



**environment, forestry
& fisheries**

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 356 {NW362E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 2 of 2021

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Mr D Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) In view of the Table Mountain National Park (TMNP) that is situated in a fire-prone Mediterranean climate zone, comprising a fire-dependent biome which needs to burn every 10 to 15 years, and given that climate crisis and this natural risk is exacerbated by increasing infestations of alien vegetation, what
 - (a) measures have been put in place to protect the urban interface from wildfires and
 - (b) is being done to manage the fynbos biome and associated fire risk inside the TMNP;
- (2) what are the management strategies for dealing with
 - (a) fire risk given the fire- dependent biome and
 - (b) fire risk as exacerbated by alien infestations and climate changes;
- (3) what is the condition of the jeep tracks that allow firefighters to access the mountain;
- (4) whether any measures are in place to protect the urban edge homes from fire; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

356. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) a) The circum-peninsula fire break network has been initiated to include South African National Parks (SANParks) as well as the City of Cape Town and privately owned land. The circum-peninsula fire break network covers a distance of approximately 140 kilometres, from Signal

Hill in the north to Cape Point in the south; and due to its strategic location, it assists in protecting communities from runaway wildfires on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) of the Park. The Table Mountain National Parks (TMNP) has also been appointed as the implementing agent to manage and oversee the annual construction and maintenance of the circum-peninsula fire break network.

- b) Natural fires occur in Fynbos Biome at intervals of 10 – 15 years. TMNP has developed a Prescribed Burning Priority Framework to determine and prioritise areas for prescribed burning in the National Park. The Plan takes into consideration veld age, rare and endangered species, alien clearing as well as risks pertaining to the WUI. The reasons for conducting prescribed burning in the Park are: i) to reduce fire risks, ii) to rejuvenate the fire-adapted and fire-dependant fynbos vegetation, and iii) to form an essential part of control operations aimed at eliminating invasive alien plants. The implementation of prescribed burning (or fuel reduction burning) in the Park is, however, subjected to a permit application process before any burning can take place.
- (2) a) Fire forms an integral part of the ecological management of the National Park. Fire risks are determined through the Prescribed Burning Priority Framework, which is updated on an annual basis, and will be dealt with through prescribed burning (which usually takes place during March – April of each year) or fuel reduction burning (which usually takes place between May – August).
- b) The TMNP has an approved plan for the control of listed alien species as required by relevant legislation. This alien species control plan highlights the integrated and multifaceted approach to the management of these species. Alien species not only alter the fire patterns in the Park, but also pose management challenges in terms of visitor safety and security, water security and direct biodiversity threats. The implementation of the Park's strategies to address these issues is undertaken largely through the National Public Works Programme – Working for Water (WW). The TMNP continually assesses the risks posed by highly flammable and fire prone Pines, Eucalyptus and Acacias that occur on the urban interface with these alien invasive vegetation species, a priority for removal. In terms of the long-term planning for alien species control in the TMNP, management continually draws on the expertise and collaboration with specialised organisations such as South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), South

African Environmental Observation Network (SEAPON), Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology (CIB) and climate change experts.

- (3) The Jeep tracks are in a fair condition and suitable for the 4x4 fire trucks which are used for veld fire management. Ongoing maintenance of jeep tracks form part of the yearly maintenance plan of the Park. The use of helicopters in either dispatching teams or as an initial attack method is key to the success of fire-fighting operations on the TMNP.
- (4) Urban edge homes are protected by the annual maintenance of the circum-peninsula fire break network. However, homeowners on the urban edge also have a role to play in reducing the fire risk on their respective properties (that is within the Home Ignition Zone).

The Cape Peninsula Fire Protection Association (CPFPA), of which TMNP is a key role player, has submitted a project proposal to SANTAM to assist homeowners on the WUI in order to minimise the risk of wildfires damaging their assets. Using the CPFPA as a testing site, the process assesses current wildfire risks and hazards, uses the results to inform homeowners of their risk rating and assistance needed to reduce the overall risk rating of their area or communities, resulting in an updated risk map.

Regards



**MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 18/3/2021