



BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT: CONSTRUCTION OF TREE-HOUSE

**PROJECT:**

The Development of a Tree-house for Tourist Accommodation, Marataba Safari Lodge, Marataba Section of the Marakele National Park

CONSULTANT:

EMROSS Consulting (Pty) Ltd.
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APPLICANT:

More Concession 1 (Pty) Ltd.
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PROPERTY:

Portion 2 of the farm Geelhoutbosch 269KQ
Marataba Section of the Marakele National Park

August 2016.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Marataba Lodge is situated in a 23000ha private concession within the Marataba Section of the Marakele National Park, in the Limpopo Province. The lodge attracts a number of tourists on an annual basis which facilitates and promotes the protected area sustainability through ecotourism.

The experience of sleeping out in a “tree house” is a very unique way of experiencing the African bush, which the More Lodges would like to make available at the Marataba Lodge.

This development is intended to proceed under environmentally sound practices and principles, ensuring that the tourism operation continues to operate in an environmentally sound manner whereby the impacted footprint of the facility and its operations are minimized.

More Concession 1 (Pty) Ltd has contracted EMROSS Consulting (Pty) Ltd as independent environmental assessment practitioners, to undertake the required actions to apply for environmental authorisation from the National Department of Environmental Affairs, for the development of the tree house.

Government notices no. R 983-985 stipulates activities which require authorisation, in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998). Government notice 982 prescribes the manner in which the application must be undertaken.

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is the construction of a tree-house type sleep out which will accommodate two people. The development will be a free-standing platform structure with a footprint of approximately 150m². Three alternative sites have been identified and considered.

