

Tracy Brunings

From: Malcolm Mitchell <mitchelltrading8@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, 03 August 2022 10:14
To: Tracy Brunings; Myrna Staal
Subject: Comments on application for consent uses farm 225
Attachments: Comments Related to Consent Use Application Farm 225.pdf; Montevue Pics to support comments_pdf was removed from this message

Please find documents regarding comments on consent uses on farm 225 (Montevue Nature Farm PTY LTD) attached.

Regards

Malcolm Mitchell
Phone: 0834376624
www.ouberg.blogspot.com

To: Planning Dept Langeberg Municipality
From M and M Mitchell, Farms 2 and 7 of 145, Ouberg, Montagu
Comments regards impacts of Montevue Nature Farm PTY LTD.

Comments on Method of Operations and Activity to date:

- We agree that low impact, professionally assessed, sustainable eco-tourism are appropriate uses for unproductive yet ecologically vulnerable land, but only when properly evaluated, managed and run with qualified staff or owner on site to manage and reduce risks and degradation. Sanbona and Simonskloof are local examples of national industry leaders in this niche market.
- The owner of Montevue Nature Farm lives in Cape Town and runs his business online. It's unlikely he is aware of the nuisance and security risks his business poses to neighbours, as he is not on-site or nearby when paying guests are present. The business does not employ any qualified manager or foreman on the property, and only runs with labourers. This creates risk of fire and stock theft to all neighbours in the region, (including Mr Stemmet and Mr Joubert, whose commercial farms border Montevue Nature Farm), as well as personal security risks for all surrounding properties.
- Local guidelines seem to imply that consent use for "guest house" is conditional on the owner residing on the premises, or appointing a resident qualified manager with the skills and authority to act on behalf of the owner. Currently, Montevue Nature Farm is operated remotely, without hospitality staff.
- It is our opinion that the current remote method of operating Montevue Nature Farm PTY LTD as an unsupervised full tourism-use property with public access for recreational 4x4 activity, is unsustainable. Any disturbance of sensitive ecology impacts neighbours and the region as a whole, and contributes to climate change. The owner has made assumptions as to the ecological viability and sustainability of his property which has unique, indigenous assets that are presently under threat by various tourism activities that have not been assessed for ecological impact. For example:
 - excavated and filled dams with saline borehole water and stocked with invasive species (tilapia) which could have ecological impact on all riverine systems, and also poses risk of pollution as there is no way to empty and clean dams that may have become infected by diseases due to overstocking and stagnation. This also poses threat to all animals and birds using the water source, as well as anyone using the dam for recreational purposes.
 - He has translocated large desert antelopes endemic to the Northern Cape, mistakenly assuming they are endemic to the Klein Karoo. But these species may compete for territory with the herd of wild roaming kudu and smaller local species like Klipspringer and Duiker, and may cause damage to indigenous plants, as gemsbok are root diggers (like donkeys and goats).
 - The current carrying capacity (according to Cape Farm Mapper) is already exceeded.
 - Encouraging recreational 4x4 use is also not in line with accepted sustainable eco tourism development.
 - Indiscriminate siting of roads, dwellings, campsites and wood fires in highly sensitive zones is also potentially damaging.
 - Light pollution on hilltops, noise pollution and disturbance to sensitive game corridors and introducing day visitors and vehicles to previously undisturbed areas without normal measures to assess and reduce risks to vulnerable indigenous flora and fauna and neighbouring lands; create impacts that are unsustainable over the long term and impact neighbouring lands and reduce their options.
- Currently, guests are not signed in on arrival, and there is no supervision or control during their stay and no oversight of workers. This poses security risks to surrounding properties.
- Lack of cellphone and wifi communication on the farm has already resulted in our attending to three separate emergencies on Montevue that resulted in hospital admission. One call was at 4am to attend to a worker, Magdalena Janse, who died in our car en route to the hospital. We had to inform her family and minor children and assist them. This caused unnecessary distress for us, especially as the remaining family were evicted in an undignified and unsympathetic manner soon after this tragedy, and this caused a huge amount of trauma to all concerned, and has not been satisfactorily resolved.

- There are many dangers of being in a rural area distant from town and services which the owner does not seem to appreciate, possibly because he does not live on the property or in the area. For example, we remove and relocate an average of twelve venomous snakes from our werf and house every Summer. Our record has been 12 puffadders, 11 cobras and 18 boomslang in one season, which occurs between Oct to January. Snake season coincides with holiday season. The remoteness of the property and the fact that our local hospital does not have a 4x4 ambulance or carry anti-venom, pose life threatening risks to guests and could potentially cause distress to neighbours who could be called upon for assistance in a medical emergency. These and other risks have not been considered or assessed.
- Advertising the property for recreational 4x4 also poses risks of fire and potential inconvenience to neighbours as there is no recovery vehicle or tractor on site, no way to contact emergency services unless you are on top of a difficult to access hill (or in front of our gate, as our farm is the last place with cell signal on the public road), and no trained first aid staff.
- We observed the new owner constructing the new 4x4 routes and creating access to previously undisturbed areas in 2019. Previous resident of the property, Mr Biden (personal communication June 2022), confirms the circle road and 4x4 routes were not created by previous owner, Mr Richard Weiler (bluvines), and did not exist before purchase by current owner. The only existing jeep tracks were those leading from the worker accommodations to the guest cabins. Pictures and posts on Montevue social media sites state the dams were excavated and new 4x4 routes were created by the current owner in November 2019 for the express purpose of creating more access to more of the property. Roads and vehicles for recreational activity creates visual impact that is visible from our property and the public road, and creates noise nuisance in natural environments, and causes degradation to the regions sensitive ecology. We hope that an engineer has approved this road as it is very steep, and considering the lack of on-site staff, could pose risks that cannot be covered in the event of a claim.
- The owner of Montevue PTY LTD may not have been aware of relevant local planning legislation requiring consent for tourism activity, but as he owns and operates several self catering accommodation properties as businesses which he markets successfully on social media platforms and most booking websites, he should be aware of relevant Western Cape Government tourism legislation requiring registration, health, safety and fire risk assessments, membership of relevant tourism authorities and insurance cover, prior to taking in paying guests. These regulations apply to all tourism businesses in the province, and it appears from this application, that this property is not currently operating according to these industry norms and standards. These requirements also protect neighbours from impact of indiscriminate tourism business activity.
- There have been loud parties at Montevue which have run until 5am the following morning. The music is amplified through the hills and is very loud at our home and distresses our animals and disturbs our peace. The owner appears to encourage this type of activity by advertising it as part of his business, with no consideration for the carrying capacity of the small dwellings, the septic facilities currently installed, the additional traffic created on a quiet road, or the nuisance posed to neighbours.
- Current fire risks are concerning as it is unlikely any insurer will pay out a non-compliant business in the event of a neighbour's claim:
 - lucerne store made of reeds,
 - cabin with thatch roof and wooden construction,
 - jetmaster open braaiplaces inside the wooden dwellings with wooden floors and walls,
 - large metal chimneys through wooden ceilings,
 - metal chimney through thatch roof dwelling that does not clear the apex,
 - fire pits in front of wooden cabin in prevailing wind directions,
 - open fires in non designated "wild camping" sites
 - wood burning hot tubs and braais set into wooden decks,
 - No fire extinguishing measures available, no fire breaks, no areas reserved as no-go spaces.
 - Wild Camping, day visitors and recreational 4x4 trails are advertised with no limits on where those guests may be on the property. There appear to be no designated firemaking facilities for campers

