

WESSA EASTERN PROVINCE

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME

April - June 2012 Report



GOAL

A conservation area system representative of all habitats and ecological processes in the south-eastern region of South Africa is secured and supported by a capacitated civil society.

AIM

To promote and make substantive contributions to the conservation of the eastern Cape Floral Kingdom, eastern Succulent Karoo and Maputaland-Pondoland Hotspots, through strategic conservation and environmental education interventions.

OBJECTIVES

- To support the formulation and implementation of feasible conservation strategies;
- To promote private sector and community conservation;
- Leading and supporting educational and promotional drives that are aimed at raising public awareness of biodiversity conservation;
- To engage decision-making processes in support of improved sustainability practices.

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

Introduction

WESSA EP is involved in a diverse range of conservation issues and projects with WESSA's core focus areas guiding our mandate and involvement. Activities can be broadly categorised under the following areas: Sustainable Development, Waste Management, Community-based Conservation, Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Education.

WESSA EP is staffed by regional manager Prof Martheanne Finne more, senior conservation officer Morgan Griffiths, senior environmental education officers Pearl Jonas and Luthando Gwoxa, biodiversity conservation officer Clayton Weatherall-Thomas, permaculture trainers Jakki Botha and Nomonde Ntsundwana. They are all supported by office manager Cheryl Lipman.

Sustainable Development

Coega Environmental Monitoring Committee

The contentious Open Space Management Plan (OSMP), which delineates the developable and conservation areas, is still being negotiated. We are concerned about the coastal setback line and possible location of transport lines and factories in the primary dune field. This is a difficult issue as there are large disturbed areas within the dune field (by mining and a failed aquaculture venture) that could realistically be used for mariculture operations, against the need to secure the shifting dune field for ecological process needs. The need for dune protection also needs to be balanced with the need to develop aquaculture facilities to grow fish protein and hence relieve pressure on wildstocks. Morgan met with Coega Development Corporation staff on the OSMP, with a possible solution in site.

Commenting on Development Proposals

A major new shopping mall development has been approved outside of Port Elizabeth. WESSA and other NGOs negotiated on the layout and conservation areas. Once approved by the provincial department of environmental affairs (DEDEAT) the developer applied to have these negotiated issues rescinded, and when DEDEAT refused, the developer then appealed to the MEC. This appeal bid was

not placed in the public domain, nor was the MEC's dismissal of the appeal last year. In March the MEC issued a new appeal decision, upholding this appeal! WESSA is challenging this 2nd appeal decision and the entire appeal process as being *ultra vires*. At stake are various rocky outcrops of very high conservation status and a threat to increase flooding down the Baakens River Valley.

Blue Flag Programme

In March Morgan visited Coffee Bay and Hole-in-the-Wall, finding each has a stunning beach that could easily attain Blue Flag status, with the potential to draw more tourism and hence sustainable economic opportunities. What was truly impressive was how local hotels were actively taking it upon themselves to improve their local coastal environments, particularly with regard to waste management. Morgan also conducted inspections of Robberg 5th Beach, Plett, and Cape St Francis beaches in April.

The WESSA Blue Flag programme is also growing in scope: we are now working with 5 marinas to join the programme, including local Port Alfred marina, to upgrade their facilities and environmental management. The programme is also expanding to include a 4 boat-based shark and whale watching operators, including one of the largest operators in Cape Town and even a kayak-operator at Hermanus. We have developed a significant partnership with one of these shark tours, the Dyer Island Conservation Trust; who we are partnering with to install fishing-line bins along the coastline. These new initiatives were discussed at the BF National Workshop in Hermanus over late May. And finally, Morgan is working to get his yacht, *Fling*, based at Algoa Bay Yacht Club accredited as the first Blue Flag yacht in the country.



USAID Stepping up to Sustainability' Programme

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development, the goal of this 2012 phase of the three year programme is to 1) put into practice the lifestyle choices WESSA is advocating all need to make; 2) establish additional Sustainability Commons, which offer public access to sustainable practices and technologies, and 3) to deliver various presentations, workshops and courses which promote sustainable lifestyle changes.

