

CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION ON THE 'MANAGEMENT' OF THE CHACMA BABOON POPULATION IN THE OVERSTRAND

PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT THE MARINE HOTEL, HERMANUS ON 3 NOVEMBER 2025

INTRODUCTION:

1. The open meeting took place at the Marine Hotel, Hermanus from 17h30 to 19h00;
2. The meeting was arranged and facilitated by the EMS Foundation¹;
3. The meeting was publicized in various social media platforms and local newspapers, and no restrictions were placed on who could, or could not, attend and participate;
4. Approximately 85 residents of the Greater Hermanus area attended either in their personal capacities or representing the organisations that they are affiliated with;
5. No fundamentally dissenting opinions were expressed during the meeting;
6. The meeting formed part of the EMS Foundation's concern that the current 'management' practices by the Overstrand Municipality of the Chacma baboon population in Hermanus² need to be urgently re-assessed with input from a greater variety of stakeholders, including civil society, animal protection and welfare organisations and scientific experts;
7. The EMS Foundation is also convinced that existing collaboration and co-ordination between civil society, animal protection and welfare organisations and scientific experts must be extended to ensure that progress is made to resolve the numerous factors that create and exacerbate the perception that the Chacma baboon populations in the Hermanus area and other areas in the Overstrand are a 'problem'.

PRESENTATIONS:

8. Having heard six presentations from a range of Chacma baboon and other conservation and protection experts, namely:
 - a. Mr Cormac Cullinan, Managing Director of Cullinan & Associates and the Executive Director of the Wild Law Institute.
 - b. Dr Pat Miller, Chairperson of Whale Coast Conservation.
 - c. Ms Sheraine van Wyk, environmental scientist specialising in Environmental Learning and Research.
 - d. Ms Liezl Smith, co-founder and Chairperson of the Kogelberg Villages Environmental Trustees (KVET).
 - e. Mr Francois Van Zyl, Special Projects & Operations Manager, Kogelberg Villages Environmental Trustees (KVET).

¹ The Mission of The EMS Foundation is the advancement and protection of the rights and general welfare of wild animals, children, elderly persons and other vulnerable groups in South Africa and Africa, for the purpose of alleviating suffering, disrupting inequality in all its forms, raising public awareness, empowering and providing dignity. The EMS Foundation (South Africa) was established as a Trust in November 2014 (registration number: IT 222949/14). The Foundation has a Not for Profit Organisation (NPO) status (registration number: 168-304NPO) and is a registered Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) with section 18(a) status - Reference Number: 930053286.

² It should be noted that while this meeting focused on the situation in the Greater Hermanus area, similar sentiments and concerns have been, and continue to be, made with respect to other villages and towns which fall under the Overstrand Municipality.

- f. Dr Adam Cruise, Investigative environmental journalist and Wildlife Policy Co-Ordinator for the EMS Foundation.

PRESENTERS AND PARTICIPANTS NOTED THAT:

9. Hermanus belongs to all who live in it;
10. Chacma Baboons are sentient beings with intrinsic value and are not by their nature 'problem' animals;
11. The 'problem' is not the resident baboons but rather the way human residents interact with them and the adversarial and interventionist manner by which the resident baboons are 'managed' by the municipal authorities;
12. There is an urgent need to reframe the relationship between human residents and resident baboons in the Overstrand area so as to facilitate harmonious coexistence/overlap and compassionate conservation and protection practices, and that the current framing of it as a problem caused by baboons which must be managed and controlled, inevitably leads to an escalation in human-baboon, human-human conflict, degraded ecosystems and divided communities (as has happened in Pringle Bay);
13. Conservation and protection practices are required to be in line with the Animal Protection Act (Act 71 of 1962) and the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004), particularly Section 9A (which clearly stipulates that biodiversity management plans must promote wildlife well-being and humane practices, actions, and activities towards wild animals);
14. Human residents need a deeper understanding of baboon culture, social structure, and their historical and cultural ties to human spaces;
15. Chacma Baboon 'management' necessitates an adaptation of the lifestyle of human residents;
16. An ethic of respect (*hlonipha*) for baboons and care and consideration for the nature in which we live and on which we depend for survival and fulfilment should be actively promoted and encouraged;
17. A revision of the current management style and methodologies and the adoption of an ethos of respect, empathy and compassion towards the baboons informed by scientific knowledge of baboon ecology, local expertise, datasets and analysis, and insights from indigenous cultures who have coexisted with baboons for millennia, is required urgently;
18. There is little or no interest on the part of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to investigate and prosecute human residents, intent on killing or injuring baboons. This impunity sends a clear message that there are no legal consequences for killing or injuring baboons or attempting to kill or injure baboons;
19. Collaboration between environmental scientists, wild animal protection and welfare organisations and municipal and provincial decision-makers as well as with human residents and other relevant stakeholders needs to be enhanced.
20. In his budget speech on the 29th May 2025, Executive Mayor Klaas said that the current baboon management programme would be reviewed before January 2026 and that it would entail a full public participation process before any final decisions are made.

WAY FORWARD AND FOLLOW-ON ACTIONS:

21. To hold an urgent meeting comprising participants from the relevant structures of the Overstrand Municipality with local representatives of the Wildlife Animal Protection Forum of South Africa (WAPFSA), Whale Coast Conservation, other registered conservation organisations in the Overstrand and delegated residents who attended the meeting on the

3rd November 2025 at The Marine Hotel, Hermanus – to discuss the above noted issues and community concerns.

22. To request an urgent meeting with the South African Police Service regarding their failure to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for deliberately injuring or killing baboons or other species;
23. Mindful of *Point 20* above, to call for the immediate halt to the current Overstrand Municipality's Adapted Baboon Management Plan and for the development of an agreed strategy and management plan through a transparent public participation process that entails non-lethal, humane and respectful approaches—grounded in the principle of peaceful, nonviolent coexistence/overlap and promoting both human and baboon well-being;
24. To call on the Overstrand Municipality to implement its existing bylaws on waste management and to conduct waste management in baboon areas in a responsive and adaptive manner;
25. To continue to facilitate on-going dialogues with residents, other organised stakeholders, and the Overstrand Municipality with the aim of ensuring that non-violent and non-aggressive 'management' techniques are effectively implemented and existing municipal waste bylaws are adhered to;
26. To build on local expertise and local projects that have collected unique and robust data.
27. To roll out, in co-operation with the Overstrand Municipality and Whale Coast Conservation, a targeted, smart and efficient baboon education and awareness programme for adults and children across the Overstrand, which are aligned to immediate behaviours and practices that need to be amended or rethought;
28. To offer support to the Overstrand Municipality in repairing and/or upgrading waste transfer sites, public and private waste bins to ensure that they are robust and 'baboon proof';
29. To liaise with the appropriate officials and authorities responsible for urban planning to incorporate designated wildlife corridors in all development initiatives;
30. To call for, and reiterate our offer to assist with the immediate removal of the now non-functional collars from the baboons in the Overstrand Municipal area;
31. To facilitate Overstrand-specific academic studies on, for example, baboon dynamics, existing ecological food sources, the impact of development on their foraging behaviour, impact of the spread of alien vegetation on baboon foraging, wildlife management systems on humans and baboons and to assess lessons learned from international experiences of 'managing' wildlife in urban areas.