and day visitors. This encourages risky activity as there is no oversight of guests during their stay. Borehole water is not sufficient in quantity for fighting large fires that could easily get out of control. All these activities expose neighbouring farms to risk of veld fires and total loss. We understand that better, more sustainable use, that would meet the guidelines discussed in the Western Cape Land Use in Rural Areas and Biodiversity Handbook, would be to exclude 4x4 vehicles from the sensitive, core areas and use these areas exclusively for mountain bikers, guided climbers, guided plant and bird tours, and recreational hikers. These are all sustainable activities within the ecotourism niche market that have huge potential on the Ouberg, as we already have exposure through Mountain Mania and the Eroica cycle events which pass through the region, along with the new "Montagu Rocks Climbing Guide" and guided and graded climbing routes tourism initiatives already underway in Montagu. These activities also present collaboration opportunities with local tourism guides who successfully operate exclusively in these niche markets (For example: David Webster, Tony Lourens, Marion MacLean, Anneline Mohammedt, Jurgen Wolfaardt) giving guided tourism experiences with landowners co-operation and affiliation with various tourism and conservation bodies like MATA, GCBR, CN and SANBI. We feel that the owner would receive excellent advice and input from these skilled professionals that could benefit both his business, and the region in general.

- Game species that are not endemic to the area (gemsbok) pose potential risks to ecology and commercial activities of surrounding farms if they escape. The property has no large game fencing along boundaries.
- The septic facilities pose risks to neighbouring properties down river and to ground water supplies which we all rely on. Composting toilets that are certified to SABS standards may be appropriate, but currently, bucket and bin systems (advertised on Montevue Youtube channel) are unsanitary and pose risks to river systems and could pollute underground water sources. Baboons and other wildlife may access the waste if not properly secured.
- There appears to be no access currently for the municipal honeysucker to remove septic tank waste, according to a social media post by the owner. This concerns us, as we are downriver and we all rely on ground water.
- Currently, the tractor shed also contains two dwelling units for workers, with septic facilities which are not consistent with current guidelines. These septic facilities have no french drain and seep into the river. There is road damage of the Ouberg public road at this area due to flooding that reduced the road to one lane on a corner. This is dangerous for all passing traffic, including the many cyclists using the route.
- The owner may not be aware, but there is a heritage building on the property that he calls the "old stone house". The Jooste family home is a heritage Cape Karoo Huisie that is visible from the Ouberg public road. The building is potentially older than the 1901 English Fort that was constructed by the town guard to repel the Scheepers Commando (on our farm 7 of 145), and may form part of the as-yet unexplored Anglo Boer War tourism and scenic route potential of the Ouberg, which could be negatively impacted if left to deteriorate further.
- Some Notes on the history of the property, the heritage house and eviction of farmworker family: We understand that Montevue Nature Farm was once part of the original Rietkuil farm, which included properties now known as ShariVari, Syferfontein and Montevue in the South Western regions (personal communications with the Montagu "Elders of the Ouberg": Mr Johan Verryne and Mr Wolfaardt). This particular Cape Karoo homestead may be as old as, or even pre-date the farm house on Rietkuil (ShariVari), which is understood to be one of the oldest homes in rural Montagu, according to personal communication with a previous owner Mr Wolfaardt, whose family owned the land for many generations and employed and housed the Jooste and Janse families. The Cape Karoo Huisie on portion 225 was occupied and farmed by the Jooste and Janse family for several generations. Their family cemetery lies near their abandoned house, and was used earlier this year to bury an elderly Aunt who resided on the Syferfontein portion. Part of the Jooste family were transferred as workers with the sale of the farm throughout the years, and continued to subsistence farm for their own needs and have been self sufficient since commercial farming activity ceased in or around 2000.

Sadly, the family were evicted (3 months after the death of their wife and mother, see above wrt emergencies and communications) by the current owner in August 2021 without much consideration for the preservation of unique and previously disadvantaged farming communities in rural areas of the Cape, or for the welfare of the three minor children. The family's belongings are still stored in the tractor shed, where they lived since the farm was subdivided and prior to their sudden eviction. They have not managed to find another home and cannot remain in the wendy house in Ashbury sited by the owner without permissions as way of settlement, as they were attacked. The children currently live with an elderly grandmother and a friend of the family and are not together. The Jooste's previously operated a small scale homestead with a few sheep, as well as vegetable gardens and chickens prior to eviction and removal. Their currently unoccupied family homestead is many kilometers from the guest accommodation and is accessed separately to the guest facilities, by a separate entrance on the public road. The Jooste family have applied to the department of labour to investigate their case, and according to Mr Jooste, they would like to be reinstated on the farm and are not seeking any monetary settlement. They have received a reply from Minister Esau acknowledging their issue and are awaiting investigation.

- If the Jooste family could occupy their old family home, this may present a possible win-win solution without having to go through lengthy proceedings, would honour the principles of spatial justice as outlined in the Act and give the owner an opportunity to reconsider a possible workable solution. In return, the Jooste's would likely restore this heritage building using local skills and traditional methods, which could be an asset to the owner, to heritage and conservation of the unique Ouberg farming community, the scenic route and potential new tourist routes.

