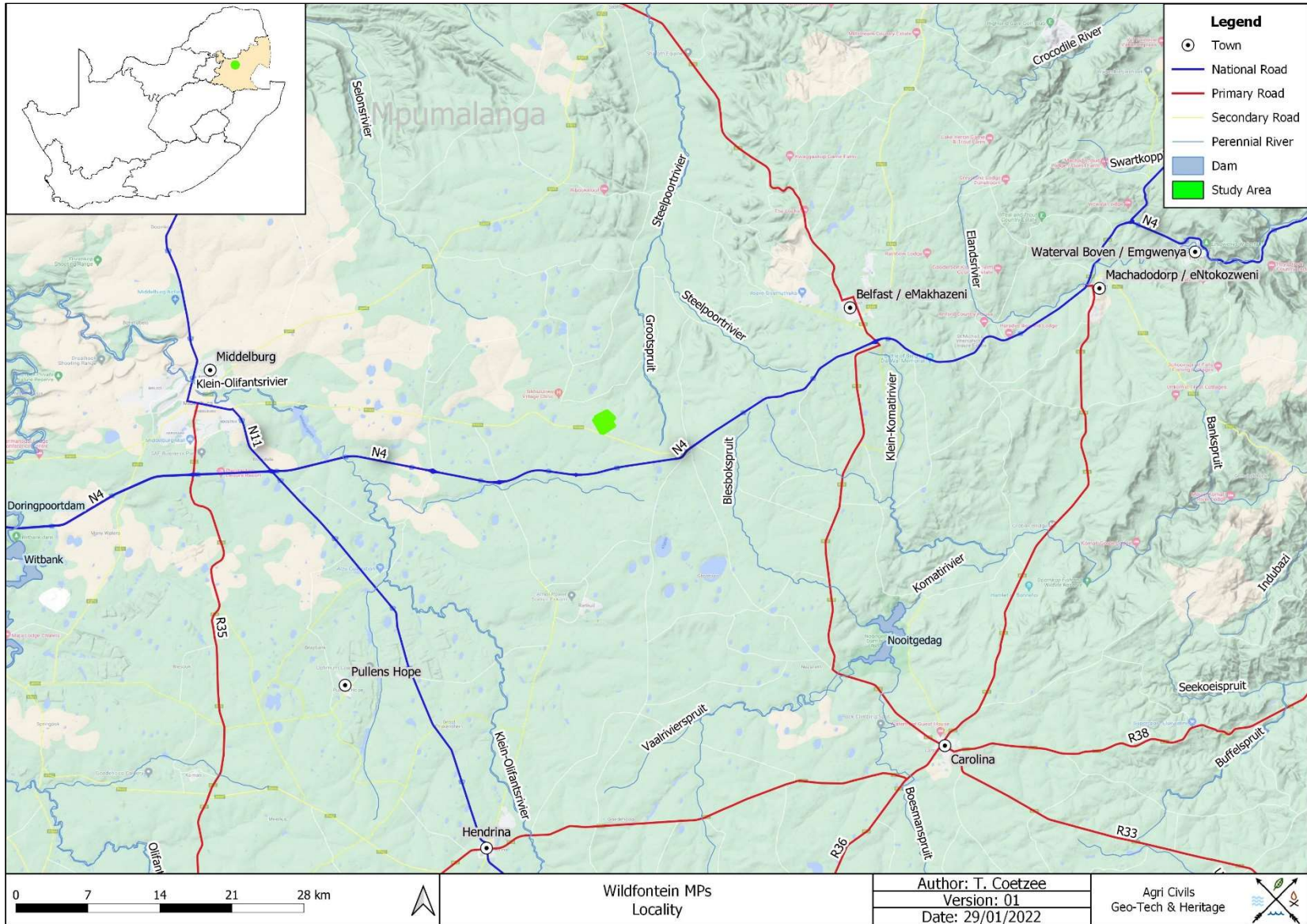
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# 1. Project Background

## 1.1 Introduction

Eco Elementum (Pty) Ltd appointed the author to undertake a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment for the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development on three adjacent areas located on a portion of the Remaining Extent of the Farm Wildfontein 420 JS (**Table 1**) within the Magisterial District of Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province (**Figures 1 – 3**). The proposed coal mining development falls within the eMakhazeni Local Municipality and is located approximately 27 km southwest of Belfast / eMakhazeni. The purpose of this study is to examine each of the three demarcated study areas in order to determine if any archaeological resources of heritage value will be impacted by the proposed mining development, as well as to archaeologically contextualise the general study area. The aim of this report is to provide the developer with information regarding the potential location of heritage resources on the demarcated study areas.

In the following report, the implications for the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development on the demarcated portions with regard to heritage resources are discussed: Three portions (Kapalpha MP, Sastrobuzz MP, Peacanwood MP) located on a portion of the Remaining Extent of the Farm Wildfontein 420 JS. The development will consist of surface infrastructure and opencast pits. The legislation section included serves as a guide towards the effective identification and protection of heritage resources and will apply to any such material unearthed during development and construction phases within the demarcated study areas.



**Figure 1:** Regional and Provincial location of the study area.



## 1.2 Legislation

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) aims to conserve and control the management, research, alteration and destruction of cultural resources of South Africa and to prosecute if necessary. It is therefore crucially important to adhere to heritage resource legislation contained in the Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa (Act No.25 of 1999), as many heritage sites are threatened daily by development. Conservation legislation requires an impact assessment report to be submitted for development authorisation that must include an AIA (Archaeological Impact Assessment) if triggered.

AIAs should be done by qualified professionals with adequate knowledge to (a) identify all heritage resources that might occur in areas of development and (b) make recommendations for protection or mitigation of the impact of the sites.

### 1.2.1 The EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and AIA processes

Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessments generally involve the identification of sites during a field survey with assessment of their significance, the possible impact that the development might have, and relevant recommendations.

All Archaeological Impact Assessment reports should include:

- a. Location of the sites that are found;
- b. Short descriptions of the characteristics of each site;
- c. Short assessments of how important each site is, indicating which should be conserved and which mitigated;
- d. Assessments of the potential impact of the development on the site(s);
- e. In some cases a shovel test, to establish the extent of a site, or collection of material, to identify the associations of the site, may be necessary (a pre-arranged SAHRA permit is required); and
- f. Recommendations for conservation or mitigation.

This AIA report is intended to inform the client about the legislative protection of heritage resources and their significance and make appropriate recommendations. It is essential to also provide the heritage authority with sufficient information about the sites to enable the authority to assess with confidence:

- a. Whether or not it has objections to a development;
- b. What the conditions are upon which such development might proceed;

- c. Which sites require permits for mitigation or destruction;
- d. Which sites require mitigation and what this should comprise;
- e. Whether sites must be conserved and what alternatives can be proposed to relocate the development in such a way as to conserve other sites; and
- f. What measures should or could be put in place to protect the sites which should be conserved.

When a Phase 1 AIA is part of an EIA, wider issues such as public consultation and assessment of the spatial and visual impacts of the development may be undertaken as part of the general study and may not be required from the archaeologist. If, however, the Phase 1 project forms a major component of an AIA it will be necessary to ensure that the study addresses such issues and complies with Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act.

### 1.2.2 Legislation regarding archaeology and heritage sites

*National Heritage Resource Act No.25 of April 1999*

Buildings are among the most enduring features of human occupation, and this definition therefore includes all buildings older than 60 years, modern architecture as well as ruins, fortifications and Farming Community settlements. The Act identifies heritage objects as:

- objects recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa, including archaeological and palaeontological objects, meteorites and rare geological specimens;
- visual art objects;
- military objects;
- numismatic objects;
- objects of cultural and historical significance;
- objects to which oral traditions are attached and which are associated with living heritage;
- objects of scientific or technological interest;
- books, records, documents, photographic positives and negatives, graphic material, film or video or sound recordings, excluding those that are public records as defined in section 1(xiv) of the National Archives of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996), or in a provincial law pertaining to records or archives;
- any other prescribed category.

With regards to activities and work on archaeological and heritage sites this Act states that:

*“No person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.” (34. [1] 1999:58)*

and

*“No person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority:*

- (a) destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;*
- (b) destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or palaeontological material or object or any meteorite;*
- (c) trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or palaeontological material or object, or any meteorite; or*
- (d) bring onto or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment which assist in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and palaeontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.”(35. [4] 1999:58)*

and

*“No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority:*

- (a) destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;*
- (b) destroy, damage, alter, exhume, remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority;*
- (c) bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) and excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.” (36. [3] 1999:60)*

On the development of any area the gazette states that:

*“...any person who intends to undertake a development categorised as:*

- (a) the construction of a road, wall, power line, pipeline, canal or other similar form of linear development or barrier exceeding 300m in length;*
- (b) the construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length;*

- (c) *any development or other activity which will change the character of a site-*
  - i. *exceeding 5000m<sup>2</sup> in extent; or*
  - ii. *involving three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof; or*
  - iii. *involving three or more erven or divisions thereof which have been consolidated within the past five years; or*
  - iv. *the costs of which will exceed a sum set in terms of regulations by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority;*
- (d) *the re-zoning of a site exceeding 10000m<sup>2</sup> in extent; or*
- (e) *any other category of development provided for in regulations by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority, must at the very earliest stages of initiating such a development, notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.” (38. [1] 1999:62-64)*

and

*“The responsible heritage resources authority must specify the information to be provided in a report required in terms of subsection (2)(a): Provided that the following must be included:*

- (a) *The identification and mapping of all heritage resources in the area affected;*
- (b) *an assessment of the significance of such resources in terms of the heritage assessment criteria set out in section 6(2) or prescribed under section 7;*
- (c) *an assessment of the impact of the development on such heritage resources;*
- (d) *an evaluation of the impact of the development on heritage resources relative to the sustainable social and economic benefits to be derived from the development;*
- (e) *the results of consultation with communities affected by the proposed development and other interested parties regarding the impact of the development on heritage resources;*
- (f) *if heritage resources will be adversely affected by the proposed development, the consideration of alternatives; and*
- (g) *plans for mitigation of any adverse effects during and after the completion of the proposed development.” (38. [3] 1999:64)*

The Human Tissues Act (65 of 1983) and Ordinance on the Removal of Graves and Dead Bodies (Ordinance 7 of 1925) protects graves younger than 60 years. These fall under the jurisdiction of the National Department of Health and the Provincial Health Departments. Approval for the exhumation and re-burial must be obtained from the relevant Provincial MEC (Member of the Executive Council) as well as the relevant Local Authorities. Graves 60 years or older fall under the jurisdiction of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) as well as the Human Tissues Act, 1983.

