

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the report provides baseline information regarding the affected environment, as well as an overview of the surrounding land use activities. An overview of the associated environmental attributes of the site has been included to aid in the process of identifying project activities that may have potential impacts on the environment, and which may require further assessment in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) phase. Additionally, this information highlights potential constraints which the affected environment may place on the proposed development. In compliance with the requirements for a Scoping Report in terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), as contained in GN R326 Appendix 2.2 (1) (g) (iv), the following environmental attributes have been considered:

- Geographical Context: Site Locality and Surrounding Land-use
- Biological
- Physical
- Heritage and Cultural
- Socio-economic: Social and Economic

The baseline information presented in this chapter was sourced from the following available desktop resources:

- Plans
- Guidelines
- Spatial Tools and Mapping Resources
- Municipal Development Planning Frameworks and Instruments
- Relevant literature and Web-based Information

The respective environmental attributes have, amongst others, informed the identification of alternatives for the proposed development. The assessment of alternatives is contained in Chapter Five of this report. To further inform the description of the affected environment and refine the scope of the assessment, site visits took place on the 11 April 2017 and 30 August 2017. The information gathered from site observations was supplemented by preliminary specialist input. In addition, the description of the affected environment has been informed by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner's (EAPs) knowledge of the local area based on several previous environmental assessments of a similar nature, which have been undertaken in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM) and Sundays River Valley Municipality (SRVM), namely:

- New agricultural developments for Habata Boerdery on the following farms:
 - Landdrost Veeplaats, SRVM
 - Oliphantskop, NMBM
 - Portion 18 and 19 Logan Braes, NMBM
 - Portion 16 and 17 Logan Braes, NMBM
 - Falcon Ridge, SRVM
- New agricultural developments for San Miguel Fruits SA (Pty) Ltd:
 - Riverbend Citrus, SRVM
 - Intsomi Citrus, SRVM
- New agricultural development for Venter Boerdery on Hopefield Farm, SRVM
- New agricultural development for Kududu Trust on Portion 5 of Nooitgedacht, SRVM
- New agricultural development for Hermanus Potgieter Familie Trust on Swanepoels Kraal, SRVM
- New agricultural development for Luthando Farm on Portion 320 of Strathsomers Estate, SRVM

Subject to the outcome of the assessment process, specialist studies, technical input and consultation process, the proponent, Scheepersvlakte Farms (Pty) Ltd, intends to develop the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 (~852.12ha), referred to as Scheepers Vlakte Farm, SRVM, for the cultivation of annual crops (e.g. maize) and establishment of a variety of citrus. The area which will form part of this assessment process measures ~852ha. The Farm is currently zoned for agriculture and the area to be cultivated, including associated infrastructure, will be determined by the outcome of the various specialist assessments forming part of this Scoping and EIA process. Located within the boundary of the same property, is Portion 10 of Farm 98, within which a dam, owned by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) for water supply to the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), measuring ~31ha, is situated. Portion 10 of Farm 98 **does not** form part of this assessment process.

3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

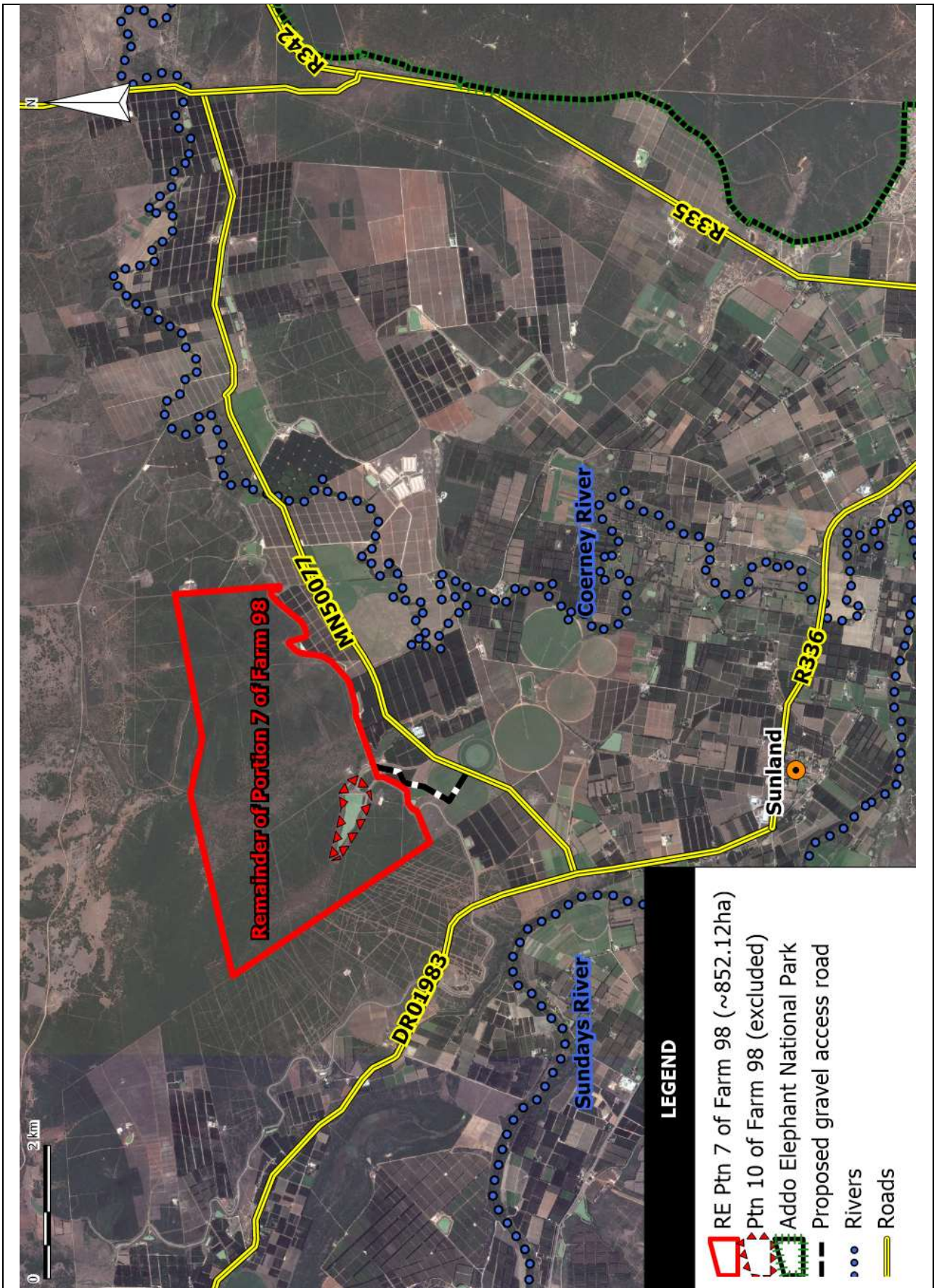
3.2.1 Site Locality and Overview

Scheepers Vlakte Farm is located ~6km north of Sunland, in the SRVM. The nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park is located ~7km east of the Farm (Map 3.1).

Access to the Farm is proposed from an existing gravel road on the southern boundary of the site. Internal roads of varying diameters will be required to facilitate the movement of tractor trailers for the collection of citrus. The cultivation area will also include laydown areas and irrigation infrastructure of varying diameters. The proponent intends to use existing buildings on the Farm. However, additional buildings will be required, including a pre-sort packhouse, logistical facilities and staff housing.

The proponent has been allocated 650ha of water rights by DWS (5 850 000m³ per annum) and water for the proposed development will be sourced from the LSRWUA canals. The planting plan and irrigation layout, inclusive of the proposed new dam/ s for irrigation water storage requirements, will be informed by a suitably qualified irrigation specialist, based on the outcome of the various specialist assessments to be undertaken and in consultation with the project proponent.

A detailed project description is provided in Chapter Two of this report.



Map 3.1: Locality map of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98.

