

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Background Information Document (BID) has been structured to provide all potential Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) with a concise overview of the proposed project activities as well as the associated Environmental Authorisation and Water Use Authorisation Processes. Furthermore, this BID also intended to provide I&APs with information relating to the manner in which I&APs can voice any issues concerning the proposed project. The compilation and distribution of this BID, forms part of the Public Participation Process for the project.

The BID provides notification of the availability of the Draft Basic Assessment Report (BAR) for public review and comment from 09 November 2024 to 09 December 2024.

The report is available at the Potchefstroom Public Library- 44 sol plaatjie, st, Potchefstroom, 2531, Vereeniging Library: leslie st vereeniging, 1930, Welda Public library: Hawk st, Welda, Caeletonville and Vanderbilpark/ Sharpville library: Seeiso st, sharpeville, vereeniging, 1928 and on the Zitholele Consulting's website:

[www.zitholele.co.za/environmental/](http://www.zitholele.co.za/environmental/) under the heading "R54 Road Upgrade BA Road Upgrade". Please submit your comments on the BAR by no later than 09 December 2024 to the contact persons/details as listed below. Information regarding the above processes can also be requested from the Public Participation Office at the contact details provided herein.

Zitholele Consulting (Pty) Ltd  
Contact Person: Ms Londolani Sitsula  
P O Box 6002, Halfway House, 1685  
Tel: (011) 207 2060, Fax: 086 674 6121  
or  
Email: R54roadupgradeBA@zitholele.co.za

# Notification of Application for Environmental Authorisation and Water Use Authorisation (WUA) Processes for the proposed Improvement on National Road R54 Section 1 From Potchefstroom (Km 0.0) To Previous Nw/Gp Border (Km 41.60), North West and Gauteng Provinces.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

09 November 2024

### 1. BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Notice is hereby given that South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) (the Applicant) has applied for Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the above project. An EA is required by way of a Basic Assessment (BA) process, from the Competent Authorities, i.e. Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014 (as amended), promulgated in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA). Zitholele Consulting (Pty) Ltd has been appointed as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake the BA process.

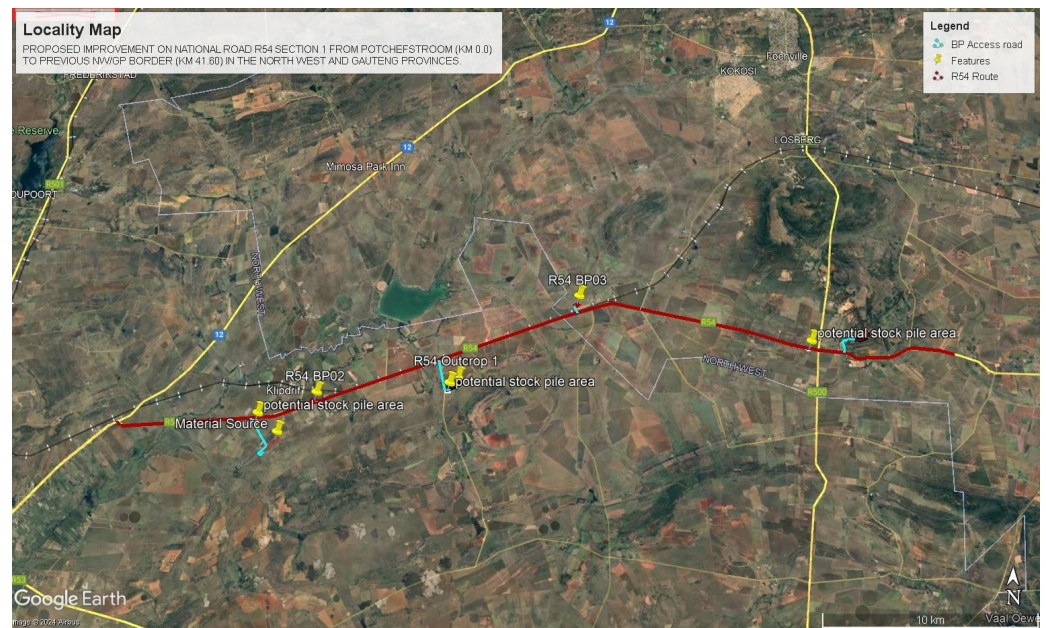


Figure 1: Location of the proposed R54 road upgrade, Border of Gauteng and Northwest Province

