

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

APPLICATION IN TERMS OF SECTION 24G OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 107 OF 1998) TO RECTIFY THE UNLAWFUL CLEARANCE OF VEGETATION ON FARM 296 MIDDELPOS, NEAR PIKETBERG, WESTERN CAPE.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)

AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

March 2019

DEA&DP REFERENCE No: 14/1/1/E1/9/10/3/0410/17

1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

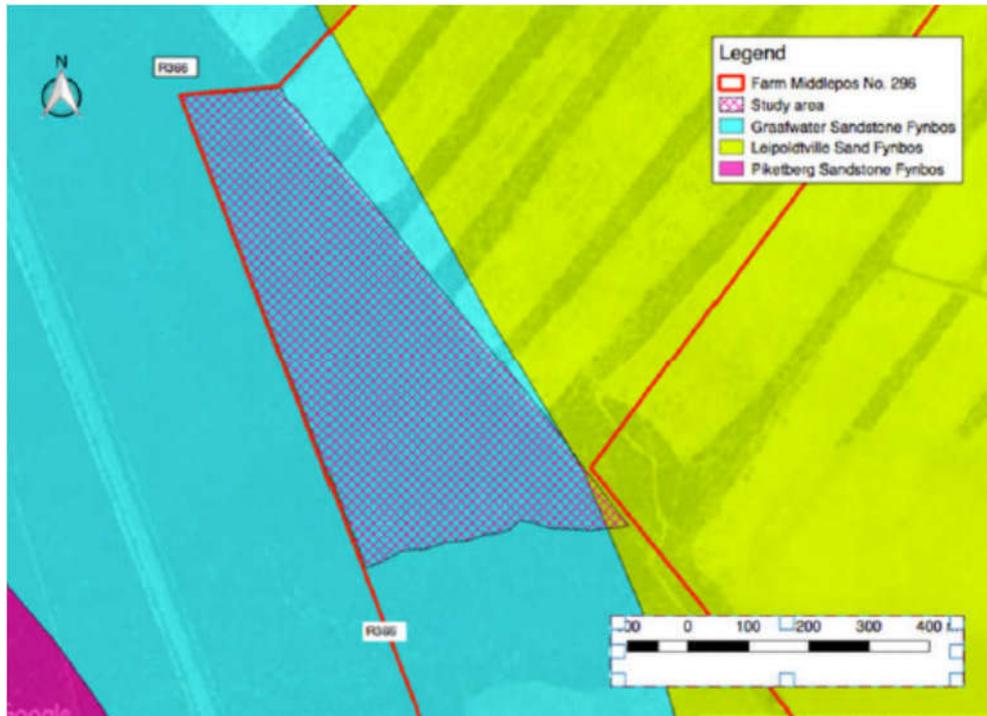
The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide stakeholders with information about the unlawful clearance of approximately 24Ha of indigenous vegetation on Farm 296, Middelpoos near Piketberg in Western Cape Province.
- Introduce and explain the Section 24(G) and Public Participation process to be followed for the proposed development, in terms of applicable environmental legislation (National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), (Act No.107 of 1998), as amended;
- Invite all stakeholders to register and comment on any aspect related to the proposed development between the 15th of March and the 16th of April 2019.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

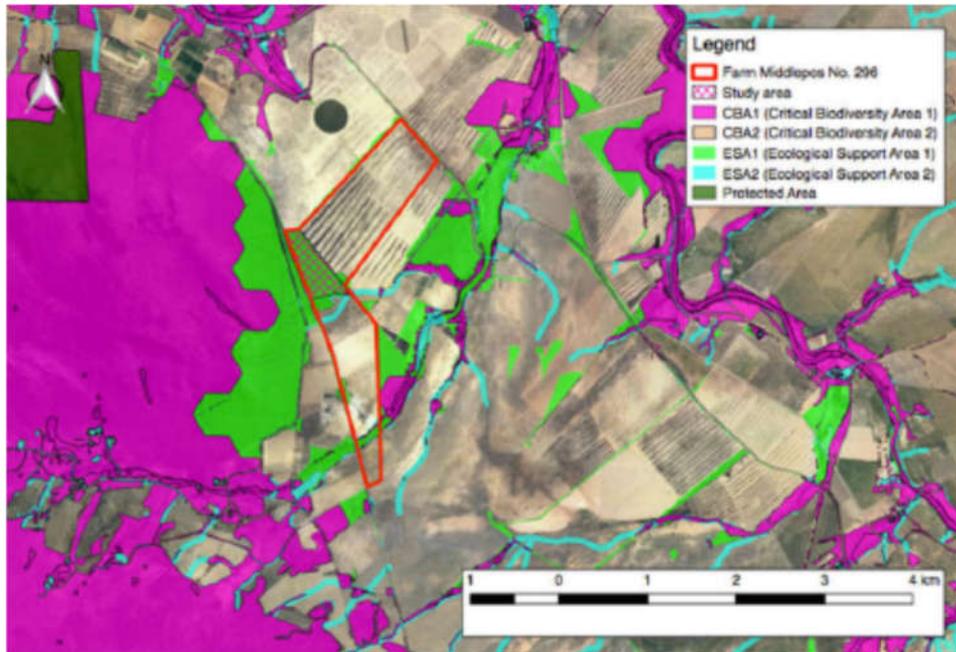
The applicant have illegally commenced with the clearance of approximately 24Ha of indigenous vegetation on Farm 296, Middelpoos near Piketberg. The vegetation was burnt and subsequently an iron rail was towed behind a tractor in order to uproot the burnt remnants and flatten the soil.