Eventhough the owner of Montevue Nature Farm has never introduced himself or informed us of any of his activity, we had assumed that because the business is aggressively marketed across all social media platforms, that it would have had the appropriate assessments and insurance in place to protect neighbours, the muni and paying guests from any risks that the business poses to our property, our environment and our future earnings and opportunities. It has been disappointing to discover that this is not the case. However, we do hope that his enthusiasm for eco tourism will continue, although with some guidance from the appropriate conservation authorities to ensure sustainability and to rectify some of the issues that have been created in the meantime. As long time residents of the Ouberg, we really value our current peaceful way of life, our valuable plant stock and fauna species, our vulnerable unique historic farming community, our scarce water sources, and our Ouberg environment. This opportunity to comment has at least presented an ideal forum to suggest workable solutions, and we are grateful for your time and consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,
Malcolm and Melody Mitchell
Farms 2 of 145 and 7 of 145.



Montevue Nature Farm

...

6 August 2020 · 🌐

Bad news, but Good news! Many of our weekends are already fully booked at both of our cabins, but for a limited time we are opening up DAY VISITS to Montevue! (You can stay anywhere else and still visit Montevue for the day.)

This means that you can get full access to our 1050 Klein Karoo mountain paradise for an entire day, with everything it has to offer. Come for 4x4 routes, like Dead Man's Pass, MTB, Hiking, Climbing the ropeway up Widow's Plateau, Picnic in the veld, Kuier at Kaalbas Dam and come watch the beautiful Klein Karoo flowers!

Learn more here: <https://montevue.co.za/.../day-visit-4x4-mtb-hiking-picnic/>



Montevue Nature Farm

7 November 2019 · 🌐

...

Spent a night at The Whitehouse on the farm. Things are moving quickly. We are busy finishing redoing existing roads so even small cars can visit and adding additional 4x4 route over the mountain with awesome look out spots. Also going to start on the dam soon. Hopefully have some fish and row boats soon! Exciting stuff.



Montevue Nature Farm

Send Message

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👍❤️😄 17

4 shares

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5. Which of the below routes, trails and sights or other interesting things did you see, explore or do? - either via foot, MTB, or Vehicle. (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ <u>Kudus Kloof 4x4 Trail (green route)</u> | ☐ Duikers Hoogte Hiking Route |
| ☐ <u>Francois se Pad 4x4 trail (yellow route)</u> | ☐ <u>Visited Olive Gorge</u> |
| ☐ <u>Dead Man's Pass 4x4 trail (Black route)</u> | ☐ Ribbok Hoogte Hiking Route |
| ☐ Rope way up to Widow's Plateau | ☐ Karoo Cottage Ruins |
| ☐ Signal Hill | ☐ Mountain Biking on any trails |
| ☐ <u>Land's End (End of the road, at end of Green route)</u> | ☐ Hiking on any trails |
| ☐ Braai/Picnic/swim/Kajak at KAALBAS DAM | ☐ Saw any elusive game like Kudu, Ribbok, Duiker, Klipspringer (NOT Springbok) |
| ☐ Erosion Caves Hiking route | |

Please give any other feedback/advice regarding our 4x4 routes, hiking trails, view points, or points of interest on the farm.

0 of 10 answered





MONTEVUE

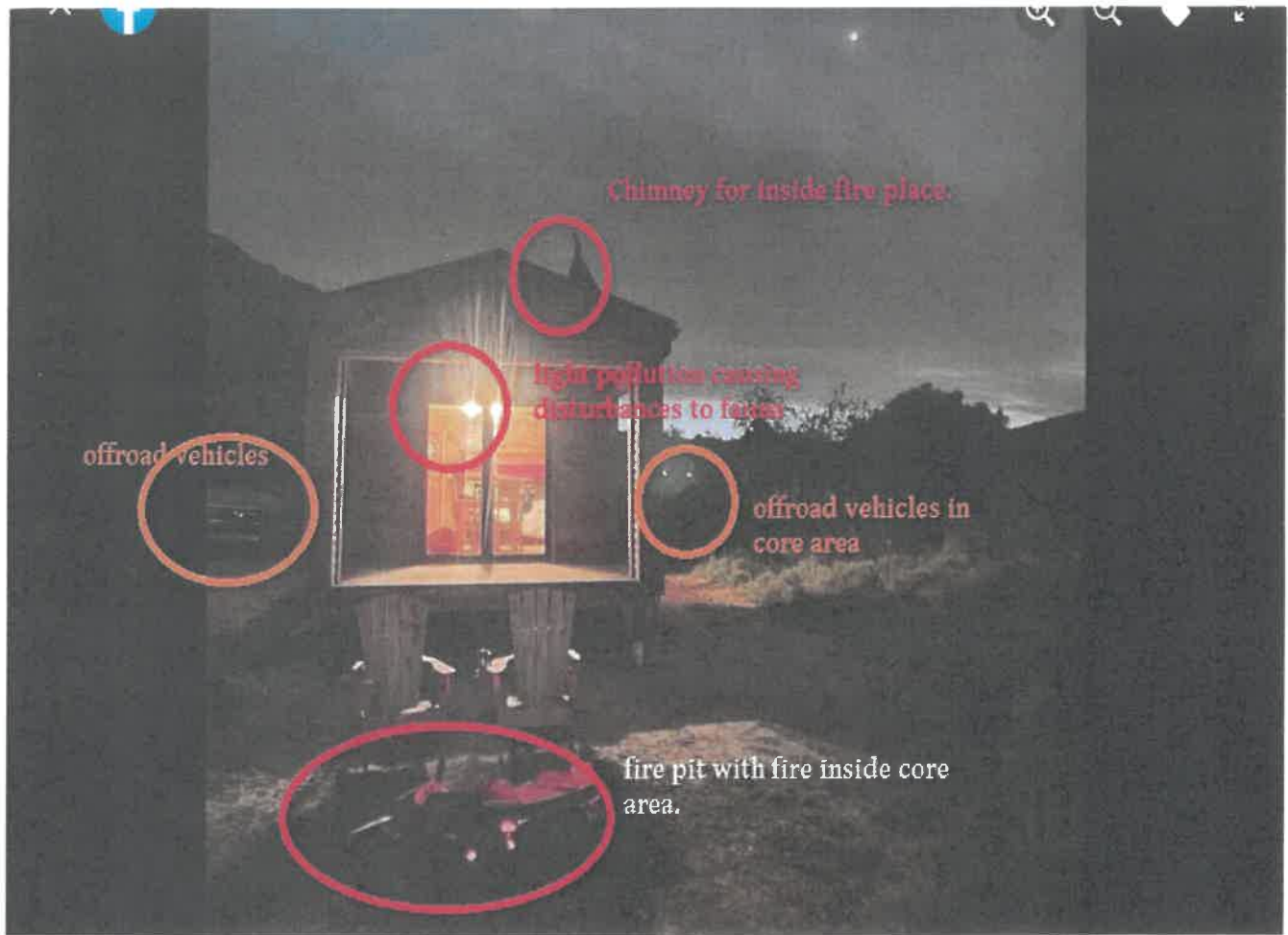
NATURE FARM

Luxurious Eco-Friendly Self Catering Accommodation

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so that it feels secluded. We want it simple and in the middle of nature on the outside, but luxurious on the inside.

