

Site Visit: Sutherland Footprint Site

SAHRA Representatives: J. Lavin and M. Galimberti

Municipality: A. Gibbons of Karoo Hoogland Municipality
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Date of site visit: 26 March 2014

Time: 11am to 2.30pm

Background

Miss Lavin attended a portion of the University of Witwatersrand palaeontology field season in the Fraserburg area early in March 2014. While in the field with Prof. Rubidge and his students, Miss Lavin was shown a site consisting of a palaeo-surface with footprints. This site is referred to as the Sutherland Footprint Site.

At this time, it was noted that the site is situated within an active Municipal Quarry and is therefore at risk. Upon advice from Prof. Rubidge, it was determined that this site may be as significant as the Grade 1 David Green Fossil Shoreline situated outside of Escourt. Numerous photographs of the site were taken as record. An appropriate way forward for the footprint site was discussed with Prof. Rubidge and he agreed that the best way to conserve the site in the immediate future would be to cover the exposed surface in sterile builders sand, and then cover that with a layer of sand bags. This would suffice until further academic study is possible. At the time, no resources were available to conserve the site.

Once back at Head Office, Miss Lavin contacted the Sutherland Municipality and organized a meeting on site to discuss the conservation of this significant site. This meeting was conducted on 26 March 2014 with Mr Allistar Gibbons, Miss Lavin and Dr Mariagrazia Galimberti.

Discussion

Of immediate concern is the obvious destruction of up to 40% of the site. It is unclear whether this portion of the site was destroyed by human intervention or by erosion. It seems likely due to human intervention since there was not enough loose material in the area to justify erosion. As far as we know the weather in the area has been fair in the two weeks between site visits and as such, it is difficult to explain the destruction through erosion. It also appears that the damage was too selective to be due to erosion. In either case, immediate conservation interventions are required for the preservation of this significant site. Miss Lavin explained the relevant sections of the National Heritage Resources Act

including Section 35 which requires that a permit be applied to SAHRA for any impact to a palaeontological resource.

The quarry is situated on municipal land and is managed by the municipality. The municipality controls access to the quarry site, however unpermitted access is possible. Mr Gibbons indicated that the quarry has been in use for a very long time and no Environmental Management Plan exists for the quarry. Miss Lavin agreed to provide the contact details of the relevant people at the Department of Mineral Resources so that this may be rectified. The material from the quarry is excavated by local people for road and structural maintenance.

Mr Gibbons was extremely helpful and accommodating to the heritage requirements of the site. He mentioned that he is aware of a similar footprint site in Fraserburg. The Fraserburg site is worked on by Dr Roger Smith. Various options for immediate action were discussed including;

- Doing nothing
- Removing the palaeosurface through controlled excavation
- Protecting the site until proper scientific analysis can take place

Resolution

It was agreed that the site is of such significance that some conservation intervention is necessary. It was agreed that removing the palaeosurface would put the resource at too great a risk and likely result in its destruction.

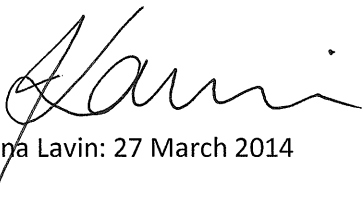
It was therefore agreed that the Karoo Hoogland Municipality would use available labour and resources to provide the following conservation intervention;

- cover the exposed footprint layer in approximately 10cm of sterile builders sand (approximately 10m x 20m)
- cover the builders sand and remaining in situ strata in sand bags (approximately 20m x25m)
- Surround the exposed area with red and white danger tape
- Inform residents that the eastern section of the quarry is no longer open for quarrying activities

It was also agreed that SAHRA would;

- Draft a letter to the municipality explaining the significance of the footprint site
- Contact Dr Roger Smith about conducting a systematic analysis of the footprint site
- Provide a permit to Mr A. Gibbons on behalf of the Karoo Hoogland Municipality for the above proposed conservation interventions.

Signed:



Jenna Lavin: 27 March 2014

Signed:



Mariagrazia Galimberti: 27 March 2014