Seyisi Permaculture Course

We situated our 2nd permaculture course at the Seyisi Primary School grounds. Some 40 learners, parents and educators were invited to participate in this programme, with the school having allocated a large unused portion of its grounds for this project. Our staff and associates, Pearl, Luthand, Jakki and Nomonde, conducted practical lessons in soil preparation, companion planting garden bed designs & mulching, to name but few aspects. Growth returns have been low, as we are moving into the winter season, but winter vegetables were planted and the good rains have been helping.



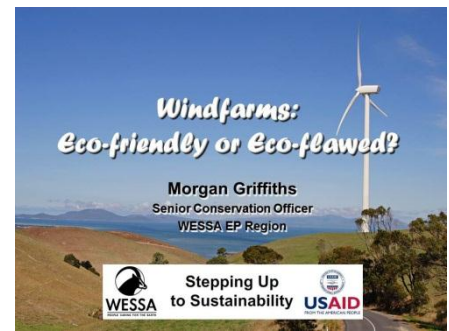
In April, about 55 indigenous trees were donated to the school by Food and Trees for Africa. The neighbouring schools and the community benefited. This initiative created a job opportunity for the community of Kwa-Zakhele. Some of the trees were planted around the fence and next to the garden. The Eastern Cape Department of agriculture donated sweet potato seedling. The school invited other neighbouring schools, who also received seedlings to plant back at their schools. The school also visited SAMREC during wetlands day celebration.

Wind Energy Presentation

On the 9 May, Morgan gave a presentation to over 120 grade 5 Triumph Primary learners. The presentation looked at the pros and cons of wind-energy production, as well as the need for green energy production over fossil fuel sources and developing sustainable lifestyle practices. The

presentation fitted into the grade's curriculum for this year. What was startling to come out of engaging with these pupils was:

- 1) Their lack of knowledge as to where our energy comes from, and the environmental problems resulting from its production.
- 2) How common cellphone use is even at this age-group, with at least 30% having personally two or more cellphones. Cellphone use creates an energy demand, but also an opportunity for us to utilise this technology for communicating and education this new generation.



Wind Farm Workshop

This workshop was held in Blue Horizon Bay on 25 April 2012, and was a collaboration with Afri-Coast Engineers and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Forty-three people attended the workshop. These included educators, learners from the High Schools' Eco-Clubs and members from the Nelson Mandela Bay Transition Network.

Morgan set the scene relating to the challenges facing energy capacity generation in South Africa. He then focused on current debates around the pro's and con's of harnessing wind energy through establishment of Wind Farms. Some of the pro's were

that Wind Farms create green jobs, help develop skills and research and produce smaller carbon emissions than coal fired power stations. The cons were however that they created relatively fewer jobs when compared to mining activities for coal, may have a large visual impact which may be objected to (such as by game farm owners) and may have impacts on bats and birds. The audience were very interested to hear about the NIMBY phenomenon: "not-in-my-backyard" response against development proposals. It was noted that the local community of Blue Horizon Bay, while very committed to sustainable living practices as evidenced by their recycling project, were themselves very opposed to the siting of the Wind Farm on the hill near their homes.

Donald McGillivray from Afri-Coast presented why MetroWind is wanting to established a wind farm with 9 turbines at Blue Horizon Bay. The site selected was on the windy headland above the hall where we held the workshop. He outlined how the site was chosen through applying various criteria, such as wind speed, presence of critical flora and fauna in the area, existing land usage, possible impact on radar at the airport, zoning implications and many other factors. He noted that agricultural usage was compatible with wind turbines. He gave many technical facts about wind turbines which the learners were most interested in and asked lots of questions about.