The findings of the site survey are that 24 ha of natural vegetation were cleared. Clearing by definition implies that the vegetation was uprooted and completely removed as opposed to brushcutting. In addition, the cleared area has been ploughed and cultivated initially with wheat and at present with rooibos tea.



According to *The Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* (VEGMAP)(Rebelo *et al.* 2006 in Mucina & Rutherford, 2006) the study area supports three ecosystems at Farm Middlepos No. 296. They include Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos, Leipoldville Sandstone Fynbos and Cape Freshwater Wetlands. A closer look at the study area shows that Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos is assigned as the dominant vegetation type and that Leipoldville Sand Fynbos occur within very close proximity. This proximity (varies from 0m - >150m) indicates a possible ecotone or merging of the two vegetation types (Figure 4B). It is further noted that the VEGMAP states that Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos “grades into FFd 2 Leipoldville Sand Fynbos on the western edge, depending on sand depth and water table.”

The *2017 Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan* (CapeNature, 2017) classifies the study area as ESA1 (Ecological Support Area 1), with the drainage line at the southern side of the study area assigned as ESA2 (Ecological Support Area 2). This should be understood within the conservation planning categories described in *The 2017 WCBSP Handbook* (Pool-Stanvliet *et al.*, 2017). Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) are habitats with high biodiversity and ecological value. These include areas that are likely to be in a natural condition (CBA1) and those that are potentially degraded or represent secondary vegetation (CBA2) whereas Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) are essential for meeting biodiversity targets. They play an important role in supporting the functioning of Protected Areas or CBAs and are often vital for delivering ecosystem services. A distinction is made between ESAs that are still likely to be functional (i.e. in a natural, near-natural or moderately degraded condition; (ESA1) and Ecological Support Areas that are severely degraded, or have no natural cover remaining, and therefore require restoration (ESA2). In this instance, the ESA1 designated is confirmed to be a suitable category.



Sampling of the intact natural vegetation to the east, south and west of the study area shows that the intact vegetation would have comprised transitional vegetation between Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos and Leipoldtville Sand Fynbos, with the latter vegetation type probably being more of a dominant unit considering the species complement. The intact and recently burnt heuwetjieveld on the south side of the drainage line is more akin to the true Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos whereas the cleared vegetation was probably more akin to Leipoldtville Sandstone Fynbos. The dominant species observed in the adjacent and intact vegetation (Figure 13) include *Leucadendron pubescens*, *Leucospermum rodolentum* (VULNERABLE), *Ehrharta calycina*, *Diospyros glabra*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Muraltia spinosa*, *Serruria cf. fucifolia* (ENDANGERED), *Montinia caryophyllacea*, *Passerina corymbosa*, *Phyllica oleifolia* and *Willdenowia incurvata*. The cleared vegetation was probably senescent when it was cleared, judging from the 13 to 15 year-old age estimation of the unaffected vegetation. Bulbs and forbs would have also featured prominently but were probably suppressed by the dominant, partially senescent shrubs.

A drainage line is present on the southern boundary of the cleared area. This vegetation within this drainage line was also burnt although it was not cleared subsequently. The vegetation within and immediately surrounding this drainage line has re-established.

The DEA&DP Environmental Law Enforcement Directorate conducted a site inspection on the 9th of May 2017 and subsequently issued a Compliance Notice to the applicant Paardekop Boerdery (Pty) Ltd on the 17th of November 2017. GNEC have subsequently informed the Department of our appointment on the 6th of March 2018. All clearance activities have been completed prior to the site visit from the Department.

A Specialist Botanical Impact Assessment has been conducted in order to further inform the Draft S24G Report.

3. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT (ACT NO. 107 OF 1998), AS AMENDED

Environmental Assessment

An Application for retrospective Environmental Authorization (EA) is currently being undertaken in order to authorize the following “Listed Activities” in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (“NEMA”) (Act No. 107 of 1998).