## 2. Study Area and Project Description

### 2.1 Location & Physical Environment

The proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development is situated to the southwest of Belfast / eMakhazeni. The identified study areas are listed below (**Table 1**):

**Table 1:** Study areas & coordinates

Study area	Farm Name	Farm Portion	Map Reference (1:50 000)	Lat	Lon	Development Extent (ha)
Kapalpa MP	Wildfontein 420 JS	RE	2529 DD	-25.785190	29.819260	4.94
Sastrobuzz MP	Wildfontein 420 JS	RE	2529 DD	-25.786857	29.818987	4.94
Peacanwood MP	Wildfontein 420 JS	RE	2529 DD	-25.788009	29.818533	4.61
<b>Total</b>						<b>14.49</b>

The study area is located 27 km southwest of Belfast / eMakhazeni, while Middelburg is located roughly 38 km to the west-northwest, Hendrina 43 km to the southwest, and Carolina 45 km to the southeast (**Figures 1 – 3**). The study area falls within the Nkangala District Municipality and the eMakhazeni Local Municipality in the Mpumalanga Province. In terms of vegetation, the study area falls within the Grassland Biome, which is typically associated with summer rainfall regions. This Biome covers approximately 28% of South Africa. According to the vegetation classification by Mucina & Rutherford (2006) the study area falls within the Eastern Highveld Grassland vegetation unit.

Eastern Highveld Grassland's conservation status is considered to be endangered with a conservation target of 24%. Only a small portion is conserved in statutory and private reserves. This vegetation unit consists of the plains between Belfast / eMakhazeni in the east and the eastern side of Johannesburg in the west and also extends towards Bethal, Ermelo and to the west of Piet Retief / eMkhondo. This vegetation type is associated with slightly to moderately undulating planes and includes low hills and pan depressions. The general vegetation

is short dense grassland with small, scattered rocky outcrops and some woody species. About 44% of this vegetation unit has been transformed by cultivation, plantations, mines, urbanisation and the building of dams. Although no serious alien invasions are reported, *Acacia mearnsii* may become dominant in disturbed areas. Erosion associated with this vegetation unit is considered to be low (Mucina & Rutherford 2006).

The average elevation for Eastern Highveld Grassland varies between 1520 and 1780 MASL (metres above sea level). The average elevation of the project area is 1730 MASL and slopes from the slightly more elevated northern section to the lower southern area.

The study area falls within the summer rainfall region and the average annual rainfall is roughly 838 mm. The average annual temperature is 14.1 °C. The average summer temperature is 17.5 °C, while the winter temperature averages 8.4 °C (Climate-data.org accessed 29/01/2022).

The study area falls within the B12C Quaternary Catchment that forms part of the Olifants Water Management Area (WMA). The closest perennial river to the study area is Grootspuit, a perennial offshoot of the Steelpoort River that flows 5 km to the east. The Middelburg Dam is located 30 km to the west.

When the surrounding environment is considered, the region is associated with crop cultivation and mining activity. Access to the study area is via a local mine road turning from the R104 secondary road to the south of the study area (**Figures 2 & 3**). On a local scale, all three demarcated portions intersect open veldt that used to be cultivated. A section of the Kapalpha MP area, however, appears still to be cultivated.

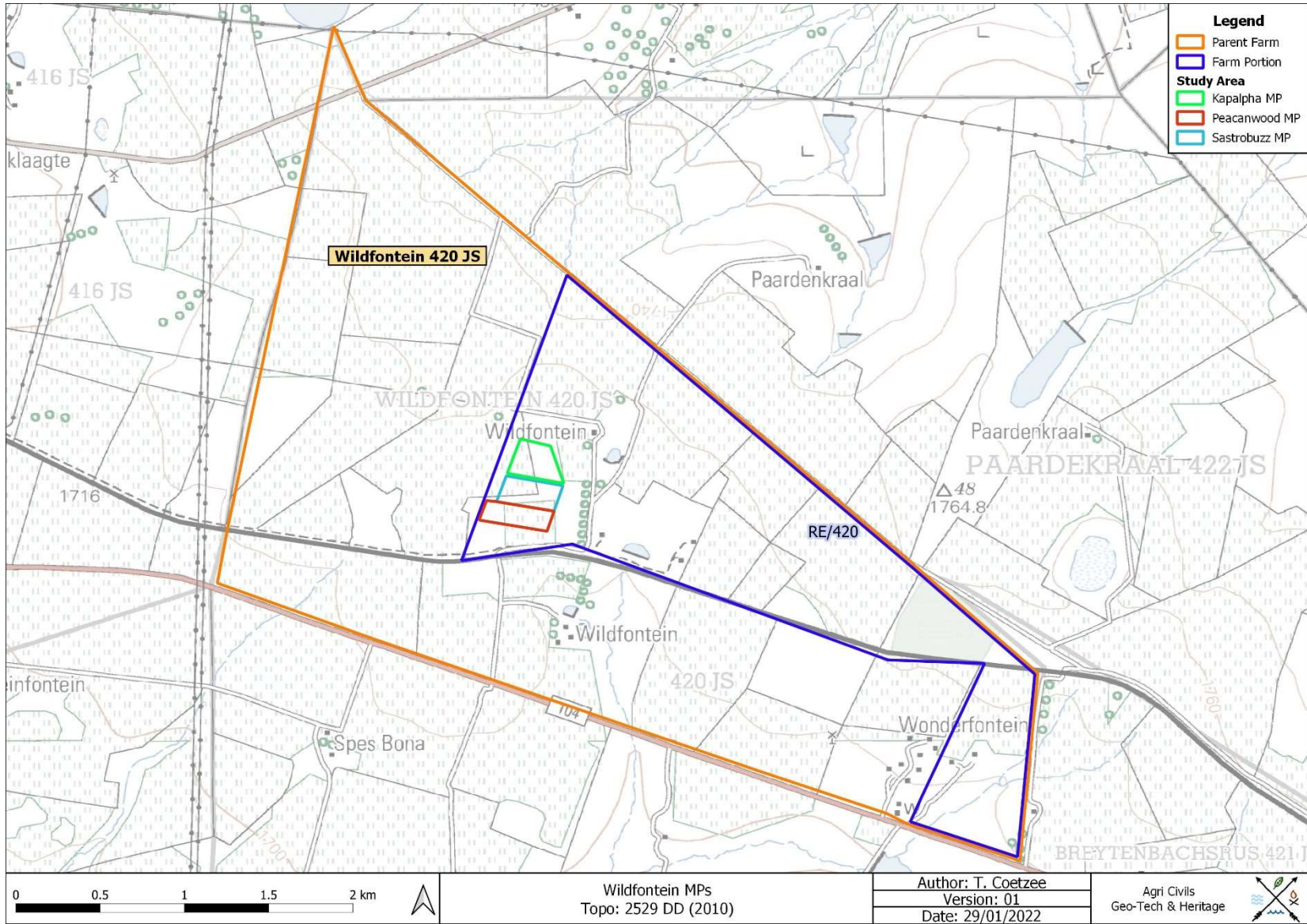
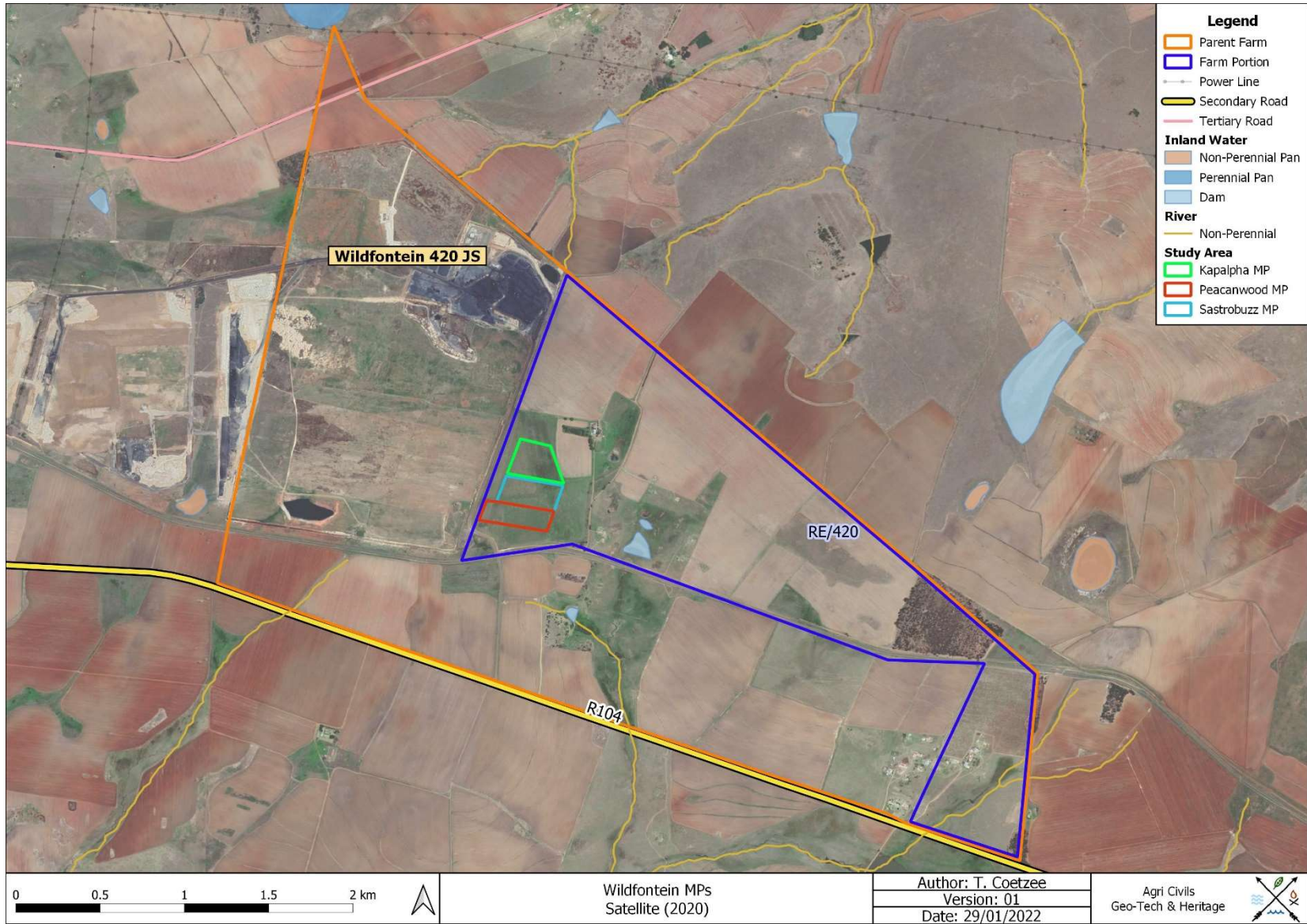


Figure 2: Segment of SA 1: 50 000 2529 DD indicating the study area.



