

#### **4. APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCOPING PHASE**

A number of issues for consideration in the project were identified during the Environmental Screening Investigation (ESI) undertaken in May of 2006 by BKS (Pty) Ltd, and validated by the Bohlweki Environmental Team. This Environmental Scoping Study (ESS), which forms part of the EIA process, identified potential positive and negative environmental (biophysical and social) impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed Pumped Storage Scheme and associated infrastructure, for investigation in the EIA phase. The study also scoped out a number of alternatives in order to identify the site with the least anticipated negative impacts, for further investigation within the EIA phase of the project. This chapter serves to outline the process that was undertaken during the Scoping Phase.

##### **4.1 Authority Consultation during Scoping phase**

###### ***4.1.1. Consultation with Decision-making Authorities***

Through meetings with the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (N DEAT), the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture and Land Administration (M DALA) and the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (L DEDET), it has been established that N DEAT will act as the lead / decision-making authority for this proposed project. The provincial boundary between the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces has recently been changed and there is uncertainty at provincial government level as to which of these two provinces the proposed site forms part of; therefore, both L DEDET and M DALA will both act as the commenting environmental authorities.

The above mentioned relevant authorities have been consulted from the outset of this study, and will be engaged throughout the project process. To date, authority consultation has included the following activities:

- Pre-application consultation with N DEAT regarding the process to be followed with regards to the proposed project. Apologies were received from the delegates from L DEDET and M DALA – these authorities stated that they will abide by the decision of N DEAT. The minutes of this meeting were also forwarded to L DEDET and M DALA, who were absent from the meeting. The minutes of this meeting are attached in Appendix C of this report;
- Submission of an Application for Authorisation in terms of Section 24(5) read with Section 44 of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), with respect to listed activities identified in terms of Sections 24 and 24D of the NEMA, Regulations No. R. 386 & 387, to N DEAT together with declarations of independence from the environmental consultants. Copies of the application form and declaration of independence

to N DEAT, as well as the acknowledgement of receipt received from N DEAT, are included in Appendix D of this report.

#### **4.1.2 Consultation with other Relevant Authorities**

Consultation with other relevant authorities were undertaken telephonically, through meetings and through written correspondence in order to actively engage these authorities, to provide them with information pertaining to the proposed project and to obtain feedback from them. This will be done throughout the EIA process, as agreed upon with N DEAT.

The representatives from these Departments have been requested to formally provide input into the EIA process. Non-DEAT authorities that have been consulted through the Environmental Scoping Phase and will continue to be consulted in the EIA phase of the project, include *inter alia*:

- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF)
- National Department of Minerals and Energy (DME)
- South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)
- South African National Roads Agency Ltd (SANRAL)
- Provincial Departments of Roads and/or Transport
- Provincial Departments of Land Affairs
- Local and District Municipalities
- South African National Parks (SANParks)
- Relevant stakeholder groups, including tribal authorities and agricultural unions

#### **4.2. Environmental Scoping Study (ESS)**

The ESS aimed to address the following, taking into account the ESI conducted by BKS as the baseline scenario:

- description of the environment that may be affected;
- identification of potential positive and negative environmental impacts (biophysical, social, economic and cultural), including potential cumulative impacts, as well as a rating of each impact;
- description of feasible alternatives that were identified;
- evaluation of the potential feasible alternatives and the nomination of a preferred alternative to be investigated within the EIA phase of the project (done through validation of the ESI studies and conducting additional specialist studies – refer to Chapters 3, 6 and 7);
- identification of “hotspots” which should be avoided, where possible, due to potentially significant impacts on sensitive environments; and
- recommendations regarding more detailed investigations required within the

EIA phase of the project.

Impacts on, *inter alia*, biodiversity (including flora and fauna), water quality, hydrology, soils, geology, agricultural potential, existing infrastructure, socio-economic issues, heritage sites and visual impacts were identified during the ESI by means of a limited site inspection together with mainly desktop studies of available information.

