



**Environmental Management  
Programme for Paragliding and Hang  
Gliding in the Table  
Mountain National Park**

**October 2004**

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# Environmental Management Programme for Paragliding and Hang Gliding in the Table Mountain National Park

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to Paragliding and Hang gliding on The Peninsula

Paragliding and hang gliding is a small but growing sport in the Western Cape. Lion's head, Table Mountain and the adjoining Peninsula range are amongst the most popular sport flying sites in the country for both local and visiting foreign pilots.

The sport was pioneered (hang gliding) in South Africa in 1973 and one of the first sites flown was Lions Head. Paragliding commenced in 1987 and the number of participants has grown to a community in the order of 100 pilots in the greater Cape Town area. Since then, numerous other launch sites have been established in the Peninsula Mountain chain area and now total 24.

### 1.2 Approach to the Environmental Management Programme

The Environmental Management Programme proposed in this document is broadly based on the ideas outlined in the ISO 14000 Standard for Environmental Management Systems (EMS) (SABS, 1996). An EMS can provide an orderly and consistent approach to addressing Paragliding and Hang gliding related environmental issues. It does not establish absolute requirements for environmental performance. However, it does provide an outline of the process and elements needed for an effective system to manage environmental impacts.

The Environmental Management Programme outlined in this document involves an ongoing process of formulation, planning, implementation and evaluation of an environmental policy. The steps required in this process are outlined below:

- **Environmental Policy**

The environmental policy forms a statement of pilot's intentions regarding their environmental performance. It provides guiding principles and aids in the setting of objectives and targets. This policy needs to be endorsed by pilots.

- **Planning**

The activities relating to paragliding and hang gliding have been reviewed and an initial assessment has established the impact they have on the environment. This provides a starting point from which objectives and targets for management can be set. The degree of practical control over the environmental aspects being considered should be taken into account. Priority objectives and targets need to be decided upon and a management programme and tools developed to meet them. Resources are also committed for implementation. Part of this programme has been developed for comment but it needs to be endorsed by pilots and SANParks.

- **Implementation**

This requires the execution and operation of the management programme.

- **Review and evaluation leading to improvement**

Deficiencies and shortcomings in the management programme will need to be addressed and the effectiveness of the programme checked. It is important that an EMS is continually reviewed and improved with the objective of improving overall environmental performance.

An Environmental Management Programme based on the principles of EMS thus forms a flexible system that is adaptable to changing circumstances.

### **1.3 Scope of the Document**

Subject to the approval of South African National Parks (SANParks), this document sets out a number of proposals to manage Paragliding and Hang gliding on the Peninsula Mountain Chain.

An environmental policy has been formulated which clearly outlines the principles by which flying activities will be guided.

The potential impacts of flying have been identified and an initial assessment has been undertaken.

A draft management programme has been proposed that outlines how a Paragliding / Hang gliding Working Committee (PHWC) together with pilots will monitor and regulate flying activities and the impacts associated with launching particularly. This system will hopefully enable the PHWC to work jointly with SANParks to maximise the benefits of flying whilst minimising the negative environmental impacts. The proposals set out in this document should form the basis for an ongoing and growing system to manage flying activities on the Peninsula.

**NOTE:**

While this document intends for the regulation of the sport, paragliding and hang gliding are inherently dangerous sports and prospective pilots must recognise that the responsibility for their safety lies purely with themselves.

### **1.4 Management of Commercial Operators**

Any commercial operator providing a service regarding Paragliding and Hang Gliding within the Table Mountain National Park are required to submit an application to SANParks for approval. SANParks will consult with the PHWC regarding all applications received.

Application can be addressed to:

The Park Manager: TMNP

P.O Box 37

Constantia

7848

## CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Pilots are committed to minimising the adverse effects of their activities on the environment and to promoting the safe practice of the sport. To this end they are committed to the following principles:

- Minimising the impact of launching and flying activities on the natural environment, including indigenous fauna and flora
- Minimising the visual impact of degradation at launch sites
- Minimising impacts on the cultural and historical environment including all archaeological and palaeontological sites.
- Co-operating with managing authorities and recognising and responding to their concerns
- Identifying and assessing the significance of impacts associated with potential new launching areas in conjunction with SANParks and other interested and affected parties
- Monitoring sport flying activities to ensure compliance with the principles outlined above

This environmental policy provides a framework for action and the setting of objectives and targets.

## CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND ISSUES

This section provides an overview of the potential environmental impacts of paragliding and hang gliding and their significance. This provides a starting point from which the objectives and targets for management can be set.

### 3.1 Safety and security

The presence of paragliders and hang gliders in an area may act as a crime deterrent, discouraging criminals from operating in the park – especially if this is done in collaboration with park staff, the SAPS and volunteers. Equally, paragliders and hang gliders may act as the “eyes and ears” of the park in areas not normally accessed by park staff and other users, reporting useful sightings eg. Klipspringer, Thar etc. Paragliders and hang gliders may also provide a complementary support service to the park in emergency situations. All information can be reported on (021) 957 4700.

### 3.2 Potential Impacts Identified

The potential impacts that have been identified in relation to activities associated with paragliding and hang gliding are presented in Table 1. The status of these potential impacts is also indicated i.e. whether they are positive (+ve) or negative (-ve).

**Table 1.** The potential impacts of paragliding and hang gliding:

Activities	Potential Impacts	Status
Walking to and from site	• Erosion of footpaths	-ve
	• Trampling and removal of indigenous vegetation	-ve
	• Litter	-ve
	• Access to natural environment	+ve
	• Exercise	+ve
	• Awareness of environmental issues	+ve
Launching	• Erosion	-ve
	• Trampling of indigenous vegetation	-ve
	• Removal of indigenous vegetation	-ve
	• Disturbance of animals and nesting/ endangered birds	-ve
	• Litter	-ve
	• Waste	-ve

Activities	Potential Impacts	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="605 260 1117 289">• Trampling and removal of alien vegetation</li><li data-bbox="605 302 1138 331">• Recreational use of the natural environment</li><li data-bbox="605 344 1024 373">• Positive psychological experience</li><li data-bbox="605 386 846 415">• Physical exercise</li></ul>	+ve +ve +ve +ve



### 3.3 Significance Of Impacts

A significance rating has been determined for the potential impacts that have been identified. The criteria used to determine the significance ratings are presented in Table 2 and the significance of the potential impacts are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Criteria used to determine the significance ratings

Criteria	Categories
Spatial extent/influence of impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site specific or local</li> <li>• Regional</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>
Magnitude of impact at spatial scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High:</b> Natural and/or social functions and/or processes are severely altered</li> <li>• <b>Medium:</b> Natural and/or social functions and/or processes are notable altered</li> <li>• <b>Low:</b> Natural and/or social functions and/or processes are negligibly altered</li> </ul>
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary (&lt;1 year)</li> <li>• Short term (1 to 6 years)</li> <li>• Medium term (6 to 10 years)</li> <li>• Long term (more than 10 years)</li> </ul>

Given these criteria, the significance ratings have been defined as below:

- **High:** impacts of high magnitude locally for longer than 6 years and/or regionally and beyond
- **Medium:** impacts of moderate magnitude locally to regionally in the short term
- **Low to very low:** impacts will be localised and temporary.
- **No impact:** a potential concern or impact, which, upon evaluation, is found to have no significant impact at all.

It should be noted that the significance of some of the potential impacts might vary from area to area. This will depend on the specific conditions present at a particular launching venue. For example, erosion at a launch area will depend on how susceptible the soil is to erosion and the amount of solid rock present. In Table 3, the significance ratings have been assigned for impacts both with and without management actions.

**Table 3: Significance of Impacts**

Activities	Potential Impacts	Status	Significance	
			No Management	Management
Walking to and from site	• Erosion of footpaths	-ve	High	Low
	• Trampling and removal of indigenous vegetation	-ve	High	Medium
	• Litter	-ve	Medium	No Impact
	• Access to natural environment	+ve	Medium	Medium
	• Exercise	+ve	Low	Low
	• Awareness of environmental issues	+ve	Medium	Medium
Launching	• Erosion of launch area	-ve	High	Low
	• Trampling of indigenous vegetation	-ve	High	Low
	• Removal of indigenous vegetation	-ve	High	Low
	• Disturbance of animals and nesting/endangered birds	-ve	Low	Low
	• Litter	-ve	Medium	Low to No Impact
	• Waste	-ve	Low	Low to No Impact
	• Disturbance of archaeologically sensitive sites	-ve	Low	Low to No Impact
	• Recreational use of the natural environment	+ve	Medium	Medium
	• Positive psychological experience	+ve	Medium	High
	• Physical exercise	+ve	Medium	Medium

## CHAPTER 4: MANAGEMENT PLAN

This section sets out a proposed management plan to regulate paragliding and hang gliding, new launch sites and to manage impacts.

