

## Progress Report on the

# National Grasslands

# *Biodiversity* Programme

**July - September 2005**

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### Introduction and programme management issues

The NGBP is in the design phase, and the objectives of this phase are:

- To design the NGBP to secure natural resources and meet biodiversity targets in the grasslands biome
- To design the project document to meet the UNDP-GEF requirements
- Explore whether existing programmes that have the same objectives as the NGBP, want to align themselves with the NGBP and see what they are doing to manage biodiversity in grasslands.

### Update

Florence Nazare joined SANBI in August as the programme coordinator.

A Grasslands Steering Committee has been established that provides oversight, advice and facilitates the design phase of the NGBP. It has the following members: SANBI; Forestry South Africa;



AgriSA; DWAF; DEAT; DoA; GDACE - representing the urban sector; UNDP GEF regional and SA offices; and WWF The Green Trust.

The NGBP is tasked with mainstreaming biodiversity into the Urban, Forestry and Agricultural (extensive and intensive) sectors. Two additional sectors have been proposed recently: Mining and Tourism. The area of Conservation Planning is cross cutting, providing vital decision support tools required by the programme. The NGBP is tasked with working in six provinces: Gauteng (overlaps with the urban sector); Mpumalanga; Eastern Cape; KZN; Free State; and North West.

### Urban sector

An Urban Development and Biodiversity Workshop was held with 74 participants from 31 institutions national, provincial and local government, civil society, private sector associations, research and academic institutions.

The workshop resulted in the establishment of a Grasslands Urban Team. Its aims are to design

the urban Gauteng-based component of the NGBP; to provide leadership and direction to the content of the urban Gauteng-based component of the NGBP; to serve as a discussion forum for implementation of the Gauteng Conservation Plan; and to facilitate information sharing. Members come from the following organisations: GDACE; Tshwane metro; Ekurhuleni metro; Jo'burg metro; Sedibeng District Municipality; Emfuleni Local Municipality; Mogale City LM; West rand DM; IAIA and WESSA.

Six potential areas for intervention within the urban sector were identified

- Making plans work in metropolitan councils
- Making plans work in district and local municipalities
- Conservation of priority sites through utilisation
- Private sector engagement
- Urban edge and the built environment
- Law enforcement

### **Next steps**

A log frame meeting for the urban component will be held on 3 and 4 November

### **Forestry sector**

A Forestry Development and Grasslands Biodiversity workshop was held on 28 September and was attended by 45 participants. The aim was to explore with industry, government and other stakeholders what is being done to secure biodiversity within the grasslands biome while meeting the industry's challenges. It resulted in the formation of a Forestry Design Team that will take responsibility for the detailed designing of what

interventions the NGBP will undertake in this sector. The Team presently has 9 members (2 DWAF, 2 SANBI, 1 Forestry SA, 1 rep of small/emerging timber growers, 1 rep of big timber growers, 2 civil society GSSA&EWT)

The workshop provided guidance that the NGBP forestry component should develop interventions in the following areas:

- Securing unplanted forestry land for biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Management of unplanted forestry land
- Small growers, in particular regarding expansion of new forestry plantations
- Management of existing plantations

### **Agricultural sector**

To date discussions have been held with the following agricultural stakeholders: AgriSA; the Wildlife Ranching Association (formerly SAGRO); National Department of Agriculture; provincial Departments of Agriculture in E Cape, Mpumalanga, and Free State. It has been proposed that an Agricultural Advisory Team be established to provide strategic direction to the agricultural component of the programme.

Due to the scale of the agricultural sector it was decided that a strategic focus is required, to facilitate maximum impact for the given budget. The first is a comparative economic study of key agricultural enterprises to identify those expected to grow in the next 5 to 10 years.

The second is an assessment of which agricultural enterprises hold the greatest threat for biodiversity, and which have the potential for

biodiversity compatible interventions.

The findings from these studies will be presented to stakeholders at the Grasslands Forum meeting of 24 November 2005.

### **Conservation planning**

A provincial biodiversity conservation plan that identifies biodiversity priority areas is an essential decision support tool for the NGBP. The fact that GDACE's Gauteng C-plan2 has provincial cabinet approval lends it the weight needed for the plan to be taken seriously by both the public and private sectors.

