



Noordhoek Environmental Action Group (NEAG)

NPO Registration Number 006-538 PBO Registration Number 9771758142

Annual General Meeting

When: Tuesday, 28th of February, 2023

Where: Noordhoek Community Centre, Avondrust Circle, Chapmans Peak

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Guest: Dr Ian McCallum

Membership: R100 per year or any donations welcome

Chaired by NEAG 2022 Chair Dr Andrea Marais and Vice-chair Dr Rob Anderson.

Dear Members,

AGM AGENDA

- Welcome
- Committee
- Noteworthy activities
- Finances
- Special thanks
- PSHB issue
- Voting
- ToadNUTs & Project Noordhoeked
- Q&A
- Guest Speaker
- Closing

AGM REPORT

1. About

The [Noordhoek Environmental Action Group](#) (NEAG) is a non-profit organisation of like-minded people who support NEAG's aims, mission and vision. We focus on the natural local fauna and flora within the Noordhoek area and surroundings, and their relationship with the social and built environment occupied by Noordhoek's residents and local enterprises.

NEAG's aims are to protect and preserve the indigenous flora, fauna, wildlife, marine life and ecological systems of our natural environment and promote a holistic and mutually beneficial interaction with our human population for the benefit of all its residents and visitors.

NEAG is first and foremost an ACTION group that will not stand down on issues that compromise its values. Its mission is to act as custodians and take all necessary actions within the law to ensure the protection of this environment to sustain, preserve and improve it for the benefit of our descendants. Its members will critically engage with any activities that may have an impact on the natural or social environment, without fear, favour or preference toward the interests of any individual, commercial or institutional entity.

NEAG's vision for Noordhoek is to maintain the rural character of the valley as a mixture of natural, agricultural and residential areas with limited commercial activity and a focus on protecting biodiversity. We seek a balance where all constituents are supported and protected to coexist harmoniously with minimal effect on the natural environment. This vision is fully supported by the [NRPA Noordhoek 2030 Vision](#).

The 2022 committee comprised:

- **Dr Robert Anderson (Vice-chair and Chapman's Peak Nature Sanctuary conservation)** is a founding member of NEAG and has been on the committee for longer than he can remember. Despite seeing many changes during his 44 years in Noordhoek, he is pleased that we have escaped some of the awful developments that have raised their heads over the years. His main interest is

biodiversity and in looking after as much of our natural habitat as possible. Our small Chapman's Peak Nature Sanctuary is one of his favourite causes.

- **Dr Andrea Marais (Chair)** specialises in conservation psychology. She found that NEAG provided her with access to like-minded individuals that encouraged her to pursue her passion for conservation and the need to protect biodiversity. She encourages people to have difficult conversations if it will assist in protecting the rights of nature and that of future generations.
- **Glenn Ashton (Environmental management, wetlands, and complex systems expert)** is a PhD Candidate who has been involved in environmental activism and management for most of his life. He is passionate about Noordhoek, Cape Town and South Africa. His environmental work encompasses all spheres from local to international.
- **Tessa Oliver (Aliens and Fire expert)** is a project manager in the fields of fire risk reduction, climate change adaptation and natural resource management. She has lived in Noordhoek for well over a decade and dedicated much effort to ridding the valley of invasive alien plants and reducing its wildfire risk.
- **Gwen Hewett (Editor, *Tread Lightly* liaison and advisor)** has lived in Noordhoek all her adult life and is in awe of its magnificent beach, mountains, wetlands, its common, milkwood groves, and the rich variety of indigenous flora and fauna in all these different ecosystems. She is keen to see this precious area appreciated and preserved.
- **Ceinwen Smith (Education)** has always been intrigued by the natural world and immersion in wild places. This passion fuelled her study and teaching in the natural sciences, which have taken her to the Great Lakes in the US and to Antarctica. Since her return to Noordhoek three years ago she has been rediscovering its 'wildness' and beauty. As a scientist she is fascinated by the intricate and essential relationship between people and the natural world, and how we can restore our deep connection to it. She is strongly focussed on engaging people in hands-on learning experiences in nature.
- **Rein Buyze (Education)** is passionate about immersions into nature as an educational tool for children and adults alike. A teacher for many years in the Waldorf School environment, he now has developed programs for integrating education in wild spaces, bringing deep nature connection and interest in the environment as the core learning principle. He has recently moved to

Noordhoek and set up an initiative that inspires learning through connecting to nature in the southern peninsula. He has joined NEAG in the hope to make more people aware of the beautiful natural areas and how they can be utilized and protected through engagement and activism.

