

# **ZWARTKOPS CONSERVANCY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019**

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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.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

EXCO met once a month to conduct the business of the ZC.

Special thanks to Gail Badenhuizen, who produced the monthly minutes.

### **Sub Committees**

#### **Administration**

The administration of the Conservancy, an increasingly complex business considering the workload which our Hon Secretary, Treasurer and Auditor have to handle, is run with exemplary efficiency. The same cannot be said for the various government authorities with whom we interact.

Many thanks to Arthur Rump, Ken Flugel and Andrew Smith.

Jenny Rump officially retired from her long-time position as Conservation Officer and was applauded at the Annual General Meeting for her years of outstanding service to the Conservancy, during which time she was honoured as Port Elizabeth's Citizen of the Year. She was elected as a member of the Executive Committee.

The long-term aim of EXCO is to establish the Conservancy as a professionally run organization with salaried management and staff, overseen by a non-executive board.

Our first step in this direction was not successful as our replacement environmental officer proved an ill-advised choice.

Fortunately, Dale Clayton stepped into the breach and has tackled the job with great enthusiasm and ability, and we have had the invaluable services of Jenny at our disposal as well.

#### **Legal**

Our sincere thanks to Attorney Francois Swanepoel for his tireless efforts to force the Metro to release water quality results to us and thereby, to the general public, as they are legally bound to do.

#### **Fund Raising**

Donations for the 2019 financial year total R422 650. The list of our major contributors follows. We are also most grateful to many members and non-members who made smaller donations:

SPAR Eastern Cape	188 557
Orion Engineered Carbons	100 000
Global Giving Foundation	52 108
Ford Global Caring	33 744
Plastics SA	19 598
ZIPSKI	9 000
Peaker's Operations	7 140
Frank Collier Business Systems CC	4 000
V Cliff	3 500
Peter & Margie Newton	3 043

Grants from state organizations during the year totalled R526 000.

We received R376 000 from the National Lottery Commission, which has been spent on a vehicle, a laptop computer and various necessary items, as per our submission to the Commission.

The Metro Grant in Aid of R150 000 was renewed. These funds are spent on prescribed projects.

### **Public Relations**

Our efforts over the years in highlighting the plight of the Swartkops River are beginning to bear fruit.

While we have borne the brunt of numerous "talk shops" in the past, it is pleasing to report that the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) has selected the Swartkops River as its project within the trilateral Benguela Current Convention.

We expect this initiative to produce positive results for the ZC.

### **Education and Awareness**

Wandisile Lukwe and his team continue to work hard at promoting environmental awareness through the continuous weekly program of Motherwell Stormwater Canal, riverside and nature reserve lessons for pupils from a large number of schools in the surrounding areas.

The team also contributes to annual events such as Marine Week at which they present lessons to a different set of pupils.

The Masazi Buddies Project Winter Camp held in June 2018 attracted 144 pupils and was by all accounts a great success.

Later during the year, the Department of Education forced the various organizations including our Masazi Buddies Project which had been housed in the disused Jabavu School in Motherwell to vacate the premises.

Various attempts to find alternate accommodation were unsuccessful and the Summer Camp was held at a school in Kirkwood.

Money for camps is always a problem, and effort needs to be put into fundraising well in advance of camps being held.

Wandisile, Patricia Ntabeni and Shirley Tome are to be congratulated on keeping the torch of educational education burning brightly.

### **Motherwell Buy Back Centre**

Dale Clayton supervised upgrades to the facility with donations by Plastics SA. The ladies continue to produce good work and it is hoped that the interest shown by the DEA Benguela Current Convention team will further enhance the image and productivity of the BBC.

### **Infrastructure**

During the year benches were installed at Dufour in honour of the late David Bligh of the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation, and in the Aloe Reserve in honour of Jenny Rump and her mother Dr Noel Urton.

Curlew II was kept in regular operation and apart from a steering gear problem, functioned with its usual efficiency thanks to Peter Senn with assistance from Rod Lochhead.

### **Pollution and River Clean up**

During the year, the Motherwell and Markman Stormwater Canals presented us with by far the worst and most challenging sewage crisis we have ever encountered.

The municipality offloaded the crisis onto Alliance Plumbers who, after a series of monumental and very smelly battles, managed to restore order.

However, the infrastructure problems facing the municipality would present a major challenge to the most efficient local authority in the world. Unfortunately for the Zwartkops River and those who live near it, the Nelson Mandela Metro has neither the political will nor the competency to deal with the situation.

One small step in the right direction must be recorded. Two litter traps were at long last installed in the Motherwell Stormwater Canal. As long as they are regularly emptied, they will prevent some of the tide of plastic waste pouring into the River. They are unlikely to make much difference when heavy rain occurs.

Dale Clayton must be commended for his untiring battle with the Metro on behalf of the long-suffering litter pickers, who are funded by the national government's Extended Public Works Programme. Due to the large-scale corruption detected in the municipal department responsible for payment of these funds, strict controls were instituted which unfortunately had the effect of delaying payment, sometimes for months on end.

There is only so much the Conservancy can spare to provide wages for the litter-pickers.

We are unfortunately faced with a situation where we will have to find funding for our own team as it is unthinkable that we stop removing plastic waste from the riverbanks and surrounds.

During the year, the Conservancy attended the Spar “Ban the Plastic Bag” launch at the Boardwalk Hotel, where Jenny Rump gave a presentation on the work of the Conservancy in the fight against plastic pollution.

While the Conservancy continues in its fight to force the municipality to reveal the results of its water tests, we began our own programme of testing in order to provide a reliable source of information for the public.

### **Reserves**

The Cerebos Salt Company ceased operations in the valley and the pans to the east and north of Redhouse dried out, with the subsequent departure of the majority of the birdlife.

The pans were no longer an economic proposition for the company, particularly as they were spending enormous sums of money to unsuccessfully protect their pump-stations from theft and vandalism.

This loss of our invaluable wetlands can be directly attributed to the municipality’s decision to abandon the Valley by removing its wardens to the Baakens River, in spite of its legal obligation to protect the proclaimed nature reserve.

Fortunately, Cerebos is aware of its duty of rehabilitation and future land use in terms of its mining license, and discussions begun on plans to flood the pans anew.

Frank Collier 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019