3.2.2 Surrounding Land-use

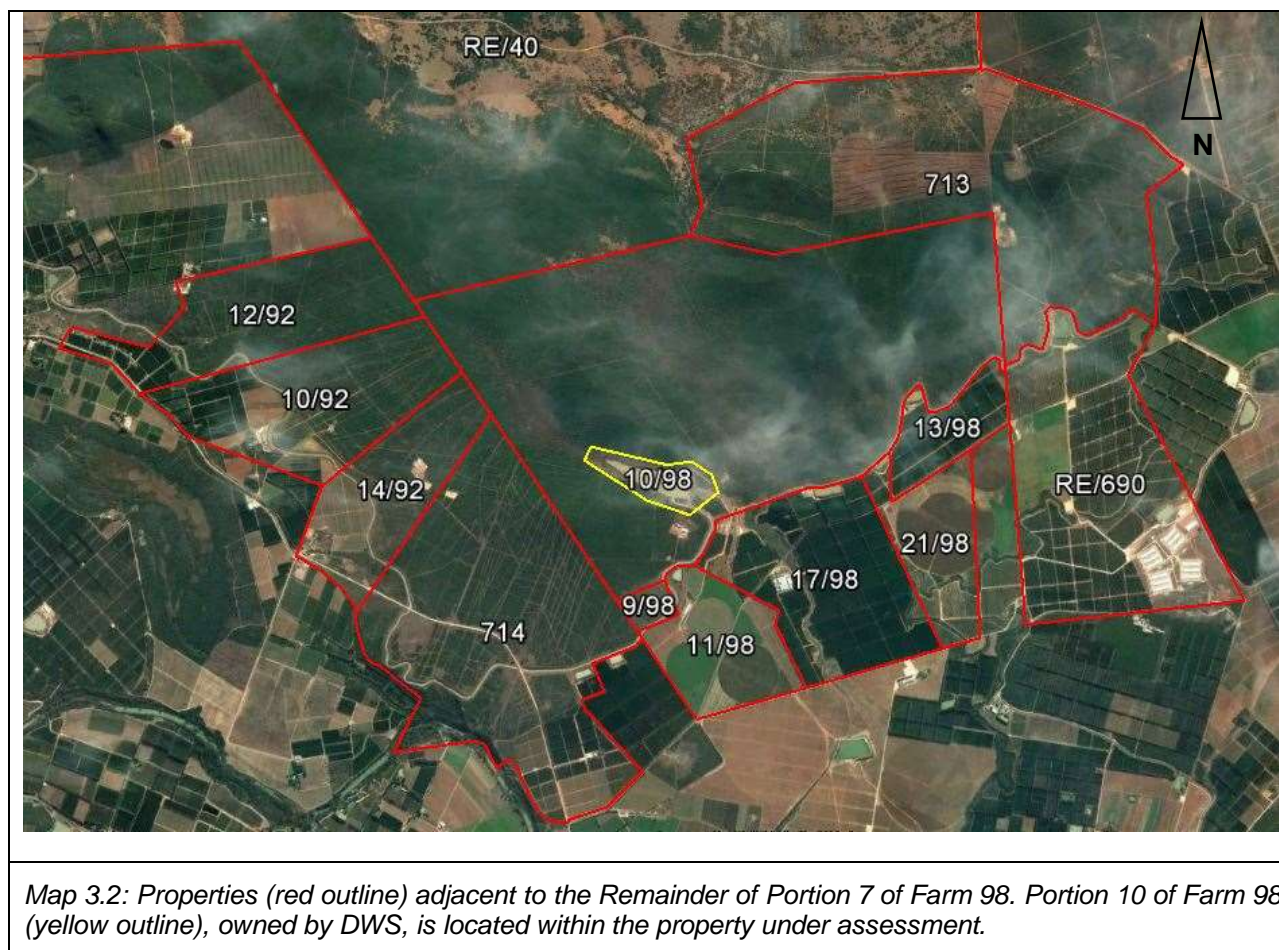
Scheepers Vlakte Farm is adjacent to 12 properties (See Map 3.2), while one property, Portion 10 of Farm 98, is located within the boundaries of Scheepers Vlakte Farm. These properties, with their associated activities, are listed in Table 3.1 below.

Scheepers Vlakte Farm is located in a predominantly agricultural area, as indicated by the surrounding land uses adjacent to the Farm. Although the vegetation is largely untransformed directly adjacent to the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the farm, the surrounding farms are currently engaged in commercial agricultural activities including citrus orchards, commercial chicken production and livestock/ game grazing. A portion of the farm adjacent to the eastern boundary of the area under assessment has been zoned to Open Space III. The southern boundary of the farm abuts existing agricultural lands including citrus orchards and cultivated fields (e.g. lucerne). The northern boundary of the Farm is adjacent to the Enon Mission Station communal land, showing signs of livestock grazing.

Based on the surrounding land uses mentioned above, the proposed agricultural development on Scheepers Vlakte Farm is not likely to cause a significant change in character within the surrounding landscape, as the surrounding area is currently predominantly agricultural in nature. As a result, the focus of this environmental assessment process will be on the potential of the Farm for the cultivation of annual crops (e.g. maize) and the establishment of a variety of citrus. Additionally, this assessment will focus on areas for conservation, guided by technical and biophysical constraints as to be informed through relevant specialist studies. Finally, the assessment must consider the proximity of the agricultural development to the Addo Elephant National Park (See Map 3.1) and potential impacts thereon, due to the triggering of related listed activities in the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), as well as other areas set aside for conservation purposes. See Chapter Four for the full list of activities triggered.

Table 3.1: Activities on the land adjacent to the area under assessment.

Farm Number	Activities	Boundary
RE/40	Enon Mission Station communal grazing land	North
713	Game and livestock grazing, as well as citrus orchards and Open Space III.	North and East
RE/690	Livestock grazing, commercial chicken production and citrus orchards.	East
13/98	Citrus orchards	South
21/98	Livestock grazing and citrus orchards.	South
17/98	Citrus orchards	South
11/98	Livestock grazing and citrus orchards.	South
9/98	Rangeland	South
714	Citrus orchards and rangeland.	West
14/92	Citrus orchards and rangeland.	West
10/92	Citrus orchards and rangeland.	West
12/92	Citrus orchards and rangeland.	West
10/98	Dept. of Water and Sanitation water supply dam	Within boundary of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98



3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES

3.3.1 Biological

The vegetation expected to occur at the site is noted in a number of conservation planning frameworks relevant to the area. The resolution of the planning framework mapping is limited to a landscape level and the vegetation types and distribution on individual farms is subject to confirmation by a botanical specialist. The section below outlines the findings of the desktop review of the relevant National and Regional conservation planning frameworks and mapping resources applicable to the area.