KZN has a technically advanced conservation plan but faces many implementation challenges.

Mpumalanga has completed a first draft of their conservation plan. They have been supported by SANBI and the Steering Committee responsible for the process is a key institutional mechanism through which the NGBP should work.

There is no province-wide systematic conservation plan for the E Cape but rather a number of finer scale and biome specific conservation plans such as CAPE, STEP, Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Park (MDTP) and the Wild Coast and Pondoland plans. DWAF is busy with a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a systematic conservation plan for the Mzimvubu to Keiskamma Water Management Area. This work should be completed by April 2006 and should provide critical planning information for the grasslands within the province.

The Free State province has resolved to develop a Biodiversity Conservation Plan. The NGBP will support the

presentation of the process for developing the plan to management of the FS Department of Tourism, Environment and Economic Affairs (DTEEA) for approval.

The North West province has undertaken a number of planning processes. The detail of these and the need or not for a provincial conservation plan will be discussed with them during a visit planned at the end of October.

Mathieu Rouget from SANBI is working with Belinda Reyers, contracted by the NGBP, to develop a grassland biome biodiversity profile and spatial biodiversity priority assessment. This plan will be presented to stakeholders at the Grasslands Forum meeting scheduled for 24 November 2005 (see ad on page 18).

### **Provincial visits**

During July to September visits were undertaken to Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu/Natal, Free State, and within Gauteng. A North West visit is scheduled for late in October 2005.

### **Economic Issues**

The issue of a study to design a Financial Mechanism/Revolving Trust has emerged strongly: the idea is that a financial mechanism (such as a trust) is established to support the securing of biodiversity priority sites. The trust would initially be capitalized and using these funds it could purchase priority biodiversity land and sell them to buyers willing to accept title deed restrictions and conservation management implications. These sites would be bound by stewardship agreements with a conservation agency. Money

from the sale of the sites would go back into the Trust for new purchases. This is not a new idea and has been implemented successfully in other countries such as Australia and the USA. The SA context is clearly different and key issues such as land reform have to be taken into account. The NGBP is in the process of discussing the matter with DEAT and hopes to thereafter commission the development of a feasibility/business case for the idea. As other bioregional programmes have been exploring the issue for some time, this needs to be handled as a national initiative.

In line with the project document the NGBP needs to address the issue of placing a value on the ecosystem services provided by the grasslands biome and this was discussed in some depth with KZN stakeholders. As part of a Working for Water project to place an economic value on controlling invasive alien species, a total economic value of the remaining intact grasslands biome is in the process of being estimated. This work has been undertaken by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and CSIR. The NGBP will be commissioning work to make certain adaptations to the work, add additional information (such as comparisons) and produce a short document and presentations for various audiences that makes the case for the grasslands biome in terms of its ecosystem value.



## **South African Soil Surveyors Organisation**

### **Pietermaritzburg workshop**

The next SASSO workshop is at Pietermaritzburg on the 24th and 25th of November 2005. The program includes lectures by the father of soil classification, Dr. Chris MacVicar, and on-site lectures by experts on soil management. The annual general meeting with election of office bearers and year end function will conclude the Thursday. The workshop closes at 12:00 on Friday. We will visit about 18 soil profiles over the course of the workshop. Visit the SASSO website at [www.sasso.co.za](http://www.sasso.co.za) or contact Piet le Roux on:

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### **A Fresh Breeze in Agricultural Management**

*Strategic Approach to Farming Success* by Wim Nell (South Africa) and Rob Napier (Australia), applies strategic management principles to agriculture.

The main feature of this book is its practical approach. Exercises at the end of each chapter help to compile a strategic plan for a farming business to guide the reader to sustainable farming success. It can be applied to any farming situation throughout the world.

Visit [www.farmingsuccess.com](http://www.farmingsuccess.com) or contact Wim Nell on email [NellWT.SCI@mail.uovs.ac.za](mailto:NellWT.SCI@mail.uovs.ac.za) or phone +27(0)51 401 3759/2557.