

**DESKTOP PALAEOLOGICAL IMPACT
ASSESSMENT AND "PROTOCOL FOR
CHANCE FIND OF FOSSILS" FOR THE
Mpact (Pty) Ltd Paper Mill DEVELOPMENT,
EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN
MUNICIPALITY, GAUTENG PROVINCE.**

**FOR
HIA CONSULTANTS
APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING CC
Cell: 0834593091**

DATE: 04 February 2017

By

Gideon Groenewald

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gideon Groenewald was appointed by APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING CC to do a Desktop Palaeontological Heritage Resources Impact Assessment for the extension of the Mpact (Pty) Ltd Paper Mill yard, situated on Portion 228, New Era, Extension 1 in Springs, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng Province.

Legal Requirements

This “Chance Find Protocol” report forms part of the Desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment and complies with the requirements of the South African National Heritage Resource Act No 25 of 1999. In accordance with Section 38 (Heritage Resources Management), a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is required to assess any potential impacts to palaeontological heritage within the development footprint of the development and the SAHRA need to know the basic procedures that must be followed during the initial excavations for this project. The recommendations contained in this “Chance Find Protocol” document must form part of the EMPr for the project and timed to coincide with the initial excavations for the foundations that will exceed 1.5m into any geological formation on the development site.

The purpose of this communication as an addendum to the Desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment, is to discuss a procedure for the recording of any significant fossils in this development site. The proposal for development includes the extension of the present activities of the Mpact (Pty) Ltd Paper Mill storage yard, situated on Portion 228, New Era, Extension 1 in Springs, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng Province. The development falls on Highly significant shale and coarse-grained sandstone of the Vryheid Formation that has a very high likelihood of containing significant plant fossils.

During previous studies, significant fossils were present in these rock formations. The potential for finding significant plant and trace fossils in any excavation into sediments of the Vryheid Formation is always very high and the cooperation of the entire team at the Mpact (Pty) Ltd development is of critical importance. The interest and cooperation of the management team will be highly appreciated and it is essential that the excavation should be monitored during the first week of excavation and that this “Chance Find Protocol” must be updated on a weekly basis, during the lifetime of the excavation period for the project.

The development site for the proposed extension of the Mpact (Pty) Ltd Paper Mill storage yard, situated on Portion 228, New Era, Extension 1 in Springs, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng Province, falls on Highly significant shale and coarse-grained sandstone of the Vryheid Formation that is very highly likely to contain fossils.

Fossils were recorded from previous studies in these rock formations. The potential for finding significant plant and trace fossils as well as vertebrate fossils, in any excavation into sediments of the Vryheid Formation, is always very high and the cooperation of the entire team at Mpact (Pty) Ltd is of critical importance. The interest and cooperation of the management team will be highly appreciated and it is essential that the excavation be monitored during the first week of excavation and that this “Chance Find Protocol” be updated on a weekly basis during the life-time of the excavation period for the project.

It is recommended that:

- The EAP and ECO must be informed of the fact that a Very High Palaeontological Sensitivity was allocated to the entire development site and due to the highly weathered nature of the sedimentary rocks, no significant fossils is expected before the start of excavations for foundations.
- The entire team at the construction site must be introduced to Palaeontological material that is likely to be found on site. It is best to pre-arrange a once-off information session with the Palaeontological specialist, who must present a simple and understandable, preferably audio-visual presentation (in an “interpreted voice” of the majority of the contractual workers on site), during the initial site visit that must form part of the EMPr for the project.
- This “Chance Find Protocol” needs to be included into the EMPr of the project and a reasonable budget need to be allocated, to ensure compliance with the legal responsibility of the developer in terms of the proper conservation of and storage of Palaeontological Heritage.
- The SAHRA must be informed of the content of this “Chance Find Protocol” and EMPr arrangements by the EAP or the developer, for final approval of the Environmental Authorisation during the EIA process.

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INTRODUCTION

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During previous studies, significant fossils were present in these rock formations. The potential for finding significant plant and trace fossils in any excavation into sediments of the Vryheid Formation is always very high and the cooperation of the entire team at the Mpact (Pty) Ltd development is of critical importance. The interest and cooperation of the management team will be highly appreciated and it is essential that the excavation should be monitored during the first week of excavation and that this “Chance Find Protocol” must be updated on a weekly basis, during the lifetime of the excavation period for the project.