3.3.1.1 Aquatic Vegetation

National Context

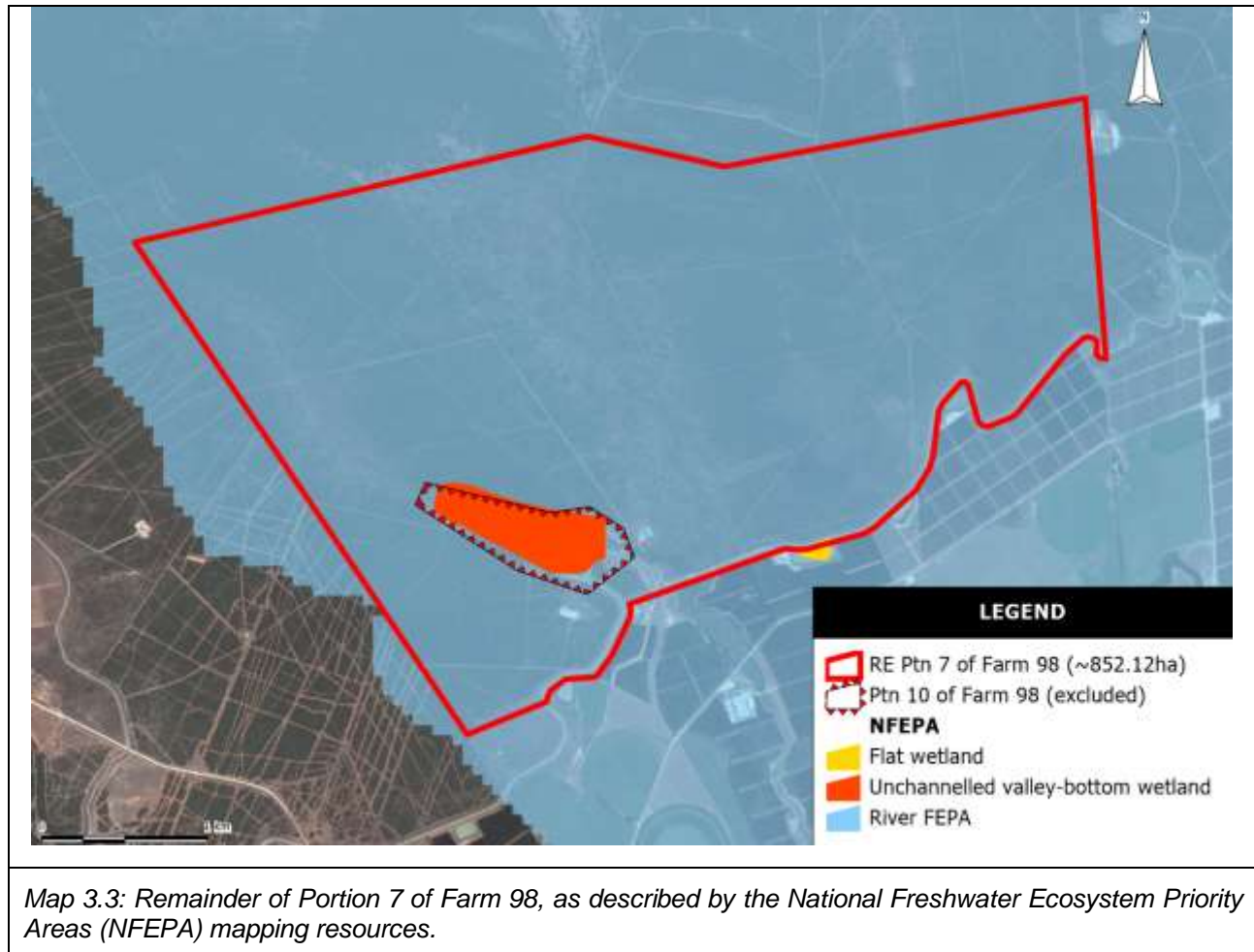
- National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas (NFEPA; Net et al. 2011):

The NFEPA project is a systematic biodiversity planning framework which aims to identify FEPAs to meet national biodiversity goals for freshwater ecosystems, within the context of equitable socio-economic development. Additionally, the project aims to enable the effective implementation measures to ensure the protection of FEPAs, which includes free-flowing rivers.

In terms of the NFEPA map, the majority of Scheepers Vlakte Farm falls within a River FEPA. Regarding River FEPAs, the whole sub-quaternary catchment is included, although FEPA status only applies to the actual river. In this instance, it applies to the Coerney River and its associated sub-quaternary catchment. For River FEPAs, the surrounding land and smaller stream network needs to be managed in a way that maintains the good condition of the river reach (Map 3.3).

A flat wetland, along the southern boundary of the Farm, as well as an unchannelled valley bottom wetland, located on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment, DWS dam), has been identified in terms of the NFEPA Wetlands map (Map 3.3).

The presence of potential and existing wetlands, rivers and drainage lines will have to be confirmed by an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Regional Context

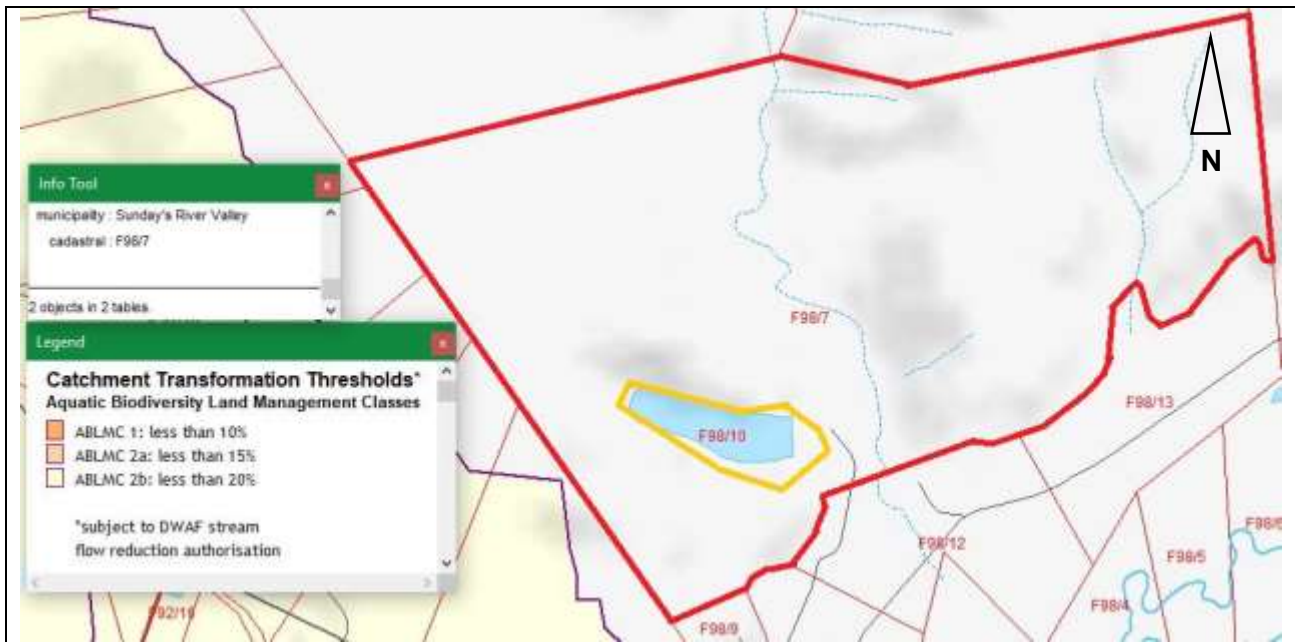
- Eastern Cape Biodiversity Conservation Plan (ECBCP; Berliner & Desmet 2007):

The ECBCP is a broad scale biodiversity plan, utilized to map particular Terrestrial or Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) for conservation in the Eastern Cape, as well as to assign appropriate land use categories and guidelines to the existing land.

It is important to note that, although the *Sundays River Valley Municipality Biodiversity Sector Plan* is a more recent document and has been mapped at a finer scale, when determining the listed activities applicable to the proposed development, the ECBCP, rather than the SRVM BSP is consulted, as stipulated by the competent authority.

Scheepers Vlakte Farm does not fall within an Aquatic CBA, in terms of the ECBCP mapping resources (Map 3.4).

The importance of the aquatic resources on the Farm, as well as the CBA status of the Farm, will have to be assessed by an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Map 3.4: Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 (red outline) in terms of the ECBCP Aquatic CBA mapping resources.