**Figure 3:** Study area portrayed on a 2020 satellite image.



## 2.2 Project description

The proposed development consists of 14.49 ha demarcated for the mining of coal on three portions intersecting the Remaining Extent of the Farm Wildfontein 420 JS. The three areas are labelled Kapalpha MP, Sastrobuzz MP and Peacanwood MP and border each other. The proposed Kapalpha MP and Sastrobuzz MP areas will consist of surface infrastructure and opencast pits, while the proposed Peacanwood MP area will consist of an opencast pit only. The holder of the proposed Kapalpha MP will mine the opencast pits of the Sastrobuzz MP and Peacanwood MP areas on their behalf, while the surface infrastructure on the Kapalpha MP and Sastrobuzz MP areas will be utilised for all three mining permit areas. The planned access road turns from an existing local mine road to the west of the study area (**Figure 4**). The proposed infrastructure and activities include:

- Mobile offices and hard park
- Access road
- Clean water discharge structure
- Overburden stockpile
- Topsoil stockpile
- Culvert crossing
- Clean water channels soft stockpiles
- Clean water channels
- Dirty water channels
- Opencast pits
- Weigh bridge
- Silt retention structure
- Entrance
- ROM pad
- Mobile crushing and screening
- PCD

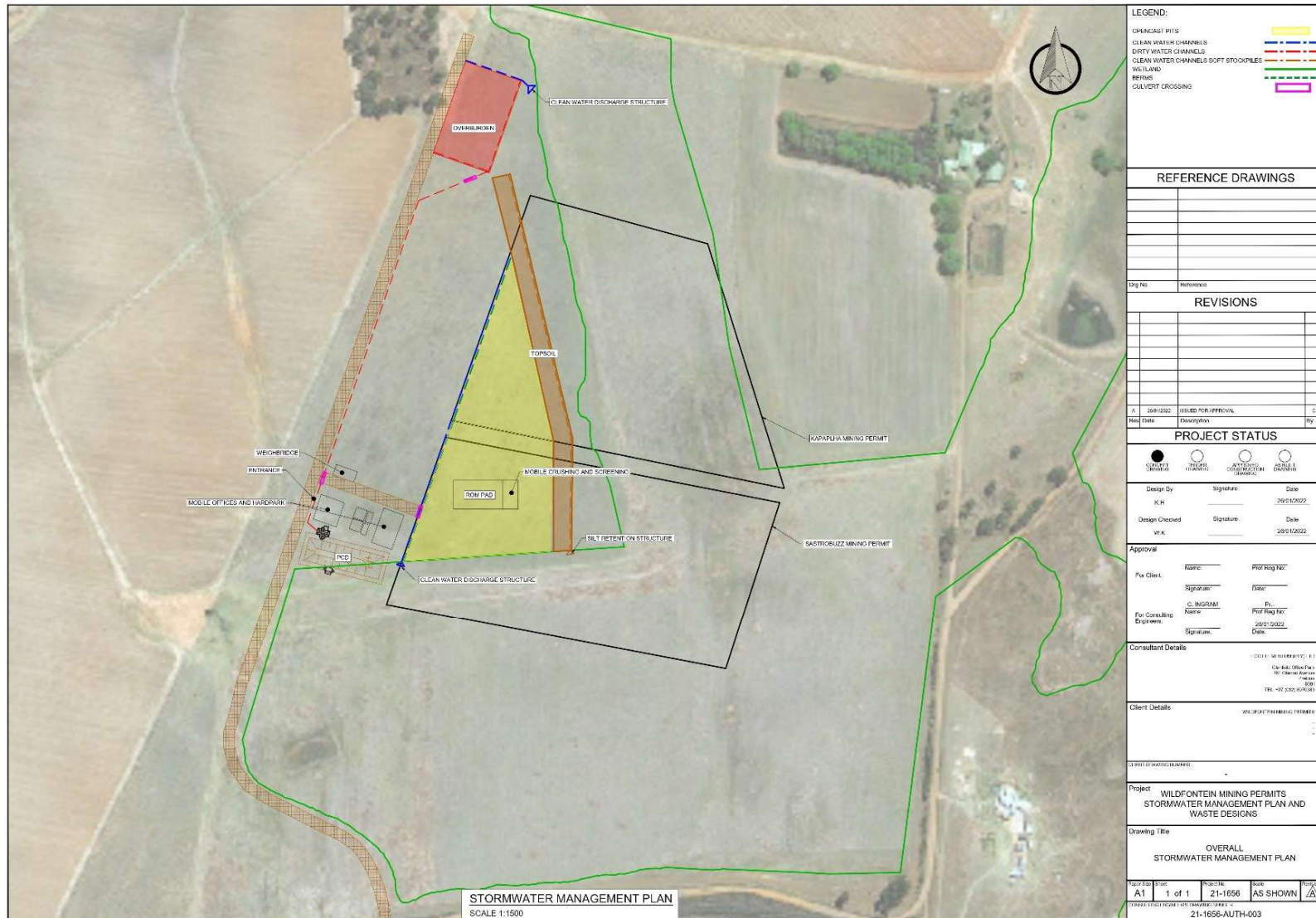


Figure 4: Proposed layout for the Wildfontein Mining Development (Supplied by Eco Elementum 2022).

### 3. Methodology

Archaeological reconnaissance of the three study areas were conducted during March 2022 through a systematic pedestrian survey of the proposed study area (**Figure 5**). The transects were spaced roughly 50 m apart. General site conditions were recorded via photographic record (**Figures 6 – 17**). Also, the project area was inspected beforehand on Google Earth, historical topographical maps and aerial imagery in order to identify potential heritage remains (**Appendix A**). The historical topographical datasets dating to 1967, 1986 and 2010, as well as the historical aerial images dating to 1955, 1964, 1975 and 1991, proved useful in terms of providing an indication of potential heritage sites and past land uses associated with the study area. Although no potential sites were observed on the historical aerial images and topographical maps, one contemporary site was recorded during the pedestrian survey. The total area inspected was 14.49 ha. Because heritage resources are often associated with perennial and non-perennial rivers, the rivers and streams located within close proximity of the study area were buffered by a distance of 500 m, indicating a potentially sensitive area.

The reconnaissance of the area under investigation served a twofold purpose:

- To obtain an indication of heritage material found in the general area as well as to identify or locate archaeological sites on the area demarcated for development. This was done in order to establish a heritage context and to supplement background information that would benefit developers through identifying areas that are sensitive from a heritage perspective.
  
- All archaeological and historical events have spatial definitions in addition to their cultural and chronological context. Where applicable, spatial recording of these definitions were done by means of a handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) during the site visit, as well as by plotting the boundaries from aerial imagery and topographical maps.

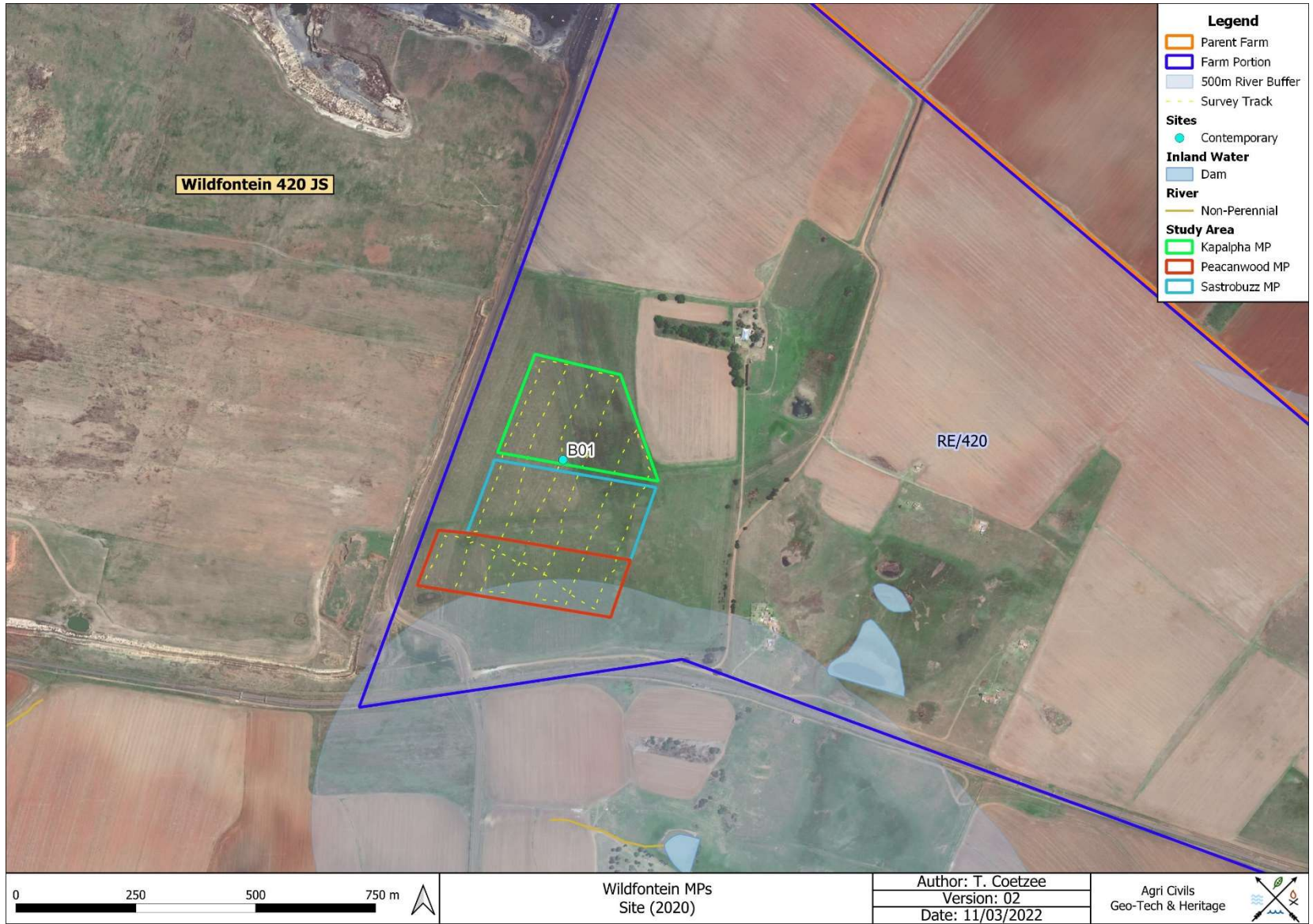


Figure 5: Study area and identified sites portrayed on a 2020 satellite image.



