

Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area
MONTHLY EMS REPORT

MRCA  **EMS**
Conservation

REPORT No.: 32

PERIOD: Dec 2009 - Jan 2010

DATE: 29 January 2009

CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT

1

- ✘ On 10th and 11th Dec alien clearing & path maintenance by the City of Cape Town.
- ✘ 14th Jan the same team undertook a follow-up of the path.

INVASIVE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

2

- ✘ Clearing of woody alien species *Acacia saligna* (Port Jackson) and *Acacia Cyclops* (Rooikraans) took place as above. The Rietvlei Wetland Reserve team assisted in clearing from the Northern and Southern area as well as the parade ring to prevent further infestation of the conservation area.
- ✘ Due to the re-growth of *A.saligna* and *A.cyclops* seedlings around the dam a follow up clearing was done on the 14th January 2010. Monitoring of the area is done constantly and locations of invasive species are noted.
- ✘ In Burn Block 2 a section of Kikuyu grass has been brush cut and herbicided, however it was discussed at the Burn site visit held on the 15th January 2010 that the area should only be herbicided as brushcutting would decrease the fuel load and the patch would not burn.
- ✘ Kikuyu grass has been identified in other parts of the northern and southern areas. It was decided that the Kikuyu infestation along the boundary fence of the Northern section (i.e. against Stable Yard) should be herbicided and *Carpobrotus* planted in a 5m strip against the boundary wall.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

3

Burn Process:

- ✘ A site meeting was held on the 15th January at MRCA. Here it was confirmed that Burn Block 2 can be burnt during March 2010.
- ✘ A meeting was held on 26th January with Koos Retief and Jacques Kuyler where preparation for the burn and operations on the day of the burn was discussed. Burn preparations will commence the end of February 2010 whereby with the assistance of the Rietvlei team the fire break around Burn Block 2 will be cleared and all the *Rhus* cut down. It was decided that the 20% of the *Rhus* which is not herbicided will be left as two clumps creating increased coverage for the Grysbok once it grows back.

REHABILITATION

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- ✘ A rehabilitation experiment has been carried out along the old track within the southern section. Three 1x1m plots have been marked at 20m intersects. The plots fall within a dry and wet areas and one plot is a control. A pick was used to loosen part of the ground material within the plots of the dry and wet areas but more man power is needed to complete both plots as substrate is very hard and compact. The aim of this experiment is to see the regeneration rate of each plot once restricting substrate has been loosened. This will indicate if it is viable for the road to be excavated.
- ✘ The notes of the Ecological Restoration Workshop held on 24 Nov, is available by e-mail on request.

INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

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- ✘ **Pathways:** Path maintenance is being regularly undertaken & 100% of the path was cleared on the 14th January 2010 with the assistance of the Rietvlei team. A plank of the board walk is broken and needs replacing.

- ✘ **Stormwater outlets:** All outlets are clear of vegetation & open.
- ✘ **Rubbish bins:** CCT to supply additional bins when possible. No vandalism or other damage noted.
- ✘ **Signage & Fences:** A wooden railing fence along Burn Block 2 is broken but there is a secondary fence which will contain the area.
- ✘ The **owl box** has been taken down and hidden within the southern section so that it does not burn during the control burn.

FAUNA MANAGEMENT & OBSERVATIONS

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- ✘ Fauna **sightings** are being captured to be uploaded onto the CCT database CCT had a site visit of MRCA on the 8th December 2009. They are currently in the process of compiling a Fauna Management Plan for all conservation sites within the Metropole area.
- ✘ A **juvenile grysbok** has been seen three times since the last report and therefore a drive count is to be planned for the end of February with the assistance of CCT students and staff. This will clarify the present population and identify if any mortality or births have occurred.
- ✘ On the 15th of January 2010 a road kill was identified of a **Grey winged Francolin**. This species is on the fauna list however is not seen very often. The carcass was placed within the southern area. The carcass has been checked for carcass beetles however none have been found as of yet. Information will be supplied to Clifford Dorse who is undertaking research on these beetles.
- ✘ Annual **fauna surveys** are planned, i.e. Small mammal, bird counts, insect survey, amphibian survey.

