



Webinar

Draft Ecosystem Environmental Assessment Guideline

Presented by:

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Biodiversity and Land Use Project



Presentation Outline

- Introduction to the team
- Background
- Purpose of the guideline
- Legal framework
- Data layers in the Screening Tool
- Biodiversity Priority Areas



Introduction to the team



Warrick Stewart – Resilience Environmental Advice



Abulele Adams - CSIR



Nancy Job - SANBI



Mthobisi Nzimande- SANBI



Fahiemma Daniels – SANParks*



Abigail Bahindwa- SANBI

James Dabrowski (Confluent Environmental) is acknowledged for his inputs on aquatic ecosystems

Background

- DFFE commissioned **SANBI** and **CSIR** to develop **biodiversity** related Protocols.
- The **need** for **Protocols** arose because there is no standardised approach for the assessment of impacts in specialist studies in EIAs in South Africa.
- The **Aquatic** and **Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols** aim to **standardise specialist assessments** of ecosystem-level aspects of **EIAs** and the reporting of potential impacts from proposed developments on ecosystems.
- The **Ecosystem Environmental Assessment Guideline** provides **background** and **context** to the minimum assessment and reporting criteria contained within the **Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols**



Purpose of the guideline and the webinar

- **Purpose of the guideline is to:**

offer guidance on how the minimum information requirements should be implemented with room for flexibility

offer assistance through identifying other resources that can be used to implement the protocol criteria;

provide background and context to the assessment and minimum reporting criteria contained within the Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols;

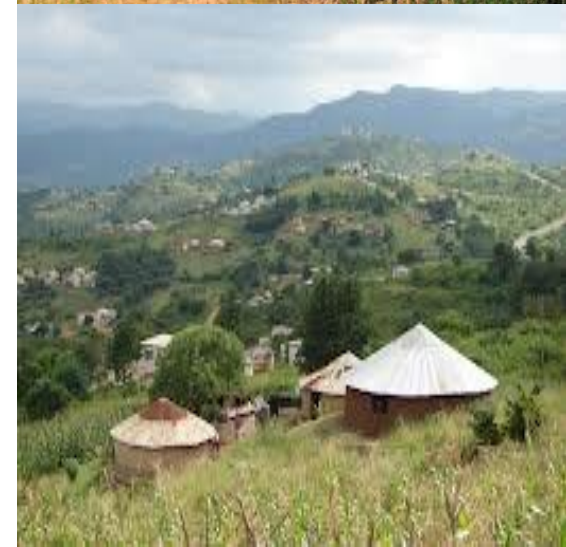
ensure that good practice is applied and consistent in Aquatic and Terrestrial specialist assessments in South Africa; and

ensure that the Screening Tool data and Protocols are interpreted correctly.

- **The purpose of the webinar is to:**

introduce the guidelines to stakeholders; and

have engagement on the key concepts proposed in the Guideline



Purpose of the guideline and the webinar contd...

- **The guideline does not:**

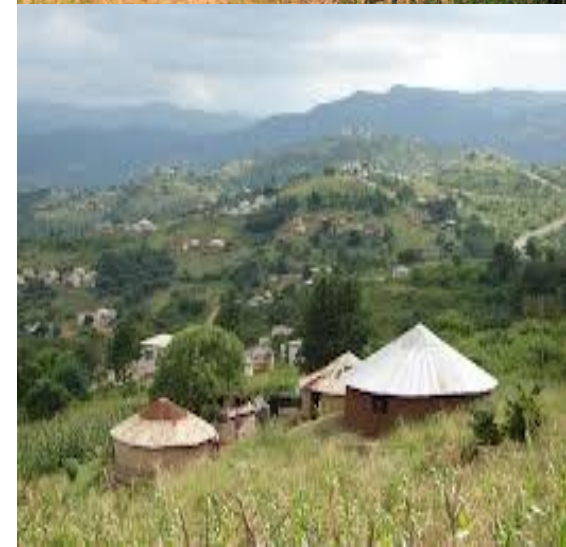
discuss the assessment criteria of the terrestrial Plant and Animal Species Protocols, as there are separate Species Protocols with associated Guidelines;

discuss the assessment and reporting criteria of the other DFFE protocols, other than for Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols;

discuss any aspect of the Screening Tool other than the data layers related to the Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols;

amend the contents of the existing gazetted Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols;

negate existing provincial guidelines.



