



MARCH 2014

NEWSLETTER



Photograph: Loek Bleeker

COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

Polygraph tests

As Johan mentioned, our 3 rangers have passed their polygraph tests and have been recommended for their integrity. We are obviously delighted with these results. Johan and two gate guards, Edgar and our new Terrance Sivalo were tested last week and we are awaiting results. Terrance M, our third gate guard will be tested shortly.

Take-offs

We did not vote on take-offs at the last committee meeting as only 4 members were present and we require a clear majority vote on the final decision. Allocations are currently; Class1 – 2 buffalo and 5 waterbuck, Class2 - 10 warthog, Class3 – 1 elephant and 100 impalas, Class4 - 5 kudu. The Mike Peel presentation was again a

great success, enabling us to better understand our fauna and flora. We have reduced the count of elephant and buffalo numbers recorded in the last census of Grietjie to a more accurate annual average for the decision making process. The biomass of game on Grietjie has increased substantially over the past few years; in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 it was 3922, 7249, 7866 and 9154kg/km² respectively. Guidelines for Balule indicate an upper limit of 4,000kg/km², however the Balule average currently stands at 8,000 kg/km². An uncontrolled increase in the stocking rate will ultimately be disastrous, especially in a drought situation. The biggest problems are the Class3 feeders, elephant and impala, which make up 41% of the total biomass and should be limited to about 20%. We thus envisage that the full allocation for these species will be utilized. It was also recommended that we remove a further 15 waterbuck due to the waterbuck overpopulation. Ideally a swap for wildebeest or zebra would be in our best interests, but failing that we may have to just give them away. So far we have received one objection regarding the allocated take-offs, and that was for the removal of kudu.

Understanding Grietjie's Ecology

The most important factors that should determine the optimum number of game or carrying capacity on Grietjie are perhaps:

- the fact that waterholes attract more game - this was mentioned more than once at Mike Peel's meeting
- the ever increasing stocking rate due to births and immigration
- the apparent low grass standing crop of Grietjie (currently at 200kg/ha, Balule at 771kg/ha)
- the bush encroachment
- the need to avoid disasters in a drought year

Grietjie has no long-term policy regarding the wellbeing of our fauna and flora, the owners are perhaps being taken care of by the Constitution. With this in mind, I was delighted when I received an email from one of our owners after the M Peel presentation:

"I would propose that a sub-committee, or action group be formed. This group should then study this report, as well as gather any other information it can, and prepare a detailed action plan (Ecological Action Plan) for the committee. This would give the committee the ability to focus on achieving "mini goals" within a certain time frame, towards completing the Ecological Action Plan (EAP)."

The committee fully supports this initiative for an action group. We need a mixture of participants, some with a good understanding of our ecology and the available reports, some with intellect, definitely common sense and some lateral thinkers. Above all, the members of this group should be unbiased and open to all suggestions. We have to stop only talking about it - we must start managing our waterholes, our habitat and our game. There is another option - not to do anything at all and let nature take its course. This, I believe, would be irresponsible and would ultimately devalue our reserve.

If you are motivated to join this group, please contact me via "grietjecomms". If you really care about our fauna and flora, get involved in the decision making process.

Collection of Road User Fees for Contractors & Deliveries (AGM 2013)

We have at last received a copy of the boom permit at the main gate - Government Gazette 1488, Vol. 15 extraordinary, 04 April 2008 states:

"..... that a control gate can be erected at Km 2.629 on road D2263 on the condition that no member will be charged for using the road..... . The applicant will be accountable for members of the public beyond this control gate."

- This means that the AGM proposal for collecting road user charges should not be implemented at present.
- An option would be to de-register the districts road from the gate to the 4way stop and then apply road fees.
- Currently the province maintains the full length of the road once a month at an estimated cost of R7,000 per month.
- If we deregister the Grietjie portion, we have to fund the maintenance of this section (R3,500/mth)
- Committee consensus was to leave the status quo as is, as we cannot secure a grader on a regular basis to maintain this section nor do we have the funds, some R42,000 per annum, to do so. This amount will be very similar to what can be collected in fees.
- Any suggestions from our members via “grietjiecomms” are welcome.

Finances

We are expecting a further R130,000 in income from 1 March to 30 June and will then “break even” this financial year. R30,000 of this income will be from ONGR for road and gate usage and R100,000 from our owners and members in fees and levies. Damage caused by the recent heavy rains to roads and especially fence lines may require some extra funding. We are still assessing the full extent of damages.

Road Works

We are extremely grateful for the heavy rains we have received lately. They came at a critical time and the gravel roads with berms and cut off drains withstood the run-off well. The photos below show the damage to roads after the 2012 flood when there were no berms and drains to minimalise damage.





