

## **Minutes of the GSSA Strategic Planning Meeting on 3 April 2006 at Cedara**

(**Note:** items in small italics print are from the 2004 strategic planning document. Normal print text refers to the April 2006 meeting)

### **1. Welcome**

A Swanepoel welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked A Short for organizing the venue and F and J du Toit for the catering.

### **2. Present and apologies**

Present:

A Swanepoel, P Scogings, L Dziba, N Findlay, A Short, M Hardy, J du Toit, F du Toit, S Ammann, M Thobela, N Allsopp

Apologies:

R Grant, L Brown, W Trollope

### **3. Review Vision and Mission**

A Swanepoel outlined to proposed procedure and objectives of the review meeting as follows:

- Review the 2004 objectives
- Convert the objectives and plan to be more generic
- Develop the new plan for the next two years for the new council to use as a framework

#### ***Introduction***

*Members of council met on 28-29 April 2004 for a Strategic Planning workshop at Unkulunga 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 the 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 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 organizations 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 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 circulated for comment to 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.*

The feeling of council was that the vision should not be restricted to “grazing resources” only but should also include other uses of natural resources e.g. wood collection etc. It was proposed to amend the vision to the following:

The Grassland Society of Southern Africa strives to be the champion of the wise use of rangeland and pasture resources in southern Africa.

It was decided to give everyone more opportunity to make proposals for changes to the vision and review these at the next meeting.

## **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 the wise use of natural and cultivated grazing resources.*

Once proposals have been accepted to amend the vision the wording of the mission, especially the end part, should be changed to incorporate the amended vision.

## **4. Review strategic objectives**

### **Objective 1**

**To inform key role players in the environmental field of the GSSA.**

*Target date: Congress 40 (July 2005)*

*Responsibilities: N Allsopp*

#### *Activities*

- *Contact Lyndon and Habitat Council representatives 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, DG's of relevant departments).*
- *Identify suitable members for presenting road show.*
- *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).*

The activities envisaged for objective 1 were a daunting task and would require greater capacity or a secretariat to deal with it. N Allsopp tried to link with “Contact”, a group that informs subscribers about environmental legislation that is to come through parliament. N Allsopp also followed up with the DoA about the Sustainable Use of Agricultural Resources Bill but was not able to find the right contact person.

N Allsopp did receive an invitation to attend a workshop on The Subdivision of Agricultural Land. However this was at too short notice. There were also supposed to be regional workshops but information about those was not forthcoming.

L Dziba suggested that we need to find the correct platform to have contact with the DoA and offered to provide such a link.

N Allsopp also mentioned that it would be important to have more time for an internal debate before inputs can be made to e.g. parliamentary bills. There should be active lobbying by all council members. Once contacts have been made these relationships have to be fostered.

### Successes

- National Grassland Conservation Initiative
- Close co-operation with SAEON (participating in Congress 41)
- EWT (Endangered Wildlife Trust) are now aware of the GSSA
- Maloti-Drakensberg initiative
- SANParks (KNP) organizing long-term monitoring workshop at Congress 41
- Have members who are part of various conservation organizations
- Represented at the Science Expo
- Connections with the Crane foundation
- GSSA website

### Activities for objective 1

- Develop a new poster or suitably illustrated presentation that can be sent to all agricultural departments, universities etc. (showing relevance of theory and praxis of “grassland” science. “What do we offer”)
- Get members to actively promote the GSSA
- Require more contact with NDA so that the GSSA is informed of meetings and workshops
- Raise profile of the GSSA amongst government departments and NGO’s. Contact required with DWAF, DEAT, DST etc.

Responsible: Vice President

### 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 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: Vice President*

#### Activities:

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

### Successes

- Themes at Congress 40 and 41 proposed by ordinary members (not organizing committee)
- Focused workshops and Symposia held at Congress 40 and 41 driven by members not on the organizing committee.
- SANBI report-back on NGCI at Congress 40

- Well known speakers secured for Congress 41
- GSSA website

### Activities for objective 2

- Further promote symposia at Congresses
- Organize high- powered symposia for which an extra entrance fee can be charged
- Ensure well-known opening speakers for congress
- Make members aware of the opportunity of running symposia during congress
- Develop a marketing strategy for congress/symposia (also see obj. 3)

Responsible: Vice President (through President)  
Congress Organizing Committee

### Objective 3

**To promote GSSA Congresses by ensuring that congress announcements reach the broadest possible audience.**

*Target date: Annual activities to precede sending of first announcement of next congress*

*Responsibilities: PRO to co-ordinate development of lists with congress organizers 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/organizations 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 the theme*

#### Successes

- Have developed a broad mailing list outside the membership
- Web page-link reminders via e-mail, good design and layout

