

ZWARTKOPS CONSERVANCY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017

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OVERVIEW

Vision

A healthy Swartkops River ecosystem that supports the needs of the fauna that inhabit it, the flora that surround it, and which provides in a totally sustainable manner, a holistic platform for recreation and enterprise.

Mission

To promote public awareness and participation in caring for the greater Swartkops River ecosystem for the benefit of all.

Local Government

The new dispensation in the management of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro is already showing positive results in the willingness of councillors and officials to discuss the problems of failing infrastructure, and to provide positive action in response thereto.

The Metro faces an enormous task in addressing the backlog of work but the signs are promising and we look forward in hope of better things to come.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EXCO meets once a quarter to review and approve the actions of the Management Committee and its various sub-committees.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MANCO meets monthly, and oversees the day to day operations of the sub-committees responsible for specific portfolios as listed below.

Special thanks to Gail Badenhuizen, our minutes secretary for both EXCO and MANCO.

I would like to thank members of both committees for their work this past year.

Sub Committees

Administration

Many thanks to Alan Barrow, our out-going Treasurer, who has done a great job in keeping us on the financial straight and narrow for the past seven years. We will miss his input and his sense of humour.

Welcome to Ken Flugel, our new treasurer; Ken has helped us greatly over the past year or more in our red-tape battles with SARS; thank you Ken, we look forward to working with you.

Our grateful thanks to Andrew Smith our Auditor, who took over the task this year.

One measure of the increase in the workload of the Conservancy is a comparison between the revenue statements of the financial year ending 29th Feb 2012 and that of 28th Feb 2017. In five years, annual revenue has increased from R201K to R481K, or by 240%.

Education and Awareness

Masifundisani

Jenny Rump, Patricia Ntabeni and Wandisile Lukwe continue to teach over two thousand grade-six children drawn from a large number of schools in Motherwell, as the main thrust of the Masifundisani Environmental Education Program.

We are most grateful to Mr Pasiwe of Khuboni Bus Company for supplying weekly busses during term time to transport pupils to the Motherwell Storm water Canal and either the estuary or a reserve free of charge. Without this generous donation our Masifundisane Program would not take place.

The team was also involved in Marine Week last October, and we must not forget Arthur Rump's educational hikes in the Groendal wilderness area as well as in our reserves.

The young dancers of the Enviro Club continue to provide entertainment and clean-ups in support of environmental awareness; congratulations to Patricia on her work with these talented youngsters.

Earlier this year, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) provided funding for lessons and craft from rubbish workshops held in the Pond 6 area. Many thanks to Jenny, Patricia and Wandisile for their wetland presentations, and to Shirley Tome for catering and assisting.

Once again, thank you Jenny for leading the environmental education crusade!

Masazi

The Masazi project has forged ahead under the direction of Wandisile Lukwe, who must be congratulated on the huge strides made during the past year. He has overcome many hurdles but is now firmly established in the Jabavu School building in Motherwell. This building belongs to the Department of Public Works which permits organisations to operate there if they are working for the benefit of the community. He has been most enterprising in obtaining the use of two classrooms and toilets in the building.

The Ford Motor Company's Global Giving Fund chose the Conservancy as a beneficiary and the grant received was used to assist in repairing the classrooms and toilets and securing them as the Masazi project's headquarters. Mention must also be made of the way Ford staff members came in numbers to assist with the repairs to the building, gardening and also to clean up the Motherwell Stormwater Canal area during their September Month of Caring. Thank you Ford, what a wonderful example to set for other companies to follow.

Over the past year Wandisile has run a number of camps for his ever-growing flock of young environmental enthusiasts – the Masazi Buddies. We are grateful to Dedisa and Enviroserv for sponsoring transport and food at these camps.

The purpose of the camps is to foster a "buddy" system where they will support each other in trying to get over the essential Masazi messages in their schools about not littering, the correct use of toilets and saving our environment.

Recently, Wandisile organised a very successful Masazi Buddies Youth Day Concert attended by over 100 people to raise funds for the July school holidays camp.

