

Grasslands Programme Update

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The latest news from the Grasslands Programme...good and bad

The bad news is that the UNDP GEF intersessional work programme that should have been held in December last year to finally approve the Grasslands implementation budget was postponed until June 2007. This means that our core implementation funding has been delayed for a second time. This development is beyond our hands and those of our colleagues at UNDP GEF who have been so supportive in the programme to date.

The good news is that SANBI and DEAT have met and considered the implications and developed a strategy to enable the programme to proceed in the interim. We are also cautiously

hopeful that the GEF June 2007 meeting will happen and that the funds will flow three to four months thereafter.

In short, although we don't have the \$8.3million that we have requested from UNDP GEF for the five year implementation plan in the bag yet, we do have resources and commitment from DEAT and SANBI to continue and have a developed a strategy for programme activities until March 2008. We have no intention of stopping.

We also have significant stakeholder commitment to the programme, with various government, private sector and civil society organisations actively undertaking important work in the



grasslands biome which we need to share and reflect upon.

The level of support and interest that the Grasslands Programme enjoys was evident at the 1st Annual Grasslands Partners Forum, held at SANBI in Pretoria from 23 - 24 November 2006. Over 150 people attended the Forum, with solid representation across the organisational and production sectors that the Programme is working in. With the opening address from Dr Steven Cornelius, Head of Department at GDACE, the Forum provided an opportunity for production sectors (agriculture, coal mining, forestry

and urban), national, provincial and local government to meet and discuss the planned interventions in the different sectors and seek consensus on key content issues. The 2nd Partner's Forum will occur in October 2007.

The other good news is that SANBI has appointed a full time Grasslands Programme Manager who will be based in the SANBI Pretoria office from April this year. This is Anthea Stephens who is presently working for the urban component of the programme as a consultant. Anthea brings years of experience in managing complex environ-



Alan Short

mental programmes having been the Acting Director of the IUCN-SA Country Officer in her previous job. She holds an MSc in Environmental and Geographical Science. Florence Nazare remains with the Programme on a full time basis in the programme (based in Pretoria) and Lala Steyn remains on as a part-time consultant (based in Cape Town).

Anthea is very excited about the job saying: *"This is an innovative and exciting initiative that has a real ability to demonstrate concrete opportunities for effectively involving economic sectors in the conservation of biodiversity. This is a long-held passion of mine, and is what I believe equips me with the drive and commitment to provide the leadership, management and strategic direction required of the Grasslands Programme Manager."*

What is the implementation strategy for February 2007 – March 2008?

This strategy involves (i) implementing scaled back activities within key areas, and (ii) prioritizing human resource needs accordingly. Work within the various sectors will occur as follows:

Urban

A full time Urban Coordinator will be appointed on a 3 year contract to continue the work that Anthea has begun. This person will be located within the offices of GDACE. The

urban coordinator will be responsible to roll out the urban implementation plan commencing implementation of activities around securing the 12 biodiversity priority sites in Gauteng, as well as formalizing partnerships with provincial agencies, local municipalities and the private sector in Gauteng through various agreements. The Coordinator will work on the development of a toolkit to assist decision-makers mainstream biodiversity into land use planning and management. It is anticipated that service providers will be contracted to provide inputs on the following aspects: Complete the institutional mainstreaming effectiveness scorecard with municipalities; Develop guidelines for urban eco-estates; Develop guidelines for securing urban conservation land; and Make a case for the value of biodiversity in an urban setting.

Forestry

Appointment of a forestry service provider on a part time basis over a 12 month period to continue the forestry work already begun. This person will be based in Pietermaritzburg. S/he will be responsible to initiate activities as set out in the detailed implementation plan (developed by James Jackelman) to secure biodiversity priority sites on unplanted forestry land. S/he will also be responsible for developing detailed implementation plans for the two other streams of work in the forestry component, i.e. on small



Newly appointed Grasslands Programme Manager Anthea Stephens and Grasslands Programme Officer Florence Nazare

growers and policy aspects.

Agriculture

The Agriculture Coordinator will be appointed by SANBI to be based in Pretoria by July/August this year to spearhead this component. S/he will pick up on important policy issues in the agricultural sector. These include the various draft policies being developed by DoA, such as on range and forage; the cabinet approved biofuels strategy; and taking the work forward regarding red meat certification through engagement with the private sector.

