



The step-by-step SRA Application Process



The NVSRA Application Process

- ✓ **Step 1** – The urban perception survey has been completed - refer to Issue 2 of 4th April 2022
- ✓ **Step 2** – The draft business plan has been completed and key aspects of the plan such as geographical area, scope of services and indicative costs, have been discussed with the Municipality.
- ✓ **Step 3** – Bitou Municipal Council approved the SRA By-Law and SRA Policy and completed a 30-day public participation process in August. The SRA By-Law obtained final approval from Council on 31st October with publication in the Government Gazette to follow later in November.
- ✓ **Step 4** – Revised SRA Business Plan and budget was presented to the Bitou Municipality CFO for final approval in the early November.
- ✓ **Step 5** – Business Plan was sent to all NV property owners by email and presented on 19th December 2022 at a public participation meeting facilitated by Dr Bianca Currie.
- ✓ **Step 6** – Consent Forms were emailed to all NV property owners to respond to the implementation of the SRA proposal – December 2022/January 2023.
- ✓ **Step 7** – Submission of the SRA application to Council 22nd February 2023. Following the successful Public Participation Meeting in December 2022 and having received consent forms from 50% plus 1, an application for Natures Valley to be declared a Special Rating Area was submitted by the Steering Committee to Bitou on 23 February 2023. It was advertised in the local press and approved at the Bitou Municipal Council meeting of May 2023. Of the 241 consent forms received 230 (58.5%) were in favour 11 against (2.8%) Of the forms received 94.4% were in support of forming the SRA.

- ✓ **Step 8** – On 26 April 2023 Natures Valley SRA NPC was incorporated with Rob Nichol, James Martin and Paul Richards as the founding directors. On 26th June 2023 a Finance Agreement was signed between Bitou Municipality and Natures Valley SRA. The SRA commenced on 1st July when the first SRA levy was included on ratepayers July statements. Bitou paid the SRA its first monthly payment on 15th August 2023. The NVRA assisted the SRA to operate in July by lending R35 000 to the SRA to pay July expenses. This loan has been repaid to the NVRA in full.

The NVSRA is Up and Running

After months of hard work and perseverance, the NVSRA is finally up and running. A big thank you to everyone who made this project possible, but especially to David Owen, who spent many hours behind the computer drawing up business plans and researching SRA structures or meeting with Bitou officials to craft a way forward for Natures Valley before returning home to England last year. He left the reins in the hands of NVSRA Steering Committee who saw us through the final stages of the process and on the 1st of July 2023 the NVSRA came into being.

No formal NVSRA meeting is planned for 2023, but we will be reporting back to residents at the NVRA AGM in December and will convene an NVSRA AGM during 2024. As mentioned in the Application Process Steps 8 above, Rob Nichol, James Martin and Paul Richards were appointed as the founding directors and we ask any homeowners who would like to put forward nominations for further directors to please submit these for consideration.

Profile: Marco Barnardo – Natures Valley Superintendent



We would like to recognise the incredible contribution made to the establishment of the SRA and the smooth day-to-day operation of Natures Valley by our Superintendent, Marco Barnardo. I am sure that almost everyone has benefitted from his amazing service over the years, but not many have been able to get to know him that well as he operates very much under the radar, appearing miraculously, at just the right moment, to bail you out of a difficult situation.

Marco is a “Barnardo” and his family go back generations in Covie where he was born and brought up. His Paternal grandmother, Irene Barnardo, is well remembered by early residents of Natures Valley as the “Matriarch of the Covie Community”. Her strong work ethic and pioneering spirit seem to have played a big role in the young Marco, whose can-do attitude to any task he faces is a breath of fresh air. As he always says, “failure is not an option, obstacles are merely part of the learning curve”!

Marco attended Chapmans High School in Port Elizabeth before embarking on a very successful career in conservation with South African National Parks where he quickly rose through the ranks from Field Ranger to Section Leader. During his service at SANParks Marco completed numerous courses from Armed and Unarmed Combat and Security training to High Angle Rescue, giving him a wide range of practical and managerial skills to further his career.

In September 2016 Marco joined Bitou Municipality as the Superintendent for Natures Valley and Covie where to supervise the implementation of Bitou services. Marco is a Commissioner of Oaths, a Certified Peace Officer, a trained first aid responder and a member of the NSRI Natures Valley Coastwatcher Group that keep us all safe on the beaches and at the Lagoon.

