

REPORT BY FRIENDS OF ORCHARD VILLAGE WATERWAYS

A report of the work done over the past six months, the challenges and problems we have encountered, and suggestions for going forward.



The section of Westlake River which runs through Orchard Village, before crossing Main road and heading towards Zandvlei, is seen in the bottom left of the above photograph.

CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY

2. WESTLAKE RIVER

- 2.1. Pollution management**
- 2.2. Litterboom installation**
- 2.3. Crime and anti-social behaviour**
- 2.4. invasive plant growth**

3. STREAMS (CANALS) IN KERNER PARK

4. GARDEN ALONGSIDE WESTLAKE RIVER

5. FUTURE GOALS, and areas where we require assistance

- 5.1. River**
- 5.2. Streams**
- 5.3. Garden**

6. MORE ABOUT FRIENDS OF ORCHARD VILLAGE WATERWAYS

7. SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE LINKS

1. SUMMARY

Where things stand, and what we need going forward

Overall, the Westlake River in Orchard Village appears in relatively good health. We have recently spotted fish, as well as clear evidence of otters (first week of November 2025), while frogs, ducks and birds seem to be doing well. The pollution situation is being managed, although the invasive water plants are now starting to spread quite rapidly on the river.

Our ultimate goal is to help create an ecosystem which can thrive by itself, with minimal management and resources. We are however still far from that point, and in the meanwhile, our aim is to manage things as best possible. We believe that this requires more frequent removal of invasive plants – by us, and with support from the City of Cape Town, as our resources, especially manpower, is limited. Regular attention to invasive plants will result in less disruption and potential destruction to the river and wildlife habitat, as well as the wildlife itself.

Waiting until the river is completely overgrown with invasive plants before either coming in with machinery, or large teams of manual labourers, is expensive, and potentially destructive and disruptive. If the City of Cape Town were able to help complement the work we are doing by sending in a small team of workers (5-10 people), once every two to three months (especially in spring and summer), we believe this would save money and be far more beneficial to the river and related ecosystem.



An overview of the area and the various components discussed in this report

Photo taken: 12 November, 2025

2. WESTLAKE RIVER

2.1 Pollution management (June 2025 – November 2025)

We (Hannes and Anthony), undertook clean-ups in the river focusing on litter and pollution, on the following dates: 9 June, 8 July, 23 July, 31 July, October 11, November 5.

On each occasion, roughly an average of 2 to 3 big black rubbish bags were filled, probably around 100 kilograms in total.

2.2 Litterboom installation

We installed a litterboom in August this year, about 80 metres south of the Steenberg road bridge. This has made a big difference to the amount of litter in the Westlake River within the confines of Orchard Village.

(<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/august-activity-homemade-litterboom-and-a-pre-spring-stream-clean>).

Problem areas do however remain:

- a) The area of the river just south of the Steenberg bridge. The issue here appears two-fold.
 - a1) Regular litter items such as takeaway containers being thrown into the water by the men who sit by the bridge waiting for employment, and likely also by some of the traders using the area.



November 2025

a2) The second issue here is vagrants, who dump items such as blankets and other items in the river. This might not only be vagrants, but could be anyone looking for a place to get rid of rubbish. Ultimately there seems little other solution than to fence off strategic areas of the river, in order to manage the situation long term.

A similar situation occurs at the bridge on the northern side of Steenberg road (the Kirstenhof side, next to the little lane which runs between the Church of the Holy Spirit and the Sewage pump station). And a similar situation also applies at the bridge on the Main Road where the Westlake River crosses from Orchard Village into Zandvlei (situated on the corner of Main road and Chenel Way).

2.3 Crime Issues

The areas around the bridges (marked in green on the map) currently allow for antisocial behaviour and crime, as they offer hiding places; a domestic worker was robbed close to the Main Road/ Chenel Way bridge just this week, with people using these areas for dumping rubbish, going to the toilet, consuming drugs, and as a hideout.

One formal trader, who operates the air-con refill business, has reported the following:

- The people who sit on the bridge waiting for work frequently litter in the river.
- They have also tried to kill/ have injured ducks/ geese.
- Some of the other (informal) traders (the people who sell fruit and flowers at the traffic lights) have used the river as a hideout to consume drugs.

- People have been spotted sleeping in the bushes at the far end of the field (situated alongside Steenberg road), behind the houses in Orchard Village.

An example of recent dumping around Steenberg road bridge:
<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/new-waders-big-litter-removal>

1.2 Invasive growth

Around about the beginning of May this year, Ward Councillor Carolynne Franklin arranged for a team of workers to manually clear the invasive plants in the river. At that point, the water was barely visible – the plants had taken over the entire surface area of the water.



