



Publication: Cape Argus Early - Main
Title: CapeNature set to barter for Table Mountain Park
Publish date: 24 Oct 2022
Page: 3

Reach: 27662
AVE: R 41233.96
Author: Mwangi Githahu

CONSERVATION

CapeNature set to barter for Table Mountain Park

MWANGI GITHAHU
mwangi.githahu@inf.co.za

CAPENATURE is investigating taking over the Table Mountain National Park from SANParks in line with a 2021 budget proposal from Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Barbara Creecy.

The move was revealed to the legislature during the deliberation on the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, and CapeNature's 2021/22 annual reports.

Committee chairperson Andricus van der Westhuizen (DA) asked for an update on the process of swapping National Parks and Provincial Nature Reserves after Creecy's announcement last year.

At the time Creecy she said she had kick-started the process as a way to reduce the fragmentation of functional responsibilities and the overlap

of functions between different organs of state. Replying to Van der Westhuizen, CapeNature chief executive Razeena Omar said there was currently a national working group, with representatives from the department as well as CapeNature, that was looking into this process.

Environmental Affairs and Development Planning MEC Anton Bredell confirmed a meeting would be scheduled between himself, Premier Alan Winde, Creecy and Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille to discuss the details of any swop.

Bredell said he believed CapeNature would do a better job than the national government in managing safety and conservation in the park.

CapeNature said it was ready to indicate which nature reserves it was willing to swop for Table Mountain and that the swop would considerably increase the entity's revenue

generation. CapeNature's annual report showed the entity netted more than R50.5 million in tourism income in the 2021/22 financial year, a record that surpassed pre-pandemic income performances.

Omar said this was due to a robust recovery in visitor numbers to CapeNature parks and outstanding work from the entity in promoting ecotourism in the province.

Van der Westhuizen said: "Table Mountain is probably the biggest ecotourism draw in the province. With the exceptional management displayed by CapeNature, it would only make sense for this park to also be run by this entity."

He said he would be submitting questions to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning to ascertain further details on the possibility of such a switch, and exactly where in the process things

had reached.

Meanwhile, department head Gerhard Gerber told the committee the department's criminal investigations sub-directorate had completed and referred 10 criminal investigations to the NPA during the reporting period, thus achieving the Medium Term Strategic Framework's annual target of 10. The criminal investigation cases referred to the NPA during this reporting period included non-compliance with an environmental authorisation/waste management licence and illegal clearing of critical endangered vegetation.

There were also cases of illegal excavation and infilling within wetlands or rivers; illegal construction of dams; and unlawful activities which have resulted in significant pollution and/or degradation to the environment and impacted negatively on people's health and wellbeing.