



WATERBERG NATURE CONSERVANCY

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Date 17th November 2011 * Venue: Rivier Oord, Vaalwater

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman, John Miller, welcomed all those present and thanked everyone for making the effort to attend this AGM. He also welcomed our guest speaker, Maylene Broderick.

Attendance: 35 people attended and 12 apologies were received.

2. Confirmation of previous minutes – (8th September 2010)

The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of proceedings.
There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

3. Guest Speaker – Maylene Broderick – Head of the Department LEDET

Vision for the Waterberg, including questions such as what is LEDET's role in the following aspects of Waterberg life?

Prospecting Rights applications; Invasion of alien plant species; Pollution of our rivers; Overgrazing, erosion and miss-use of land; Prevention of Species extinction; Residential tourism developments; The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve; Skills development and job creation; Promotion of the Waterberg as a tourist destination

Open discussion – questions, ideas, concerns, issues.

Maylene thanked John for the opportunity to speak to the WNC members. Without the help and input from the people in the ground, LEDET cannot be successful.

LEDET supports the following processes:

- Nomination of Waterberg Biosphere Reserve
- Waterberg district EMF (Environmental Management Framework)
- Waterberg BR management plan linked to EMF
- Waterberg Meander Route project
- Provincial MaB forum for biospheres
- Sustainable community projects – environmental awareness (tree planting and cleaning campaigns)
- Always funded logistics for stakeholders meetings
- Just finalized MoA between LEDET and district municipality in support of WRB
- Busy compiling the 10 year review report of WBR (2001 – 2011) to UNESCO

The role of the government in management of Biospheres (BR):

1. National level

- Provide for BR in national legislation and enforce international & national legislation and strategies

- Monitor e implementation of the MaB programme
 - Report to UNESCO on the implementation of the MaB program in RSA
 - Establish a National MaB Committee
 - 2. Provincial – **LEDET falls under the provincial leg**
 - Provide for BR principles in provincial legislation & enforce legislation and strategies
 - Ensure LEGDP compatibility
 - Provincial Parks to include BR objectives in management plans for Reserves
 - Ensure that biosphere reserve management plans are in place
 - Review BR every 10 years
 - Take part in intergovernmental events
 - Provide financial resources for provincial campaigns
 - Establish a provincial BR forum
 - 3. District and Local
 - Make human and financial resources available for management duties
 - Include BR principles in IDP and SDF
 - Submit Annual report to Provincial department
 - Review every 5 years
 - Take part in intergovernmental and BR events
 - Promote BR principles
 - Implement BR principles through municipal functions
- **Industries discharges and pollution to river systems**
 - The Department of Water Affairs is the custodian of South Africa's water resources. Part its mission is to maintain the fitness-for-use of water on a sustained basis. The concept of fitness for use is therefore central to water quality management.
 - Discharge of industrial effluent is controlled by either the local authorities or DWA
 - The onus to ensure pollution does not occur is placed on the owner / polluter
 - **Wastewater management**
 - LEDET has developed a status quo for all wastewater treatment facilities in the Province
 - The status quo will assist in provincial waste management planning as well as implementation of Section 60 through 64 of the National Environmental Management: Waste Act, 2008 (Act 59 of 2008) on Waste Information System
 - **Waste Oil Generators**
 - The Department is currently embarking on a program for identifying waste oil generators in the Province with the objective to establish a status quo on quantities and management procedures for these generators

Pollution to river Systems

What can stakeholders do?

- Acquire information
- Eliminate serious impacts on the river systems
- Limit fishing to the use of rods
- Sustainable land use practices
- Adhere to legislation and regulations
- No dumping in the rivers
- Improve efficiency of sewage treatment plants

Challenges

- Pollution control
- Siltation – poor land use management
- Sand mining in rivers
- Water abstraction
- Limited resources to monitor
- Developmental needs
- Poor understanding
- Re-channeling
- Alien introductions and invasive plants

Achievements

- Completed surveys of all the perennial rivers in Limpopo
- Recently completed follow-up surveys in the Lephalale, Mokolo and Matlabas
- Currently a survey being done on the Crocodile West / Marico catchment
- Planned – a State of Rivers report for the various rivers

While LEDET is responsible for the monitoring of the ecological health of the rivers, the Department of Water Affairs is responsible for water quality and supply. The two departments conduct surveys together in Limpopo.