3.3.1.2 Terrestrial Vegetation

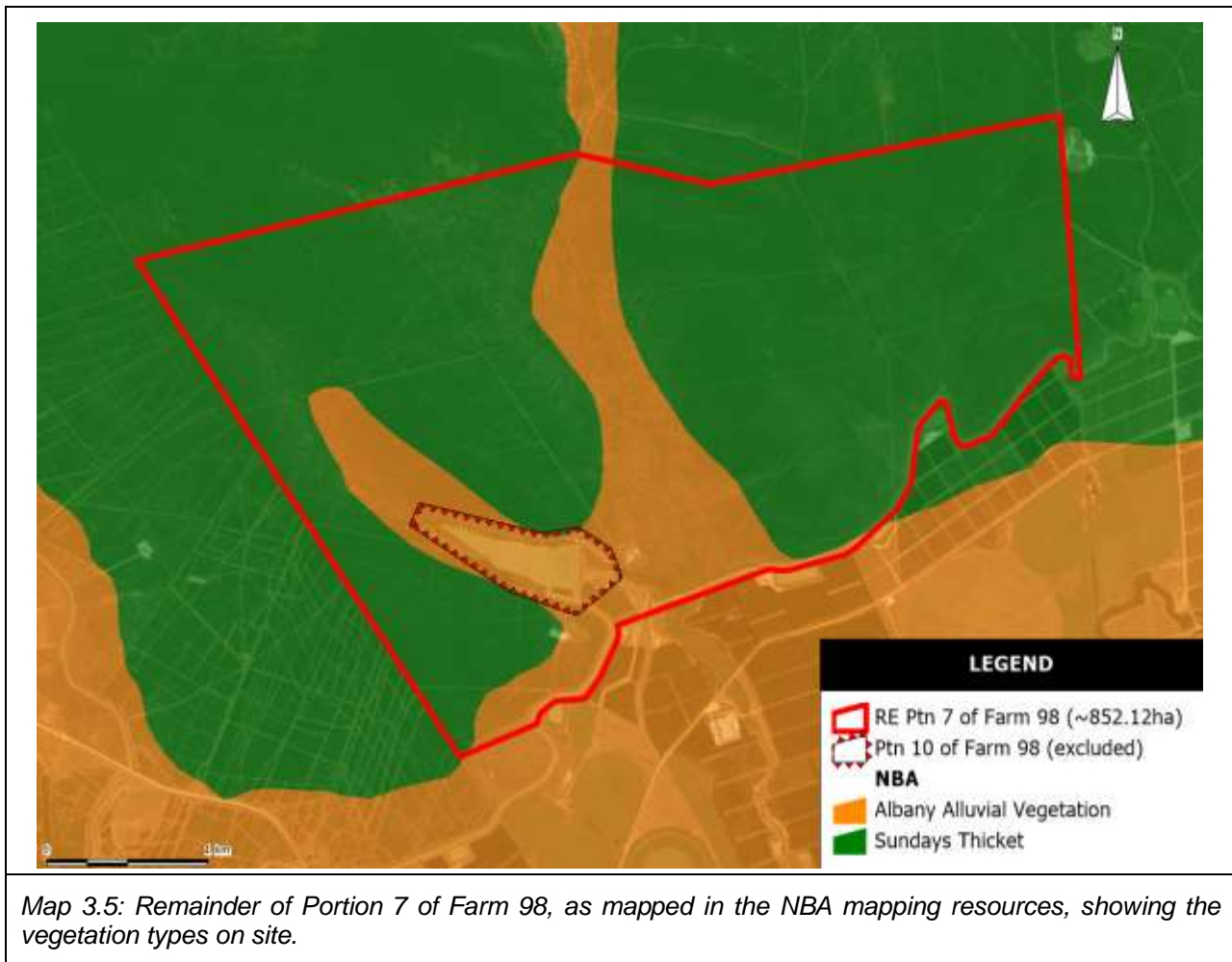
National Context

- National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA 2011):

The NBA aims to identify the threat status and protection levels for ecosystems, in order to map and classify various ecosystem types in South Africa.

The NBA shows the predominant vegetation types on the Farm as Albany Alluvial Vegetation and Sundays Thicket. Albany Alluvial Vegetation is largely restricted to the watercourse/ drainage line which bisects the Farm, as well as a south and southwestern portion, including Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment). Sundays Thicket has an Ecosystem Status of *Least Concern* and is listed as *Poorly Protected*. Albany Alluvial Vegetation has an Ecosystem Status of *Endangered* and is similarly listed as *Poorly Protected*. The respective conservation targets proposed for Sundays Thicket and Albany Alluvial Vegetation, in the NBA mapping resources, is 19% and 31% of the historical extent (Map 3.5).

The presence and extent of the vegetation types on the Farm will have to be determined by a botanical specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Regional Context

- Subtropical Thicket Ecosystem Programme (STEP; Pierce & Mader 2006):

The STEP mapping resources indicate that the vegetation on Scheepers Vlakte Farm is predominantly Sundays Spekboom Thicket and Sundays Doringveld. Sundays Doringveld is largely restricted to the watercourse/ drainage line which bisects the Farm, as well as a south and southwestern portion, including Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment). Sundays Spekboom Thicket, as well as Sundays Doringveld, are both listed as *Vulnerable*. The conservation target of the historical extent assigned in terms of STEP for Sundays Spekboom Thicket is 18% and 17% for Sundays Doringveld (Map 3.6).

According to the STEP mapping resources, Scheepers Vlakte Farm is situated within a Biodiversity Corridor (purple on Map 3.7). In terms of the STEP, it is advised that land in Biodiversity Corridors can only withstand minimal loss of natural area through disturbance and developments. It is worth noting that the STEP is superseded by the SRVM Biodiversity Sector Plan as it is more recent and at a finer scale.

The presence of the vegetation types on site, as well as their extent, will have to be confirmed by a botanical specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Map 3.6: Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98, as mapped in the STEP mapping resources, showing the vegetation types on site.



Map 3.7: Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 (red outline) falls within a Biodiversity Corridor (purple) and is situated adjacent to Vulnerable (yellow), as well as Impacted Areas (hatching), as identified in the STEP mapping resources.

- Eastern Cape Biodiversity Conservation Plan (ECBCP; Berliner & Desmet 2007):

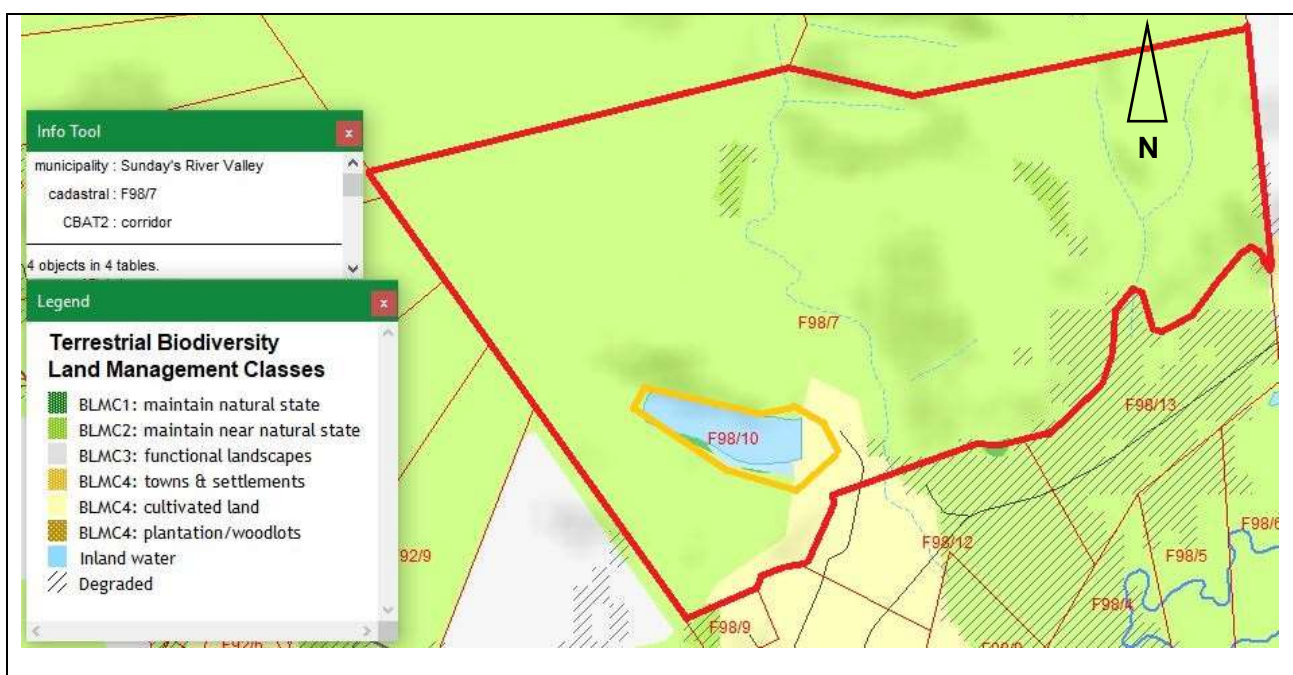
The ECBCP is a broad scale biodiversity plan, utilized to map particular Terrestrial or Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) for conservation in the Eastern Cape, as well as to assign appropriate land use categories and provide management guidelines to the existing land.