The assessment methodology for each of the aspect is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

#### **4.2.1. Specialist Inputs**

In undertaking the ESI, a number of specialist studies were conducted in order to comprehensively identify both potential positive and negative environmental impacts (social and biophysical) associated with the project as well as to evaluate the extent of such impacts and determine their status. Through the ESS, which followed a two-pronged approach of validating the ESI and conducting certain additional specialist studies, the specialist team identified and considered the potential impacts for the proposed SPSS in order to identify a preferred alternative and any impacts of potential significance. Impacts determined to be of potential significance will be assessed for the preferred alternative in the EIA phase of the project. The following specialist studies have been conducted during the ESI and ESS (studies not conducted during the ESI but which were conducted during the ESS, have been *italicized*):

- Biophysical
  - Terrestrial Ecology (including fauna and flora)
  - Riverine Ecology (including wetlands)
  - Water Quality
  - Hydrology
  - Soils and Agricultural Potential
  - *Wetlands*
  - *Groundwater*
  
- Social
  - Displacement of persons
  - Heritage study
  - Health and safety (including HIV/Aids)
  - Access route (accessibility to site)
  - Visual (deterrent in ecological scenic environment)
  - *Tourism aspects*
  - *Traffic impacts*
  - *Air quality impacts*
  - Infrastructural development (water, electricity, etc.)

- Economic
  - Loss or improvement of local income due to project
  - Generation of employment by project

#### **4.2.2 Assumptions of the Study**

The assumptions on which this study has been based include the following:

- Assumptions
  - All information provided by Eskom to the Environmental Team was correct and valid at the time it was provided.
  - The alternative sites selected by Eskom and investigated during the ESI and ESS are all feasible.
  - All data from unpublished research is valid and accurate.
  - It is not always possible to involve all Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) individually. However, every effort is being made, and will continue to be made, to involve as many I&APs and representatives of the stakeholders in the study area as possible. The assumption is furthermore that representatives consulted with, are acting on behalf of the parties whom they represent and that they are mandated to do so.

#### **4.3 Public Participation Process for the Environmental Scoping Study**

The public participation process undertaken to date and through the Scoping Phase is discussed below.

Some of the main aims of the public participation process are to serve as a structure for communication and consultation with I&APs and to assist I&APs in identifying issues of concern and suggestions for enhanced benefits of the project and to comment on the findings of the EIA process. To this end, the primary aims of the public participation process during the ESS phase of the project will be:

- To inform interested and affected parties (I&APs) and key stakeholders of the proposed project.
- To initiate meaningful and timeous participation of I&APs.
- The identification of issues and concerns of key stakeholders and I&APs with regards to the proposed development (i.e. focus on important issues).
- The promotion of transparency and an understanding of the proposed project and its potential environmental (social and biophysical) impacts.
- To provide information used for decision-making.

- To provide a structure for liaison and communication with I&APs and key stakeholders.
- To assist in identifying potential environmental (social and biophysical) impacts associated with the proposed development.
- To ensure inclusiveness (the needs, interests and values of I&APs must be considered in the decision-making process).
- To focus on issues relevant to the project and issues considered important by I&APs and key stakeholders.
- To provide responses to I&APs' queries.
- To encourage co-regulation and shared responsibility.

Public participation will continue throughout the EIA process. Public participation to be conducted in the EIA Phase is outlined in Chapter 9 (Plan of Study for EIA).

#### **4.3.1 Advertising**

In terms of the EIA Regulations (2006), the commencement of the EIA process has been advertised in the following manner at the outset of the process (Appendix E):

- *Site Advertisements*  
On-site posters have been placed in public places in the study area to advertise the proposed project. These have been placed in the predominant languages in the area, viz. sePedi, siSwati and English (upper reservoir sites) and Afrikaans and English (lower reservoir sites) – Refer to Appendix E for photographs of site notices.
- *Newspaper Advertisements:*  
The EIA process has been advertised to inform I&APs of the proposed project. Adverts were placed in the following local newspapers (adverts will also be placed in these newspapers in the following stages in the EIA process):
  - Steelburger – English and Afrikaans – 29 September 2006
  - City Press – English – 1 October 2006

Copies of the advertisements of the commencement of the EIA process and the availability of the Draft Environmental Scoping Report are included as Appendix I of this report.

#### **4.3.2 Identification of and Consultation with Stakeholders and I&APs**

Various key stakeholders were contacted and will continue to be contacted as part of the public participation process, including:

- National, provincial and local government departments;
- Ward councillors;
- Agricultural unions;
- Local, District and Provincial Authorities;
- Tribal Authorities;
- Department of Agriculture;
- Land owners affected by project as well as neighbouring landowners;
- Department of Minerals and Energy (DME);
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF);
- Land Claims Commission;
- Community based organisations (CBOs, development bodies, etc);
- South African National Parks (SANParks);
- Other NGO's (such as WESSA (Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa), Earthlife Africa, Groundworks, etc);
- Mining companies; and
- Local businesses.

