

MINUTES

eThekwini Biodiversity Forum

May 19, 2011

9h00 – 12h00

Paradise Valley Nature Reserve



PRESENT

Aarnia van Vuuren	AV	Johan Bodenstein	JB1	Paul Seaman	PS
Basheshile Thusi	BT	Johnathon Foly	JF	Peron Amein	PA
Basil Vezi	BV	Kate Richardson	KR	Rashieda Davids	RD
Bryan Ashe	BA	Kedibone Moshapo	KM	Reshnee Lalla	RL
Cassandra Abboy	CA	Kerina Singh	KS	Richard Boon	RB
Crystal Naidoo	CN	Kirstin Williams	KW	Richard Lundie	RL
Derrek Ruiters	DR	Lesley Frescura	LF	Rodney Bartholomew	RB
Di Higginson Keith	DHK	Lilian Develing	LD	Sabelo Nkosi	SN
Gillian Noyce	GC	Lunga Ndlova	LN	Sarah Stott	SS
Graham Cairns	GC	Lungi Ndlovu	LN	Sbu Mkhwanazi	SM
Hazel Govender	HG	Manisha Maganlal	MM	Sibonisile Mpungose	SM
Heather Cairns	HC	Martin Clement	MC	T.N. Msweli	TM
Himansu (Snowy) Baijnath	HB	Mbali Mntungawa	MM	Teddy Govender	TG
Jean Lindsay	JL	N.C Dlamini	ND	Thami Kunene	TK
Jean Senogles	JS	Nkuli Hadebe	NH	V.J. Khoza	VK
Jessica Brislin	JB	Paulos Gwala	PG	Warren Botes	WB

APOLOGIES

Alistair McInnes, Natasha Govender, Debra Mitchell, Lesley Frescura, Sean o’ Donoghue, Bafana Gwacela, Gary Edwards, Karl Westphal, Billie Prinsloo, Rob Crankshaw, Bianca McKelvey, Noloyiso Nkqeto, Suvarna Parbhoo, Jabu Sithole, Adrian Armstrong, Jeanne Tarrant, Geoff Pullan, Guy Redman, Malcolm Stainbank, Sue George.

1.	WELCOME & INTRODUCTION	
1.1	RB welcomed all and facilitated introductions.	
2	PRESENTATION – An overview of the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department, by Richard Boon	
2.1	RB presented the functions of Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department (EPCPD), which included the following: The Environmental Planning & Climate Protection Department aims to conserve biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services it provides for the benefit of present and future generations; and Plan for mitigation of- and adaptation to- the	

	<p>impacts of climate change.</p> <p>The EPCPD is made up of four branches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Biodiversity Planning Branch • The Biodiversity Impact Assessment Branch • The Policy Implementation Branch <p>The Climate Protection Branch.</p>	
2.2	<p>RB noted that he would only be providing details on the Biodiversity Planning Branch as it had the most relevance to the Forum.</p>	
2.3	<p>RB stated that the purpose of the Biodiversity Planning branch is to identify Durban's important terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments and to protect and manage these environments as part of the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS).</p> <p>The key tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify those areas that must be secured as part of the D'MOSS • To develop and implement tools aimed at securing conservation worthy land • To develop and implement strategies to deal with specific threats to Durban's natural environment • To report on the State of Biodiversity in Durban • To form partnerships with a range of internal and external stakeholders to protect and manage municipal biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services. 	
2.4	<p>RB noted that 89.1% of D'MOSS is currently not protected. The aim is to get to a point where majority of D'MOSS is protected. There is thus a lot of work to be done.</p>	
2.5	<p>RB stated that the Biodiversity Planning branch is currently formulating a Systematic Conservation Plan (SCP) that will be completed in the next financial year. The SCP would eventually be converted to a Bioregional Plan, which has legal standing and all other planning documents would have to take the Bioregional Plan into account. D'MOSS has been incorporated into the Town Planning Schemes. An Environmental Impact Assessment is required for any proposed development within D'MOSS.</p>	
3	Land Acquisition	
3.1	<p>RB provided details of the land acquisition being coordinated by NG and mentioned that NG has purchased properties to the value of R10 million this year and has received a further budget of R11 million for the 2012/13 financial year onwards. NG emphasised that there would be no point in acquiring land and leaving that land unmanaged afterward. NG stressed the importance of effective management for conservation.</p>	
3.2	<p>RB noted that eleven (11) Nature Reserves were in the process of being proclaimed, one of which is the Roosfontein Nature Reserve.</p>	