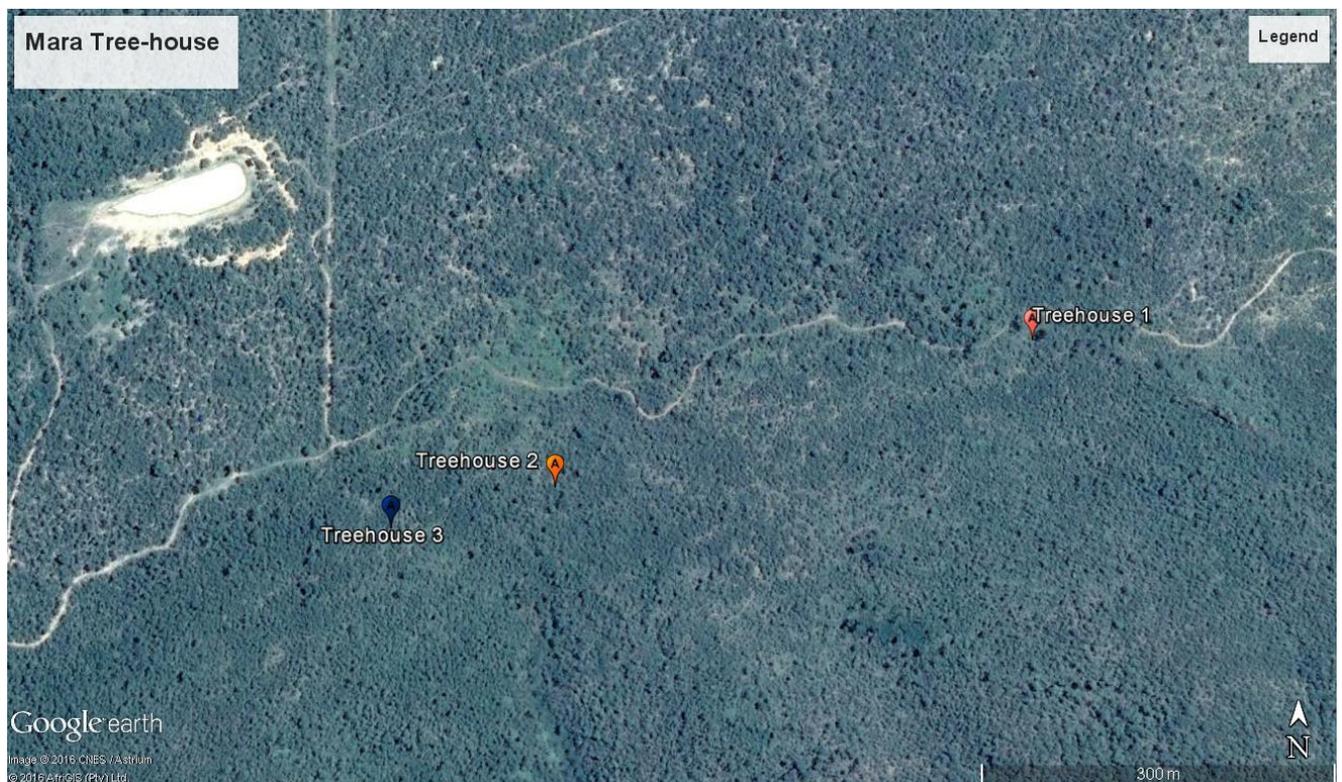


Figure 1: Mara Treehouse alternative sites (Source: Google Earth 2016).

3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

In terms of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), the activities proposed are regarded as listed activities under schedule of activities as follows:

GNR 985 – LN3 (Basic Assessment in certain geographical areas):

Activity #5: “The development of resorts, lodges, hotels and tourism or hospitality facilities that sleep less than 15 people, in (a) A protected area identified in terms of NEMPAA...”.

A basic environmental assessment is thus required to be conducted in order to obtain environmental authorization.

The proposed developments may also be subject to regulations contained in other legislation, such as the:

- National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No 57 of 2003);
- National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999, Section 38);
- Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (No 43 of 1983);
- National Water Act (No 36 of 1998);
- National Environmental Management Act (No 107 of 1998);
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996); and
- Promotion of Access to Information Act (No 2 of 2000).

These legislative components will be incorporated into the report where they are applicable.

4. THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The legislation calls for a basic assessment to establish potential environmental impacts of the proposed developments. The assessment will look at avoiding or minimising potential environmental damage and promote sustainable development.

The assessment process commences with a planning stage. During this stage:

- A pre-application meeting is held with the decision making authority, in this case the National Department of Environmental Affairs;
- Site visits by specialists may be required, if deemed necessary, to assess the site and potential impacts that could be caused by the proposed developments;
- Potential interested and affected parties to the development are identified and
- Notices and advertisements are publicised and identified interested and affected parties are consulted.

The planning stage is followed by a reporting stage. During this stage:

- Property information and public comment, along with various assessments and specialist inputs, are incorporated into a report which assesses the proposed development in context of the site.

The reporting stage is followed by Public Participation, where:

- The compiled report is made available for comment; and
- The application form and report is submitted to the competent authority.

The final stage is the decision making stage. During this stage:

- The authority reviews the report and public comments for decision making.
- Once the decision is made, this is circulated to the applicant and to the public. There will be an opportunity to appeal the decision at this point.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, it is the right of persons to have the environment in which they live protected in a responsible and sustainable manner. Every person also has the right of access to information and should be informed of any proposed scheduled activities.

Therefore, an important aspect of the Environmental Impact Assessment process is to identify potential Interested and Affected Parties and to provide them with accessible information, to which they may raise comments or voice any concerns associated with the proposed developments.

This is done by contacting special interest groups and park management, by advertising the process in a local newspaper, and by erecting notices at the entrances to the national park.

Registered Interested and Affected Parties have the right to comment on reports regarding the developments, which are to be submitted to the department by the consultant.

In return the registered Interested and Affected Party is expected to:

- Submit all comments in writing to the consultant;
- Adhere to time frames given for commenting or submit a written motivation for why a longer commenting period is needed; and
- Disclose any direct business, financial, personal or other interest in the development and/or approval or refusal of the development.

6. WHO TO CONTACT

Should you wish to register as an interested and affected party to this process and should you have any special concerns that you wish to be addressed during the assessment process, please send your name and contact details and issues to be addressed to:

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White River

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E-mail: mette@emross.co.za

Interested and Affected Parties have **30 days to register**. We will, however, be accepting comments throughout the process. In order for issues to be fully assessed, it would be preferable to receive these at the start of this process.

The whole assessment process is expected to last approximately 6 months.