



RUSTENBURG STRENGTHENING PROJECT

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SPECIALIST OPINION RELATING TO ECOTOURISM IMPACTS

PREPARED FOR:



**DYNAMIC INTEGRATED GEOHYDRO
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIGES**

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DEFINITIONS

Adventure Tourism

Consists of practicing any sports or adventure activities by individuals or groups of people traveling with the goal of practicing sports activities which require physical condition. These activities are usually risky, but they offer experiences filled with excitement and adrenaline in a direct contact with nature. It is a type of tourism that involves taking the responsibility to preserve natural resources.

Agritourism

Agritourism consists of traveling to farming establishments in order to enjoy the scenic and productive values. It is considered in typical rural buildings which are especially equipped to accommodate tourists, but which also are used for agricultural purposes. These buildings are called tourist ranches or farmhouses.

Biodiversity / Biological Diversity

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, terrestrial, marine and aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems (as per the Convention on Biological Diversity Act, No. 10 of 2004).

Buffer Zone (Protected Area)

An area surrounding a protected area where restrictions are placed on its use in order to protect the area. Collaborative projects and programmes are implemented in order to protect the area and its reserve.

Community Management:

Managing an area in such a way as to take into account the needs and desires of the community, neighbours and partners, and incorporating these into decision making. It is a process of participatory management (Management Committee).

Cultural Heritage:

As defined in Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention Act, 1972, it is considered as monuments, architectural works, works of monumental art, elements or structures of archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and groups of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, groups of buildings, groups of separate structures or sites, architectural works, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, areas of archaeological, historical, artistic, scientific, ethnological, or anthropological interest, and areas in which the cultural heritage of outstanding universal value is embodied in the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Ecotourism:

The travel to natural areas to learn about the way of life and culture of the people living in the environment, while taking care not to change the environment and contributing to the economic well-being of the local population (definition of ecotourism by Hecto Ceballos Lascurain).

Ecosystem:

A dynamic complex of animal and plant communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit (as per National Environmental Conservation Act, No. 57 of 2003).

Ecosystem Services:

As defined in Section 1 of the ~~Management Environmental Protected Areas Act~~ of 2003 as environmental goods and services meaning:

- (a) benefits obtained from ecosystems such as food, fuel resources;
- (b) benefits from the regulation of ecosystem processes regulation, disease and flood control and detoxification;
- (c) cultural material benefits obtained from ecosystems and a spiritual, recreational, aesthetic, inspirational, ecological symbolic nature;

Medical Tourism

Traveling to an area for a specific treatment or health factor. For spas or resorts where thermal or healing waters can be accessed.

Heritage Resources:

Natural and / or cultural resources which are utilized in a

Local Community:

Any community of people living or having rights or interests in a the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, No.

Management:

In relation to a protected area established for the purposes of control, protection, conservation, maintenance and rehabilitation regard to the use and extraction of biological resources, it includes sharing activities in the area in a manner consistent with the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, No. 57 of 2003.

Management Unit

The specific area / sector of which the manager has been appointed is responsible for conservation management. Each area / sector unit will be provided with its own budget and associated management boundaries of these areas follow the general protected area boundaries.

Nature Conservation

The conservation of naturally occurring ecological systems, the indigenous plants and animals therein, and the promotion and maintenance of biodiversity.

Natural Heritage:

As defined in Article 2 of the World Heritage Convention Act, 1989 considered as consisting of physical and biological formations which are of outstanding universal value from scientific, geological, geographical formations and precisely delineated areas habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding point of view of scientific conservation, natural sites or precisely delineated areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of scientific or natural beauty.

Partnership/s

Cooperative and / or collaborative arrangement/s between the NEMA and a third party that supports the Park objectives.

Protected Area:

Any of the protected areas deferred to in the National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act No. 57 of 2003.

Rural Tourism:

The distinctive feature of rural tourism is the desire to offer visitors giving them the opportunity to enjoy the physical and human environment as far as possible, take part in the activities and traditional lifestyles.

Stakeholders / Interested Parties

These are interested individuals or groups affected directly or indirectly by and in consequence of the project. These include the authorities, local communities, investors, consumers, environmental interest groups and the general public.

Sustainable:

In relation to the use of a biological resource, it means a use that is not at a rate that would not lead to its depletion; would not disrupt the biological ecosystem in which it occurs; and would ensure its continued use in accordance with the aspirations of present and future generations of people (as per the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, No. 10 of 2004).

Wilderness Area

An area designated for the purpose of retaining an intrinsic character, or capable of being restored to such an area which is under permanent improvements or human habitation as intended by the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act No. 57 of 2003.

ABBREVIATIONS

BEEP	Biodiversity Environmental Education Programme
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
NWDC	North West Development Corporation
NWPTB	North West Parks and Tourism Board
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IES	Integrated Ecotourism Solutions
IMP	Integrated Management Plan
IUCN	World Conservation Union (as commonly referenced)
NAA	Natidna Accommodation Association
DEDECT	Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Forestry
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SANParks	South African National Parks
SAT	South African Tourism
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR STATUTES

NEMA National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998,

NEMBA National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, No.

NEMPAA National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act,

NHRA National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999

WHCA World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 NuLeaf Planning and Environmental as a Specialist Service Provider

NuLeaf Planning and Environmental Pty Ltd is a multidisciplinary company specialising in Environmental, Landscape and Tourism Service Provision. Based in Pretoria, Gauteng, the company is able to work on projects within South Africa and further afield. This unique combination of expertise allows NuLeaf Planning and Environmental to offer integrated and sustainable solutions to support planners, developers and decision makers in both Government and the Private Sector.

Our Environmental scope includes mainly Environmental Planning, Environmental Management and Environmental Assessment, but more often than not, a combination of these is required. More specialised services include Integrated Management Planning, Visual Impact Assessment and Environmental Awareness Training.

In terms of our Landscape expertise, we offer the full range of Landscape Architectural services, including Landscape Planning, Landscape Design, Detail Design, Specification and Contract Management.

In addition, we often participate on a Landscape and Environmental level in the development integrated Urban Design Framework and other types of Strategic Development Plans.

Our Tourism services include primarily Eco-Tourism Planning, Eco-Tourism Management and Conservation Management, but linked to these are a wide range of additional tourism support services aimed at all types and scales of operation. These include Product Development, Auditing, Business Planning, Mentoring, Grading and Training. These are often combined to suit the requirements of the client.