DESKTOP INVESTIGATION

On Saturday, 4 February 2017, Dr Gideon Groenewald, experienced fieldworker, investigated the site of the proposed extension of the Mpact (Pty) Ltd Paper Mill yard, situated on Portion 228, New Era, Extension 1, in Springs, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng Province. This “Chance Find Protocol” report is the result of a Desktop Survey of the site, in terms of significant Palaeontological Heritage items.

Excavations for the new development might expose mostly shale, as well as coarse-grained sandstone of the Very Highly significant Permian aged Vryheid Formation of the Ecca Group, Karoo Supergroup. There is a chance find of significant plant and trace fossils in the shale and sandstone of this Formation and the recording of these fossils will contribute significantly to our understanding of the palaeo-environments that prevailed in the area during the Permian age in Southern Africa.

The Chance find Protocol includes procedures that need to be followed with the training of the ECO by a suitably qualified palaeontologist and the recording of significant fossils and does not replace a normal communication between the palaeontologist and the Site Management Team or Mpact (Pty) Ltd Management during the life-time of the excavation for this development.

Although the initial budget for the Palaeontological Heritage component must include the full-time involvement of a suitably qualified palaeontologist (budget to be discussed before the onset of excavations), the reality is that the rocks might be less fossiliferous and the expected time for the Palaeontologist to be on site might be significantly reduced with proper training and communication with the ECO and EAP for this project.

PALAEONTOLOGICAL IMPACT AND MITIGATION PROTOCOL

The predicted palaeontological impact of the development is based on the initial mapping assessment and literature reviews as well as information gathered during the Desktop investigation. The Desktop investigation confirmed that the study area is underlain by sedimentary rocks of the Vryheid Formation and probably deep soil.

Due to weathering, no well-preserved fossils are expected before significant excavation of foundations and infrastructure has begun. Exposure of bedrock during excavation however might result in the exposure of well-defined plant, trace and vertebrate fossils.

CHANCE FIND PROTOCOL FOR PALAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Mitigation for Excavation Impact on Palaeontological Heritage Resources

It is essential that the appointed palaeontologist, in consultation with the Project Manager of the Excavation works and Mpact (Pty) Ltd, develop a short-term strategy for the recovery of significant fossils during the excavation operation. As part of such a strategy, the palaeontologist will have to:

- Initially, and at least for the first week of excavation, visit the site at least once to ensure recording of all potentially significant fossil strata.
- Determine a short-term strategy and budget for the recording of significant fossils. This Strategy can simply be an oral agreement on when the site is to be inspected and what the finds are, that might be recorded. The site visit must include an introduction session with all the managers of the Project Team, including training of the ECO by the appointed palaeontologist to basically inform the teams of what to look out for in terms of fossil heritage on site.
- In the case of any unusual structures, the Palaeontologist must be notified, and a site visit must be arranged at the earliest possible time with the Palaeontologist. In the case of the ECO or the Site Manager becoming aware of suspicious looking material that might be a “Significant Find”, the construction must be halted in that specific area and the Palaeontologist must be given enough time to reach the site and remove the material before excavation continues.

Mitigation Measures Normally Encountered

1. Mitigation of palaeontological material must begin as soon as possible and preferably when “trial excavation” takes place. The appointed specialists must acquaint themselves with the operation and determine feasible mitigation strategies.

2. A plan for systematic sampling, recording, preliminary sorting and storage of palaeontological and sedimentological samples will be developed during the early stages of the project, in collaboration with the Evolutionary Studies Institute (ESI) at WITS University, which is the closest Institute to the site.

3. Mitigation will involve an attempt to capture all rare fossils and systematic collection of all fossils discovered. This will take place in conjunction with descriptive, diagrammatic and photographic recording of exposures, also involving sediment samples and samples of both representative and unusual sedimentary or biogenic features. The fossils and contextual samples will be processed (sorted, sub-sampled, labelled, boxed) and documentation

consolidated, to create an archive collection from the excavated sites for future researchers.

Functional responsibilities of Mpact (Pty) Ltd

1. Ensuring, at their cost, that a representative archive of palaeontological samples and other records is assembled to characterise the palaeontological occurrences affected by the excavation operation.

2. Provide field aid, if necessary, in the supply of materials, labour and machinery to excavate, load and transport sampled material from the excavation areas to the sorting areas, removal of overburden if necessary, and the return of discarded material to the disposal areas. In the case of this project it is foreseen that only one representative sample of 1m³ of rock with plant or trace fossils will be sampled. *(If trace fossils of Permian age are exposed it will be very Highly significant and the Palaeontologist will obviously be in close communication with the ECO to act as required by SAHRA without causing undue standing time for the contractors).*

3. “Facilitate” systematic recording of the stratigraphic and palaeo-environmental features in exposures in the fossil-bearing excavations, by allowing time to describe and measure geological sections, and by providing aid in the surveying of positions where significant fossils are found. *(In the case of this specific development, the likelihood of such finds is very high).*

4. Provide safe storage for fossil material found routinely during excavation operations by construction personnel. In this context, isolated fossil finds in disturbed material qualify as “normal” fossil finds.

