



URGENT
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To:

Alderman Eddie Andrews

Deputy Mayor and Mayoral Committee Member for Spatial Planning and Environment, City of Cape Town

Edwin.Andrews@capetown.gov.za

Ms Hapiloe Sello

Chief Executive Officer, South African National Parks

hapiloe.sello@sanparks.org

Dr. Ashley Naidoo

Chief Executive Officer, Cape Nature

c/o Natalie Hayward <nhayward@capenature.co.za>

Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team (CPBMJTT)

cpbmjtt@sanparks.org

cpbmjtt@capenature.co.za

cpbmjtt@capetown.gov.za

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Dear Alderman Andrews and representatives of SANParks, CapeNature and the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team

Re: A Funded Coexistence Alternative to the Permanent Captivity of the Waterfall and Seaforth Baboon Troops

The Wildlife Animal Protection Forum of South Africa (WAPFSA) is a national network of thirty South African organisations, established in 2017 to engage government on matters concerning the conservation and protection of wild animals and the natural environments in which they live. Its members work across animal protection, conservation, environmental justice, law, governance, climate justice and community advocacy. WAPFSA's positions are informed by robust science, constitutional and environmental law, ethical and compassionate conservation practices, and a commitment to humane coexistence between people and wild animals.

WAPFSA writes to place a concrete and constructive proposal before the City of Cape Town, SANParks and CapeNature. We understand that there is a viable alternative to capturing the Waterfall and Seaforth baboon troops and confining them permanently at the proposed Kogelfontein Urban Wildlife Centre: an appropriately designed and located baboon-proof fence, developed and assessed with the benefit of Dr Dave Gaynor's expertise, together with the waste-management, monitoring and community measures needed to make the intervention effective.

Importantly, several WAPFSA member organisations, together with other organisations and individuals outside WAPFSA, have already put up their hands to support and contribute towards the cost of the fence. The precise commitments would need to be confirmed once the final design,



route, cost and implementation arrangements are settled. Appropriate technical and environmental assessment, transparent governance and a credible implementation and monitoring plan would also be required. This wider expression of support creates a realistic opportunity to overcome the stated financial obstacle and achieve a genuine win-win solution: the affected communities would receive a physical barrier and improved management support, while the baboons would remain free-living within their natural ecosystem.

We therefore request that the three authorities pause all steps directed at capturing and permanently confining the two troops while this proposal is properly and transparently assessed.

WAPFSA's position

For the record, WAPFSA remains opposed to the capture of wild baboons from the Waterfall and Seaforth troops and their permanent confinement at Kogelfontein. WAPFSA has consistently opposed the relevant elements of the Cape Peninsula Strategic Baboon Management Plan because the proposed removal of these troops would eliminate indigenous baboons from part of their existing range in and around Simon's Town instead of addressing the human-created conditions that drive the negative interface.

The present situation should not be reduced to a choice between killing the baboons and keeping them alive in permanent captivity. That is a false dichotomy. It risks silencing legitimate conservation and welfare concerns by presenting confinement as the only compassionate outcome. The authorities should first demonstrate, transparently and on the evidence, that feasible non-lethal measures capable of keeping the baboons wild have been fully and fairly considered.

The proposal must also be described accurately. Permanently removing the Waterfall and Seaforth troops from the wild, confining them behind fences and preventing them from reproducing would not preserve those troops as viable, free-living social and ecological communities. It would bring their existence in the wild to an end and, through sterilisation, ensure their eventual disappearance even within captivity. In substance, this amounts to the functional extirpation of the two troops from the southern Cape Peninsula. Referring to the proposal merely as "relocation", "management" or a welfare alternative obscures its irreversible purpose and effect.

Why the alternative must be assessed

Permanent captivity should not be treated as the inevitable or only humane alternative to killing the baboons. That framing creates a false choice and risks foreclosing a feasible coexistence measure before it has been fairly evaluated. Wild baboons are intelligent, highly social animals whose welfare is inseparable from troop structure, movement, foraging, choice and life within a functioning landscape. Removing entire troops from the wild would be an irreversible intervention with serious welfare, ecological and precedent-setting consequences.