These presentations were both informative and gave the attendees greater understanding about wind farms; and how by changing to the wind energy, this would be cheaper than the power generated by the new coal-fired power stations. In addition, the workshop focussed on why it is important to save energy at homes, schools and at workplaces. Janet Cherry from NMMU outlined in her presentation about how the MetroWind Wind Farm will be assisting the poorer communities that were adjacent to the site. A Sustainable Living Project was currently being planned with community input driving the design process including the building of sustainable human settlements and establishment of permaculture gardens.

The educators received relevant lesson plans and climate change puzzles to take back to their respective schools to use for teaching and learning. As part of the USAID Stepping up to Sustainability Programme, all participants were invited to complete the Change Choice questionnaire and write about a change they were prepared to make to save energy in their homes and schools. Don McGillivray stopped by the WESSA offices to show his commitment to reducing energy usage by riding an electric bicycle, rather than using a car.



Waste Management Issues

Aloes Wastesite Environmental Monitoring Committee

Nothing to report.

The Waste Trade Project

WESSA EP has twinned with the Waste Trade Company that offers a recycling facility to a number of our Eco-Schools. The WTC provides the schools with receptacles and pays the schools for the waste collected. This service has been offered to all our Eco-Schools.

Biodiversity Conservation

Maputo-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot Programme & the NMB Urban Conservation Programme

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is funding a two year partnership programme of the NMBM, WESSA and CREW (Custodians of Rare & Endangered Wildflowers). The Nelson Mandela Bay Urban Conservation Programme (NMBUCP) aims to capacitate civil society to support government's conservation activities by:

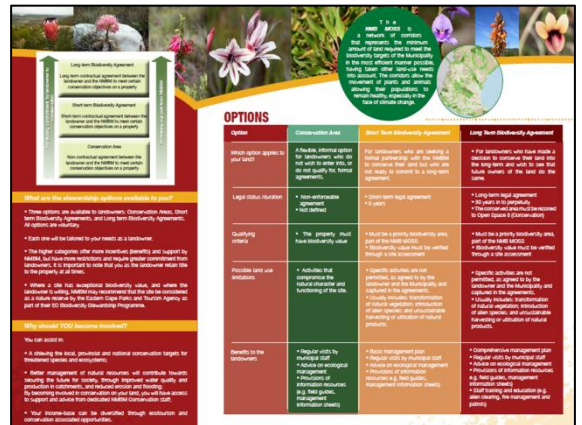
- Train and capacitate environmental NGOs and civil society members;
- Test pilot biodiversity stewardship agreements with selected landowners (NMB Biodiversity Stewardship Programme);
- Refine the community-conservation model for urban conservation areas (as the Baakens Valley Community Partnership - BVCP) , with an emphasis on developing deprived communities

It is very encouraging seeing more municipal staff active in the programme and being capacitated in the two approaches. We are still defining both municipal and civil society roles and responsibilities as the programme is being implemented and is evolving. The extent to which these approaches are being adopted into municipal operations is happening at a very slow pace as these approaches are new to the operational team. Initially considered by municipal staff as being outside of their operational functions, given that these approaches are not being implemented simultaneously by other conservation operational teams. This is complicated by a practice that has developed over time, of responding to community complaints. This reactive way of working has had a constraining influence on a more proactive approach. Community-based conservation approaches require a different skill set to how conservation officials have been trained. We anticipate however that institutionalisation will happen at a faster pace as conservation officials acquire the skill set as required within these approaches.

Biodiversity Stewardship Programme

Clayton and the NMBM stewardship officers have completed seven property assessments, with another four targeted. The benefits and extension services that will be offered to landowners by NMBM through the BSP have been determined, although added benefits are being explored. In particular, a relationship with the Working for Water programme is seen as important, as it is a government programme that clears invasive plant species, and this is the benefit that most landowners seek, and which the NMBM largely lacks budget for. The BSP Technical Task Team, which includes various provincial conservation authorities and the NMMU, met to decide which biodiversity stewardship category the properties qualify for. This allows the biodiversity stewardship process to continue into the next phase, namely landowner negotiations, as well as the drawing up of management plans for these properties. Of the five properties, four qualified for long-term biodiversity agreement, while the one qualified for nature reserve status, a special case for the NMBM BSP, as the property is over 3 000 ha, extends out of the NMBM, and the landowner requested to be a nature reserve. While the landowner will sign a biodiversity stewardship agreement with the province, the metro (NMBM) will be the management authority

Information pamphlets and other resource materials for local landowners have been designed. A brochure (pictured right) that introduces the programme is complete, as well as a comprehensive summary of the BSP, designed for larger corporate organisations. A BSP operations handbook for the metro staff involved in the programme has been finished.