We have created hiking trails, MTB trails and 4x4 routes so people can access more of the property to enjoy it. Use it to explore the farm and enjoy this unique part of the Karoo.



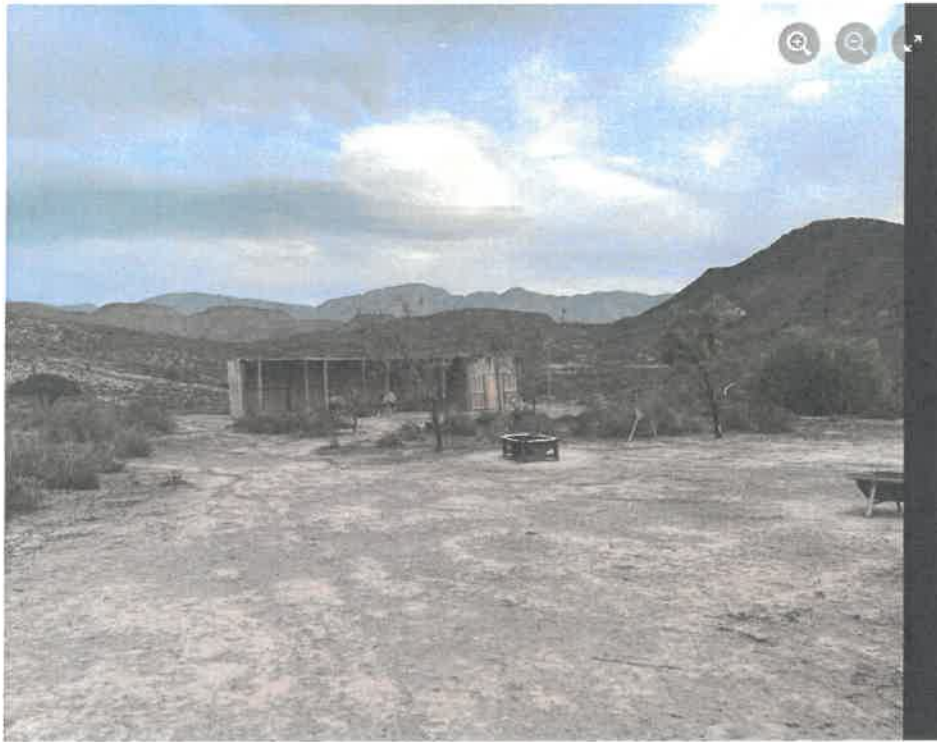
This photo is from a post.

 **Montevue Nature Farm**
1 August 2021 · 🌐

 Like  Comment

 Write a comment... 

Storage facility for bales of feed constructed of gum pole and reeds. Not baboon proof and a potential fire hazard.



The cabin is a thatched roof structure with wooden walls, floors and surrounded by a wooden deck.

The chimney height does not appear correctly positioned above the apex height of the thatched roof. This could be a fire hazard.



MONTEVUE NATURE FARM

CABINE DES ANGES - Luxury Self-Catering Wood Cabin at Montevue Nature Farm (Montagu, Western Cape)

63 views • Nov 30, 2021

2 DISLIKE SHARE SAVE ...

Wood fired hot tub at White House set into wooden surround



SEARCH

Home Friends Videos Marketplace Groups



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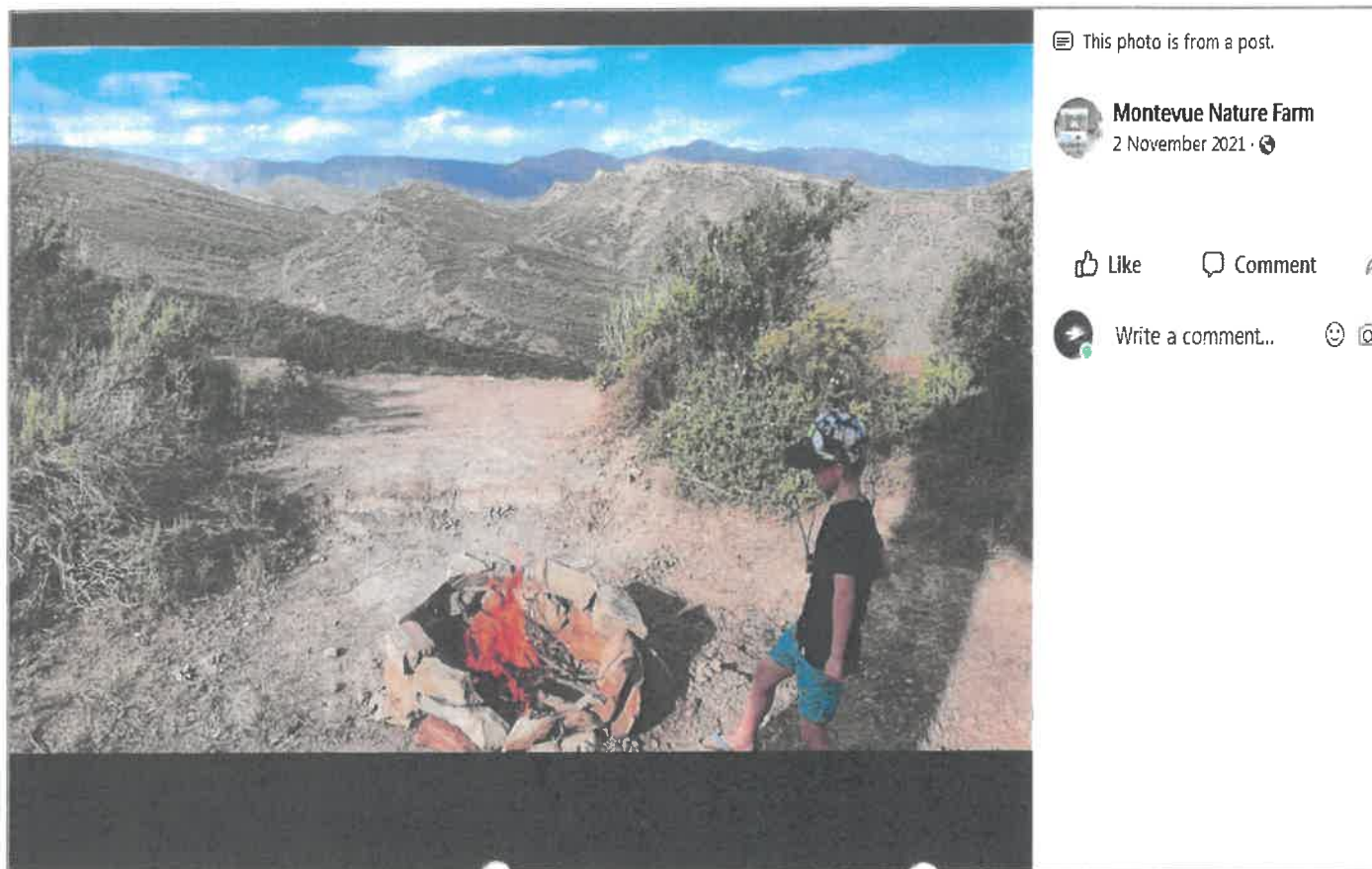