[Dr Gaynor](#) has pointed to the practical experience of baboon-proof fencing at Zwaanswyk and elsewhere and has questioned the rejection of a fence on the basis that it is unproven or may merely displace the problem. His further analysis describes this as a [last-chance conservation opportunity](#). In WAPFSA's view, the identified concerns call for careful site-specific design and testing; they do not justify refusing to assess the option. A properly designed fence should form part of an integrated programme that addresses attractants and human conduct, including [secure, baboon-proof waste systems](#), enforcement against feeding, public education, monitoring and rapid maintenance.



The alternative developed in Simon's Town in 2024 was advanced by people with direct local experience of the baboons and the landscape. Its central principle remains sound: baboon management cannot be separated from the physical and social conditions in which the human-wildlife interface occurs. The fence is therefore not proposed as a stand-alone structure, but as a central component of an integrated coexistence programme.

The Waterfall and Seaforth troops are also part of the ecological community of the Cape Peninsula. The City's own [Cape Town Biodiversity Spatial Plan 2025](#) recognises the importance of an ecologically connected landscape. Baboons contribute to seed dispersal, nutrient movement and other ecological processes in the fynbos landscape. Their removal would further fragment an already pressured population and would signal that wildlife may be eliminated from contested urban edges instead of requiring people and institutions to change the conditions that produce conflict. The [Green Group's alternative proposal](#) likewise emphasises that baboon management cannot be separated from the landscape in which the human-wildlife interface occurs.

Ecological and biodiversity consequences

The Cape Peninsula baboons are not ecologically dispensable simply because they live at an urban edge. They are seed dispersers and nutrient movers, and their foraging and territorial movements connect parts of an increasingly fragmented fynbos landscape. Their ecological functions are particularly important in a fire-adapted system in which regeneration and movement between habitat patches matter. Removing entire troops would consequently affect more than the individual baboons: it would remove ecological relationships and reduce the resilience of the southern Peninsula ecosystem.

The population is also geographically peripheral and constrained. There is no neighbouring population that can simply replace troops removed from the southern Peninsula. A decision to eliminate the Waterfall and Seaforth troops from the wild would therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse and could result in the permanent loss of baboons from this part of their historic range.

This concern must be understood against the broader pressures on the Cape Peninsula, including expanding development, habitat fragmentation and growing human use. Research has long identified the difficulty of [balancing Cape Town's conservation imperatives and development needs](#). The appropriate response is to strengthen ecological connectivity and change human practices, not to remove indigenous wildlife whenever conflict intensifies.

A credible assessment of the funded alternative would be consistent with the authorities' conservation and animal well-being responsibilities and with the emphasis in the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), particularly [Target 4](#), on maintaining wild populations, genetic diversity and effective human-wildlife coexistence. It is also relevant that the Cape Peninsula forms part of the [Cape Floral Region Protected Areas World Heritage Site](#). A proper assessment would strengthen public confidence that a decision of this magnitude is based on necessity, evidence and a fair consideration of less harmful measures.

Statutory responsibilities of SANParks and CapeNature

It is difficult to understand how SANParks and CapeNature can support the permanent removal, confinement and reproductive elimination of these wild baboon troops without squarely addressing their statutory conservation and animal well-being obligations.



The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 expressly incorporates the consideration of animal well-being into the management, conservation and sustainable use of biological resources. “Well-being” is defined holistically and includes the conditions conducive to an animal’s physical and mental health and its ability to cope with its environment. These obligations cannot be satisfied merely by keeping the baboons alive. The authorities must consider the consequences of permanent confinement and sterilisation for their behavioural, social, psychological and physical well-being, including the loss of free movement, natural foraging, environmental choice and the continued existence of the troops as functioning social groups.

