



Agency for Cultural Resource Management

Specialists in Archaeological Studies and Heritage Resource Management

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RECOMMENDED EXEMPTION FROM FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES, CONSOLIDATION OF SALT MINING RIGHTS UNDER ONE MINING RIGHT: PORTIONS 10, 13 18 & 20 OF THE FARM GROOT WITPAN NO. 327, GORDONIA RD, DAWID KRUIPER LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

SAHRA Case ID: 15850

1. Introduction

The application entails the consolidation of already approved and existing Salt Mining Rights under a single Mining Permit, involving Portions 10, 13, 18 and 20 of the Farm Groot Witpan No. 327 Gordonia RD (Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality), in the Northern Cape Province.

Site Plan Consulting is the appointed, Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) responsible for facilitating environmental authorisation for the project.

Groot Witpan is located about 100kms north west of Upington along the R360 road (Figure 1). Salt mining has taken place on the farm for at least the last 30 years (Site Plan Consulting 2020). Currently, salt mining takes place in terms of two adjacent Mining Rights, held by related yet different entities.

2. Description of the proposed activity

The proposed consolidation and addition of the Mining Rights on Groot Witpan No. 327 are illustrated in Figure 2.

The Mining Right on Portion 10, held by Gordonia Salts (Pty) Ltd, is to be incorporated with the northern Industrial Salt (Pty) Ltd Mining Right, for Portion 13.

The Mining Right areas are to be expanded to the north west by the incorporation of Portions 18 and 20.

At present, most activities are centred around the northern portion of the operation. Brine is collected through pumping from pumps mostly located on Portion 20, into holding/concentration ponds. The water evaporates and the salt crystals start to form on the surface. As soon as the layer of salt crystals is thick enough, the salt crystals are harvested by scraper and front-end loader.

The inclusion of Portion 18 into this application is specifically for the possible location of additional pump/s. No evaporation ponds or any other infrastructure will be developed on Portion 18. Existing roads and tracks are used, and no new roads will be constructed.

Apart from the possible location of additional new pumps on Portion 18, all existing facilities including workshops and stores, plant equipment, accommodation units for workers, managers/visitors residence, and stockpiling area, are already in place, and that 'no further activities or disturbance of the site is expected' (Site Plan Consulting 2022:31).



3. Archaeological context

The archaeological record of the vast Northern Cape region reflects the entire human history from ESA times (more than 1 million years ago), through the Middle Stone Age (about 300 000 - 40 000 years ago), to the Later Stone Age (the last 10 000 years of precolonial history in southern Africa). The last 2000 years particularly was a period of increasing social complexity to the east, with the appearance of herding and farming, and of ceramic and metallurgical (Iron Age) technologies alongside an older continuing trajectory of LSA hunting and gathering and stone tool-based technologies (Morris & Henderson 2019). In these far northern drier areas, it is likely that hunting and gathering persisted into the colonial era.

A search of SAHRIS has shown that very little archaeological work has been conducted in the Groot Witpan study area. However, several AIAs around salt pans have been undertaken in the Northern Cape (Figure 4).

Low density surface scatters of MSA artefacts were recorded in proposed salt prospecting areas at Bettastadt and Tsonga Pan on the Farm Gemsbok Horn 242, about 70kms south east of Groot Witpan (Morris & Henderson 2019). The significance of the impact on archaeological heritage resources at these two pans, was determined to be Low.

Low densities scatters of weathered, MSA and some LSA material (chips, chunks & flakes), were recorded during a HIA for the proposed Bloupan Salt Mine on the Farm Annesley 338 about 30kms north west of Groot Witpan (Engelbrecht 2018). The remains were also graded as having Low (IVC) local archaeological significance.

Small numbers of weathered ESA and MSA resources (of Low significance) were also recorded by Morris (2006) at Eenzaamheid Pan, and Hakskeen Pan (Morris 2016).

The Salt Pan studies surrounding Groot Witpan appear to indicate a paucity of archaeological traces in these marginal areas, where archaeological resources are more likely to appear on dune crests on the margins of pans (Masson 2006; Morris 2006, 2016; Smith 1995).

4. Conclusion

The proposed activities at Groot Witpan 327 (essentially the consolidation of already existing salt mining rights under a single Mining Permit), are not considered to pose a serious threat to local archaeological heritage because of the following considerations:

- No further disturbance or activities of the site is expected.
- All current activities take place within already disturbed and approved mining areas, for which EMPs are already in place.
- The literature study shows that salt pans surrounding Groot Witpan cannot be considered sensitive or threatened archaeological landscapes

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that exemption from further specialist archaeological studies be granted, as no Stone Age archaeological resources are likely to be impacted by the application.