The expected taxonomic training that was meant to be led by Tony Dold unfortunately did not take place due to incremental weather. However, the NMBM Stewardship Officer and two CREW volunteers were sent on a formal taxonomic course that deals with identifying and drawing Fynbos plant families. This should greatly benefit both organisations. Taxonomic training will now be done by the programme, in partnership with Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan University, on a quarterly basis. CREW has been involved in a number of assessments, particularly the Yellowwoods property that spans over 3 000 ha, and will be visited numerous times to completely identify all the threatened species on the property.

Community-based Conservation

There are encouraging numbers of individuals, conservancies and friends groups operating in our province, where volunteers and paid staff are working diligently to address local concerns and interests. WESSA EP tries to assist them to bring about local change. We also manage a few programmes, in cooperation with various conservation and community bodies.

Baakens Valley Community Partnership

WESSA in partnership with the NMBM and other stakeholders, have developed the BVCP, which sets out to build the practice of growing the Baakens Valley (BV) as a safe community resource and functional ecological corridor, by strengthening community participation, afford socio-economic opportunities to those that need it most, demonstrate political relevance, increasing environmental education opportunities, expanding and consolidating the protected area network and growing tourism opportunities.

Community Building:

The project team continues to encourage the participation of the Ubuntu Environmental Trust, the Walmer Youth Development Forum and church groups in the partnership. In the last quarter we have supported their inclusion in planning meetings of SPAR Baakens Valley Ride & Walk and the Trail Adventures trail runs), encouraged their participation in the event and linked them to capacity building and income generation opportunities linked to the event. We supported



an initiative by the Walmer Ubuntu Environmental Trust and the Walmer Youth Forum in the planning and hosting of a 'Freedom Day Picnic in the Park', in celebration of our National Freedom Day (27 April). It aimed to draw together different sectors of society, by celebrating our cultural and environmental heritage through music in the beautiful surrounds of Settlers Park. The weather held off and the sun came out over a crowd of 163 people. The Rev Zolile Dayimani carried the day, which show-cased the Walmer Family Church Gospel Choir, stirring poetry reading, energetic Walmer kwaito (rap) groups and the Walmer Renaissance Dance Troupe. The picnickers were even treated to the delightful scene of two toddlers trying to join in with the dance troupe! The real purpose of celebrating Freedom Day was clearly evident as the power of music created a tangible sense of community spirit and togetherness.

We also worked closely with another group of stakeholders that collaborate on the 'Save our Valley' Project. This is a community inspired fund-raising project, centred around the Lion Roars Foundation (of a private game and hospitality company); aimed through hosting fun sporting events to raise funds that will benefit public use and enjoyment of the valley. Funds raised previously have helped equip the rangers and have paid for alien invasive plant removal to improve security in the valley. These partners (Lion Roars Foundation, FatTracks MTBike Club, Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism and the BVPT.) are very different from the township groups in that they are skilled individuals with access to financial resources. Our approach with this group is very different from the way in which we work with the community organisations from Walmer Township. We encouraged them to be inclusive of poorer communities, both



in terms of involving the Walmer Youth Forum in the planning and hosting of the events and secondly, by identifying development teams that can participate in the event. We also encouraged them to actively seek skills development and temporary employments opportunities for these youths. This partnership allows for the strengthening of relationships between private partners and the municipality. The event, the SPAR Baakens Valley Ride & Walk, was a major event and required much of the BVCP team's time commitments over May and June to plan and prepare for, especially as rain postponed the event twice. Held on Sunday 24th June, a large group of enthusiastic mountain-bikers, walkers, children and dogs came together at Dodds Farm to enjoy two muddy bike rides and a guided walk through the heart of the Baakens Valley green belt.

