



Eco Route

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY
REGISTRATION NO. 1998/031976/23

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COMMENTS AND RESPONSE REPORT

Pre-Application Section 24G EIA PROCESS

THE RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITIES IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) (“NEMA”): INDIGENOUS VEGETATION CLEARANCE, EXPANSION AND CLEARANCE OF SEDIMENT AND LITTORAL VEGETATION FROM IN-STREAM DAMS ON PORTIONS 66 AND 9 OF THE FARM NO.232 REDFORD, BITOU MUNICIPALITY, WESTERN CAPE.

Comments Received from Interested and Affected Parties Regarding the Pre-Application NEMA Section 24G Application Form

DEA&DP Ref. No: 14/2/4/1/D1/13/0004/22

Responses have been provided in collaboration with Confluent Environmental.

COMMENTS	RESPONSE
STATE DEPARTMENTS	
Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning – Dorien Werth (15/02/2022)	
THE RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITIES: INDIGENOUS VEGETATION CLEARANCE, EXPANSION AND CLEARANCE OF	

SEDIMENT AND LITTORAL VEGETATION FROM IN-STREAM DAMS ON PORTION 66 AND 9 OF THE FARM NO.232, REDFORD, BITOU MUNICIPALITY.

1. The Section 24G pre-application Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") for the rectification of the unlawful clearance of indigenous vegetation and expansion of and clearance of sediment and littoral vegetation from in-stream dams on Portion 66 and 9 of the Farm No. 232, Redford, Bitou Municipality, refers.

2. The Directorate: Development Management (Region 3) of the Western Cape Government: Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning ("this Directorate") has reviewed the information contained within the draft S24G pre-application EIR and provides the following comment:

2.1. The development / activity

From the information provided in the Draft S24G pre-application EIR it is understood that the development consists of the clearance of sediment and littoral vegetation from the existing dams, including the enlargement of dams 1,2 and 4. In addition, the applicant has cleared 4.2 hectares of indigenous vegetation in order to plant almond trees without the required environmental authorisation, however a further 15.8 ha of almond trees will be planted in the future.

It is understood that the total storage capacity of 39 000 m³ is optimal with regards to storage of surface flows from the Redhaus catchments. Lower storage results in substantial deficits in irrigation requirements over a 50-year simulation period, while increasing dam volume does not yield a significant increase in assurance of supply that would warrant a larger dam volume. Supplementary irrigation from a borehole will be required, particularly during very dry periods when surface inflows will be insufficient to meet the irrigation demands. Three of the four dams have been enlarged by more than 100 square metres. All the dams are in-stream and occur within National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (NFEPA) wetland.

2.2. Applicable Listed Activities

- Based on the information provided to this Directorate more than 10 cubic metres of soil was removed from the four dams, wetlands and riparian area during the clearing of littoral vegetation, sediment and enlarging or three of

Agreed.

Agreed.

the four dams. It is noted that Activity 19 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 1 (GN No R.326 as amended 7 April 2017) is applicable.

- From relevant historic aerial imagery, it appears that the area where the unlawful clearance of indigenous vegetation commenced, may not have been cultivated in the 10-year period preceding the construction of the dam. The vegetation on site may therefore have conformed to the definition of indigenous vegetation, which is defined as “vegetation consisting of indigenous plant species occurring naturally in an area, regardless of the level of alien infestation and where the topsoil has not been lawfully disturbed during the preceding ten years”. It is noted that Activity 27 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 1 (GN No R.326 as amended 7 April 2017) is applicable.

- It is noted that activity 48 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 1 (GN No R.326 as amended 7 April 2017) is applicable as three (3) dams across Portions 66 and 9 Redford 232 have been enlarged by more than 100 square metres. The dams are all in-stream and occur within NFEPA wetlands.

