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GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES

NO. 1271

27 NOVEMBER 2020

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998
(ACT NO. 107 OF 1998)****CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 2 AND CHAPTER 5 OF THE INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PHASE 1 OF THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY AND PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONDITIONS OF EXCLUSION**

I, Barbara Dallas Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, hereby consult on the intention to amend Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 of the Integrated Environmental Management Plan for the Square Kilometre Array (Phase 1) and condition 4.1.1.2 contained in Government Notice No. 436 published in *Government Gazette* No. 42323 on 22 March 2019, as set out in the Schedule hereto.

The Integrated Environmental Management Plan was adopted as an environmental management instrument for the purposes of excluding the National Research Foundation, in terms of section 24(2)(e) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), from the requirement to obtain environmental authorisation for activities identified in terms of section 24(2)(a) and (b) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), which are associated with the development of phase 1 of the Square Kilometre Array, and which were described in Chapter 2 of the Integrated Environmental Management Plan, under specific conditions, as set out in Government Notice No. 436 published in *Government Gazette* No. 42323 on 22 March 2019.

Members of the public are invited to submit written comments or inputs until 08 January 2021, to the following address:

By post to: The Acting Director-General
Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
Attention: Dr Dee Fischer
Private Bag X447
PRETORIA
0001

By hand at: Reception, Environment House, 473 Steve Biko Road, Arcadia, 0083
By email: dfischer@environment.gov.za
Enquiries: Dr Dee Fischer at Tel: 012 399 8843

Comments or inputs received after the closing date may not be considered.


BARBARA DALLAS CREECY
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SCHEDULE

1. BACKGROUND

This Schedule applies to the amendment of Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 of the Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP) for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) (Phase 1) as well as the proposed amendment to the conditions of exclusion as contained in Government Notice No. 436 published in *Government Gazette* No. 42323 on 22 March 2019 (Exclusion Notice of 2019). The IEMP was adopted as an environmental management instrument and based on such adopted IEMP, the National Research Foundation was excluded, in terms of section 24(2)(e) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (the Act), from the requirement to obtain environmental authorisation for activities associated with SKA (Phase 1) as contemplated in Chapter 2: Part IV of the adopted IEMP. This adoption and exclusion was contained in the Exclusion Notice of 2019.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Chapter 2 of the adopted IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) contains the scope of the SKA (Phase 1) activities and Chapter 5 contains the environmental management programme. These two chapters are proposed to be revised to take into account the following:
 - 2.1.1. The findings of the most recent Radio Frequency Characterisation Reports undertaken at the Swartfontein, Losberg, Bergsig and Visserskloof farmsteads located within the core area of the SKA identified that the radio frequency risk levels were high and the current proposed construction camp configuration would pose a high risk of radio frequency interference which could compromise the reception of identified antenna;
 - 2.1.2. The desire of the National Research Foundation to increase the allocation of renewable energy into the energy mix of the SKA (Phase 1);
 - 2.1.3. The need to construct a boundary fence access road to allow for fence inspections and to enhance security;
 - 2.1.4. The addition of three farm portions to the core which increases the size of the site from 129750 to 135245 hectares; and
 - 2.1.5. To acknowledge the declaration of the site as the Meerkat National Park with SANPARKS as the appointed Land Management Authority.
- 2.2. The revised IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) is proposed to be called the IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) Revision 1 and is proposed to replace the IEMP as adopted in the Exclusion Notice of 2019 from the date of publication in the *Gazette*.

- 3. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CHAPTERS 2 AND 5 OF THE INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY (PHASE 1)**
- 3.1. In order to mitigate the high radio frequency interference levels in the core area of the SKA, it is proposed to amend the construction camp configuration as follows:
- 3.1.1. The Meys Dam construction camp is to be decommissioned immediately at the commencement of the construction phase;
- 3.1.2. The two new construction camps to be built at the Bergsig and Swartfontein farms and the expansion of the Losberg farm construction camp as identified in the IEMP adopted in the Exclusion Notice of 2019, are proposed not to proceed; and
- 3.1.3. The IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) Revision 1 proposes that the construction camp requirements are consolidated into one camp which is to be located at the existing Visserskloof farmstead which is also to house a photovoltaic solar park of 40 hectares in extent.
- 3.2. In order to support these proposed amendments and in compliance with condition 4.1.1.1 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019, the following additional environmental studies have been undertaken, which included field work on the full footprint of the SKA Phase I and specifically assessed the proposed footprint of the Visserskloof farmstead for the proposed construction activities:
- 3.2.1. an ecological and inland aquatic assessment;
- 3.2.2. a terrestrial assessment;
- 3.2.3. a bat assessment; and
- 3.2.4. a heritage walk through and assessment.
- 3.3. The specialist studies identified in section 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of this Schedule have been consolidated into an environmental report entitled “Gap Analysis and Ecology, Bats and Aquatic Site Assessments, Final Report, Version 2 dated 29 May 2020” and the heritage walk through and assessment identified in section 3.2.4 of this Schedule is appended to that report. The report includes a consolidated map of “areas unsuitable for development” overlaid with the proposed final development footprint as required by condition 4.1.1.2 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019. The map is attached as Appendix C to Chapter 5 of the IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) Revision 1, as required by condition 4.1.1.4 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019.
- 3.4. The report identified no fatal flaws with the proposed amendments to the scope of the SKA as identified in section 3.1 of this Schedule, but proposed additional conditions associated with the exclusion, which propose to amend condition 4.1.1.2 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019 and have been incorporated under section 4.1 of this Schedule.
- 3.5. The “bat eviction protocol” and the “chance find policy for heritage artefacts” identified by the specialists as additional mitigation measures are attached as Appendix D to the original environmental management programme contained in Chapter 5 of the adopted IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1).
- 3.6. The amended Chapter 2 of the IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) Revision 1, the consolidated environmental report and supporting specialist studies, as well as the additional appendices have been reviewed and found to meet the requirements and general principles contained in sections 2, 24(1) and 24N of the Act.

4. ADDITIONAL CONDITION OF EXCLUSION AND AMENDMENT TO CONDITION 4.1.1.2 OF THE EXCLUSION NOTICE OF 2019

4.1. In addition to the conditions contained in section 4 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019, the following conditions are added:

4.1.1A The National Research Foundation may not develop any infrastructure:

4.1.1A.1 exceeding the 15 hectares which has been identified as the “limits of acceptable change” in areas with a very high ecological sensitivity and mapped as “ecological areas unsuitable for development”; and

4.1.1A.2 other than linear infrastructure in areas with a very high aquatic sensitivity and mapped as “aquatic areas unsuitable for development”.

4.2. Condition 4.1.1.2 of the Exclusion Notice of 2019 is amended by the insertion at the end of the condition of the words “other than development contemplated in condition 4.1.1A”.

5. GENERAL

The IEMP for the SKA (Phase 1) Revision 1, the consolidated environmental report, specialist studies, bat eviction protocol and chance find policy for heritage artefacts are available at the following websites:

<http://www.SKA.ac.za>; and
<https://egis.environment.gov.za/SKAphase1>;

and the gazetted Government Notice can be accessed at:
https://www.environment.gov.za/legislation/gazetted_notices.

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