### 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited plans to upgrade National Road R54, Section 1, from Potchefstroom to the former NW/GP border, focusing on incorporating Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) and enhancing public transit services. This project aims to improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians, support community development, and modernize infrastructure. Key upgrades include widening the road, installing new pavement, enhancing drainage systems, and improving intersection safety. The project will also replace and upgrade approximately 112 minor culverts, four major culverts and five bridges to meet hydraulic requirements and accommodate the new road width. A total of five (5) borrow pits have been identified with the anticipated materials quantities include 480,000 m<sup>3</sup> of G6-G8 from 5 sources, 500,000 m<sup>3</sup> of G5 from 3 sources, and 600,000 m<sup>3</sup> of G1 from 3 sources.

### 3. NEED AND DESIRABILITY

The South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited plans to upgrade National Road R54, Section 1, from Potchefstroom to the former NW/GP border, focusing on incorporating Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) and enhancing public transit services. This project aims to improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians, support community development, and modernize infrastructure. Key upgrades include widening the road, installing new pavement, enhancing drainage systems, and improving intersection safety. The existing road is a two-lane single carriageway without climbing lanes and primarily serves motorized traffic. Two design options were evaluated: Option 1 includes enhanced cross-section standards for higher traffic volumes, while Option 2 retains existing configurations without climbing lanes, deemed unnecessary. The project will also replace and upgrade approximately 112 minor culverts and several bridges to meet hydraulic requirements and accommodate the new road width. The expected construction phase will last about two years, with operations commencing in January 2025, followed by regular maintenance by SANRAL. In terms of Listing Notice 1 (GNR No. 983) of the EIA regulations, 2014 (as amended) the proposed road upgrade will trigger listed activities 12, 19 and 56 and listed activities 12, 14, 18 and 23 of Listing Notice 3 (GNR No. 985). The proposed road upgrade occurs within the 500m regulated area of the wetland and within the Klein Nyl River. Therefore, a General Authorisation (GA) will be required in terms of Section 21 (c) and 21 (i) of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998).

### 4. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposed activity is underpinned by the legal provisions of the National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998 (NEMA), as amended, and the National Water Act, No. 36 of 1998. These Acts have specific regulations governing potential impacts on the receiving environment and includes the following Regulations:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations of 2014 (GN R982), as amended;
- Water Use Licence Application and Appeals Regulations of 2017 (GN R267)

The listed activities that may be applicable to the project are indicated in the table below:

Listed Activities	Applicability to proposed project
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 983: Listing Notice 1, Activity 12:</b></p> <p>The development of—                      (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more;                      where such development occurs—                      a) within a watercourse;                      c) if no development setback exists, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse;</p> <p>excluding—                      (aa) the development of infrastructure or structures within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the port or harbour;                      (bb) where such development activities are related to the development of a port or harbour, in which case activity 26 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 applies;                      (cc) activities listed in activity 14 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 or activity 14 in Listing Notice 3 of 2014, in which case that activity applies;                      (dd) where such development occurs within an urban area;                      (ee) where such development occurs within existing roads, road reserves or railway line reserves; or                      (ff) the development of temporary infrastructure or structures where such infrastructure or structures will be removed within 6 weeks of the commencement of development and where indigenous vegetation will not be cleared.</p>	<p>As a result of the proposed R54 improvement, the current bridges B2127, B2166, and B2167 will be upgraded, B2053 and B2531 will be demolished, and new bridges will be constructed. Additionally, four existing major culverts will be upgraded. These sections of the proposed road upgrade are located within a waterway and within 32 meters of a wetland or watercourse.</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 983: Listing Notice 1, Activity 19:</b></p> <p>The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse.</p> <p>but excluding where such infilling, depositing, dredging, excavation, removal or moving—</p>	<p>In order to build bridges, upgrade culverts, and upgrade R54 within existing wetlands and watercourses, there may be infilling or depositing of material into, or dredging, excavation, removal, or moving of soil, sand, pebbles, or rock from a watercourse.</p>