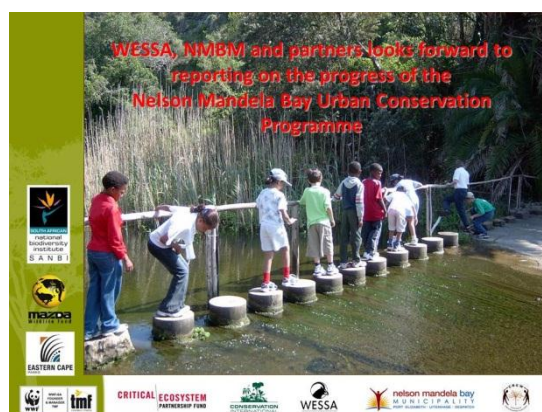
Though heavy rains had washed aside the bridges on Saturday night, the Baakens Valley Rangers were out early and heroically were able to dig some of them out of the cold mud and re-lay them. The event succeeded in exposing the natural wonders of the Valley to many first-time visitors; with the many children being suitably impressed by the sight of Gall Wasp larvae wiggling inside growths on the invader wattle plants (the wasps being a biological control agent). The event had a strong community-building focus, with members of the Walmer Youth Forum and West End Scouts getting the opportunity to experience helping run the event. The event raised funds towards upgrading the Guinea-fowl Trail and equipping the Baakens Valley Rangers. A testament to how the corporate community is supporting the security and conservation efforts in the Valley can be seen by the long list of 14 sponsors and contributors.

A number of sporting events were organised by outside parties in the Baakens Valley, with the BVCP facilitating their use of the Valley. These include two competition trail runs down the valley in June and an interschool X-country run. The BVPT, Birdlife Eastern Cape, VoetSek Club, CREW and the Mountain club of SA have all arranged several walks and training events in the Valley over this reporting period. The BVPT aims to facilitate one walk every two months. We are planning further sporting events, guided walks and other activities throughout the remainder of the year. A major adventure-based team run is planned for September. All these events serve to promote the Valley and the highlight the partnerships that seek to contribute towards its sustainability.

Community participation and capacity building are crucial outcomes of this programme. From our BVCP Champions Forum held in November, we have been attempting to action the many small working groups and sought-after activities. In June we held our second Champions Forum, and we have been

encouraged by turnout of existing and new participating groups and individuals. After a fun drumming session to encourage a sense of unity, co-operation and fun, the Forum examined our progress over last six months and then conceptualised activities and response actions for the next six months.

Whilst the partnership endeavours to be inclusive of politicians in this community development, we hope to gain political support of the project through demonstrating the unique role that nature conservation can play in social upliftment. In early July the partnership was invited to present at the NMBM's Public Health Standing Committee. This presented the partnership with a unique opportunity to showcase the BVCP's goals and objectives, to highlight how the programme aligns with the social goals of the city and most importantly gave the team an opportunity to showcase the valley as a community and thus city asset.



Security:

This period has been free of reported criminal incidences. Our Baakens Valley Ranger Programme has stabilized after the Coca-Cola Fortune Company started a year-long sponsorship of the rangers. This has allowed us to field a larger contingent of rangers – now up to eight rangers. The Walk Safe Programme continues with the SA Police Service, private security companies (ADT, Atlas and Chubb) and other anti-crime organisations (I-PATROL, Crime Sector Community Forums and Business Against Crime) conducting day and night patrols into road-accessible areas of the valley. The BVCP attends the monthly GOCOC meetings (town safety and security committee), which allows us to share information and collaborate with the security agencies.

Environmental Education Activities:

We enjoyed eight school group visits into the Valley this period, with a number of Sunday School classes also visiting the valley over the weekends, going on nature trails guided by the Baakens Valley rangers.

