



Barberton, Oct. 6, 2021

Dear Moodies BASE Science Team Members (and Associates),



Nic Beukes, Chris Rippon and I spent the past two days visiting the eight drill sites, together with the drilling manager and the drilling supervisor of Master Drilling. The two engineers evaluated site accessibilities for the two rigs and their footprint requirements. We also discussed schedules, security, accommodation, procedures, permits, water and many other topics among ourselves and the landowners. According to the mobilization schedule, both drill rigs will arrive in Barberton October 26 on flatbed trucks and move up into the mountains from there.

We would actually have liked to drill our most distant and highest location, “lower Moodies” strata on Farm Belvue in the Stolzburg Syncline, prior to the start of the rainy season in mid-November but we’ll have to await the resolution of an possibly illegal mining exploration venue there. We will therefore begin drilling a sequence of four boreholes in the SAPPi pine and eucalyptus plantations of the Saddleback Syncline: We will start simultaneously with BASE 4-3 and 4-2 in the Lomati Delta Complex, then BASE 4-1 and -3. The sequence of boreholes after the Christmas/New Year break Dec. 15 - Jan. 5 is as yet undecided: BASE-2 (located at the highly accessible White Outcrops on the R40), the Fairview Mine well BASE-1, or the two Belvue Farm (Nkomazi) wells BASE 5-1 and -2 will depend in part on how quickly the Belvue Farm case can be resolved. Chris Rippon and Rod Tucker will serve as well site geologists for all boreholes. At a rate of ca. 20m/day and ca. 500m long boreholes, each borehole will take somewhat more than a month.



In Barberton, we secured the middle section of the BIAS Hall, a spacious former steel-processing plant and machine hall in the center of Barberton (the same building in which the Barberton Museum and a range of shops are housed). The core saw has arrived from UJ and is currently being connected with electricity and water. The drilling company will deliver core boxes, tables and trestles. We expect and will attract a steady stream of visitors who will be guided along a walkway, to be equipped with rock and core displays which will lead from “Why research ?” through “The BGB and the Moodies Group” to rationale for the BMM World Heritage Site. I have begun the design and printing of numerous posters and banners. Next week, Phumelele Mashele (MSc Wits) will join us to form the core of our social media and publicity team.



Our hospitality Manager Astrid Christianson has made the rental of two very nice apartments / flats / cottages in Barberton possible. She has equipped them in the past days with beds, furniture, kitchenware, curtains and many other items. We now have accommodation for five and will probably have space for temporary guests on couches or similar. However, Astrid ([astrid@barberton.co.za](mailto:astrid@barberton.co.za)) will gladly organize accommodation in Barberton for you. In particular, if you are going to

work analytically on the core, we actually expect you to visit in order to obtain a more complete perspective on your research and the conditions under which core is recovered and processed.

Starting early November and at the end of each day, six days a week, a bakkie will transport the cores down to the Barberton BIAS hall where they will be slabbed, documented, and packaged in two sets of core boxes (one for the SA National Core Repository, the other for ICDP). Approximately 5 people will be working in this hall: 2 helpers handling and slabbing the core, me and Dora Paprika describing and documenting the core, and Phume handling visitors and doing outreach.

It is very satisfying to see this machinery set in motion. Thanks to all who contributed and will contribute. Wish us good luck and success; we hope to see you here.

*Nic and Christoph*