



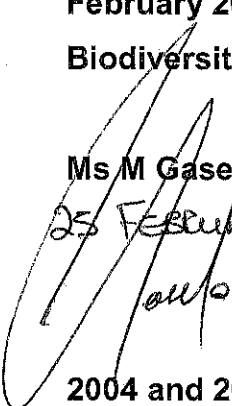
GAUTENG PROVINCE
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE RIDGES GUIDELINE

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Name of HOD : **Ms M Gasela**
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Signature of HOD : 

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

- EIA** : Environmental Impact Assessment
- GDARD** : Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- NEMA** : National Environmental Management Act

Definition of Terms

Application: In the context of this document, it means an application for environmental authorization as contemplated in the EIA regulations.

Buffer zone: In terms of this guideline refers to an area of land required to filter out the deleterious effects that land transformation can have on species and the ecological processes of class 1 ridges.

Environmental Management Instrument In terms of the National Environmental Management Act, this includes: Environmental management frameworks, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments, norms or standards amongst others.

Geographic Information System is a system for the input, storage, retrieval, analysis and display of geographic data.

Kloof: South African term for gorge or ravine.

Koppie: South African term for hill.

Low impact activities: These are activities that do not have a large environmental impact on the natural environment in space and time.

Examples of these types of activities are (but not limited to): Forest cultural / spiritual use, Cultural and historical conservation of sites, Conservation areas, Animal production (free range), tourism, Water network, Sanitation network,

Electricity network, Transport and Holiday resorts, camps, loges and cottage hospitality.

Red List The Red List published by the IUCN classifies all those species threatened with extinction within a particular threat category of, in order of decreasing risk of extinction, Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable.

Significantly impacted: This means that the ecology of the area being assessed has irreversibly changed from similar areas that remain natural. This must be done through an objective (scientific) assessment of the diversity and ecology of the area.

1. Introduction

The quartzite ridges of Gauteng are one of the most important natural assets in the northern provinces of South Africa. This is because these ridges, and the area immediately surrounding the ridges, provide habitats for a wide variety of fauna and flora, some of which are Red Listed rare and endemic species or, in the case of certain of the plant species, are found nowhere else in South Africa or the world. The ridges also fulfil functions that are necessary for the sustainability of ecosystems such as the recharging of wetlands and rivers, wildlife dispersal and providing essential habitats for pollinators. Ridges also have a socio-cultural role in that they provide aesthetically pleasing environments that are valued by residents, tourists and recreational users. Human activities such as urbanization, mining and the planting of alien vegetation may undermine the contribution that ridges make to the environment.

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Policy

The purpose of this guideline is to set out the Department's policy on the conservation, development and use of ridges with a view to ensuring that –

- the use of ridges is sustainable;
- members of the public are able to make informed decisions regarding proposals for development on ridges and the use of ridges;
- officials make consistent decisions in respect of planning and environmental applications that involve negative impacts on ridges; and
- the Department's responsibility in respect of the protection of the environment is carried out in an efficient and considered manner.

The guidelines set out in this document are also intended to assist applicants who are required to undertake an environmental impact assessment and to facilitate the quicker administration of such applications.

In developing the guideline, the Department has considered international approaches, the views of stakeholders, the Department's legislative obligations and its experience

in the processing of applications. The way in which these issues were considered have been summarised in a separate document titled *Background to the Development of a Ridge Policy Guideline for Gauteng*.

It should be noted that this document is a guideline and that the Department accordingly reserves the right to deviate from the guideline where appropriate. Furthermore this document is current as of September 2017 and may be changed from time to time. Any person who needs to consider the relevance of the guideline to their activities is advised to ensure that they are in possession with the most up to date version.

3. Authority of the Policy

The Head: Agriculture and Rural Development (HOD) or his/her delegate is the only official that can approve deviations from this guideline.

Program managers in the Sustainable Use of the Environment Branch are responsible for the fair implementation of the guideline.

4. Legal Framework

The environmental right, which is set out in section 24 of the Constitution, requires government to take –

“...reasonable legislative and other measures that -

- (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;*
- (ii) promote conservation; and*
- (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.”*

The conservation of ridges therefore falls within the ambit of the above environmental right and this document comprises one of the measures that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (“the Department”) has taken to give effect to the environmental right in respect of ridges.

5. Scope of Application

This guideline applies to all ridges in Gauteng. For the purposes of this document, a ridge includes hills, koppies, mountains, kloofs and gorges and/or a landscape type or topographic feature that is characterized by two or more of the following features - a crest, plateau, cliff or footslope. In addition, ridges are characterized by slopes of 5° or more (that is equivalent to slopes of > 8.8% or > 1: 11 gradient) when modelled in a Geographic Information System digital elevation model that is based on 20m contour intervals at a scale of 1:50 000.

Most ridges which fall within the scope of this guideline have been mapped by the Department in an ArcView shape file. Ridges that have been identified by the Department include (but are not limited to) the Bronberg, Daspoortrant, Gatsrant, Klipriviersberg, Kwaggasrant, Linksfield Ridge, Magaliesberg, Meintjeskop, Melville Koppies, Perdeberg, Pyramind Koppies, Roodepoort Ridge, Silverton Ridge, Skurweberg, Smuts Koppie, Suikerbosrand, Swartkop and Witwatersberg.