1.2 Background and Brief

Dynamic Integrated Geohydro Environmental Services DIGES was appointed by Eskom Holdings Limited Transmission Division, as the independent environmental consultant to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment EIA for the proposed establishment of the Marang B 400/132kV Substation and ± 2 km ,400kV power line from the existing Bighorn-Marang or Medupi-Marang or Midas-Marang 400 kV power line, Rustenburg, North West Province.

NuLeaf Planning and Environmental Pty Ltd was appointed by DIGES as a sub-consultant to provide a specialist opinion on the impacts of the proposed development on ecotourism in the study area. This is a specialist opinion that forms part of the EIA and addresses the affects of the proposed transmission line on the receiving tourism environment. Three alternative positions for the Marang B 400/132kV Substation have been proposed and a ± 2 km, 400kV power line from the existing Bighorn-Marang or Medupi-Marang or Midas-Marang 400 kV power line.

The study area contains the extent of the proposed positions and line and includes an approximate 5 km buffer area around the alignment.

The Scope of Work for this specific study includes the following:

- Provide status of tourism within and in close proximity to the study area;
- Identify conservation/protected areas in conjunction with tourism worthy areas and how the proposed development can avoid them;

- Identify potential impacts on ecotourism, if any, of the proposed infrastructure per alternative route to be assessed and substations to be upgraded;
- Identify mitigation measures of the proposed infrastructure on the ecotourism industry; and
- Overall specialist opinion.

1.3 Study Area

The study area includes the entire area covered by the line alignment and the substation sites. The site located approximately 4km north-east from Rustenburg in the Bojanala Region of the North West Province. See the below figure.

2 STUDY APPROACH

2.1 Methodology

For the effective implementation of the study, the Scope of Work was divided into a three phased methodology which included the following:

Phase 1: Project Initiation, Review of Existing Information and Desktop Analysis

- **Project initiation discussion with Project Manager:** A detailed discussion with the project manager took place and all work requirements and potential impacts which have already been identified were discussed. The project plan and assessment approach was amended accordingly.
- **Review of existing information:** The project team reviewed tourism statistics, geographic data, tourism hotspot data, high value habitat data, existing management plans and provincial/national ecotourism related strategies. This information was then utilized to ensure all market related data and all strategies were considered in the assessment. The strategies also guided the approach of the assessment.
- **Baseline search of existing tourism establishments in the area:** A baseline search was undertaken by consulting with local tourism information offices, tourism websites and travel guides. The purpose of this baseline search was to identify any tourism accommodation establishments and tourism products in the study area which could potentially be affected by the proposed development.
- **Identification of focus points:** Due to the fact that the population density of the study area is fairly low and the density of tourism attractions in the area is similarly low, focus points were identified. These focus points are regions which have high value tourism attractions and areas which see a moderate to high tourist traffic on an ongoing basis. The focus points will then be assessed more intensively than other regions.

Phase 2: Site Visit, Data Capturing and Identification of Impacts

- **Site Visit:** A site visit was undertaken from whereby the specialist consultant traversed the focus areas identifying potential impacts on ecotourism establishments and identifying impacts on future tourism opportunities;
- **Review of Visual Impact Assessment:** The Visual Impact Assessment for the project area was provided by the Project Manager. This scope of work is implemented due to a large portion of tourism related impacts of the proposed development is directly related to the visual intrusion of the development on tourism experiences and products;
- **GIS data capturing and photographing:** Basic GIS capturing of tourism attractions/products and photographs were taken of these products for reporting purposes.

Phase 3: Reporting

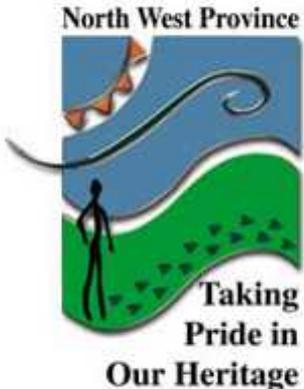
This Ecotourism Impact Assessment was then be compiled for the proposed development and includes the following aspects.

- The Tourism Status Quo;
- Identification of tourism attractions;
- Identification of potential impacts;
- Significance Rating of Impacts;
- Identification of mitigation measures; and
- Final recommendations.

2.2 Stakeholders considered

As with all industry related impact assessments, specific stakeholders and their associated interests were considered. These stakeholders include conservation and tourism related stakeholders in the North West Province. Although not all of these stakeholders were necessarily engaged with in the compilation of the assessment, their mandates and current strategies were considered. Their descriptions and relevant mandates are included below:

Table : Relevant Stakeholders/Role-players

<p>North West Development Corporation</p> <p>Rustenburg P.O. Box 8087 Rustenburg 0330 Tel: 014 597 3405 Fax: 014 597 1531</p>	
<p>North West Parks and tourism Board</p> <p>To direct and develop the integration of tourism and nature conservation in a manner that uplifts the people of the province, by creating value where the market would not intervene on its own</p> <p>Head office: Tel: + 27 018 397 1500/ Fax: + 27 018 397 1660 Physical Address Heritage House Cooke's Lake 30/31 Nelson Mandela Drive Mafikeng</p>	
<p>Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism</p> <p>To achieve the development and growth of a well coordinated, vibrant, diversified and sustainable economy that will create jobs and eradicate unemployment in the North West Province.</p>	

<p>Development House NWDC Building Corner Provident Street and University Drive, Mmabatho 2735</p> <p>Telephone: 018 387 7700</p>	
<p>National Accommodation Association</p> <p>The NAA-Nort West is a Provincial organisation bringing together guesthouses, bed and breakfasts (B&B) and self-catering accommodation throughout the Province.</p> <p>The NAA are the national voice for medium and small accommodation establishments.</p>	
<p>South African Tourism</p> <p>SA Tourism is responsible for marketing the south Africa's tourism product to domestic and key source international markets.</p> <p>Tel: 011 895 3000 Fax: 011 895 3001</p>	

2.3 Desktop Information and Available Information

Very limited information is available from a tourism and conservation perspective for the Study Area. The following information and data sets were utilized for the purposes of completing this assessment:

- **Visual Impact Assessment:** Most impacts associated with transmission lines on ecotourism products relate to visual impacts. The Visual Impact Assessment completed by Axis Landscape Architects was therefore a guiding document which assisted Nuleaf in identifying focus areas to take into consideration. The proposed mitigation measures suggested in the VIA were also considered in this assessment.
- **Protected Area Expansion Strategy:** The National Protected Area Expansion Strategy developed by the DEA in 2008, provides information in terms of the properties considered for the expansion of existing Protected Areas in South Africa.
- **Tourism Sector Growth strategy:** This document was utilized to understand the South African Government's strategy to achieve growth in the Tourism Sector nationally and provincially. It was compiled by the National Department of Tourism in 2010.