### 4.1 Organisational Structures

The environmental management plan will involve different organisations and groups of people. These are described below and the roles and responsibilities of these various structures is detailed further in the management programme

- **South African National Parks (SANParks)**

South African National Parks (SANParks) are the managing authority of the Table Mountain National Park and as such, are the ultimate decision making authority. They have the right to establish rules and regulations regarding all activities within the National Park.

- **Paragliding and Hang gliding Working Committee**

It is proposed that a Paragliding and Hang gliding Working Committee (PHWC) consist of representatives from SANParks and the sport flying community, democratically elected by pilot users of the Peninsula Mountain Chain. The committee should consist of no less than 4 members. There should be continuity from one elected committee to the next, in that two members of each committee should serve a double term. Election of members will take place at a meeting called specifically for the purpose and votes will also be accepted by proxy, e-mail, letter or fax.

### 4.2 Proposed Categories Of Launching Sites

In order to manage the impacts detailed in Section 3, it is proposed that three different categories of Launch site be created which will be subject to differing levels of control in respect of management. Procedures for management and application for new launch sites in each of the proposed types are listed.

The following categories of launch sites are suggested in order to facilitate their management:

- **Existing launch sites**  
These are sites that are currently widely utilised. Access has been negotiated and granted. These venues will require the approval of SANParks prior to being classified as existing Paragliding and Hang gliding launch sites.
- **Launch sites in sensitive areas**  
These are launch sites that are currently widely utilised for this purpose. Certain conditions have made these sensitive enough to require a higher level of management. These venues will require the approval of SANParks prior to being classified as launch sites in sensitive areas.
- **New proposed launch sites**  
Other possibilities exist for new launch sites. Such new sites will require an environmental assessment before use is granted. If a site is approved it will be delegated into one of the aforementioned two categories.

Annexure 1 provides the locations and descriptions of present Paragliding and Hang gliding launch sites. Annexure 2 details proposed improvements to some of these sites. All launch sites presently utilised for Paragliding and Hang gliding will have to be assessed and approved at the implementation of this Management Programme.

### 4.3 Management Objectives and Actions

A bi-annual meeting is proposed between the PHWC and SANParks to discuss the status of management of flying activities on the Peninsula. In addition, a number of management objectives and actions are outlined below. These management actions are to apply to **all** flying venues. All pilots will be expected to comply with the provisions outlined below.

Many of the management actions discussed below should occur on a self-regulatory basis, with pilots taking responsibility for their own actions. These management actions are to be taken in respect of all types of launch sites being used i.e. existing sites and sites in sensitive areas.

- **Erosion**  
The PHWC will monitor the state of paths and discuss this at a proposed bi-annual meeting between the PHWC and SANParks. A summary report (including maps where necessary) detailing actions needed to upgrade paths should be drawn up before the meeting. The total number of new paths required to service new venues is probably

minimal and some existing paths are urgently in need of maintenance. Responsibility for path maintenance will occur as follows:

- SANParks will be responsible for the maintenance and upgrading of existing generally utilised paths in the park;
- For paths exclusively used to access paragliding and hang gliding launch sites:
  - The PHWC and pilots will be responsible for maintenance (labour and cost) on these paths;
  - SANParks will provide materials and technical information support for path maintenance.

All pilots are required to utilise existing paths.

Vegetation removal and trampling at the launch sites should be avoided at all costs to prevent erosion. Where possible, actions should be taken to put erosion control measures in place. Areas requiring such measures may be identified by SANParks. SANParks will provide materials and technical knowledge and the PHWC will be required to put measures in place as well as pay for cost of associated material. No new paths or desire lines may be created or made without permission of SANParks.

- **Vegetation**

The maintenance and creation of proper access paths will limit the impact on indigenous vegetation.

