

Meeting Minutes

Horse Riders Forum

Date: 24 June 2016

Venue: Sunbird Centre

Time: 17:00

Attendees:

Jaclyn Smith – Chair person: Senior Section Ranger TMNP Central

Carly Cowell – Regional Ecologist Cape Region

Elmonique Petersen – Section Ranger Wetlands Section

Galvin Klein – Ranger Sergeant Wetlands Section

Lisa Hare - Commercial Horse Riders from Sleepy hollow/ Imhoff

Natasha Bath - Noordhoek Wetlands Riders (NWR)

Nicola Roche - Recreational User

Arlene Nelson - Noordhoek Wetlands Riders (NWR)

Chris Dixon - Noordhoek Commune

Lynn Brown - Noordhoek Rates Payers Association (NRPA)

Ingrid Altmann - Noordhoek Pony Club

Welcoming conducted by SSR, Jaclyn Smith (JS).

Everyone attending introduced themselves and stated which forum/association /club they represent.

JS mentioned that all parties are to be on the same page with regard to utilization of the Noordhoek Wetlands. JS presented a Powerpoint presentation to the user group highlighting the background of the Noordhoek Wetland use by horse riders. JS also mentioned the current and future status of the Noordhoek Wetlands. JS asked if this is the first formal meeting being held with the different associations present. JS was not aware of an official “forum” representing the horse riders. Chris Dixon (CD) suggested that Arlene Nelson (AN) create a new “forum/body” for the user group to engage. Carly Cowell (CC) suggested that it is important that competitive riders form part of the forum. Other members to be included in future meetings.

JS continued her presentation discussing the overview of the section, the management authority and the challenges posed in the respective sections. JS mentioned that the central section of TMNP covers a vast area including areas such as Constantia, Noordhoek, Masiphumele, Peers Hill,

Silvermine, Boyes Drive, Price Drive and Tokai. The SSR for the section is JS whom oversees SR's Elmonique Petersen (EP) (Managing the Wetlands) and Slindile Sisibo (SS) (Managing Silvermine East and West). JS currently oversees the Tokai section. Table Mountain National Park (TMNP) being an open access park faces numerous challenges therefore it is of utmost importance for the conservation status to be explained to the different user groups. JS stated that a lot of land has been fragmented and the Noordhoek Wetlands serve as an important link between Cape Point and the mountain ridges on the Northern section of TMNP. Regional ecologist CC conducted a study on corridor establishment and the importance thereof in terms of animal migration through the Park. CC mentioned that different studies on Otter Habitat, Oyster catcher breeding grounds and caracal range within the Park has been conducted in the Wetlands section. CC mentioned that the flora in the wetlands is quiet endangered. CC explained that three vegetation types occur within the Noordhoek wetlands namely; Cape Dune Strandveld of which 60% is listed as endangered and only 6% is conserved. Sand Fynbos is listed as vulnerable and has been categorized as the most endangered vegetation type in the world. The Cape Salt marsh pans is listed as vulnerable and TMNP is the only Park that formally protects this vegetation type.

In the presentation JS referred to extracts of the Horse Riders EMP to provide background. The current EMP is to be reviewed, by then an established user group will be in place. JS mentioned that the user group will then be able to provide comments and give input. JS stated that rangers see the accumulative impact of activities (Horse Riding, formation of illegal paths, erosion etc) on the Wetlands. Concerns regarding safety was discussed and SANParks to meet individuals halfway. Before new routes are to be established we should look at the conservation value of the Noordhoek Wetlands. CD stated that the horse bridge is fine. Lynn Brown (LB) mentioned that the bridge is slippery in winter. CC stated that riders are to be aware of there environment. JS mentioned that the technical department made recommendations to have the horse bridge stabilized. JS mentioned that activity permits across the board is a concern. CD suggested that the Noordhoek Tack Shop can sell activity permits. AN suggested the NRC sell permits every month. JS will speak to the hospitality service manager regarding the suggestions made by the forum. CD mentioned that purchasing permits to be made more convenient. Natasha Bath (NB) suggested that a database be formed of all horse riders who have activity permits. It was noted that horse riding is not only for recreation but it is also job creation. JS mentioned that it's important for the forum to understand why SANParks says no to certain things and may allow other things. SANParks need to prioritize. JS mentioned that the forum can assist by volunteering for certain projects. LB mentioned that the Noordhoek communities have come up with ideas of what the community wants. LB stated that the community wants to keep Noordhoek equestrian. Equestrian activity acts as a buffer to the wetlands. Nicola Roche (NR) mentioned the severe erosion of the paths in the wetlands. No accessibility for emergency vehicles in case of a fire, safety concerns regarding single tracks, the vegetation is quite dense and due to constant trampling the sand has become very sandy and young horses could injure themselves. JS mentioned that management priorities for the tracks in the wetlands include; re-establishment and maintenance of existing paths. It was noted that widening of tracks was suggested. CC mentioned that Parks try to mimic the natural flux. Paths use to be seasonal and a management option would be to seasonally open and close paths. CC stated that species are lost the more fragmented habitats become. CC stated that paths have a buffer effect and it is essential to keep core conservation areas bigger. Lisa Hare mentioned existing paths can be rehabilitated whilst they are kept closed. A suggestion from the forum was for possible new horse tracks. JS stated that

the route for the suggested new track will directly impact the main population of Cape Dwarf Chameleons residing in the wetlands. Closure intervention in 2010 has resulted in the area rehabilitating quite well. CD mentioned that there is a discussion to find alternative paths. LH stated that most Noordhoek groups are eager to comply. LB stated that communication and education is important. CD stated the more tracks/paths there are the less erosion will take place. CD mentioned that seasonal closing be looked at for paths to recover. CD mentioned that there are more non-competitive riders in Noordhoek. LB stated that it is in the forums interest to have the wetlands protected but one of their main interests' is also horse riding. JS stated that paths need to be ground truthed before it can be considered to be opened. JS mentioned that the user group to aid in conserving the wetlands. LH mentioned that we need to engage in a way to protect the wetlands. We need to help to educate the people about why we are conserving the wetlands. People need to understand the value of the wetlands. It is advisable to have more equestrian spaces in the community rather than building houses. CC stated that the carrying capacity for horses in wetlands needs to be calculated. CC stated that SANParks want to conserve the wetlands not only for now but for future generations. CD mentioned that the less area there is available for horse riding, will cause riders move to Kommetjie. Subdividing will take place. A balance needs to be maintained. CC stated that horse riding does not take place in any of the other National Parks. CC posed the question, why then in Table Mountain National Park? CC mentioned that was part of the stipulations in the Heads of Agreement. The Heads of Agreement is a legal document (between the City of Cape Town and SANParks) stipulating what SANParks can do and what they can consider implementing.

AN to complete a list of all representatives. JS is to draft an agenda for the follow up meeting. JS to confirm a date for the next meeting. JS to email date proposal for the next meeting. JS stated she is available in mid July 2016. CC will generate a map with all the different layers. EP to type the minutes.

Meeting adjourned at 19:00.