Listed Activities	Applicability to proposed project
<p>a) will occur behind a development setback;  b) is for maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan;  c) falls within the ambit of activity 21 in this Notice, in which case that activity applies;  d) occurs within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the port or harbour; or  where such development is related to the development of a port or harbour, in which case activity 26 in Listing Notice 2 of 2014 applies.</p>	
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 983: Listing Notice 1, Activity 56:</b></p> <p>The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre—  (i) where the existing reserve is wider than 13,5 meters; or  (ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres; excluding where widening or lengthening occur inside urban areas.  The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan.</p>	<p>The proposed road upgrade will include widening of the road by more than 6 metres.</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 985: Listing Notice 3, Activity 12:</b></p> <p>The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan.</p> <p><b>c. Gauteng</b>  ii. Within Critical Biodiversity Areas or Ecological Support Areas identified in the Gauteng Conservation Plan or bioregional plans.</p> <p><b>h. North West</b>  iv. Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority;  vi. Areas within a watercourse or wetland, or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland.</p>	<p>There may be more than 300m<sup>2</sup> of indigenous vegetation that will be impacted as a result of the proposed road upgrade which will occur within the CBA and ESA as identified in the Gauteng Conservation Plan.</p> <p>The proposed road upgrade which will occur within the CBA 1 and 2 and ESA 2 of the Terrestrial Critical Biodiversity Areas and ESA 2 of the Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas as identified in the North West Biodiversity Plan.</p> <p>The improvement of bridges and culverts within existing wetlands and watercourses is part of the proposed R54 road improvements.</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 985: Listing Notice 3, Activity 14:</b>  The development of—  ii. infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more;  where such development occurs—  (a) within a watercourse;  (c) if no development setback has been adopted, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse;  excluding the development of infrastructure or structures within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the port or harbour.</p> <p><b>c. Gauteng</b>  iv. Sites identified as Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan or in bioregional plans;  v. Sites identified within threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p> <p><b>h. North West</b>  iv. Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority;</p>	<p>The anticipated R54 road upgrade will result in the upgrading of the current bridges and culverts. These and the planned road improvement is within or 32 meters from a watercourse.</p> <p>The proposed road upgrade which will occur within the CBA 1 and 2 and ESA 2 of the Terrestrial Critical Biodiversity Areas and ESA 2 of the Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas as identified in the North West Biodiversity Plan. Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan</p> <p>The improvement of the R54 road bridges and culverts will occur within the threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 985: Listing Notice 3, Activity 18:</b></p> <p>The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre.</p>	<p>The existing R54 road will be upgraded by more than 4 meters, which may occur near a watercourse or 100 meters from its margin.</p>