We have a number of university architecture and design students using the Baakens Valley as a model for development or design projects, which we have facilitated. We are encouraged by the upsurge in school visits, as it signals that teachers and parents perceive that our security interventions are working to make the Baakens Valley safer.



Infrastructure & Reserve Management:

Sewerage spills in sections of the pipelines in the Sunridge area were reported by local residents. With a strong relationship having been formed with the NMBM's Infrastructure and Engineering Department (I&E Dept) we have noted an improvement in response times to reported spills and water leaks. We partnered with NMBM's Water and Sanitation Department in the development of an education campaign regarding sanitation and the environment. It was decided that the NMBM's THONSI Water Conservation Campaign will be extended to include messaging around the environment and sanitation. Several promotional materials are planned as part of the campaign. These include an introductory brochure, bookmark, fridge magnet, sticker and a pamphlet illustrating the workings of the sewer system. The schools conducting recent water quality studies in the lower reaches of the Baakens River have typically been elucidating that the river is in a slightly polluted to moderately healthy state – indicating that the efforts to repair the spills have lowered the pollution state of the river.

Steff Schenk's community group (Adopt-A-Plot) has expanded their clearing of a forest grove in the Sunridge area, of alien invasive plants (AIPs) and using the cut trees to rebuild two foot bridges. And twice replaced them over this period due to floods washing them away. We have supported the hacks and bridge-building with staff and materials. We are developing a proposal to work with some team-building companies and engineering firms to build bridges that can lie above the flood zone, using alien trees for materials.

Volunteer community group: profiling the Baakens Buddies

On Saturday 2 June a small team of 4 adult and two teenage Sunridge volunteers, led by Steff Schenk, rebuild the two bridges over the Baakens River below the Sunridge NGK church. They were assisted by two members of the Walmer Youth Forum and Morgan. The two bridges had been washed away in March and needed to be rebuilt for the up-coming SPAR Baakens Valley Ride & Walk event. We needed to build them strong enough to carry numerous mountain-bikers and high enough to escape most of the flood events. We firstly tried dropping two massive 30m-tall bluegum trees over the river to form the bridges – but they snapped under their own weight! We then cut small trees and rebuilt the bridges in the existing style, though having raised them on large trunk sections for height. Over 270 1m gum-poles had to be cut from amongst the alien bluegum forest and then nailed down –well over 600 nails hammered in! We hope they survive the rains!



Communications, Publicity and Tourism Promotions:

BVCP continues to use our Facebook page as an effective means of communicating and sharing information between the Champions, the BVCP staff team and the general public. It is particularly useful of announcing events. We have also conducted a letter drop to residences alongside the Valley, informing them of this programme and encouraging their participation. We were also able to publish articles on the success of the Freedom Day Picnic and the Spar Baakens Valley Ride & Walk in the regional newspaper. Morgan was also able to give short interviews on the events and the work of the BVCP on a local radio (BayFM) and a TV station (BayTV).

Baakens River Valley Rangers Project

To promote appreciation and use of the Valley, the BVCP is working hard to improving visitor safety. This includes the training and deployment of five Baakens Valley rangers, who are funded by the Coca-Cola Fortune company, as one of three projects under the Coca-Cola Fortune-WESSA National Water Security Programme. Over this quarter the rangers were:

- Patrolling the Valley, making their returned presence felt.
- The BVPT, Birdlife Eastern Cape, VoetSek Club, Wednesday Walkers Club, CREW and the Mountain club of SA have all arranged several walks and training events in the Valley over this reporting period, with the rangers escorting most of these events.
- Escorting school groups visiting to undertake river ecology or other studies in the Valley: The rangers' abilities in guiding these groups have improved through involving them in the formal school visit and at our public events. They have also received training on the "Spirit of the Wild" Course to improve their ability to communicate to visitor groups.