- The three (3) dams on the development site that were expanded are all in-stream and occur within NFEPA wetlands. The development site is outside the urban edge and urban area and occurs within a sensitive area as per the Garden Route EMF. It is noted that Activity 23 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 3 (GN No R.324 as amended 7 April 2017).

- Since the dams are in-stream dams, the enlargement of these dams might have required written authorisation in terms of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No 36 of 1998). You are therefore urged to obtain confirmation and input from the Breede Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (BGCMA) for further guidance in this regard.

2.3. Environmental Management Programme

The Pre-application Section 24G report does not include an Environmental Management Programme (“EMPr”). The report must include an EMPr, which addresses the potential environmental impacts of the activity throughout the project life cycle including an assessment of the effectiveness of monitoring

Noted. From GIS mapping and specialist reports, it can be assumed that only small pockets of indigenous vegetation were present. Therefore, it is difficult to establish the exact footprint size of indigenous vegetation clearance on the property.

Agreed.

Agreed.

This has been undertaken. A Water Use License Application (WULA) has been submitted to BGCMA and the WULA process is underway (eWULA reference: WU 20050).

Noted. An EMPr will be included with the EIR during the Draft Phase.

and management arrangements after implementation (auditing). Please ensure that the Environmental Impact Report includes the EMPr when submitted for commenting and decision-making purposes.

2.4. Specialist Reports

Please be reminded that any specialist doing work related to any of the fields of practice listed in Schedule I of the Natural Scientific Professions Act, 2003 (Act 27 of 2003) ("SACNASP") Act must be registered with the SACNASP in any of the prescribed categories [Section 18] and further to this, only a person registered with the SACNASP may practise in a consulting capacity [Section 20]. The applicant/EAP must confirm that this requirement has been complied with and the declaration(s) must reflect compliance with the applicable Act. Furthermore, it is recommended that the specialist report(s) should contain all the information set out in Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (as amended).

2.5. Public Participation Process

It is noted that proof of the public participation process will be included in the final S24G EIR.

2.6. Water Use License Application

According to the Pre-application S24G EIR the following activities are applicable in terms of the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) Section 21:

- Section 21a) taking water from a water resource
- Section 21b) storing water
- Section c) impeding or diverting the flow of water in a watercourse
- Section i) altering the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse

Please note that in terms of One Environmental Management System National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), ("NEMA") the respective processes must be synchronized and managed in a cooperative governance manner and the application processes must be aligned to run concurrently. As such, it is advised that any reports and information with regard to the WULA be included in the S24G EIR.

3. Kindly quote the abovementioned reference number in any future correspondence in respect of this matter.

This has been complied with.

Agreed.

This has been undertaken. A WULA has been submitted to BGCMA for the water uses stipulated and the WULA process is underway (eWULA reference: WU 20050).

The public participation process for both the Section 24G and WULA were run simultaneously for 60 days (3/02/2022 – 5/04/2022), and all reports for the WULA will be included in the S24G EIR.

