

BOT RIVER ESTUARY FORUM (BREF)

MINUTES OF BREF MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2015

AT 14H00 – LIBRARY HALL, HAWSTON

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairperson Robin Perrins, welcomed everyone present.

Apologies recorded from: Dirk Uys, Cllr Phillip Appelgrein, Gerhard Cilliers, Tess Bruwer, Tracey Whitelaw, Patrick van Coller, Dave Hugo, Melissa Naicker & Zane Jumat.

The Attendance register was circulated.

2. Agenda Points

2.1 Amendments

Penelope Aplon requested that item 9.1 on the Agenda be dealt with at the next meeting. Frans Theunissen raised an issue that the Home Owners of Benguela Cove has extended their boundary fence when the water is low, which is far beyond their beacon. The concern is that when the water rises again this could be a hazard as there will be steel fencing under the water. In terms of the Bot River bylaw you are not allowed to put things in under the high water mark. He would like the Environmental Dept to have a look at this. Penelope Aplon noted that the reason she requested that this item should stand over is because she wants Benguela Cove to come and present at the next meeting.

2.2 Additional new items

The chairperson noted that the Bot River Estuary Artificial Breaching 2015 will be discussed before the Agenda begins.

Bot River Estuary Artificial Breaching 2015

Robin Perrins noted that Province sent a letter which states that the existing Mouth management plan (MMP) is still in place till November 2016. Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that the Mouth Management Plan will be available on the Municipal website for viewing.

Robin Perrins commented that in terms of the present criteria there are three aspects that should be taken into consideration. The salinity, water levels and as an additional item the flooding of properties but that is not a sole criterion. A lot of people did not acknowledge that a natural breach was impossible with the height of the berm. At this stage to talk about the quality of fishing, eco tourism, the effect on holiday makers, etc would waste time because they have no control of taking those considerations into account should it be necessary or if the crisis arise for another breach which he thinks would be highly unlikely. He asked all to understand that they dealt with some of the sentiments expressed by the Middelvlei Home Owners Association and one or two other organisations but they can't do anything about it at this stage. These sentiments must be tabled at a workshop where it can be motivated for consideration and be dealt with presumably by the panel running the workshop.

Pierre de Villiers commented that he wants to discuss the management principles that they apply and to get the members comments. He commented that Steve Lamberth and Giselle Murison will be attending the meeting so all specialist questions relating to birds and fish should be directed to them. He raised the following questions;

a) Is everyone happy with the MMP, did everyone read it and do they understand the document? Hannes van Rensburg and Anton Boon commented that they are not sure as to whether they have seen the document or not.

b) Is everyone happy with the fact that there must be a small Breaching Committee who can make the necessary decisions? The committee consists of OSM, CapeNature, the BREF Chairperson and then the specialists who provide comments. Hannes van Rensburg commented that they do not have a problem as to how the committee is put together. Anton Boon wanted to know that if the people on the committee have the knowledge and if they know what they are dealing with. Pierre de Villiers commented that this is a decision making group not a specialists group. The Municipality is on the committee because they provide a grader and law enforcement, the chairperson represents BREF, CapeNature is there because they historically did the salinity. SASC is in a MOU with CapeNature now that's why they take the current salinities. Hannes van Rensburg commented that they cannot criticise the composition of the decision making body but they are interested to know what is their mandate and the criteria that they follow in order to take responsible decisions which they are going to be held accountable for. Pierre de Villiers commented that they are responsible through consensus and the MMP which is a legal document that implement the criteria. Hannes van Rensburg commented that he just wants to understand the process clearly; the committee operates within a set framework however they can use their discretion? Pierre de Villiers commented yes based on specialists input.

Preston Arendse commented that the forum should have the interests of the lagoon at heart and people should not attend BREF meetings for their own personal gain. He noted that the criteria of the BREF representation should be looked at and why people attend the meetings.

c) Pierre de Villiers commented that it should be clarified which representatives represents what organisations. He suggested that representatives on the Forum should inform their respective groups accordingly as to what was discussed at the meetings and provide them with the documentation that BREF administration circulates so that all members are informed at all times. Members shouldn't say that they are unaware of what was circulated or what was discussed at forum meetings. He also suggested that all must declare before a meeting starts that they do not intend to go against any of the principles and practices of the BREF or to use what was discussed against any of the forum members. The forum agreed and accepted Pierre de Villiers suggestions. He noted that the concepts will go in the Estuary management framework.

