



Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust  
Trading as Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

Box 27  
Napier  
7270

23 April 2024

Attention: Michelle Naylor  
Lornay Environmental Consulting

**RE: UNLAWFUL PLOUGHING ON Remkuil Ptn 7 of 259 Rietfontein**

Dear Michelle

With reference to our email and telephonic discussions regarding the unlawful ploughing by Mr Johannes du Toit at Remkuil, I can offer the following, with regards our inputs on the impact on the vegetation and potential mitigation.

In 2016, WWF-SA (with us, the ORCT, driving the process and later being the implementing agent) signed a Conservation Servitude with MG Lotter, then the owner of Remkuil/Klipfontein (portion 7 of 259) and several other adjacent land parcels. This agreement was registered on the title deeds, as per the emails I have forwarded you.

The site was signed up as an 'easement' (conservation servitude) due to the fact that it contains some of the last and 'largest' remaining patches of Critically Endangered Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld (WRSR) left on Earth. Essentially all the red-listed endemics typical of this vegetation type are found on the farm, include *Morea comptonii*, *Drosanthemum flavum*, *Babiana purpurea*, *Aloe brevifolia*, and several others. The entire original easement comprises over 370ha of WRSR, of which about 12% now falls under Mr du Toit's ownership. Mr Lotter also sold another cadastre to Mr Dreyer van Niekerk, thereby essentially splitting a single easement into three separate easements. This has made the management of the easement complicated for us as the 'management authority / implementing agent'.

The ploughing of 1.67 ha of CR virgin renosterveld requires an 'offset' of a 1:30 ratio, meaning that 50 ha of the same vegetation type need to be secured elsewhere to 'balance the scales', according to SANBI's current offset guidelines. I have met with Mr du Toit on his other farm in order to explore possibilities there to secure these 50 ha, but much of the veld there is degraded and rehabilitation costs would be substantial, making the viability of an easement a little uncertain (we would require a second site visit). I would like to engage further on the issue, and I know Mr du Toit is open to this. I would also like to discuss the possibility of re-consolidating the 30ha purchased from Mr Lotter back into the neighbouring land portion still owned by Mr

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Lotter, as per the map below. This reduces the splitting of renosterveld remnants further and allows the continued management of this continuous portion of CR veld.

We are happy to meet with Mr du Toit to discuss further. What is clear from my engagements with him is that Mr du Toit regrets what happened here and that he is open to finding a positive way forward for renosterveld.

For this particular case, I firmly believe that hiring a botanist to assess the 1.7 ha lost against an offset, will not be beneficial as i) Mr du Toit is more than willing to engage with the ORCT and yourself / the Department to mitigate and ii) we know the site intimately and do not require an additional botanical assessment from a specialist (we are specialists in renosterveld ourselves) and iii) we would rather see money used to secure hectares for conservation and restore degraded areas on Mr du Toit's other farm, or elsewhere.

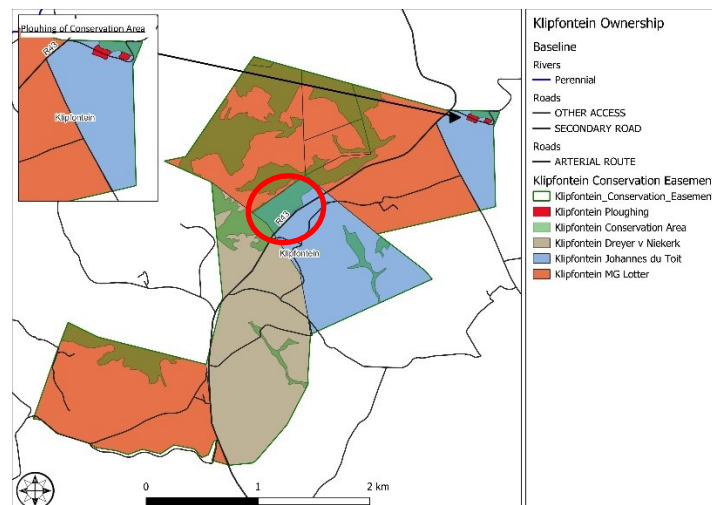
I hope this will be of some assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss further.

Kind regards

Odette Curtis Scott



CEO, Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust



Above: Map denoting the original Klipfontein easement and new ownership by Mr du Toit (and van Niekerk). The red circle indicates the area that should ideally be reconsolidated with the portions still owned by Mr Lotter.

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