

ZWARTKOPS CONSERVANCY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016

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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.

Reality

The ZC operates beyond the bounds of its mission statement in that it manages functions that are properly the duty of the local authority.

The ratepayers and citizens of Port Elizabeth and the surrounding towns and villages need competent officials dedicated to service, capable of carrying out their duties without recourse to an army of private consultants, who are understandably driven by the profit motive, sometimes to the detriment of the Metro.

Until such time as this happy state of affairs comes about, I fear we must soldier on if we are to preserve the River from turning into a complete cesspool.

Fortunately there are still some excellent officials who are doing their best under extremely trying circumstances.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

We thank its members for their input; special thanks to Phyllis Magda, our minutes secretary.

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.

Sub Committees

Administration

Arthur Rump, our Secretary, has been a member of ZC since its inception, and keeps the ship sailing on a steady course, through calm and storm. His experience and guiding wisdom are invaluable.

We are indebted to Alan Barrow – our captive chartered accountant – for the impeccable financial statements he prepares, a mandatory requirement for a Public Benefit Organization such as the Swartkops Conservancy.

We are most grateful for the time-consuming battles that Ken Flugel fights with SARS on our behalf. The red-tape tide threatens to submerge us at times, but between Alan, Arthur and Ken we continue to swim!

Our grateful thanks to Nelmarie Smuts, our auditor.

Education and Awareness

Jenny Rump, our invaluable environmental officer is core to the existence of the ZC; we are very aware that she works incredibly hard to save the Swartkops and we sometimes have difficulty in reining her in.

Jenny is the public face of the ZC; over time she has developed a wide-ranging network of friends and allies in the academic world, municipal and government departments, industry and commerce, non-governmental organizations, private and concerned citizens across all segments of society and, not least, the Press.

Without her indefatigable work ethic, the Swartkops River, the Reserves and surrounds would be in a much worse state than they are.

Jenny Rump works to uplift the communities in close proximity to the Swartkops estuary especially, but not only, Motherwell and Aloes. Weekly sessions on the estuary or at one of the two reserves are held with about sixty students (usually Grade Six) from schools in previously disadvantaged communities. She is one of three teachers. They concentrate on environmental and pollution issues, especially on ways to prevent it happening in future. All lectures usually culminate in a visit to the Motherwell canal which is one of the big polluters of the Swartkops River. These lessons are also being taken into local communities.

Patricia [Ntabeni](#) has been teaching environmental basics for many years and forms an integral part of Jenny's team. Thank you Patricia for all your hard work and enthusiasm.

The Masifundisani environmental education program addresses on average thirty schools from under privileged areas per annum, involving two thousand Grade Six pupils and thirty teachers.

Schoolchildren are transported by bus to Dufour Park in the summer for teaching on wetlands, and to the Aloes or Swartkops Nature Reserves during the winter. All lessons are followed by a visit to the Motherwell Canal where pollution prevention is taught. Our thanks go to Algoa Bus who sponsored 2 busses per month till August 2015. We are most grateful to Khuboni & Khuboni Transport who from March this year have sponsored 2 free busses per month. THANK YOU KHUBONI for coming to our aid, because without help with transport we cannot continue with our vital Masifundisani program.

Jenny and Patricia have recently been joined by Wandisile Lukwe, who brings very welcome youthful energy to the organization.

Wandisile's brainchild is the Masazi Project. Masazi is a Xhosa word which means "Let Us Know", aimed at people who do not have any knowledge about environment issues.

The objective is aimed at community members, church members and school children, with the following objectives:

- Increase awareness and participation in protecting our environment;
- Involve volunteers, local community and the government body in activities like awareness, conservation, education, community participation and recycling;
- Educate learners in schools on how to live in a healthy environment;
- Minimise the illegal dumping in our communities by educating our community members.

To this end, Wandisile has involved the Department of Education, and has interacted with various primary and senior schools. He has been most enterprising in getting two rooms for free in the empty Jabavu High school building as a base for operations.

At the beginning of July, Patricia and Wandisile conducted a camp for fourteen pupils in the Groendal Wilderness Area, in order to set up a buddy system where they will support each other in promoting the anti-pollution message messages.

Our thanks to Dedisa for sponsoring the bulk of the costs involved.

We have great hopes for Masazi and wish Wandisile the best of luck in the future.

The Enviro Club – the troupe of young dancers and actors whose performances promote environmental awareness and who also do cleanups and plant trees, continues under the capable leadership of Patricia Ntabeni. She once again produced an excellent concert at the Motherwell Library in June.

The Motherwell Buy Back Centre ladies are patiently hoping for containers to replace those which were burnt out but continue to work at recycling waste into products, of which the famous Wonder Cooking Cushions are the flagship. Jenny works tirelessly to transport waste material to their centre.