- **North West Provincial Information:** A range of documents were utilized to understand the Status Quo of tourism in the province and what the tourism trends would be. This information was also utilized to identify provincial and regional tourism packages/routes which could potentially be affected by the proposed development.
- **Local Tourism Information:** During the site visit, the local tourism associations were approached for additional information on local tourism projects taking place within the study area. Limited information was obtained with this approach.
- **Tracks for Africa GIS information:** GIS information was reviewed from tracks for Africa. There was not a significant amount of data available on this area.
- **Statistics South Africa:** Information relating to tourism trends was sourced from Statistics South Africa.

2.4 Assumptions and Limitations

In reviewing this report, it should be acknowledged that certain limitations were experienced during the study and therefore certain assumptions needed to be made regarding certain aspects of the Ecotourism Assessment. These assumptions and limitations included the following:

- The Ecological Assessment for the project would take into consideration the impacts on sensitive habitats/ecological features which visitors see as attractions.
- Very little detailed information was provided on the components of the transmission line and the project description is therefore indicative of a typical transmission line of this nature.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Overview

The project involves the construction and maintenance of a new 3x 500MVA 400/132kV Main Transmission Substation MTS, Marang B on approximately ±30 hectares and a ±2km 400kV loop -in-loop-out power line from the existing BighornMarang/Medupi-Marang/Midas-Marang 400 kV power lines.

3.2 Project Components and Activities

Each project component and activity will affect the receiving environment differently and is therefore discussed separately. The following project components will occur during the construction and operational phases of the project and are identified as elements that may cause a potential landscape and/or visual impact:

- **Substations**

The entire project will require a site of approximately 30Ha, this area being enclosed by three 4m high fences. A level or stepped platform will be created with a buffer zone inside the fence. On the outskirts of this area will be several terminal gantries which are the termination points for the various set of lines entering or leaving the substation.

These structures will be approximately 45 meters tall.

The greater area of the platform will be taken up by the bus bar structures which will be up to a maximum of 27m in height, 2 x 500MVA 400/132kV transformers, other equipment and equipment buildings that will be approximately 13m in height. This includes a number of fire safety walls.

- **Construction Camps and Lay-down yards**

The construction phase is expected to continue for 24 months from the commencement date. Temporary construction camps will be present for the duration of the construction period. The appointed contractor will set up construction camp along the alignment where practical. The material lay-down yards are expected to be located adjacent the construction camp and will serve as storage areas for the construction material and equipment.

Various types of construction equipment will be required to erect the transmission towers and suspend the electrical cables between them. A TLB, cement truck and mobile crane will be used during the construction phase in conjunction with 102 labourers.

- **Access roads**

Where no access roads are available and vehicular access is required, roads will be constructed. Access may be by means of a two-track dirt road or a cleared corridor. It is expected that roads will be rehabilitated after the construction phase or maintained to facilitate access during periodic maintenance visits.

4 DEFINING ECOTOURISM IN THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Definition of Ecotourism

The International Union for Conservation Networking IUCN has defined Ecotourism as the following:

"Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature and accompanying cultural features, both past and present that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples"

Most tourism in natural areas today is not ecotourism and is not, therefore, sustainable. Ecotourism is distinguished by its emphasis on conservation, education, traveller responsibility and active community participation. Specifically, ecotourism possesses the following characteristics:

- Conscientious, low-impact visitor behaviour;
- Sensitivity towards, and appreciation of, local cultures and biodiversity;
- Support for local conservation efforts;
- Sustainable benefits to local communities;
- Local participation in decision-making; and
- Educational components for both the traveller and local communities

Increased tourism to sensitive natural areas without appropriate planning and management can threaten the integrity of ecosystems and local cultures. The increase of visitors to ecologically sensitive areas can lead to significant environmental degradation. Likewise, local communities and indigenous cultures can be harmed in numerous ways by an influx of foreign visitors and wealth. Additionally, fluctuations in climate, currency exchange rates, and political and social conditions can make over-dependence upon tourism a risky business.

However, this same growth creates significant opportunities for both conservation and local communities. Ecotourism can provide much-needed revenues for the protection of national parks and other natural areas, revenues that might not be available from other sources.

Additionally, ecotourism can provide a viable economic development alternative for local communities with few other income-generating options. Moreover, ecotourism can increase the level of education and activism among travellers, making them more enthusiastic and effective agents of conservation.

Table 3: Ecotourism typologies identified in Stun Safaris

Photographic safaris are undertaken by tourists to view and/or photograph specific natural heritage aspects of a specific area.

Natural heritage features include fauna, flora and unique landscapes.

Tourists make use of a wide range of activities, accommodation and operators to fulfill their needs.



Adventure

Adventure tourism is focused on visitors who travel for the specific purposes of participating in extreme sports or adrenaline related activities.

The North West provides a large amount of opportunities for adventure related activities. These include activities such as:

- hang-gliding
- parasailing
- abseiling
- hiking trails
- angling
- yachting
- ballooning



<p>Local Leisure</p> <p>Local leisure tourism includes local visitors which travel with the sole purpose of ‘getting away from it all’ and do not travel to participate in a specific activity but rather to relax in a natural environment.</p> <p>Caravanning and camping is the preferred form of accommodation for these travelers and the local setting is fairly important for the satisfaction levels of visitors.</p>	
<p>Special Interest</p> <p>Special interest visitors are visitors which have a specific interest in an area. Special Interest tours are normally operated by a specialized tour operator or it is a pre-packaged and pre-determined route designed by the relevant local government with detailed interpretation.</p> <p>The rich history and the unique ecological features of the study area attract a number of visitors. These cultural features and the unique ecological features include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geology; - Unique/endemic fauna and flora; - Anglo-Boer war sites; - Unique cultural history of the area; - Archaeological important sites - Bird Watching - Etc. 	 