Information on these ridges or other ridges falling within the shape file may be requested from the Department by e-mailing marc.leroy@gauteng.gov.za. It should be noted, however, that this guideline applies to all ridges in Gauteng, irrespective of whether a ridge is included in the shapefile or not. The Department may also be contacted for verification as to whether a landscape type or topographic feature falls within the scope of the guideline.

6. Policy Pronouncements

a. General objective in respect of ridge

The general objective of the Department is that the ecological and socio-cultural value of ridges must be conserved. The ridges have, however, undergone different degrees of habitat loss due to human activities such as urban development and quarrying. The approach which the Department has adopted to realizing its general objective is to

provide for the maximum feasible conservation of a ridge within the existing constraints of the habitat loss that has already taken place.

In order to give practical effect to this policy, the Department has classified all ridges in Gauteng into one of four classes, based on the existing extent and percentage of area converted to urban development or other human activities. The classes are as follows -

b. Ridge classification

Class 1 ridges are ridges in respect of which 5% or less of the area has been transformed by human activity. (Approximately 58% of ridges currently fall within Class 1, including the Suikerbosrand and parts of the Magaliesberg).

Class 2 ridges are ridges in respect of which more than 5%, but by less than 35%, of the ridge has been transformed by human activity. (Approximately 23% of ridges currently fall within Class 2, including parts of the Magaliesberg, ridges falling within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, the Klipriviersberg, the Bronberg and the Skurweberg).

Class 3 ridges are ridges that have been transformed by 35% or more, but by less than 65%, as a result of human activity (Approximately 8% of ridges currently fall within Class 3, including the Northcliff, Roodepoort and Krugersdorp ridges).

Class 4 ridges are ridges that have been transformed as a result of human activity by 65% or more. (Approximately 11% of ridges currently fall within Class 4, including the Melville Koppies and the Linksfield Ridge).

c. General guidelines on ridges

The guidelines which are applicable to the use and development of the different classes of ridges are set out below.

1) Class 1 ridges

Only low impact activities with an ecological footprint of 5% or less in the 200 metre buffer zone of the ridge will be supported, no development will be permitted on the ridge itself.

2) Class 2 ridges

Development activities and uses that have a high environmental impact on a Class 2 ridge will not be permitted.

Low impact development activities, such as tourism facilities, which comprise of an ecological footprint of 5% or less of the property may be supported. (The ecological footprint includes all areas directly impacted on by a development activity, including all paved surfaces, landscaping, property access and service provision).

Low impact development activities on a ridge will not be supported where it is feasible to undertake the development on a portion of the property abutting the ridge.

3) Class 3 ridges

The guidelines for Class 2 ridges will be applied to areas of the ridge that have not been significantly impacted on by human activity.

The guidelines for Class 3 ridges will be applied to areas of the ridge that have been significantly impacted on by human activity.

4) Class 4 ridges

Further development activities will not be supported in areas of the ridge where the remaining contiguous extent of natural habitat is 4ha or more.

d. Requirements for applications that must follow an environmental impact assessment process

- 1) Applications involving activities on a ridge that must be subjected to an environmental management instrument in any form must, in addition to any other requirements of law, be supported by a study or studies which, as a minimum, describe –
 - (a) the ecological conditions – including the functional, hydrological and compositional aspects – of the ridge,
 - (b) flora and fauna – including any mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates - that are present on the ridge,
 - (c) the impacts of the proposed activity on a) and b),
 - (d) the stability of the slope and any implications thereof for the application, and
 - (e) the cultural, historical, open space and visual value aspects as well as the current use and value of the ridge for social purposes and the extent to which the proposed activity will impact on these uses or values.

- 2) Applications involving developments on a ridge falling within Class 1, 2 or 3 must be assessed through a study of the impacts of service provision and access on the ridge. This must, as a minimum, describe the location of access and services to the site; and the impact of service provision and access (new or existing) may have on the ridge.

- 3) In the absence of an environmental instrument that sets out the development of a ridge (norms and standards), an ecological management plan must accompany an application which sets out the measures and responsibilities in respect of the management the ecological integrity of the property, other than the specific area where the development activity is proposed.

7. Default

There is no legal consequence of defaulting on this guideline. However, the violation of the best practice in the guideline goes against sustainable development, the environmental principles contained in NEMA and will lead to a loss of biodiversity in the province.

8. Inception Date

The guideline inception was on 19 April 2001. This update of the guideline is valid from the date of signature of the Head of Department.

9. Review

The guideline should be reviewed every 5 years as a norm. If the legal framework, or the environment this guideline set out to protect changes in such a way as to affect the validity of the guideline, then the guideline must be reviewed.

10. Termination

This guideline should be terminated when there are no more natural ridges left in the Gauteng Province.

11. Enquiries

Enquiries can be made to the Scientific Manager: Biodiversity Management or to the Environmental Information Manager: Environmental Policy, Planning and Coordination.

12. Approval

Approved by:



A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'allu'.

GDARD Head of Department

Date: 25 FEBRUARY 2019