- **Erwin Potgieter (Treasurer)** has lived in Noordhoek for close to 10 years and loves the diversity and changing landscapes of the Noordhoek Valley. He loves the idea of trying to keep Noordhoek semi-rural to accommodate both humans, animals, and the natural environment where we all strive to live in harmony.
- **Marissa Massari (Communications)** is the newest member of the committee. Having grown up in the Southern Suburbs, the many many hours spent as a child playing in the Liesbeek River at the end of our home, or adventuring up the road to Newlands forest, planted a deep seed for the love of nature. My passion is to engage and interact with people, and I'm excited to be part of an action group which encourages working together towards positive solutions for protecting our natural habitat. *"There are always flowers for those who want to see them" - Henri Matisse*

2. AGM report

2.1 Chairperson's 2022 reflections written by Andrea Marais

The year has had numerous highlights for me, the most inspirational being that NEAG turned 30 years old. That means I was just a 13-year-old kid in Joburg watching 'The Mickey Mouse Club' on TV (as Joburg kids did then) when NEAG was formed. Its genesis was triggered by the sound of chainsaws echoing from Chapman's Peak driving residents to near insanity due to the noise pollution. Rob wrote an excellent article in our December newsletter about the rich history of NEAG, the numerous contributions from volunteers over the years, and how it quickly morphed from an "awareness" group to an "action" group. Whenever Rob speaks about the history of Noordhoek and NEAG I notice how many environmental challenges have remained the same over the years: inappropriate developments, massive and technical EIA documents, public participation processes that present a mere façade of participatory governance, alien vegetation (and landowners who ignore the fire risk), time and funding pressures, and a large body of apathetic residents fortunately offset by a

dedicated core of residents who support NEAG, show compassion for the natural environment and aim to live in harmony rather than in conflict with it!

What seems to have kept NEAG going over the years is the long-term view of what natural ecosystems require to be able to flourish so that future generations can live in harmony supported by the natural environment. NEAG's vision has always been "to act as custodians and take all necessary actions within the law to ensure the protection of this environment, and to sustain, preserve and improve it for the benefit of our descendants". Implicit in the Noordhoek 2030 vision, with the recent addition of climate change, is the need to start thinking about what kind of world and Valley we will be leaving behind for future generations. This long-term view is focused on balance, responsible and sustainable development, mutual flourishing of nature and humans, and the rights of nature combined with the rights of children to live in a healthy environment. This view is too often confronted with myopic policies and development approvals, such as the approval of the Houmoed Phase 1 road and the certain long-term impact it will have on the wetland biota, its ecosystem functioning, and on surrounding communities, and even the greater valley as it gets pushed towards collapse.

The 'Good Ancestor' book written by Roman Krznaric speaks about the intergenerational responsibility to create a better future for generations to come. He argues that we have a moral obligation to think about and act for the benefit of future generations, and that this can only be done through sustainable living, political activism, and leaving a positive legacy. This vision and commitment is at the core of all the projects NEAG focuses on.

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The following section contains the portfolio reflections.

2.2 Portfolios

2.2.1 Chapman's Peak Nature Sanctuary Conservation report written by Dr Rob Anderson

The Chapman's Peak Nature Sanctuary is in a good state. The usual maintenance was carried out and we notice that years of alien removals are reducing the crop of new seedlings. Reasonable winter rains produced a fine show of flowers. We continue to participate in the Noordhoek Open Gardens weekend as the only truly 'natural garden' and received very good reactions from those who took part in our guided walks. The paths are well used, but we wish all dog-walkers would clean up after their animals! Dr Donovan Kirkwood continues to collect seeds from some of the plants and scatter them before the rains – this is helping to revegetate areas that were degraded decades ago, but the bulk of the strandveld and milkwood thicket is looking good!

2.2.2 Environmental management, wetlands, and complex systems report written by Glenn Ashton

Obviously the primary issue on NEAGs agenda is the ongoing build-up to our court challenge to City and Provincial authorities on Houmoed Road extension, phase 1, proposed to run from the existing Houmoed Road to the bottom of Lekkerwater Road. Beside the risk to indicator species like Leopard Toads, which breed at ponds which will be impacted by the road, the road puts the entire Noordhoek Wetland system at risk as the area intersected by the road, the Pick n Pay wetland, it is the primary receiver of all runoff from the area. As such it cleans this water which then goes into Lake Michelle and then into the Greater Noordhoek wetland system. This wetland is already under massive strain from human pressure and Houmoed Road extension would significantly increase the risk to the wetland. Andrea Marais has driven this legal process and we have a great legal team. Legal papers have been submitted and we await a court date. We feel our case is strong.

In November we took the Mayoral Committee member for water and wetlands, Alex Landsdowne, on an exploratory visit to highlight our concerns and were impressed with his dedication and hope that his increased knowledge of the importance of this area will result in increased wetland protection and care by the city.