4.2 Needs and expectations of Ecotourists

Ecotourists are not trying just to reduce their impact on the environment of the study area. They actually try to help the environment and the local populations in different ways. They have a social consciousness and a responsible attitude.

The foremost needs and expectations of Ecotourists visiting the study area include the following:

- Ecotourists have a need to engage with and contribute to the protection of natural environment of the area and its associated cultural environment;
- Ecotourists have an expectation to be exposed to a story-line and to learn new things from their experience;
- Ecotourists have a focus of engaging with local communities and gaining a better understanding of how other societies function;

- Ecotourists have a need to only utilise products and service providers which support and implement the principles of sustainable tourism in their products;
- Ecotourists have a psychological need of getting back into nature and to experience the environment on a first hand basis;
- Ecotourists visiting the study area for its natural beauty and expect to experience natural and pristine landscapes with minimal human impact.

Today, Ecotourism in South Africa has also come to include 'tourist participation' in all aspects of the operation. This means that the Ecotourist visiting the study area should not only experience all the natural aspects of Ecotourism, but they should also be exposed to and involved - where feasible with aspects of local community life. Thus the Ecotourist should have an integrated and holistic experience, a truly South African episode, within an environment which is as pristine as possible.

Important experiential aspects include the following aspects:

- Ethos-bonding. This implies that the Ecotourist wants to do more than just travel and participate in activities such as hiking, snorkelling and/or viewing wildlife, etc. - in fact the entire spectrum of outdoor activities that is part of "the African Experience". The Ecotourist also wants to get "involved" or "participate" in local community matters and/or interact with "locals" in some way. They want to gain insights into the needs and daily life activities of local people, and to better understand their cultural values.
- Exposed to the New Democracy. A complete change has occurred in South Africa with regards to a new and emerging democracy post-1994. To be exposed to this new stage and process of development in South Africa's history is of interest and enlightening to many Ecotourists. They are particularly interested in aspects of the "peace and reconciliation" process, and how family values and personal freedoms have changed.
- Natural and Cultural Diversity. South Africa has been marketed as "A World in one Country". It not only has a rich diversity of wildlife and scenic splendour, but also an unusual mix of different cultural and ethnic groups, each with their own language, food, religion and customs. This excites foreigners, as the conservation of cultural diversity is now a recognised global issue.

5 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

5.1 National Tourism Trends

South Africa's scenic beauty, magnificent outdoors, sunny climate, cultural diversity and reputation for delivering value for money have made it one of the world's fastest growing leisure – and business – travel destinations.

The country is highly diverse in terms of its climate, culture, tourist activities and infrastructure, catering for every tourism niche, from business, eco- and cultural tourism through to adventure, sport and paleo-tourism.

Tourism is regarded as a modern-day engine of growth and is one of the largest industries globally. In 2012, G20 heads of state recognized tourism as a driver of growth and development, as well as a sector that has the potential to spur global economic recovery.

South Africa has earmarked tourism as a key sector with excellent potential for growth: the government aims to increase tourism's contribution, both direct and indirectly, to the economy from the 2009 baseline of R189,4-billion 7.9% of GDP to R499 -billion by 2020 National Department of Tourism, 2012. Tourism supports one in every 12 jobs in South Africa.

South Africa's spectacular scenery, friendly people, world-class infrastructure make it one of the most desired destinations in the world. The sector was given a massive boost by the successful hosting of the World Cup in 2010, when the country received a record-breaking 8.1-million foreign visitors. Despite tough global economic conditions, tourism grew in 2011, with 8.3-million international tourists.

The regional African tourist market is South Africa's important tourist markets, contributing more than 73% of total tourist arrivals and more than R50-billion in revenue in 2011. Domestic tourism is also an important source of revenue and employment, contributing 52% of total tourism consumption. Cruise and rural tourism are focusing growth areas.

A labour intensive sector, with a supply chain that links across sectors, tourism is a priority sector in the government's planning and policy frameworks. It is one of the six job drivers of the New Growth Path framework.

The National Tourism Sector Strategy, launched in 2011, aims to ensure the sector realizes its full potential in terms of job creation, social inclusion, services exports and foreign exchange earnings, fostering a better understanding between peoples and cultures, and green transformation.

South Africa plans to grow tourism by allowing travellers to move more freely and efficiently. Measures would include e-visas, regional visa schemes, and visa waiver programmes between key source markets. Tourism service excellence standards have been devised and implemented by the SA Bureau of Standards and the National Department of Tourism.

The following tourism opportunities exist to grow South Africa's National Market Share:

- **Wine tourism:** one of the fastest-growing and most lucrative sectors of the global tourism market. In 2009, wine tourism contributed an estimated R4,3 billion to South Africa's tourism revenue.

Wine and gourmet tourism could help the wine industry offset the international volatility it experiences, as well as play a role in terms of South Africa's goal of increasing the geographic spread of tourism.

- **Medical tourism:** where people seek medical treatment in another country, is a fast-growing sector. Most medical tourists come to South Africa for cosmetic surgery, but the country's skilled surgeons can also provide organ transplants; cardiac, orthopedic and obesity surgery; and dentistry.
- **Rural tourism:** a priority area for government. The departments of Tourism and Rural Development and Land Reform have developed strategic interventions to allow poor communities better access to revenues generated by the tourism market.



Figure: Ecotourism Opportunities to grow market share

5.2 Provincial Tourism Trends: North West Province

5.2.1 *Tourism Status Quo in the Province*

The North West province lies in the north of South Africa on the Botswana border. In the West it is boarded by the Kalahari Desert, to the east Gauteng province, and the Free State to the south. It is known as the Platinum Province for the wealth of the metal it has underground, though it is also known as the Texas of South Africa owing to some of the largest cattle herds in the world.

The province is largely characterized by flat regions of scattered trees and grassland. The Magaliesberg mountain range in the northeast extends about 130 kilometers from Pretoria to Rustenburg.

Sun City has to be the most famous tourist attraction situated in the northwestern region of the province. It is a luxury resort and casino and offers a host of activities. Another major tourist attraction, Pilanesberg Game Reserve, borders Sun City and is home to the Big 5.

Other attractions that highlight the natural beauty of the North West are the Taung Heritage Site, Vredefort Dome, Madikwe Game Reserve and various cultural villages. Annual events play a role in keeping the North West in the consciousness of local and international visitors.