Photo taken around April, 2025

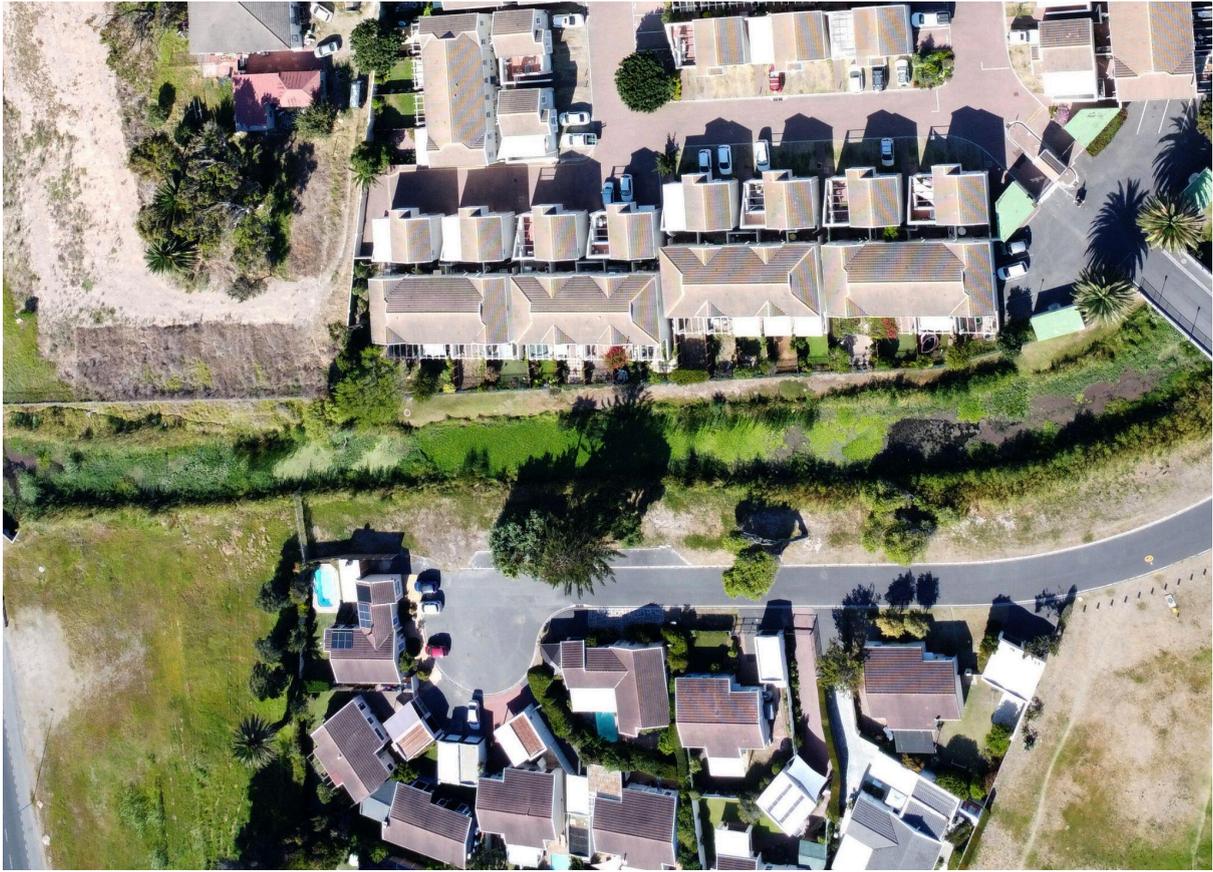


Photo taken around April, 2025

Since this clean-up, and up until now, the Westlake River in Orchard Village has remained mainly free of invasive plant growth on top of the water. However, there are two outbreaks of water lilies, and possibly water lettuce, which we have just recently started to tackle and which is quickly spreading, see photos below (taken on 12 November, 2025):



The Westlake River in Kirstenhof, next to Raapkraal road (which was also cleared of invasive water plants in May), is now entirely overgrown, as is the channel leading between the Church of the Holy Spirit and the sewage pump station. (This area does not fall within our village, we are just mentioning it as it is part of the same river).



Photo: 11 November, 2025

The Westlake River (south of Main Rd, on the Zandvlei side), now also has a substantial amount of plant growth, including water lettuce, shown in the two photos below (11 November, 2025)





This growth, especially on the Raapkraal road (Kirstenhof) stretch of Westlake River, was probably increased by the Pollsmoor sewage spill, in September.
(<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/sewage-spill-sets-back-river-restoration>)

3. STREAMS (CONCRETE CANALS) IN KERNER PARK



11 November 2025

At the start of April, a CoCT team cleared the four canals in Kerner Park of all plant growth. By August, a fair amount of this growth was back, and we cleared about 10% of it. However it quickly grew back and became out of control by October. We are therefore grateful that the City has sent a team over the past week (2nd week of November, 2025), to clear the streams again.