As noted, Lake Michelle would be most seriously impacted if this road went ahead and if the wetland became more degraded. We recently met with the Lake Michelle management committee to find out about their measurement and management of the water in the Lakes. We know of long standing issues with the quality of the water there and it appears that the water body is not in the best shape, with elevated phosphorus levels indicating that all is not well with this system. We are liaising with them toward further co-operation.

We continue to sit on the Longbeach Mall environment management committee. Their artificial wetland which cleans all water leaving that site before entering the wetlands has recently been maintained. This involved the dredging of the wetlands, management of the polluted material excavated and then replanting and rehabilitation of the wetland in order that it can continue to scrub out the pollutants from the parking areas and runoff of the Mall. The rehabilitation appears to have worked well and the artificial wetlands are working well.

We are concerned about ongoing impacts on the fringes of the wetlands. At the Noordhoek sports grounds illegal dumping has been halted and we await rehabilitation of this area. Further illegal dumping of material on the site has recently been addressed with the city. Other wetland infill has also occurred at the storage yard and the woodcutter's site on the north west of the Pick n Pay wetlands. We are concerned about these ongoing impacts as they each serve to degrade the health of the wetlands.

Finally we have negotiated a halt to the spraying of our verges with roundup. This is of direct importance to our wetland system and the species which live there as Roundup has been shown to have massive negative impacts on all species from humans to birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, insects, earthworms and of course plant species. We do require support from the community to keep their own verges clear by mechanical means (spade work) and need funding for a small team to work on the roads in the area.

Our wetlands are some of the most unspoiled and intact wetlands in the City of Cape Town and it is important that we continue to care for them. They are not only home to many species but also clean our pollution from the water, reduce the impacts of

flooding, and purify water before it enters the aquifer from where our borehole water comes. Wetlands provide massive services to us and the economic value alone is worth millions of Rands per year. The aesthetic and biological value is beyond measurement. Their health relies on our care.

2.2.3 Aliens and Fire report written by Tessa Oliver

Along with the NRPA, we have been working on inspiring landowners to clear invasive aliens from their properties. There have been some heartening alien clearing efforts in our valley – notably by De Goede Hoop Fynbos Estate, SANParks, and some private landowners. This is not only beneficial for biodiversity and water but also lowers the risk of intense wildfires and structure loss for everyone living here. Special mention must be made of the Project Noordhoek team, who are trained in alien plant removal and have cleared massive tracts in the wetlands, making it less vulnerable to fires while also improving the security of walkers and horse riders.

2.2.4 Education report written by Rein Buyze

There was collaboration between Call of the Wild and Noordhoek Montessori to develop a labyrinth in the Sanctuary, which was a successful awareness project that brought attention and beautification to a degraded area. There is on going exposure for the children in various learning environments to be educated about the natural areas of Noordhoek. This included an informative walk with Patrick Dowling from (KEAG) to Kommetjie along the beach, experiences with Rob Anderson and Ceinwen Smith studying biology and biodiversity and many other exciting natural excursions into the wild. We continue to strive in our belief that by immersing children in the natural environment that it stand a better chance of being protected in the long-term future.

2.2.5 Tread lightly report written by Gwen Hewett

As the only registered non-profit organisation in Noordhoek, NEAG serves as an umbrella body for three other voluntary environmental groups in the valley, namely ToadNuts, Project Noordhoek and On the Verge. Toadnuts, run by Suzie J'Kul and Alison Faraday, focuses on protecting the endangered western leopard toads and their habitat. Toadnuts runs street patrols during the migration seasons to help toads cross roads safely, educates residents on how to support toads to survive in their gardens,

and engages with authorities and the public to help protect toad habitats. Project Noordhoeked, run by Karoline Hanks, concentrates on keeping our beach, dunes, and major roads (including Ou Kaapse Weg) clear of dog poop, litter and invasive alien vegetation. It also undertakes many projects such as the beach boardwalk extension, the wire whale Kakapo to encourage beach walkers to collect litter, and eco benches at the beach and elsewhere. In addition, it recently introduced temporary cages to protect bird nests on the beach from dogs. On the Verge, headed by Kathy Fish, concentrates on beautifying our neighbourhood with attractive plantings in public areas, clearing invasive alien vegetation, and also creating pedestrian walkways, sometimes including benches. All four groups work closely together and rely entirely on donations and fundraising events to support their work.

2.2.6 Communication report written by Marissa Massari

As part of its communications and community outreach NEAG publishes four newsletters a year, each themed around a season. Every edition communicates and highlights what NEAG is working on, and where the immediate community and even members from afar can assist. We also feature information on the local environment, updates on processes, insights from experts, book reviews, and a range of creative and practical ideas and tips. We are truly grateful for all the positive feedback received and encourage members to communicate with us if there are specific topics they would like us to focus on. All our newsletters can be accessed on our website: <https://neag.org.za/newsletters/>.