Among the best-known events and festivals are:

- September: Aardklop Festival, Potchefstroom
- September: Cultural Calabash, Taung
- December: Nedbank Sun City Golf Challenge, Sun City

5.2.2 Tourism Trends

The North West province only receives 5.4 % of all foreign visitors which is a decline of 1.1 % from previous years. There is no data available that identifies the reasons for the declining market share in respect of international tourist arrivals and bednights. However, the following assumptions can be made regarding the reasons for this:

- International tourists are not aware of the tourism offerings which the province has for Guests;
- Attractive and appealing tourism products are currently not available;
- Tourism infrastructure, such as signage is insufficient.
- Suitable tour products of the required quality have not been developed as yet.

The result is that the North West tourism sector is not competing effectively with other provinces in respect of growing its share of international tourism arrivals. In this regard for example, provinces such as Gauteng and Mpumalanga have been able to effectively leverage their natural resources to grow tourism, with Gauteng receiving 44.6 % and Mpumalanga 15.2 % of foreign visitors. Data has shown that foreign travelers mainly come to South Africa to visit friends and family and for leisure.

Locally, North West fares slightly better, receiving 6 % of tourists. The province has much to offer domestic tourists such as Heritage sites and National Parks and this is a market well worth exploring. This, however, requires a much more focused marketing and tourism product development strategy.

5.2.3 Wildlife Ranching and Breeding

The wildlife-ranching sector in South Africa now encompasses more than 10 000 farms from about 3 500 in 1992 and covers more than 20 million hectares. This means that there is in private hands about three times more conservation land than there is under the protection of national and provincial parks. Twice as many animals are on these private farms than in the public parks. South Africa leads the global fraternity of wildlife ranching and generates more than R7.7-billion in income each year.

Concerns about conservation ensure that there is always a debate about the role that hunting should play in the tourist offering. The first national Hunting Indaba was held at The Palace, Sun City, in October 2012. This brought together leading figures in national and provincial government, wildlife ranchers and representatives of the hunting sector.

National Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa told the indaba that the hunting and game-farming sectors were important partners in 'conservation, tourism and economic development'. The Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa has put the overall value of the wildlife industry to the national economy at R7.7-billion. The industry is said to employ 140 000 people. The Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa says that the sector is now bigger than the sugar and dairy sectors.



Figure : Game Farming Opportunities

5.3 Provincial Tourism and Conservation Strategies

5.3.1 Protected Area Expansion Strategy

Protected areas are areas of land or sea that are protected by law and managed mainly for biodiversity conservation.

South Africa’s protected area network currently falls far short of sustaining biodiversity and ecological processes. In this context, the goal of the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy is to achieve cost effective protected area expansion for ecological sustainability and increased resilience to climate change.

The NPAES highlights ways in which we can become more efficient and effective in allocating the scarce human and financial resources available for protected area expansion. It sets targets for protected area expansion, provides maps of the most important areas for protected area expansion, and makes recommendations on mechanisms for protected area expansion.

The common set of targets and spatial priorities provided by the NPAES enable co-ordination between the many role players involved in protected area expansion.

The goal of the NPAES is to achieve cost-effective protected area expansion for ecological sustainability and increased resilience to climate change. It sets targets for protected area expansion, provides maps of the most important areas for protected area expansion, and makes recommendations on mechanisms for protected area expansion.

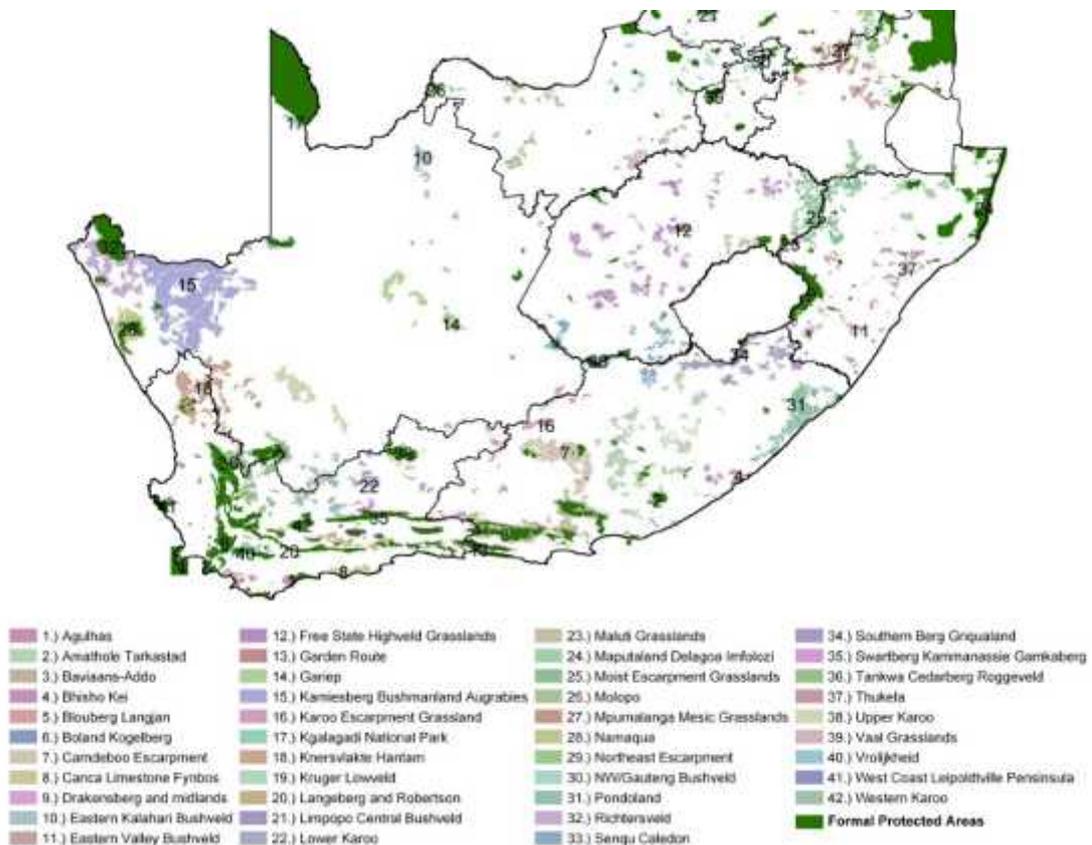


Fig: Focus areas for land based protected Area Expansion

The electrical infrastructure planned for the North West needs to take this Protected Area Expansion Strategy into consideration. Although land may not currently be included in a Protected area, it is critical, that to understand the conservation value of that land and how it plays a role in the proposed expansion of relevant Protected Areas in the North West Province.

