

# **Background Information Document**

## **Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Establishment and Operation of the Doros Plains Lodge in the Kunene Region**

### **1 Introduction**

Ultimate Safaris (Pty) Ltd (the *Proponent*) proposes to establish and operate the *Doros Plains Lodge* (hereinafter referred to as the *project*), located about 80 km southwest of Khorixas in the Kunene Region. Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2 for the locality map. For this project, the Proponent has entered into a joint venture (JV) agreement with the three area managing conservancies, namely the Uibasen Twyfelfontein, Sorris Sorris and Doro !Nawas Conservancies.

The Lodge will serve as a provider of a tourism and lodging experience for high-end clients with an emphasis on a wilderness experience and speciality wildlife-based activities including rhino tracking. It will form part of a route that highlights a number of conservancy attractions and will enhance the profile and value that conservancies contribute to national tourism and biodiversity management efforts.

Given the fact that the proposed project and associated activities are listed in the 2012 EIA Regulations of the Environmental Management Act (EMA) No. 7 of 2007, an environmental clearance certificate (ECC) is required, subject to an Environmental Assessment (EA). Subsequently, the Proponent appointed Resilient Environmental Solutions cc (RES) to undertake the required EA Study and apply for the project ECC.

### **2 Project Description**

Activities at the Lodge will include game walks (rhino and elephant tracking under the supervision of rhino rangers trained by Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), employed by the three conservancies that manage the area, as well as trained guides employed by the Proponent. The project represents a unique product insofar as it offers a lodging experience and comfortable stay to high-end clients comprising six semi-permanent rooms, staff accommodation, 3 guide/pilot tents and on-site laundry. It represents an innovative approach to developing a new tourism product with a strong emphasis on bringing value to conservancy biodiversity and tourism assets.

