

## DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

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## SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

## DECLARATION OF "WONDERWERK CAVE", PORTION OF PORTION 23 OF FARM, BLOCK AA 689, (IN KURUMAN) AS A NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

By virtue of the powers vested in the South African Heritage Resources Agency in terms of section 27(5) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999, SAHRA hereby declares "Wonderwerk Cave" situated on Portion of Portion 23 of farm BLOCK AA 689 in Kuruman, as a National Heritage Site.

## SITE SIGNIFICANCE

*Research at Wonderwerk Cave, in the eastern Kuruman Hills, has generated important insights into nearly two million years of human history. The site comprises a 140 m deep cave with a 6 m archaeological deposit, as well as a portion of the Wonderwerk farm property. It was ceded to the McGregor Museum as a heritage site and public servitude. It is a declared Provincial Heritage Site and has been graded Grade 1 by SAHRA Council. It was nominated as part of a serial nomination, with Border Cave and Klasies River Mouth, for the tentative list for World Heritage Sites, and this has since been changed to an individual nomination for the site.*

*In terms of the criteria set out in Section 3(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999) Wonderwerk Cave qualifies for national heritage status on several criteria. Research, since the 1940s, into the archaeological deposits within Wonderwerk Cave has testified to the site's importance in the pattern of South Africa's history. Some 6 m deep, the deposits are estimated to span nearly 2 million years. This includes a long Stone Age sequence from Oldowan and Acheulean to Later Stone Age times, ending with evidence of occupation by the first white settlers, who lived in the cave in the early twentieth century.*

*Wonderwerk Cave exhibits rare and endangered aspects of South Africa's cultural heritage. Distinctive rock paintings on the cave walls date from the last thousand years. In the Later Stone Age levels (c. 11 000 BP to <1000 BP) some of the older dated rock engravings known from the African continent were found. A fragment of engraved haematite from still older Middle Stone Age levels may be c. 70 000 years old. In Middle and Earlier Stone Age levels, besides a lithic sequence through Acheulean to Howiesons Poort, there is early evidence for controlled use of fire (ash, burnt stone and calcined bone), grass bedding and pigment usage. Together these are suggestive of aspects of behavioural modernity in the emergence of modern humans. Environmental evidence bearing on human development in the region is provided in the exceptionally well preserved animal bones (including species which became extinct in early Holocene times, with human agency as a probable contributory factor) and other palaeoenvironmental indicators.*

*Research at Wonderwerk has already proven the potential of the site to yield information on human, natural and cultural heritage over the past nearly 2 million years. Several different dating techniques and other forms of analysis have been and are being applied.*