
Opening Address for Rangeland Monitoring Workshop

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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the ARC and to the National Rangeland Monitoring Workshop that is meant to be a platform for deliberations about the form and shape the much needed rangeland monitoring programme should take. We need some mechanism that enables us to stay in touch with the state of health of our rangelands in order to utilize them judiciously and to make sure they are there for our children's grandchildren and their grandchildren. The landscape is littered with examples of degradation of one form or another of the rangeland resource, owing to our failure to take good care of our natural veld. I think if things continue at this pace of degradation, in less than 100 years Acocks's description of our veld types will have to be redone.

Seeing the diversity of the workshop participants- from the programme we have DoA, SANParks, SAEON (SA Ecological Observation

Network), PDAs and universities- I believe the will to tackle the problem is there. All we need now is to get the collective wisdom of this group to design and develop a programme that we can use to monitor the condition of our rangelands. Many tools which can assist in the monitoring programme are already available and are readily accessible if one knocks on the right doors. I am talking about systems like AGIS (the agricultural information systems) and other databases, vegetation surveys and mappings. I am not even mentioning the wealth of experience and expertise of the grass mechanics who are in this room alone.

Although this time we are coordinating the workshop, this is not an ARC programme- it is much bigger than that- the success of whatever range monitoring strategy the workshop comes up with will depend on the cooperation and contributions of the colleagues who are here at the workshop and those who for one reason or another are not here today. Cooperating and sharing wis-

dom and resources will be the hallmark of this initiative, we hope.

We are also hoping that the monitoring programme will encourage fresh and exciting research on various aspects of grassland science or ecology or livestock and game production systems.

Colleagues, let me wrap up by recognizing a few organisations and individuals who are here today. I have to acknowledge the generous financial and strategic contribution of the Department of Agriculture's Directorate of Animal and Aquaculture Production Systems to making this workshop a reality. I have to acknowledge the sterling work of the organizing team led by Dr Luthando Dziba who had to deal with the logistical arrangements of this workshop. Well done, you guys. I appreciate how difficult the task you had can be. Believe me, it is difficult to even organise a party in a brewery!

Many of you had to come from far to get here. Thank you indeed for making time to attend the workshop. I am sure at the end of the workshop you will deem the workshop worth all your effort.

To each and every one of you, welcome to the workshop and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

At the end of today, you are invited to a braai at the Irene Pig Lapa to unwind and chat the evening away.

I thank you.



GIMS Map Competition

GIMS, the distributor of ESRI GIS software and related products in South Africa, is hosting a Map Competition at its User Conference from the 1-3 October 2007. The Map Competition aims to recognise excellence on cartography and GIS modelling, with prizes in four categories: presentation; content; thematic maps; and natural resources and utilities.

The competition is open to any interested parties, whether individuals, teams or institutions from the private and public sectors. Entrants may only submit any entry in one of the above categories, but there is no limit to the number of entries per Entrant.

Entries are free, and must be submitted to the Midrand offices of GIMS by 1 September 2007, accompanied by a short explanation of the map and all contact details. Both digital and laminated hardcopy maps must be submitted.

The map must be an original map, generated using ESRI software. All entries will remain the property of GIMS unless prior arrangements are made with the judging panel. GIMS will only use the material for display or promotional purposes.

Maps will be judged by a panel of expert GIS users. Judging criteria include: the degree to which sound principles of cartographic design have been used; the user-friendliness of the final product; the cost-effectiveness of the product; the degree to which the product exhibits an innovative solution to a problem.

For further information and competition details, contact Antionette McMaster : +27 11 238 6300 or email amcmaster@gims.com