Rivers – LEDET's legal mandate

- NEMBA – monitor and report on the State of the Environment on a regular basis
- Conduct river surveys and determine the ecological status of these river
- The surveys cover the fish, macro invertebrates, geomorphology and habitat quality

Invasive Alien Species

- PAST: natural barriers of oceans, mountains, rivers and desert provided the isolation essential for unique species and ecosystems to evolve
- CURRENT: barriers have been rendered ineffective by major global forces that combined to help alien species travel vast distances to new habitats and become alien invasive species.
- FACTORS: globalization, growth in the volume of trade and tourism, free trade, custom and quarantine practices developed earlier time to guard against human and economic diseases and pests are often inadequate safeguards against species that threaten native biodiversity.
- Impacts are immense, insidious and usually irreversible
- Invasive alien species pose significant threats to human livelihoods, economic development and biodiversity
- These threats are likely to be exacerbated by climate change as environments become less hospitable for indigenous species
- Invasive alien species are believed to be the second most significant cause of species loss after habitat destruction and thus their treat to biodiversity needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency

What need to be done?

- Government
 - o Do case studies, asses the status and trends
 - o Develop measures to mitigate and regulate
 - o Development of mechanisms for trans-boundary, regional and multilateral cooperation

- Eradication programs
- Development of education, training and public awareness measures
- Public
 - Obtain information
 - Comply to legislation
 - Assess status on land
 - Implement eradication of aliens

What should stakeholders do?

- Acquire knowledge
- Consult experts prior to any introductions of species
- Comply with the law and permit conditions
- Report environmental crime
- Liaison and cooperation
- Environmental advocacy

Challenges

- Poverty – stealing
- Blatant environmental crimes
- Domestication of indigenous wildlife
- Introduction of non-indigenous species / alien invasive
- Lack of data and information
- Poor cooperation
- Limited resources

Reponses

- Scientific research
- Aggressive anti-poaching campaigns
- Policy development
- Guidelines and procedures
- Public and private partnerships – Swebeswebe Waterberg Roan Antelope project

Species extinction: LEDET's role and Responsibilities

- Set conservation targets
- Bio monitoring
- Conservation strategies
- Monitor trends
- Environmental education
- Protection – laws – LEMA
- Regulation and enforcement

Challenges

- Climate change and the possible impacts on the area that may lead to environmental degradation. Developed a Climate Change Strategy for the province
- Large number of developments / various land uses for the Waterberg. More effective evaluation of development applications to ensure sustainable land use – implement Conservation Plan (LCP). Ecological advice to be rendered.
- Expansion of mining activities. Ensuring that mining do not take place on protected areas or critical biodiversity areas. Expanding the Protected Area Estate of Limpopo.

- What should stakeholders do? They should participate in relevant forums, take part in consultive processes, gain access to planning documents, request info and support where required – management and decision support level.
- Set objectives for the Biosphere to make it a unique area with explicit sound environmental management values.

Land use: LEDET's role and responsibilities

- Prevent poor land use activities from taking place through;
 - o Conservation planning – LCP
 - o Sustainable land use strategies – MAB's and EMF's
 - o Environmental authorization for development – EIA's
 - o Ecological advice and extension services

Overgrazing, misuse of land & erosion

- Inappropriate use of land = using land for purposes that are not sustainable based on:
 - o Character of the soils and substrate
 - o Ecological sensitivity
 - o Sustainable development opportunities
- Overgrazing and erosion are generally regulated through Agriculture Legislation and implemented by the Department of Agriculture.
- Inappropriate land uses for certain developments are amongst activities regulated through NEMA and the EIA process.

Questions

Q – Enforcement: Developmental proposals get approval with certain conditions regarding the environment. Who is going to enforce these conditions? There seem to be a short fall on enforcing conservation issues.

A – LEDET has a mandate to enforce conditions set out in proposals. There is currently a shortfall of staff in the enforcement units. Previously the environment never been a high priority – this has changed with the new MEC and LEDET are trying to rebuild the enforcement team and train the staff but you also need to have resources to do the work.