Next up is his new “Greening my Environment” program which starts at the beginning of the July school term, and goes on for 4 months during which time 600 pupils from 40 schools will be trained by our 2 teachers plus 2 additional teachers after school hours to spread the essential Masazi message. It will be the task of the 600 new Masazi Buddies to spread the message to other pupils from their schools. We are happy to announce that this program is to be sponsored by PlasticsSA and Dedisa.

Jenny and Mark Watts are reviewing the possibility of a future Permaculture Garden in the grounds of Jabavu school, as an interesting addition to the environmental curriculum. This would be made possible from additional Ford Global Funding.

The key to saving the Swartkops River is to educate the children, who are extremely receptive and who give us hope for a much cleaner future.

Motherwell Buy Back Centre

The Centre, has received a major boost in the form of Mr. Fikile Desi, a former City Councillor, who has joined the 5 ladies and registered the business as Khulanathi Mzontsundu Primary Co-Operative Limited. Under his direction and guidance, we hope to see the Buy Back Centre evolve into a free-standing, profit-making business.

To help the Centre on its way, EnviroServ has generously donated two containers (and transport for the one), a large table, a scale and a bakkie to the Centre. This is a major boost for the Centre which was virtually burnt down a few years ago. EnviroServ is the one company which was involved with the Centre right from the start in 1999 and which has attempted to help the Centre ever since. Thank you EnviroServ.

Many thanks to Louis and Cathy Beyers and their business contacts, who were instrumental in having the containers moved down from Johannesburg and put in place at the Buy Back Centre at no cost to the ZC.

Jenny Rump carries out her recycling round in the area once a month and collects recyclable items from town weekly for the Centre. Thank you, Jenny.

Our vision for enterprises like the Masazi Project and the Buy Back Centre is that they evolve into free-standing entities, building management skills over time so that they grow into powerful and influential agents for the preservation of the environment.

Fund Raising

We have been especially fortunate of late in terms of fund-raising. Special mention must go to Louis and Cathy Beyers, who put together the amazingly successful Spar River Paddle Challenge, which not only raised over R60 000, but also brought wide-ranging publicity to the Conservancy. It is hoped that the Challenge becomes an annual event.

The list of our major contributors follows. We are also most grateful to many members and non-members who made smaller donations:

Donor	Amount	Utilization
Metro	R150 000	Enviro Education, Workshops, litter clean-up & Masazi
Spar	R91 000	Litter Pickers
Spar River Paddle	R63 000	Conservation Management, education & Masazi
Ford	R62 000	Masazi
Nussbaum Foundation	R50 000	Enviro Education
Orion	R24 000	Conservation Management
African Hide	R20 000	Conservation Management
ICLEI	R20 000	Pond 6 Project
Enviroserv	R12 000	Conservation Management
Zipski	R11 500	Conservation Management
SAB	R9 600	Masazi

We continue to apply to the Lotto Fund. Our thanks go to Jenny Miller who produces most professional applications on our behalf.

Infrastructure

Our thanks to Peter Senn and Mike Spearpoint for keeping Curlew II shipshape and unsinkable and on all the work they do in assisting with litter bag collection.

Legal

The legal case against the Metro, which Mike Spearpoint has done so much over many years to assemble, awaits the production of an up-to-date and realistic schedule for the introduction of the infrastructure Master Plan of 2009.

We are mindful of the massive backlog that the Metro must deal with, but even more mindful of the need to address the problem without further delay.

Pollution and River Clean up

Jenny and her network of informers continue to monitor pollution in the Valley and are often the first to know about the latest sewage or industrial waste spillage.

Some of the more dramatic and damaging disasters which have occurred over the past year include a sewer blockage resulting in a massive spill into the Motherwell Canal, an outlet pipe collapse at the Studebaker pump station which at times resulted in sewage flowing down the Markman Canal, a collapsed sewerage pipe in Despatch where the sewage ended up in a canal leading to the Swartkops River, reports of cows dying from drinking water affected by sewage sludge from the Kelvin Jones wastewater plant, and sewage sludge flowing into the sea off Brighton Pier.