June/ July 2025



10 November, 2025

The streams run into the Westlake River, and also support wildlife, including tadpoles, frogs, birds and fledgling ducks, as well as insects including bees.

Prior to the City clearing the streams, we met with a City official, Marlin Viljoen, and asked if it could be arranged that small clusters of plants are left in the river – to act as filters for pollutants, as well as refuge/ habitat for wildlife. This objective was partially met by the City – of the four streams, two were entirely stripped of vegetation, and the other two have minimal plants left. Before this, the plants had been thriving with bees – generally a good indicator of environmental health.

Our plan is now to try and better manage these small pockets of plant growth – to be more proactive in keeping these from spreading. Pollutants in the stream have included paint – likely poured down a street drain in the area. There has also been what appears to be oil spills from time to time, particularly in the stream which runs in the direction of Steenberg road.

4. GARDEN ALONGSIDE WESTLAKE RIVER (Adjacent to Chenel Way)

Previously this was just wasteland, comprising invasive weeds, stones and rubble. The garden has come along very nicely, and has added aesthetic appeal to the Orchard Village entrance.



2024

The goal is also to improve the soil quality, increase the shade cover, to keep out invasive plants, and to create an area which residents can enjoy and which leads them towards the river - increasing their appreciation, and hopefully involvement, We have tried to prioritise

indigenous and water-wise plants, though we have added some non-indigenous plants (but non invasive) when they were donated by members of the community.



August 2025



August 2025

<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/spring-arrives-in-orchard-village>

Our work in this section has been quite intensive – including preparing the plant beds which involved digging through rubble and stone, and adding compost and other organic matter.

nutrients, to improve the soil quality. We have also managed to run a hosepipe from Anthony's house, using well-point water to water the garden a few times a week. Also included in this part of the project are the five Milkwood trees we received from the CoCT before winter; these have been well cared for and are in healthy condition, though are yet to grow much yet; they will probably need another two years of close maintenance.



November 2025

5. FUTURE GOALS AND AREAS WHERE WE REQUIRE ASSISTANCE

5.1 Westlake River

- a) Replace invasive plants on the riverbanks with indigenous plants (starting with a smaller, pilot area).
- b) Prevent the continued dumping of rubbish into the river by having fences installed at the areas mentioned before.
- c) Continue to manage the eradication of invasive water plants manually, and avoid having machines enter the river. This may require more timeous interventions, and larger numbers of workers to assist.

- d) Create some sort of stone weir/ filtration system on the river.
- e) Create floating plant rafts – to filter the water further, and to propagate new plants.

For some of these matters, especially the clearing of invasive plants in the river, we would require assistance from the CoCT and other potential role-players, as Friends of Orchard Village Waterways does not have the capacity.

5.2 Streams

- a) Our primary focus for now is to better manage invasive plant growth; the streams are at least accessible, compared to the river.
- b) We have also been looking at the possibility of creating a pond area or small dammed area where the streams meet up, an area which is already frequented by children with their parents or nannies. This would further community engagement in the waterway systems.
- c) Rewilding of the streams (canals). Ultimately it would be great to return the streams to their natural state, and to do away with the concrete, or at least start this in a pilot area.

5.3 Riverside garden

- a) Proper walkways, with access for prams and wheelchairs, as well as a couple of benches, would be lovely additions and would encourage more usage and commitment from residents.
- b) A couple of clearings (in strategic positions, so as not to compromise privacy in the Camargue housing complex, on the opposite bank) would enable people to enjoy the river views and to watch the wildlife.

6. FRIENDS OF ORCHARD VILLAGE WATERWAYS

The group has been operating for about six months, although we are still in the process of being formally registered. As many of you will know, we have met, and also engaged via email with numerous City of Cape Town officials, from various departments. We have been appreciative of the way in which CoCT officials have received us and we are optimistic that we will continue to build on these relationships for the benefit of the natural environment in our neighbourhood.

Currently the Friends of Orchard Village group comprises of Hannes Kok, Anthony McLennan and Alex Sparg, and while we have received a lot of positive feedback, as well as some donations (plants, hosepipes, compost) from the community, it has been Hannes and Anthony who have primarily carried out the physical work, while Alex, a Landscape Architect and also a local resident, has assisted us with strategic planning and other related information.

We have also reached out and met with related organisations such as Fynbos Life, Kera (Kirstenhof and environs rates association), Zandvlei Trust and r ...???? And received their support. Jenny Louw from Zandvlei Catchment Management forum and Councillor Franklin have also been very supportive. We do have a relatively active Whatsapp group which is helping create awareness.

7. ONLINE INFO

For more info on work done to date:

<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/progress-report>

<https://orchardvillage-waterways.co.za/news>

Social media

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/foovw>

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DV9vtCg142WIFh5hffGzI>