Removal of indigenous vegetation for the establishment of routes and footpaths will not be condoned. The size of the area of activity at the launch site will be limited so as to minimise impacts on indigenous vegetation.

If alien vegetation occurs within the immediate vicinity of the site, this will be removed by SANParks.

No new launch sites will be approved if it will have a significant negative effect on the vegetation.

- **Litter and Waste**

No foreign material of any kind is to be left behind at launch sites. Defecation should be avoided at all costs, but, if necessary, should take place well away (50m is recommended) from venues, paths and streams, and be buried.

At the discretion of the PHWC, or at the request of SANParks, the Working Committee will organise clean-ups of launch sites, or paths used exclusively to reach launch sites.

**Disturbance of animals and birds**

Nesting and endangered birds should not be disturbed. Seasonal closure of launch sites will occur if nesting birds are likely to be disturbed. The following procedure will apply:

- The SANParks will inform the PHWC of any proposed closure;
- The PHWC will provide the wording for appropriate closure signage and inform the relevant SANParks reserve manager;
- Appropriate signs will then be made up by the SANParks reserve manager and erected at the top and bottom of the path to the launch site, indicating the intended period of closure.
- The PHWC will also advertise the closure.

No new launch site will be approved if, in the opinion of an expert, it will disturb an endangered or nesting bird.

- **Cultural/Historical sites**

Cultural/Historical sites are not to be disturbed. No new launch site will be approved if it has a significant effect on the content of an archaeological site.

- **Launch Surfacing**

Launch surfacing will be as unobtrusive as possible and will be camouflaged to blend in with the environment where necessary.

## **4.4 Management of Launch Sites**

All launch sites will require approval from SANParks before allocation into one of the two categories of launch site at the outset of the implementation of this Management Programme.

### **4.4.1 Launch Sites**

The Paragliding and Hang gliding Working Committee (PHWC) will maintain and make freely available to SANParks full details of all existing launch sites.

Existing launch sites are presented in Annexure 1.

Any upgrading of existing launch sites needs to be submitted by the PHWC to SANParks for approval. The PHWC and SANParks to respond to the application within 3 months of receipt.

If requested by SANParks, a venue shall be independently assessed and may be declared sensitive. Such areas will either be subject to stricter management or closed down should SANParks deem it necessary.

### **4.4.2 New Proposed Paragliding and Hang gliding Launch sites**

Anyone wishing to establish a new launch site will be required to apply to the Paragliding and Hang gliding Working Committee (PHWC) for permission. New launch sites will then be submitted to SANParks for approval. The PHWC and SANParks to respond to the application within 3 months.

Approval for new launch sites shall be subject to and dependent on the outcome of an environmental assessment according to the following procedure.

New launch sites will require permission from the Committee. Proposals for new launch sites should be addressed to the PHWC and either posted to or handed to the Secretary at the Glen Country Club at the following address:

Paragliding and Hang Gliding TMNP Working Committee  
C/O The Glen Country Club  
CLIFTON  
Cape Town  
8001

A written proposal should be submitted to the PHWC and should include the following information:

- map detail showing the exact position of the proposed site, as well as proposed access path/s
- detail of other potential users of the area, including comment on any possible impact that flying may have in this regard (positive and negative)
- comment on the flora and fauna in the area. This should be a general comment on the existence of indigenous or alien vegetation and some idea of their relative abundance and a comment on the amount of vegetation that will be impacted upon
- comment on the nature of the archaeological and palaeontological deposits or any rock art
- comment on the quality of the access path/s, including recommendations for upgrading, or the need for new paths, if any
- comment on the quality of the launch terrain, in particular any loose rock that may pose a safety threat

The PHWC shall forward these proposals to SANParks, who will jointly undertake a physical examination of the area within a month.

If there is insufficient information for decision making, at the discretion of either the PHWC or SANParks a further professional assessment of the area may be required. This will be organised by the PHWC at their cost. At the discretion of the SANParks approval may be granted subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure these are met before issuing permission that launching activities may commence.

The criteria by which proposed launch sites are assessed shall be in accordance with the principles laid out in the environmental policy. When a launch site is approved by SANParks it will be afforded status for management purposes as a launch site. The routes of any new paths required to the new site will be specified by SANParks and recommendations made for construction.

