

# Update...

October 2019

Our first *Update* of the new financial year.

## ADMIN

During the course of the year the composition of the board of Trustees changed with the resignation of two Professional Advisors (M Cameron and Z Erasmus) and one Administrative Trustee (R Strain). New appointees were Dr. J Rutherford and D v Zyl (Professional Advisors) and N Louw (Admin. Trustee). The board is constituted as per the footer of this page, all of whom have agreed to serve for the forthcoming financial year.

## FINANCE

The year ended with a R53K loss which was as anticipated (budgeted loss R71K), summarised as:

	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>
<b>RECOVERIES:</b>		
HOA	141,600	141,600
PFER	42,000	24,000
INTEREST/OTHER	<u>27,348</u>	<u>20,000</u>
<b>TOTAL RECOVERIES</b>	<b><u>210,948</u></b>	<b><u>185,600</u></b>
<b>EXPENSES:</b>	<b><u>ACTUAL</u></b>	<b><u>BUDGET</u></b>
ADMIN	22,844	23,015
MAINTENANCE	82,500	93,600
ALIEN CLEARING	109,046	103,200
ROAD REHAB.	33,684	24,000
OTHER	<u>15,751</u>	<u>12,400</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>263,825</u></b>	<b><u>256,215</u></b>

The budget for the 2020 financial year was distributed a few months back, which shows an anticipated loss of R63K, however the Trustees have decided not to increase the monthly contribution from the HOA, opting rather to fund the additional expenditure from accumulated reserves.

Major contributors to expenditure are "Routine Maintenance" of walking trails and fire-breaks, and "Alien Vegetation Clearing", which is an on-going exercise and will be for the foreseeable future.

## REHABILITATION OF THE SOUTH ROAD

Those of you who walk the tracks and trails of the reserve will have noted that the "South Road", which heads west into the reserve near the water tanks above No. 1, has had some serious maintenance, with concrete strips added in many of the more eroded patches. This continues to be "work in progress" as the lower section of the road still needs upgrading, which will be done when resources and time allow. With summer here and the growing season well advanced, our focus will be on keeping the trails "walkable" and of course, the ever pressing clearing of alien vegetation re-growth. Not to mention the constant (costly) nuisance of fallen trees from our neighbours' properties after heavy winds/rain.



For those driving the South road, please remember it is very much for **4 x 4 vehicles only** and should you take on the steep hill on the western boundary please do so **DOWNHILL** only. Any attempt to climb uphill will lead to wheel-spin and damage to the fire-break, which is already under pressure from natural forces of erosion. Also, when approaching the hill, please refrain from cutting the corner and keep to the concrete tracks which are positioned on a more substantial base, for the same reason.

## RE-OPENING OF WALKING TRAIL

Some of you will have already enjoyed the “short-cut” from the upper part of the Leopard Trail, down the steep fire-break back to the 3-Dams road, which was reopened a few weeks ago, affording a very pleasant (and energetic) circular walk.



Concurrently the team will also be cutting back and removing dead vegetation along portions of the road, as well as the Cape Sweet-pea, which is unfortunate, as it has an attractive flower and it provides some much needed greenery.



However it is more important to protect our dwindling stock of healthy, living trees. It also camouflages dead vegetation, which is the fire threat we are trying to minimise.

## FIRE PREVENTION

The minutes of a previous Trustee meeting included comment by Deon van Zyl, one of our new Professional Advisors, who is also very involved with local fire management, being the current chairman of the Southern Cape Fire Prevention Association (SCFPA). After a walk-about of the estate he advised that we were particularly vulnerable from the Phantom Pass road verges, which are thick with dead vegetation and bracken fern (which incidentally is not an alien). There is also serious infestation of the creeper “Cape Sweet-pea” (*Dipogon lignosus*), which, while also not an alien, is extremely invasive and is suffocating/killing healthy trees and therefore must be removed.



The first thing we needed to do was to establish which areas were the responsibility of the WBPNT and which the HOA, which we did and we have initiated a clearing program, starting with the cutting of a +-6m firebreak between the fence and properties no.'s 42-44.

## BIETOU

Probably the most prolific plant to have flourished since the 2017 fire is the bietou which is to be seen in dense patches all over the reserve. While it is most attractive in its current growing stage, we know that it becomes woody and senescent as it matures and eventually dies, posing yet another fire threat.