- Checking on sewerage pipeline leaks.
 - Guarding the Tuesday Congregational Church of Nigeria prayer services held every week in Settlers Park. The rangers haven't needed to guard the bi-monthly Karate training events at the park!
- Reporting on faunal sightings: there have been a number of large raptor sightings, including a Black Snake eagle and African Crowned eagles



- Dealing with incidents of crime:
 - 1) Locating illegal rubbish dumping sites.

- 2) Investigating reported incidents of snaring and deliberate poisonings of guinea-fowl.
- 3) Warning persons found poaching flowers or medical plants in the Valley, such as the ones Willy is pointing out.
- 4) Various bush-dweller nests cleared from. This work normally involves much cleaning up of rubbish! The rangers also worked with community activists in the Karisma area, to clear up an illegal dumping site



- Helping volunteers build bridges over the Baakens River, as well as clearing alien invasive plants in preparation for the SPAR Baakens Valley Ride & Walk.



- Assisting in marshalling and security for the two trail runs and MTBike races down the valley in June, and an interschool X-country run in May.
- Assisting in security and guiding the 163 people attending the Freedom Day Picnic on 27 April and the ca 250 family walkers at the Take Back Our City Picnickers event in Settlers Park on 3 June.

Environmental Education Projects

The Mazda vehicle is also been extensively used by our EE staff, in their servicing of our Eco-Schools, in Stepping Up to Sustainability Programme, the ABB, Algorax/Orien and Coca-Cola Fortune Eco-Schools, Community-Garden Projects and the nature trails. WESSA EP work closely with the NMBM, Algoa Bus Company, Zwartkops Conservancy, DWA, ECPBTA, SANParks, the Wilderness Foundation and the Born Free Foundation in carrying out these activities.

Eco-Schools Programme

The region has 30 schools registered in 2012. Of these, 19 are directly supported by Pearl and Luthando, with coordinators from SANParks, Born-Free Foundation, Ndlambe Municipality and independent schools making up the rest this programme continues to grow with schools in the Graaff-Reinett wishing to join in. The Mazda vehicle is critical for these schools' visits. Twenty-three of these schools are covered with funding by ABB, Algorax/Orion and Coca-Cola Fortune. The Algoa Bus Company continues to provide buses to transport learners on field trips to various natural habitats around Nelson Mandela Bay. We work in partnership with the Born-Free Foundation, SAMREC, Wilderness Foundation and the Zwartkops Conservancy in offering trail and field studies.

The Thomson Trading company donated two water tanks through the Sunrise Rotary Club to two Eco-Schools, namely Mzimhlophe in Zwide and Kwa-Ford Primary School in New Brighton. Each received a 5000 litre tank, with the stands and gutters installed by WESSA. Rain water harvesting is very important for schools and homes because water is a scarce resource that we need to conserve. The tanks will assist with the schools' food gardens, for irrigating the vegetables grown for their feeding schemes.



Mzimhlophe Principal receiving tank



Kwa-Ford learners happy with their new tank

Uitenhage High Visit to the South African Marine Rehabilitation Centre

About 60 learners from Uitenhage High visited SAMREC. They enjoyed a very informative lesson. The learners even conducted a beach clean-up while they were identifying birds. This was an excellent exercise, with one of the learners saying that they did not know many of the birds and what they feed on. SAMREC is in constant need of towels for cleaning oiled penguins, and the learners donated about 28 towels to SAMREC.

The beach clean-up exercise has helped the learners with their school recycling project, with the learners taking the collected cans and bottles back to school for the recycling project. The learners were also taught about how pollution affects marine life and our beaches. Eddie Moleko from SAMREC showed the learners many pictures of how litter pollutes the ocean and how long different types of litter take to degrade under water. For example an aluminium can is estimated to take between 80 to 200 years to completely degrade, glass bottles about 1000,000 years.