**Figure 6:** Kapalpa MP area seen from the northeast – cultivated section.



**Figure 7:** Kapalpa MP area seen from the southeast.



**Figure 8:** Kapalpa MP area seen from the southwest.



**Figure 9:** Kapalpa MP area seen from the northwest.



**Figure 10:** Sastrobuzz MP area seen from the northeast.



**Figure 11:** Sastrobuzz MP area seen from the southeast.



**Figure 12:** Sastrobuzz MP area seen from the southwest.



**Figure 13:** Sastrobuzz MP area seen from the northwest.



**Figure 14:** Peacanwood MP area seen from the northeast.



**Figure 15:** Peacanwood MP area seen from the southeast.



**Figure 16:** Peacanwood MP area seen from the southwest.



**Figure 17:** Peacanwood MP area seen from the northwest.



## 3.1 Sources of information

At all times during the survey, standard archaeological procedures for the observation of heritage resources were followed. As most archaeological material occur in single or multiple stratified layers beneath the soil surface, special attention was paid to disturbances; both man-made such as roads and clearings, and those made by natural agents such as burrowing animals and erosion. Locations associated with archaeological material remains were recorded by means of a Garmin Oregon 750 GPS and were photographed with a Samsung S7 mobile phone. A literature study, which incorporated previous work done in the region, was conducted in order to place the study area into context from a heritage perspective.

### 3.1.1 Previous Heritage Studies

#### **Forzando Coal Holdings on the Farms Weltevreden 193 IS and Halfgewonnen 190 IS**

An archaeological survey was conducted for a coal mine on the Farms Weltevreden 193 IS and Halfgewonnen 190 IS. The demarcated impact area was 600 X 600 m and is located roughly 20 km south of the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Project. Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) surveyed the study area and the remains of two circular homesteads that possibly date to the Late Iron Age were observed. Both homesteads consist of between 3 and 6 structures and are located close to a stream. More recent angular settlement remains, as well as 2 graveyards associated with the settlements were observed. The graves consisted of mounds made with ferricrete. One of the graveyards consisted of 8 graves, and the other of 5 graves (Huffman & Steel 1995).

#### **Goedehoop Coal Mine, Mpumalanga**

An Archaeological and Cultural Historical survey and impact assessment was conducted by the National Cultural History Museum (2003) for the development of the Goedehoop opencast coal mine near Hendrina in the Mpumalanga Province. The Goedehoop site is located roughly 28 km southeast of the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Project. Opencast areas that were surveyed included portions of the Farms Schurvekop 227 IS, Vlakkuielen 76 IS, Middelkraal 50 IS, and Halfgewonnen 190 IS. It was noted that a few graveyards located outside of the impacted areas were observed and would therefore not be impacted.

#### **Halfgewonnen Colliery, Mpumalanga**

Van Vollenhoven (2013) conducted a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for a mining right application at the Halfgewonnen Colliery between Hendrina and Bethal. The Halfgewonnen Colliery is located on the Farm Halfgewonnen 190 IS about 32 km south-southeast of the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Project. The project entailed the extraction of pillars from the underground mining area that was previously mined through bord-and-pillar methods. Van Vollenhoven (2013) located no sites of cultural heritage significance during the survey.

### 3.1.2 Historical topographical maps & aerial images

The historical aerial images dating to 1955, 1964, 1975 and 1991 (**Appendix A: Figures 25, 26, 28 & 30**) indicate all three areas to be cultivated with no surface infrastructure visible. The 1967 and 1986 topographical maps (**Appendix A: Figures 27 & 29**) show all three areas to be cultivated, while the 2010 topographical map (**Appendix A: Figure 31**) indicates that each area consists of a combination of cultivated land and open veldt. No buildings or structures are shown on any of the topographical maps.

## 3.2 Limitations

The pedestrian survey (March 2022) confirmed the study area to be a combination of cultivated and open grassland. Movement was slightly hampered in a few places by high grass cover, which also resulted in reduced visibility (**Figure 18**). The general visibility, however, was considered to be good. No other access constraints were encountered. It should be noted that the boundaries of a section to the west of the proposed Sastrobuzz MP area and a section to the northwest of the proposed Kapalpha MP area were not available at the time of the site visit and were therefore not inspected. These sections, however, are considered to be of low heritage significance since no obvious heritage sites were noted in the general vicinity and historical aerial imagery and topographical datasets indicate the area to be cultivated as well.



**Figure 18:** Dense vegetations associated with some areas.

## 4. Archaeological Background

Southern African archaeology is broadly divided into the Early, Middle and Later Stone Ages; Early, Middle and Later Iron Ages; and Historical or Colonial Periods. This section of the report provides a general background to archaeology in South Africa and focuses on more site-specific elements where relevant.

### 4.1 The Stone Ages

The earliest stone tool industry, the Oldowan, was developed by early human ancestors which were the earliest members of the genus *Homo*, such as *Homo habilis*, around 2.6 million years ago. It comprises tools such as cobble cores and pebble choppers (Toth & Schick 2007). Archaeologists suggest these stone tools are the earliest

direct evidence for culture in southern Africa (Clarke & Kuman 2000). The advent of culture indicates the advent of more cognitively modern hominins (Mitchell 2002: 56, 57)

The Acheulean industry completely replaced the Oldowan industry. The Acheulian industry was first developed by *Homo ergaster* between 1.8 to 1.65 million years ago and lasted until around 300 000 years ago. Archaeological evidence from this period is also found at Swartkrans, Kromdraai and Sterkfontein. The most typical tools of the ESA (Early Stone Age) are handaxes, cleavers, choppers and spheroids. Although hominins seemingly used handaxes often, scholars disagree about their use. There are no indications of hafting, and some artefacts are far too large for it. Hominins likely used choppers and scrapers for skinning and butchering scavenged animals and often obtained sharp ended sticks for digging up edible roots. Presumably, early humans used wooden spears as early as 5 million years ago to hunt small animals.

Middle Stone Age (MSA) artefacts started appearing about 250 000 years ago and replaced the larger Early Stone Age bifaces, handaxes and cleavers with smaller flake industries consisting of scrapers, points and blades. These artefacts roughly fall in the 40-100 mm size range and were, in some cases, attached to handles, indicating a significant technical advance. The first *Homo sapiens* species also emerged during this period. Associated sites are Klasies River Mouth, Blombos Cave and Border Cave (Deacon & Deacon 1999).

Although the transition from the Middle Stone Age to the Later Stone Age (LSA) did not occur simultaneously across the whole of southern Africa, the Later Stone Age ranges from about 20 000 to 2000 years ago. Stone tools from this period are generally smaller, but were used to do the same job as those from previous periods; only in a different, more efficient way. The Later Stone Age is associated with: rock art, smaller stone tools (microliths), bows and arrows, bored stones, grooved stones, polished bone tools, earthenware pottery and beads. Examples of Later Stone Age sites are Nelson Bay Cave, Rose Cottage Cave and Boomplaas Cave (Deacon & Deacon 1999). These artefacts are often associated with rocky outcrops or water sources.

## 4.2 The Iron Age & Later History

The Early Iron Age marks the movement of farming communities into South Africa in the first millennium AD, or around 2500 years ago (Mitchell 2002:259, 260). These groups were agro-pastoralist communities that settled in the vicinity of water in order to provide subsistence for their cattle and crops. Archaeological evidence from Early Iron Age sites is mostly artefacts in the form of ceramic assemblages. The origins and archaeological identities of this period are largely based upon ceramic typologies. Some scholars classify Early Iron Age ceramic traditions into different “streams” or “trends” in pot types and decoration, which emerged over time in southern Africa. These “streams” are identified as the Kwale Branch (east), the Nkope Branch (central) and the Kalundu Branch (west). Early Iron Age ceramics typically display features such as large and prominent inverted rims, large neck areas and fine elaborate decorations. This period continued until the end of the first millennium AD (Mitchell 2002;

Huffman 2007). Some well-known Early Iron Age sites include the Lydenburg Heads in Mpumalanga, Happy Rest in the Limpopo Province and Mzonjani in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

The Middle Iron Age roughly stretches from AD 900 to 1300 and marks the origins of the Zimbabwe culture. During this period cattle herding appeared to play an increasingly important role in society. However, it was proved that cattle remained an important source of wealth throughout the Iron Age. An important shift in the Iron Age of southern Africa took place in the Shashe-Limpopo basin during this period, namely the development of class distinction and sacred leadership. The Zimbabwe culture can be divided into three periods based on certain capitals. Mapungubwe, the first period, dates from AD 1220 to 1300, Great Zimbabwe from AD 1300 to 1450, and Khami from AD 1450 to 1820 (Huffman 2007: 361, 362).

The Late Iron Age roughly dates from AD 1300 to 1840. It is generally accepted that Great Zimbabwe replaced Mapungubwe. Some characteristics include a greater focus on economic growth and the increased importance of trade. Specialisation in terms of natural resources also started to play a role, as can be seen from the distribution of iron slag which tend to occur only in certain localities compared to a wide distribution during earlier times. It was also during the Late Iron Age that different areas of South Africa were populated, such as the interior of KwaZulu Natal, the Free State, the Gauteng Highveld and the Transkei. Another characteristic is the increased use of stone as building material. Some artefacts associated with this period are knife-blades, hoes, adzes, awls, other metal objects as well as bone tools and grinding stones.

The Historical period mainly deals with Europe's discovery, settlement and impact on southern Africa. Some topics covered by the Historical period include Dutch settlement in the Western Cape, early mission stations, Voortrekker routes and the Anglo Boer War. This time period also saw the compilation of early maps by missionaries, explorers, military personnel, etc.

#### **4.2.1 The South African War**

Several small skirmishes took place in the general area. However, no artefacts or features relating to the South African War were found during the survey. One of the more important and well-known South African War sites in the vicinity of the study area is the Battle of Bergendal, located approximately 29 km east of the study area. The battle took place on 27 August 1900 between the forces of General Louis Botha and Lord Roberts. Lord Robert's plan was to use his 20 000 troops for a decisive action against the Boer commandos to the east of Pretoria, while the Boers intended to use strong positions north and south of the railway line near Belfast to stop the British advance to Machadodorp. During this time President Paul Kruger was in Machadodorp, the new seat of the Boer government (Von der Heyde 2013: 205-207).

