GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2004

Introduction

Members of council met on 28-29April 2004 for a Strategic Planning Workshop at Ukulinga Research Farm in Pietermaritzburg. The meeting was facilitated by Mphoya Thobela, Richard Hurt and Nicky Allsopp. A record of the workshop was written by Sigrun Kassier. The workshop focused on achievements and strengths of the GSSA, the values held in common by its membership and the challenges facing the GSSA. The activities associated with the various portfolios were also examined.

The core business of the GSSA was seen to be the promotion of the "discipline" of grazing resource sciences. The GSSA achieves this through promoting these sciences through its congress, journal and other publications. It aims to serve an advisory function by translating this science to achieve practical outcomes. This function embraces the areas of policy support, consultancies on environmental issues, and provision of information for extensionists, land users and land owners.

The GSSA should serve as a body ensuring continuity in the feedback loops between theory and praxis. Theory should inform policy, applied research and practice, while these should in turn inform theory in order to ensure that this remains dynamic.

Factors which ensure the wellbeing of the Society are its image and its sustainability. Image is determined by ensuring the visibility and credibility of the society and projecting a professional profile. To this end the society needs to market itself in order to compete with and complement other leading organisations in the environmental sphere.

The sustainability of the Society is dependent on maintaining and increasing membership numbers, ensuring that there is capacity in that membership to serve the Society, and in maintaining its finances in a positive state.

At a meeting in September, Mphoya Thobela, Richard Hurt and Nicky Allsopp developed a list of objectives aimed at strengthening the Society. They also revised the Vision and Mission of the GSSA. The outcomes of this meeting are attached and are circulated for comment by the Council.

Vision

The Grassland Society of Southern Africa strives to be the champion of the wise use of natural and cultivated grazing resources in Southern Africa.

Mission

The mission of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa is to advance livelihoods of the people of southern Africa and biodiversity conservation through the science and practice of wise use of natural and cultivated grazing resources.

Strategic objectives

Objective 1

To inform key roleplayers in the environmental field of the GSSA

Target date: by Congress 40 (July 2005)
Responsibilities: Nicky Allsopp
Activities:

Contact Lyndon and Habitat Council representative on strategies to adopt for lobbying.
Identify audiences (who, where, when, how) (e.g. portfolio committees of agriculture, land affairs, environment, water affairs and forestry, DGs of relevant depts.)
Identify suitable members for presenting roadshow.
Develop suitably illustrated presentation showing the relevance of the theory and praxis of "grassland" science. "What do we offer"
Identify what we would like from key players (e.g. support young scientists, send staff to congress, support exchange visits in Africa, consult GSSA on relevant issues).

Objective 2

To ensure that Congress adopts a relevant theme each year through which it can promote the Society to a broader audience
(this is not aimed at excluding the full range of presentations at a congress, but to ensure that relevant issues are tackled at congress which attract attention of a broader audience)

Target date:

18-24 months prior to the congress being held

Responsibilities:

Congress 40: Richard Hurt
Congress 41: Nicky Allsopp and current vice President (Annelene Swanepoel)
Thereafter vice President

Activities:

Incoming vice President ensures that successful bid is associated with relevant theme for congress taking place at end of his/her presidency.
For Congress 41, Chris Dannhauser to organise congress. Harry Biggs and Mike Peel to be approached to develop theme around long term environmental observation associated with the Ndlovu SAEON site which has been set up in the Lowveld

Objective 3

To promote GSSA congresses by ensuring that congress announcements reach the broadest possible audience

Target date:

Annual activity to precede sending of first announcement of next congress

Responsibilities:

Annelene Swanepoel to send Congress 39 mailing list to Administrator
Congress 40: Congress organising committee to identify lists for circulating announcement
Future congresses: PRO to coordinate development of lists with congress organisers and council
Administrator to maintain and update lists

Activities:

Develop a congress mailing list which advertises the congress broadly.
Update list annually with all new delegates who have attended congress
Identify people/organisations and mailing lists which may be used: e.g. AZEF (Arid Zone Ecology Forum), PLAAS (Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at UWC), NGCI (National Grassland Conservation Initiative), SAWMA (South African Wildlife Management Association), key academics, key provincial personnel
Identify interest groups associated with theme