Government Notice No. R. 983 of 04 December 2014, as amended –

- Listing Notice 1 – Activity No: 27
- Listing Notice 2 – Activity No: 15

Definition of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

An environmental impact assessment is a good planning tool to assist in the identification, evaluation and assessment of potential positive and negative impacts of a proposed development on the environment. It also recommends ways to avoid or reduce negative impacts, and ensure that developments are sustainable without affecting people’s lives and the environment adversely.

As mentioned, an EIA is undertaken in terms of the NEMA (Act No 107 of 1998) as amended, and the EIA Regulations.

4. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Potential environmental issues that will be addressed in the assessment include inter alia:

Freshwater

A drainage line is present on the southern boundary of the cleared area. This vegetation within this drainage line was also burnt although it was not cleared subsequently. The vegetation within and immediately surrounding this drainage line has re-established.

Botanical

The findings of the site survey are that 24 ha of natural vegetation were cleared. Clearing by definition implies that the vegetation was uprooted and completely removed as opposed to brushcutting. In addition, the cleared area has been ploughed and cultivated initially with wheat and at present with rooibos tea.

Sampling of the intact natural vegetation to the east, south and west of the study area shows that the intact vegetation would have comprised transitional vegetation between Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos and Leipoldtville Sand Fynbos, with the latter vegetation type probably being more of a dominant unit considering the species complement. The intact and recently burnt heuwetjieveld on the south side of the drainage line is more akin to the true Graafwater Sandstone Fynbos whereas the cleared vegetation was probably more akin to Leipoldtville Sandstone Fynbos. The dominant species observed in the adjacent and intact vegetation include *Leucadendron pubescens*, *Leucospermum rodolentum* (VULNERABLE), *Ehrharta calycina*, *Diospyros glabra*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Muraltia spinosa*, *Serruria cf. fucifolia* (ENDANGERED), *Montinia caryophyllacea*, *Passerina corymbosa*, *Phyllica oleifolia* and *Willdenowia incurvata*. The cleared vegetation was probably senescent when it was cleared, judging from the 13 to 15 year-old age estimation of the unaffected vegetation. Bulbs and forbs would have also featured prominently but were probably suppressed by the dominant, partially senescent shrubs.

Socio Economic

The benefits associated with the clearance include an increase in agricultural production due to the availability of agricultural land which have facilitated the planting of wheat and rooibos tea in the area.

As mentioned, the Basic Assessment Report will identify measures to reduce identified negative impacts, and optimise positive impacts.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In terms of the NEMA, public participation forms an integral part of the environmental assessment process. The public participation process provides people who may be affected by the proposed development with an opportunity to provide comment and to raise issues of concern about the project or to make suggestions that may result in enhanced benefits for the project.

Comments and issues raised during the public participation process will be captured, evaluated and included in a Comment and Response Report. These issues will be addressed and included in the final, Basic Assessment Report which will be submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP).

6. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

GNEC was appointed as an independent environmental consultancy by **Paardekop Boerdery (Pty) Ltd** to facilitate the environmental impact assessment and public participation process for the proposed project from **Friday the 15th of March until Tuesday the 16th of April 2019**. Alternatively a copy of the report is also available on the GNEC website at www.gnec.co.za. To register as an Interested and Affected Party, please complete and return the enclosed registration sheet and submit any written comments to:

GNEC

Att: Mr Renier Kapp

P.O. Box 2632, Paarl, 7620

Tel: 021 870 1874

Fax: 021 870 1873

Cell: 082 675 5233

E-mail: renier@gnec.co.za

GNEC Ref No: 20486

DEA&DP Ref No: 14/1/1/E1/9/10/3/0410/17

Please submit the registration sheet to GNEC by no later than Friday the 16th of April 2019.

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 OF VEGETATION ON FARM 296 MIDDELPOS, NEAR PIKETBERG, WESTERN CAPE.**

REGISTRATION AND COMMENT SHEET

March 2019

DEA&DP REFERENCE No: 14/1/1/E1/9/10/3/0410/17

GNEC REF: 20486

Title _____ **Name and Surname** _____
Company Name/Interest _____
Postal-or-Residential Address _____
Area _____ **Postal Code** _____
Tel: _____ **Cell Phone** _____
Fax: _____
E-Mail Address _____

Please indicate you preferred method of communication (Please indicate with an X)

Fax		E-Mail		Post	
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Comments (You are welcome to attach more sheets if necessary (Your comments will be considered in the EIA (BA) process)

Please provide details of any other person/company whom you would like us to add to our mailing list

Title _____ **Name and Surname** _____
Company Name _____
Tel: _____ **Fax No:** _____
E-Mail _____

Please complete and return to GNEC by no later than **Tuesday the 16th of April 2019**

Attention: Mr Renier Kapp

P.O. Box 2632, Paarl, 7620

Tel: 021 870 1874, Fax: 021 870 1873, Cell: 082 675 5233, E-mail: renier@gnec.co.za

Thank You for your participation