

MAYOR ANNOUNCES APPROVAL OF UNFORSEEN AND UNAVOIDABLE EXPENDITURE

During a Special Council meeting held on the 22 January 2019 in Hermanus' banqueting hall, the Executive Mayor Ald Dudley Coetzee addressed the council regarding an approval of unforeseen and unavoidable expenditure due to fires experienced across the Overstrand.

Quoting in his speech, executive mayor indicated that, "the fire season for the period to date have proved to be extreme, posing a serious financial challenge for the municipality. Mayor pointed out a number of factors, for the increase in expenditure were staff overtime payment, vehicle fuel costs as well as external resources obtained to ensure that the municipality had the necessary capacity to deal with these abnormal circumstances.

"Mayor further declared that on the incident happened the 11 January 2019, the Chief Fire Services, confirmed a number of fires, hence a code red was declared at provincial government". Resources were stretched beyond capacity with the following major incidents:

* **Betty's Bay Wild Fire**

* **Masakhane fire which spread rapidly to the Franskraal Wild Fire**

* **Karwyderskraal Fire, rapidly escalating, threatening several communities including Camp Hill and the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. This fire spread across the mountain to Fernkloof.**

"Approximately 200ha of indigenous vegetation of the Fernkloof Nature Reserve burned. The area previously burned in 2008 and therefore the veld about 11 years old. Mountain Fynbos usually burns between 12-15yrs without extensive damage to the integrity of the veld".

The mayor also announced in terms of the provisions of section 29 of the MFMA that, on request from the Municipal Manager, "he has authorised unforeseen and unavoidable expenditure for which no provision was made in the 2018 / 2019 Budget of the Municipality.

This authorisation was as a result of discussions to consider the excessive expenditure incurred with regard to the various Wild Fires experienced across the Overstrand, of which the extent could not reasonably been foreseen.

The total costs was an estimate in, which exact details were to be finalised, and were to be appropriated in a forthcoming adjustment budget on 27 February 2019, to address requirements.

The following provisional estimated cost of unforeseen and unavoidable expenditure for these fires is at this stage:

The current estimate for Fire Fighting Services (external): (We still await final accounts from other municipalities)	R 3 500 000
Estimated replacement costs of Fire Engine destroyed in fire:	R 2 420 000
Estimated Additional Vehicle Fuel costs for December 2018 & January 2019 Fires:	R450 000
Overtime estimates: (based on Overtime submissions):	R1 900 000
- Estimated Water services infrastructure: (Booster pumps, Replacement of domestic water meters and connections, Markers of fire hydrants and valves, Signage)	R978 000
- The estimated infrastructure damaged on the Fernkloof Reserve	R 100 000
This brings us to a total estimated amount of	R 9 348 000

BELOW-AVERAGE 2018 RAINFALL FOR GREATER HERMANUS

The total rainfall measured during 2018 in Hermanus was 520 mm, resulting in 2018 being the 4th consecutive year with below average rainfall. The long term average rainfall for Hemanus is 620mm per year. Total rainfall measured in 2015 was 510 mm, in 2016 it was 526 mm, and 502 mm in 2017. The level of the De Bos Dam was at 51% of capacity on 14 February 2019, compared to 48% on the same date in 2018,

According to the records of rainfall statistics at the municipal offices in Hermanus from 1936, the five years with the lowest rainfall to date were 1973 (365 mm), 1969 (446 mm), 1988 (464 mm), 1975 (468 mm), and 2000 (494 mm).

At this stage, the level 2 water restrictions, including the first level of water saving tariffs, have to be maintained. Properties with even numbered addresses may water their gardens for maximum one hour, only on Wednesdays, and uneven numbered properties for one hour, only on Tuesdays. No watering may be done between 9:00 and 17:00 on any of these days. Washing of vehicles and hard surfaces with a hose pipe using municipal water is still not allowed.