6. References

Englebrecht, J. 2018. Proposed Salt Mine on Bloupan, located on the Remainder of the Farm Annesley No. 338, situated within the Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality, ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Northern Cape Province. Report prepared for Van Zyl Environmental Consultants. Ubique Heritage Consultants, Askham.

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Masson, J. 2006. Archaeology and geomorphology: Eensaamheid Pan, Northern Cape. *The Digging Stick* 23 (1): 15 -18.

Morris, D. 2016. Heritage Impact Assessment, Hakskeen Pan, in the Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality, Northern Cape, in relation to tourism and event-related development: Final Report (Revised). Report prepared for EnviroAfrica cc. McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

Morris, D. 2006. Report on a Phase 1 Archaeological Assessment of proposed Salt Works areas on the Eenzaamheid Pan north of Upington, Northern Cape. McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

Morris, D. & Henderson, A. 2019. Heritage Impact Assessment of proposed prospecting drilling sites at two pans on Gemsbok Horn 242 in the Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality, Northern Cape. Report prepared for Site Plan Consulting. McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

Site Plan Consulting, 2020. Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Environmental Management Programme Report, Groot Witpan Salt. Report #: 2758/MR-102/DEMP

Smith, A.B. 1995. Archaeological Observations along the Orange River and its Hinterland. In: Smith, A.B. (ed). *Eniqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier*: 265-300. Rondebosch: UCT Press.



Figure 1. Google Earth satellite map indicating the location of the study area (yellow) north west of Upington. Note the concentration of salt pans in the area



Figure 2. Approved Mining Right Area (Red polygon) on the Farm Groot Witpan No. 327