It is important to note that, although the *Sundays River Valley Municipality Biodiversity Sector Plan* is a more recent document and has been mapped at a finer scale, when determining the listed activities applicable to the proposed development, the ECBCP, rather than the SRVM BSP is consulted, as stipulated by the competent authority.

The ECBCP mapping resources indicates Scheepers Vlakte Farm as predominantly a Terrestrial Biodiversity Land Management Class 2 (BLMC2). A BLMC2 refers to a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) that must be maintained in a near natural state. The recommended land use objective for a BLMC2 would be to manage sustainable development practices, with minimum loss in ecosystem integrity and functioning. The acceptable transformation threshold for a BLMC2 is 0%-10%, per land parcel considered. The land uses recommended by the ECBCP for a BLMC2 includes conservation, game farming and communal livestock.

A southern section of the site is mapped as a Terrestrial Land Management Class 4 (BLMC4), which refers to cultivated land. The recommended land use objectives for a BLMC4 are to optimise sustainable agricultural production. The acceptable transformation threshold for a BLMC4 is 70%-100%, per land parcel considered. The land uses recommended by the ECBCP for a BLMC4 includes all land uses, without conditions. Scattered sections on the Farm are also shown as degraded/ transformed. The land use objective for degraded land is to manage sustainable development (Map 3.8).

The importance of the vegetation on the Farm in maintaining CBAs and Ecological Processes will have to be assessed by a botanical specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Map 3.8: Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 (red outline) in terms of the ECBCP Terrestrial CBA mapping resources.

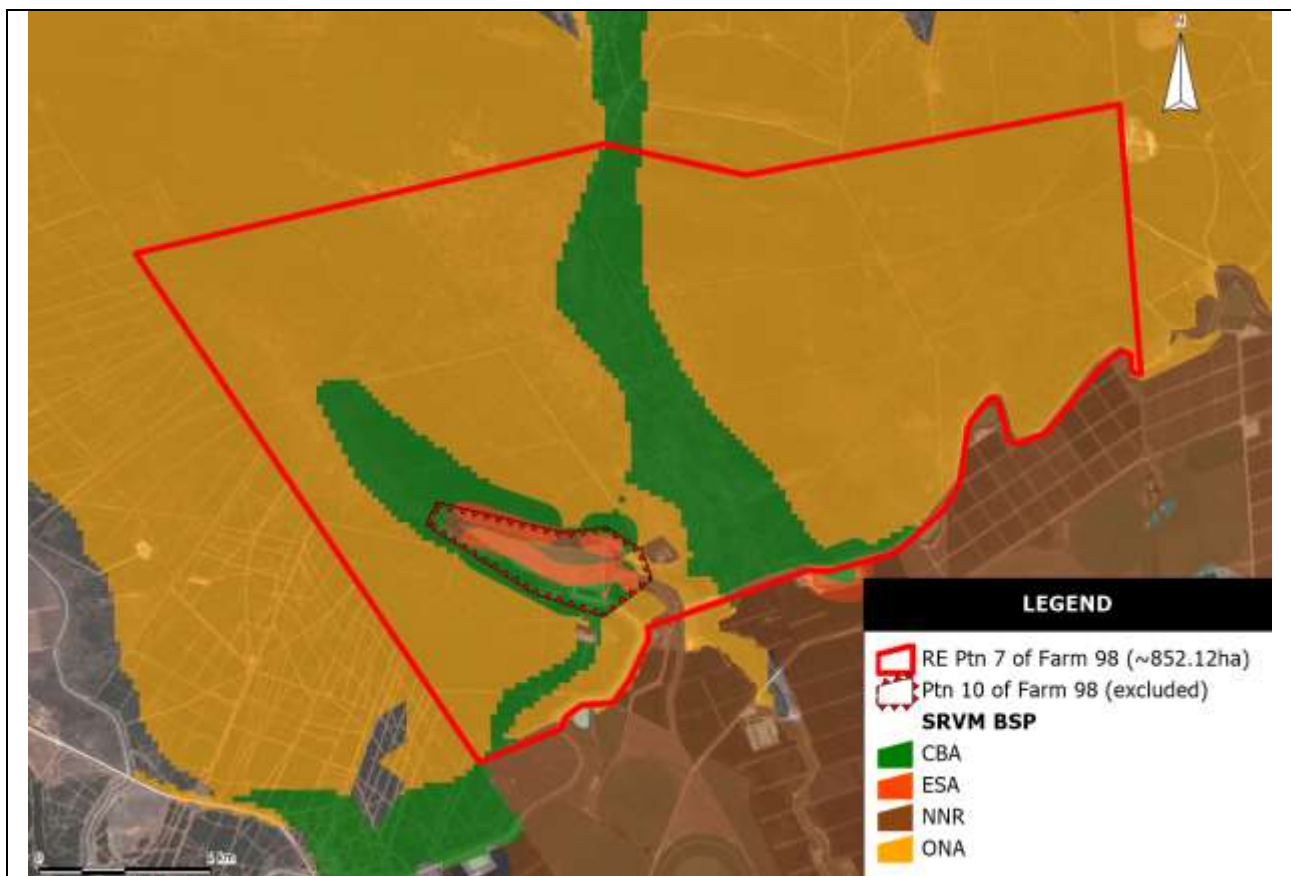
- Sundays River Valley Municipality Biodiversity Sector Plan (SRVM BSP; Vromans et al. 2012):

Of the nine local municipalities in the Sarah Baartman district Municipality, the Sundays River Valley Local Municipality is one of the four local municipalities for which Biodiversity Sector Plans have been developed. From a biodiversity perspective, these municipalities comprise 44.7% of South Africa's Albany Thicket Biome. Furthermore, approximately half of the Sundays River Valley Local Municipality occurs in the southwestern Albany-Pondoland-Maputoland Hotspot, a globally recognized hotspot (Mittermeier et al., 2004).

It is important to note that, although the *Sundays River Valley Municipality Biodiversity Sector Plan* is a more recent document and has been mapped at a finer scale, when determining the listed activities applicable to the proposed development, the ECBCP, rather than the SRVM BSP is consulted, as stipulated by the competent authority.

In terms of the SRVM BSP, the majority of the Farm is mapped as Other Natural Area (ONA), while portions of the Farm are mapped as Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA). CBA areas are largely restricted to the watercourse/ drainage line which bisects the Farm, as well as a south and southwestern portion, including Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment). A portion along the southern boundary of the Farm is mapped as No Natural Area Remaining (NNR; Map 3.9).

The importance of the vegetation and aquatic features on the Farm in maintaining CBAs, will have to be assessed by a botanical, as well as an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of this assessment.



Map 3.9: Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98, as mapped in the SRVM Biodiversity Sector Plan mapping resources.

3.3.1.3 Site Observations

Site visits were undertaken by the EAP on the 11 April 2017 and the 30 August 2017.

Vegetation on site and levels of degradation

The site visits indicated that the dominant vegetation type on Scheepers Vlakte Farm is a combination of natural to moderately degraded Sundays Thicket. The STEP and NBA mapping resources have mapped a section of the Farm as Albany Alluvial Vegetation/ Sundays Doringveld. On inspection of one of the drainage lines present on the Farm, vegetation of a riparian nature was identified, while the surrounding soils were notably wetter compared to other areas on the Farm (Photo 3.1). Mapping by the various biodiversity planning frameworks will have to be assessed by a botanical, as well as an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of the assessment.