Montevue Nature Farm
15 February 2021 •

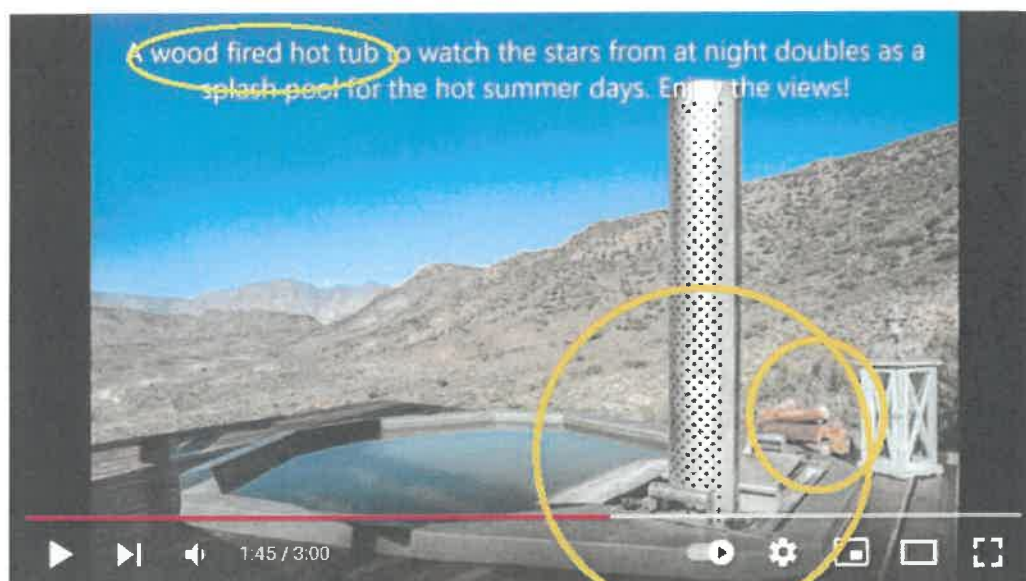
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Write a comment...   

Open Fire on the hill top in protected areas. Areas have been scraped clean for the building and amenities site.



Wood fired hot tubs with metal chimneys are located within a wooden surround. Firewood is not stored safely.



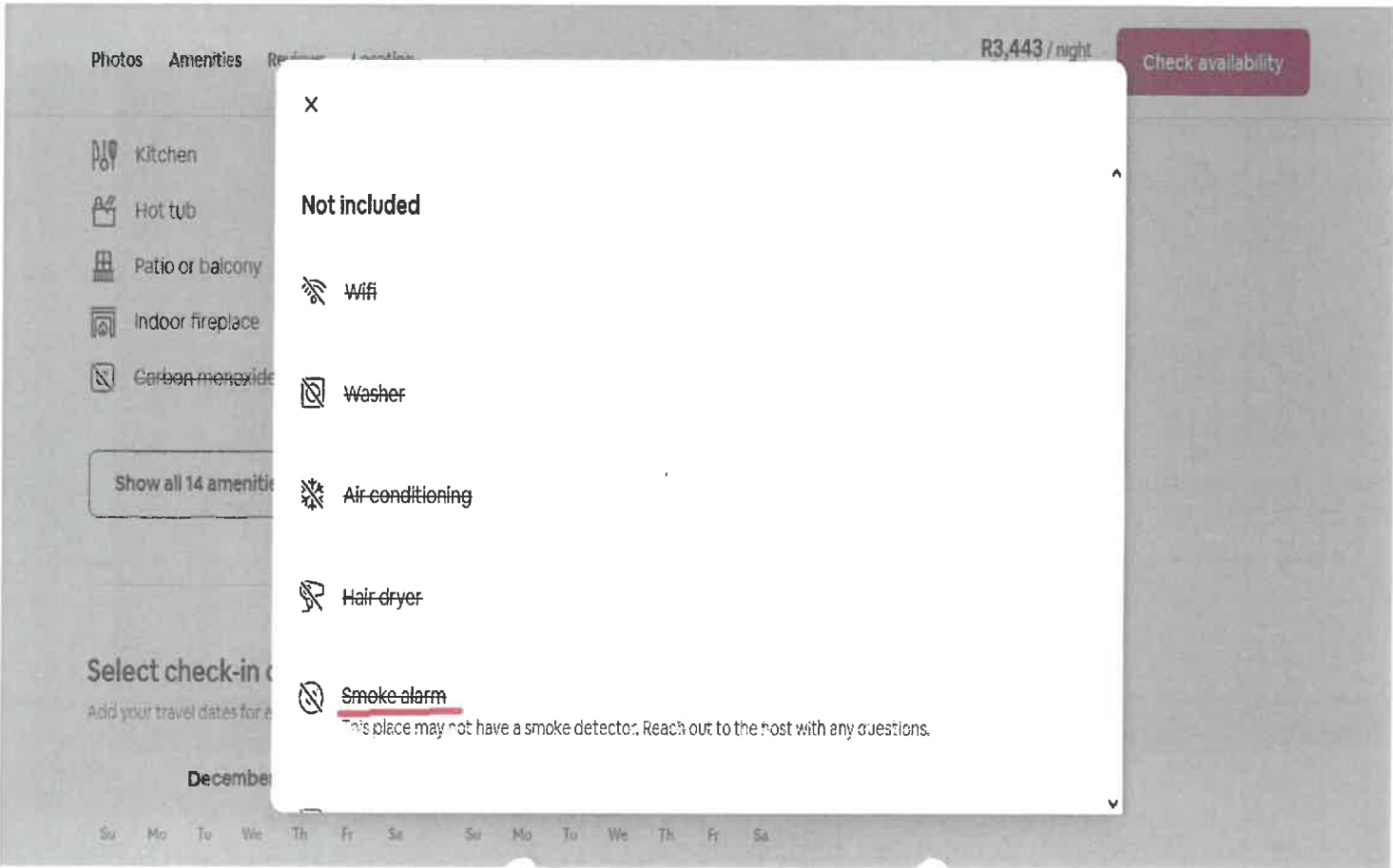
[MONTEVUE NATURE FARM](#)

CABINE DES ANGES - Luxury Self-Catering Wood Cabin at Montevue Nature Farm (Montagu, Western Cape)

HUNTERS CABIN Inside open fire place with oversized metal chimney through a wooden ceiling. This cabin is very remote and has two large open fire making facilities with no trained fire safety person on site and no alarm system.



