



VERMAAKLIKHEID S24G APPLICATION - INITIAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (February - March 2024)

Date	Comment	I&AP	Response	Respondent
Biodiversity				
11 March 2024	The footprint of the dwelling and jetty is mapped as Critical Biodiversity Area 1 (CBA) in the Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan. The vegetation which would have occurred on the dwelling footprint is mapped as Canca Limestone Fynbos classified as least concern and the vegetation at the jetty footprint is non-terrestrial estuarine vegetation. The jetty is within the estuarine functional zone of the Duivenhoks River Estuary.	Rhett Smart - CapeNature	Noted. Agreed.	EnviroAfrica
	The web-based screening tool should be used to determine which specialist assessments are required and incorporates the desktop information referred to above. A site sensitivity verification report should be compiled motivating the specialist assessments undertaken in relation to the screening tool results. We recommend that the aquatic biodiversity specialist should have experience with estuaries. The development proposal must respond to any biodiversity constraints identified in the specialist assessments.		Noted. Please refer to Appendix O.	EnviroAfrica
	CapeNature will provide further comment once the Section 24G Report is released for comment. Take note that a Sea Shore Lease is required from CapeNature for structures below the high water mark, including jetties.		Noted. A Sea Shore Lease Application will be conducted.	EnviroAfrica
General				
27 February 2024	Would you kindly please provide any supporting information to review for the purposes providing comment on this S24G application.	Ryan Apolles - Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning - Sub-directorate: Coastal Management.	No documentation is available at present, but you will be notified when the Application Form and Impact Report, including all specialist reports, are available for viewing and comment	EnviroAfrica
26 February 2024	I would like to express my support FOR (not against) Jonathan Gersh, Farm 499/9, in their sg24 and municipality applications. Jonathan has been renting out this property for 8 years as a self-catering house. During that time, I have seen him employ, empower two fantastic women, that currently, manage this property. They make use of local contractors. Every year, for a couple of months, they clear alien vegetation and plant trees. It is a well-managed initiative with an excellent reputation. He has explained to me that some or parts of his buildings are unlawful. In my personal and unqualified opinion, Jonathan's buildings are light on nature –they are designed to blend in with nature. His buildings are comparatively smaller and less conspicuous compared to many in the area. I understand that he is engaging with the local municipality and department of environment with sole intention to rectify these matters. Vermaaklikheid is an old farming area with significant challenges. The farms are no longer engaging in commercial, or even subsistence farming. There is a small local population called Skoolkop. The community suffers from high unemployment and a variety of social challenges associated with poverty. The area is also ravaged by alien vegetation. Jonathan Gersh's farm, Thorn & Feather, is one of a small group of landowners engaging in self-catering accommodation activities. These actions benefit the area in meaningful ways. I would be extremely disappointed if he is denied the opportunity to make his buildings lawful and continue with Thorn & Feather. It is also my suspicion that the attention brought to his property originated from the efforts of a vindictive landowner in the area. This individual has a history of violations including matters of the environment and building regulations. I think it is only fair for each to have "a place in the sun".		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
04 March 2024	I have got to know Jonathan Gersh in Vermaaklikheid since my permanent move there in 2016. I purchased a share in farm 42/499 in 2016, recently sold it, and am in the process of acquiring a share of farm 126/499. I have admired Jonathan Gersh's careful build on the banks of the Duivenhoks River and have recommended his place to friends who have rented it from him for short periods. I am no expert, but his place seems to me a tasteful and sensitive construction, especially when compared to the vast edifice erected by his neighbour, which strikes me as decidedly not in keeping with environmental concerns and norms of the area. It is with some disbelief therefore, and outrage, that I have become aware of objections and attempts to place obstacles in the way of Gersh's modest and mindful intervention. I write in full-hearted support of Jonathan Gersh in the hope that environmental authorities of our area grant him permissions for, in my view, his wonderful project, which is a great benefit to the people he employs, and to all of us as residents of Vermaaklikheid.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
04 March 2024	Writing this email in support of the Thorn and Feather property in its bid to operate as a going concern. Thorn and Feather employs not only Nella Collier and other permanent employees from the village, but also employees various contractors from the local community. Jonathan has invested time and effort into building up and training his employees to help with much needed tourism. The fact that the person opposing Thorn and Feather owns one of the most disgusting buildings on the river (known as 'The Packing Shed') is farcical. The Thorn and Feather property is a low water usage, environmentally friendly property. Jonathan has undertaken numerous bush clearings of the invasive Rooikrans in the area.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica

04 March 2024	I have been following the saga of and his attacks on his neighbours with concern. It is highly unusual that a bully is tolerated for so long, especially when the application of the law comes into play. It is well known that the strength of the law is in its consistent application. It cannot be selectively applied. It fails and loses all credit when it is applied to one person but not to the neighbour. To my knowledge, having been on the Duivenhoks Conservancy Committee for about 8 Years, Jonathon Gersh was considerably more compliant and consultative, in his building and design of his dwelling, than almost all other recently built buildings in Vermaaklikheid. His concern for the natural environment and historical references are very well considered and can be held as an example of a desirable standard very seldom seen.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
	He has built a jetty that brings access to the river, however it is environmentally considerate and would almost definitely pass on these standards, even though due process was not followed. This is well known to the Hessequa Municipality. Another fact that is well known is that very few of the jetties on the river have Environmental clearance. I would like the Municipality to consider that if it goes ahead with pursuing legal proceedings against Jonathon Gersh, that it should proceed with the same standards against all transgressors on the Duivenhoks River. Especially the neighbour of this property in question who has flouted the law with impunity and got away with it. This is highly irregular and should be the subject of investigation. The integrity of the law and the municipality comes in to question when it is used as a tool in the hands of wealthy bullies to further his psychotic ends.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
10 March 2024	We wish to express our support for Jonathan Gersh (Farm 499/9 - Thorn & Feather) in his application with department of Environment and Hessequa Municipality. Our friends have stayed at Thorn & Feather over the years. The property is managed by two wonderful people from the local community. The stone buildings, in our unqualified view, are understated structures on a small footprint in comparison with surrounding neighbours. There has been a lot of effort to integrate with nature, promote and preserve the ecology. It is our understanding that this property has attracted the attention of a vindictive neighbour, owner of a far larger property on the banks of the Duivenhoks river. We sincerely hope that some justice will prevail, that being, the continuation of this beautiful self-catering house known as Thorn & Feather.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
08 March 2024	I am writing to you as a trustee of the Polynesia Trust, which holds ownership of portion 52 of Farm 499 in Vermaaklikheid. We wish to extend our support to Mr. Jonathan Gersh, proprietor of Thorn and Feather, as he undertakes the necessary DEFF applications for his property. Throughout our association, Mr. Gersh has consistently demonstrated exemplary character, underscored by a profound commitment to both the community and environmental stewardship of Vermaaklikheid. His dedication is evident in the considerate manner in which he approached the development of his property, his unwavering support for his employees, his efforts in eradicating invasive species, and his initiative in replanting native flora. It is our belief that Mr. Gersh's endeavors are not only in the best interest of his property but serve as a valuable contribution to the broader Vermaaklikheid area.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica
08 March 2024	This is a letter of support for the improvements made to Johnathan Gersch's property, Thorn and Feather, in Vermaaklikheid and for the business he runs on it. The self catering business and the improvements he has made to his property have had a positive impact on the Vermaaklikheid environment and community. There is very little chance for employment in the village beyond rural tourism business that he has developed. There has been significant alien clearing done on his property since he has bought it. This adds value not only to his property but also to the region as a whole as it creates more space for the indigenous vegetation to flourish. These businesses need to be protected by the local authorities from the unnecessary expense of having to defend themselves against questionable complaints. Their efforts to regularise their minor transgressions need to be supported. Please don't throw the baby out with the bath water here. We need more Johnathon's and fewer litigious neighbours in Vermaaklikheid.		Noted.	EnviroAfrica