

# MINUTES

eThekwini Biodiversity Forum

14 November 2013

9h00 – 12h00

Paradise Valley Nature Reserve



## PRESENT

Arnia van Vuuren	AV	Cllr Gillian Noyce	GN	Nomafu Dlamini	ND
Avrille Coen	AC	Greg Mullins	GM	Nosipho	
Barry Lang	BL	Irene Reid	IR	Ndzimbomvu	NN
Bashashile Thusi	BT	Jabulani Khoza	JK	Nkuli Hadebe	NH
Bheka Memela	BM	Jean Lindsay	JL	Peron Amein	PA
Charissa Jaganath	CJ	Jean Rodel	JR	Rashieda Davids	RD
Clayton Tomson	CT	Jean Senogles	JS	Reshnee Lalla	RL
Clive Walker	CW	Jenny Loughlin	JL	Sade Moneron	SM
Corrinne Winson	CW	Jo Boulle	JB	Rob Jamieson	RJ
Dave Moldenhauer	DM	John Hinck	JH	Sbu Mkhwanazi	SM
Derek Ruiters	DR	Kate Richardson	KR	Stephanie Reynolds	SR
Di Higginson Keith	DH	Katherine Terblanche	KT	Zodwa Msweli	TM
Dina van Niekerk	DvN	Kenneth Mabila	KM	Terry Stewart	TS
Duane Constance	DC	Lesley Frescura	LF	Thami Kunene	TK
Errol Douwes	ED	Lyn Archer	LA	Trafford Petterson	TP
Gillian Noyce	GN	Mark Graham	MG	Warren Friedman	WF
George Victor	GV	Marion Spence	MS	Wendy Wiles	WW
Cllr Geoff Pullan	GP	Mena Nxumalo	MN	Zacharia Mashote	ZM

## APOLOGIES

Cllr Billie Prinsloo, Johann Vermeulen, Kirsten Williams, Leigh Richards, Preshine Govender, Roddy Ward, Suvarna Parbhoo

1.	WELCOME & INTRODUCTION	ACTION
1.1	RD welcomed all and facilitated introductions. She noted that the two presentations that have been arranged for the day were strategically put together as both are talking to the involvement of local communities towards raising environmental awareness and effecting positive change. RD noted that this was meant to motivate forum attendees into taking action and added that while the Biodiversity Forum has proven to be effective in delivering environmental and biodiversity education and information, she hopes that the presentations will inspire attendees to go from learning to doing and hopefully tap into the depth of collaborative resources that are available within the forum.	

2	<b>PRESENTATION: <i>Using Citizen Science to Evaluate the Ecological Integrity of South African Rivers: The Duzi-Umngeni Conservation Trust Study</i>, Dr Mark Graham of Ground Truth</b>	
2.1	<p>MG's presentation provided examples of local citizens using the miniSASS community river health biomonitoring tool within the Umngeni Catchment. This tool allows for river quality data to be captured and uploaded onto the live miniSASS website and database. Through the website, users are able to monitor the changes in river quality within the catchment, with the aim of raising awareness about how different land uses within the catchment can impact the river quality. The miniSASS website was developed through collaboration between GroundTruth and the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA), with seed funding from the Water Research Commission.</p> <p>MG emphasised that environmental awareness can have a profound impact on behaviour. He used an example of his office, at which the installation of photovoltaic cells was resulting in not only a saving of electricity, but a reversal of costs as shown by way of the reduction of the meter reading. By being able to see the reduction in the meter reading, staff have automatically become more vigilant with respect to energy usage and continuously aim to reduce their electricity usage even more to see the effect on the meter reading. MG hopes that the awareness raised through the miniSASS programme will have the same effect and change behaviour for both communities and industries who are affecting river health.</p> <p>The miniSASS website provides a central hub for river health data, supporting materials, instructions, and news of the latest activities that have taken place. It also features the interactive Google Earth map and database, which allows miniSASS users of all ages to explore their catchment, find rivers in their areas and then upload their miniSASS results. Land users such as industries or farmers within the catchment can also use the tool to assess the impacts of their activities on the river environment.</p> <p>MG noted that it is hoped that through citizen science, the national community will upload test results showing river health across Southern Africa.</p> <p><b>For more information or to register on the miniSASS website, go visit <a href="http://www.minisass.org">www.minisass.org</a>.</b></p>	
2.2	<p>CW queried if any training was available to aid users on the miniSASS project. MG responded that training is available, and documents are accessible on the internet that provide the relevant information regarding the miniSASS river evaluation.</p>	
2.3	<p>It was queried how the system pinpoints particular pollution offenders and how those polluters should be reported. MG responded that the data provides localised information on where the 'hotspots' are regarding water degradation. The necessary inferences can be made from there.</p>	
2.4	<p>GA queried with respect to the turbidity test, whether rainfall would affect the measure of the turbidity of the water, and therefore the quality of the water. MG noted that the tests work to establish the quality of water after it has received treatment, and so rainfall will not affect this.</p>	
2.5	<p>DHK queried whether people who are doing the river testing may be at risk of contracting Bilharzia. MG responded that people are advised to wear clothing that may prevent the contraction of Bilharzia, but this is not something that can be totally avoided.</p>	
2.6	<p>DC queried how one would test for algal blooms before they become visible. MG noted in his response that algal blooms are evident in nutrients before they become visible so it is</p>	