4	Environmental Rates Certificates	
4.1	RB provided details on the opportunity for private landowners whose properties fall within D'MOSS to apply for a Rates Certificate, whereby no rates will be charged on the D'MOSS part of the property. However, certain conditions would apply, in that there needs to be an Environmental Servitude registered over the property or it must be rezoned to Conservation Zone and the property must be managed.	
4.2	LD noted that a property owner in Hillcrest undertook an EIA to construct 250 units on D'MOSS land the case of which may go to the High Court. LD then mentioned another site in Waterfall, which is owned by Nkhosi Bhengu. This site is degraded but also within D'MOSS and the owner wants to construct 1500 houses on the property.	
4.3	RB responded that any development proposed within D'MOSS will be reviewed by EPCPD and that the intention is to restrict development on D'MOSS as far as reasonably possible.	
4.4	Rob applauded the EPCPD for all the good work being done.	
4.5	JB1 queried whether there was a policy for agricultural practices within wetlands. WB responded that there is no policy for agricultural practise within wetlands. However, it needs to be looked at on a case by case basis, since subsistence agriculture can occur within certain wetlands and even improve the state of that wetland, while in other wetlands it could cause negative impacts.	
4.6	JB1 queried whether there is technology available that can treat grey water in the household before it reaches a waste water treatment works. RB responded that the Wastewater Department should be consulted in this regard.	
4.7	JB1 stated that in terms of D'MOSS, no development is allowed within grasslands, yet the onus is on the landowner to manage the grassland. Queried whether any assistance from the City with management, in particular burning, was available. RB responded that the Working on Fire programme was initially set up to burn Municipal grassland. However, this programme has provided advice to landowners and has even started to burn some private properties. The Working on Fire team has already doubled and in time the intention is to grow it even further.	
4.8	HC queried whether any plan were in place to allow for cooperation between Municipal Departments, e.g Park Departments and EPCPD. Further queried whether the Town Planning Department is going to the level of looking at environmental matters when doing building inspections. Building inspectors should be educated not to pass buildings that are not environmentally acceptable.	
4.9	RB responded that there is some collaboration between departments, e.g EPCPD working together with Parks Dept in conservation of D'MOSS. RB added that the priority of the Biodiversity Planning Branch is to secure the conservation of	

	D'MOSS.	
5	Working for Ecosystems and Working on Fire	
5.1	HC requested that Errol Douwes do a presentation on the progress he has made with alien clearing.	NG, ED
5.2	It was noted that it was about time that activities are coordinated regarding invasive alien species. Too much money was being previously spent without planning.	
6	Environmental Impact Assessment	
6.1	BA questioned the involvement of the Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) branch of EPCPD with our Municipal Departments. Raised concern that there seems to be a lack of push toward the inclusion of specialist studies on climate change. For example, Phase 2 of the development of the beachfront had little environmental input on climate change. SN responded that EPCPD do play a role in developments proposed by other departments through commenting on projects. The BIA branch acts as a hub, receiving applications for projects and make comments relevant to the protection of biodiversity.	
6.2	BA further noted that the issue regarding sea-level rise was being ignored. The short term economic development goals seem to outweigh environmental concerns.	
7	PRESENTATION – A critical assessment of the efficacy of the D'MOSS implementation strategy in the Outer West, by Paul Dudley Seaman	
7.1	PS described his proposed thesis to interrogate the efficacy of D'MOSS within the Molweni River catchment. Noted that two surveys were undertaken on the dominant species present in the catchment. However, the species varied between the two surveys, showing a change in species diversity due to the impact of alien invasives.	
7.2	PS highlighted the aims of D'MOSS and outlined the potential threats to the achievement of those aims, including climatic change, alien plant invasion, stray dogs etc.	
7.3	He highlighted the importance of managing D'MOSS through partnerships between, e.g. EPCPD, Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) and National Department of Environmental Affairs.	
8	QUESTIONS	
8.1	LD noted that three years had passed between the rezoning of D'MOSS and the	