### Activities for objective 3

- Further broaden the mailing list by using existing lists (see above) and by including the following: Study groups, provincial DoA, agricultural colleges, conservation groups, farmers associations, conservation colleges, other organizations and societies
- Sponsorship, including relating sponsorship options to specific symposia
- Each council member to send five new e-mail addresses to the administrator
- Link with Obj. 7
- Organize focused agricultural symposia at congresses aimed at farmers

Responsible Administrator  
PRO  
Congress Organizing Committee

## **Objective 4**

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

*Target date: Report back at Congress AGM*

*Responsibilities: Past President to drive this objective*

### Activities

- *Justin du Toit has already written several popular articles and submitted them to the Farmers Weekly*
- *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 for Range and Forage Science, for more information visit [www.gssa.co.za](http://www.gssa.co.za)".*

### Successes

- J du Toit produced approximately six articles for Farmers Weekly with another two in press.
- Reference made in the article to GSSA

The original intention was to translate existing journal articles into farmer friendly articles. This is not always useful, as there first has to be a synthesis of topics, rather than directly translating a single article. It requires a completely different writing style.

The Farmers Weekly has a very specific technology transfer which is not general interest education.

### Activities for Objective 4

- Ask authors to also produce a popular article of suitable journal articles identified by the editor/editorial team.
- Translate what J du Toit has already written into isiZulu and send to Echo, Ilanga (MT)
- Translate the articles into Afrikaans
- The publication must be from the GSSA if possible; at worst it must mention the GSSA.
- Get journalist from Farmers Weekly to interview GSSA members (must be careful about what is written)

### Responsibilities

isiZulu – Mphoya Thobela

Farmers Weekly – Justin du Toit

## **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*

*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 a 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 members who could provide information*
- *Assess viability of this approach to promoting the discipline*

## Successes

- RSG will come to Congress 41

## Activities for objective 5

- Combine objectives 4 and 5
- Promote the GSSA through various media, as and when the opportunities arise especially with regard to radio and TV as these are more difficult to use.

Responsible: PRO

## **Objective 6**

**Develop a protocol to promote the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC)/ Professional members to the broader environment.**

*Target date: AGM at Congress 40*

*Responsibilities: Chair of PAC*

### Activities

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

## Activities for objective 6

- Update the professional register
- Do a needs analysis – send out a questionnaire
- Get information on SACNASP
- Compile an information brochure
- Revise the professional code of conduct
- Get web links for tenders
- Advertise the professional members on the GSSA website
- Get professional members to advertise in Grassroots

Responsible: PAC Chairperson

## **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*

## Successes

- Had discussions with Farmer Support Group, but is restructuring at present
- Established links with a lecturer in Malawi, but had no budget to participate in GSSA activities

- Established links with an environmental manager in Zambia, but also had no funds available
- Marketed GSSA at Malawi conference in January 2006
- Upcoming events are placed on the website

#### Activities for Objective 7

- Link with other societies and universities in Africa
- Link with Unisa
- Try and get students from other African countries to attend congress
- Contact the British Ecological Society for grants
- Encourage GSSA members attending congresses in other countries to take along posters, fliers etc to promote the GSSA

Responsible: Mphoya Thobela, Susi Vetter, Nicky Allsopp  
All members – networking

### **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 continue to seek ISI rating*

#### *Activities*

- *Ongoing activity of NISC*

#### Successes

- NISC does follow this up annually (The problem with ISI is that it is based on a high turnover of articles and topics, not suitable for long-term research)

#### Activities for objective 8

- Find out about other rating systems
- Use our website to promote the journal
- Publicize ISI rating amongst members to encourage them to make submissions. ([www.ISInet.com/isi/journals/index.html](http://www.ISInet.com/isi/journals/index.html))
- Make rating system one of the responsibilities in the NISC contract (see obj. 9)
- Other important list to be on is Department of Education (SASI)

Responsible: N Allsopp to get clarity on the ISI process

### **Objective 9**

#### **To develop a new three-year contract with NISC**

*Target date: By January 2005 council meeting*

*Responsible: Annelie de Beer in consultation with scientific editor*

Activities:

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

N Allsopp reported on the general problems GSSA has with NISC. The first problem is that NISC always perceives the GSSA as failing in their obligations. Secondly NISC demands the entire payment for the year at the beginning of the year and neglects to realize that many businesses get paid on delivery of the product and not in advance. The problem is that the old contract does not discuss the payment procedure. Thirdly NISC demands to know the number of journals required at the beginning of the year. The best we can do is provide a member list but this does not take into account any new members joining during the year for whom there is then no journal available.

F du Toit reported that one of the NISC responsibilities was to electronically archive all the old journals. NISC has only done volumes 18 to 22. To archive 1 to 17 NISC has quoted an additional R47 000. NISC must be given an ultimatum to either archive the remaining journals as part of the existing deal or the GSSA demands to copyright for 1 – 17 back.

