

# Update...

September 2021

**T**ime for an *Update* as we start our new financial year including a summary of the 2020-21 management accounts (pre-audit) and a look at the budget and plans for the forthcoming financial year.

## FINANCIALS

Income for the year was R178 535 which as usual is primarily from HOA levies (R141 600), PFER contribution (R24,000) and interest on investments (R12 935). Expenditure for the period was R207 377 resulting in an operating loss of **R28 842** as against a budgeted loss of **R51 910**.

Almost half of the expenditure (R102k) was on routine maintenance of firebreaks and trails, other significant expenditure included ad-hoc clearing and widening of firebreaks R34k, road maintenance R20k, accounting/audit and insurance R20k, and the boundary was professionally surveyed and re-pegged (R15k) as all previous markers had been lost in the fire of 2017.

A copy of the management accounts for the year Sept. 2020-Aug2021 is available on the website ([www.westfordbridge.co.za](http://www.westfordbridge.co.za)); HOME OWNERS; WB NATURE RESERVE.

## BUDGET

As part of the V&V (Nature Reserve Verification & Validation) program we needed to update our EMP (Environmental Management Plan) which includes details on planned maintenance of the infrastructure and alien clearing for the year.

The revised EMP includes an annual update process for such maintenance and the results are automatically passed through to the Budget, which we have used for the first time when compiling the budget for the coming financial year.

Once again some 80% of the anticipated total expenditure (R189k) is earmarked for maintenance of trails, roads and firebreaks, as well as alien clearing. Other than a possible update to the "Trails Map" there is nothing in particular planned for the year, unless the

electric fence project becomes a reality, which the HOA board continues to work on and will no doubt keep us informed on progress. In the event this does happen there should be no significant costs to the WBPNT operating budget as it would be installed on existing firebreaks and all firebreaks are catered to in the on-going maintenance schedule.

In order to accommodate the ever escalating operating costs the Trustees agreed at a recent meeting that it was necessary to increase the monthly HOA contribution by R50 per property for the forthcoming year. The new contribution will be R250 per property per month. It is the first increase in three years and is unfortunately unavoidable.

A copy of the detailed budget is available on the website.

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (EMP)

It is a requirement within the Deed of Trust to operate the nature reserve according to the dictates of a formal Environmental Management Plan (EMP) which should be updated every five years.

The last update was produced by messrs. Cameron &



Erasmus in August 2013. The fire of 2017 delayed the need for an update as virtually all vegetation was razed to the ground, however, with the healthy regrowth and the recent requirement of the V&V program it became necessary to review the situation and produce an

updated EMP based on the revised situation post the fire.

As this is quite a demanding and time-consuming exercise the EMP update has traditionally been outsourced to environmental consultants, however it was agreed that on this occasion it would be developed in-house, saving ourselves upward of R20k. As it is a comprehensive and lengthy document there is no need to duplicate it here, instead you are encouraged to access it on the website under the DOCUMENTS tab.

The two most important elements of the EMP are “Fire Management” and “Maintenance”. The starting point was the revision of the “Management Blocks” (burn blocks) which included consultation with local fire authorities, followed by a vegetation species assessment by an environmental expert (Dr Anina Coetzee of Mandela University) who visited our Reserve and conducted an in-situ study of the whole area. From this we were able to schedule the optimum controlled burn program for the future.

The second issue, Maintenance, elicited a complete revision of the maintenance planning process for trails

	Month	Sep				Oct				Nov				Dec					
	Date	07	14	21	28	05	12	19	26	02	09	16	23	30	07	14	21	28	04
	Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
TRAILS	Fynbos					1												x	x
	Porcupine					1												x	x
	Leopard				1													x	x
	Leopard zig-zag									1								x	x
	Bushbuck						4							3				x	x
	Forest						4							3				x	x
	Forest (N-S)						4							3				x	x
	Fish Eagle															1		x	x
	Board Walk					1												x	x

and firebreaks. This is discussed in detail in Section 5 of the EMP.

## WALKING TRAILS

Just a couple of points on the walking trails. Currently the ticks seem to have reappeared, therefore it would be wise to take extra care, particularly when walking with dogs.



With the onset of spring and the accompanying surge in vegetation growth, it becomes quite a challenge to keep all walking trails in pristine condition. Fortunately this will settle in time, so please bear with us.

Some of the old boardwalks in the forest are beginning to need attention or replacement. This is part of the ongoing maintenance plan but in the meantime take care when walking on the Forest Walk and Bushbuck Ravine.

Although we have tried to proactively remove dead or dying trees along the forest trails, branches and debris (and sometimes whole trees) continue to fall and block one’s path, particularly after strong winds and heavy rains. We appreciate having this brought to our attention when it happens by walkers, as many of you do. Thank you.