<p>4. This Directorate reserves the right to revise or withdraw initial comments or request further information from you based on any information received.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development – Lutendo Netshilema (13/04/2022)</p>	
<p>RE: COMMENTS ON 24G PRE-APPLICATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT & WATER USE LICENSE APPLICATION ON THE RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITIES IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) (“NEMA”); INDIGENOUS VEGETATION CLEARANCE, EXPANSION AND CLEARANCE OF SEDIMENT AND LITTORAL VEGETATION FROM IN-STREAM DAMS ON PORTIONS 66 AND 9 OF THE FARM NO.232 REDFORD, BITOU MUNICIPALITY, WESTERN CAPE.</p> <p>Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development; Directorate: Land and Soil Management administer and implement the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, (CARA) 43 of 1983). The Act is regarded as one of the principal Acts governing the protection of agricultural and other resources. The main aim of the Act is to control the utilization of the natural agricultural resources to ensure the conservation of soil, water and vegetation, as well as the combating of alien and invasive plants. According to Section 1 of the Act, conservation of natural agricultural resources includes the protection, restoration as well as the reclamation thereof.</p> <p>The objectives of CARA are to provide for the conservation of the natural agricultural resources through maintaining the production potential of the land, combating and prevention of erosion, preventing the weakening or destruction of the water resources, protecting the vegetation and combating weeds and invader plants.</p> <p>The activities description completed unlawful activities as indicated by the 24G application report. The development consisted of the clearance of sediment and littoral vegetation from existing dams, including the enlargement of dams 1,2 & 4. In addition, the applicant has plants 4.2 ha of Almond trees; however, a further 15.8 ha of almond trees will be planted in the future. Commencement: approximately October 2017</p> <p>The land owner is advised to observe and to follow the following requirements recommendations.</p>	<p>Noted. The applicant endeavours to consistently comply with the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, (CARA) 43 of 1983.</p> <p>The applicant is currently complying with the objectives of CARA as she has removed all alien invasive plants on portions 66 and 9, planted cover crops in areas currently not utilised as almond orchards in order to increase soil health and microbial health, rehabilitated areas of erosion, and planted multiple indigenous plant species around watercourses to reintroduce the natural habitat.</p> <p>There has been a correction to area proposed for future almond tree planting – the applicant proposes to plant a further 10 ha of almond trees on portion 66; however, this is dependent on the outcome of the S24G.</p>

- According to Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, (CARA) 43 OF 1983; The land owner must apply for a cultivation permit from this office for any piece of land he wants to cultivate if the land is virgin soil and has not been cultivated in the last 10 years as the definition in terms of the CARA.
- The land owner must apply for a cultivation permit from this office for any piece of land he wants to cultivate if the land is virgin soil and has not been cultivated in the last 10 years as the definition in terms of the CARA.
- Regulation 2(1) of the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act 43 of 1983), "Except on authority of a written permission by the executive officer, no land user shall cultivate any virgin soil: Provided that such authority shall not be required in respect of virgin land for which an approval has been granted in terms of section 4A of the Forest Act, 1972 (Act 68 of 1972).
- According to Regulation 4, sub-regulation 1 (a) "Every land user shall by means of as many of the following measures as are necessary in his situation, protect the cultivated land on his farm unit effectively against excessive soil loss as a result of erosion through the action of water". Measures that may be applicable is; - a suitable soil conservation work to be constructed and thereafter be maintained in order to divert run-off water from other land or to restrict the run-off speed of run-off water, - the land concerned or sites shall be cultivated in accordance with such methods or be laid out in such a manner that the run-off speed of run-off water is restricted and that the surface movement of soil particles be restricted, - to establishment permanent cover vegetation to prevent soil erosion, - suitable wind breaks shall be constructed or suitable vegetation to be established to serve as a wind break.
- According to Regulation 5, sub-regulation 1 (a) (j) "Every land user shall by means of as many of the following measures as are necessary in his situation, protect the cultivated land on his farm unit effectively against excessive soil loss as a result of erosion through the action of wind: The land concerned shall be cultivated in accordance with such method or be laid out in such manner that the surface movement of soil particles through the action of wind is restricted.
- According to regulation 4, 5 and 6 of the CARA every land user shall by means of as many as necessary follow measures in his situation, protect the land on his farm unit effectively against excessive soil loss as a result of erosion through the action of water and wind: Measures applicable may include continuous monitoring for signs of soil erosion, repairing, rehabilitation, establishment of indigenous vegetation on dam banks, to

A cultivation permit is currently in the process of being applied for. The applicant is in communication with Dawie De Villiers from the Elsberg office.

As stated above.

Portions 66 and 9 of farm Redford 232 were previously utilised for agricultural activities. A full description of the history of the property is outlined in the Draft S24G report.

The applicant has infilled drainage lines with rocks, planted cover crops, and planted indigenous plants within riparian areas. Further efforts for rehabilitation and erosion prevention are underway in accordance with the mitigation measures provided in the aquatic impact assessment.