The Wakkerstroom agricultural demonstration implementation plan will be complete by March/April this year. The next step is project set-up with partner organisations such as MTPA and DALA, and the initiation of implementation activities, with a possible focus on developing the process for the declaration of a "protected environment" (PE) under the Protected Areas Act by the MEC for the area surrounding the Paardeplaats Nature Reserve of MTPA. The Wakkerstroom work will be taken forward through the ap-

pointment of a service provider on a 12 month contract. The Agricultural Task Team visits the area on 7th until 9th March undertaking a field visit, viewing conservation stewardship and biodiversity friendly land management on farm and engaging with local farmers.

The Free State river ecosystems demonstration implementation plan will be completed by April/May this year. Thereafter work in this component will go on hold until GEF funds are available.

Coal mining

The report on how and where to pilot the establishment of a wetland mitigation banking scheme in the coal mining sector will be completed within the first quarter of this year. It will be distributed to stakeholders for comment. Thereafter work in this component, which will be implemented through Working for Wetlands, will go on hold until GEF funds are available.

Communications

The Grasslands Programme has enhanced the body of knowledge on the biodiversity of the grasslands biome and the impact of production sectors on the biome. Existing staff will focus on producing and distrib-



1st Annual Grasslands Partners Forum, 23-24 November 2006

uting this information in an accessible format to raise awareness around the importance of the biome and the activities of the Grasslands Programme. This will involve preparing factual publications, developing a regular newsletter and a website for the Programme. A publication on "what stakeholders are doing for biodiversity in the grasslands biome" and a "lessons learnt during programme development" is also planned.

A reminder of what the Grasslands Programme is about

This bioregional programme aims to sustain and secure biodiversity and associated ecosystem services of the grassland biome for the benefit of current and future generation. The mission is:

- To ensure that the wise management of biodiversity contributes to sustainable development in the grasslands biome
- To ensure that production and development activities are appropriately located and managed, so that the delivery of ecosystem services is not impaired
- To mobilize and empower land users and landowners, including companies, to be effective

stewards of the landscape.

The strategic approach of the programme is mainstreaming biodiversity in production sectors and the chosen sectors are agriculture (rangeland and cultivation), forestry, coal mining and urban development in Gauteng.

How do stakeholders participate in the Grasslands Programme?

The **Grassland Steering Committee** provides strategic direction to the programme and consists of the following institutions: DWAF, DEAT, DoA, AgriSA, Forestry SA, GDACE, UNDP/GEF, WWF The Green Trust and SANBI.

The **Grasslands Partner' Forum** meets annually to provide a forum for stakeholders to discuss key strategic issues facing the grasslands biome. The November 2006 Forum was well attended by over 100 participants from government, private sector and civil society.

The **Grasslands Urban Team** was born out of the Gauteng Urban Development and Biodiversity workshop that was attended by 74 people from 31 institutions held in July 2005. There are 13 members

(GDACE, 3 metros, 3 DMs, 3LMs, 1 NGO, 1 professional association, SANBI). The Team has identified 12 priority sites in Gauteng for conservation action and has designed the log frame for the urban component of the programme.

The **Forestry Task Team** was formed out of the Forestry Development and Grasslands Biodiversity workshop that was held in September 2005 and consists of representatives from: SANBI, DWAF, Forestry South Africa (FSA), large timber growers, small/emerging timber growers, private timber growers, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Authority, the E Cape Dept of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism, civil society and research institutions. The design team has developed a high level log frame for the forestry component of the programme with the following areas for intervention:

- Industry wide interventions to mainstream biodiversity
- Securing permanently unplanted forestry land that are priority sites for biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Expansion of new plantations

The **Agriculture Task Team** has representation from the Agribusiness Chamber, AgriSA, NAFU, Red Meat Producer's Organisation (RPO), National Emerging Red Meat Producer's Organisation (NERPO), Grain SA, Wildlife Ranching SA and the national De-

partment of Agriculture. The team is being expanded to include the ARC, representatives from the provincial departments of agriculture in KZN and Mpumalanga; representatives from provincial conservation agencies/environment departments in Mpumalanga, KZN and the Free State; and the National Woolgrowers Association. A Wakkerstroom Task Team will be established to provide direction and oversight to the implementation of the Wakkerstroom agricultural demonstration project. A Steering Committee for the Free State river ecosystem demonstration is in place.

Once GEF funds are secured a **Coal Mining Task Team** will be established.

A full list of documents available from the Grasslands Programme is available separately and at: www.sanbi.org/frames/biodiversityfram.htm and follow the link to Bioregional Programmes and Grassland Project

Who can be contacted for more information?

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