

PLOT CLEARING POLICY PROPOSED CHANGES AS UNDERLINED :

A. PROPOSED CHANGES TO TWO SECTIONS OF THE MAIN POLICY IN ORDER TO INCORPORATE CONSERVANCIES

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Conservancy: Conservancy means a Conservancy within a residential area registered with CapeNature

- 2.1 This policy is specific to municipal and privately owned vacant land within residential areas and bordering urban edges, provided that for a Conservancy, Annexure A applies mutatis mutandis and in the place of a conflicting provision of the main policy.

B. INSERTION OF A NEW ANNEXURE A PROPOSED FOR CONSERVANCIES

Annexure A : CONSERVANCIES

1. This annexure is specific to municipal and privately owned vacant land within a Conservancy.
2. Section 8.2 of the main policy shall not apply.
3. **STREET/ROAD RESERVES (VERGES):**
 - 3.1. In order to protect and maintain the street/road reserves as ecological corridors, which are essential to biodiversity conservation within Conservancies, and which also contribute to their aesthetic character, clearing of the vegetation that they support will be undertaken as per the specifications prescribed in Section 4.
 - 3.2. Streets and roads already serve as firebreaks. Additional clear-cutting or intense mowing of associated street/road reserves in order to create wider firebreaks should not be undertaken.
 - 3.3. Trimming of vegetation that overhangs street and road verges may be carried out.
 - 3.4. Vegetation established within the street/road reserves at intersections must be trimmed to maintain appropriate sight distances to ensure traffic safety.
4. **PRESCRIBED STANDARDS/SPECIFICATIONS FOR CLEARING VEGETATION**

The aim of clearing vegetation from street/road verges, vacant or minimally developed private properties and undeveloped municipal land is to remove dead biomass and selected live plant matter that accumulates at densities that are ecologically sub-optimal for Fynbos and Strandveld. The standard for clearing vegetation, in support of this aim, to be adopted by contractors, owners of private property, and the municipality shall be at repeat intervals of between four and five years. The details pertaining to the standard are listed in Sections 4.1 – 4.8 below.

 - 4.1. Deadwood and dry combustible plant biomass must be removed.
 - 4.2. Invasive alien vegetation typically accounts for the majority of accumulated biomass within many local Conservancies. All invasive alien plant species listed in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 must be eradicated. This should entail either removal of entire plants from the ground or cutting larger plants at, or as close as possible to, ground-level.

Cut stumps must be treated with herbicide to prevent re-growth. All invasive alien plant biomass must be removed for proper disposal.

- 4.2.1. Cut and remove relatively short-lived pioneer plant species only when they have become moribund (when starting to die off), having served their primary ecological function such as the stabilization of exposed soil. Examples of such species include: Blombos (*Metalasia muricata* and other species of the same genus), Madder (*Anthospermum* species), Gonnabos (*Passerina* species) and Tabakbos (*Senecio halimifolius* and other species of the same genus).
- 4.2.2. No vegetation that naturally contributes to peat wetlands (typified by the presence of Kolkol, *Berzelia* species) shall be cleared. Reeds, such as Fluitjiesriet (*Phragmites australis*) and Bulrush (*Typha capensis*) can be cut short (less than 10cm); however care must be taken not to damage surrounding sedges, restios and other wetland species such as the endangered and highly threatened orchid, *Satyrium haklackerii*. Rapid re-growth of the mentioned reed species can be anticipated.
- 4.2.3. Leave all slow-growing restios and sedges contributing to wetland communities. Cutting these plants will promote the undesirable establishment of low-diversity reed-swamp (e.g. dominated by bulrush) and grass species that are ecologically disruptive, fire-prone and difficult to eliminate from areas into which they have opportunistically encroached.
- 4.2.4. Short-lived woody shrubs and trees that are becoming moribund (more than 50% of the plant biomass is dead) can be cut and removed. Examples of such species include Tolbos (some of the taller *Leucadendron* species) and the Keurboom (*Virgilia divaricata*, an introduced native species of the southern Cape).
- 4.3. Do not disturb or clear young or mature species that have the potential to contribute to low-flammability Fynbos, managed open thicket and temperate forest. Examples of such species include: healthy *Protea* species (critical species for Fynbos pollinators such as sunbirds and sugarbirds), Cape Beech (*Rapanea melanophloeos*), Waxberry (*Morella cordifolia*), Milkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*), Dune koko tree (*Maytenus procumbens*), Tanninbush (*Osyris compressa*), Cape saffron (*Cassine peragua*), Cherrywood (*Pterocelastrus tricuspidatus*), Dune Guarrie (*Euclea racemosa*), Wild and Sand Olive (*Olea capensis* and *O. exasperate* respectively), Kanferboom (*Tarchonanthus camphoratus*), Rhus species (*Searsia* species), Bergbas or African sandalwood (*Osyris lanceolata*) and Coastal Silver Oak/Kusvaalbos (*Brachylaena discolor*). Low flammability sedges and shrubs growing in association with these woody species should not be cleared.
- 4.4. Leave undisturbed all Fynbos and Strandveld vegetation that are in the early phase of post-fire recovery. Amongst other ecological benefits this type of vegetation retards invasions by and the establishment of alien plant species.
- 4.5. Subject to Section 4.6 below, all vegetation litter produced in the clearing of erven must be removed from cleared land and may not be left *in situ* for longer than 5 (five) working days.
- 4.6. Cuttings may be chipped into pieces not larger than 100 x 100 mm in size and spread uniformly over the total area of the cleared area but may not be left as heaps that could give rise to spontaneous combustion.
- 4.7. **EXCEPT TO COMPLY WITH SECTIONS 3.3. AND 3.4 ABOVE, AND READ IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 5 BELOW**, the indigenous vegetation established within in the street/road verges does not need to be cut or disturbed at all. Left in a natural state, the vegetation creates ecological corridors that are valuable environmental assets of the municipality and local communities.

Property owners should be encouraged to retain adjacent street/road verges in states that are as natural as possible.

- 4.8. Topsoil may not be removed or disturbed as far as possible.

5. STREETS SERVING AS FIREBREAKS AND BUILT ERVEN

- 5.1. Vegetation height in street/road reserves and on private properties should be managed to achieve a fire safety ratio of one metre in height per two-and-a-half metres of cleared distance from residential buildings. The taller the vegetation, the greater the cleared distance, to achieve compliance with the specified ratio.

- 5.2. From a fire safety perspective, property owners of built erven should be discouraged from intensive clear-cutting of natural vegetation and instead focus on trimming to achieve the height to distance ratio stated in Section 5.1 above. This assumes additional compliance with the specifications listed in Section 4.

6. MUNICIPAL LAND ZONED OPEN SPACE ZONE 1: NATURE RESERVE AND PROTECTED AREAS IN TERMS OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION

- 6.1 No intervention will take place except for the removal of deadwood and dry combustible material, as per Section 4.1, and the removal of invasive aliens as per Section 4.2, above. Controlled burning, on a 10 to 15 year rotation, should be considered as an ecological management tool where this may be possible. Alternatively, non-wetland vegetation should be managed, in the long-term, towards low-flammability open thicket and/or temperate forest.

- 6.2 Plant species characteristic of seasonal and perennial wetlands, including streams, may not be disturbed. Wetlands are protected by the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) and intervention may be only in accordance with a specific Maintenance Management Plan (MMP). In terms of the Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998) permits may be required.