- 1. The applicant cleaned and cleared the property of alien vegetation, removed skip loads of building rubble, plastic bottles, abandoned broken down furniture and carpets and other human garbage, and safely removed and disposed of 2 large skip loads of asbestos to a site in Port Elizabeth.**
- 2. Secondly, the applicant established the infrastructure on the properties which included the fencing, fire breaks, roads, dam maintenance, water infrastructure for domestic use, irrigation infrastructure, electricity and solar installation, home and building renovations and the demarcation of the properties into different land use zones. The demarcation of 3 different zones or land uses: residential, agricultural and indigenous with a targeted and differentiated management plan for each zone.**
- 3. Although, the applicant did not specifically identify a wetland zone and riparian buffer zone, the indigenous zone does incorporate the more sensitive catchment areas where reforestation and rehabilitation processes are already well underway. The applicant has expressed that her goal has always been to restore the indigenous habitat over time.**

construct a suitable soil conservation work and thereafter maintain it in order to divert run-off water from other land or restrict the run-off water if necessary.

- According to regulation 7 sub-regulation (1) "Subject to the provisions of the Water Act 1956 (Act 54 of 1956), and sub-regulation (2) of this regulation, no land user shall utilize the vegetation in vleis, marsh or water sponge or within the flood area of a water course or within 10 metres horizontally outside flood area in a manner that causes or may cause the deterioration of or damage to the natural agricultural resources". It is recommended that a **32m buffer** zone is kept in a natural condition.
- It is stated in the 24G application that alien species exist, such plants need to be controlled and removed annually (on going clearing programs) as they can cause damage to the surrounding natural vegetation. According to Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, (Act 43 of 1983), Regulation 15E method of controlling alien plants are as follows:
 - Uprooting; felling; cutting or burning
 - Treatment with a weed killer that is registered for use in connection with such plants in accordance with the directions for the use of such
 - Biological control carried out in accordance with the stipulations of the Agricultural Pests Act, (Act no.36 of 1983)

Combination of one or more methods mentioned above, and any action taken to control alien plants shall be extended with caution and in a manner that will cause least possible damage to the environment.

- Definition of cultivation in terms of the CARA: "in relation to land, means any act by means of which the topsoil is disturbed mechanically; and cultivate has a corresponding meaning."

Detailed rehabilitation plan including all mitigation plans must be included in EMP report, as the plan will be used as a guideline for ongoing monitoring of rehabilitation/mitigation plans. Such plan should be considered for decommissioning and post closure of the proposed development in ascertaining all mitigations conditions are compiled and adhered to.

The Department reserves the right to revise its initial comments and request further information from you based on any new or revised information received.

To date, the applicant has planted over 11 000 plants and trees in this zone, many of them on the list of plants recommended by the aquatic specialist for rehabilitation.

4. In an effort to minimise the negative impacts of erosion, the applicant had planted Kikuyu grass. However, the applicant has already begun removing Kikuyu grass in the identified wetland zones, where appropriate, to replace with more suitable indigenous vegetation as per the aquatic report.

5. In terms of the agricultural zone, the applicant has implemented a regenerative agricultural approach which includes the use of diverse cover crops in the work rows and on the orchard ridges. In addition, an integrated pest management plan has been put in place. The applicant conducts regular soil analysis including both the chemical composition of the soil as well as the soil microbial health.

6. As previously stated, the applicant had already established buffer zones around the riparian areas; however, based on the recommendation made by the aquatic specialist regarding 25m buffer zones, the established buffer zones require extending. The applicant is currently in the process of extending the buffer zones to comply with the specialist recommendation. 7. Vegetation was planted to mitigate against the erosion caused in the watercourses as per the aquatic specialist mitigation measures and recommendations.