AIRBNB Advert stipulates no smoke alarm



Stated occupancy of Montevue Nature Farm
Cabine Des Anges on website:



Luxurious Eco-Friendly Self-Catering Accommodation

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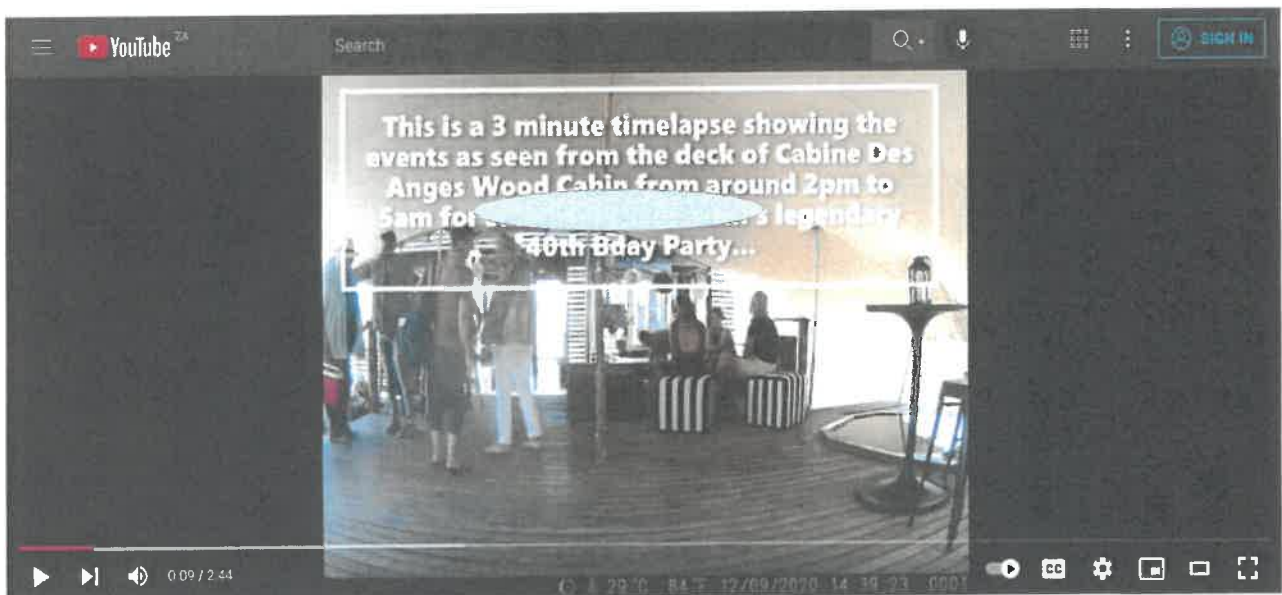
summer, overlooking the valley. The house has everything you need to have an amazing time rain or shine!

This unit sleeps a total of 10 people. (Max 6 adults):

- The loft area has **2 Double Beds**, perfect for a family with kids, and a **full bathroom with bath** overlooking the mountains.
- The separate downstairs flatlet (access from outside the house) contains **1 double bed**, and **1 pull out couch**, perfect for a small family. The flatlet also has a **full bathroom with a shower**.
- The large open plan living room and kitchen feels spacious and luxurious, and is well equipped. There is **1 extra pull out couch** that sleeps 2 extra people or children.
- There is also an **Outside Shower** and **Outside Toilet** (Loo with a view!) for the adventurous.

RESERVATIONS

MORE INFO:



TIME LAPSE - When a quiet Karoo farm turns into a crazy 14 hour party venue

106 views • Nov 9, 2020

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Montevue Nature and Outdoors
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Time lapse video showing 14hrs of the event as seen from the deck of 'Cabine Des Anges' Wood Cabin at Montevue Nature Farm. See how the party progress from the day into the night and then into the morning until day break!

The theme was 'Into the Wild' and the people dressed the part. Lots of chatting, dancing, partying and more! Was super awesome event.



Wedding Set Up - Timelapse

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13K views • 7 years ago



109-Year-Old Veteran and His Secrets to Life Will Make You...

National Geographic
39M views • 5 years ago



30 Days Timelapse at Sea | 4K | Through Thunderstorms...

JeffHK
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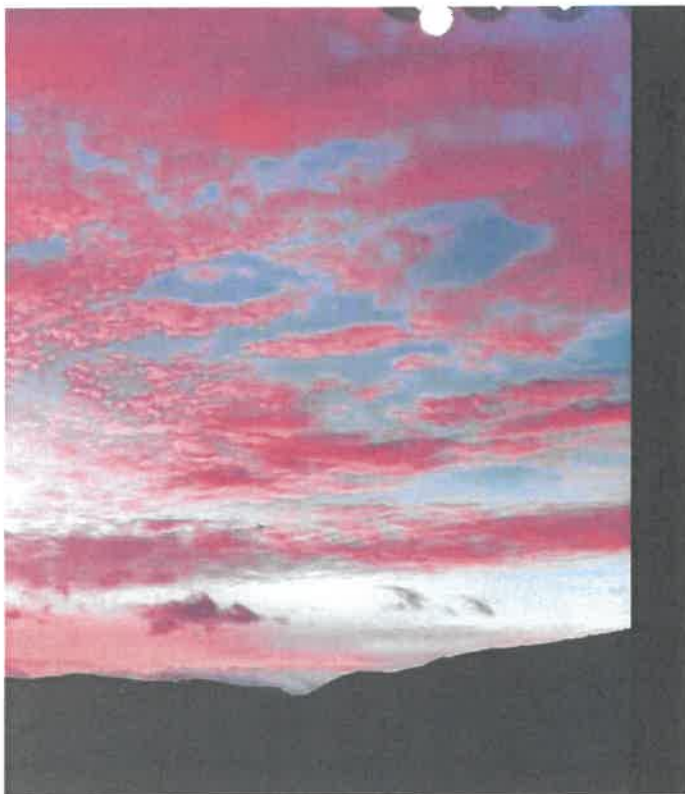
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30 Days Timelapse at Sea | 4K | Through Thunderstorms...
JeffHK
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Montevue Nature Farm
2 May 2021 ·