Community News

WESSA was invited by the Ward 26 Councillor in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, to investigate ways in which to empower the youth of the Zwide Community about how they can start their own businesses. One of the focus areas of the Councillor is environment and the jobs that can be created. Luthando shared his knowledge with a large group of youth about recycling as a means of starting a business. He advised them to form groups to establish Buy-back centres. It was also advised to the older people to start community food gardens and back-yard food gardens. He also demonstrated to them how they could save expensive electricity by using wonder-cookers. This is a sustainable way of saving energy as we the country is facing energy crisis.

The Councillor mentioned that a local wetland was in need of care from the local community. Pearl gave a community presentation about the importance of Wetlands, and how they provide ecosystems services to local communities. Pearl explained to the community that Wetlands can create jobs and recreational and educational opportunities.

Masifundisane Primary Field Trip

We conduct school field trips most Wednesdays over school term times, in partnership with the Swartkops Conservancy, SAMREC and the Algoa Bus Company. We undertake lessons for groups of up to 60 learners along two trails: namely the Aloe Trail (Aloe Nature Reserve) and Flamingo Trail (Flamingo Nature Reserve). We also take the learners to the Swartkops Estuary and Motherwell Storm

Water Canal is the place to see how the pollution enters the estuary. The learners do appreciate the outdoor exposure because they can feel and touch some of the plants such as Spekboom, Sosatie and Sausage plants; and organisms such as prawns and crabs. These lessons also dealt with climate change and global warming, and how Spekboom can help to absorb CO₂. WESSA and Zwartkops Conservancy compiled a booklet called Swartkops Field Guide. This field guide is given to the educators and as spot prizes for learners.

Celebrating International Biodiversity Day in Hopewell Reserve

The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) was proclaimed by the United Nations on May 22, to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. To celebrate Biodiversity Day, Luthando and Clayton took 26 learners from Molly Blackburn High School to Hopewell Private Nature Reserve, where they hiked 8 kilometres through the Thicket! Accompanied by two teachers and Mfuneko Mzongwana, one of the rangers at Hopewell, the children were taught about what biodiversity is, and how it relates directly and indirectly to us as people and users of biodiversity. The group walked on the trail through the thicket vegetation that linked with the previously taught curriculum on biome identification. The thicket biome vegetation was identified and described, including the properties of the spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*), aloes, bobbejaan se toontjies (*Senecio radicans*) and pigs ear (*Cotyledon velutina*). The learners were delighted by sightings of sunbirds on the aloes and the monkeys enjoying the fruits of the Gwarri tree. Some buck spoor were followed, and very basic tracking skills were demonstrated. Learners were particularly interested in the traditional uses of medicinal plants such as mphepho (*Helichrysum* spp.), and this is where the learners and teachers taught the WESSA staff a thing or two, including the properties of plants such "umlomo mmandi" to attract girlfriends, which resulted in lots of laughs! A good time was had by all!



ACHIEVEMENTS

- The growth of the Blue Flag Programme to include marinas and boats.
- The success of the permaculture garden training under the USAID Stepping Up to sustainability programme.
- The success of the Freedom Day picnic in the Park and the SPAR Baakens Valley Walk & Ride Event.
- The growing corporate sponsorship of environmental education projects.
- We have been informed that our programme proposal to provincial government to create 43 'green jobs' has been successfully in progressing to the final round of evaluations. We are waiting for final approval of this R8.5 million programme for green job creation and water conservation education.

MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

Electronic media

Martheanne was interviewed on Kingfisher FM on World Environment Day about our activities.

Morgan presented on the Baakens Valley Community Partnership programme on BayTV.

Pearl and Luthando presented on waste management issues on a SABC Radio talkshow.

Printed media

Nothing in this quarter.



CONTACT DETAILS OF PROJECT EXECUTANT

Morgan Griffiths
Senior Conservation Officer

Martheanne Finnemore
Regional Manager



WESSA Eastern Province Region
2 b Lawrence Street, Central Hill, 6001,
PO Box 12444, Centrahil, 6006, Port Elizabeth
Tel: +27 (0)41 585 9606/1157
Fax: +27 (0)86 614 9701
E-mail: morgan@wessaep.co.za