5.3.2 National Tourism Sector Strategy

The National Tourism Sector Strategy, launched in 2011, aims to ensure the sector realizes its full potential in terms of job creation, social inclusion, services exports and foreign exchange earnings, fostering a better understanding between peoples and cultures, and green transformation.

South Africa plans to grow tourism by allowing travelers to move more freely and efficiently. Measures would include e-visas, regional visa schemes, and visa waiver programmes between key source markets.

Tourism service excellence standards have been devised and implemented by the SA Bureau of Standards and the National Department of Tourism.

Vision of Strategy:

To be a Top 20 tourism destinations in the world by 2020

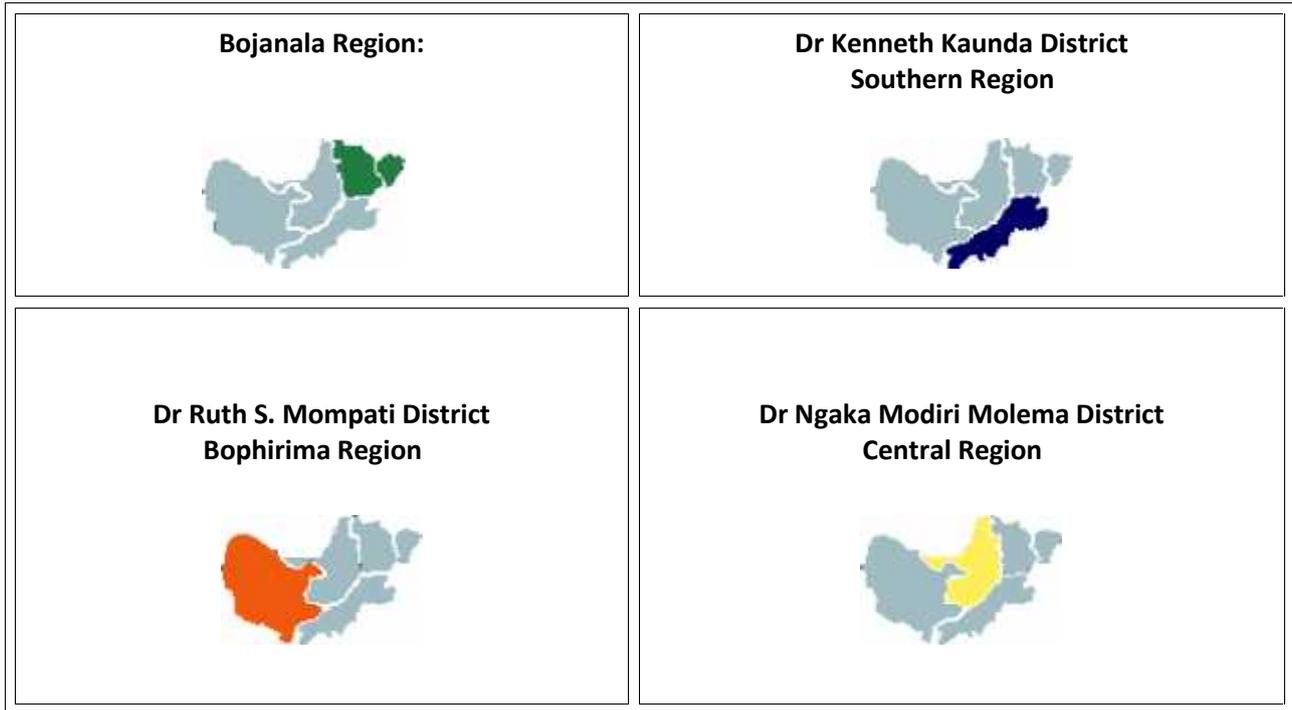
Mission of Strategy:

To grow a sustainable tourism economy in South Africa, with domestic, regional and international components, based on innovation, service excellence, meaningful participation and partnerships.

5.4 Regional Tourism Packages

The province has been divided in 4 tourism regions: Bojanala region; Bophirima; Central region and the Southern region.





These regions all have very different features and the reasons why tourists visit these areas are very different. Due to the fact that the tourism regions have been defined, it is easier to determine which markets the proposed transmission lines will affect.

Description of the Bojanala Region:

This region of North West province borders Gauteng and is regarded as the most beautiful region of NW. The area is largely bushveld and is flat and open. It is a natural game area and is home to many game reserves such as Pilanesberg Game Reserve. This region is also home to The Lost City, Magaliesberg, Hartbeespoort Dam and The Cradle of Humankind.

This Tourism Region includes the following cities which are relevant to the study area;

- Brits
- Broederstroom
- Hartbeespoort Dam
- Magaliesburg
- Mogwase
- Phokeng
- Rustenburg

Description of the Southern Region:

The southern region borders the Free State and Gauteng. This region is the most popular tourist destination, with 83 % of money-making activities occurring here. Activities on offer are hiking, mountain biking, water sports to name a few. Top attractions are Bloemhof Dam Reserve and Vredefort Dome.

This Tourism Region includes the following cities:

- Klerksdorp Matlosane
- Magwassie Hills
- Potchefstroom Tlokwe
- Ventersdorp

Description of the Bophirima Region:

This region has a very strong mining and agricultural economy, as well as, vast expanses of African savannah bushland which is home to a variety of game such as lion and rhino. The main town, Vryburg, is the centre of a large agricultural district, while Taung is the site of the discovery of the Taung skull- an extremely important archaeological discovery.

The region is situated 1,200m above sea level and has an annual average rainfall of 430mm. The climate is dry and healthy, particularly in winter when days are sunny and bracing. Summers are hot with temperatures ranging from 16 - 38 degrees C.

Description of the Central Region:

The central region is home to the capital of the province, Mahikeng. This region is a fast growing, modern, residential, administrative and commercial town. The area is fairly flat and dry in the west, becoming bushveld towards the east.

The Central Region offers game viewing - including the Big 5 - bird watching, hunting, fishing, sport, hospitality, conference facilities, shopping, gaming, Anglo-Boer War sites and a number of excellent guest houses and guest farms.