Majority of the property has already been rehabilitated; therefore, the need for a rehabilitation plan would be irrelevant. The applicant is currently undertaking rehabilitation as per the recommendations provided in the aquatic impact assessment.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment: Forestry Western Cape – Melanie Koen (31/03/2022)

THE RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITIES IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) (“NEMA”): INDIGENOUS VEGETATION CLEARANCE, EXPANSION AND CLEARANCE OF SEDIMENT AND LITORAL VEGETATION FROM IN-STREAM DAMS ON PORTIONS 66 AND 9 OF THE FARM NO.232 REDFORD, BITOU MUNICIPALITY

1. Forestry is responsible for the implementation and the enforcement of the National Forest Act (NFA), Act 84 of 1998 as amended and the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, Act 101 of 1998 as amended (NVFFA).

Noted.

2. Section 15 of the National Forest Act (NFA) (Act No. 84 of 1998) as amended prohibits the cutting, disturbing, damaging or destroying of protected tree species without a licence. Section 7 of the NFA, provides for the prohibition of the destruction of indigenous trees in any natural forest without a license.

Noted.

3. According to the information provided only alien vegetation and old orchards were cleared, thus Forestry's mandate under the NFA is not affected. Forestry recommend that the disturbed/ cleared areas, along the watercourse, be rehabilitated with indigenous/ endemic forest tree species. That the areas along the watercourse with indigenous forest patches be kept intact.

Rehabilitation of the watercourse areas are currently being undertaken.

4. Forestry reserves the right to revise initial comment based on any additional information that may be received.

Noted. Thank you.

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Breede Gouritz Catchment Management Agency – R Mphahlele (30/03/2022)

RE: NEMA SECTION 24G FOR THE RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF INDIGENOUS VEGETATION CLEARANCE, EXPANSION AND CLEARANCE OF SEDIMENTS AND LITORAL VEGETATION FROM INSTREAM DAMS ON PORTION 4 AND 66 OF THE FARM 232 REDFORD, BITOU

Reference is made to the above mentioned subject matter submitted to this office for comments.

The following are BGCMA comments which should be adhered to:

<p>1. This office acknowledges and confirms that a Water Use Licence Application was lodged for the above mentioned water uses that commenced without a water use authorisation.</p> <p>2. The WULA process is still underway and its outcome will be communicated immediately after the assessment is completed.</p> <p>3. Further, the above illegal water uses were reported to the Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement (CME) unit to conduct further investigation for further investigation.</p> <p>4. In light of the above, all illegal water uses should be ceased or discontinued until such time that a licence is issued or approval to continue with water uses is approved in writing by CME.</p> <p>5. Please note that the onus remains with the property owner to adhere to the provisions of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998).</p> <p>This office reserves the right to amend and revise its comments as well as to request any further information should it be necessary to do so.</p>	<p>Regarding point 4, the instruction to cease illegal water use. At the time of writing (13 April) the applicant had received a notice of intention to issue a directive to cease all unlawful storage on the properties from the CME. The applicant is in the process of responding to this request, and correspondence between the CME unit is ongoing with the applicant.</p> <p>Please note the Portion numbers are incorrectly stated. They should be Portion 9 and Portion 66 / 232. Portion 66 is the recently consolidated version of Portion 4 and 1.</p>
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Plettenberg Bay Community Environment Forum – Julie Carlisle (08/02/2022)