	rates relief, which was considered a long time.	
8.2	RB responded that there is no Bylaw available to guide this process. Added that it would have been ideal for rezoning and re-evaluation to take place at the same time. However, the rezoning in Outer West will have little effect on land value, as most of the land is oversteep with minimal development potential. The valuation of properties and the market values are questionable. Work is currently being done to integrate the valuation of D'MOSS into the Valuation Roll to allow for this process to be streamlined. However, properties would still be required to comply with certain conditions, e.g registration of an Environmental Servitude, rezoning and management.	
8.3	LD noted that many people buy property with the expectation that they would be able to subdivide in the future or build a cottage on their property to allow for their families to use the property.	
8.4	RB stated that all town planning schemes in the City are over 50 years old and were developed in the absence of environmental considerations. If people were allowed to freely exercise the existing zoning in the City, the environmental situation would be far worse and of a state that majority of people would be unhappy with. The City needs to make bold interventions to save conservation areas.	
8.5	LD responded that she has no issue with conservation, However, the City needs to assist landowners with management of the D'MOSS	
8.6	Concern was raised regarding the impacts of package plants. PS noted that he found in the areas where he conducted his research that package plants discharge effluent directly into the stream. RB suggested that eThekweni Water Services be requested to present their Development Plan and highlight their approach to package plants.	
8.7	RB of the Msunduzi Municipality noted that they looking at an Ecosystem Services Plan, where environmentally significant land that is in private ownership needs the involvement of the landowners to manage. The approach is to facilitate controls in terms of Town Planning Schemes with additional options for management, e.g Stewardship Programmes and possible assistance form EKZNW.	
9	UPDATES FROM THE NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION by Sibusiso Mkwanazi	
9.1	SM noted that one of the tasks of the Natural Resources Division is to manage Nature Reserves, e.g., Springside Nature Reserve. Majority of the work done involves alien invasives clearing. Virginia Bush Nature Reserve is almost totally dominated by the Balloon Vine . SM noted that currently 10 staff are employed at Virginia Bush Nature Reserve. All staff work with the Friends of Virginia Bush and also assist to recover stolen property.	
9.2	SM added that his division also deals with encroachment of woody vegetation into grassland. At Virginia Bush Nature Reserve there is a small patch of grassland and	

	the main aim there is to manage encroachment.	
9.3	SM added that the Natural Resources Division also undertakes burning. Mentioned that the Working for Fire programme is stationed in the New Germany Nature Reserve and offers assistance with burning. Some Natural Resources Division staff get trained through the Working for Fire programme. Additional funding is required for more appropriate uniforms.	
9.5	SM stated that his division also cares for animal, e.g there was a baby duiker that was taken care of by one of his staff members, where the duiker was fed and even taken home to ensure proper care.	
9.6	SM noted that there are rotten fences posing a threat to the Nature Reserves allowing dogs to enter and injure or kills animals in the reserve. Animals need to be protected from dogs. In one extreme case this year, it was necessary put a dog down that was persistently killing animals in the reserve.	
9.7	At Silverglen Nature Reserve, R500 000 was spent on fencing. A request was made to the public to inform the Natural Resources Division should the fence be broken.	
9.8	SM noted that only two education officers are part of his staff, who mostly educate communities in the urban areas. Most of their work is done in schools but there are plans to expand the education to greater rural areas. The intention is to get staff to focus on rural schools.	
9.8	SM mentioned that there is a project underway with Traditional Healers and the School of Medicine. SM noted that there was concern regarding the conservation of Tribal Land. Added that his division has commenced education of Tribal Leaders on conservation awareness on wetlands. The Tribal Leaders were escorted to a well managed wetland to see what a functioning system should look like. A workshop was held on 2 April 2011, where all stakeholders had the opportunity to present how they were managing their land and identify where they were going wrong. Some solutions were identified but specialist input will be required in the field to assist with the compilation of Environmental Management Plans.	
9.10	SM presented the organogram of his division. Noted that 18 Field Rangers are currently employed.	
9.11	Noted that any input from the public is welcomed.	
10	QUESTIONS	
10.1	JS noted that in 2009, conservancies and other NGOs including Birdlife Africa, WESSA etc entered into an agreement to work with the Parks Department. Queried whether this could be reawakened. SM responded that he gives credit to organisations investing their time and money in conservation efforts. Raised concern that the partnership was not well forged and was not clear. Agreed that this definitely needs to be revived. Added a Senior Manager was soon to be	