We have two people living at Montevue. Francois, who was born and raised there, and his wife Lena. They are responsible for the cleaning and up keep of the properties. On Monday morning Lena passed away. Not even 40. She crept into our family's hearts quickly these past 3 years. She loved the work and all the guests coming to the farm after many years of nothing happening on the farm. She was so proud. They have such a simple way of life that I envy. We will be heading over tomorrow to see her children and hopefully find and train new cleaners. Our apologies if you had to wait for a deposit return or if we were slow on replying to your messages. Take care of each other ❤️ Rus sag lieve Magdalena See less

20

5 comments 2 shares

Like

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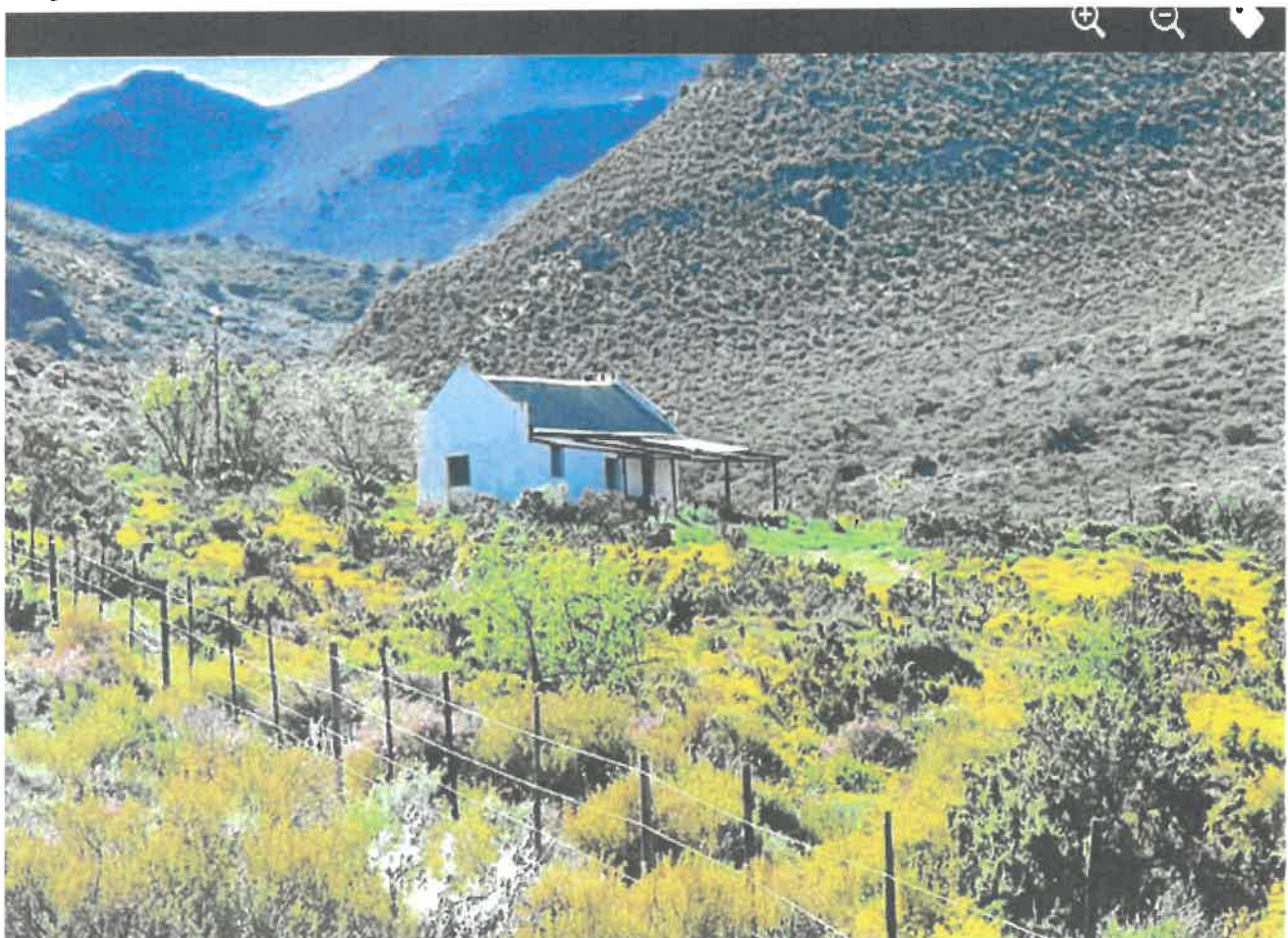
Most relevant

Owners obituary notice for Magdalena Jansen who was employed on the farm for twenty years since the age of 18. She was 38 at the time of her death. Her young son is also buried on the farm. Magdalena was not buried on the farm. The remaining family including her minor children were evicted in August the same year. The most recent burial occurred in 2022, when the Jansen family buried Magdalena's elderly aunt who had been a resident of the greater property her whole life up until her death.

WORKERS ACCOMMODATION SITE



Cape Karoo heritage building: Previously the Jooste Family Home for several generations. Jooste/Janse family burial plot nearby to this cottage.



SEPTIC TANKS WASTE REMOVAL:



Bertus Engelbrecht ▶ Montagu O' my Montagu

30 November 2020 · 🌐

...

Weet iemand dalk waar ek iemand kan kry om ons plaas se septic tank uit te pomp? Die munisipaliteit sê hul kan glo nie by ons cabin uitkom nie. Al plek wat ek kon opspoor wat dit doen is in Ceres en hul vra oor die R3600 net om uit te kom. Dan nog extra vir die pomp. Sekerlik moet daar 'n portable toilet besigheid of iemand in die area wees wat 'n septic tank kan uitpomp?

