



SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

Fact Sheet Coastal Heritage



**Produced By: Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit
& Development Applications Unit**

Definition

Coastal Heritage consists of heritage resources lying within the intertidal and coastal zones.



Wreck of the Volo (1896) near Bushmans River mouth

Types of Heritage: Coastal heritage resources include maritime and underwater cultural heritage resources such as such as: lighthouses, harbours, dockyards, tidal pools, wrecks or parts of wrecks of vessels and aircraft older than 60 years, including any artefacts or survivor camps associated with them, burials, man-made tidal fish traps, submerged prehistoric landscapes, places of significant intangible cultural heritage, structures older than 60 years, and archaeological or palaeontological artefacts.

Legislation

The National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999, (NHRA) provides a framework for the management and protection of the cultural heritage resources of South Africa. The NHRA established the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) as the national administrative body responsible for the protection of South Africa's cultural heritage. The SAHRA is an agency for the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture and is, *inter alia*, responsible for establishing principles, standards and policies that provide details on how to record and manage the national estate.

The NHRA sets out a three-tier system to establish who is responsible for managing heritage resources.



National Level

The South African Heritage Resources Agency is responsible for the management of the estate at a national level. Grade 1 or Declared National Heritage Sites are always the responsibility of SAHRA, as are Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage resources.

Provincial Level

There are Provincial Heritage Resources Authorities (PHRAs) in each province who are responsible for the management of Grade 2 heritage resources in their respective provinces, in KZN, the PHRA is AMAFA.

Local Level

There are a limited number of compliant local heritage authorities who can manage Grade 3 heritage resources.

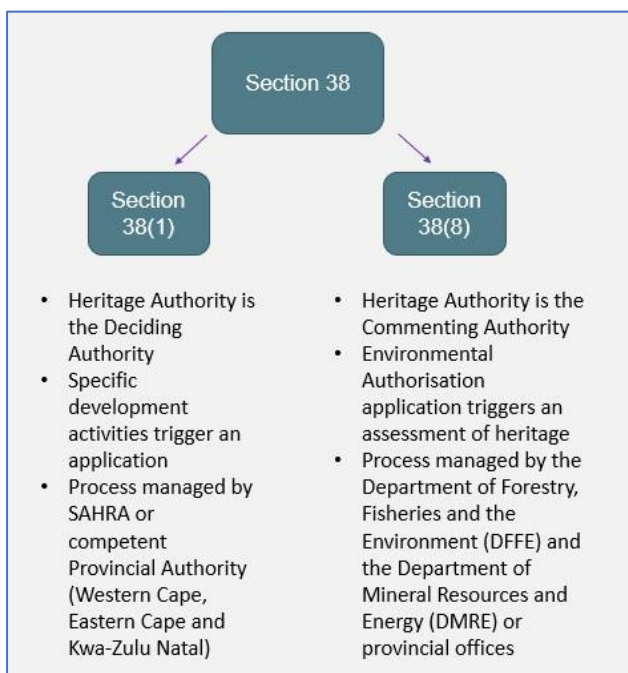


Port Shepstone Lighthouse (1906)
Photo: Justin Klusener.

This three-tier system helps developers to know who to contact when they are planning a development. SAHRA must always be approached to comment on developments where impacts to maritime and underwater cultural heritage may occur.

Development, legislation, and heritage

Proposed developments must carefully consider the ways in which the project activities may adversely impact the surrounding environment, including heritage resources in that environment. In terms of the NHRA, development applications must be submitted to the relevant Heritage Resources Authority (in the coastal zone, usually SAHRA and/or a PHRA). The applications must be submitted via the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS) and will require the payment of a fee. Developments requiring a heritage impact assessment are either in terms of:



Section 38(1): When a development triggers an assessment in terms of section 38(1), a stand-alone Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) report is submitted to the relevant heritage authority, either SAHRA or AMAFA who is then the deciding authority.

OR

Section 38(8): Developments requiring environmental authorisation in terms of the Environmental Management Act (NEMA) must also include a Heritage Impact Assessment. In these cases, since DFFE/DMRE is the deciding authority, the heritage authority is a commenting authority and provides input on the HIA only.

The intertidal and coastal region is often a hostile, dynamic and ever-changing environment, this means that heritage resources can be exposed or covered up in a relatively short space of time. This must be considered when regulating any development along the coastline as there will always be the potential for unknown heritage resources to be hidden beneath shifting tides and sands. To manage this risk, development applications must have mitigation measures put in place to react to the discovery of any heritage resources.



Nightingale trawler when it wrecked in 1933



Remains of the Nightingale trawler along the coastline

Permits

Heritage resources, as outlined above, are the property of the state and as such should be protected. However, there are situations where the disturbance of a heritage resource is necessary. This can only be carried out under permit from the relevant heritage authority.

In this instance Section 35(4) of the NHRA states that:

“No person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority—

- (a) destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;*
- (b) destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or palaeontological material or object or any meteorite;*
- (c) trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or palaeontological material or object, or any meteorite; or*
- (d) bring onto or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment which assist in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and palaeontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.”*

Section 27(18) of the NHRA relates to National Heritage sites and states that:

“(18) No person may destroy, damage, deface, excavate, alter, remove from its original position, subdivide or change the planning status of any heritage site without a permit issued by the heritage resources authority responsible for the protection of such site.”

Best practice in heritage conservation is usually preservation *in situ*. This means that permits are only issued subject to strict conditions and after extensive consideration. As is the case with development applications, permit applications must be submitted to the relevant Heritage Resources Authority. The applications must be submitted via the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS) and will require the payment of a fee.

Considerations to the impact on a heritage resource

During any developments in the coastal regions, it is important to consider how the works could impact the environment. Heritage is not just physical resources that we can see and touch; it can also include intangible aspects of cultural heritage which may manifest as a sacred space or ritual site for traditional communities.

Examples of impacts to consider are whether changing the flow of a body of water. E.g., river or estuary, could affect any identified heritage resources? Does the proposed work adversely affect the intangible cultural practices in the area or restrict access to a site that may have cultural importance to the local community? Does any heritage need to be disturbed and would a permit need to be applied for?



Heavy machinery working in sand dunes on a beach

It must also be noted that the destruction or theft of any heritage resources, including shipwrecks, is a crime and is a contravention in terms of Section 51 of the NHRA.

Heritage is a non-renewable and finite resource and every effort must be made to protect and preserve it for future generations.

Useful Links

SAHRIS - <https://sahris.sahra.org.za/>

SAHRA Website - <https://www.sahra.org.za/>



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Underwater Cultural Heritage**
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