



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

Ref Number: WCPP 11/4/8

Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on its oversight visit to the Cederberg area on 7 September 2023, as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following members:

America, D (DA)
De Villiers, PT (GOOD)
Marran, P (ANC)
Murray, CA (DA)
Van der Westhuizen, AP (DA: Chairperson)

An apology was received from Member Peter Marais (FF Plus).

1. Introduction and background

Section 114 (2)(b)(i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa mandates provincial legislatures to provide for mechanisms to maintain oversight over the Provincial Executive Authority in the province.

The floods that occurred in the Cederberg area on 15 June 2023 caused considerable devastation to infrastructure, including that of the farming community and Nature Reserves. The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning therefore resolved to undertake an oversight visit to the Algeria Camping Site and surrounding area, to meet with the Department of Agriculture and the Citrus Growers Association and visit affected farms in the Citrusdal area.

The purpose of the visit to the Algeria Camping Site was to discuss and observe the impact these floods have had on the Reserve and surrounding areas, to assess the impact of the flood damage to infrastructure and biodiversity and to discuss the impact on tourism revenue. Similarly, the purpose of the meeting and visit to the affected areas near Citrusdal was to discuss the impact these floods have had on the agricultural industry, particularly the citrus sector, and to observe firsthand the extent of the damage. The Committee also engaged with the Citrus Growers Association on challenges experienced in the export of citrus and other crops.

This report highlights the Committee's findings and recommendations stemming from the visits.

2. Algeria Camping Site

2.1 Overview

The visit commenced with a welcome by CapeNature's Landscape Manager and a briefing by the Conservation Reserve Manager. The Acting Mayor and Director Support Services from the Cederberg Municipality were also in attendance. The briefing focused on the flood damage to the campsite. Photographs that were taken shortly after the June 15th flood were shared with the Committee as well as recent photographs that gave the Committee an indication of progress and rehabilitation to date. This was followed by a site visit to areas in the campsite and reserve that were badly affected by the flood.

2.2 Findings and observations

2.2.1 Damages to the Algeria Camping site included a paved road leading to a river crossing that was washed away. Picnic benches, tables and braai areas as well as campsite topsoil were also washed away.

2.2.2 Extensive damage was caused to the Boshberge Road. The flooding caused a landslide that resulted in 14 to 15 ton of rocks landing on the Boshberge Road bridge in the Reserve. Offices and staff accommodation were surrounded by water for several days, roads were washed away, and water pumps and Eskom transformers were washed away downstream. The newly renovated Camp Innocent at Matjiesrivier was under water with significant damage to structures, trees and roads. The roads leading to the Algeria Community, including the N7 access road, as well as the Uitkyk Pass and beyond, were also severely damaged.

2.2.3 The Committee was pleased to hear about the humanitarian support that took place during the time of the flooding and that the community and farmers rallied together to support each other and to offer assistance. The West Coast District Municipality, Disaster Management, and the Fire Protection Association also played vital roles. So too the Gift of the Givers that distributed sustenance and warmth to those in need. Helicopters delivered supplies to isolated spots and local farmers joined forces with CapeNature, reopening roads and delivering essential supplies.

2.2.4 During the months of June and July 2023 the Reserve was under full closure. It was envisaged that some of the campsites would re-open in phases between July and November 2023.

2.2.5 The projected Income (before the flood) was R6,2 million. The loss of income due to the flood (June – August 2023) amounted to R619 000 and additional loss of income (September 2023 – March 2024) was projected at R931 000. The Committee was informed that insurance claims were only honoured in terms of the loss incurred to tourism assets and income. However the majority of the loss incurred was on roads and bridges. These were not covered by insurance companies.

2.2.6 The administration of section 30 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA) entailed the management of information generated during an incident and extended to monitoring the clean-up and remediation undertaken by the responsible person and may involve enforcement action against the responsible person in the event of non-compliance. An Environmental Management Plan was drafted in terms of NEMA, outlining the phases of reconstruction and rehabilitation and was promptly approved.

Road contractors and engineers were contracted to do interim repairs while the Environmental Impact Assessment was underway for long term remedial actions.

Phase one entailed the repairs to allow the opening of campsites by December 2023 and included cleaning up, wall repairs and infilling, bridge clean up repairs and infilling, repairs to Camp Innocent and access roads.

Phase two was envisaged to take place between February and June 2024, subject to the availability of funding, and included overall landscaping, rehabilitation and embankment stabilisation, as well as storm water management.

Phase three was envisaged to take place between June 2024 and March 2025, subject to the availability of funding. Plans included the construction of three new ablution blocks, a new bridge, a day visitor area with additional long term parking, secluded campsites, and sewerage upgrades.

- 2.2.7 The Committee observed that the flood damage was extensive and that it would require a substantial amount of funding to repair. The Committee was in support of the rehabilitation and expansion plans presented and took note of the cost of repairs that were estimated at R40 million. The Committee further expressed that the Algeria camping site had a lot of potential for future tourism possibilities and therefore believed that this investment in tourism facilities could render a good dividend in the future. The Committee was also appreciative of the emergency repairs that were already done and that the Nature Reserve reopened as fast as possible by making alternative arrangements such as using the second access road to the caravan park as an emergency escape route.