Q – Poaching is very serious in the area.

A – From a criminal perspective – not too concerned, but from a fauna and flora perspective very concerned.

Q – What if you neighbor does not allow you access to water?

A – Most of the water licenses are on farms and on private properties. The Minister cannot change that without changing the legislation. Legislation is not always working – the judges and magistrates do not understand the realities – people need to eat and live – LEDET is trying to educate them.

Q – Is there any Category 1 (invasive plants) enforcement officers?

A – Yes – please contact Maylene directly for the name of the enforcement officer.

Q – What is the future of the Bakenberg community? This is very poor community – is there a plan for these people?

A – We should not look at Bakenberg in isolation. Various projects within the Biosphere have been identified – a number of projects have been put together but there is no coordinated effort at the moment to put money together for projects. More mining houses are being approached to get involved as well.

Communities cannot come year after year for grants – there must be a start date and end date for assistance. We are a welfare state at the moment and this need to change to a developmental state.

Q – The permit system is very complicated – what is being done to simplify the system?

A – The permit system is being automated, but with a lot of problems. At the moment looking at increasing the conditions and will become more onerous. We are aware that there are problems and is busy working on a National system – will be rolled out throughout the year – permits in all provinces will be the same.

Q – What about tourism?

A – Tourism jobs are more sustainable than mining jobs. The province should look at a brand and get more involved with the tour operators.

Q – Has the EMF been established? How can we make sure that the Waterberg plan does not fall away?

A – The Conservation Plan is now in place and can now push for the Management Plan

Q – Skills training – money is not available – why?

A – The application process is very onerous. The various parties need to sit down together and discuss the projects in mind and who is responsible for what. This needs to be done in partnership with LEDET.

Q – When would be the appropriate time to get all the stakeholders together? There seem to be a sense of hopelessness within the community and a lack of implementation of projects.

A – LEDET is always open for meetings with stakeholders – this should be arranged sooner than later. Other staff is also available for meetings and queries. Implementation of new projects is on the 1st of April and talks should start before the end of the year or very early in January 2012.

Q – Land claims – had a portion successfully claimed and is renting the property from the new owners. There are however still 4 lodges standing empty. Who can we talk to for assistance to get these lodges running again?

A – LEDET will provide a list of contacts – SEDA or ICD – depending on how much money you need.

The WNC should put a wish list forward.

Q – How does LEDET liaise with other departments – roads, sewerage, tourism etc?

A – LEDET is looking at a strategy – mandate to enable sustainable tourism. This process has started with various other departments.

LEDET is responsible for economic development. The Infrastructure cluster and Economic cluster are now working together to form an Integrated Plan for area.

Local municipalities are responsible for sewerage and LEDET can only get involved once pollutions start but are currently busy putting a plan together to tackle water pollution together with the municipalities.

Q – This is a political question regarding land reform – Malema said that all land should be taken without any compensation to the landowners. Where do we stand?

A – This can only be changed through legislation and until then the status quo applies.

John thanked Maylene and her staff and congratulated her on an excellent presentation and promised that the ExCo committee will have a wish list as soon as possible.

4. Tea Break

5. AGM Business

Chairman's Report – attached

Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement

- Current balance as at 17th November 2011 = R39,041.10
- There are currently 64 members of which 55 have paid their dues for 2011.
- Any questions can be directed to HC.

New Motions

- Newsletter – want to see property values and change of ownership – motion approved and seconded.

6. Election of executive Committee

The same Executive Committee as 2011 was re-elected.

John Miller, Kelly Abram, Shaun McCartney; Richard Wadley; Anne Scotting; Peggy Parham; Ken Cowie, Conway Volek.

The Chair and Vice-chair will be elected at the next ExCo meeting in January 2012.

7. Any other business

Kelly Abram explained the proposed Pom Pom weed eradication day planned for January 2012.

Welgevonden volunteered people and resources for the day.

The project will be split into 2 sections:

1. Education re the Pom Pom weed and how to eradicate it
2. Volunteer day working along the road removing the alien plant.

The meeting was adjourned and everyone was invited to stay for refreshments and a light supper.

Signed:Chairman

Date:

Waterberg Nature Conservancy

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