<p>RE: DAMS ON PORTIONS 66 & 9 OF THE FARM 232, REDFORD</p> <p>Many thanks for the opportunity to comment on the above S24G process involving Portions 66 & 9 of 232, Redford.</p> <p>It is well known and, for many years, has been a very practical concern to those dependent on Whiskey Creek, that is has a very limited capacity, has been known to dry up and is an unreliable system. The system requires as much inflow as possible in order to feed those properties that are dependent on this river and who have existing water rights. Considering this, it would appear from the reports that not enough investigation or forethought was given to the requirements for 20 hectares of almond trees or the legalities of constructing dams.</p>	<p>No new dams were constructed by the present owner. All the dams were constructed by previous owners and existed prior to the properties been purchased. Two of the dams were constructed prior to 1998 (Dam 2 and Dam 4), and some storage is therefore considered legal as they are an Existing Lawful Use.</p> <p>The dams on these properties are on two tributaries of the Whiskey Creek. Both tributaries have existing neighbouring dams located downstream from them, which would collect and store water that is not stored upstream. Therefore, removal of the dams does not mean the water will end up in the Whiskey Creek. To ensure the ecological reserve or any Existing Lawful Uses that have been Validated and Verified are met and maintained in the Whiskey Creek, a broader catchment scale Reserve Determination would need to be undertaken and would require water</p>
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Considering this, and despite the descriptions in the report of clearing of rubble, waste, planting of indigenous plants in the buffer zones, etc by the owners, it remains unacceptable, in our opinion, that the dams remain, particularly as they are in wetland /instream areas that feed into Whiskey Creek. The precedent that would be set is not acceptable and the potential impacts of this damming on the health of the system and the needs of downstream water users is also unacceptable. At the very least, the dams that were in existence with change of ownership should be rehabilitated and the new dams decommissioned.

We therefore object to the existence of the new dams and recommend that the dams are decommissioned and restored as wetland areas, understandably not as per their historic state as the soils have already been impacted. Furthermore, the Forum believes that the cumulative impact of past and ongoing illegal and legal dams that are being developed in this catchment needs to be investigated.

Considering the above, we recommend that a water audit is done for the area and that an agricultural specialist is appointed to investigate best land use practices for the area. Possibly a Biodiversity and Agriculture (WWF-SA) programme could be initiated to the benefit of everyone in the area.

We reserve the right to participate in and comment on any further processes in this regard.

releases from all land-owners. The hydrological study (Confluent 2022) addresses this issue as follows: "Any implementation of the Reserve must focus on discharges from the lowest dam in the Whiskey Creek catchment to determine whether these flows are sufficient to meet the ecological flow requirements. Any shortfall in ecological flow requirements must be addressed through a catchment scale study that focusses on ensuring equitable releases from all farm dams located throughout the catchment area."

The landowner has an agreement with the neighbour downstream of Dam 4 which allows for the periodic release of water to ensure adequate levels of sustained in their dam. This demonstrates the willingness of the applicant to ensure downstream water users are not negatively impacted by their water use.

When dam walls were maintained and upgraded to prevent leakage on Dams 2 and 4, outlet valves were incorporated to allow water to trickle out and maintain wetland habitat downstream.

The hydrological study has addressed the water requirements for irrigation of 20 ha of almond trees and has determined that 60 000m³ of surface water supplemented by 24 000m³ of groundwater will be sufficient for irrigation of the orchards. This historical unauthorised construction of the dams, and more recent enlargement of 3 of the 4 dams is the subject of the Water Use License Application.

It must be noted that the landowner voluntarily undertook the process of rectification (Section 24 and WULA) immediately upon learning that the work undertaken to maintain and enlarge the dams required authorisation.

It is agreed that a water audit should be conducted for the area, as many unauthorised water uses are being undertaken. In terms of maintaining water quantities in the Whiskey Creek, the only way of ensuring that legitimate water users and the ecological reserve are met is to a) conduct a Validation and Verification of water use for all users in the catchment, and b) to commission a Reserve Determination study for the catchment. These studies are beyond the scope of a single applicant's WULA, but are recommended.

(04/04/2022)

Hello Janet,

I don't think my objection went through. Please forward this to your colleague responsible for collating public participation on Redhaus (S24G process for Portion 4 & 9 of the Farm Redford 232).

Allowing the plantation of 20ha of almonds which are not proven to be successfully grown in The Crags and will require 60,000 m³ of water per annum most of which will unlawfully come from two non-perennial watercourses is beyond belief.