Listed Activities	Applicability to proposed project
<p><b>c. Gauteng</b>  iv. Sites identified as Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan or in bioregional plans;  v. Sites identified within threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p> <p><b>h. North West</b>  iv. Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority;</p>	<p>The proposed road upgrade which will occur within the CBA 1 and 2 and ESA 2 of the Terrestrial Critical Biodiversity Areas and ESA 2 of the Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas as identified in the North West Biodiversity Plan. Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan.</p> <p>The improvement of the R54 road bridges and culverts will occur within the threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p>
<p><b>EIA Regulations of 2014 (as amended) of NEMA, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) GNR 985: Listing Notice 3, Activity 23:</b></p> <p>The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre.</p> <p><b>c. Gauteng</b>  iv. Sites identified as Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan or in bioregional plans;  v. Sites identified within threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p> <p><b>h. North West</b>  iv. Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority;  The expansion of—  (i) infrastructure or structures where the physical footprint is expanded by 10 square metres or more; where such expansion occurs—  (a) within a watercourse;  (c) if no development setback has been adopted, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse;</p> <p>excluding the expansion of infrastructure or structures within existing ports or harbours that will not increase the development footprint of the harbour.</p> <p><b>c. Gauteng</b>  iv. Sites identified as Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan or in bioregional plans;  v. Sites identified within threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p> <p><b>h. North West</b>  iv. Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority; (ee) Critical biodiversity areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional plans.</p>	<p>The existing R54 will be upgraded as part of the proposed improvement. The route, including the current culverts and bridges, will be widened. The upgrade may occur within 32 meters from a watercourse.</p> <p>The proposed road upgrade which will occur within the CBA 1 and 2 and ESA 2 of the Terrestrial Critical Biodiversity Areas and ESA 2 of the Aquatic Critical Biodiversity Areas as identified in the North West Biodiversity Plan. Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the Gauteng Conservation Plan.</p> <p>The improvement of the R54 road bridges and culverts will occur within the threatened ecosystems listed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act (Act No. 10 of 2004);</p>
<p><b>National Water Act, 1998 (Act No.36 of 1998):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 21(c): impeding or diverting the flow of water in a watercourse; and</li> <li>• Section 21(i): altering the bed, banks, course, or characteristic of a watercourse.</li> </ul>	<p>The proposed road upgrade occurs within the 500m regulated area of the wetland and within the Loopspruit River. Therefore, a General Authorisation (GA) will be required in terms of Section 21(c) and 21 (i) of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998).</p>

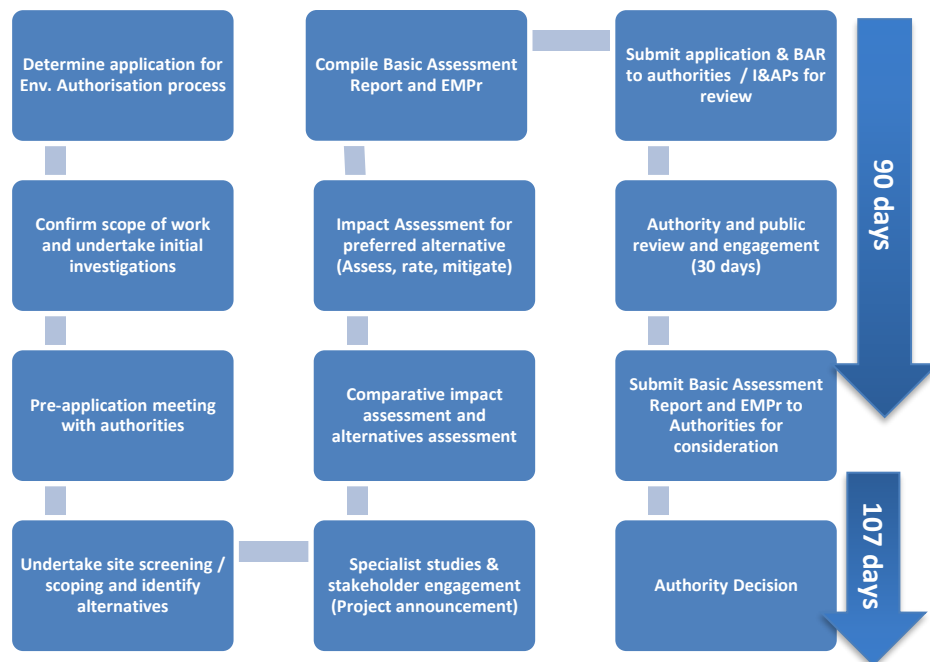
The following processes must therefore be undertaken:

1. Basic Assessment process towards issuance of an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the road upgrade and the borrow pits; and
2. A Water Use Authorisation process towards issuance of a General Authorisation (GA).