DRAFT 2017/18 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED

Overstrand Municipality's draft audited annual report for the 2017/18 financial year, which was tabled at a special Council Meeting on Tuesday, 22 January 2019, will be considered with all the comments and representations it received during the time it was open for public scrutiny, at a Council meeting scheduled for 27 March 2019. This meeting will be open to the public.

The annual report provides opportunity for a thorough inspection to determine whether the Municipality is still on course.



At a Special Council meeting held on Tuesday, 22 January 2019 Overstrand Executive Mayor, Dudley Coetzee, congratulated councillors for successfully completing a course in Good Citizenship. They graduated from the Stellenbosch University's School of Public Leadership at the end of last year.

The councillors who completed their course are (l-r) Charmaine Resandt, Fanie Krige, Riana de Coning, Connie Tafu-Nwonkwo, Lindile Ntsabo and Valerie Pungupungu. Pictured with them are Municipal Manager Coenie Groenewald, Mayor Dudley Coetzee and Deputy Mayor Elnora Gillion.

*Cllr Vuyani Macotha was not available to attend the meeting due to work commitments

WHAT TO DO WITH INJURED ANIMALS AFTER THE RECENT FIRES?

Throughout the devastating fires in January 2019 we have seen and heard of many members of the public, emergency personnel, firefighters and environmental personnel who have found injured animals and taken them to a vet or have assisted by removing animals from areas before the flames of the fire engulf them. These are our unsung heroes and we would like to thank each and every person that has taken the time to help our animals in need and for caring for our environment.

It will take time for the veld to restore and seeds to regenerate again and this means that the natural food source, shelter and habitat for the animals will have to be provided in another way. The lack of vegetation in vast areas also impacts on the availability of water and moisture for a myriad of species. Given the devastation caused by the fires and the enormity of the associated impacts, some of which have been referred to above, it is just too extreme to say "They will move to another area, they will be fine". Yes, they will have to move to other areas but the limited amount of natural space available for these animals that already only inhabit the narrow strip of veld between difficult mountainous terrain and the urban edge, will have an impact on their behaviour and movement patterns as they search for food and shelter.



We should all be aware that feeding of wild animals is prohibited and therefore Overstrand Municipality cannot support feeding of any wild animals in their natural habitat but we would like to ask that people be aware that animals such as small mammals, lizards, snakes, birds, tortoises etc may frequent their gardens more and more over the next few months for shelter, protection, water or food. Please do not destroy these creatures and rather report them to us if they become a nuisance.

Baboons

The Overstrand also has a large number of baboon troops in the areas of Rooiels, Pringle Bay, Betty's Bay, Kleinmond, Onrus, Hermanus, Voëlkop and Franskraal. It is possible that we could start seeing a big change in the behavioural patterns and movement patterns of our troops. A great deal of their natural feeding ranges have been destroyed by the fire.

Because of this we would like to ask the people of the Overstrand NOT to feed the baboons. Please do not put out food for them in the veld - this will prohibit them from doing what they are supposed to naturally do and this in turn will have a negative impact on the regeneration of our natural environment, which later could lead to erosion and serious soil and vegetation loss. This could all have a long-term negative effect on the biodiversity of our areas. Please refrain from leaving food in the veld.

If you would like to put out water for animals and birds, please do not do it close to your house. Rather put it in the veld, away from the urban edge. There are other animals such as cats and dogs that could prey on these animals in and around the urban area. Please ensure that you do not have fruiting trees, vegetable gardens, open refuse bins or bags, open compost heaps, etc. in your gardens if you live within 500m of a nature reserve or natural area that has burnt. The animals will try to feed on these easy pickings and this can lead to constant and more severe raids and the associated conflict with humans. This could ultimately lead to the capture or death of the animal. Please do not start this vicious cycle by feeding the baboons.

The Overstrand Municipality would appreciate your understanding and support in this matter. Please report any major invasions of your gardens by wild animals or birds.

Who to call?