No landowner should be allowed to divert the flow of a natural watercourse for their financial gain. Why should they be allowed to use water from a natural watercourse because it flows through their land? Filling a dam for recreation purposes is entirely different.

Has anyone done an environmental impact on what is happening to the flow of underground water now that so many people in the area are drilling boreholes either to meet the requirements of their bond and / or for use on their land?

20ha of almonds needs a huge amount of bees to pollinate the trees. Has anyone done an environmental assessment on what happens to local bees when scores of new hives are brought into the area? Has anyone thought through what those bees will feed on throughout the year?

I also would like to state that any reference to creating employment through these endeavours is not strictly above board either as most of these farms are employing unregistered Malawians either directly or via contractors.

I object to this application. I think the water courses should be returned to their natural state. Any water for trees should come from water run off. I believe the landowners should be fined for their actions and should be refrained from carrying on with their intended plan. Sadly too many people are buying property in the area, tearing the land up for financial gain with very little regard to the environmental impact (short and long term) and asking for forgiveness

While almonds are a relatively new crop for the area, the applicant has just completed their second harvest after successfully establishing a 4.2 ha almond orchard. The previous owner of PlettMacs (F. Oelschig) has also successfully established almond orchards in The Crags.

All the farm portions are zoned for agricultural use, and all crops require irrigation of some sort unless they are simply dryland grazing. The precision drip irrigation system installed by the landowner ensures that irrigation efficiency is maximised. By its very nature, commercial farming requires the diversion of flow from natural watercourses for financial gain. But simultaneously provides food and products upon which human society is dependent. Commercial agriculture also provides employment and helps maintain economic growth. Having said that, the impoundment of water in watercourses and irrigation of crops are regulated water uses in terms of the National Water Act for which the applicant is applying for a license. The WULA process provides a balanced approach to the regulation of water use, and the outcome of this process will determine whether the water use is sustainable or not.

In response to the comment about underground water. A geohydrological assessment was requested by the BGCMA for the WULA and was done by a qualified specialist to determine the sustainability and impacts of abstracting groundwater through the borehole for supplementing irrigation. The proposed abstraction was found to pose a 'negligible negative' impact to the groundwater environment. The assessment included a hydrocensus which assesses the impact of groundwater abstraction on neighbouring properties. The specialist stated that up to 25 000m³ could be applied for without detrimental effect. The application is for 24 000m³ and the borehole is metered ensuring abstraction can be monitored.

and not permission. This has to stop before even more irreversible damage is done to the environment.

On the question of the bees, the bees for pollination are brought in from outside the area only for the short pollination period and removed again afterwards. They have no requirement to feed in the Craggs throughout the year. This is a common agricultural practice throughout South Africa where crops require pollination. This practice can place local honeybees and other pollinators under pressure. However, in a relatively new but progressive approach, Redhaus Farm is one of the first nut orchards in the Western Cape to actively plant cover crops between rows which are aimed to provide a high value forage source of nectar and pollen to all pollinators within a few kilometres for a period of time both during, and long after the pollination hives have been removed. Together with the extensive areas of fynbos regeneration on the farm, this ensures a more sustainable approach to maintaining wild populations of bees. (Information supplied by Owen Williams, Honeychild Conservation Beekeeping Co.)

The statement about employment of unregistered Malawians either directly or via contractors is factually incorrect. 9 full time workers are employed at the farm. 8 of whom are South African and 1 is a Lesotho National married legally to a South African, who has a valid working visa. During the recent harvest period a further 8 temporary workers were employed, all South African Nationals living in Kurland. Furthermore, the landowner uses Terblanche Services for several farming services and have done so over the last 4 ½ years. All his workers are South African Nationals.

Please note that although the Section 24G process requires rectification of commencing with EIA Listed Activities prior to authorisation, the process does issue the proponent with an administrative fine. The amount of the fine is decided upon by DEA&DP once the necessary Environmental Impact Assessment is complete and the final documents are submitted. Notice of the administrative fine will be sent to all I&APs.