Modified/ transformed areas are notable across the farm. Towards the southern boundary, modified areas are represented by existing farm structures (Photo 3.2), the DWS dam on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment; Photo 3.3), as well as several internal vehicle tracks. Further, portions of the Farm are heavily encroached by *Opuntia ficus indica*, which is an indication of a degraded vegetation state, possibly due to previous livestock grazing and browsing (Photo 3.4). Several grassy, open patches, devoid of Thicket vegetation are also visible across the Farm (Photo 3.5).

A wetland area was observed along the southern boundary of the Farm (Photo 3.6). The wetland appears to be artificial and as a result of a potential leak from either the DWS dam on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment), or an underground leak from the water pipeline which passes along the southern boundary of the Farm. These findings will have to be assessed by an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of the assessment.

These on-site findings supplement the information obtained from the various conservation and planning frameworks consulted above, and are subject to verification by a botanical, as well as an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of the assessment.

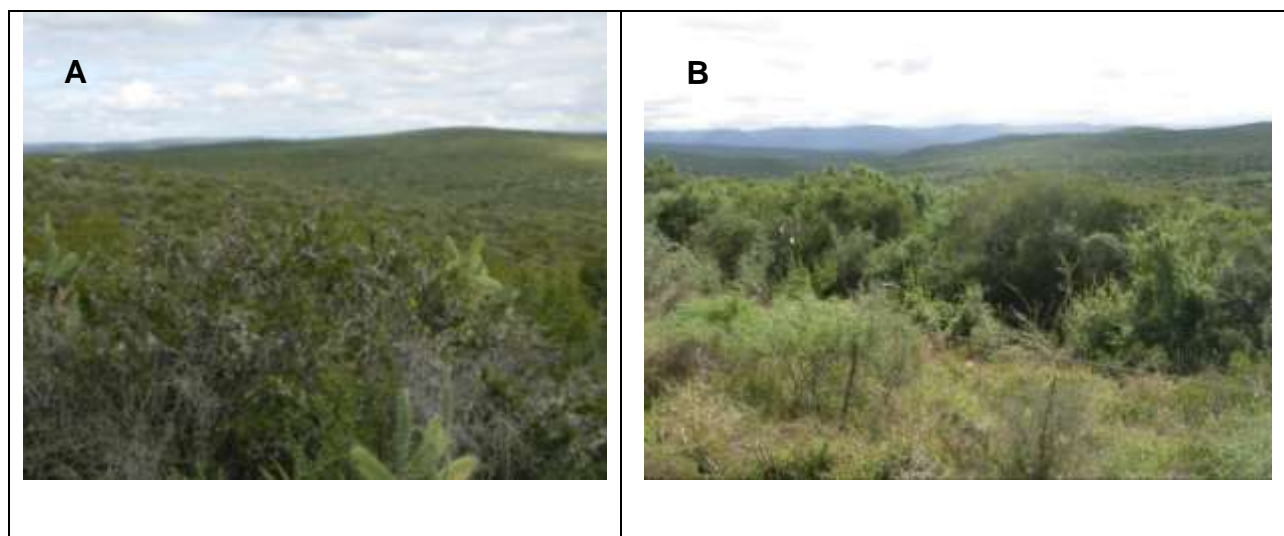




Photo 3.1: The dominant vegetation on the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 is a combination of natural to moderately degraded Sundays Thicket (A and B above). Some riparian vegetation was also identified within one of the drainage lines on the Farm (C).



Photo 3.2: Existing farm structures on the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98.



Photo 3.3: DWS dam on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment), located within the boundary of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98.



*Photo 3.4: Sections of the vegetation on the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 are heavily encroached by *Opuntia ficus indica* (Prickly Pear), which is an indication of a degraded vegetation state, possibly due to previous livestock grazing and browsing, as suggested by the water trough.*



Photo 3.5: Grassy, open patches on the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98.



Photo 3.6: Wetland area adjacent to the southern boundary of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98. The wetland possibly results from a potential leak in the DWS dam on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment), or from a leak in a water pipeline with runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the Farm (pictured right).

Concluding Remarks

The findings and recommendations of the conservation planning frameworks utilised for the area will have to be confirmed by a botanical, as well as an aquatic specialist, during the EIA phase of the assessment. If necessary, suitable recommendations (e.g. aquatic buffers and biodiversity target areas) should be made for the incorporation of the requirements of the relevant conservation planning frameworks in the development.

3.3.1.4 Fauna

A formal faunal investigation did not take place during the site visits on the 11 April 2017 and the 30 August 2017. In addition, no large fauna were observed on the farm during the site visit. However, it is anticipated that the vegetation on the site provides habitat to several small to medium mammal, reptilian and amphibian species. The site is likely also frequented by a variety of avifaunal species. The Addo Flightless Dung Beetle (*Circellium bacchus*) which is endemic to the region is anticipated to occur on the site.

The Ecological Specialist Assessment that will form part of the EIA phase of the assessment should consider the potential occurrence of Rare and Endangered fauna on the site, within the context of the type and extent of faunal habitat on the site.

3.3.2 Physical

3.3.2.1 Climate

The Sundays River Valley is characterised by harsh climate conditions, with summer temperatures rising in excess of 40°C. The monthly distribution of average daily maximum temperatures ranges from 21.9°C (July) to 29.2°C during summer (February). The region is the coldest during July, with average night time temperatures of 5.2°C.

Rainfall for the area is overall low, between 250 - 500mm annually, and spread throughout the year. Sunland, the closest town to the Scheepers Vlakke Farm, receives ~315mm of rain per year. Lowest rainfall occurs during the winter, specifically in July (13mm), and the highest rainfall during autumn, particularly in March (44mm).

3.3.2.2 Geohydrology and Surface Water

The preliminary site visit and review of the relevant aerial imagery, as well as the NFEPA planning framework for the area under assessment, have assisted in the identification of aquatic resources on Scheepers Vlakte Farm. A single flat wetland, located outside the southern boundary of the Farm, as well as an unchannelled valley-bottom wetland, located on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment) within the boundary of the Farm, was identified using the NFEPA mapping resources (Map 3.3). In addition, a non-perennial drainage line / watercourse (mapped by the 1:50 000 topographical data) appears to have historically run through the middle of the site (Map 3.4). However, no water was observed in the drainage line during the site visit. A wetland area was observed adjacent to the southern boundary of the Farm (Photo 3.6). However, the wetland appears to be artificial and as a result of a potential leak from either the DWS dam on Portion 10 of Farm 98 (excluded from this assessment), or an underground leak from the water pipeline which passes adjacent to the southern boundary of the Farm.

The nature of these wetlands and watercourses (ie. natural or artificial) will have to be confirmed by an aquatic specialist during the EIA phase of the assessment.

3.3.2.3 Geology and Topography

Geology

In terms of the Fossil Sensitivity Map compiled by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (<http://www.sahra.org.za/map/palaeo> Accessed August 2017), Scheepers Vlakte Farm is mapped as having a 'very high' palaeontological significance (red in Map 3.10).

A paleontological specialist will have to determine the likelihood of the occurrence of substantial fossil deposits on the Farm, as well as the potential impacts of the proposed development on such deposits, during the EIA phase of this assessment.