## 5. BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A Basic Assessment (BA) aims to provide an objective view of the potential environmental and social impacts that could arise during the planning, construction, operation, and decommissioning phase of a proposed project. A critical element of the BA Process is the Public Participation Process that gives Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) an opportunity to provide comments on a proposed development. The outcome of the BA Process is concisely presented and documented in the Basic Assessment Report (BAR) in order to provide the Competent Authority with all the information in order to make an informed decision.

The BAR content aligns with the requirements of Appendix 1 of the EIA regulations, 2014 (as amended) (GN R.326) and timeframes are strictly adhered to through careful management of process. **Figure 2** provides a process flow diagram indicating the key tasks to be carried out for the BA Process.



**Figure 2: Process Flow Diagram for the steps required in a Basic Assessment Process**

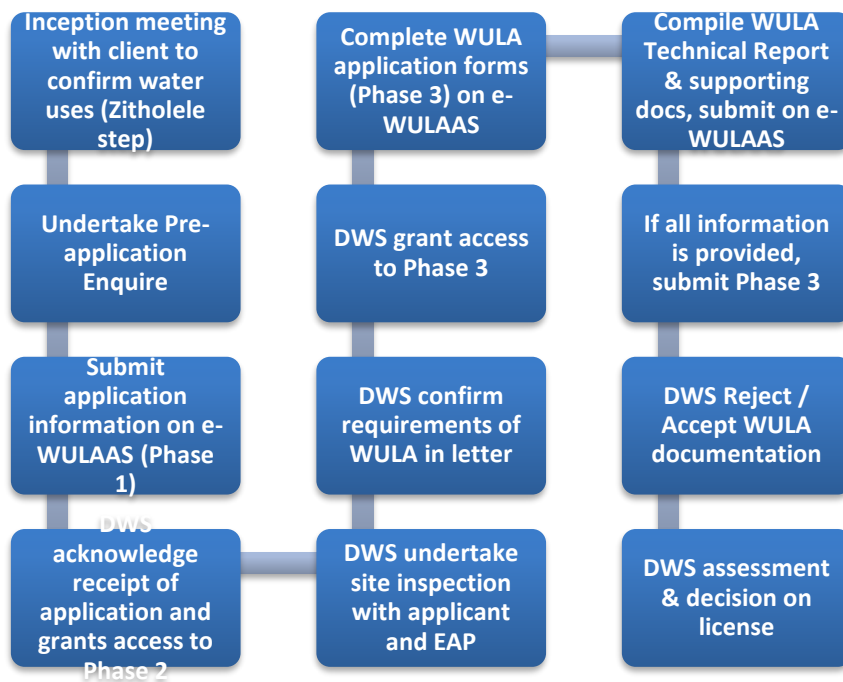
A decision on the application for environmental authorisation through a BA process is usually reached within 107 days of receipt of the BAR by the Competent Authority.

## 8. WATER USE LICENCE APPLICATION

In terms of the Water Use Authorisation process a General Authorisation (GA) will be required in terms of Section 21(c) and 21 (i) of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998). In terms of these Regulations, the General Authorisation must be undertaken and submitted through the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)'s online submission portal called Electronic Water Use Licence Application and Authorisation System (e-WULAAS). In terms of this online submission system, a Water Use License Application (WULA) is submitted online in three distinct phases (Refer to Figure 3).

The Water Use Licence or General Authorisation process can occur simultaneously and in conjunction with a Basic Assessment Process therefore Zitholele ensures that the WULA Application Forms, Technical Report (if required)

and supporting documents are completed at the same time as the BAR. This streamlines the public review process per project.



**Figure 3: Process Flow Diagram for the steps required in a Water Use License Application**

## 9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

As an important element in undertaking the BA for the proposed project, Zitholele Consulting will conduct the public participation process as set out in the NEMA EIA regulations, 2014 (as amended). Applicable guidelines and best practice procedures will furthermore be taken into consideration. The public participation process will enable stakeholders to contribute to the process through information sharing and to review the findings of the independent studies that are to be undertaken. The steps of the public participation component are outlined below.

