

## OPSOMMING

### DIE EKOLOGIE EN PLANTEGROEIBESTUUR VAN DIE OLIFANSTRIVIERSISTEEM

deur

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#### PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (PLANTKUNDE)

Die Olifantsrivier is die tweede grootste rivier in die voormalige Transvaal, nou bekend as die Noordelike Provinsie en Mpumalanga en is een van die mees besoedelde riviere in die streek. Die motivering van hierdie projek was onder andere om 'n breë oorsig te verkry van die huidige toestand van die makrokanaal en om impakte te identifiseer wat kan lei tot die verdere degradering van die makrokanaal en die riviersisteem as sulks.

Die primêre doelstellings van hierdie studie was die identifisering, beskrywing en kartering van die homogene plantegroei-eenhede, die identifisering van uitheemse- en indringerplante en die saamstel van bestuursaanbevelings en riglyne wat 'n bydrae sal lewer tot die effektiewe bestuur en instandhouding van die makrokanaal.

Hierdie projek het oor 'n periode van vier jaar gestrek. Floristiese- en habitatsdata is oor 'n tydperk van drie jaar by 'n totaal van 155 varieerbare strookpersele ingesamel. Dataverwerking is met behulp van die PHYTOTAB-PC rekenaarprogrampakket gedoen.

Die makrokanaal van die Olifantsrivier kan in twee breë groepe verdeel word na aanleiding van die plantegroestructuur met die makrokanaalbanke geassosieer naamlik die banke waar 'n houtagtige komponent afwesig of beperk is tot enkele dwergstruik (Grasveldbloom) en die banke wat gekenmerk word aan 'n ruie houtagtige komponent (Savannebloom).

'n Totaal van agt plantgemeenskappe is geïdentifiseer in die makrokanaal van die Olifantsrivier geassosieer met die Grasveldbloom. Die makrokanaal van hierdie gedeelte van die Olifantsrivier varieer van 6 meter breed met geen duidelike oewersone nie, behalwe vir enkele gras-, biesie- en pionierkruidspesies geassosieer met die waterrand, tot so breed as 32 meter met 'n duidelik gedefinieerde oewersone.

Daar is nege plantgemeenskappe in die makrokanaal van die Olifantsrivier geassosieer met die Savannebloom geïdentifiseer. Die makrokanaal varieer van 17 meter tot 210 meter breed. Die Olifantsrivier in die Laeveld is 'n goed ontwikkelde riviersisteem wat aan die teenwoordigheid van verskeie kanale, eilande en voormalige eilande, gedomineer deur houtagtige plantegroei, gekenmerk word.

Die negatiewe impak van plantspesies met die makrokanaal in die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin geassosieer is 'n ernstige bedreiging vir die biodiversiteit van hierdie areas. Die lys van verklaarde onkruid en indringers soos gestipuleer in die wet is onvolledig en behoort hersien te word na konsultering met die relevante rolspelers en organisasies.

Na die vloede in die Olifantsriviersisteem gedurende 1996 is daar besluit om heropnames by geselekteerde persele gedurende die 1996 en 1998 groeiseisoene te doen. Die onderskeie datastelle is ge-analiseer en vergelyk om die impak van vloede op die floristiese samestelling van die makrokanaal te kwantifiseer.

Daar is aangedui dat aktiwiteite wat die stabiliserende rol van die oewerplantegroei nadelig beïnvloed bydra tot 'n verhoogde impak deur vloedwater. Hierdie studie bevestig die opportunistiese aard van sommige uitheemse plantspesies wat 'n merkbare toename in gemiddelde kroonbedekking en konstantheid na afloop van die vloede getoon het.

Die belangrikste impakte in die makrokanaal en omliggende areas word deur die mynbou-, industriële- en landbousektore veroorsaak. Hierdie impakte is aan die hand van huidige

omgewingswetgewing ge-evalueer om vas te stel of enige van hierdie impakte 'n oortreding van die wet is. Die bevindinge en bestuursaanbevelings wat voortspruit uit hierdie projek verskaf 'n wetenskaplik gefundeerde basis vir die bestuur van die makrokanaal van die Olifantsriviersisteem.

