

# PROPOSED SOLAR ENERGY PLANT NEAR AUGRABIES

November 2013

Background Information Document

Mulilo Renewable Energy (Pty) Ltd (project company Augrabies Solar PV1 (Pty) Ltd) intends constructing a Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Energy Generation Facility of up to 10 MegaWatts on the farm Rooipad (9/15) near Augrabies in the Northern Cape Province. They have appointed Rosenthal Environmental to do an Environmental Basic Assessment including a Public Participation Process. This Background Information Document is to assist you in commenting on the proposed project.

## What work is proposed?

The proposed solar generation facility would consist of an array of black coloured panels up to 3m high over an area of up to 19.9 hectares. A 22 kiloVolt (kV) power line comprising wooden poles up to 8.5m high with three wires on top, would connect the power plant to an existing power line running to the Blouputs substation passing across the westerly portion of Rooipad farm. The power lines would look similar to other small power lines in the area. An alternative 22 kV line route to connect to the Blouputs Substation on Farm 431 is being investigated.

A 400m long and 6m wide access road was proposed, but the environmental assessment recommended rather improving the existing farm access track. There would be several kilometres of internal roads about 4m wide within the PV plant. A water pipeline would connect to existing farm infrastructure which would then require only 233m of pipeline on the site and 1.2 km on an adjacent farm.

Two alternative sites were considered for the Solar plant, both on Portion 9 of Farm Rooipad No 15 about 2 km south of the Augrabies Falls National Park and north of the R359. Site 1 would be about 1.5 km east of the Blouputs turnoff into the National Park (Preferred because it is less visible from the Augrabies Park and has a shorter power line). Site 2 is about 4 km east of the turnoff. The alternatives would require power lines of 1.7-2.1 km or 4.2-4.6 km respectively, depending on Eskom requirements.

## Use of the electricity generated

Electricity would be fed into the Eskom grid at the Blouputs substation to be used by those living in the Kakamas and Augrabies area.

## Why do they want to build this here?

The Department of Energy is encouraging renewable energy, including solar as an alternative to polluting fossil fuels. Augrabies has bright sunlight most of the year. Rooipad farm is close to the Blouputs substation, where electricity can be fed into the grid.

## What issues have been identified?

Specialists were appointed to undertake studies for each of the key issues of concern identified including: Agricultural potential, Botanical, Ecology, Freshwater Ecology, Heritage, Fossils and Visual. The studies found that Site 1 closer to the Blouputs substation is more suitable.

**Visual impacts:** Because the project is near the Augrabies Park, visual impacts have been carefully minimised following a visual specialist study. A natural ridge would screen the preferred site from a view site in the National Park. The only night lighting planned would be motion activated security lighting that would only rarely activate. Scattered trees would be planted to screen the facility.

**Jobs:** Limited job opportunities will be available during the construction phase and a smaller number afterwards. No jobs can be applied for during the Public Participation Process.

## Who is being consulted?

The project is in the Kai! Garib Local Municipal area, in the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality. The environmental authority is the national Department of Environment Affairs (DEA), with the Northern Cape Department of Environment Affairs and Nature Conservation as a commenting authority. Comment & consents are required from the Department of Water Affairs, the SA Heritage Resources Agency & Department of Agriculture. The South African National Parks is a neighbour and an authority.

Other Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) identified to date include landowners,

neighbours as well as agricultural, tourism, businesses, community and environmental organisations. A full list is in Appendix E1 of the Draft Basic Assessment Report. If there are others whom you feel should be consulted, please inform them of the process and encourage them to register as an I&AP.

### What is the environmental legal process?

An Environmental Basic Assessment including public consultation is required. Listed activities applied for include: No. 1 (electrical generation), 11 & 18(i) (drainage channel impacts), 23 (transformation of undeveloped land) (GN No. R. 544); no 4(a)(ii)(gg) (access road), 13(a) (ecological support area), 13(c)(ff) 14 (indigenous vegetation clearance), 16(a)(ii)(ff) & (hh) (construction near National Park) (GN No. R. 546) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2010) promulgated in terms of section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA). An application has been submitted to DEA with reference no: **DEA: 14/12/16/3/3/1/453**

### When will we discuss this?

You will be able to view drawings and documents, voice your concerns and ask questions on the project at a Public Open Day to be held at the Augrabies Community Hall on **19 November 2013** from 3pm with the formal Public Meeting commencing at 6pm.

Draft Basic Assessment Report, Background Information Document and Response forms available at Kakamas Public Library or by email request from **30 Oct 13 – 9 Dec 13**.

### What will we do with your comments?

The Draft Basic Assessment Report will be updated with your comments to form a final report, which you can also comment on. This will be submitted to the DEA. They will decide whether or not to allow the project to proceed or ask for more information and/or consultation. If you disagree, you can appeal. (Only registered interested parties will be notified).

### Please register and comment

You are invited to register as an interested party and provide written comments together with the above reference number, your name, contact details and an indication of any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which you have in the application to the contact details below by **9 December 2013**.

### Rosenthal Environmental

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*Indien u hierdie korrespondensie in Afrikaans verkies, kontak ons asseblief.*

*Below: Location of site 1 and alt Site 2*