Another problem is that NISC is not prepared to give a more stable pricing structure so that the GSSA knows what to budget for. The reason given is that the printing industry is unstable.

It has to be acknowledged that NISC does provide a good quality product.

M Hardy proposed that the new contract be discussed at the council meeting including the issue about the copyright.

Successes

- GSSA has given an updated member list to NISC at the beginning of the year.

Activities for objective 9

- Finalize new contract
- Discuss copyright
- Discuss electronic publishing of volumes 1 – 17 with NISC
- Seek legal advice if necessary

Responsible: President and Vice President

**Objective 10**

**To develop an advertising /advertorial strategy for Grassroots**

*Target date: January 2005 council meeting*

*Responsible: Grassroots Editor, PRO*

Activities: to be determined

Successes

- Drew up a price list for Grassroots (needs to be linked to the website)

- Have two permanent ads on the website
- Have drawn up general advertising policy

#### Activities for objective 10

- Get sponsorship
- Contact publisher of SAEON's newsletter and get a quote
- Look at the possibility of getting sponsorship for an entire issue of Grassroots from a big company e.g. Afgri, Absa, Standard Bank etc.

Responsible:, Administrator, Grassroots Editor

### **Objective 11**

#### **Resolve the positions of website coordinator and Grassroots editor on council**

*Target date: October 2004 council meeting*

*Responsible: N Allsopp*

#### Activities:

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

#### **Change objective 11 to: Determine the portfolio of additional members**

Is the publications editor the production editor? Presently the Grassroots editor is co-opted. It was decided to appoint A Short as the publications editor at the next council meeting (April 2006).

It was decided to leave the website coordinator position as is i.e. additional member since the situation is still quite dynamic. The position of the website coordinator should however be better defined:

- Change to website editor
- Website editor to determine content, suitable links etc.
- Website editor is also in charge of the protocol guiding the website incl. what new technologies should be employed
- Strive to make website editor a formal position on council once the terms of reference have been satisfactorily determined.

#### Successes

- Have a web publishing policy document which was developed by D Hattas.

#### Activities for objective 11

- Determine the portfolios of the additional council members
- Review the current status of additional council members at the next AGM
- Define a job description for the website coordinator
- Make a decision whether website coordinator should change to website editor
- Grassroots editor to become the publications editor.

Responsible: ???

## **Objective 12**

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

*Target date: every council meeting*

*Responsible: President assisted by council*

### Activities:

- *Review the activities of the administrator on a regular basis*
- *Ensure that the contract describes the responsibilities adequately*

*(Note: the current administrator is doing an excellent job at 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.)*

### Successes

- Hired F du Toit

### Activities for objective 12

- Review the admin contract at council meeting

Responsible: President with council

## **Objective 13**

**Review constitution of the GSSA and propose relevant amendments to remain relevant in a changing environment.**

*Target date: January council meeting*

*Responsible: J du Toit to coordinate this activity*

*All council members to review the constitution*

### Activities

- *J du Toit to circulate the most recent constitution*
- *Council to review the constitution and develop proposals for amendments in time for circulation to the membership before the AGM*

### **Change objective 13 to:**

**Ensure that if constitutional changes are necessary they are tabled at the April meeting for timeous circulation to the membership. (Review the constitution annually to ensure that it remains relevant within a changing environment)**

### Successes

- Several amendments proposed and made at the AGM held during Congress 40.

### Activities for objective 13

- Discuss any prospective changes at the April council meeting of each year
- Continually review the constitution in a changing environment.

Responsible: ???

## **Objective 14**

### **Review the strategic plan at regular intervals.**

*Target date: Major review: first council meeting after congress  
Evaluate progress at every council meeting*

*Responsible: President to ensure that this appears on the agenda of every council meeting*

#### Activities:

- *Evaluate progress on objectives at every council meeting*
- *Revisit objectives annually at first council meeting after congress*
- *Assess the need for a new strategic planning process after the first council meeting*

#### Successes

- Briefly reviewed the plan at each council meeting
- Reviewed the plan annually

#### Activities for objective 14

- Review annually
- Renew the plan every 5 years
- The document should be seen as a framework and as a self evaluation mechanism
- Develop a by-line (slogan) for the GSSA
- Hold a competition for the by-line with a small prize

Responsible: Grassroots editor and administrator

### **5. Review financial situation of the GSSA**

Will be held over to the council meeting.

### **6. Define new or revised objectives**

Has been covered under the individual objective discussions

### **7. Action plans**

Incorporate specific actions from the strategic plan into the action list of the council meetings.

### **8. Conclusions and Summary**

The secretary will circulate the minutes to all council members.

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President

Date

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Secretary

Date