

## Background Information Document:

### Basic Assessment for the proposed establishment of a flood attenuation facility in Palmiet River catchment, Padfield Park, Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal

#### 1. Introduction to the project

The eThekweni Municipality's Coastal, Stormwater and Catchment Management Department (CSCMD) has identified a section of the Palmiet River in Pinetown (see Figure 1) that is technically suitable for the establishment of an off-stream temporary storage facility that will assist in the attenuation of downstream flood waters of the Palmiet River system (refer to Section 3 below for more information on the proposed facility).

The above facility will serve as a mechanism to reduce peak flow velocities draining through the catchment. This will be achieved by enabling flood waters to spill over the river banks into the proposed attenuation facility, from where the flood waters will more gradually be released back into the river system through the existing culverts under Padfield Road.

[Note: In other words, an artificial flood plain would be created].

The purpose of the proposed attenuation facility is to mitigate downstream negative impacts along the Palmiet River catchment which include the following:

- Flooding and resultant damage to public and private property and infrastructure;
- Risk to the health and well being of humans and animals (domestic and wild); and
- Accelerated erosion of downstream river banks encroaching properties adjacent to the Palmiet River.

In addition, the proposed attenuation facility is also expected to act as a sediment trap thereby positively contributing to the water quality in the Palmiet River system during flood events.

#### 4. Potential issues associated with the project

Outlined below is a preliminary list of the potential social and biophysical issues potentially associated with the proposed development that have been identified to date:

- Loss of vegetation due to site clearance;
- Affect on riverine and wetland systems;
- Affect on groundwater table and base flow levels of the Palmiet River;
- Nuisance to neighbouring residents during earthmoving activities (e.g. noise, dust, etc.);
- Transformation of public open space; and
- Downstream impacts.

Further to the above issues, additional issues may be identified during the course of the Basic Assessment Process and associated Public Participation Process (see Section 6 below).

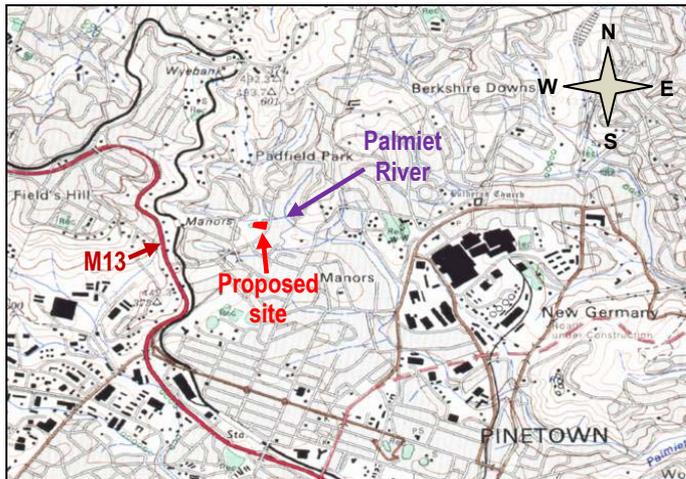


Figure 1: Locality map

In terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations as promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), the above proposed activity constitutes a number of listed activities which require Environmental Authorisation prior to commencement of the activity (refer to Section 5 for more detail regarding the applicability of the EIA Regulations to the project).

As such, the CSCMD has commissioned SRK Consulting (SRK), as an independent environmental assessment practitioner (EAP), to facilitate their application for Environmental Authorisation for the proposed attenuation facility.

#### 2. Purpose of this document

This document, the Background Information Document (BID), is intended to provide background information about the EIA Process being undertaken for the proposed development and provides:

- An overview of the project;
- An overview of the legislative context and an outline of the manner in which the EIA will be undertaken;
- An indication of how interested and affected parties (IAPs) may become involved in the project; and
- Contact details to whom IAPs may submit their issues and concerns associated with the project.