5. Provide covered, dry storage for samples and facilities that is defined as a work area for sorting, labelling and boxing/bagging of samples.

6. Costs of basic curation and storage in the sample archive at the ESI, WITS University (labels, boxes, shelving and, if necessary, specifically-tasked temporary employees).

Documentary record of palaeontological occurrences

1. The contractor will in collaboration with the Palaeontologist, make the excavation plan available to the appointed specialist, in which the following information must be indicated on the plan by the excavation site. This must be done in conjunction with the appointed specialist and form part of the on-going revision of the EMPr during the excavation stage of the project:

1.1. Initially, all known specific palaeontological information will be indicated on the plan. This will be updated throughout the excavation period

1.2 Locations of samples and measured sections are to be pegged, and routinely accurately surveyed. Sample locations, measured sections, etc., must

be recorded three-dimensionally if any significant fossils are recorded during the time of excavation.

Functional responsibilities of the appointed Palaeontologist

1. Establishment of a representative collection of fossils and a contextual archive of appropriately documented and sampled palaeo-environmental and sedimentological geodata in collaboration with the ESI at WITS University.

2. Undertake an initial evaluation of potentially affected areas and of available exposures in excavations. A one-day training session of the ECO must be included in this first site visit to this project.

3. On the basis of the above, and evaluation during the early stages of excavation development, in collaboration with the contractor management team, more detailed practical strategies to deal with the fossils encountered routinely during excavation, as well as the strategies for major finds.

4. Informal on-site training in responses applicable to “normal” fossil finds must be provided for the ECO and environmental staff by the appointed specialist.

5. Respond to significant finds and undertake appropriate mitigation.

6. Initially, for the first three months of operation, at least two weekly visits to “touch base” with the monitoring progress, process and document interim “normal” finds and to undertake an inspection and documentation of new excavation phases. A strategy for further visits during the life of the excavation must then be determined.

7. Transport of material from the site to the ESI, WITS University.

8. Reporting on the significance of discoveries, as far as can be preliminarily ascertained. This report is in the public domain and copies of the report must be deposited at ESI and the South African Heritage Resources Authority (SAHRA). It must fulfil the reporting standards and data requirements of these bodies.

9. Reasonable participation in publicity and public involvement associated with palaeontological discoveries.

Exposure of palaeontological material

1. In the event of construction exposing new palaeontological material, not regarded as normative/routine as outlined in the initial investigation, such as a major fossil find, the following procedure must be adhered to:

1.1 The appointed specialist or alternates (SAHRA; ESI WITS University) must be notified by the responsible officer (e.g. the ECO or contractor manager), of major or unusual discoveries during excavation, found by the Contractor Staff.

1.2 Should a major *in situ* occurrence be exposed, excavation will immediately cease in that area so that the discovery is not disturbed or altered in any way until the appointed specialist or scientists from the ESI at WITS

University, or its designated representatives, have had reasonable opportunity to investigate the find. Such work will be at the expense of the Developer.

CONCLUSION

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REFERENCES

Groenewald G.H., Groenewald D.P. and Groenewald S.M., 2014. *Palaeontological Heritage of the Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West Provinces.* Internal Palaeotechnical Reports, SAHRA.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE AUTHOR

Dr Gideon Groenewald has a PhD in Geology from the University of Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) (1996) and the National Diploma in Nature Conservation from Technicon RSA (the University of South Africa) (1989). He specialises in research on South African Permian and Triassic sedimentology and macrofossils with an interest in biostratigraphy, and palaeo-ecological aspects. He has extensive experience in the locating of fossil material in the Karoo Supergroup and has more than 20 years of experience in locating, collecting and curating fossils, including exploration field trips in search of new localities in the southern, western, eastern and north-eastern parts of the country. His publication record includes multiple articles in internationally recognized journals. Dr Groenewald is accredited by the Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa (society member for 25 years).

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

I, Gideon Groenewald, declare that I am an independent specialist consultant and have no financial, personal or other interest in the proposed development, nor the developers or any of their subsidiaries, apart from fair remuneration for work performed in the delivery of palaeontological heritage assessment services. There are no circumstances that compromise the objectivity of my performing such work.



Dr Gideon Groenewald
Geologist