2.2.7 Treasury report compiled by Erwin Potgieter

Year Ended 31-Dec 2022	NEAG	ToadNUTs	Open Studios	TOTAL
Opening Balance 01-Jan 2021	64 781	14 854	7 400	87 035
Income	11 676	3 500	11 650	26 826
INCOME - OPEN STUDIOS			11 650	11 650
INCOME - MEMBERSHIP	4 700			4 700
INCOME - DONATION	6 548	3 500		10 048
BANKING - INTEREST	428			428
Expenditure	(11 613)	-	(19 050)	(30 664)
ACCOUNTING	(1 850)			(1 850)
BANKING - CHARGES	(4)		(3)	(8)
DONATION - PROJECT NOORDHOEKED	(7 000)			(7 000)
GENERAL - REFRESHMENTS / STATIONERY	(2 144)			(2 144)
EXPENSES - OPEN STUDIOS			(9 202)	(9 202)
OPEN STUDIOS - EXPENSES			(9 845)	(9 845)
PROJECTS - NATURE SANCTUARY	(615)			(615)
TOTAL	63	3 500	(7 400)	(3 838)
Closing Balance 31-Dec 2022	64 843	18 354	(0)	83 197

3. Special thanks

- **Network for Animals:** David Barritt from Network for Animals has tirelessly been supporting our High Court Case. Without their financial and background support we would not have been able to take this on.
- **Noordhoek Ratepayers Association:** Brad and his committee work really hard, and we enjoyed building a closer relationship with his team over the past year to align all aspects of the Noordhoek 2030 Vision. There is greater realisation that our two organisations need to be aligned to achieve the goals of the vision for the benefit of the natural environment and residents alike. Brad has been a massive support over the year leading difficult environmental conversations with the Mayor and surrounding communities.
- **Project Noordhoeked:** Karoline, Filippo and their team do incredible work and are a massive asset to Noordhoek. We are truly excited about their coastal bird deployment project and continue to be inspired by the powerful work they do each day, getting the work done!
- **ToadNUTs:** Alison and Suzie continue to work tirelessly to stop this indicator species from going locally extinct and we truly admire all their effort and those of their patrollers during the migration in winter. We continued to work closely with them on the Houmoed High Court Case and their passion for biodiversity is truly encouraging.

- **On the Verge:** Kathy and her team continue to beautify our verges with the Open Gardens event being a highlight for NEAG to showcase the Chapmans Peak Nature Sanctuary.
- **Patrick Wright:** Patrick is always willing to help and provide support and has been an incredible help with keeping our website updated and accurate. He is also always willing to attend on-site meetings with stakeholders. He really continues to do so much for Noordhoek on various fronts!
- **SANParks:** Thanks to Suzan Muroa for tirelessly responding to our e-mails and actioning concerns that we raise. She is always willing to meet on site and discuss environmental challenges observed. We really appreciate the open communication we managed to foster during the year.
- **CoCT Environmental Management Department:** We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Joy Garmin who takes environmental transgressions seriously and for her swift action when we report these.
- **Councillors:** Cllr Pat Francke, Cllr Simon Liell-Cock and Ald Felicity Purchase for always keeping us in the loop on important matters and being willing to assist us with challenging matters that include attempts to change policy.
- **NEAG Executive Committee:** For all the hard work as part of NEAG, but also in your personal endeavours where you are involved in environmental work in some way, shape or form. There is a strong alignment of values, beliefs, and worldviews within the committee and also with the work we all do outside of the committee.

4. Nominations for the NEAG Committee for 2023 are:

- **Chair:** vacant, but Andrea Marais will remain interim chair until a replacement has been found
- **Vice-chair:** Rob Anderson
- **Court case and Climate change:** Andrea Marais
- **Education:** Ceinwen Smith and Rein Buyze
- **Environmental management, wetlands, and complex systems expert:** Glenn Ashton
- **Aliens and Fire expert:** Tessa Oliver

- **Editor, *Tread Lightly* liaison and advisor:** Gwen Hewett
- **Communication:** Marissa Massari
- **Treasurer:** Erwin Potgieter
- **Secretary:** vacant

If you would like to volunteer or nominate someone for any of the positions/or assistance, kindly send contact details and a note about your/their interests to neag.info@gmail.com.

5. 2023 MEMBERSHIP

Whether you are a new or existing member, please complete our membership form to ensure we have your correct details and can keep you updated on all of NEAG's activities: <https://neag.org.za/membership/>.

Our membership fee is proposed to be R100 per year.

You can use Zapper or an EFT to make payment. Kindly use reference: membership/your name when making payments. Any support is always appreciated.

Bank: Standard Bank, Fish Hoek

Name of Account holder: Noordhoek Environment

Savings Account number: 073849286

Branch code: 036009



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea'.

Green Regards

Andrea

Chair