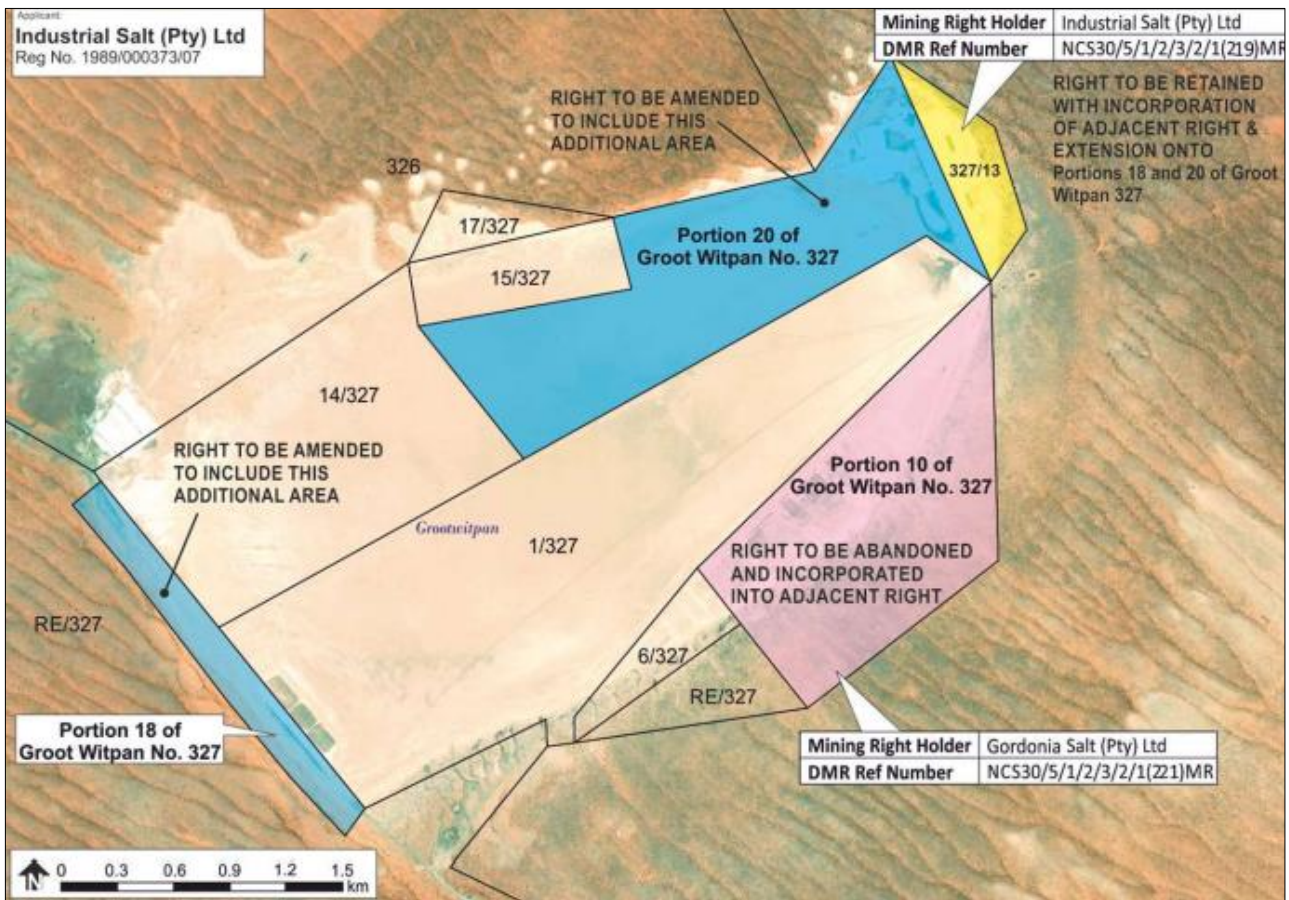


Figure 3. Consolidation of Mining Rights: Groot Witpan No. 327 (Site Plan Consulting September, 2020)

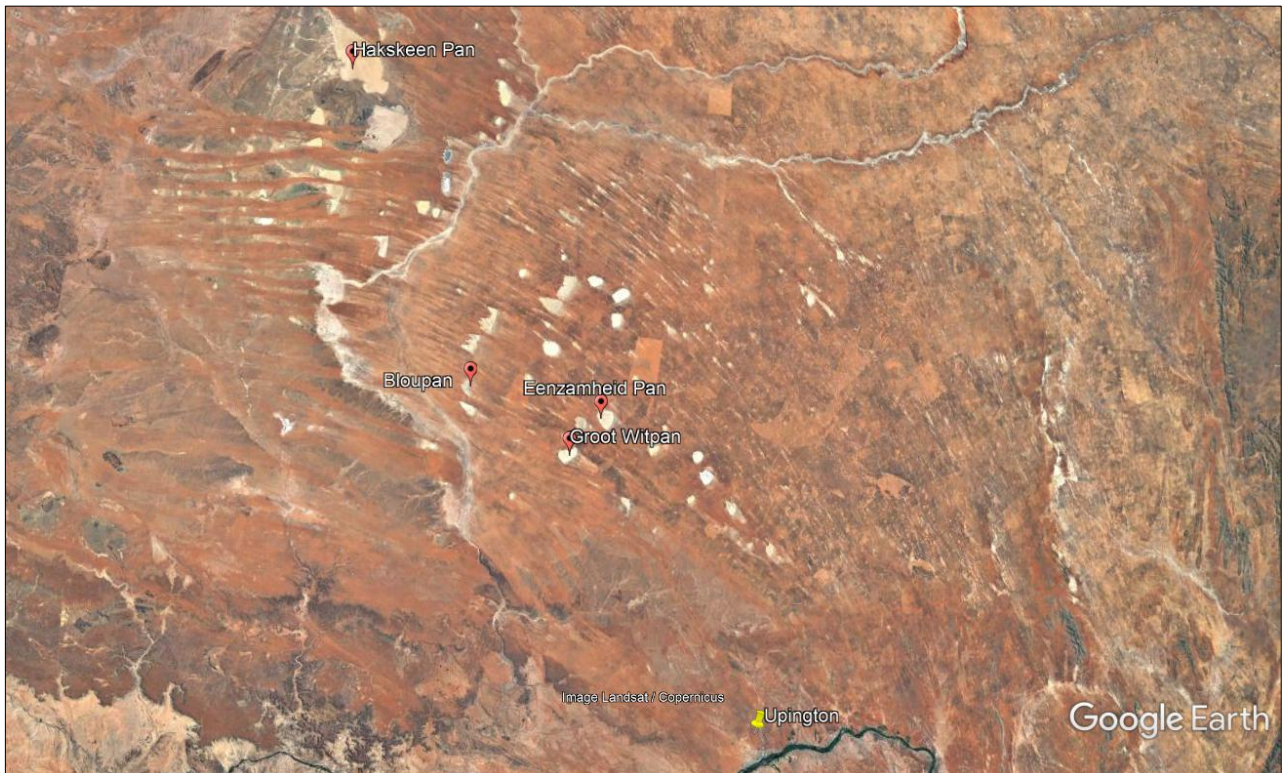


Figure 4. Google Earth satellite map indicating the location of salt pans where HIAs have been conducted