On a positive note, the infamous Motherwell Canal has had a new litter-trap and weir installed, so that 98% of the flow of polluted water down the Canal, 80% of which formerly washed straight into the River, is now diverted into the reedbed, which is taking strain under the increased volume but is at least lessening the level of pollution entering the River. The new litter trap is emptied daily by the metro and has made a noticeable difference to the litter along the banks of the river in that area. We have also noticed an improvement in the *e-coli* pollution counts.

In December last year, the Committee joined the Executive Mayor, Councillors and officials on a site visit to the various storm-water canals in the and around Uitenhage. They were in a disgusting condition. The Metro moved into action and the situation has improved although there is much work still to be done.

In June, a follow-up meeting was held with the Mayor and his team in the Uitenhage Town Hall. It is hoped that these meetings continue to occur on a regular basis.

We are grateful to Councillor Annette Lovemore for finding the missing water results and for ensuring that most of the monthly readings are sent to us.

The positive attitude displayed by the Metro government is most encouraging.

Air pollution is another problem we face, the sources of which are not always easy to trace. The easterly winds sometimes bring strong and most unpleasant smells from somewhere in the Brickfields/Markman area; the jury is still out on which source is responsible. Our thanks to Rod Lochhead for doing his best to smell out the culprits.

Our thanks to Leon Kilian and Alan Withers who reported offal being deposited into the veld at Perseverance. David Bligh of DWS and Jenny stirred up the authorities and the result was that the piggery from which the pollution came, has disappeared.

A special mention must be made of David Bligh from DWS, who is always willing to assist when pollution is seen. His expertise and dedication are invaluable to us.

A new pollution threat has arisen with the advent of “bunker barges” operating in Algoa Bay. These foreign-owned ships offload bunker fuel from large tankers and then re-supply merchant ships. This activity takes place a few kilometres offshore. An oil-spill is an inevitability. Our beaches and the River mouth will be badly affected when this happens. We need to take this up with the authorities, but we must expect a long battle.

Congratulations to Dale Clayton and his team of dedicated litter-pickers, who scour the banks of the River, and often further inland, for plastic and other litter; we are most grateful to Conrad Isaacs and Spar Eastern Cape for funding this effort last year. Fortunately, the Metro has again secured funds for this essential task.

Many thanks to Peter Senn and Louis Beyers for the hours spent on the water moving cargoes of rubbish from collection points inaccessible by road.

We also thank the Metro for the speedy removal of hundreds of bags of litter and PlasticSA for the donation of 3000 bags for our beach and other clean-ups.

Without the dedicated efforts of Dale and Peter and their Litter Ladies, the state of the River banks would be too horrible to contemplate.

Reserves

The Swartkops Nature Reserve and the Aloes Reserve are suffering badly from the lack of control by the Metro.

There is no barrier to the extermination of the remaining small game by snares, packs of hunting dogs, and the spread of the exotic and prolific jointed cactus by wandering herds of cattle, to the burning of the veld by abaKhwetha, to nocturnal gill-netting activity, to the presence of scrambler motorbikes tearing up the landscape and to the encroachment of squatter camps.

We have been informed that the Metro has consolidated its limited resources in the Baakens River valley and that there will be no protection for the Swartkops Nature Reserve and minimal protection for the Aloes Nature Reserve.

On a positive note, we have met with Councillors on the subject of outsourcing the management of the Reserves and the proposed Ramsar area to the ZC. Negotiations are at a very early stage but this appears to be a logical course to follow.

The spread of Jointed Cactus is a huge problem in our reserves. The Conservancy bought special poison for a trial run at the paddocks at Amsterdamhoek. The poison must be applied directly to the cactus. Many thanks to Dale Clayton for taking on this arduous task. We have hopes that application of the Cochineal bug to the jointed cactus will prove easier and less costly.

Many thanks to Hank van der Water for all the work he does in the background to maintain law and order in the Valley and in the River.

In conclusion, the future looks exciting and we have much to do. If you should be interested in getting involved in any way with the ZC, please contact us!

Frank Collier 26th July, 2017