Sick birds in the Overstrand area should be reported (GPS co-ordinates for location will be most helpful) to the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) on 072 598 7117, the nearest local state vet, BirdLife Overberg, CapeNature office or the Overstrand Municipality's environmental department (028 316 3724 or a/h 028 313 8000/8111).



MUNICIPALITY STEPS UP "DOGS ON LEASH" COMPLIANCE

Overstrand Municipality's Environmental Department requests that residents living adjacent to the Fernkloof Nature Reserve, or the general public using the nature reserve for recreational purposes be mindful of the current state of the veld and support the recovery of wildlife after the recent fires. A young female duiker, injured during the January fires in Fernkloof, was released two weeks ago back into the nature reserve after two days' of rehabilitation at the Hermanus Animal Hospital. She was chased and traumatised by dogs running free in the Fernkloof Nature Reserve. This animal and many others that have been released in this area are trying to cope with a change of home range and some are still recovering from injuries.

We urge residents to restrain their pets chase any wild animals. These animals have already been traumatised and displaced by the fire and we are trying to ensure a safe space for them in the areas east of the Fernkloof Botanical Gardens.

The Fernkloof Nature Reserve is protected by the National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act and pets should not be allowed on the Nature Reserve at all. The Municipality has made an exception to allow pets on Fernkloof within designated areas, but for this allowance they must be on a leash. It is against the Municipality's by-law to have dogs off-leash in public places and people who follow the law are frustrated by those who don't. Allowing a dog in a public place without being kept on a leash under control of a person will result in a fine of R200 and/or impoundment.

• People who walk their dogs must have bags with them to pick up dog droppings.

According to the municipal by-law dogs must always be on a leash and should be under control of the person holding the leash. Section 6(2) and (3) of this by-law clearly stipulate that "No person may or cause to be allowed any dog to be in a public place unless it is kept on a leash."

Any contravention of this by-law can be reported to the Municipality's Law Enforcement at 028 313 8996 or Control Room 028 313 8000/8111. Alternatively send an email to enquiries@overstrand.gov.za, providing us the license plate or address of the person concerned.

OVERSTRAND'S WETLANDS ARE VERY IMPORTANT

In celebration of World Wetlands Day, Overstrand Municipality's Environmental Department and partners will be hosting various wetland education programmes to raise awareness of wetland values and benefits. World Wetlands Day is held every year on 2 February and marks the signing of the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention) on 2 February 1971.

Wetlands are areas where surface water surrounded by land plays a central part in controlling the local habitat of the plant and animal life living there. Wetlands occur mostly around catchment areas - and include estuaries, lagoons, marshes, rivers and ponds.

No matter the shape or size, wetlands provide numerous important services for people, fish and wildlife such as protecting and improving water quality, providing habitats for fish and wildlife, storing floodwaters, maintaining surface water flow during dry periods, and reducing soil erosion. We need to preserve our wetlands for future generations because once destroyed rare plant, animal, bird and fish species won't have a home to live and people won't be able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the different species living there.

In the Overstrand, we have a number of wetlands which you can visit to experience these unique habitats first hand.

- The most extensive is the Kleinmond-Lamloch Botriver wetland system. (Rooisand is a conservation area, but the Lamloch wetland is on private property). This wetland is home to the critically endangered Microfrog and the endangered Cape Platanna.
- A small but precious wetland area of 11 hectares is on the Hermanus Golf Course, commonly known as the Flat Street Wetland.
- The Mill Stream wetland system in Stanford provides breeding habitat for the Western Leopard Toads. (Interesting enough, until the mid - 90s Kleinmond was home to the largest population of Western Leopard Toads in SA)
- The Paddavlei in Hawton, unfortunately spoilt by contamination by waste water.
- The important birding areas associated with wetlands are the Botvlei area, Rooisand and the Lamloch swamps, the Klein River Estuary and associated wetlands on the coast just east of Hermanus as well as the Stanford wetlands and the river system.

Why are wetlands so important to Hermanus and any other part of nature?

Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality. They provide habitat for animals and plants and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