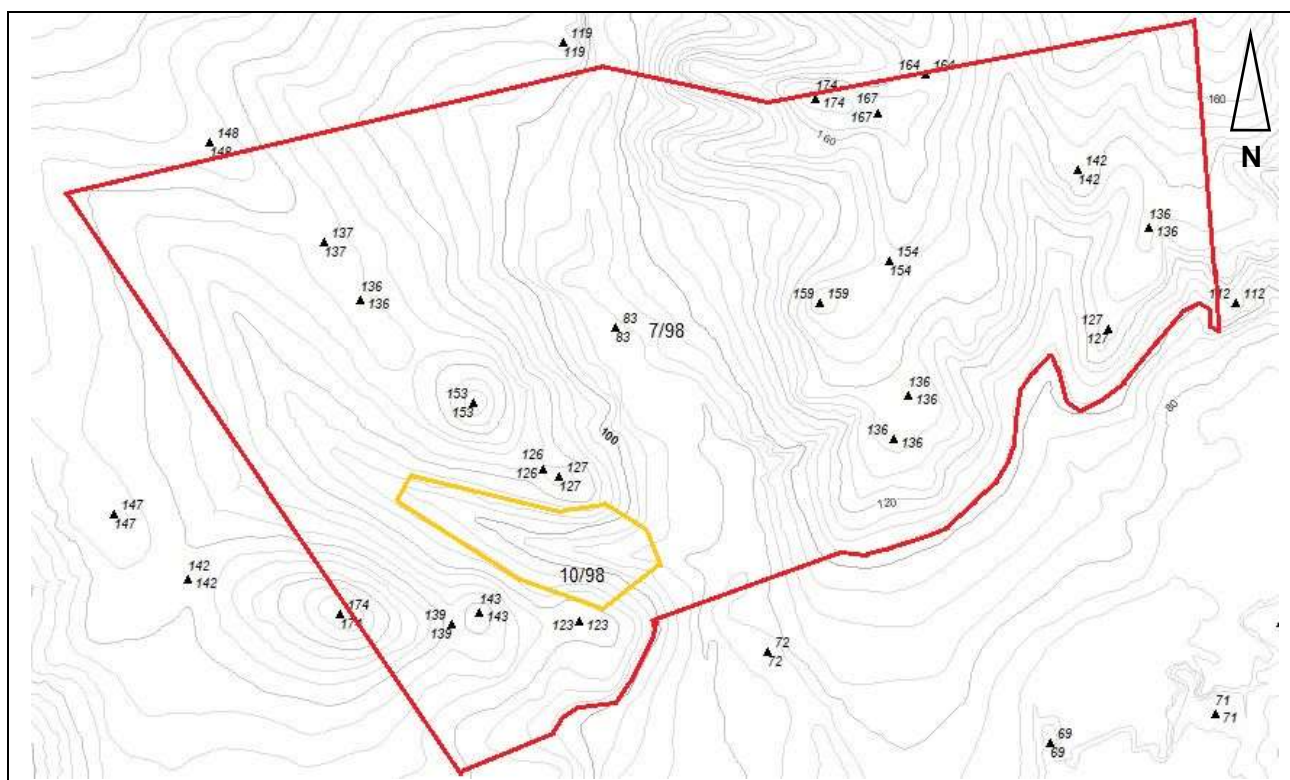


Map 3.10: Fossil Sensitivity of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98, as given by the SAHRA mapping software.

Colour	Sensitivity	Required Action
RED/PINK	VERY HIGH	field assessment and protocol for finds is required
ORANGE/YELLOW	HIGH	desktop study is required and based on the outcome of the desktop study, a field assessment is likely
GREEN	MODERATE	desktop study is required
BLUE	LOW	no palaeontological studies are required however a protocol for finds is required
GREY	INSIGNIFICANT/ZERO	no palaeontological studies are required
WHITE/CLEAR	UNKNOWN	these areas will require a minimum of a desktop study. As more information comes to light, SAHRA will continue to populate the map.

Topography

The Farm is incised by two low lying valleys that gently slope up towards the higher lying areas. The highest points are 174m whereas the lowest elevation is 83m above mean sea level. The most prominent valley area is situated approximately in the centre of the property, which is indicated as a non-perennial drainage area (by the 1:50 000 topographical data), with the land gently sloping southwards towards the Coerney River (Map 3.11).



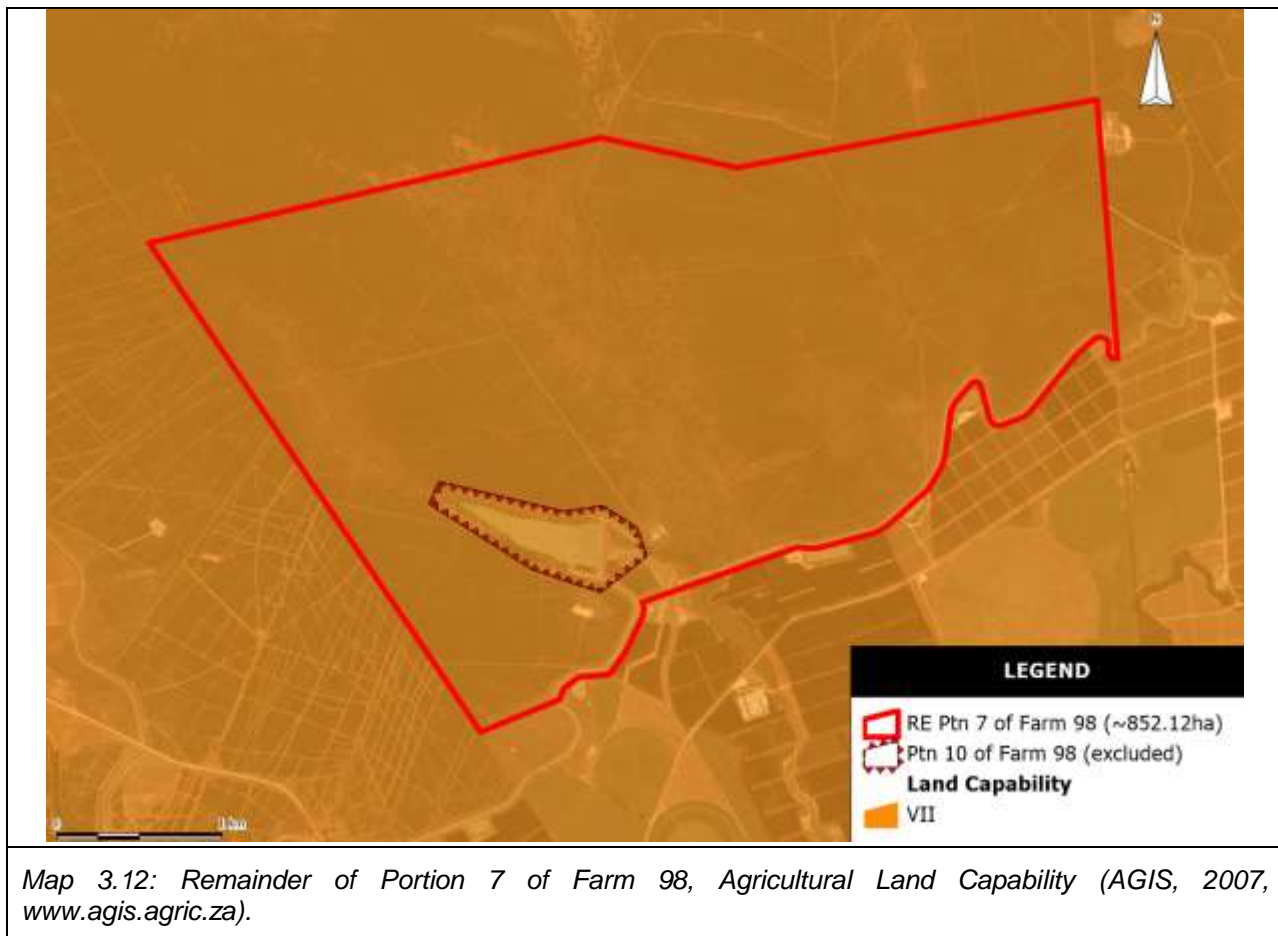
Map 3.11: Contour map (5m contour intervals) showing topography of the Remainder of Portion 7 of Farm 98 (red outline).