Identification of I&APs was undertaken, through existing contacts and databases, responses to newspaper advertisements, public meetings, networking and a proactive process to identify key I&APs within the nominated study area.

The process used to identify possibly affected landowners was as follows:

- Liaison with the relevant local authority – including Land-use and Rights Divisions;
- Industry and mining (e.g. Chamber of Commerce & Industries, where identified);
- Liaison with agricultural bodies in South Africa, i.e. AgriSA and the Transvaal Agricultural Union SA (Chairperson of the local union);
- Telephone directories (Telkom);
- Referrals from identified landowners regarding his/her/their neighbour(s) and
- Information obtained from the site visit.

In addition, landowners were urged to provide information regarding land claims lodged against their properties with the National Land Claims Authority. This information will be captured on the landowner map as and when the information becomes available.

All I&AP information (including contact details), together with dates and details of consultations and a record of all issues raised were recorded within a comprehensive database of affected landowners and the Issues Trail (and occupiers / tenants where relevant and available). This database will be updated on an on-going basis throughout the EIA process, and will act as a record of the communication/consultation process.

#### **4.3.3 Background Information Document**

A Background Information Document (briefing paper) for the project was compiled in English and Afrikaans. Should any other language requirements be identified during the consultation process, Eskom will be informed accordingly for decision-making purposes. A copy of the background information document is included in Appendix F. The aim of this document is to provide a brief outline of the proposed project, provide I&APs with a map of the study area, provide preliminary details regarding the EIA process, and explain how I&APs can become involved in the project. The background information documents was distributed to all identified stakeholders and I&APs together with a registration and comment form, inviting I&APs to submit details of any comments and / or concerns they might have at that stage regarding the proposed project.

#### **4.3.4 Consultation and Public Involvement**

Through consultations, issues for inclusion within the EIA were identified and recorded. Consultations were in the form of telephonic interviews and personal interviews with affected and surrounding landowners, key I&APs and stakeholders to inform them of the proposed project and to record their comments.

- Directly Affected Landowners

Every reasonable effort was made to create an opportunity for potentially affected landowners to participate in the study. The following approaches were followed to satisfy legal requirements:

- Meetings were held with organised structures that represent a fair percentage of the potentially affected landowners, e.g. Farmers' Associations.
- Briefing papers and questionnaires were distributed to as many of the landowners directly affected by the proposed project,

- Focus Group Meetings

As it is preferable to consult personally with potentially affected landowners and other focus groups in the study area, a series of focus group meetings were held with these parties. Details of these meetings are contained below:

- Meeting with the Greater Tubatse Local Municipality, Burgersfort – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006
- Provincial Meeting, LEDET Offices – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006
- Meeting with Chief Maphepha II, Tribal Authority Office, Nkosini / Goedtedacht Village , Mosterlose, Groblersdal – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006

- Meeting with Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality and Groblersdal Local Municipality, Groblersdal – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006
- Meeting with Farmers' Unions and Landowners, Tubatse Chrome Club – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006
- Meeting with Surrounding Landowners, Tubatse Chrome Club – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006
- Provincial Meeting, MDALA Offices – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006
- Meeting with DWAF and Water Forums, DWAF Offices, Pretoria – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Landowners were invited in writing to attend these focus group meetings and minutes of all meetings were compiled and made available to all attendees as well as parties from whom apologies were received. Minutes of Focus Group Meetings conducted are included as Appendix G of this report.

- Key Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings with identified key stakeholders in the study area will be held during the EIA phase of the project. These meetings will be held with groups that have similar interests, such as environmental NGOs, local authorities, landowner's associations, etc. The main aims of these meetings will be to provide stakeholders with information regarding the proposed project and provide them with the opportunity to raise any comments, issues or concerns regarding the proposed project. Identified key stakeholders will be invited in writing to attend these focus group meetings. Minutes of all meetings will be compiled and distributed to all attendees and parties from whom apologies are received.

- Key Stakeholder Workshop

A key stakeholder workshop was held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2006, at the Eskom Convention Centre, Midrand, with I&APs who were identified as key stakeholders in the project. This meeting enabled key stakeholders to air their views and issues and aimed to facilitate interaction between the key stakeholders and the project team. In addition, the workshop allowed for smaller groups of I&APs and/or representatives of larger interest groups or organisations to play an active role in the EIA process and provide an opportunity for dialogue and consultation with these parties. Registered stakeholders were invited in writing to attend the key stakeholder workshop. Minutes of this workshop were compiled and distributed to all attendees and parties from whom apologies were received. Minutes of Key Stakeholder Workshop are included as Appendix G of this report.