Anton Boon commented that he has sent a letter on 21 Aug 2013 (the previous breaching) but he has never received any feedback on his correspondence. On 28 September 2015 he has sent a letter which has also never been answered. He noted that the Breaching Committee does not listen to what the community is saying. Pierre de Villiers commented that he should complain at forum meetings. Pierre de Villiers also mentioned that Anton Boon attended the meeting with the Mayor where they had a chance to table their concerns and the reason he wasn't aware of what was going on is because he did not attend the last BREF meeting and his representative did not inform him of what was discussed. Hannes van Rensburg noted that there are a lot of different interests and the only way to operate as a community is if it is clear what the process is and how it is going to work. Robin Perrins noted that all these points should be tabled at a BREF workshop.

Cliff Coombe commented that if there were due process these discussions would not be happening. He noted that no progress will be made until a system is in place that does not allow for these types of discussions. Pierre de Villiers commented that he agrees, there is room for a lot of improvement that's why he wanted to do the meeting in this structure to allow

for comment. He is working on this so by the next workshop he wants to put a tight system in place.

Preston Arendse suggested that a task team must be put together to work on the breaching criteria. The task team should work on how to rectify the breaching problem which started in 1985 when CapeNature opened the keel. The keel must be closed again so that estuary can breach naturally from now on.

One of the BREF members agreed with what Preston Arendse said. He further commented that they were more than 40 organisations that belonged to BREF, but they lost interest because of the discussions that takes place at the meetings. He noted that the wild horses and birds should not be dealt with at BREF meetings. He mentioned that the reason the Hawston community attended today is because they are scared that the lagoon will be taken away from them. He mentioned that rocks have been scattered to block the entrance to the Eiland where the Hawston community used to camp.

M.G Potgieter commented that expert opinions are needed in the compilation of the breaching criteria and the MMP. He noted that the people should be included in the criteria, what are their needs and what do the people want. Robin Perrins commented that the community from Kleinmond, Arrabella, Benguela Cove, Fisherhaven and Hawston must decide what they want of the lagoon. This must be taken forward to the next workshop.

Pierre de Viliers reported on the 2015 breaching. He noted that the salinity was about 12.1 at the last BREF meeting on 10 September where the potential opening of the estuary was discussed. It was also mentioned that the Springtide was coming up on 29-31st. They decided to have a breaching committee meeting which was held at the Boat club on Monday 21 September where the principles was discussed. The average salinity of the day was 10.48. They wanted confirmation that the salinity was at 10 so they would do a follow up monitoring the next day by Danie Coetzee. Danie monitored the next day at about lunch time because of the rain. They monitored according to the MMP top, middle and bottom and the average for the area was 10.58. Based on that they made the call to breach, they put it in writing. The height was 2.45. The next meeting was at Overstrand Municipality on 30 September. They put all the information on paper and based on the comments from the specialists (not one specialist said they shouldn't breach) decided to send a letter to DEADP they stated that it wasn't exactly according to the criteria. Because the estuary must open in daylight they would start at night time to get in line with the tides and so the estuary would open on the day of 1st Oct, statistically they were one day out. They send it to DEADP who looked at it and they approved it at 16:22. They started their planning and in 2 hours the municipality was ready. Robin Perrins sent out the intent to breach email he could not send it earlier as they only received approval at that time. They dug the channel in the middle. They have overhead footage of the process as they used a drone to record the whole process. Law Enforcement kept everyone out so there were no issues. At about 11:00 they made a call that the people could go in. 14 days after the breach the post breaching report was circulated to all. He noted that there is room for improvement but with the tender they will tighten up the process. He noted that it doesn't matter how you structure the process there will come a time where a small team will have to make decisions based on crucial evidence and there will have to be trust in the team and trust in the process so that members on the forum do not create a negative impression on what's going on. He thanked and complimented all that was part of the breaching process.

Frans Theunissen commented that the Mouth management plan sets out a certain criteria it clearly says 10 parts per thousand. He wanted to know how much discretion is allowed as the salinity is always judged downwards and not upwards. With regards to the trust comment he mentioned they have always given their support but it goes both ways for example on the

days leading up to the breach they have emailed Pierre de Villiers 3 times and phoned him twice on his mobile but they haven't had any response. Pierre de Villiers commented that he manages 17 estuaries; he is one manager for the whole coastline for CapeNature he doesn't have the time to reply to everyone's individual requests. He noted that there is a forum where feedback on the individual requests will be provided. He also mentioned that the raw salinity data will be put on the municipal website; once the information is available on the website the BREF will be informed.