Legal framework

- **Regulation 16(1)(b)(v)** of the **EIA Regulations** provides that an applicant for an EA is required to submit a report generated by the screening tool as part of its application.
- **Sections 24(5)(a) and 24(5)(h)** of **NEMA** authorise the Minister to make regulations laying down the procedure to be followed in EA applications and to prescribe minimum criteria for report content for different types of reports prepared and submitted as part of the EA application process.
 - **Protocols** for the various environmental themes were **gazetted** on the **20th March 2020** and **30th October 2020**.
- The screening tool and the protocols have the force of regulations made in terms of NEMA.
 - The content of this guideline represents the most efficient and effective manner in which the Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity Protocols can be complied with.

BIODIVERSITY

PROTOCOL FOR THE SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY

1. SCOPE

This protocol provides the criteria for the assessment and reporting of impacts on terrestrial biodiversity for activities requiring environmental authorisation. This protocol replaces the requirements of Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations¹⁵.

The assessment and minimum reporting requirements of this protocol are associated with a level of environmental sensitivity identified by the national web based environmental screening tool (screening tool). The requirements for terrestrial biodiversity are for landscapes or sites which support various levels of biodiversity. The relevant terrestrial biodiversity data in the screening tool has been provided by the South African National Biodiversity Institute¹⁶.

The screening tool can be accessed at: <https://screening.environment.gov.za/screeningtool>

2. SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

Prior to commencing with a specialist assessment, the current use of the land and the potential environmental sensitivity of the site under consideration as identified by the screening tool must be confirmed by undertaking a **site sensitivity verification**.

¹⁵ The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, as promulgated in terms of Section 24 (5) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998).
¹⁶ The biodiversity dataset has been provided by the South African Biodiversity Institute. For details of the dataset, click on the options button to the right of the various biodiversity layers on the screening tool, in the Aquatic Biodiversity theme, to view the metadata.

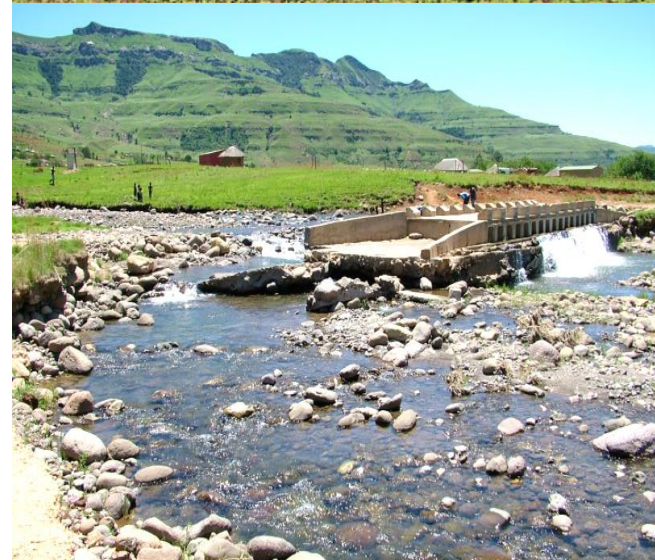
3. SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING OF IMPACTS ON TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY

1. General Information	
1.1. An applicant intending to undertake an activity identified in the scope of this protocol, on a site identified on the screening tool as being of "very high sensitivity" for terrestrial biodiversity, must submit a Terrestrial Biodiversity Specialist Assessment .	
1.2. An applicant intending to undertake an activity identified in the scope of this protocol on a site identified by the screening tool as being "low sensitivity" for terrestrial biodiversity, must submit a Terrestrial Biodiversity Compliance Statement .	
1.3. However, where the information gathered from the site sensitivity verification differs from the designation of "very high" terrestrial biodiversity sensitivity on the screening tool and it is found to be of a "low" sensitivity, then a Terrestrial Biodiversity Compliance Statement must be submitted.	
1.4. Similarly, where the information gathered from the site sensitivity verification differs from that identified as having a "low" terrestrial biodiversity sensitivity on the screening tool, a Terrestrial Biodiversity Specialist Assessment must be conducted.	
1.5. If any part of the proposed development footprint falls within an area of "very high" sensitivity, the assessment and reporting requirements prescribed for the "very high" sensitivity apply to the entire footprint, excluding linear activities for which impacts on terrestrial biodiversity are temporary and the land in the opinion of the terrestrial biodiversity specialist, based on the mitigation and remedial measures, can be returned to the current state within two years of the completion of the construction phase, in which case a compliance statement applies. Development footprint in the context of this protocol means the area on which the proposed development will take place and includes any area that will be disturbed.	
VERY HIGH SENSITIVITY RATING - for terrestrial biodiversity features.	2. Terrestrial Biodiversity Specialist Assessment
	2.1. The assessment must be prepared by a specialist registered with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professionals (SACNASP) with expertise in the field of terrestrial biodiversity.
	2.2. The assessment must be undertaken on the preferred site and within the proposed development footprint.