The Public Participation Process, as prescribed in the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, are described below in Figure 4:



**Figure 4: Process Flow of the Public Participation Process**

## 10. AVAILABILITY OF APPLICATION DOCUMENTATION

The Basic Assessment Report for public review and comment is available from 09 November 2024 to 09 December 2024 as follows:

- Hard copy at the Porchefstroom Public Library- 44 sol plaatjie, st, Portchefstroom, 2531, Vereeniging Library: leslie st vereeniging , 1930, Welda Public library: Hawk st, Welda, Caeletonville, Vanderbilpark/ Sharpville library: Seeiso st, sharpeville, vereeniging, 1928

- Electronic copy is available at the Zitholele Consulting's website ([www.zitholele.co.za/environmental/](http://www.zitholele.co.za/environmental/) under the heading "R54 Road Upgrade BA").

Please submit your comments on the BAR by no later than 05 December 2024 to the contact persons/details as listed below. Information regarding the above processes can also be requested from the Public Participation Office at the contact details provided herein.

All stakeholders that wish to provide comments on the BAR and WULA processes and stay informed throughout the process are urged to register as an Interested and Affected Party (I&AP) by submitting your contact details and interest on the project to the Public Participation Process (PPP) desk at the contact details provided. Alternatively, SMS the word "R54RoadUpgrade" to 45776.

Further communication relating to the project will only be undertaken with registered I&APs. The PPP desk can be contacted as follows:

Zitholele Consulting (Pty) Ltd  
Contact Person: Ms Londolani Sitsula  
P O Box 6002, Halfway House, 1685  
Tel: (011) 207 2060, Fax: 086 674 6121  
or Email: [R54roadupgrade@zitholele.co.za](mailto:R54roadupgrade@zitholele.co.za)

## **11. DECISION-MAKING (ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION)**

Based on the information provided in the final BAR, the Competent Authority will make a decision to grant or refuse Environmental Authorisation. The granting of Environmental Authorisation will allow the Applicant to proceed with implementing the proposed project activities. Once the Competent Authority has reached a decision, with regards to granting the Environmental Authorisation, all registered I&APs will be notified thereof within 14 days of the date of the decision. An appeal may be lodged against the decision made in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (107 of 1998) and National Appeal Regulations, 2014. I&APs will be notified of the decision made by the Competent Authority by means of the following:

- Via electronic mail;
- Facsimile (to I&APs who do not have access to electronic mail); and
- Registered mail (to those I&APs who do not have access to electronic mail nor facsimile facilities).

The Basic Assessment Process will be concluded by the notification of I&APs of the decision made by the Competent Authority.

## **12. MAP OF PROJECT LOCATION**

A locality Map of the proposed project can be found in Figure 5 below.

## **13. BID COMMENT SHEET**

A comment sheet associated with this project Basic Assessment and Water Use Authorisation process is included at the end of this BID. Please complete and return to the PPP desk by hand delivery to the offices of Zitholele Consulting, scan and email to the email address provided, fax to fax number provided or by submitting your comments telephonically to the PPP desk via the landline number specified in the left column on page 1 of this BID.