## SUMMARY

### THE ECOLOGY AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT OF THE OLIFANTS RIVER SYSTEM

by

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The Olifants River is the second largest river in the former Transvaal (now the Northern Province and Mpumalanga) and is regarded as one of the most polluted rivers in the region. The initiation of this project was *inter alia* an attempt to obtain a holistic perspective of the current state of the macro channel and to identify the impacts that could lead to the further degradation of the macro channel and the river system itself.

The primary objectives of this study were to identify and describe the homogeneous vegetation units, to map these vegetation units, to identify exotic and invader plants and provide management recommendations and guidelines that will contribute to the effective management and maintenance of the macro channel.

This project was conducted over a period of four years. A total of 155 variable length transect sample plots were used to record floristic and habitat data over a period of three years. The data were processed using the PHYTOTAB-PC computer program package. The macro channel of the Olifants River can broadly be divided into two types according to the structure of the vegetation associated with the macro channel banks namely the banks where woody

cover is absent or restricted to a few dwarf shrubs (Grassland Biome) and the banks characterized by a dense woody component (Savanna Biome).

A total of eight plant communities were identified in the macro channel of the Olifant River associated with the Grassland Biome. The macro channel of this portion of the Olifants River varied from a mere 6 metres with no distinct riparian zone, with the exception of a few grass- sedge- and pioneer forb species directly bordering the water edge to 32 metres with a well defined riparian zone.

Nine plant communities were identified in the macro channel of the Olifants River associated with the Savanna Biome. The macro channel of the Olifants River varied from 17 metres up to 210 metres wide. The Olifants River in the Lowveld is a mature well developed river system characterized by various channels, islands and former islands dominated by woody species.

The negative impact of exotic plant species associated with the macro channel within the Kruger National Park poses a serious threat to the biodiversity of this area. The lists of declared weeds and invaders as stipulated in the law are incomplete and should be revised after consultation with the relevant role players and organizations.

Floods that occurred in the Olifants River during 1996 lead to the decision to resample sites that had been sampled during the 1995 season as well as during the 1998 season and to compare these sites to quantify the impact of the floods on the floristic composition of the macro channel.

This study indicates that activities that cause the destabilization of the riparian vegetation lead to an increase in the impact of floods. An increase in the average crown cover and constancy of certain exotic plant species after flooding had occurred, confirms the opportunistic nature of these species.

The most significant impacts recorded within the macro channel and the adjacent land are due to activities of the mining, industrial and agricultural sectors. These impacts were evaluated against current relevant environmental legislation to determine whether any of these

activities transgressed the law. The findings and management recommendations provide a sound scientific basis for the management of the macro channel of the Olifants River System.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Willem Johannes Myburgh is op 28 Desember te Bloemfontein, Oranje Vrystaat gebore. Hy voltooi sy hoërskool opleiding in 1982 aan die Hoërskool Driehoek in Vanderbijlpark waarna hy sy Nasionale Diensplig in 1984 voltooi.

In 1985 registreer hy as student aan die Universiteit van Pretoria. Die B.Sc-graad met Plantkunde en Dierkunde as hoofvakke word aan die einde van 1987 aan hom toegeken. In 1988 aanvaar hy 'n betrekking as Landbounavorsingstegnikus by die Navorsingsinstituut vir Plantkunde en vanaf 1989 by die Navorsingsentrum vir Weiding. Hy is tans werksaam by die Landbounavorsingsraad-Veld en Weidingsinstituut. In 1989 registreer hy vir die B.Sc Hons-graad (deelyds) wat aan die einde van 1990 met lof behaal word.

Hy registreer in 1991 vir die graad M.Sc.-Plantkunde met spesialisering in plantekologie wat in 1993 met lof toegeken word. Verskeie kursusse in omgewingsbestuur word suksesvol voltooi gedurende 1997 en 1998 aan die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys. In 1997 registreer hy vir die graad P.hd.-Plantkunde (plantekologie) aan die Universiteit van Pretoria. Na 10 jaar diens is hy outeur en/of mede-outeur van 9 wetenskaplike en verskeie populêre artikels

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