Our vision for enterprises like Masiza, the Enviro Club 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

Our Vice-Chairman Dale Clayton has put together a presentation package which has been shown to our major donors to say thank you for their past support; this presentation has been adjusted for potential donors and has already brought results. Our thanks to Dale for taking the initiative in the essential task of ensuring the ZC's cash flow.

Our thanks to Jenny Miller for setting set up our Lotto funding application which will be submitted as soon as the call for submissions is advertised.

Our main sponsors are: NMBM Grant-in-Aid; Corporate Sponsors are: Spar E. Cape, Orion Engineered Carbons, African Hide Trading and Zipski/Bikegear, and our faithful members who regularly give eg our anonymous sponsor from the UK, Len Porter, Riverside Lodge and Guesthouse, the Saunders, Wednesday Walkers, Sean Tappan, the Watts family as well as several members who gave more than their subs. A special mention is made to Joel Marais who has been collecting donations from his school towards the rangers. A big Thank You to you all.

Infrastructure

Our thanks to Peter Senn, Ralph Hodgen and Rod Lochhead for always being available to resolve practical issues such as erecting signs, launching boats and conducting waterborne expeditions.

Legal

Mike Spearpoint continues to lead the legal fight against the Metro, the objective of which is to force the Council to efficiently spend the budget for the long overdue replacement of the ailing sewage and storm water infrastructure in the metropolitan area. Mike is tireless in his attention to detail and has built a massive case against the Metro.

Our special thanks to Attorney Francois Swanepoel, who has worked with Mike on this case for the past six years, and to Advocate Richard Buchanan for his guidance and advice all given *pro bono*.

Pollution and River Clean up

Jenny constantly monitors and reports to the Metro any sewerage and water leaks in the Swartkops valley up to Despatch and Uitenhage and beyond.

Typical of her work has been her exposure to the Press of the recent horrific flow of industrial and sewage pollution into the Markman Canal.

In mid-June she discovered overflowing manholes outside Pelts Products in Studebaker Road; reports to the Metro revealed that the pump station was not working and much more.

A week later nothing effective had been done; the dreadful stench had led to hydrogen sulphide poisoning affecting the residents of the Aloes settlement; mounds of bubbles indicated really bad pollution levels.

By the 27th June Jenny felt that the only recourse was to the Press; the disaster scene was extensively reported upon and articles and cartoons informed the public of the situation for several days and continue to do so. We must thank The Herald and Die Burger for their assistance.

The response from Metro officials was immediate; resources were rushed to the scene; by the 8th July the situation was better, but far from right. Jenny will continue to keep a watchful eye on developments.

It is amazing how the political masters of the Metro react when a municipal election is close at hand!

One of the on-going projects handled by the ZC is the management of the litter picking process along the banks of the River and surrounding areas.

In January 2016 funds from the Metro dried up and the team of four women no longer had jobs; their absence was immediately evident with litter lining the banks of the Swartkops.

Fortunately, Spar Eastern Cape came to the rescue and has provided funds for the rest of 2016; in fact, we now have a much more efficient operation in action. Mike Spearpoint and Peter Senn direct the operations of two of Mike's workers in the area north of the Motherwell Canal, and Dale Clayton's team (the original litter pickers) handle the lower regions of the River.

Our grateful thanks to Conrad Isaacs of Spar for this timely intervention.

Many thanks to Mike, Peter and Dale for their efforts in cleaning up the landscape and recently Louis Beyers for assistance with his boat.

Public Relations

Jenny and David Hayes regularly update our Face Book page with news items and pictures, and put together our quarterly newsletter; thank you both for making us visible to the outside world.

Arthur Rump heads the PR sub-committee and personally runs the ever-popular photo competition. Our thanks are due to Luc Hosten, who adjudicates the completion, for the time and effort he puts into this project.

It is our intention to completely redesign the ZC website to reflect a more modern and professional image.

Reserves

Following a meeting with Clyde Scott of the Metro, we are most pleased to have the original squad of three rangers back in action in the reserves; it is not the complete answer but every little bit helps.

Thanks to Dale Clayton for spearheading the campaign against the evil jointed cactus and to Linda Redfern for discovering the Herbicon spray in the first place and for assistance with dispensing equipment.

Recently we have been advised that cochineal bugs are the preferred weapon against jointed cactus and thanks to Ruth Scholtz and her team who have already put the bugs on plants in the Zwartkops Nature reserve.

The Ramsar initiative grinds forward with all the speed of a very slow snail, but the good news is that WESSA have succeeded in gaining the interest of the World Wildlife Fund in supporting the project financially. Our thanks are due to Philippa Huntly for her efforts on our behalf.

Finally, I have to thank the members of EXCO for their wise counsel, and the members of MANCO for their sterling work. We have a wonderful team in our Exco, Manco and sub-committees, not forgetting our dedicated staff.

Without the generosity of our sponsors and members we would not be able to achieve any of this so my thanks must finally go to them.

Frank Collier

Chairman