	employed who would consider strategic partnerships.	
10.2	JS mentioned that a policy is required around rivers to manage the buffer areas. People's lives are under threat due to animals and criminals being able to escape to rivers and open areas. It was noted that only 18 field rangers are operating and all of them finish at 16:00.	
10.3	JS raised concern that Palmiet Nature reserve was not burned this year. Added that the person who previously managed the reserve used to burn in blocks. The new staff member was not au fait with burning and lost the chameleons as a result. SM responded that it goes back to partnerships and the availability of resources. There needs to be more collaboration between community and field rangers. Noted that Jabulani Khoza is working with the older communities in Hillcrest to manage the Springside Nature Reserve.	
11	UPDATES FROM THE NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUM by Kirstin Williams	
11.1	KW noted that it is the Year of the Museums and proceeded to provide information on the upcoming events set to take place in the following week. These included displays and presentations of the museum's history, slavery, art etc.	
12	GENERAL	
12.1	<p>Bird Life Port Natal and The Bird at COP17</p> <p>AV expressed that the aim of Bird Life Africa was to raise awareness on the birds and the impacts on birds. Noted that it is the year of the Barn Swallow. AV stated that for COP 17, awareness on the impacts of climate change on birds needed to be raised. The intention is to construct a very strange looking statue of a bird that shows the effects of climate change on the physical appearance of the bird, which would be brought about through adaptation. This would be based on the hypothesis that as temperature rises, wings grow longer. The statue would be made of recycled material and would be displayed close the Convention centre. The aim is to raise awareness in a fun manner and for the weird looking bird to raise questions. AV noted that all bird clubs of KwaZulu-Natal are invited to get involved in the project.</p>	
12.2	<p>PRESENTATION – Civil Society Committer for COP 17 by Brian Ashe</p> <p>BA provided information on the civil society committee that was established to prepare for COP 17. This committee is comprised of various organisations, including World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, COSATO etc.</p> <p>The objectives of the committee are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development of an informed civil society that is mobilised, active and can articulate and advocate for climate justice • Minimise climate change through education and mobilisation, using COP 17 as a catalyst 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage lifestyle change, awareness and understanding of climate change in climate justice groups and broader civil society <p>Develop and strengthen the environmental justice movement</p> <p>BA described the actions to be undertaken by the committee, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate Global Day of Action (GDA) on December 3rd • Facilitate international engagement with GDA and climate justice summits • Create and facilitate a physical civil society space during COP17 • Create and facilitate a virtual civil society space prior to COP17 • Facilitate and organise a series of actions leading up to COP17 including : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocacy, pressure and mobilisation for climate justice <p>Raise awareness of COP17 and climate change through media and general public outreach</p> <p>BA described the virtual civil society space, “The Space” as:</p> <p>An open and inclusive venue to facilitate civil society engagement with COP17 and climate justice. Geosphere, represented by Bryan Ashe, will lead coordination for “The Space”. It will include space for caucusing to facilitate inside/outside engagement, conference-type programming, rooms of various sizes for meetings and organisation work, exhibition spaces, arts and music. Venue to be functional from 26th November 2011 to 10 December 2011. The Durban University of Technology (DUT) was identified as the core venue as well as halls and school buildings in the surrounding area. DUT is within walking distance of the UNFCCC venue, near a key public transport node, and has nearby facilities such as a hospital, sports grounds that can be used for events and the Durban Botanical gardens. DUT and its surrounds is a significant historical centre for the anti-apartheid struggle. A Refugee Camp was discussed and possibilities for local traders to set up stalls within ‘The Space.’”</p> <p>BA noted that about R10 million is required and the source of this funding is still unknown. Requested that civil society get involved and welcomed anyone to contact him for further information.</p>	
13	CONCLUSION AND CLOSE OF MEETING	
13.1	<p>RB thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.</p> <p>The next Biodiversity Forum is scheduled for 25 August 2011, at the Paradise Valley Nature Reserve from 9h00 to 12h00.</p>	