	necessary that it is tested for in laboratories. Even in this instance it is possible only to note the presence of it, and not necessarily to measure the extent of it.	
2.7	DR queried how is this project is being advertised. MG noted that it is a new project, so there has been little chance for extensive advocacy up to this point. However, it is being presented at forums where possible, and discussed in educational environments etc.	
2.8	WW noted that apparently, the carbon emissions of the manufacture of the photovoltaic panels outweigh the benefits. She queried if this was, in fact, the case. MG noted that some suppliers adhere to best practices and international standards, in which instance, this is not the case. As long as batteries are not used as backup energy sources, the benefits of using photovoltaic panels should outweigh the costs.	
<b>3</b>	<b>PRESENTATION: <i>Eco-Schools South Africa</i>, Charissa Jaganath of Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA)</b>	
3.1	<p>CJ noted that the WESSA Eco-Schools Programme is an exciting programme that aims to create awareness on various environmental issues with a focus on facilitating action toward environmental sustainability in schools and their surrounding environments. An Eco-School is a school that has made a commitment to continuously improve its environmental performance and engage in environmental learning and management. The programme is active in 51 countries around the world.</p> <p>The Eco-Schools programme was initiated in South Africa in 2003, with WESSA as the implementing agent. To date, over 1200 schools are registered with the programme, of which KwaZulu-Natal has the largest proportion of registered schools in the country, 160 of which CJ works with.</p> <p>There are five Eco-Schools themes offered to schools, namely, 1) Resource Use; 2) Nature and Biodiversity; 3) Local and Global Issues; 4) Healthy Living and 5) Community and Heritage. The theme that each school works towards is selected based on the outcome of an assessment of the needs of the school. Various projects form part of themes, including invasive alien plant removal, recycling, pollution control, food gardening and cultural awareness. The miniSASS programme was also implemented as selected schools. Parents and community members are encouraged to get involved with Eco-Schools activities either through participation or knowledge sharing.</p> <p><b>For more information, contact Charissa Jaganath on 079 304 7669 or coastalkznecoschools@wessa.co.za. Other useful educational resources are available from WESSA Share-Net (<a href="http://www.sharenet.org.za">www.sharenet.org.za</a>).</b></p>	
3.2	A request was made for a list of Eco-schools falling within each area. CJ responded that a list will be available at the beginning of next year for all areas.	CJ
3.3	RD thanked the presenters for their inspiring talks and challenged attendees to get involved with either river quality monitoring or Eco-Schools in their area.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Updates from Natural Resources Division (NRD)</b>	
4.1	SM introduced the newly appointed Manager: Natural Resources, Mr Kenneth Mabila. He mentioned that Mr Mabila has previous experience working at the Bontebok National Park for the South African National Parks (SANPARKS). <b>Mr Mabila will be based at the Westville Office and can be contacted on 031 266 0049.</b>	