See translation



1

2 comments

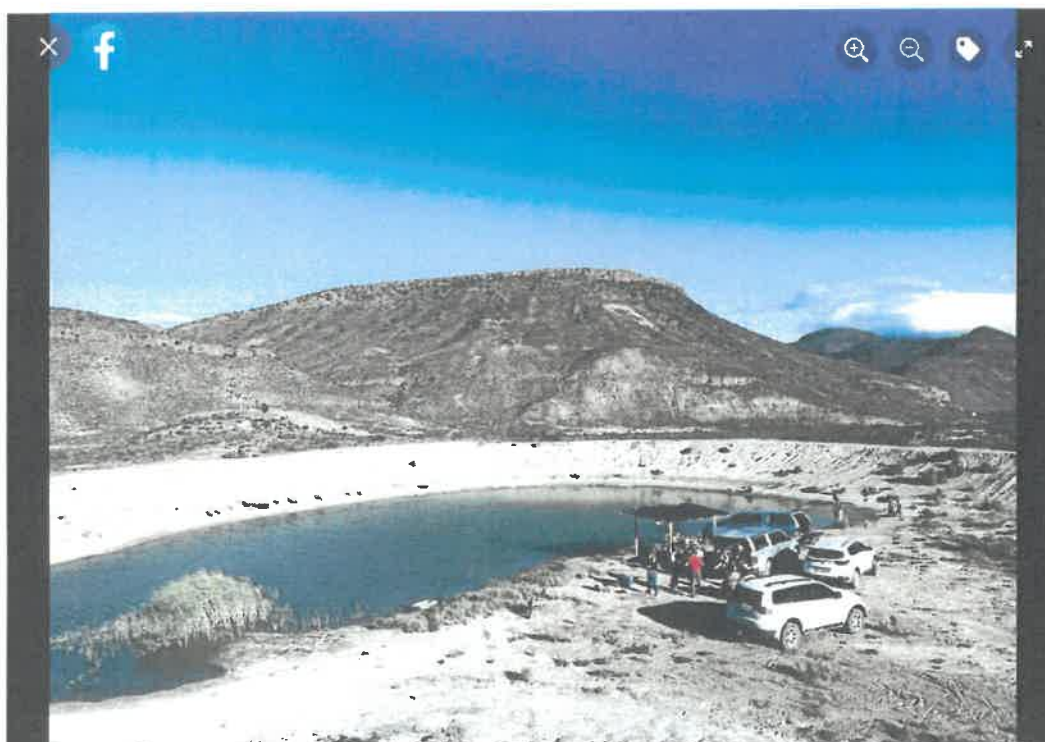


Like



Comment

Recreational 4x4



Montevue Nature Farm

7 June · 🌐

...

Lunch braai at Kaalbas dam is always a win! Even winter can't stop the boys ❤️



7



Like



Comment

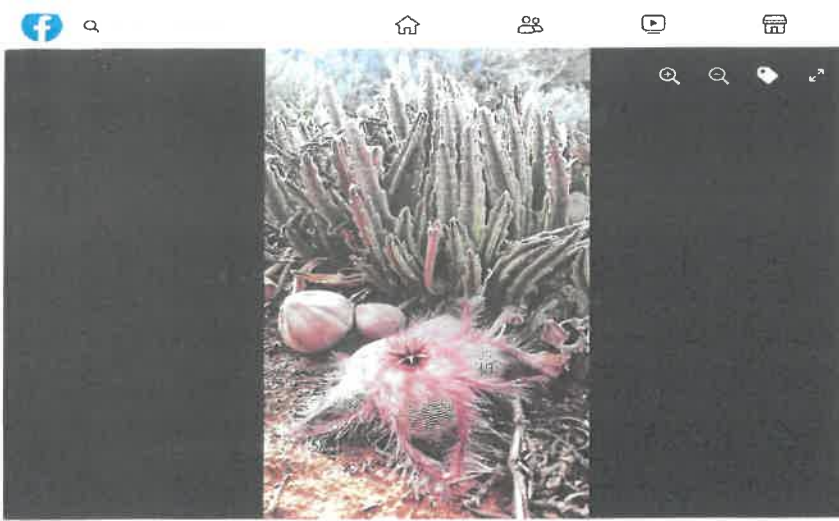


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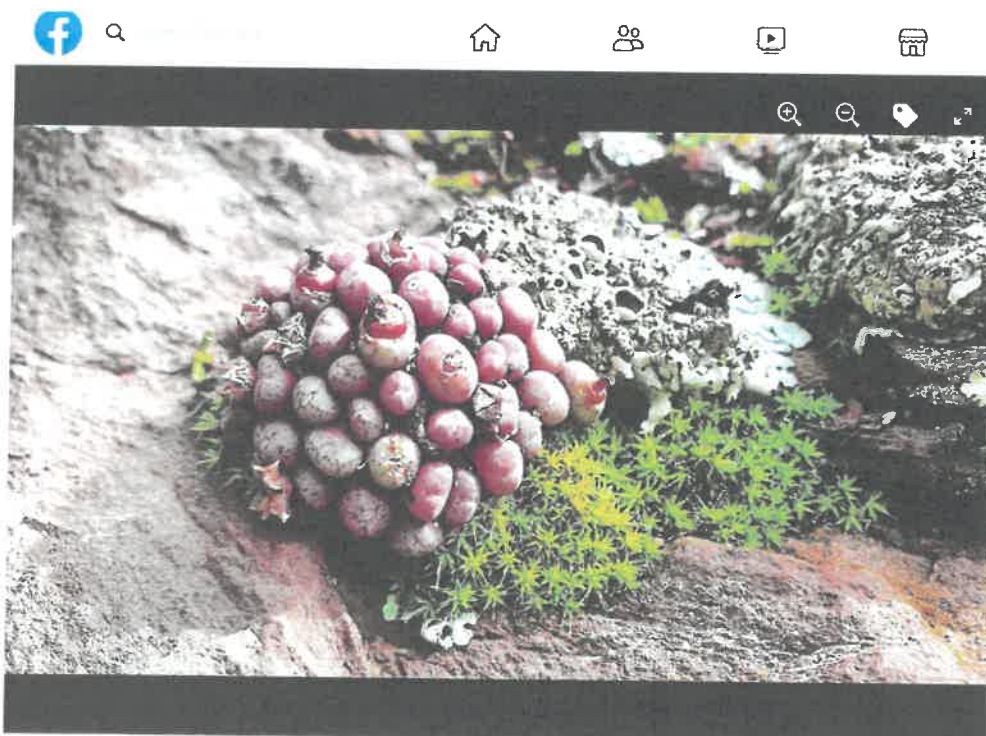


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Red Data
Species
photographed
by property
owner and
uploaded to
social media



This photo is from a post.

Montevue Nature Farm
23 October 2021 · 🌐

Like Comment

Write a comment... 😊