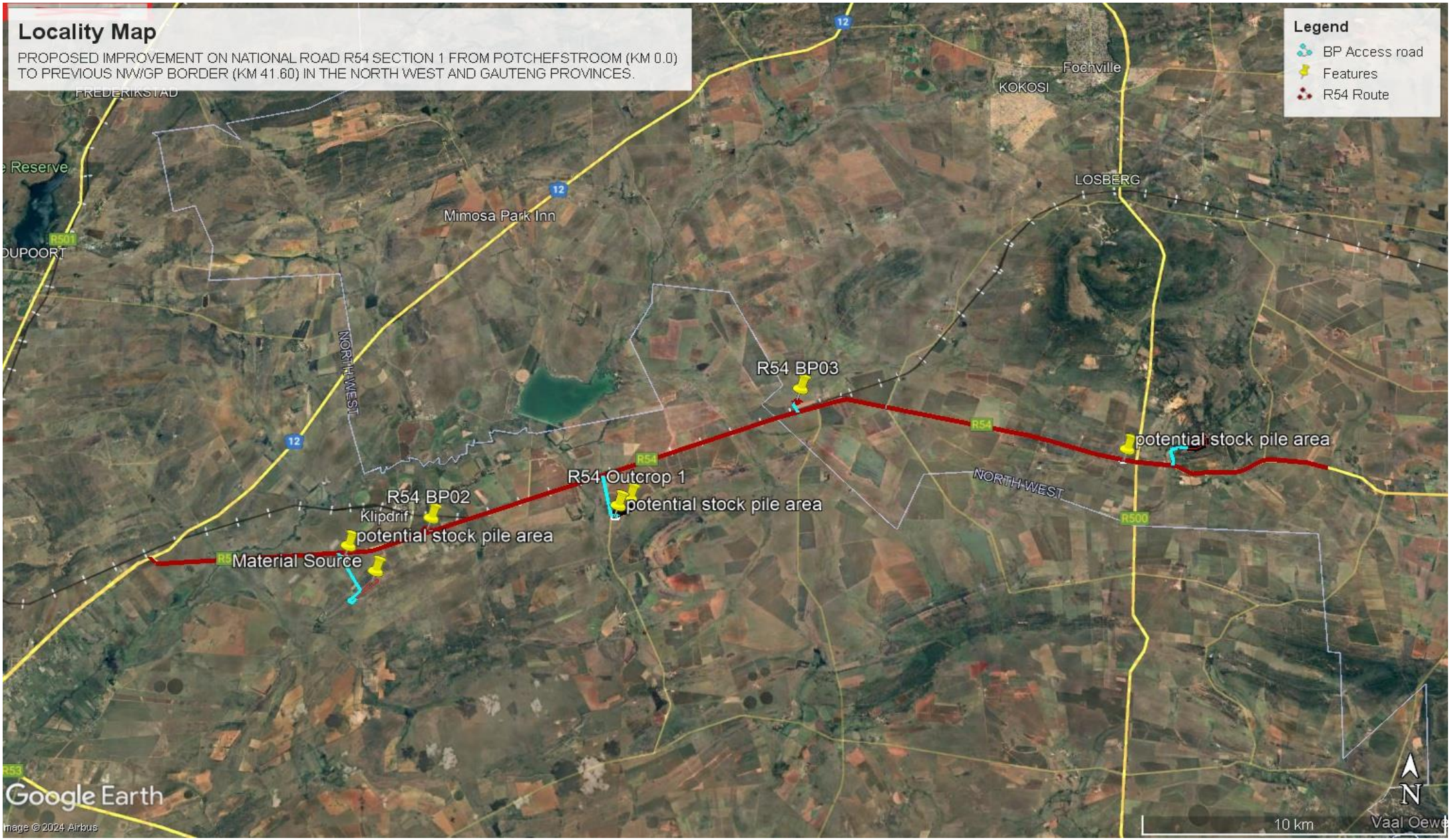


Figure 5: Locality Map of the Proposed Project



**Environmental Authorisation and Water Use Authorisation (WUA) Processes for the proposed Improvement on National Road R54 Section 1 From Potchefstroom (Km 0.0) To Previous Nw/Gp Border (Km 41.60), North West and Gauteng Province.**

As an **Interested and Affected Party** (“I&AP”), you are encouraged to register for the for the proposed R54 Road Upgrade project by completing this form and submitting it to the public participation office using the contact details provided below. Please complete this registration and comments form and return to the public participation office: by email: [R54roadupgradeBA@zitholele.co.za](mailto:R54roadupgradeBA@zitholele.co.za) or WhatsApp to 081 895 1540.

Title : \_\_\_\_\_ Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

First name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_ Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_

If a landowner and/or registered water user, please provide details:

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If you have any specific concerns or points of interest at this point in time regarding this application, please comment below:

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Completed by (please indicate name & Surname & capacity) : \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_