3.3.2.4 Agricultural Potential

The Agricultural Geo-Referenced Information System (AGIS, accessed from www.agis.agric.za August 2017) mapping resources were used to obtain information on the Land Capability of Scheepers Vlakte Farm. The whole Farm falls into Land Capability Class VII (See Map 3.12). Land Capability Classification takes into consideration the terrain, soil conditions and climate in the area.

Land in Class VII has some limitations (based on desktop level data), with restrictions including, steep slopes, erosion and shallow soil.

Given that the Land Capability Mapping was done on a landscape scale the suitability of the soils for cultivation needs to be verified based on actual soil analysis. The EIA phase of the assessment will include a Soil Suitability Assessment, in order to assess the agricultural potential of the soils on the Farm, as well as to assess slopes.



3.3.3 Heritage and Cultural

Certain cultural and heritage resources are protected under the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999. These may include structures older than 60 years; archaeological and palaeontological sites and materials, and meteorites; certain burial grounds and graves; declared heritage objects; and declared heritage sites.

No graves, burial site, or structures older than 60 years were noted on the Farm during the site visit. Preliminary specialist input suggests that the site is expected to be of low archaeological sensitivity and cultural significance. However, during the EIA phase of the assessment, these areas should be surveyed for the presence of graves or burial grounds, as well as other material which might be of archaeological importance, or which may have potential impacts on the development.

In addition, given the palaeontological sensitivity of the rock formations that are anticipated to occur on site, as previously discussed under Section 3.3.2.3, a palaeontological specialist will have to determine the potential impacts on palaeontological heritage resources on the Farm.

3.3.4 Socio-economic (Social and Economic)

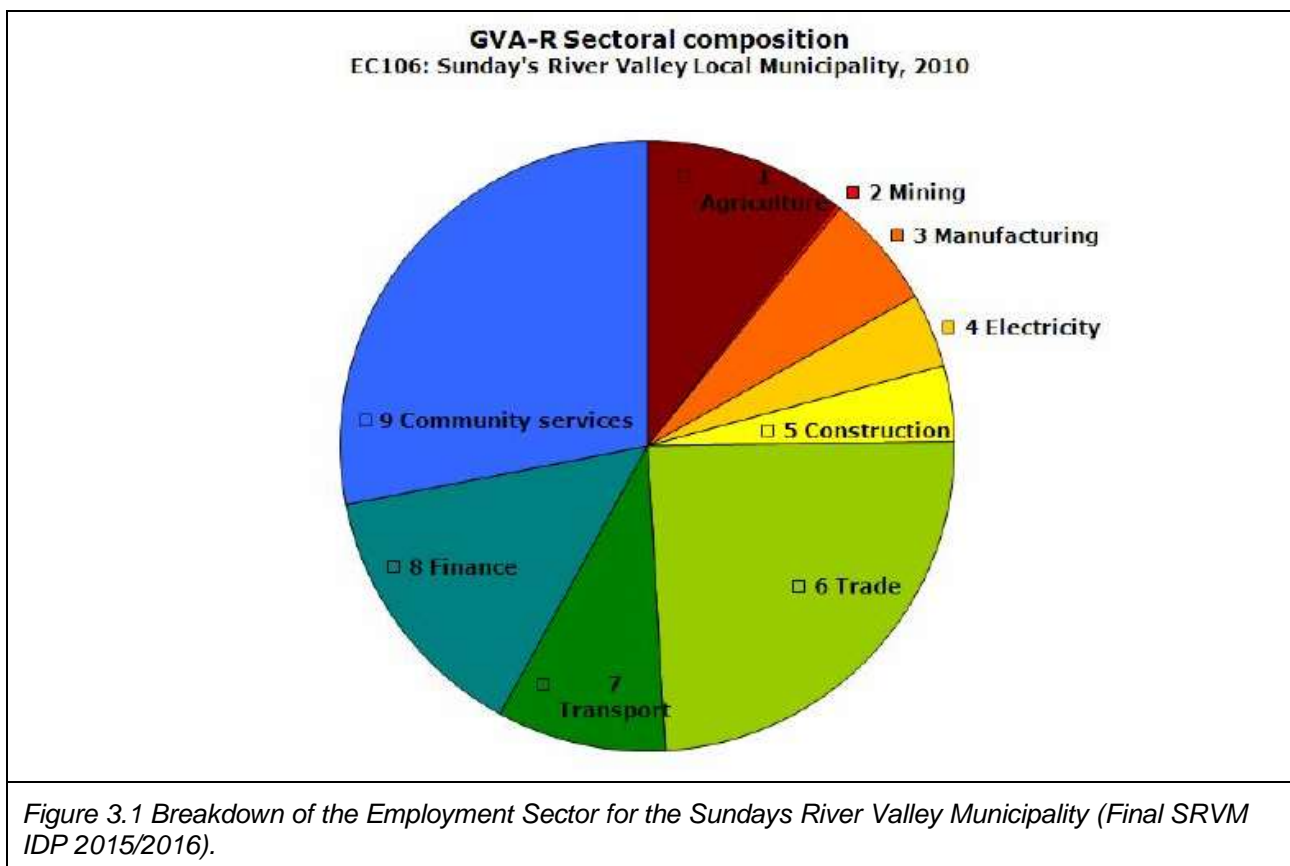
The nearest town to Scheepers Vlake Farm is Sunland, in the SRVM. However, local labour is sourced from both the SRVM, as well as the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), therefore, socio-economic data for both municipalities have been considered here.

The Final Integrated Development Plan (IDP 2015/2016) for the SRVM indicates that the current unemployment rate in the municipal area is as high as 38.54%. The Agricultural Sector, being one of the top five employment sectors in the SRVM, provides room for growth in terms of employment opportunities, as it currently represents ~11% of the employment for the SRVM area (Final SRVM IDP 2015/2016; See Figure 3.1).

The NMBM Integrated Development Plan 2011-2016 (14th Edition, 2015/2016 Financial Year) highlights some of the key socio-economic challenges in the NMBM and lists unemployment and poverty among them. Some of the reasons cited in the NMBM IDP (2015/2016) for the low economic growth experienced in the NMBM (3% per annum) are the high unemployment and dependency ratios (unemployment rate 36.3%). However, as with the rest of South Africa, the NMBM is undergoing a youth bulge, with ~35% of the population between the ages of 10-29 years. A positive outcome of such a youth bulge is demographic dividends, which, given gainful employment, can be used for poverty reduction and economic growth.

The nearby communities associated with the town Sunland in the SRVM, as well as the greater NMBM area, represent an important labour force in close proximity to the proposed agricultural development. It is anticipated that the proposed agricultural development will result in a number of new permanent and seasonal employment opportunities for the local community.

No specialist socio-economic assessment is proposed for the EIA phase of the assessment.



3.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key issues identified thus far and which require specialist assessment in the EIA phase of the assessment, are:

- Biophysical (Biological and Physical) site assessment to include:
 - Potential project related impacts on natural vegetation and faunal habitat on the Farm need to be considered.
 - The consideration of any potential impacts on the Addo Elephant National Park as well as other areas set aside for conservation purposes.
 - An aquatic impact assessment to identify and map wetlands and watercourses on the Farm.
 - Assign suitable buffers for aquatic resources identified on the Farm.
 - Provide comment on the potential impact of the proposed development on Aquatic and Terrestrial CBAs, as identified in the ECBCP.
 - The determination of suitable buffers associated with meeting biodiversity conservation targets specific to the vegetation types on the Farm, and in line with those targets indicated by the relevant planning frameworks for the area.
- It is recommended that a Desktop Palaeontological Impact Assessment be undertaken.
- It is recommended that a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment be undertaken.
- It is recommended that a Traffic Impact Assessment be undertaken.
- A Soil Suitability Assessment in the form of a Reconnaissance Soil Survey should be conducted to determine the suitability of the soil for the planting of annual crops (e.g. maize) and the establishment of a variety of citrus, before the layout is finalised. To include an analysis of the slopes on the site.