Thank you for everything you do for Natures Valley Marco, you are a valued member of our community.

Project Update

Baboon Management

The Baboon Management Program was transferred from the NVRA to the NVSRA in July this year and started with the reappointment of our 3 very experienced Bitou EPWP monitors under new contracts. We were lucky enough to retain the services of Henly Cloete, Riaan Salmans and Moses Jantjies from Kurland, as well as Markquin Damons, Geraldo Barnardo and Denzil Christians from Covie. In September Denzil moved on to a new position as a tour guide on the Otter Trail and we wish him well in his new career. His place has been filled by Covie resident Gayron Kido and we welcome him to the NVSRA monitor team where he will learn the ropes from Marco Barnardo and the other experienced monitors.

The Program made a smooth transition from the NVRA to the NVSRA and continues to be successful in controlling both baboon activity and residents and visitors waste management practices. Although we have had periodic bouts of higher baboon activity in the Valley when food sources in the forest were low, the monitors have managed to keep the troop under reasonable control, and we have had no major incidents. Monitors continue to improve their baboon management techniques and understanding the troops movement patterns has helped pre-empt raids into the Valley on a number of occasions.

This has been partly due to some significant changes in the troop during the year. We discovered the large Alpha Male dead at the water pump station in June and there was a split in the troop resulting in only 12 of the initial troop remaining. There are no large male baboons now, and it is now the larger females that are foraging in bins and looking for opportunities in the Valley.

Given the control that we have been able to maintain we have not yet deemed it necessary to move to darting and collaring any of the troop members for tracking purposes. However, we do expect that at some stage we could see a merging of two of the smaller troops in the area or one or two large males coming in to join the troop, and at that stage we may need to resort to tracking systems.

In July a Primate Research Specialist, Sophie Kurilla, from Tufts University, Boston, USA, joined the NVT team to conduct advanced studies in baboon behaviour with our troop. Sophie was researching primates for her senior thesis and wrote an impressive paper on her experiences with the Natures Valley Troop. We were able to gain valuable information on troop behaviour and we understand that Sophie will be returning to continue her research with the troop next year.

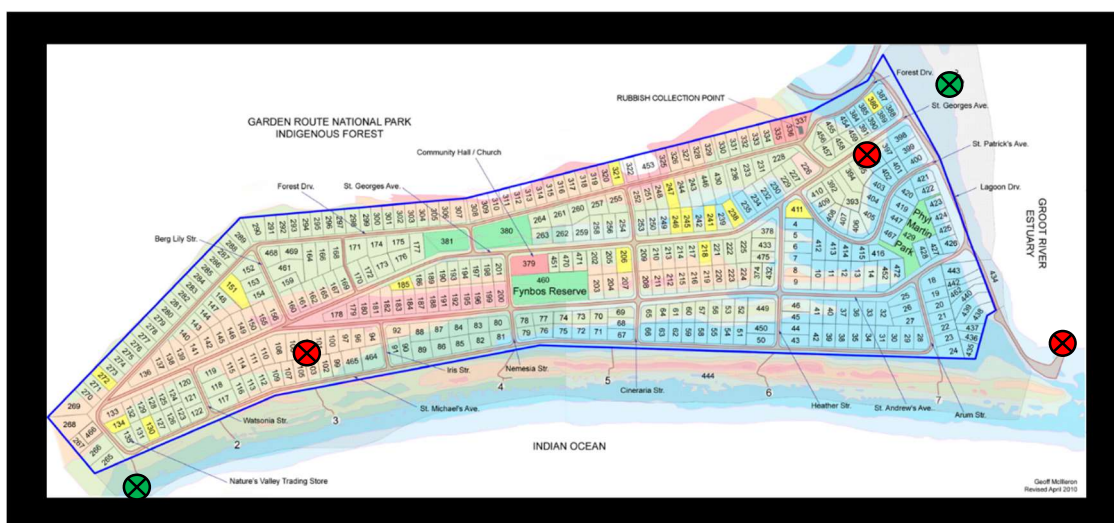
We are very pleased to report that on 30th November at a SANParks awards function held in Pretoria, the NVT and the NVRA received a Kudu Award for “Community Contribution” to conservation in recognition of the outstanding research contribution of the NVT, the Baboon Management Program of the NVRA and the establishment of a conservation oriented approach to coexisting in harmony with wildlife within our community. We are very proud of the good relationship that we have been able to establish with SANParks and look forward to extending our program of conservation cooperation with them.