- Public Meetings and Open Days

A public meeting was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, at the Mapochs Mine Recreation Club, Roosenekal, Mpumalanga. Additional public meetings and open day/s will be held during the EIA phase of the project. The primary aim of these meetings and Open Day(s) will be to:

- disseminate background information regarding the proposed project to I&APs,
- supply more information regarding the EIA process and the findings of the specialist studies undertaken;
- answer questions regarding the project and the EIA process;
- obtain feedback and input from I&APs with respect to the proposed project; and
- receive input regarding the public participation process.

In accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations, the public meeting was advertised prior to the event, within the same newspapers as listed in Section 4.3.1. Registered I&APs and stakeholders were also invited in writing to attend the public meetings. Minutes for these meetings were compiled and distributed to all attendees and parties from whom apologies are received. The minutes of the public meeting is included in Appendix G of this report.

- On-going Consultation

Consultation with all key stakeholders and I&APs through various means will be on-going throughout the EIA process.

#### **4.3.5 Social Issues Trail**

Issues and concerns raised in the public participation process during the EIA process are compiled into a Social Issues Trail (Appendix H of this report contains the ESS-phase Issues Trail, in which all comments received to date have been captured). This Issues Trail reflects the issues raised by I&APs during consultation, and provides an indication of particular areas within which concerns were raised. The issues trail included in this report include any issues and comments raised during the public review of the draft Environmental Scoping Report.

#### **4.4 Review of Draft Environmental Scoping Report and Plan of Study for EIA**

#### **4.4.1. Public Review of Draft Environmental Scoping Report and Plan of Study for EIA**

The draft Environmental Scoping Report, together with the Plan of Study to conduct the Environmental Impact Assessment (Plan of Study for EIA), was available for public review at the following public locations within the study area, which were all readily accessible to I&APs:

- Offices of Bohlweki Environmental, Kyalami, Gauteng Province;
- Greater Sekhukhune municipal offices;
- Greater Tubatse municipal offices;
- Elias Motsoaledi municipal offices;
- Steelpoort Post Office;
- Roosenekal Public Library;
- Roosenekal Post office;
- Groblersdal Public Library; and
- Electronically on Eskom's website ([www.eskom.co.za/eia](http://www.eskom.co.za/eia)) and that of Bohlweki Environmental ([www.bohlweki.co.za](http://www.bohlweki.co.za)).

The availability of the draft Environmental Scoping Report and the Plan of Study to undertake the EIA was advertised in the following newspapers:

- Steelburger – 19 November 2006
- City Press – 24 November 2006

A copy of this advert is attached in Appendix I. In addition, all registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the report in writing.

The draft Environmental Scoping Report was available for public comment from **17 November 2006** until **01 January 2007**. This translated to a period of 45 calendar days. The NEMA EIA Regulations for public review period indicate that a minimum of 30 days needs to be provided for public review; however, due to the December holidays it was felt that it would be prudent to extend the public review period in order to afford all I&APs and Stakeholders sufficient time to peruse the draft ESR and provide their comments.

#### **4.4.2 Authority Review of Draft Environmental Scoping Report and Plan of Study for the EIA**

The draft Environmental Scoping Report, including the Plan of Study for the EIA, was submitted to the authorities (Lead Authority: N DEAT; Commenting Authorities: L DEDET and M DALA) for review at the same time as it was made available to the public.

#### **4.5 Final Environmental Scoping Report**

All comments received regarding the draft ESR are incorporated in this final Environmental Scoping Report and are submitted to N DEAT, L DEDET and M DALA along with a Plan of Study to undertake an EIA, for final review and acceptance. Due to the inclusion of the two Communication Masts into the Final Environmental Scoping Report, the public will be notified of these inclusions by letter sent to all Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) registered on the project database. The Final Environmental Scoping Report will be made available for public review on the Bohlweki ([www.bohlweki.co.za](http://www.bohlweki.co.za)) and Eskom ([www.eskom.co.za](http://www.eskom.co.za)) websites. Should the I&APs have any further comments on the Final Environmental Scoping Report, these comments should be submitted to N DEAT directly. The contact details for N DEAT are:

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