The PHWC and SANParks is required to issue a decision within 3 months of the receipt of an application by SANParks, unless circumstances do not permit it.



## 4.5 Information Dissemination

The PHWC will make use of the following mediums to disseminate information regarding this Management Programme and information related to paragliding and hang gliding activities:

- A contact list of PHWC members needs to be maintained. Notices of all activities related to sport flying on the Peninsula in relation to this Management Programme will be sent out to PG and HG members by representatives on the committee.
- Paragliding and Hang gliding clubs in Cape Town and Bellville will be notified of activities in relation to this Management Plan. These include:
  - The Glen Paragliding Club;
  - The Overberg Paragliding Club
  - The Cape Albatross Hang gliding Club
- Notices will be published in the South African Hang gliding and Paragliding Association (SAHPA) Quarterly Publication.
- Information on the Management Programme and all notices will be hosted on the SAHPA Web Page at [www.sahpa.co.za](http://www.sahpa.co.za) and the Table Mountain National Park website at [www.tmnp.co.za](http://www.tmnp.co.za).

## CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

### 5.1 Responsibilities And Monitoring

#### 5.1.1 South African National Parks

SANParks holds ultimate decision-making authority and will be responsible for policing the system.

SANParks will attend bi-annual meetings with the PHWC and respond to the recommendations of the PHWC.

They will regulate and be responsible for:

- Approval of new launching sites;
- Providing material and technical advice regarding the upgrading and maintenance of paths to launch sites and the launch sites themselves as well as construction of new paths.

In conjunction with the PHWC they will also monitor:

- the state of paths;
- the state of a launch site regarding vegetation, litter, and erosion.

SANP are the managing authority and will act on individuals' transgressions as they see fit, within the law.

#### 5.1.2 Paragliding and Hang gliding Working Committee

The PHWC will monitor and regulate activities associated with sport flying launch sites.

In this regard they will help to monitor and regulate:

- the state of paths;
- the state of a launch site regarding vegetation, litter, and erosion;
- promote the safety and proper equipping of launch sites;

The PHWC will report to SANParks on a bi-annual basis regarding the condition of

paths and venues. The PHWC in conjunction with SANParks will be responsible for organising work meets to maintain and upgrade paths exclusively used to access paragliding and hang gliding launch sites. Material of such maintenance will be for the PHWC cost.

The PHWC will control the placement of additional new launch sites according to aforementioned policy and management actions and keep up to date records of all launch sites within the Peninsula Chain. The PHWC will liaise with SANParks and other relevant experts to consider applications for new launch sites.

## **5.2 Correction And Enforcement**

SANParks, as the landowner and manager, holds ultimate decision-making authority, and will act on individuals' transgressions as they see fit, within the law. This may include the imposition of fines that would be determined by SANParks.

In the interests of co-operation, however, the PHWC will act as watchdog over paragliding and hang gliding activities and attempt to defuse conflict before this point is reached.

## **5.3 Review**

The PHWC and SANParks will meet not less than twice per year to review the Environmental Management Programme and discuss relevant issues and concerns. The status of all paragliding and hang gliding launch sites will be reviewed. These meetings will also include the presentation by the Committee of a summary report detailing:

- the actions needed to upgrade paths as described earlier;
- updates on all launch sites within the Table Mountain Chain.

In addition, the management programme should be updated to reflect the results of the bi-annual meeting.

## CHAPTER 6: List of Contributors and References

### 6.1 Contributors

Andy Forbes (PG)  
Peter Ablitt (HG)  
John Blake (PG)  
Gavin Bell (TMNP)

Ian De Vries (PG)  
Anthony Allen (PG)  
Jannie Du Plessis (TMNP)  
Anél Bezuidenhout (TMNP)

### 6.2 Way Forward

After evaluation by the SANParks this document will be widely circulated to pilots and other relevant persons for comment after which it will be amended, re-evaluated by SANParks and finally adopted as policy.

### 6.3 References

SABS ISO 14001: 1996. South African Standard Code of Practice. Environmental management systems – Specification with guidance for use.

## **ANNEXURES**

- 1 PG & HG Sites in TMNP**
- 2 Proposed Site Improvements**