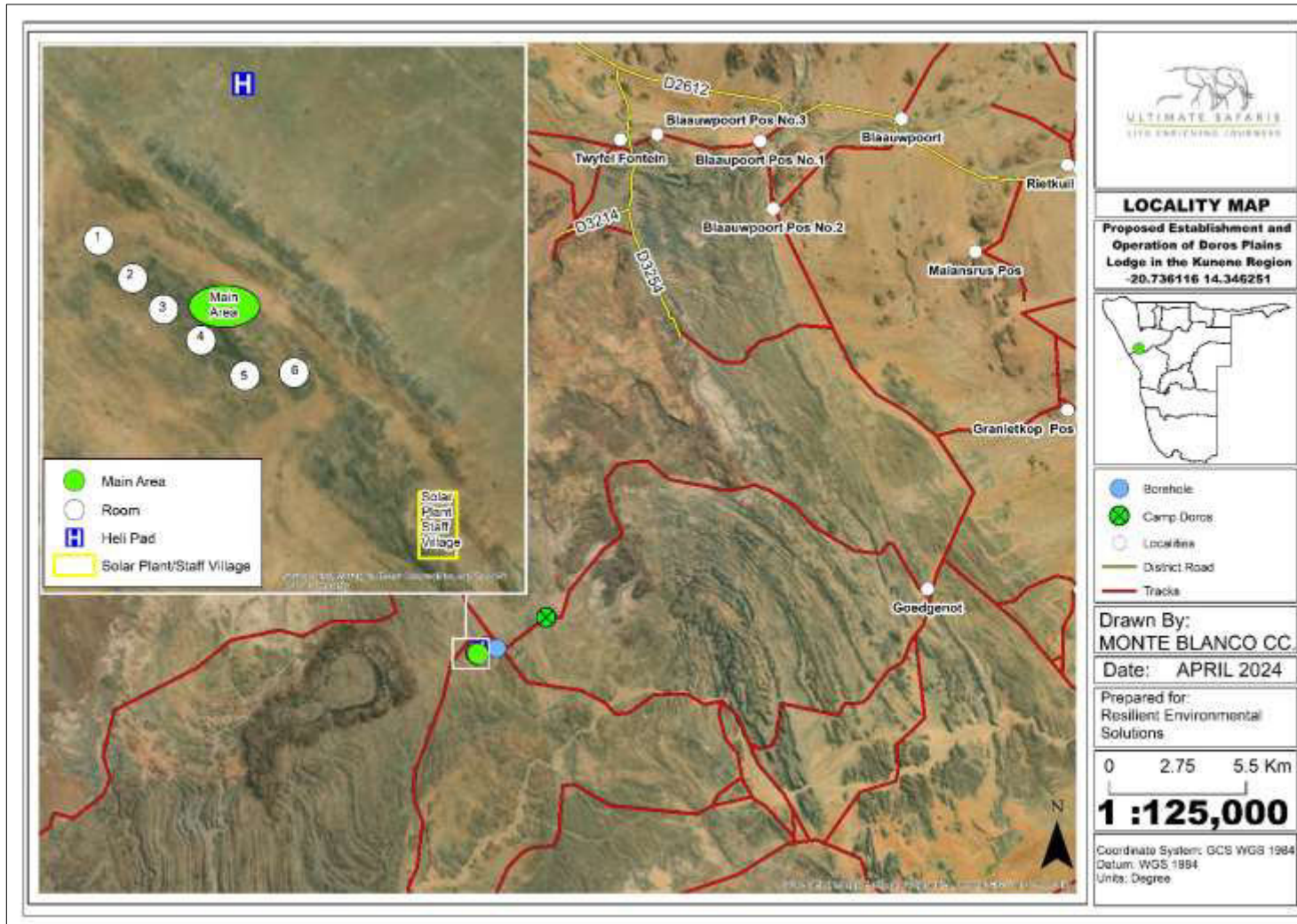


Figure 1: Location of the proposed Doros Plains Lodge in the Kunene Region

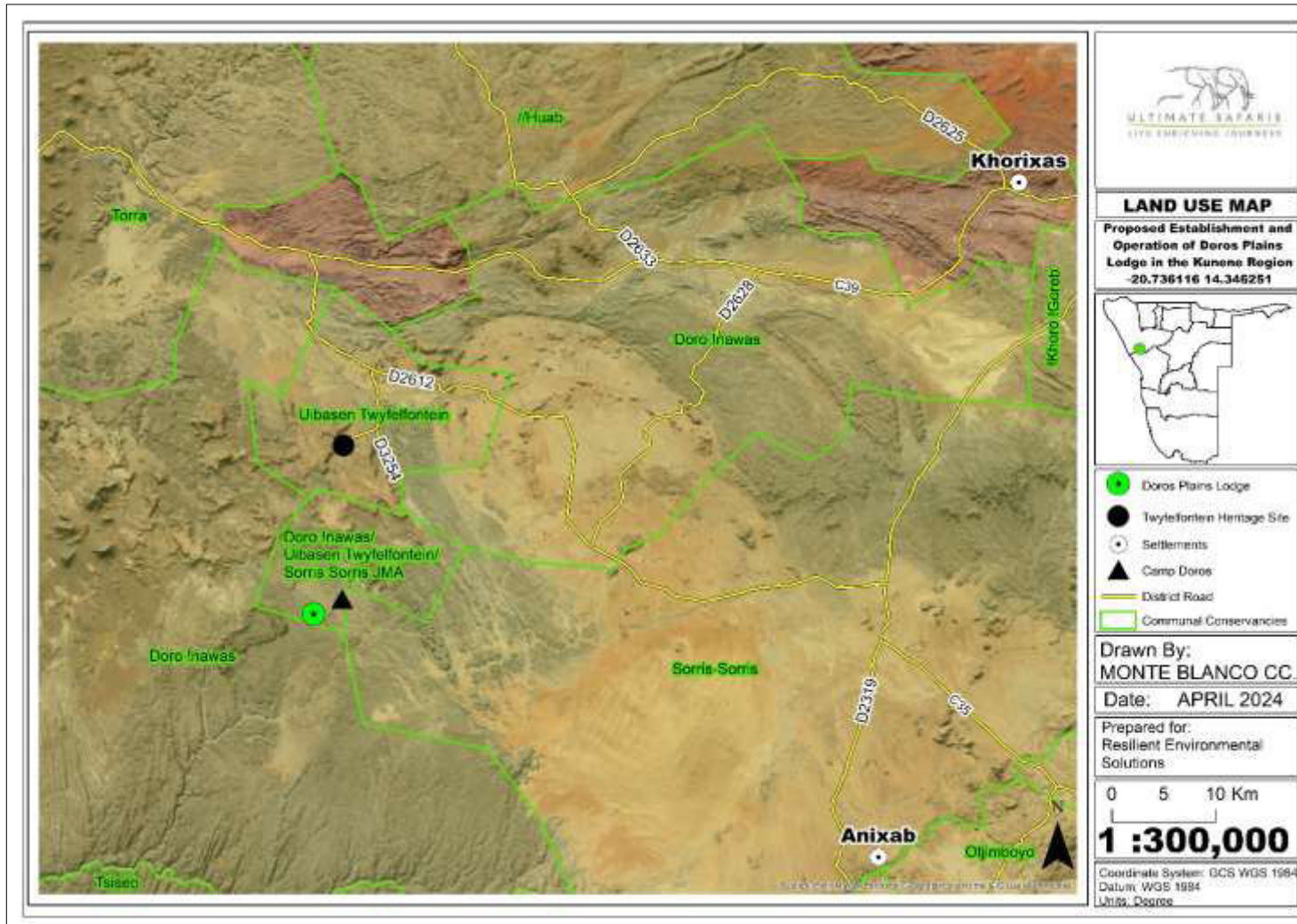


Figure 2: Location of the proposed Doros Plains Lodge in the Kunene Region



## Doros Plains Lodge: Environmental Assessment

### 2.1 Project Overview

The Lodge components and associated infrastructure are as follows:

- Six prefabricated (semi-permanent) guest rooms constructed on elevated platforms. The rooms will be equipped with en suite toilets and showers, as well as plunge pools. The toilets will function on a sophisticated water reticulation system.
- The dining area will be built in a complimentary style to the rooms.
- All food preparation shall be undertaken in a fully equipped kitchen. The food will be prepared using gas fuel and stored in solar powered fridges.
- A staff village and support infrastructure such as storerooms and laundry room will be established as semi-permanent structures.
- The actual footprint for the Lodge and its associated infrastructure is maximum eight hectares.
- Water will be sourced from two newly drilled boreholes for the project, located about 800m northeast of the Lodge, to supply water for both construction and operations. Preliminary pump tests from the boreholes show strong water; the yields are 25m<sup>3</sup>/hr and 9m<sup>3</sup>/hr, based on borehole blow tests. The Proponent will consider developing bulk water storage tanks for the Lodge on-site.
- All sewage will be treated with chambered septic tank systems designed according to recognised standards (e.g. South African National Standards). Reclaimed water will be re-used as far as possible in gardening efforts.
- All solid waste from the Lodge shall be sorted to recycle as far as possible and shall be transported back to Windhoek. A small incinerator will be used to dispose of items that can't be recycled or easily transported. To reduce the volume of plastic bottles, the Proponent shall issue each tourist with a re-useable water flask that shall be refilled from a bulk drinking water container. This shall result in a considerable reduction in waste.