We Trustees have been concerned about this and sought the advice of one of our Professional Advisors, Dr. Tineke Kraaij (Phd. Botany and ecology) and she put our minds to rest with the following response:

*“Bietou is an indigenous pioneer plant which kick-starts re-establishment of dune fynbos and thicket after disturbance such as fire. It is not very long-lived – approx. 15-20 years. However, by the time it dies, it will already have been replaced by other (live) shrubs. We happened to have done some flammability experiments on Bietou recently, comparing it to flammability of several other thicket, fynbos and invasive alien plant (like Acacias, Pines, Gums, etc.) species, and it was amongst the 5 least flammable of*



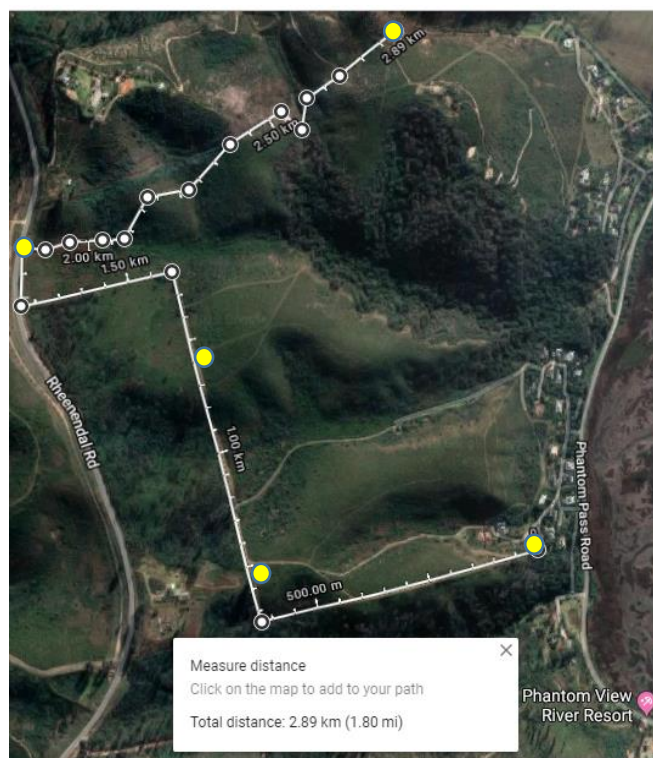
*about 30 species. Bietou has very high water contents in the leaves and branches which means that (when alive) it does not ignite easily, does not burn at very high intensity, and does not burn completely (i.e. doesn't carry fire well). When they do start dying off of old age, it will not all happen at once, so it won't create one continuous bed of dead fuels.*

*Bottom line is, I really don't think you should be too concerned and I would definitely not advocate control of this plant as that would compromise the natural succession of indigenous vegetation, and give more of a gap for invasive aliens."*

## SECURITY

With the recent spate of incidents on the estate security is on the minds of all of us. We understand that a task group is working on proposals for a sustainable solution and we look forward to their recommendations.

Over the years there has been discussion among the Trustees regarding the practicality of enclosing the entire perimeter of the WBPNT property, joining up with the existing HOA palisade fencing. Bearing in mind that this would require +/- 2,890m of fencing, the cost of doing so is significant – and then, is fencing a practical solution, given that much of this would be in remote areas, out of sight, where it could be breached without too much effort, unless it was electrified with back-up



sensors and a communications link to Allsound should it be tampered with – which is an option.

Initial quotes for 1,8m high palisade fencing (such as we currently have) was in the region of R1,200/m or approx. R3,5m in total (nearly R60k per property) – and this is without electrification. Clearly not an option. The second choice, installing 2m high electric fencing, solar driven, with back-up sensors and comms to Allsound would cost between R350 and R400/m – a third of the cost of palisade fencing and a lot more effective. It is a feasible option.

The simplest and least costly route would be to monitor likely points of ingress. There are five particular points that, in our opinion, would need to be monitored (see yellow dots on adjacent map), perhaps with motion sensitive cameras with comms link to Allsound. This would at least provide them with an early warning of possible intrusion. Certainly not the most secure solution, but better than nothing.

Enclosing the perimeter will of course block the movement of game between us and neighbouring properties, but there is also an upside – it would afford better protection from poaching (which is a very real threat) and means that we can re-introduce the game that has been lost over the years – bushbuck and Cape grysbok in particular.



In closing we would suggest that walkers take care to check themselves for ticks on returning from the reserve. This is the season and they are certainly around...

Have fun – enjoy our wonderful gem.

