

Budget Debate on Vote 32: Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Speech by Annerie Weber MP

DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

If the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (“DFFE”) really wishes to successfully deliver on its constitutional mandate, then the National and Provincial authorities need to get properly aligned. Too much hay falls on the ground between the different authorities and in the end nothing gets resolved. Since the National Threatened or Protected Species (“TOPS”) regulations came into place in 2007 some provinces still have not even implemented them, that is 16 years.

So much time is spent on developing fancy regulations, bills and amendments but the enforcement and implementation are not there to back it up.

This government has failed to protect our rhinos and elephants from poaching, our communities still suffer from heavy air pollution. Sewage overflows, plastic pollution and disposable diapers continue to destroy our rivers and oceans.

Sheba the escaped pet tiger captured the attention of the whole country, only to be shot dead because she was a danger to the public. South Africa has signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (“CITES”) agreement and tigers are included on Appendix I, prohibiting their international commercial trade but still, South Africa has traded over 200 live captive-bred tigers already in 2018. Why does the department and provincial authorities not adhere to the CITES regulations? Does the Minister believe her government is above that?

The DA agrees that canned hunting and the trade of lion bones should be stopped, but does the Minister have a plan to find jobs for those currently involved in the sector? In terms of the High Level Panel Report the department is supposed to do an audit and identify all the lion farmers that breed lions unethically for canned hunting. Instead her lion task team has gotten nowhere and are still working with old information. This is unfair to everyone involved, including lion owners not involved with canned hunting, NGOs and the lions themselves.

Renoster getalle in SA is besig om teen ‘n baie vinnige spoed af te neem. Miskien moet die department gaan kersopsteek by die grootste en mees suksesvolle renoster boer in SA. Hierdie boer het omtrent net soveel renosters indien nie meer as die Kruger Nasionale Park en in al die jare was daar nie een renoster gestroop nie.

Sadly, this farmer now has to sell his 2000 rhinos as there is no assistance financially to keep on conserving them. What will happen to these rhinos? If they are released into Kruger Park it won’t be long before they all are poached. Does the DFFE have plan for them, or do they simply not care?

We know that after hunting associations served papers to halt new TOPS regulations the minister immediately withdrew the Gazette and agreed to pay costs? How can this Minister be putting out regulations that are clearly flawed and at what cost to the taxpayer?

Unfortunately, whatever Minister Creecy attempts to achieve, her party will never see the environment as a priority and will never give the department or its entities the money it needs to actually resolve the challenges. Next year, when the Moonshot Pact saves South Africa, the DA will ensure that finally our environmental is treated with the dignity it deserves.

Thank you. Baie Dankie.