Lord Robert's force was mobilising from Middleburg and General Sir Redvers Buller was on his way from Natal to trap the Boers in a pincer movement between Machadodorp and Belfast. Buller, however, decided to move his force to the north instead of Machadodorp, a decision based on the fact that a large force would be travelling slowly and through swampy areas. The Boers under General Louis Botha positioned 5000 men in a defensive line over 80 km long to the north and south of the railway line with the centre near Belfast. Botha strengthened his flanks as he expected the British to attack his flanks with cavalry, as they had done so on previous occasions. The attack, however, was aimed at Bergendal Koppie near the middle of Botha's defensive line, taking him by surprise. Seventy-four members of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Politie under Commandant Sarel Oosthuizen held the hill for three hours until the British infantry reached the foot of the hill. As the British fixed their bayonets for the charge the Boers withdrew. Upon realising that the line had been breached, the rest of the Boers withdrew as well. Between 21 and 27 August 1900 the British suffered 300 casualties and the Boers 14. Nineteen were taken prisoner. This led to the British occupying Waterval Boven, the Boer government releasing 2000 British prisoners from the camp near Barberton and moving their railway carriage to Nelspruit. The Battle of Bergendal is considered to be the last pitched battle of the Anglo-Boer War as the guerrilla phase started thereafter (Von der Heyde 2013: 205-207).

#### **4.2.2 Coal mining general history near eMalahleni, Middelburg, Bethal, Hendrina, Ermelo and Carolina**

Mpumalanga, especially the area between eMalahleni, Middelburg, Bethal, Hendrina, Ermelo and Carolina, is associated with vast coal fields. These coal fields formed between 200 and 300 million years ago from rotten forests in swamps. During this period, Africa was still attached to South America, India and Antarctica as part of the Gondwana supercontinent. By 250 million years ago, the climate changed to dry warm conditions and the swamps in Mpumalanga were replaced by desert-like conditions around 200 million years ago. By 180 million years ago, when the Gondwana supercontinent started to split up, volcanic lava fields covered areas in Mpumalanga (De Wit 2007: 37).

With the rich coal deposits in Mpumalanga, it was only a matter of time before its value was realised and the coal extracted. Coal mining is Mpumalanga's most important industrial activity and produces about 80% of South Africa's coal. The earliest coal mining in the area dates to 1868 when farmers extracted coal for personal use in the Middelburg district. Large-scale coal mining around eMalahleni, however, only started after the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886. Due to the discovery of coal in the Brakpan and Springs surroundings in 1887 and no railway linking eMalahleni with the Rand, these early eMalahleni coal mines closed down. It was more cost effective to exploit the closer Brakpan and Springs coal deposits than the coal found at eMalahleni (Schirmer 2007: 316).

After the construction of the railway line between the Rand and eMalahleni the deposits were exploited on large scale again. The coal fields, which are about 40 km wide, are concentrated around eMalahleni and run towards Belfast in the east. The first collieries around eMalahleni were Douglas, Transvaal and Delagoa Bay, Witbank

and Landau and are of a higher quality compared to the coal found at Brakpan and Springs. During the 1890s some of the coal was exported via Delagoa Bay. In addition, the coal was readily accessible as the deposits occurred at a depth of 100 m or less (Schirmer 2007: 316-317). It should also be noted that the railway line between Pretoria and Lorenço Marques (Maputo) was completed on 2 November 1894 and the connection between eMalahleni and Johannesburg during the 1910s (Heydenrych 1999).

Between 1900 and 1920 many new collieries were established and the coal price dropped. This led to the establishment of the Transvaal Coal Owners' Association with the main aim to regulate output coal prices. This also acted to counter possible competition. It should also be noted that not all collieries joined this association. The establishment of the Transvaal Coal Owners' Association had positive as well as negative influences. On the one hand eliminating the competition might have impacted negatively on efficiency and the workers. On the other hand, it is possible that the capacity of coal mines was enhanced and facilitated further development in the industry. One positive point was that the association eased interaction with international buyers. During the 1930s, however, the coal price continued to drop and resulted in mechanisation. This introduced electric coal cutters and eliminated the need for high number of unskilled workers. By 1946 eMalahleni and Middelburg saw the emergence of a modern coal industry. The Transvaal had 34 large collieries that were responsible for 99.7% of the province's coal (Schirmer 2007: 317-319).

Between 1940 and 1960 coal output in the Eastern Transvaal increased from 13 million to 25 million tons. Although industrialisation expanded throughout this time in South Africa and a demand existed for coal both locally and internationally, a steady shift to oil as the dominant form of energy was noted. In light of these developments Anglo American Corporation launched three research programmes in the 1960s. As a result of these programmes the region's coal mines became export orientated. This trend continued throughout the 1980s. During these times a series of coal-burning power stations around the eastern Highveld coal deposits were constructed (Schirmer 2007: 321).

## 5. Archaeological and Historical Remains

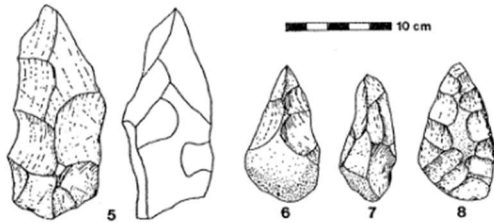
### 5.1 Stone Age Remains

No Stone Age archaeological remains were located within the demarcated study areas.

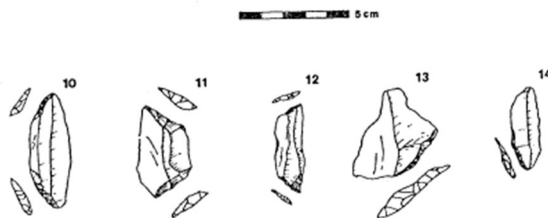
Although no Stone Age archaeological remains were located, such artefacts may occur in the general area. These artefacts are often associated with rocky outcrops or water sources. **Figures 19 – 21** below are examples of stone tools often associated with the Early, Middle and Later Stone Age of southern Africa.

Archaeological studies conducted in the surrounding areas also did not locate Stone Age artefacts.

According to Bergh (1999: 5), no major Stone Age archaeological sites are located in the direct vicinity of the study area.



**Figure 19:** ESA artefacts from Sterkfontein (Volman 1984).



**Figure 20:** MSA artefacts from Howiesons Poort (Volman 1984).



**Figure 21:** LSA scrapers (Klein 1984).

## 5.2 Iron Age Farmer Remains

No Iron Age Farmer remains were located within the demarcated study area.

The heritage study conducted for Forzando Coal Holdings on the Farms Weltevreden 193 IS and Halfgewonnen 190 IS located two circular homesteads that possibly date to the LIA (Huffman & Steel 1995).

## 5.3 Historical

No sites dating to the Historic Period were located within the demarcated study area.

The heritage study conducted by Huffman & Steel (1995) recorded angular settlement remains that might date to the Historic Period.

## 5.4 Contemporary Remains/Natural

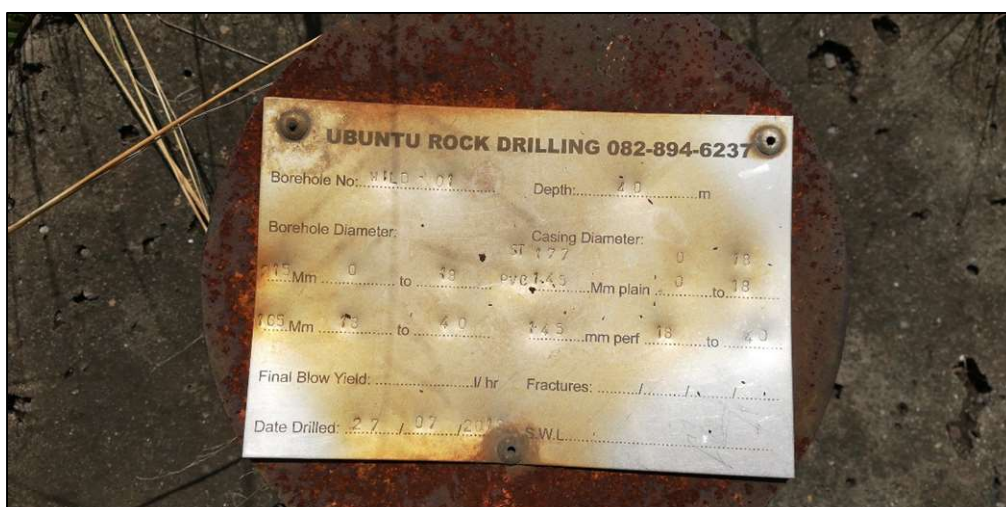
One site (B01), identified as a drill site during the pedestrian survey, was located just inside the southern boundary of the Kapalpa MP area (Table 2 & Figure 22). According to the associated plaque, the hole was drilled by Ubuntu Rock Drilling in 2018 and is labelled as “WILD – 01” (Figure 23). The depth of the borehole is 40m.

**Table 2:** Contemporary Sites

Name	Type	Source	Year	Status	Age
B01	Borehole	Survey	2018	Intact	4 years



**Figure 22:** Borehole Site B01.



**Figure 23:** Plaque at Site B01 dating to 2018.



Heritage studies conducted in the surrounding areas did not mention any significant contemporary remains. See National Cultural History Museum (2003), Huffman & Steel (1995) and Van Vollenhoven (2013).

## 5.5 Graves

No burial sites were observed during the pedestrian survey.

The heritage studies conducted by Huffman & Steel (1995) and the National Cultural History Museum (2003), recorded the presence of several graves and cemeteries.

## 6. Evaluation

The significance of an archaeological site is based on the amount of deposit, the integrity of the context, the kind of deposit and the potential to help answer present research questions. Historical structures are defined by Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, while other historical and cultural significant sites, places and features, are generally determined by community preferences.

A fundamental aspect in the conservation of a heritage resource relates to whether the sustainable social and economic benefits of a proposed development outweigh the conservation issues at stake. There are many aspects that must be taken into consideration when determining significance, such as rarity, national significance, scientific importance, cultural and religious significance, and not least, community preferences. When, for whatever reason the protection of a heritage site is not deemed necessary or practical, its research potential must be assessed and if appropriate mitigated in order to gain data / information which would otherwise be lost. Such sites must be adequately recorded and sampled before being destroyed.

### 6.1 Field Ratings

All sites should include a field rating in order to comply with section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999). The field rating and classification in this report are prescribed by SAHRA.