BIOLOGICAL MONITORING

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Vegetation:

- ✘ Vegetation monitoring is on-going. Some of the flowers observed during the last month below:



Carpobrotus acinaciformis

Athanasia sp with Table Mtn. in background

Flowers (general)

- ✘ On the 12th January 2010, 51 plant species were identified within the northern and southern area with the assistance of Fiona Powrie.
- ✘ 4 transects were relocated within Burn Block 1 & demarcated for pre-burn monitoring. 3 transects within grass, Rhus and Restio vegetation structures were identified and demarcated in Burn Block 2.
- ✘ Fixed point photography has been taken of Burn Block 2 for pre-monitoring references.

Water:

- ✘ Fixed point photography of the wetlands and dam is carried out on a monthly basis. Photographic comparison over beg Jan & late Jan 2010 provided on following page.



Measurement of water levels within the two wetlands is carried out monthly. Current depths are:

Date	Wetland 1				Wetland 2			
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2007	2008	2009	2010
Jan		114 cm	76 cm	67cm		31 cm	34 cm	47.5cm
Feb		61 cm	46 cm			1 cm	12 cm	
Mar		53 cm	28 cm			0 cm	0 cm	
Apr		35 cm	18 cm			0 cm	5 cm	
May		22 cm	37 cm			1 cm	33 cm	
Jun		59 cm	69 cm			51 cm	62 cm	
Jul	123 cm	153 cm	143 cm		82 cm	94 cm	102 cm	
Aug	150+cm	155 cm	145 cm		101 cm	95.5cm	107 cm	
Sept	150+cm	187 cm	161.5		97 cm	101.5 cm	150+cm	
Oct	150+cm	160.5 cm	143.5		83 cm	91.5 cm	150+cm	
Nov	150+cm	139.5 cm	138cm		68 cm	77 cm	92cm	
Dec	135 cm	108 cm	91cm		52 cm	58.5 cm	69cm	

If comparisons are made Wetland 1 overall levels have decreased since previous year, while Wetland 2 water levels have increased. Note must be taken that water level monitoring for December was done on the 8 January 2010 instead of in December, however the changes in water levels are still drastic.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

✘ An environmental programme outline has been compiled (see Appendix 1). This highlights a variety of programmes which are possible at the conservation area.

GENERAL INFORMATION / OBSERVATIONS / MEETINGS

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- ✘ It was noted that garden refuse and rubbish is dumped between the palisade fence and bushes along Boulevard Drive at the second circle. This arrangement with Real Landscapes will be closely monitored.
- ✘ Another e-mail from Reg de Beer about domestic cats within the conservation area has been received (14 January 2010). Action need to be discussed.
- ✘ A complaint was received from a resident from La Camargue who's gardens boarder onto the reserve. Grass was growing up the palisade fence and blocking their view of the conservation area. Upon a site inspection the grass was identified as kikuyu, an alien species and therefore action will be taken in spraying this infestation.



ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE UPCOMING MONTHS

10

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|---|---|----------------|
| ✘ Continue with the mapping of individual Red Data species. | ✓ | Ongoing |
| ✘ Commence with completing Review 'Action Items' up | ✓ | Ongoing |
| ✘ Initiate regular path maintenance contract | ✓ | Immediate |
| ✘ Identify ducks in main detention ponds (if seen again) | ✓ | Immediate |
| ✘ Explore species reintroduction in light of aims of ecosystem restoration | ✓ | Ongoing |
| ✘ Re-evaluate need for repairs to the pathway in the Northern Area | ✓ | Jan 2010 |
| ✘ Road rehabilitation experiment | ✓ | Jan 2010 |
| ✘ Draft 6 month APO | ✓ | Jan 2010 |
| ✘ Address Kikuyu & Paspalum grass spraying & clearing of woody alien plants | | Feb 2010 |
| ✘ Preparation for burning Block 2 | | Feb/Mar 2010 |
| ✘ Drive count of Grysbok | | Feb/Mar 2010 |
| ✘ Final Grysbok capture and relocation operation. | | May/ June 2010 |
| ✘ Measurement of inundated areas requiring boardwalks. | | July 2010 |