There are some roads that require more berms and we have noted some wash-aways on these. 60m of fencing was washed away by the floods at the Swartspruit entry to Grietjie and a further 60m at Plot 117 on the Olifants. Repairs to the fence-lines and roads will take priority over Maggies hill which has now been put on hold to at least the end of March. Once the tar roads have dried out, numerous potholes must also be repaired.

Website

We have engaged an external source to upgrade our website. We have had requests to make it more user-friendly. Target date for completing this upgrade is end March. Louise Dhooge has taken on the job of keeping the website up to date. Thank you, Louise.

Access Control

This month we will be concentrating on the procedures for access of contractors. Besides the staff visitors, the contractors are another high risk group to our security and must be strictly controlled, especially where a contractor is working on the plot of a non-resident owner. The system is not fully operational as numerous owners do not make the necessary arrangements with security control. Soon you may notice that access will no longer be granted to your contractor if the prescribed procedures have not been adhered to.

We distinguish between two types of contractors:

1. The resident contractor – contractor’s staff sleeping on Grietjie.
2. Non-resident contractor – the contractor and his full team enter and depart daily.

In both cases, it is the owner’s responsibility to inform the warden or security committee of the identity of the contractor, construction site (plot number) and expected duration of required access. The owner is furthermore responsible to ensure that all paperwork is completed prior to contractor cards being issued or to the contractor being granted access onto Grietjie.

Extracts from **A. Main Access Gate Control 2013**

CATEGORY	SYSTEM	ENTRY	EXIT
<i>Resident Contractors (temporary staff category)</i>	<i>Owner applies in advance for Resident Contractor Cards (see note 7)</i>	<i>Each individual collects and signs for Resident Contractor's Cards. Owners to arrange transport to work area.</i>	<i>Each individual returns Resident Contractor Cards and signs out. Owners to arrange transport from plot to gate.</i>

Non-resident Contractors	Contractor's responsible person applies for <u>Day Contractor Weekly Schedule (DCWS)</u> (see note 8).	Driver and guard check and sign <u>DCWS</u> and record entry time.	Guard and driver check and sign <u>DCWS</u> and record exit time.
-----------------------------	---	---	--

Extracts from B. Main Access Control Notes 2013:

7. Resident Contractor Card

Prior to access being granted to the Resident Contractor, the owner notifies the warden/security committee of the construction and duration thereof. The owner then submits copies of ID's and digital photos and completes the GNR Card Application Form "A" for each of the contractor's employees in order to obtain individual Resident Contractor Cards. Once the owner has obtained these cards, access can be granted. The owner is responsible for the contractor at all times and issues the contractor with the GNR Contractor Rules for abidance, copies can be obtained at the gate.

8. Non –Resident Contractor (Day Contractor)

The owner notifies the warden/security committee of the contractor, plot number, commencement date of construction and anticipated duration. The contractor submits copies of ID's (no photos required) and completes **GNR Card Application Form "A"** for each of the contractor's employees. The applications will be submitted to the gate guard and will then be authorized by the reserve manager/security committee during that day. Approved personnel will then be entered by the contractor on the **DCWS**. New names can be added daily if application forms are submitted by the contractor. The owner is responsible for the contractor at all times and issues the contractor with the **GNR Contractor Rules** for abidance, copies can be obtained at the gate.

Pedestrians

We have again had complaints from some members regarding the pedestrian issue. The latest complaint includes the drunken behavior of pedestrians. The committee is currently addressing the responsible dispensing of alcohol by some local shebeens to staff and requests each owner noticing pedestrians to identify the pedestrians (name and plot number) and submit this information with locality, date and time to "grietjiecomms". Once we have sufficient information, we can approach the employer of these pedestrians.

Pets on Grietjie

Our Constitution clearly spells out the responsibilities of keeping domestic animals on Grietjie. If you do not have a special pet enclosure/camp, do not keep pets. Lately there have been 2 reports of stray dogs on Grietjie as the owners do not have a suitable pet enclosure! This ruling applies to all residents so please ensure that tenants are made aware of the ruling.

- 11.11** ***to ensure that no domestic animals like cows, goats or sheep are kept on the RESERVE.***
- 11.12** ***to ensure that all domestic cats on GRIETJIE are sterilized to ensure no cross breeding with indigenous African Wild Cats.***
- 11.13** ***to keep the numbers of domestic dogs and cats to a minimum with a view to reducing their numbers in the RESERVE as much as possible - Nine dogs is not a reasonable number***
- 11.14** ***to ensure that all domestic dogs and cats are vaccinated against Rabies.***
- 11.15** ***to ensure that all domestic animals are confined to the vicinity of their camp, or that they are restrained on a leash when outside of their camp***

We have also had recent complaints about the nuisance of barking dogs. We request each complaining owner to initially take it up personally with the owner of the nuisance animal. As far as stray dogs are concerned, the warden has been instructed by the committee to destroy any stray dogs and cats.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS **by Ian Owtram**

The weather graphs for February were published in the last newsletter as it was distributed after the end of the month. We will be back on schedule in April.