#### 3. Project description

The proposed attenuation facility will involve the excavation of a temporary storage facility into the banks of the Palmiet River (i.e. with the intention being not to directly alter the base flow or river bed conditions) in the vicinity of Padfield Park in Pinetown (see Figure 2). For optimal attenuation capacity to be achieved, approximately 6 300m<sup>3</sup> of material will be required to be excavated and appropriately engineered embankment stabilisation techniques implemented.

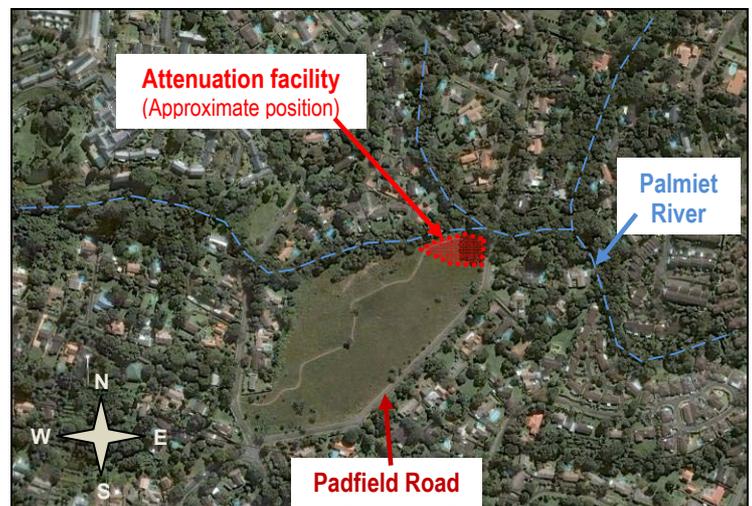


Figure 2: Aerial view of study area

## 5. The Basic Assessment Process

The proposed attenuation facility constitutes the following listed activities in terms of Listing Notice GNR. 386 of the EIA Regulations as promulgated under NEMA:

- GNR 386 No. 1m: “The construction of facilities or infrastructure, including associated structures or infrastructure for any purpose in the one in ten year floodline of a river or stream, or within 32 metres from the bank of a river or stream where the floodline is unknown, excluding purposes associated with existing residential use, but including canals, bridges, dams and weirs”.
- GNR 386 No. 4: “The dredging, excavation, infilling, removal or moving of soil, sand, rock exceeding 5 cubic metres from a river, tidal lagoon, tidal river, in-stream dam, floodplain or wetland”.
- GN 386 No. 20: “The transformation of an area zoned for use as open public space or for a conservation purpose to another use”

In accordance with the EIA Regulations, the Basic Assessment Process must be followed and an application for Environmental Authorisation as well as a Basic Assessment Report and associated documentation must be submitted to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) (i.e. as the competent authority for the purpose of this application).

The objectives of the Basic Assessment Process are to:

- Develop an understanding of the project area;
- Develop an understanding of the proposed development and how it's related activities may potentially impact on the surrounding environment;
- Identify relevant authorities and Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) to engage in the Public Participation Process (PPP);
- Facilitate the dissemination of information to the relevant authorities and IAPs and provide them with an opportunity to raise issues or concerns related to the project;
- Identify potential issues and environmental impacts;
- Assess the significance of the potential environmental impacts identified;
- Describe and investigate alternatives that have been and / or could be considered; and
- Provide feasible mitigation measures to address any significant impacts identified.

The above objectives are achieved through the technical evaluation of the proposed activity, the undertaking of the PPP and the submission of the relevant information and documentation to the DAEA, all of which are further discussed in the subsections which follow.

### 5.1 Technical evaluation

The technical evaluation and the PPP continue throughout the Basic Assessment process and, while they are closely linked, for ease of explanation they are discussed separately in this document.

The technical evaluation component aims to identify the environmental issues and impacts associated with the proposed attenuation facility. More specifically it will involve, but will not be limited to, the following tasks:

- Site assessment;
- Survey of the potential ecological issues;
- Survey of potential technical issues;
- Identification of issues related to surface & ground water;
- Identification of potential social and economic issues; and
- Consideration and assessment of feasible alternatives.

### 5.2 Public Participation Process

Public involvement is an integral part of the Basic Assessment and aims to include IAPs in the process by notifying them of the proposed project and encouraging them to raise their issues and concerns.

