



## forestry, fisheries & the environment

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

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### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 741 {NW838E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 8 of 2023

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**Ms T Breedt (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:** (1) With reference to the recent scientific publication by the scientists of the SA National Parks (SANParks) titled Elephant population responses to increased density in Kruger National Park, how is the creation of danger gradients allowable in terms of the 2023 Elephant Norms and Standards;

(2) whether SANParks scientists foresee any unintended consequences by creating danger gradients within the Kruger National Park (KNP); if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, how does SANParks intend to mitigate against stressed elephants around tourist vehicles;

(3) (a) do terms such as danger gradients, landscapes of fear and zones of enhanced vigilance refer to the same management actions to alter elephants' temporal and spatial distributions within the KNP and  
(b) how do these equate with Elephant Impact Areas;

(4) what are the relevant details of the definitions and criteria to explain the meanings and relevance of individual terms?

**741. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:**

(1) Section 28 in the Elephant Norms and Standards of 2023 makes a provision for SANParks and other management agencies to conduct research on elephants. The Elephant Norms and Standards permit the use of a method (not provided for or permissible) for the management of elephants if the method is used in a research project and meets other conditions in paragraph 28(2) that provide guidance for ethical management of research. Paragraph 28(2) of the Elephant Norms and Standards state that the method used in the research project must be aligned with the management objectives provided in the approved management plan in respect of the elephant population to which the research project relates. Further to that, the research proposal must be approved by the Animal Ethics Committee. In the case of SANParks, all research on animals is approved by the SANParks Animal Use and Care Committee.

(2) SANParks expects negligible unintended consequences related to management of elephants within the context of Elephant Norms and Standards. Further, all research conducted on animals in national parks gets approved by the SANParks Animal Use and Care Committee to ensure research conforms to ethical and humane standards.

The purpose of elephant research is to improve understanding of the ecology of elephants in order to improve management of elephants in national parks. No research is conducted with intent to cause harm to elephants. For example, ideas about creating zones of increased vigilance include playing recordings of human voices in order to reduce elephant residence time of elephants in areas with sensitive vegetation or near rivers. It is anticipated that such methods may increase the vigilance of elephants in such areas without causing harm to them. Unless carefully designed studies are conducted to test the effect of a variety of methods and tools for management of elephants, it would be difficult to know if they would be effective. The testing of these methods is intended to help improve management of elephants in ways that reduce their impacts especially where that impact may result in the damage or loss of other elements of biodiversity.

(3) (a) Yes.

(3) (b) Elephant impact areas are localities where SANParks have concerns linked to eight mechanisms which are:

- damage causing animals;

- expectations of external stakeholders;
- infrastructure damage;
- vegetation linked to elephant-fire interactions;
- vegetation features linked to seasonal rivers;
- vegetation linked to perennial rivers;
- vegetation linked to site-specific features with species of special concern; and
- poaching hotspots.

(4) Danger gradients refer to areas across a landscape where elephants experience different levels of safety and danger. Landscapes of fear refer to areas where danger is spatially predictable, but temporarily unpredictable. Zones of increased vigilance refer to areas of perceived danger where animals have increased vigilance and respond through evolved coping strategies.



**MS B D CREECY, MP**  
**MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 22/3/2023