3. Impact of the floods on Agriculture

3.1 Overview

The visit commenced with presentations by the Department of Agriculture and the Citrus Growers Association at the offices of the Citrusdal Water Users Association. The presentation by the Department of Agriculture focused on the impact of the floods on a provincial level, with specific reference to the impact thereof on the West Coast area. The background to possible causes and potential solutions were provided to the Committee. The presentation by the Citrus Growers Association focused on the challenges experienced during the floods and to date, the key success drivers of the citrus industry, the total estimated losses as a result of the floods and an action plan to rebuild the damages suffered by the citrus exporter by improving the supply chain. This was followed by a visit to the Danckaert and Middelpoos farms in Citrusdal.

3.2 Findings and observations

- 3.2.1 The citrus industry in the Olifants River catchment area exported approximately 200 000 tons of citrus and created 15 000 to 20 000 jobs. The total estimated losses as a result of the floods on public property and from other industries equated to approximately R1 billion.
- 3.2.2 Challenges experienced included the fact that harvesting was delayed due to prolonged rain, the closure of roads, and long power interruptions. This led to an overmature crop due to late picking, infrastructure damage and harbour delays.

3.2.3 There were opportunities for greater market access in the far East, particularly Dubai and South Korea but certain barriers existed that could be easily eliminated in order to achieve market access .

3.2.4 The following damages were identified on the Danckaert Farm and the Middelpoos Farm. The estimated cost of the damages was provided by the Department of Agriculture.

3.2.4.1 Danckaert farm damage – Owned by Mouton Citrus:

- Infrastructure: Seasonal hostels, housing and fences - R75 000.
- Pump house damage: The building had been under water and caused damage to all the electrical systems that would have to be replaced.
- Citrus orchard: 60ha with estimated damages of R8 million, including irrigation replacement R750 000, erosion repairs and berm repairs R1,7 million as well as loss of harvest of R5,5 million.
- Damages on the river that could possibly need river protection works. As a first phase of river protection, the dredging of the Olifants river was required. This work could have been done under the current adopted River Maintenance and Management Plan. The river has silted up and is now 1.2m higher under the road bridge. This siltation contributed to the rerouting of the river. The silt and vegetation in the river must be removed as a matter of urgency to protect the surrounding farms and infrastructure. The rehabilitation of rivers was managed in terms of NEMA and the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998). It appeared that the Water Act might require certain permissions to be granted to enable farmers and the Department of Agriculture to implement the approved River Maintenance and Management Plan for the Olifants River in the vicinity of Citrusdal.

3.2.4.2 Middelpoos farm damage – Owned by Mr Abrie van Zyl:

- Infrastructure: R1 million.
- Pump house damage: The building had been under water and caused damage to all the electric systems that will now have to be replaced.
- Citrus orchard: 30.4ha with estimated damages of R6,5 million, including irrigation replacement R1,5 million, erosion repairs, reconstruction and orchards R2 million; and loss of harvest R1 million.
- Damages on the river that could possibly require river protection works was estimated at R8 million.

3.3 Resolutions/Actions

3.3.1 The Committee **REQUESTED** that the Department of Agriculture liaises with the Citrus Growers Association and provides it with detailed information pertaining to the markets in the far east, particularly Dubai (as part of the United Arab Emirates) and South Korea, that were identified as opportunities for greater market access for citrus produce.

3.3.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** that it would confer with the Standing Committee on Finance, Economic Opportunities and Tourism, to consider:

3.3.2.1 Requesting the information as per point 3.3.1 from the Department of Economic Development and Tourism in order to determine the future possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding, to encourage further engagement to improve market access for citrus

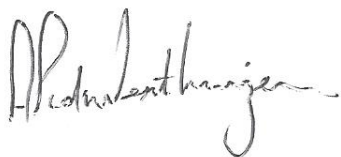
produce and to identify and eliminate the existing barriers that hampers the achievement thereof; and

3.3.2.2 Investigating and/or monitoring the efficiency of the Cape Town Port for the export of agricultural products, specifically citrus.

3.3.3 The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning engages with the Department of Water and Sanitation on the rehabilitation of the Olifants River in the Citrusdal area, particularly in respect of decreasing the risk of floods and enquire whether the Department of Water and Sanitation will allow farmers and the Department of Agriculture to implement the River Maintenance and Management Plan in line with the permissions that are required in terms of the National Water Act.

4. Acknowledgements

The Committee recognised the challenges faced by CapeNature and the farming community that lost valuable resources and are now faced with the daunting task of rebuilding and recovering from the damages caused by the floods, and expressed its appreciation to the officials from CapeNature, the Department of Agriculture as well as the representatives from the Citrus Growers Associations and those from the farming community of Citrusdal for taking the time to meet with the Committee.



MR AP VAN DER WESTHUIZEN (MPP)

CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

DATE: 25 October 2023