The following section details the manner in which SRK proposes engaging IAPs as part of the PPP during the Basic Assessment Process.

#### 5.2.1 Notification

An advertisement will be lodged in the Highway Mail newspaper during February 2009 to ensure that a broad spectrum of stakeholders are aware of the opportunity to participate.

In addition, IAPs will be notified of the project and opportunities for interaction by means of:

- The placement of notices on-site;
- Telephonic invitation to identified IAPs; and
- Distribution of BIDs (this document) to identified IAPs.

#### 5.2.2 Interaction with IAPs

It is important that IAPs are afforded ample opportunity to understand the technical issues associated with the project so they can meaningfully participate in and contribute to the Basic Assessment Process. At this stage of the project, other than the BID, the following is proposed:

- Holding a public meeting, should sufficient interest be generated in the project;
- A key stakeholder workshop if required, as above;
- One-on-one meetings with key authorities and IAPs where required; and
- Compilation of a Draft Basic Assessment Report to be made available for public review and comment.

The following entities have been identified to date as key stakeholders in the project:

- The eThekweni Municipality Environmental Management Division;
- The relevant Ward Councilor for the eThekweni Municipality;
- Padfield Park Ratepayers Association;
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry;
- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife; and
- Owners and residents of the surrounding residential area.

Additional IAPs will be identified during the course of the PPP.

#### 5.2.3 Feedback

Feedback will be provided to IAPs via letters or direct communication, if requested, and in the Draft Basic Assessment Report.

The PPP proposed for undertaking the Basic Assessment has been designed to ensure that interaction with IAPs is focused yet comprehensive. The need for a public meeting or one-on-one meetings will be confirmed during the Basic Assessment Process. All IAP contributions will be reflected in the Basic Assessment Report.

IAP comment and feedback can be provided in different ways. These include:

- By direct written (facsimile, email, post) and telephonic submission;
- Discussion from one-on-one meetings; or
- Through organised bodies such as the Ratepayers Association.

### 5.3 Submission to the DAEA

Following receipt of IAP comments on the Basic Assessment Report, the application for Environmental Authorisation, along with the Basic Assessment Report and associated documentation will be distributed to the DAEA for a decision on the project. Once a decision has been made, all registered IAPs will be notified of the decision, as well as of the procedure to appeal the decision, should they wish to do so.

Should you require any additional information or have comments about the proposed development please contact **Ms. Liz Allan** of **SRK Consulting** at:

Tel: 031-279 1200  
Fax: 031-279 1204  
Email: lallan@srk.co.za

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**PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A FLOOD ATTENUATION FACILITY  
 IN PALMIET RIVER CATCHMENT, PADFIELD PARK, PINETOWN,  
 KWAZULU-NATAL**

Please would you complete Section A of this form for our database purposes and detail your comments and questions with regard to the proposed development in Sections B to E. Please feel free to attach additional pages of comment to this document if sufficient space has not been provided.

**A Your Contact Details**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Postal Address</b>	
<b>Telephone Number</b>	
<b>Cell Phone Number</b>	
<b>Fax Number</b>	
<b>E-mail Address</b>	
<b>Organisation/Department that you represent</b>	
<b>Position within Organisation/Department</b>	
<b>Property name and portion number if you are a resident/property owner in the area</b>	

**B What is your interest in the project?**


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**C Do you have any comments or concerns about the proposed project?**


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D **Do you require further information? If so, please indicate the type of information.**

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E **Other Contacts:** If you know of anyone else who should be informed about this project, please could you provide their details in the table below (space has been provided for an additional two contacts):

<b>Name</b>		
<b>Organisation</b>		
<b>Postal/e-mail address</b>		
<b>Contact number</b>		

Thank you for taking time to comment on this project. Please could you fax, mail or e-mail this document and any accompanying pages to Liz Allan at P.O. Box 1969, Westville, 3630, Fax (031) 279 1204 or [lallan@srk.co.za](mailto:lallan@srk.co.za).