	<p>SB provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NRD is battling with land invasion at the Pigeon Valley and Burman Bush Nature Reserves, which is seemly taking place at night. The challenge is that vagrants cannot just be removed as they are protected under law after a being there for a certain time. SM invited stakeholders to participate in NRD's night patrols to prevent vagrants from moving into nature reserves.</li> <li>• Rivers are being negatively impacted by people, who are using them for rituals. Some people are dumping the remains of slaughtered goats in rivers in the Amanzimtoti area. People have also been seen washing tents and marquees in rivers in this area.</li> <li>• Illegal harvesting of Arum lilies is taking place.</li> <li>• There is a major problem of illegal burials at Trenance Park.</li> <li>• Through the Expanded Public Work Programme (EPWP), 50 people will be employed to remove invasive alien plants.</li> <li>• NRD has monitored the quality of streams in rural settlements and found the quality to be extremely poor. Co-ops have been appointed to work on this issue.</li> </ul> <p>SM added that the social ills affecting out natural areas require social interventions. SM has been liaising with the City Manager and other departments to find proactive solutions. eThekweni Municipality Law Enforcement is looking at establishing a task team to deal with similar matters. There are also structures in place to engage with cattle owners in Amanzimtoti. The number of field rangers is also being increased.</p> <p>SM noted that Durban won the Arbour Cities Award for planting large numbers of trees in various places. Planting is done by multiple stakeholders and SM congratulated members of the public and encouraged all to continue this good work.</p>	ALL
4.2	<p>JL noted that indigenous trees are being ring-barked and destroyed and stressed that fines need to be enforced by the Municipality. SM responded that it is a serious concern. Trees are being monitored, but people are destroying indigenous trees illegally, often at night. There is a formal process whereby one can submit an application to remove a tree. Unfortunately the fines are currently too minimal to drive appropriate action so it is necessary to identify indigenous trees and their importance. RJ mentioned a project that is producing tree labels at low costs.</p> <p>RD to circulate the relevant municipal tree planting and removal policy.</p>	RD
4.3	<p>RD stated that issues relating to removal of indigenous trees could be addressed through municipal By-laws and queried if this was possible. TP responded that the Municipality is currently looking at tenders to draft the By-law and could include a hefty fine for illegal removal of trees. In the interim, a Directive may be issued in terms of the Environmental Conservation Act (73 of 1989) to deal with this issue.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Updates from Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department (EPCPD)</b>	
5.1	<p>DR reported that the public participation process for the Roosfontein Nature Reserve proclamation will commence in January 2014. For the remaining nine reserves, progress has been made with the finalisation of zonation plans and the management plans will be finalised in January 2014. There are, however, a few issues that need to be resolved with respect to reserve boundaries of two nature reserves.</p>	
5.2	<p>RD provided the following updates on the Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct (GGEP) management, on behalf of Lyle Ground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All grassland management burns are complete with resultant good flowering during the spring season. A number of uncommon species were found.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been an increase in poaching events and weekend patrols are therefore being considered, based on the outcomes of an assessment of the associated financial implications.</li> </ul>	
5.3	<p>BM informed attendees that the EPCPD is currently trying to establish a Biodiversity Stewardship programme. He added that a Stewardship Task Team, comprising members of all the branches of the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department, has been set up. The task team has outlined goals and objectives for stewardship and it is in the process of identifying potential incentives and benefits for both formal and traditional owned municipal areas. Positive correspondence, centring on partnerships, has begun with the tribal authorities and Ingonyama Trust Board, an area of the eThekweni Municipality often overlooked in formal planning initiatives. A framework implementation plan is currently in draft and will be completed in the new financial year.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>General</b>	
7.1	<p>JT informed attendees that she has the frog posters and stickers available for purchase at R35 and R15 each respectively. Proceeds of the sales will go to the Endangered Wildlife Trust Threatened Amphibian programme.</p>	
7.2	<p>JL invited attendees to the Marion Hill Landfill Conservancy Spring Walk on Saturday, 19 November and Frog Evening on Saturday, 7 December.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Meeting closure</b>	
8.1	<p>RD thanked all for attending and noted that the dates for the 2014 Biodiversity Forums will be circulated in January 2014.</p>	