Safety and Security Program

We were very fortunate that SAPS established a huge security roadblock outside Kurland earlier this year. Whilst it was very annoying being stopped every time we ventured out of the Valley in the direction of Plett, the incidents of petty crime in the Valley ground to a complete halt, highlighting very clearly where our crime problems are emanating from. We installed phase one of our security camera program in December last year and it has been very effective both as a deterrent to potential criminals as well as a tool to apprehend criminals and prevent crimes happening. We have actively identified and apprehended (with the help of PBCPA) someone removing a canoe from the Valley. We used the HD cameras at the entrance to identify the numberplate and the LPR Camera (Licence Plate Recognition) to track the vehicle. PBCPA tracked and located the vehicle and the canoe in Keurbooms and returned it to the Valley. In November a bottle of wine was stolen from the Blue Rocks Shop, and we used the cameras to identify the criminal escaping with the merchandise.

The success of this program has prompted us to start with stage 2 and we will be installing 6 new cameras in 3 locations around the valley in the new year. These cameras will in future all be monitored on a 24hr basis from a control room in Plettenberg Bay. This control room provides immediate notifications of any suspicious activity and has direct connection to our Security provider (ADT) as well as all emergency services – Fire, SAP, Ambulance and NSRI. I have marked the locations of the camera sites on the map below.

Natures Valley Camera Location Sites



 Existing Camera Locations

 New Camera Locations

The first new camera site is at the intersection of St Georges Ave, St Andrews Ave, and Berg Lilly St – the cameras will be located to have views up and down St Georges Ave and down both St Andrews Ave and Berg Lilly St.

The second site is at the Waste transfer station which is often a problem where access is gained to the Valley from behind the WTS bypassing the entrance cameras. There have also been incidents of people scavenging in the bins and camping behind the WTS. This camera will help to monitor these problems.

The final location is perhaps one of the most important safety and security sites in the Valley. Two HD cameras will be sited at the lagoon end of the Syndicate having views up Lagoon Drive towards

the entrance and down towards the Lagoon Beach car park. A third High-Definition Zoom camera will also be located here giving clear views of the entire lagoon swimming area as well as the Lagoon car park.

Many of you will be aware that we had a tragic drowning of 2 very young Covie children while playing on a canoe that they found at the lagoon in October this year. Natures Valley NSRI Coastwatch and NSRI Station 14 Plett responded to a call from a member of the public and were on the scene very quickly. We have decided that a camera located here will give us 24hour surveillance capabilities all monitored by a control room in Plettenberg Bay that will significantly enhance our capability to respond efficiently to all safety and security issues.

It is because of this incident that we have also decided to implement some new protocols for the care of canoes in the Lagoon area. Marco has installed two new canoe rails at the lagoon – one opposite the NVSRA/NVT offices where canoes have always been kept, and the other at the end of the Syndicate grass area. These are the only two sites where canoes may be located until we have installed more canoe rails.

PLEASE NOTE It is compulsory to lock your canoes to these rails when not in use to prevent a repeat of the tragic accident that occurred in October. Any canoes found loose in the lagoon area OR not locked to the poles provided will be removed from the lagoon area for safety reasons.

Alien Vegetation Clearing

The NVT recruited a new member to their team earlier this year, Giorgio Lombardi, who is assisting us in establishing an alien vegetation clearing program. The NVT have identified all the invasive species as well as the location of these aliens on both public and private properties. It is sad to see that the problem has become so bad in some areas that the aliens are now spreading into the forests, and it is imperative that we get on top of this problem as soon as possible. In the new year we will begin clearing the aliens in the public areas – verges and public open spaces – but we will also inform residents of aliens on their properties. We are hoping to offer a service whereby residents can contract us to clear their property of any invasive species.

The NVSRA has purchased some additional bush clearing equipment to assist Marcos team in clearing the overgrowth of indigenous and alien vegetation from pathways and roads in the Valley. While it is nice to have that “cosy” feel of bushy pathways and trees over our roads in the village, it can become a fire hazard if left too long. Bitou Municipality have not always been able to remove the high volumes of trimmed undergrowth and consequently we have undertaken to provide a chipper to clear the surplus cuttings in order to control the “fire Load”.

Finally, we thank everyone for the support and assistance in bringing the NVSRA into being and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!!

RA Nichol

NVSRA Chairman

5th December 2023