Anton Boon thanked Pierre de Villiers for recognizing the problem they have with the process and for agreeing to improve it.

Robin Perrins thanked everyone for the free and open discussion. He asked all to not be upset if their questions have not been answered in complete detail. He hopes that progress will be made. He commented that the next workshop should be attended with the knowledge of what everyone wants for the Bot River Estuary.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

3.1 Approval / Amendment;

The minutes were approved.

Proposed: Pierre de Villiers

Seconded: Frans Theunissen

Anton Boon commented that 8.3 do not reflect what was said in the breaching report. It was decided that Heloise Fortune should check the recording so that the minutes can reflect what Pierre de Villiers said with regards to breaching.

"Pierre de Villiers commented that the salinity is very low now. They are approaching breaching salinities and are losing water to Kleinmond. This is a critical issue. The levels are 2.6 it is over the breaching criteria. The next springtide will be a possibility to breach based on another sampling to verify. Robin Perrins commented that the next full moon is on 29 September. The moment they have the average salinity it will be circulated to everyone with the water level. The committee will then have to have a meeting to make the final call".

3.2 Matters Arising

None

4. EMP Implementation

4.1 Estuary Zonation Plan

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that this needs to stand over until the Klein River is completed. Pierre de Villiers noted that he asked for a task team at the previous meetings but with no volunteers. They need input from the forum on the zonation plan. They distributed an existing zonation plan to the KREF and they elected a task team to panel beat it which was then distributed to the forum for comments. He would like to propose the same for the Bot River. Liezl Bezuidenhout suggested that she has a process with the Klein River and would like to come and present at the next meeting where all comments can be gathered.

Action: Liezl Bezuidenhout will present on the Estuary Zonation Plan at the next meeting in 2016 where all comments will be gathered.

4.2 Boat Permit System

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that the boat permit system links in with the Estuary Zonation. So once there is a system for the Klein River that works it will be adapted for the Bot River.

5. Mouth Management

5.1 Mouth Management workshop (tender process)

Caren George commented that they are awarding the tender at the moment and the workshop will happen early next year. Service Provider will be appointed by 4th Dec 2015. Zane Juma is the contact person for this process.

6. Pollution Management

6.1 Water Quality

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that Danie Coetzee is not with the Overstrand Municipality anymore. She will be the person that deals with the Estuary Management at the moment. She requested that all just give her some time. She is in process of putting the spreadsheet together to show the outliers. The readings are on the website for viewing; Heloise Fortune will forward the link once she has received it. The bacteriological samplings are done every two weeks. At the moment the water for recreational usage (swimming) is safe. Since September till 17 November almost 90% of the samples are of good quality. MG Potgieter suggested that Lamloch sites be added as sampling points; he suggested that Liezl Bezuidenhout should speak to specialists in Kleinmond to identify where samples should be taken.

Action: Liezl Bezuidenhout is busy creating a spreadsheet to make it easy to understand the water samplings.

6.2 Pollution Incidents

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that there are no pollution incidents to report on.

6.3 Kleinmond foot-bridge (presentation by Cllr P Appelgrein)

Councillor Appelgrein apologized he would not be able to attend the meeting due to prior commitments. This item will stand over till the next meeting.

7.1 Reed Management Programme

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that she hasn't gotten around to following up on this item. The plan was distributed to the forum but she hasn't received any comments, only one comment was received from Giselle Murison. Preston Arendse commented that a while ago he gave a letter to Neville Green with regards to the papkuil issue in the paddavlei, but to date he has not received any feedback. He raised another point with regards to the milkwoods that needs to be thinned. Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that she will follow up with Neville Green with regards to the letter. She noted that she has a meeting with Forestry on 14 December to discuss the milkwoods and the paddavlei area is also included.

Action: Liezl Bezuidenhout to provide feedback on papkuil and milkwoods in the paddavlein area.

7.2 Working for Water (WFW) Programme

Liezl Bezuidenhout noted that there has been no change since the last meeting. There is no funding for the Bot River project.

7.3 Fisherhaven Feral Horses

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that they will have a meeting with Director Stephen Muller on how the horses will be relocated. Council made a decision on 4 August that the horses should be relocated. A specific date has not yet been identified as there was no consensus in the Task Team, that's why it has been escalated to the director and the legal advisor to decide on a way forward. CapeNature did a carrying capacity but they don't want to release the document yet. There are two options; to move them on horseback or to relocate them through wildlife capturing.