5.5 Tourism Products and Services within project area

5.5.1 Magaliesburg Protected Natural Environment

The Magaliesburg was proclaimed a Natural Protected Area in 1977. The Rustenburg Nature Reserve Kgaswane Nature Reserve falls in this Protected Area. The Reserve spans 5300 ha and is host to over 800 antelope, over 320 species of bird and small numbers of predators such as jackal and leopards. Game viewing, picnic spots and hiking is offered.

The Marang project area is approximately 16km of the Reserve. This will have an impact on the sense of place and the tranquil nature of the Reserve.



5.5.2 Bospoort Dam

Bospoort Dam is a gravity/earth-fill type dam on the Hex River, a tributary of the Elands River, part of the Crocodile River Limpopo basin . The dam was established in 1933 as the main water supply for Rustenburg. Due to the contamination of the water from the platinum and chrome mines in the region in the sixties, it was no longer fit for human consumption. Water shortages in the nineties; again saw the dam being used as a water source.usi

Today the Dam is mainly used for fishing purposes, even though the fish are not fit to eat. It is a popular destination for carp fishing. Bospoort Dam falls in the proposed project area. There will be an impact on the sense of place.



5.6 Relevant Provincial and Regional Tourism Packages: North West

The proposed development coincides with 3 tourism routes in the North West province. The most important route being The Heritage Route. This route is the oldest tourism route that has natural, archaeological, cultural and historical attractions. The Heritage route travels through cultural villages, mountains, historical towns and ends at The Lost City and Pilanesberg National Park.

Towns and attractions along the Heritage route include:

- **Hartbeespoort Dam:**

The epicentre of water sport fun. Boating, sailing, water skiing, canoeing, diving - not to mention a floating restaurant and much more. The dam also offers the largest outdoor market in the province with a vast variety of local and Southern African art and crafts.

- **Magaliesberg Mountains**

Secret waterfalls, streams and fresh water pools lush vegetation, diverse animal species, a birders paradise. Discover these on horseback, on a leisurely drive or take on the challenge on the newly developed Summit and Baviaanskrans Hiking Routes - voted among the top five routes in South Africa.

- **Pilanesberg National Park**

Drive yourself or enjoy a conducted drive with qualified, armed rangers though the sensational 65000 ha Pilanesberg National Park, situated in an extinct volcanic crater. The park is home to the Big Five which makes for an excellent photo safari. Hot Air Balloon Safaris are also on offer.

- **Sun City and Lost City**

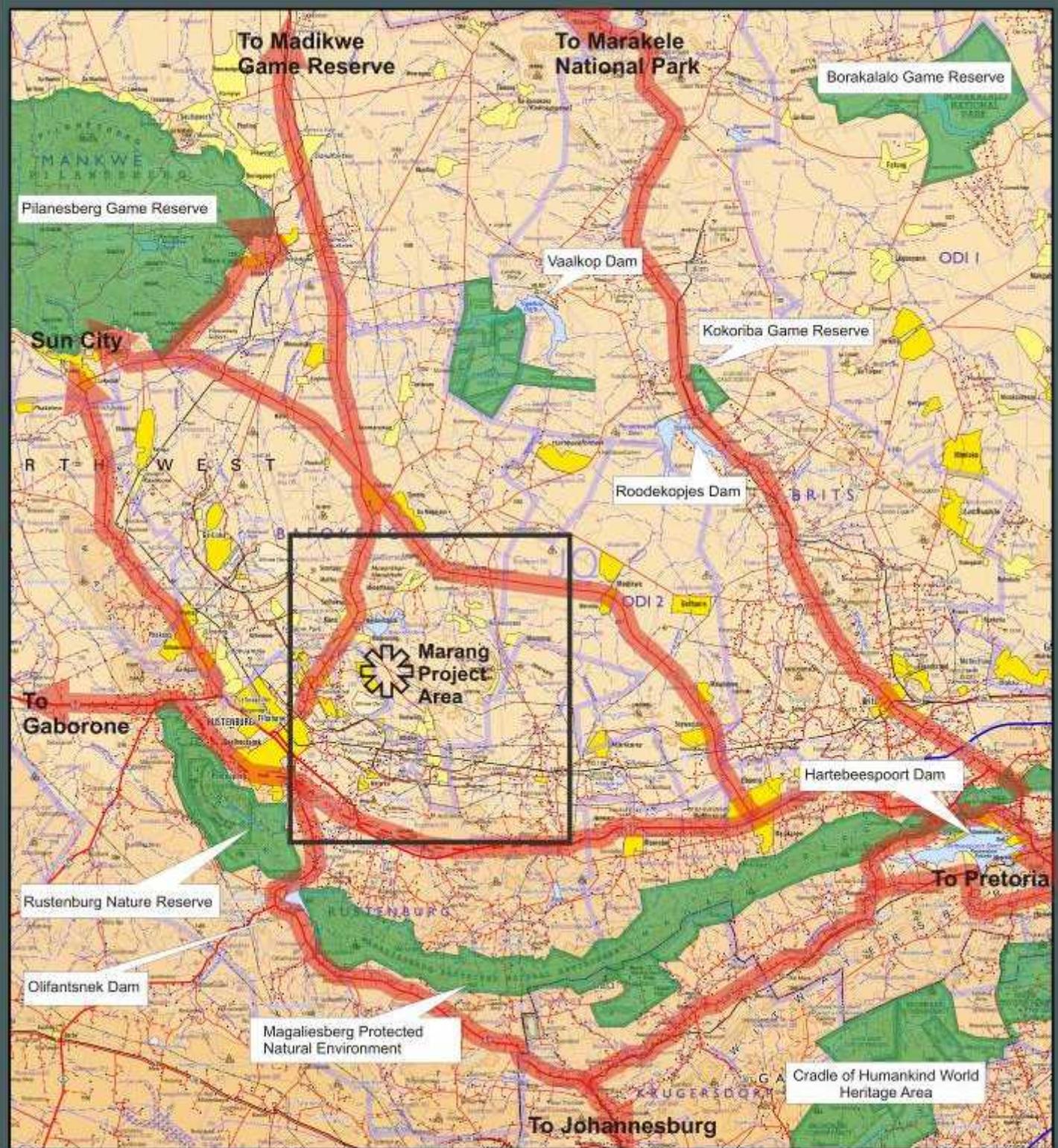
The spectacular Sun City Resort comprises four world class hotels, including The Palace of the Lost City in the heart of the African bush. A full range of sporting, gambling, entertainment, conferencing and accommodation facilities are available for your enjoyment at the most dynamic entertainment destination in the world.