**Table 3:** Prescribed Field Ratings

Rating	Field Rating/Grade	Significance	Recommendation
National	Grade 1		National site
Provincial	Grade 2		Provincial site
Local	Grade 3 A	High	Mitigation not advised
Local	Grade 3 B	High	Part of site should be retained
General protection A	4 A	High/Medium	Mitigate site
General Protection B	4 B	Medium	Record site
General Protection C	4 C	Low	No recording necessary

**Table 4:** Individual site ratings.

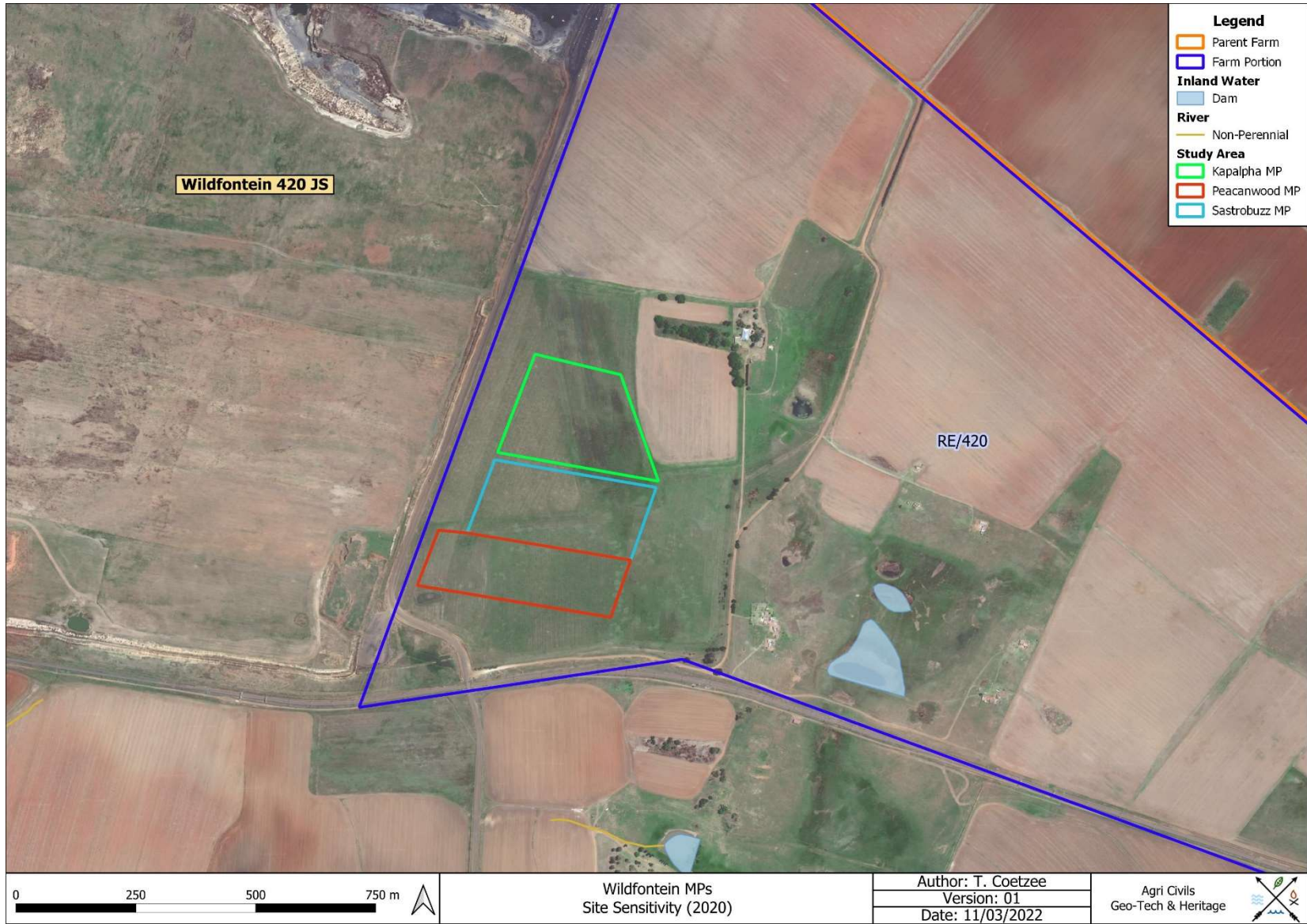
Site / Survey Point Name	Type	Rating	Field Rating/Grade	Significance	Recommendation
2629BA-B01	Borehole	General Protection C	4 C	Low	No recording necessary

## 7. Statement of Significance & Recommendations

### 7.1 Statement of significance

#### **The study area: The Proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development**

All three areas demarcated for the mining of coal (Kapalpha MP, Sastrobuzz MP, Peacanwood MP) are located in open veldt that used to be cultivated. A section of the Kapalpha MP area, however, is still cultivated. No sites of heritage significance were observed on historical aerial images or topographical maps, while the borehole at Site B01 identified during the pedestrian survey, does not exceed 60 years of age and is not considered to be significant from a heritage perspective. Although the 500 m river buffer, a zone generally associated with a higher heritage site probability, intersects the southern section of the proposed Peacanwood MP area, all three MP areas were previously cultivated and no structures were noted on historical aerial images and topographical maps. The study area is therefore not considered to be sensitive from a heritage perspective (**Figure 24**).



**Figure 24:** Study area and potentially sensitive areas portrayed on a 2020 satellite image.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in terms with the National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) in order to avoid the destruction of heritage remains associated with the area demarcated for development:

- Site B01, identified as a borehole during the pedestrian survey, dates to 2018 and is not significant from a heritage perspective. No further action is required.
- The boundaries for a section to the west of the proposed Sastrobuzz MP area and a section to the northwest of the proposed Kapalpha MP area were not available at the time of surveying. However, no potential heritage sites were observed in the general area and no buildings or structures were noted on historical aerial images and topographical maps. Also, the entire area appears to be associated with open veldt that used to be cultivated. Although the two areas are unlikely to be associated with heritage sites, a qualified archaeologist must be contacted should potential heritage sites be encountered.
- Since archaeological artefacts generally occur below surface, the possibility exists that culturally significant material may be exposed during the construction phase, in which case all activities must be suspended pending further archaeological investigations by a qualified archaeologist. Also, should skeletal remains be exposed during development and construction phases, all activities must be suspended and the relevant heritage resources authority contacted (See National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999 section 36 (6)).
- From a heritage point of view, development may proceed on the demarcated areas, subject to the abovementioned conditions, recommendations and approval by the South African Heritage Resources Agency.

## 8. Conclusion

The proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development consists of surface infrastructure and activities impacting approximately 14.49 ha. The entire study area has been disturbed by cultivation in the past and no sites of heritage significance appear to be associated with the demarcated areas. The area is therefore not considered to be sensitive from a heritage perspective.

Should the recommendations made in this study be adhered to and with the approval of the South African Heritage Resources Agency, the proposed Wildfontein Coal Mining Development may proceed.

## 9. Addendum: Terminology

### **Archaeology:**

The study of the human past through its material remains.

### **Artefact:**

Any portable object used, modified, or made by humans; e.g. pottery and metal objects.

### **Assemblage:**

A group of artefacts occurring together at a particular time and place, and representing the sum of human activities.

### **Context:**

An artefact's context usually consist of its immediate *matrix* (the material surrounding it e.g. gravel, clay or sand), its *provenience* (horizontal and vertical position within the matrix), and its *association* with other artefacts (occurrence together with other archaeological remains, usually in the same matrix).

### **Cultural Resource Management (CRM):**

The safeguarding of the archaeological heritage through the protection of sites and through salvage archaeology (rescue archaeology), generally within the framework of legislation designed to safeguard the past.

### **Excavation:**

The principal method of data acquisition in archaeology, involving the systematic uncovering of archaeological remains through the removal of the deposits of soil and other material covering and accompanying it.

### **Feature:**

An irremovable artefact; e.g. hearths or architectural elements.

### **Ground Reconnaissance:**

A collective name for a wide variety of methods for identifying individual archaeological sites, including consultation of documentary sources, place-name evidence, local folklore, and legend, but primarily actual fieldwork.

### **Matrix:**

The physical material within which artefacts is embedded or supported, i.e. the material surrounding it e.g. gravel, clay or sand.

### **Phase 1 Assessments:**

Scoping surveys to establish the presence of and to evaluate heritage resources in a given area.

### **Phase 2 Assessments:**

In-depth culture resources management studies which could include major archaeological excavations, detailed site surveys and mapping / plans of sites, including historical / architectural structures and features. Alternatively, the sampling of sites by collecting material, small test pit excavations or auger sampling is required.

**Sensitive:**

Often refers to graves and burial sites although not necessarily a heritage place, as well as ideologically significant sites such as ritual / religious places. *Sensitive* may also refer to an entire landscape / area known for its significant heritage remains.

**Site:**

A distinct spatial clustering of artefacts, features, structures, and organic and environmental remains, as the residue of human activity.

**Surface survey:**

There are two kinds: (1) unsystematic and (2) systematic. The former involves field walking, i.e. scanning the ground along one's path and recording the location of artefacts and surface features. Systematic survey by comparison is less subjective and involves a grid system, such that the survey area is divided into sectors and these are walked ally, thus making the recording of finds more accurate.

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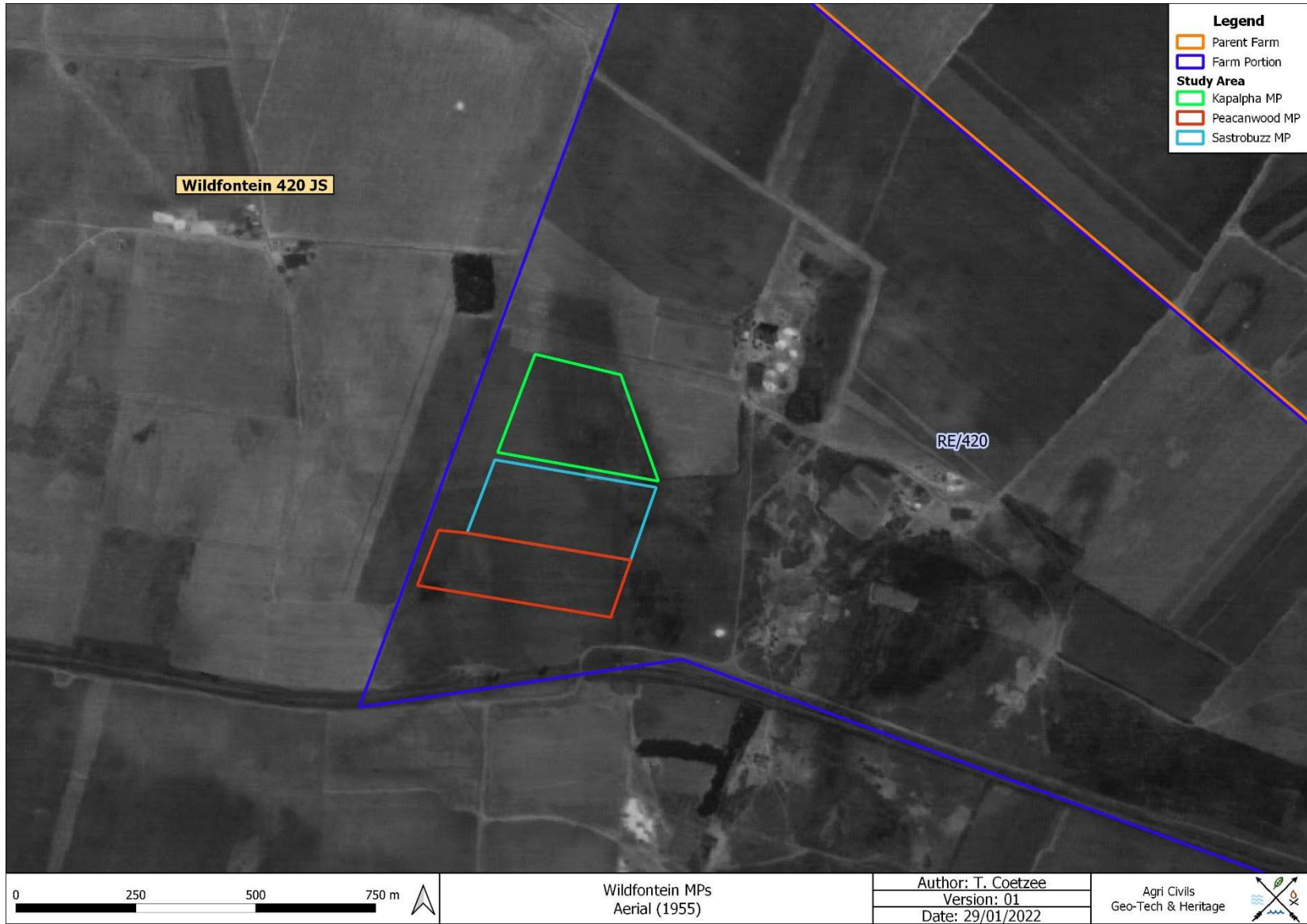
*Human Tissue Act No. 65 of 1983, Government Gazette, Cape Town*

