



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1090 {CW1251E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 39 OF 2025

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 5 SEPTEMBER 2025

Ms T Breedt (Free State: FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

(a) What was the cost of the recent Elephant Indaba his department held at the Bonamanzi Game Reserve in Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal on 12 and 13 August 2025, (b) what are the details of (i) government officials and (ii) members of any other organisations whose attendance costs were paid for by his department, (c) how was the said indaba funded, (d) which organisations were invited, (e) what are the dates of their attendance, (f) why were they invited, (g) what are the details of the (i) working and/or (ii) technical groups that were established at the said indaba and (h) which organisations were represented in each case?

1090. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- a) The total cost of the Elephant Indaba was R936 500,00.
- b) i) The costs were covered for 20 government officials, comprising technical staff from the Branch: Biodiversity and Conservation.
ii) Attendance costs were also covered for 130 community members from affected landscapes living with elephants from all nine provinces.
- c) The Indaba was funded through donor funding under the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-7 Project on Human–Wildlife Conflict.

- d) Invitations were extended to the Members of the Executive Council (MECs) and Heads of Department (HODs) of all provinces, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) entities (SANParks, SANBI and iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority), provincial conservation authorities, local communities, Traditional Leaders, Traditional Health Practitioners, the People and Parks Programme, academic institutions, private reserve managers/owners, wildlife industry associations, non-governmental organisations, animal welfare organisations, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, the African Union Commission (AUC) Secretariat, the Indian High Commission, and neighbouring African countries: Botswana, Mozambique, Eswatini, and Zimbabwe.
- e) The Indaba took place on 12 and 13 August 2025
- f) Human–elephant conflict in South Africa has escalated into a multifaceted conservation and socio-economic challenge. As elephants increasingly come into contact with human settlements, the resulting damage to crops, infrastructure, property, and even loss of human life places a strain on local support for elephant conservation. This has been compounded by growing public scrutiny and media attention, highlighting concerns around elephant overpopulation, lethal control measures, translocation, habitat destruction, and the exploitation of elephants in tourism and trade. Despite the ecological and economic value elephants offer through tourism and sustainable use opportunities, the full potential of these benefits is unrealised, primarily due to contested views on ethical management, unequal benefit-sharing, and a lack of community inclusion in decision-making. Furthermore, elephant impacts on landscapes are often misunderstood and oversimplified as these impacts are not solely determined by population size, but by ecological factors such as resource availability and seasonal movements.

The fragmented approaches on elephant management call for a holistic, inclusive, and adaptive approach that aligns conservation objectives with socio-economic development and cultural values. It is, therefore, imperative that ecological sustainability be balanced with human well-being and ethical responsibility through integrated, community-based, and science-based strategies that support both biodiversity conservation and the needs of people who share landscapes with elephants. To address this complex issue, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment convened the Elephant Indaba, bringing together the key stakeholders mentioned above that are affected by elephants. The aim was to shape a unified response rooted in science, lived experience, and constitutional principles of environmental justice.

- g) i) and ii) No technical or working groups were established at the indaba. However, all participants who attended the Indaba in person, from all organisations present, were clustered into three breakaway groups responding to the same questions. The participants who joined the indaba virtually also discussed the same questions online.
- (h) All the participants who attended the meeting physically or online participated in any breakaway group of their choice. No record was kept of which organisation attended which breakaway group.

Regards



DR D I GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 16 / 9 / 2025