7.3 Working for the Coast

Liezl Bezuidenhout reported that the WFTC budget has been approved. They are waiting to hear from the implementing agent as to when the funding will be available. She noted that the Environmental Section has received 8 Coastal Monitors, 1 Supervisor and a boat. Policing and monitoring will be available on the estuaries. Pierre de Villiers commented that The Overstrand Municipality is the only Municipality that received coastal monitors out of all the Municipalities that applied. He noted that the Overstrand should be complemented for achieving this. They don't have an implementation date yet.

8. Monitoring & Research

8.1 Ecological Reserve Study

Pierre de Villiers noted that the study has been done, but must still be signed off by Water Affairs.

8.2 Research Projects

Pierre de Villiers commented that there was miscommunication between him and Andre de Villiers he apologized but the presentation will not happen today. Andre de Villiers will send a short summary to distribute with the minutes.

Action: Pierre de Villiers to get short summary on frog presentation to distribute with the minutes.

8.3 Salinity Monitoring and FEEDBACK ON Monitoring/Research

Pierre de Villiers presented SASC's salinity data. He is not comfortable with the spreadsheet how the readings are displayed. It shows you where the sites are and he will forward the detailed data to the Municipality to be displayed on the website. He further explained the readings to the forum. The YSI broke; they will be borrowing one from DEADP to continue with the monitoring. Steve Lamberth asked if the lamloch area can be added as a salinity sampling point. Pierre de Villiers commented that CSIR should identify sampling points and he will discuss them with SASC.

Action: Pierre de Villiers to forward the salinity data to be displayed on the Municipal website.

Action: CSIR to identify sampling points.

8.4 RAMSAR

Pierre de Villiers commented that DEA RAMSAR had carried out a site visit at the Bot Estuary to assess the RAMSAR application that had been submitted by CapeNature. Stakeholders

had been invited and had been present. Based on their assessment of the site as well as the EMP and existing management structures (FORUM) DEA RAMSAR had, after discussion with DEA Oceans and Coasts, agreed that the requirement for a formal protected area may not be necessary given the management effectiveness of the existing structures which are in line with the ICMA and the NEMP. An agreement will need to be made between CapeNature and the OSM as to who will submit the final application. If the municipality approves that CapeNature can apply on their behalf they must give a letter stating that CapeNature can apply. The process is ongoing.

9.Environmental Authorisation/Development/Land use applications – Summary of current and pending

9.1 Benguela Cove Site Development

This point will be discussed at the next meeting.

10.1 Coastal Management Line Process (Previously known as the Setback line process).

Caren George noted that the implementation of the Coastal Management Line Process has been submitted to the Minister for approval. Another round of public participation will take place for stakeholder comments early next year. leptieshaam Bekko is the contact person for this process.

10.2 Slipway Process

Robin Perrins commented that this is work in progress at the moment. There is an in house workshop tomorrow with all the role-players of the Municipality. There will be public participation in terms of a management programme.

10.3 Constitution.

Robin Perrins commented that no comments were received on the constitution. Legally it was a name change from Terms of Reference to Constitution. BREF will proceed in February in terms of the Terms of Reference/Constitution as adopted on 20 April 2010.

10.4 Other.

Presentation on fish species in the Bot River Estuary – Steve Lamberth

Steve Lamberth did a presentation on the fish species in the Bot River Estuary. He noted that there are 44 species in the system, 20 thereof are common. He further explained the different types of species to the forum and he explained what happens to the fish when the estuary breaches. He noted that something has been picked up in the South African Estuaries for the first time this year in May it is called epizootic ulcerative syndrome it is a form of leprosy. This is spreading and is of concern. He asked the people to disinfect their equipment, instruments and gear. He will distribute his presentation to the forum. The chairperson thanked Steve on behalf of the forum for his presentation.

Action: The fish species presentation will be circulated to the forum.

Presentation on bird species – Giselle Murison

Giselle Murison will present at the next meeting.

Hawston Camping Site

Liezl Bezuidenhout commented that she and Penelope Aplon drafted a map to show where the campsites will be, it will also display where they will set up the water and toilets. It includes the timeframes as well. She and Area Manager Don Kearney will have a meeting next week to discuss the camp site as he will have to implement everything. After their meeting she will have an idea as to when the Hawston Community will receive written feedback.

11.Closure

The meeting closed at 16:50

Next Meeting date: Meeting dates for 2016 still to be confirmed