- The proposed Lodge will be 100% energy self-sufficient with solar power (a single photovoltaic installation, situated within the Lodge footprint) and water heating will be by heat pump powered by solar. A diesel generator will be kept on-site and used as a backup electricity source.
- A 5km access road will be established from the existing Camp Doros Lodge to the site. This will entail minor roads works to cater for the project's operations and maintenance.
- A helipad and an airstrip for small fixed-wing aircraft will be established close to the Lodge site.
- No fencing will be used in the concession area.

## Doros Plains Lodge: Environmental Assessment

### 2.2 Construction Phase

#### 2.2.1 Construction Workforce and Duration

The Proponent will appoint a contractor for the establishment of the Lodge and related facilities and infrastructure. The construction crew will be housed in temporary accommodation on-site for the duration of the construction works. However, the number of workers for this phase is unknown at this stage.

The estimated duration of the construction period is approximately nine months. However, this might be adjusted depending on local conditions.

#### 2.2.2 Construction Services and Utilities

The services and utilities required during the construction phase include:

- **Water** – the water required for construction works will be sourced from the two newly drilled boreholes near the Lodge. About 25m<sup>3</sup>/day will be required for two months, and about 15m<sup>3</sup>/day for domestic use for the rest of the construction period.
- **Fuel** – a small amount of fuel (for backup generators) is anticipated to be stored either in a secure mobile storage tank or in a stationary tank on an impermeable bunded surface on-site.
- **Electricity** – electricity will be provided by generators supplied by the contractor.

- **Toilets** – portable toilets will be supplied by the appointed contractor on-site during the construction phase. The contractors will remove the toilets upon completion of construction works.
- **Solid waste** – the waste will be collected in a secure central place on-site, removed from the area and disposed of at the nearest waste management site (possibly Khorixas). If not possible, the waste will be transported to Windhoek's solid waste management facility as appropriate.