NEMBA also empowers the Minister, under section 9A, to prohibit activities that may negatively affect animal well-being. Although section 9A is a ministerial regulatory power, it confirms that animal well-being is part of biodiversity governance and cannot be treated as an issue falling outside the mandates of conservation authorities. A decision by SANParks or CapeNature to support the present proposal should therefore disclose the well-being assessment undertaken, the expertise relied upon, the anticipated short and long-term consequences, and the reasons why less harmful measures, including the proposed fence, were rejected.

CapeNature is additionally bound by the Western Cape Biodiversity Act 6 of 2021.¹ Section 3 provides that the Act binds the State and all persons. Section 5 requires every organ of state exercising a power that may adversely affect the environment to take a long-term view, apply the Act’s principles of ecological sustainability and apply the environmental management principles in section 2 of NEMA. Section 6 requires organs of state to recognise the intrinsic value of natural resources and ecosystems; protect biodiversity and ecological processes; promote ecological resilience; avoid or minimise ecosystem disturbance and biodiversity loss; consider the well-being of faunal biological resources; and adopt a risk-averse and cautious approach where there is insufficient evidence that an activity will not cause long-term adverse effects.

These are directly relevant duties. The permanent removal and sterilisation of two free-living troops would affect biodiversity, ecological processes, troop continuity and individual well-being. CapeNature cannot lawfully approach the matter as a narrow permitting exercise or simply endorse the City’s preferred management outcome. It must independently consider the long-term and cumulative consequences, the availability of less harmful alternatives and whether the proposal is consistent with its duty to conserve biodiversity and manage the interface between people and indigenous biological resources. The Act specifically identifies this interface as part of CapeNature’s responsibilities.

WAPFSA accordingly requests SANParks and CapeNature to explain the statutory, scientific and animal well-being basis on which they support the proposal. In particular, they should disclose whether they have assessed the fence and other coexistence measures; the ecological consequences of removing the troops; the individual and social well-being consequences of lifelong confinement and sterilisation; and the application of the precautionary and risk-averse principles. Without such an assessment, support for the proposal appears inconsistent with the very conservation mandates these institutions are required to uphold.

¹ See for example sections 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10. Section 10 makes CapeNature responsible for biodiversity conservation, monitoring adverse effects and advising on the management of the interface between humans and indigenous biological resources. The relevant chapters have been in force since 15 November 2022.



International responsibilities and UNESCO concerns

The Cape Peninsula lies within the [Cape Floral Region Protected Areas](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site recognised for its exceptional biodiversity and endemic fynbos. Minister David Maynier has confirmed in writing that [UNESCO has engaged with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment](#) regarding concerns about the proposed permanent removal and confinement of these baboons. Those concerns reinforce the need for the three authorities to assess a viable coexistence alternative before taking irreversible action.

Target 4 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework calls for urgent action to halt human-induced extinctions, maintain and restore genetic diversity and manage human-wildlife interactions effectively so as to minimise conflict and support coexistence. Target 9 requires wild species to be managed sustainably while protecting ecosystems and securing benefits for people. Removing entire wild social groups from the landscape, without first testing an available and potentially fundable coexistence intervention, is difficult to reconcile with those objectives.

Precedent and reputational consequences

The decision will extend well beyond these two troops. If permanent captivity becomes an accepted response where urban development, waste, feeding and other human practices create conflict, it may establish a precedent for removing indigenous wild animals from contested landscapes rather than adapting the human environment. That precedent would be damaging for humane coexistence policy across South Africa.

Cape Town's international identity and tourism economy are closely associated with its exceptional biodiversity. Proceeding with permanent confinement while a credible, supported and potentially fundable alternative remains untested would expose the City and its conservation partners to justified criticism that they favour management by removal over coexistence. Conversely, a transparent effort to test and implement the fence could demonstrate practical environmental leadership and rebuild public trust.