Data layers in the Screening Tool

- The **national web-based environmental screening tool (ST)** supports the **pre-screening** for **environmental sensitivities** in the landscape before an application for **EA** is lodged.
- The **ST report** will indicate the **environmental sensitivities** that intersect with the proposed development footprint as well as the **relevant protocols** that the applicant would need to adhere to.
- Each of the **themes** in the ST consists of theme-specific spatial datasets which have been assigned a **sensitivity level**.
- **Sensitivity** in this context refers to the **likelihood of negative impacts** on features in the landscape from activities and infrastructure generated by a proposed development.

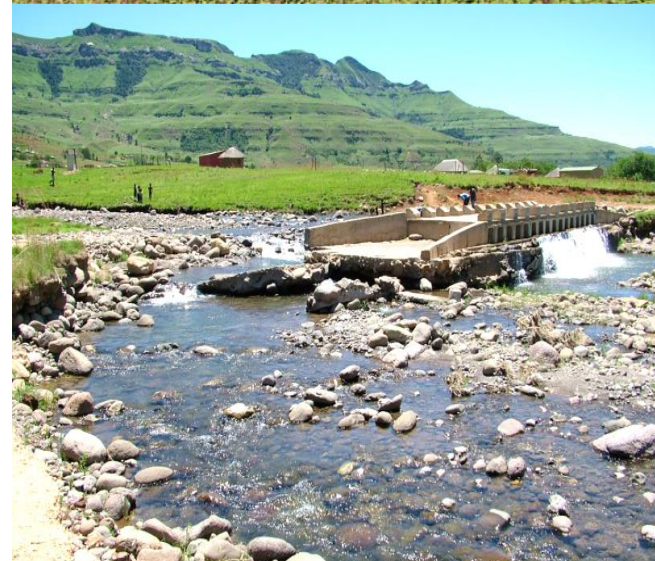


Data layers in the Screening Tool

- A two-tiered sensitivity rating system has been applied to the Aquatic and Terrestrial Biodiversity themes - “very high” and “low” sensitivity.

Sensitivity rating	Description of sensitivity rating
Very High	All Biodiversity Priority Areas (BPAs) and other sensitive features
Low	All other areas (including natural and unnatural)

- The data layers consist of information from the latest National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA, 2018)
- In addition, some provincial data was used and national data sets created for purposes other than the NBA (e.g. SWSAs, protected area expansion footprints, etc.)
- Updates of data will happen quarterly, or as required



Data layers in the screening tool contd...

Terrestrial BPAs

Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)

Ecological Support Areas (ESAs)

Protected Areas (PAs)

Priority Areas for Protected Areas Expansion (including national park expansion footprints)

Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) (terrestrial)

Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (FEPA) Catchments (terrestrial)

Threatened terrestrial ecosystems

Other sensitive features

Indigenous Forests

Aquatic BPAs (inland aquatic ecosystems only including estuaries, rivers, and wetlands)

Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs)

Ecological Support Areas (ESAs)

Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) (aquatic and riparian)

Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (FEPA) Catchments (aquatic and riparian)

Other sensitive features

Rivers

Wetlands

Estuaries

Biodiversity Priority Areas

- South Africa's Biodiversity Priority Areas (BPAs) are natural or semi-natural areas in the landscape that are important for conserving a representative sample of ecosystems and species, for maintaining ecological processes, or for the provision of ecosystem services.
- Specialists and developers to take note of the different BPAs have specific management objectives.
- When proposing projects which impact BPAs, **mitigation measures must be identified that will ensure that these management objectives are met.**



Biodiversity Priority Areas