*National Heritage Resource Act No.25 of 1999, Government Gazette, Cape Town*

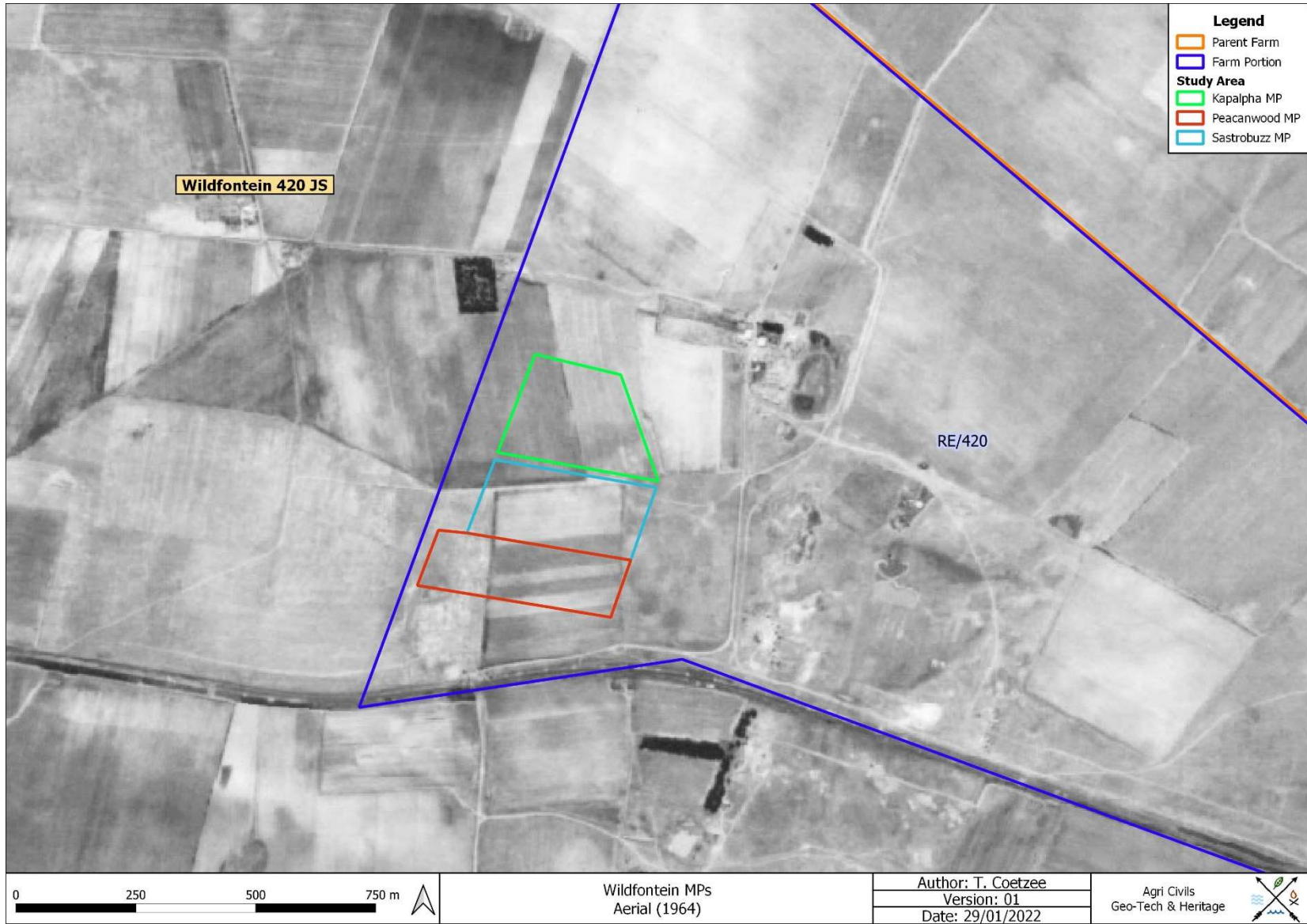
*Removal of Graves and Dead Bodies Ordinance No. 7 of 1925, Government Gazette, Cape Town*