Proposed process

WAPFSA proposes an urgent, time-bound technical process involving the City, SANParks, CapeNature, Dr Gaynor, relevant community representatives, WAPFSA members, and the other organisations and individuals who have indicated a willingness to support or contribute to funding. The process should:

- identify and inspect the proposed fence alignment and the areas in which baboon access, waste and other attractants must be managed;
- agree the performance requirements and commission or review an independent technical design and cost estimate;
- assess ecological, welfare, heritage, access and fire-management considerations, and identify any necessary authorisations;
- develop the accompanying waste-management, monitoring, enforcement, maintenance and community-engagement programme;
- set objective indicators, reporting obligations and a reasonable pilot or review period by which effectiveness can be measured; and



- establish a transparent funding and implementation mechanism that protects the independence and proper accountability of all parties.

The fence cannot mean that public authorities transfer their statutory responsibilities to civil society. The City, SANParks and CapeNature would remain responsible for the lawful, adequately resourced and integrated management measures required to give the intervention a fair prospect of success.

Requests

WAPFSA accordingly asks the City of Cape Town, SANParks and CapeNature to:

1. confirm an immediate pause on the capture, removal or permanent confinement of members of the Waterfall and Seaforth troops while the alternative is assessed.
2. provide the complete technical and financial basis on which the fence option was previously considered and rejected, including the assumptions underlying the reported cost and displacement concerns.
3. senior decision-makers and technical representatives for an urgent meeting with Dr Gaynor and the prospective funders
4. agree to a transparent, time-bound feasibility and implementation process before any irreversible decision is taken.

We request a substantive written response within seven days and propose that the initial meeting take place as soon as possible thereafter. WAPFSA, its relevant member organisations, and the organisations and individuals outside WAPFSA who have indicated support are ready to engage constructively and without delay. The existence of a broader group of potential contributors means that the fence proposal should now be tested on its merits, not dismissed because of an assumed budgetary barrier.

Cape Town can choose a course that protects residents and public spaces while keeping indigenous baboons wild and within the ecosystem to which they belong. We urge the three authorities to take that opportunity before irreversible steps are taken.

Relevant WAPFSA submissions and statements

[The DA's action plan for baboon management on the Cape Peninsula](#)

[A false dichotomy: keep the baboons in cages or kill them](#)

[Cease and desist: proposed removal of baboons from the Cape Peninsula](#)

[The management and protection of baboons: a new policy drafting process](#)

[Call for an urgent moratorium to revise Western Cape baboon-management guidelines](#)

[Baboons of the Western Cape of South Africa](#)

[Comments on the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Joint Task Team waste-management strategy](#)

[A sword of Damocles: the looming threat of permanent removal](#)

[WAPFSA shares concerns regarding UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Cape Floral Kingdom](#)



Additional supporting material

[Balancing conservation imperatives and development needs in Cape Town](#)

[A funder can help save the Simon's Town baboons](#)

[Report on UNESCO seeking clarity regarding the proposed removal](#)

[Animal Survival International statement on humane alternatives](#)

[Learning for Nature guidance on active species management](#)

[European Commission Africa Knowledge Platform summary of Target 4](#)

[Reverse the Red guidance on genetic diversity under Target 4](#)

[Nordic Council overview of Target 4](#)

[Animal Survival International petition regarding the capture and confinement proposal](#)

This letter is supported by the following organisations:

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Liezl Smith Chairperson **Kogelberg Villages Environmental Trustees**

Jabu Myeni Founder **Gifted for Good**

Les Mitchell Director **Institute for Critical Animal Studies**

Janet Solomon Founder **Oceans Not Oil**

Carol Booth Co-Founder **Monkey Helpline**

Liz Cornwall and Catherine Nyquist Co-Founders **Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary**

Lex Abnett Director **Southern African Fight for Rhinos**

Dave Du Toit Founder **Vervet Monkey Foundation**



Yours Sincerely,

Megan Carr
WAPFSA Administrator
Email: administrator@wapfsa.org
WhatsApp: +27832511978
website: <http://wapfsa.org/>