

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY B:
Brackenridge Environmental Audit
Prof. Patricia M. Holmes (PhD), 20th October 2023
- Summary author: Dr. Deborah Constant -

An Environmental Audit (EA) of Brackenridge Estate was undertaken by Prof. Patricia M. Holmes in terms of

- The criteria and rules specified in the current Home Owners Association document (HOA, revision 8, 2023),
- The Record of Decision (RoD, 2000),
- The Environmental Management Plan Operational Phase (OEMP 2001), and
- Current best practices.

This executive summary outlines the deviations from the requirements of the RoD, the 2001 OEMP and the HOA constitution documents. Against this backdrop the summary then lists the points which the audit identifies for attention, and the prioritized recommended actions to be taken.

Items of non-compliance

- An EA should be repeated annually (OEMP 2001: 2.3).
- An OEMP should be updated every three years to ensure environmental compliance (OEMP 2001: 2.4). Last OEMP was 2001.
- A qualitative assessment of the condition of indigenous vegetation should be carried out every five years by a specialist (OEMP 2001: 2.2.1).
- An Environmental Control Officer (ECO) must be appointed to ensure compliance with the OEMP (RoD 2000: *Condition 9*).
- Prescribed burns should be done to manage the fynbos (OEMP 2001).

Issues for attention

- Environmental Control Officer (ECO): No ECO appointed to date.
- Formalization of Environmental Management Committee to enable management of environment as required by the OEMP (OEMP 2001: 2.1.2).
- Alien Species control: Alien proliferation and the increase in woody fuel loads are a fire risk to the estate and to biodiversity.
- Fire risk: No prescribed burns have been done to date. Vegetation age is probably up to 40 years old resulting in a fire risk for houses and loss of biodiversity.
- Fire management: The Estate fire belt system does not span the entire housing - natural open space interface.
- Storm water management and erosion: Footpaths and fence lines are exposed to the erosive forces of heavy rain and some localized areas of soil erosion are present.

Priority actions and directives

1. Appoint an ECO to oversee the most urgent environmental issues and coordinate the required actions viz: invasive alien species control, vegetation fuel reduction, updating of fire belt system, prescribed ecological burns, repair of erosion gullies and sewerage systems and develop a monitoring system.
2. Re-constitute the Environmental Management Subcommittee of the HOA as an Environmental Management Committee (EMC) that reports directly to the Board of Trustees. The EMC to liaise with Estate Management and ensure that the environment is healthy, resilient and rehabilitated where required.

3. ECO to work with the EMC and Estate Management to develop an Integrated Fire and Alien Species Management Plan as a matter of urgency.
4. Implement an ecologically sound prescribed burning plan without delay, with an ongoing Fynbos burn frequency of 10-20 years.
5. Review and improve the current fire belt system to remove flammable vegetation near houses and at the interface with natural vegetation.
6. Review fire risk concerns outside the Estate fence with neighbours, using the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association collaboration to initiate discussions.
7. ECO and EMC to initiate a monitoring system for the natural open space areas of the Estate.

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Dr. Deborah Constant
Brackenridge Environmental Sub-Committee – 21 October 2023