## Appendix A: Historical Topographical Maps & Aerial Images

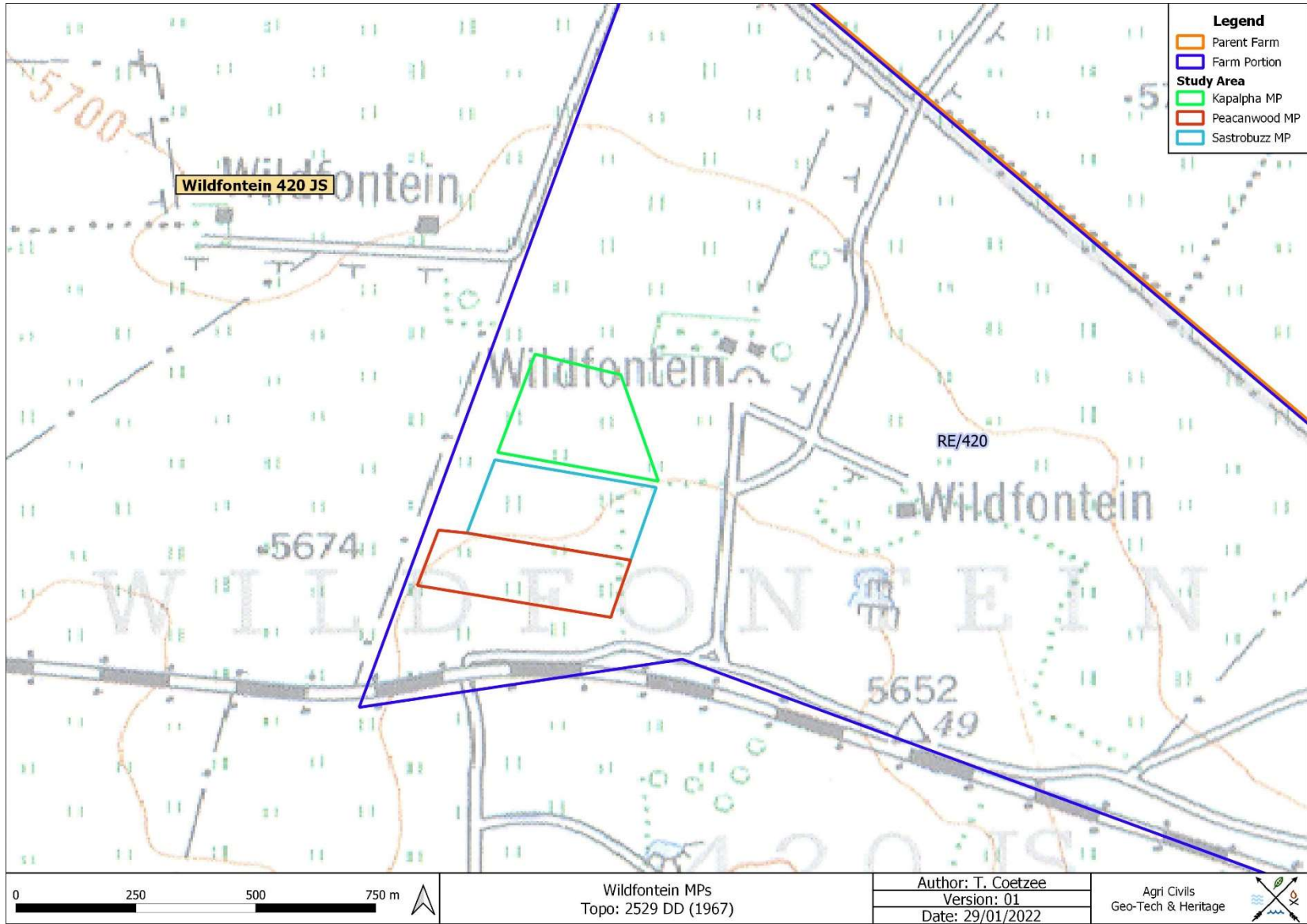




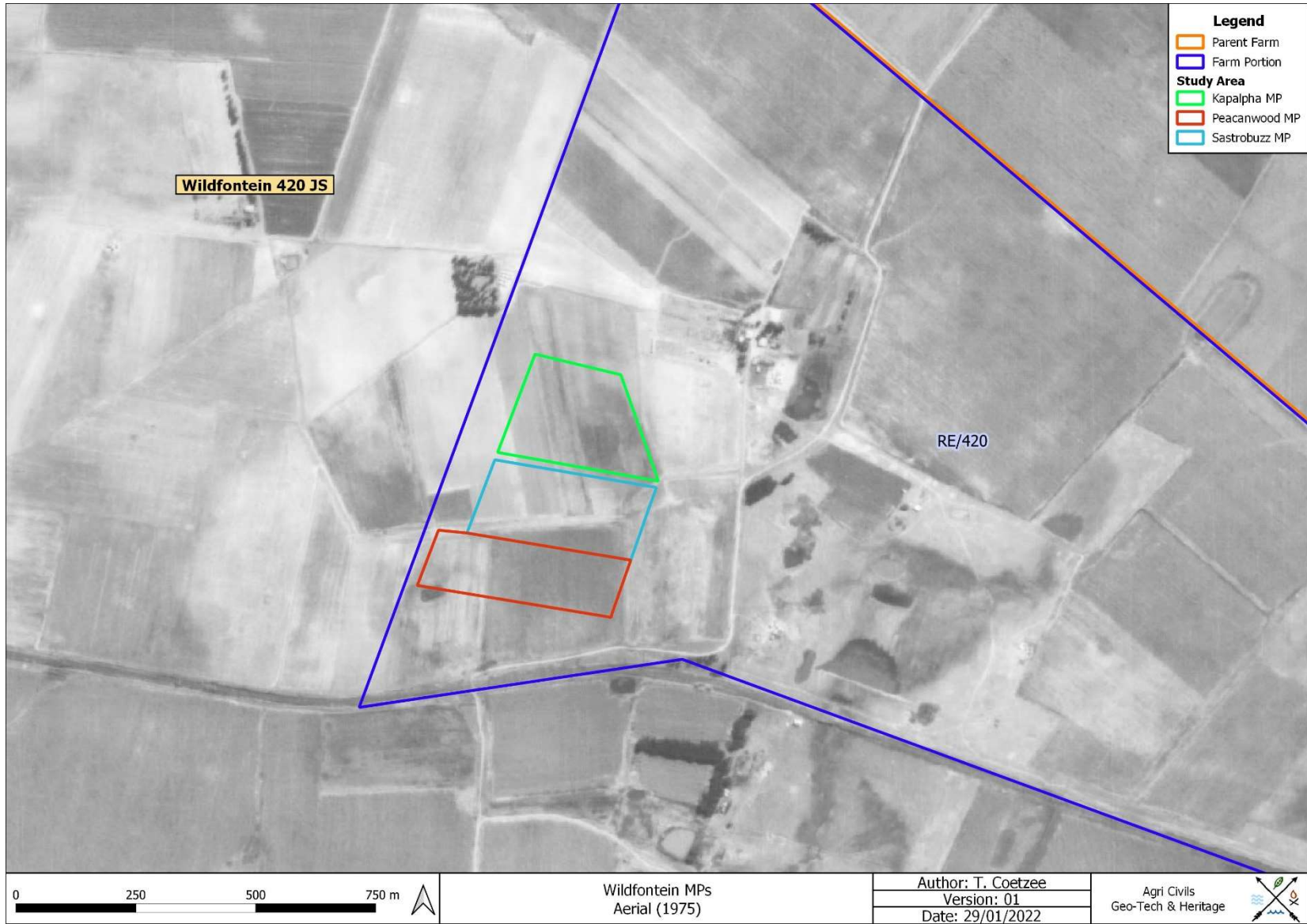
**Figure 25:** Study area superimposed on a 1955 aerial image.



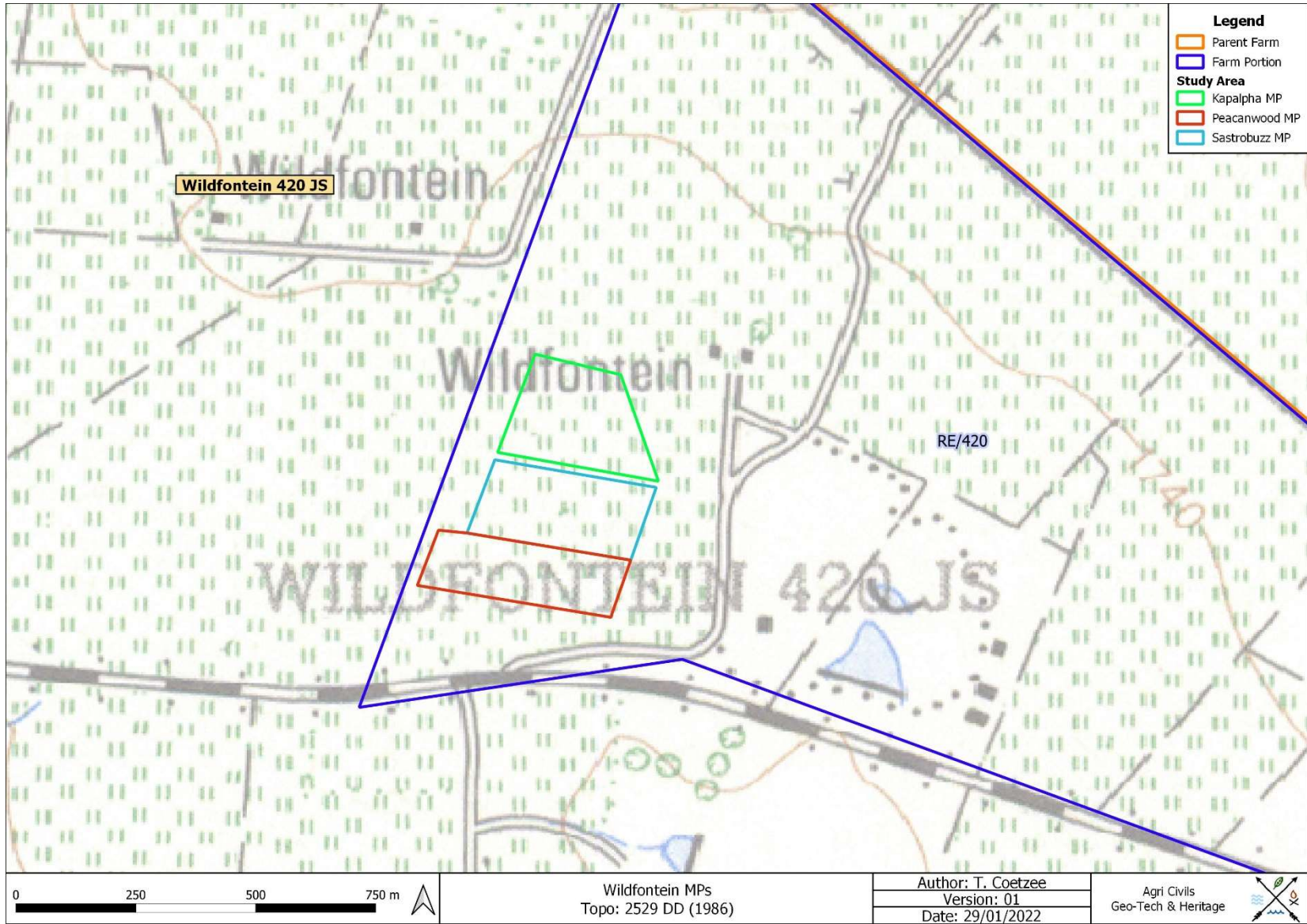
**Figure 26:** Study area superimposed on a 1964 aerial image.



**Figure 27:** Study area superimposed on a 1967 topographical map.



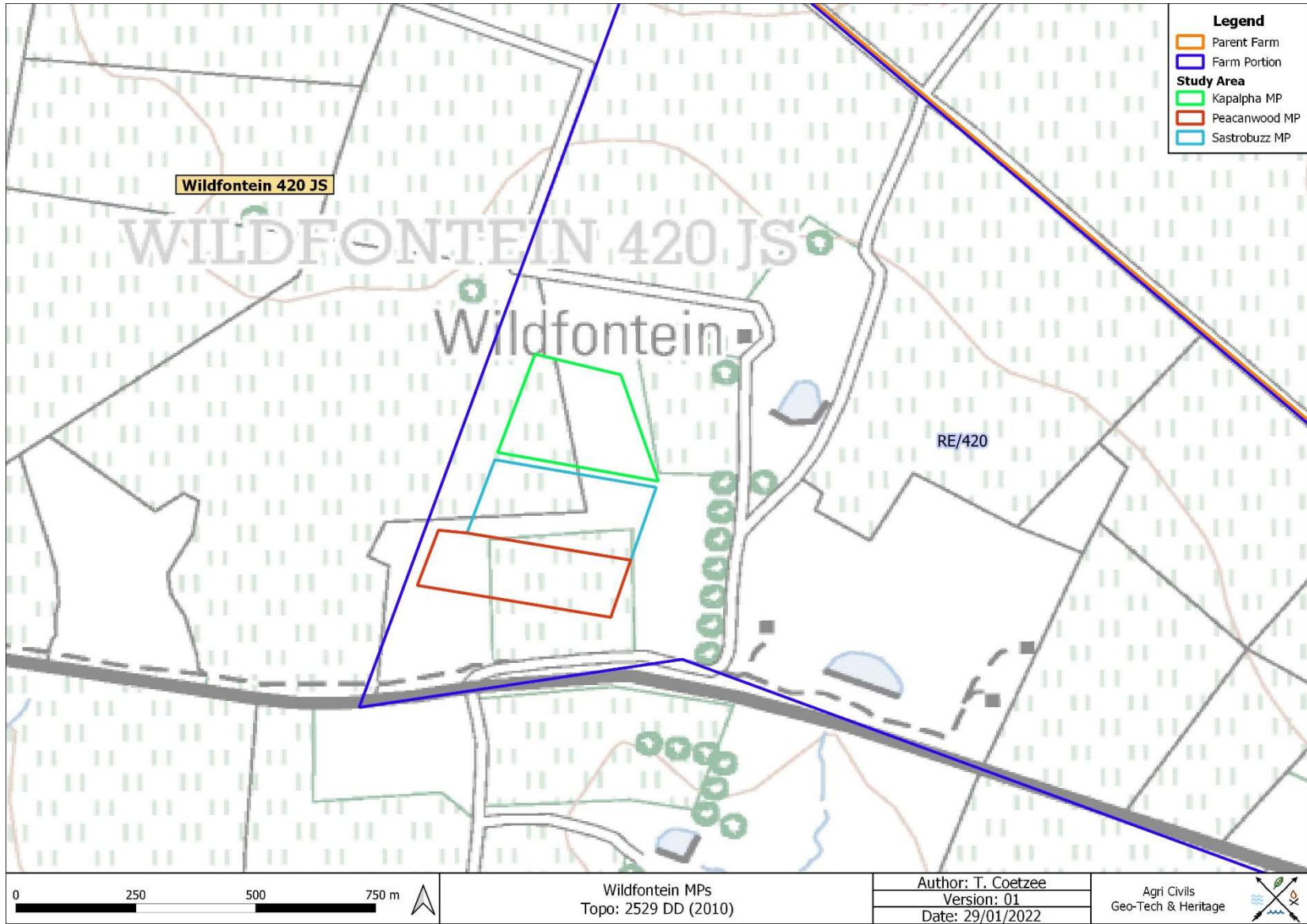
**Figure 28:** Study area superimposed on a 1975 aerial image.



**Figure 29:** Study area superimposed on a 1986 topographical map.



**Figure 30:** Study area superimposed on a 1991 aerial image.



**Figure 31:** Study area superimposed on a 2010 topographical map.