Objective 4

To ensure the translation of technical and scientific information into articles accessible to the public

Target date:

Report back at Congress 40 AGM

Responsibilities:

Justin du Toit

Past President to take responsibility for driving this

Activities:

Justin du Toit has already written several popular articles and has submitted these to the Farmers Weekly

JdT in contact with Chris Burgess (Editor FW) regarding progress

Articles originating as papers in the journal or as congress presentations should have a short note at the end indicating that "the article was originally published in the African Journal of Range and Forage Science, for more information visit www.gssa.co.za".

Objective 5

Promote the discipline through providing links from the discipline to relevant radio and television media (the aim of this is to promote the discipline in its broadest sense as being relevant to SA – not to focus on promotion of the society)

Target date:

AGM of Congress 40

Responsibilities:

PRO

Activities:

Identify relevant programmes in media (e.g. Agri TV 05.45 on SABC2, lunchtime agriculture slot run from Elsenburg on Radio Sonder Grense, Land (?) 05.02 on SABC1)

Develop list of some members doing relevant research who would be suitable candidates for appearing on these media

Contact relevant media with proposal to be available to advise on members who could provide information

Assess viability of this approach to promoting the discipline

Objective 6

Develop a protocol to promote the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) /Professional Members to the broader environment

Target date:

AGM of Congress 40

Responsibilities:

Chair of PAC (Leslie Brown)

Activities:

Develop creative ideas on how to promote PAC as professionals, consultants, ombudsman etc.

Objective 7

Promote partnerships between the GSSA, SADC and researchers in other African countries

Target date:

January council meeting

Responsibilities:

Mphoya Thobela

Activities:

Work through the SADC Centres of Excellence for livestock, indigenous knowledge and extension

Develop a knowledge exchange trip for southern African delegates around congress 40

Objective 8

To get ISI rating for the Journal

Target date:

Peter Scogings to report by January Council meeting

Responsibilities:

Peter Scogings (Scientific Editor) to ensure that NISC continues to seek ISI rating

Activities:

Ongoing activity of NISC

Objective 9

To develop a new three year contract with NISC

Target date:

By January Council meeting

Responsibilities:

Annelie de Beer in consultation with scientific editor

Activities:

Review existing contract with NISC

Develop new three year contract: focus on cost of production (fixed amount for three years), date of payment, other administrative considerations such as distribution of additional material with journal etc.

Objective 10

To develop an advertising/advertorial strategy for Grassroots

Target date:

January Council meeting

Responsibilities:

Grassroots editor, PRO

Activities:

To be determined

Objective 11

Resolve position of Web Coordinator and Grassroots Editor on Council

Target date:

October Council Meeting

Responsibilities:

Nicky Allsopp

Activities:

Appointment of all ad hoc council members to be confirmed by council at the last meeting before the AGM

Objective 12

To ensure that key administrative activities are executed timeously and effectively (this refers especially to the maintenance of membership lists and collection of subscriptions)

Target date:

Every council meeting

Responsibilities:

President assisted by council

Activities:

Review activities of the administrator on a regular basis

Ensure contract describes responsibilities adequately

(Note: the current administrator is doing an excellent job in rebuilding the administration of the Society after several years of poor management of this function by council – this objective is regarded as strategic for ensuring the continued efficient administration of the society).

Objective 13

Review constitution of the GSSA and propose relevant amendments

Target date:

By January Council Meeting

Responsibilities:

Justin du Toit to coordinate this activity.

All council members to review constitution

Activities:

Justin du Toit to circulate most recent constitution (updated since last AGM)

Council to review constitution and develop proposals for amendments in time for circulation before the next AGM

Objective 14

Review strategic plan at regular intervals

Target date:

Major review: First council meeting after congress

Evaluate progress: every council meeting

Responsibilities:

President to ensure that this appears on agenda of council meetings

Activities:

Evaluate progress on objectives at each council meeting

Revisit objectives annually at first council meeting after congress

Assess need for new strategic planning process at first council meeting after council