- **Cultural Villages**

Enrich your soul - Various cultural villages in the area let you actively participate in dancing and festivities and such tours are the ideal opportunity to experience the vast and incredibly interesting cultures of the people of the province.

- **Anglo Boer SA War**

The route has a rich history and there are many historical landmarks to be discovered. The centenary of the Anglo Boer SA War 1899 - 1902 is currently being commemorated and many battle sites, graves and memorials can still be seen.



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-  Protected areas
-  Primary tourist routes
-  Urban areas
-  Dams with recreational component



6 RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES

After identifying the potential impacts of the proposed development and the nature of the ecotourism industry in the Study Area, it is necessary to provide measures/solutions which will minimize these impacts as far as possible. The purpose of mitigation is to acknowledge the impacts associated with the project and then to identify interventions which will be suitable to the ecotourism industry and accepted, as far as possible, by the local stakeholders and role-players. However, should there have been fatal flaws identified during this process, these would have been acknowledged as such. At this stage, there are no fatal flaws in terms of impacts on the ecotourism industry.

The mitigation measures have been discussed per impact and the Visual Impact Assessment completed by Axis Landscape Architects was considered in the identification of mitigation measures as follows:

6.1 Visual Impacts on Eco-tourists and Ecotourism Establishments

- Where possible, natural screening should be provided to established ecotourism establishments which have views impacted on by the construction and operational phases. Very often, views can be managed with effective screening. Budget and capacity should be made available for this purpose. Tourism establishments can then apply to have screening implemented and this can only be done if specific criteria are met by the relevant claim.
- Final route corridors and alignment details must be provided to the ecotourism industry in the area as soon as possible so that potential developers can have this information for integration into their planning for new projects. This will ensure that they can plan future tourism development in a manner which avoids the proposed developments. This information should be distributed via the tourism forum and local/provincial tourism associations.
- Construction should proceed in off-peak seasons.

In addition to these Mitigation Measures, Axis Landscape Architects have identified mitigation measures in their Visual Impact Assessment for the Project. These aspects are focused on the individual construction components and include the following:

Access Routes:

- Make use of existing access roads where possible;
- Where new access roads are required, the disturbance area should be kept as small as possible. A two-track dirt road will be the most preferred option;
- Locate access routes so as to limit modification to the topography and to avoid the removal of established vegetation;
- Avoid crossing over or through ridges, rivers, pans or any natural features that have visual value. This also includes centers of floral endemism and areas where vegetation is not resilient and takes extended periods to recover;
- Maintain no or minimum cleared road verges;
- Access routes should be located on the perimeter of disturbed areas such as cultivated/fallow lands as not to fragment intact vegetated areas; and

- If it is necessary to clear vegetation for a road, avoid doing so in a continuous straight line. Alternatively, curve the road in order to reduce the visible extent of the cleared corridor.

Cleared Servitudes:

- Locate the alignment and the associated cleared servitude so as to avoid the removal of established vegetation; and
- Avoid a continuous linear path of cleared vegetation that would strongly contrast with the surrounding landscape character. Feather the edges of the cleared corridor to avoid a clearly defined line through the landscape.

Construction camps and lay down yards

- If practically possible, locate construction camps in areas that are already disturbed or where it isn't necessary to remove established vegetation like for example, naturally bare areas;
- Utilise existing screening features such as dense vegetation stands or topographical features to place the construction camps and lay-down yards out of the view of sensitivity visual receptors;
- Keep the construction sites and camps neat, clean and organised in order to portray a tidy appearance; and
- Screen the construction camp and lay-down yards by enclosing the entire area with a dark green or black shade cloth of no less than 2 m height.

6.2 Impacts on Ecotourism Products

- Establish an ecotourism/conservation forum for the project by engaging with all tourism associations local and provincial to ensure that ongoing communication is provided to all role - players and to ensure that all ecotourism products are aware of the construction timeframes. This will enable ecotourism destinations to plan accordingly in terms of occupancies and potential down times.
- Conduct construction activities within the off-peak tourism seasons and outside of the hunting season which has been established for the North West Province. It should be noted that the hunting periods differ on a species specific basis but the main hunting periods are from April to September.
- Provide dedicated contact point for the purpose of providing an opportunity for product owners to obtain information on the project and to provide information on impacts or problems on an ongoing basis. A response structure should also be setup to support this contact point. This will enable localized impacts to be mitigated more effectively and efficiently.
- All impacts on fauna or flora within high conservation/ecotourism value land should be rehabilitated immediately to a completely natural state. This should be done by managing removed vegetation in a manner which can be re-planted.
- Compile booklets which interpret the project and where the power is going and what value the project is adding to the local and provincial economy. Very often, when eco-tourists see the

value in a development project, they are willing to accept the associated impact on the environment.

6.3 Impacts on Establishment and Expansion of Protected Areas

- Engage with Provincial conservation authorities to ensure development within proposed conservation areas is managed accordingly.
- Annual meetings with relevant stakeholders should be conducted to obtain updated management guidelines and expansion strategies Preferably in GIS format
- Implement management guidelines and action items in terms of the relevant management plan of the Protected Area in question.

7 CONCLUSION AND FINAL OPINION

After reviewing the context of the project and the potential impacts of the proposed development on the ecotourism industry, NuLeaf Planning and Environmental are able to provide the Environmental Assessment Practitioner with an informed opinion. This opinion includes the following:

- There are no existing tourism attractions of significance in the study area;
- The study area is characterized by development and human impact and therefore does not have the tranquil, pristine environments present which ecotourists expect of a region;
- The development is an addition to an existing facility. Therefore, tourists would be impacted on in any event;
- The only tourists who may be affected by the proposed development are those tourists who are moving through the area on their way to a ecotourism destination. They will therefore only be impacted on visually. This will however have minimal impact on their overall experience in the area.
- The Visual Impact Assessment conducted by Axis Landscape Architects found that there will be very little visual impact on tourists in the study area.

Having stated the above, there is no reason why any of the alternatives should not be considered from an ecotourism point of view. We are of the opinion that this project can proceed unconditionally when considering the ecotourism industry in the study area.