### 2.3 Operation and Maintenance Phase

#### 2.3.1 Operational Phase Activities

The Proponent will manage the operations of the proposed Lodge. The following activities will be undertaken on-site:

- Upmarket lodging for high-end market.
- Guided game walks (including rhino tracking under supervision of Save The Rhino (SRT) trained guides) – importantly, this activity shall be aligned with the monitoring duties of the rhino rangers. The rhino rangers are the ones employed by the three managing conservancies and funded/supported by the Proponent.
- Guided elephant tracking with skilled guides – Ultimate Safaris has a reputation for skilled and knowledgeable guides.
- Guided walks and development of cultural tourism.
- General hospitality services (restaurant, administration, laundry etc.) to the lodging clients.

## Doros Plains Lodge: Environmental Assessment

- Fly-in option, via helicopter or a fixed-wing aircraft.
- General site maintenance works.

### 2.3.2 Operation Workforce

The Lodge workforce will be accommodated on-site in the staff village. The number of personnel is anticipated to be 20, many of whom will be employed out of the conservancies as per the signed JV contract.

The Proponent will keep on-site maintenance to a minimum. All operational phase vehicles will be serviced in Windhoek, and not on-site.

### 2.3.3 Operational Phase Services and Utilities

The water, wastewater and electricity requirements for the Lodge operational phase have been detailed under Section 2.1 above. The remainder of the services requirements and other operational management activities are as follows:

- **Road access** – an unproclaimed road will be upgraded so that it can be used to gain access to the Lodge.
- **Water consumption** – maximum daily consumption with the full complement of guests and staff is estimated as 15m<sup>3</sup>/day. Average consumption 10m<sup>3</sup>/day.
- **Solid waste management** – will be carried out as proposed during the construction phase.
- **Fuel** – a 5,000 litre fuel tank will be installed in a secured area on an impermeable bunded surface on-site.

- **Air transport:** Lodge guests will have the option of being flown from the existing airstrip at Onduli Ridge to the Doros Plains Lodge, by fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter.

## 3 Environmental Assessment Process

This scoping study will be conducted in line with the EIA Regulations as provided for by Namibia's Environmental Management Act (No. 7 of 2007).

The Environmental Assessment (EA) process is a planning, design and decision-making tool used to demonstrate to the relevant authorities, the public and the Proponent what the consequences of their decisions will be in biophysical and social terms. An EA identifies potential impacts (negative and positive) that the project might have on the receiving environment (i.e. social and biophysical); as well as identifying potential opportunities and constraints the environment may pose to the project.

### 3.1 Potential Impacts

Potential impacts on the biophysical and social environment are:

#### 3.1.1 Potential Negative Impacts

- Potential soil and groundwater pollution from waste products.

## Doros Plains Lodge: Environmental Assessment

- Disturbance of local fauna and flora.
- Physical land (soil) disturbance and soil erosion.
- Visual and noise (from aircraft) impacts on the landscape.
- Illegal hunting of wildlife.
- Impact on local services infrastructure (e.g. roads, water).
- Potential conflicts with local residents over land use.

### 3.1.2 Potential Positive Impacts

- Employment creation and skills development.
- Financial contributions towards conservation via payment of concession and conservancies' fees.
- Social and environmental investments in the community through the revenue for the conservancies, which allow investments in biodiversity management.
- Diversification of the local economy, with growth of the Namibian tourism sector.
- The presence of reputable and trusted tourism operators provides a deterrent against illegal wildlife-related activities.
- Partnerships such as the proposed one enhance the MEFT's Community Based Natural Resource Management programme, as a legitimate form of land-use and ensuring that rural communities benefit from their resources.
- Diversification of livelihoods is key for building resilience against climate change.

## 3.2 Public Participation

In accordance with the public consultation process stipulated in the EMA (No. 7 of 2007) and the EIA Regulations (GN. No. 30 of 2012), all potentially Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) are hereby given notice of the EA being conducted for the proposed project and invited to register as an I&AP.

You and/or your office are hereby invited to submit your comments or concerns about the intended activity in writing to Resilient Environmental Solutions, via:

- **E-mail** to [resilient.environment@gmail.com](mailto:resilient.environment@gmail.com)
- A **WhatsApp** message to: John Pallett, cell number +264 81 3570092

### **The deadline for registration and submission of comments:**

- **Monday, 20 May 2024**

**Please note:** Only comments submitted in writing will receive responses and be recorded and addressed during this EA process.

As an identified and registered interested and affected party, you will be kept informed throughout the environmental assessment process in accordance with Regulation 23 of the EIA Regulations (GN. 30 of 2012).