

UMZIMVUBU CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (UCPP)

MINUTES OF PARTNERS' MEETING HELD 11 SEPTEMBER 2013, METHODIST HALL, MATATIELE

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Representatives present: DEDEAT, ERS, CSA, FREEDOM CHALLENGE, LIMA, FIREWISE, DWA, INR, TSHAKA TOURS, MEHLODING, UKZN, DRD&LR (Maluti office), IDT, EWT (see attached attendance register).

Apologies

Sue Carter-Brown (LIMA), Thando Msomi (MATAT LM), Piet Bosman (Mt Currie Community), Basetsana Khathali (ANDM), Heidi Hawkins & Sarah Frazee (CSA), N. Nziweni (DEA ANDM), Andrew Lucus (DWA), Mr Nakin (WSU), Val Charlton & Guy Deacon (FIREWISE), Joyce Loza (MDTP).

2. Previous minutes and matters arising

No matters arising.

3. Update presentations (electronic copies available on request)

a) Bio – monitoring in Umzimvubu Catchment: DWA & GroundTruth

MLONDOLOZI MBIKWANA from DWA said that under the National Water Act there is requirement and provision for clarifying and monitoring management of water resources in South Africa. All activities depend on the availability of water in terms of volume and quality.

The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) was given custodianship to manage all water resources for South African citizens. Firstly consideration is given to basic environmental and human needs followed by other uses (industry, strategic use, farming etc).

The current sampling/assessment being done in uMzimvubu followed this process: DWA appointed Oliver Tambo, who in turn appointed GroundTruth consultants. The consultant are sampling at previous sampling sites as well as some new sites. Mapping for sampling especially chose sites less impacted from the up-stream and looks at quality land use activities to clarify and monitor the water resource. Initially it was supposed to be done as a technical report, but because of the development pressures like mining it was required to upgrade it as a comprehensive reserve. (Preparatory report). They are currently busy with this report.

Purpose of the comprehensive reserve is the need that development proposals be assessed quickly to of water quality and quantity and the impacts of development thereon.

Ground Truth, Department of Water Affairs and Municipalities are involved. More concrete results expected soon – these will be shared with the UCPP. A workshop will be done later this year and this is the time for inputs. Sediment studies are not yet done, but bio-monitoring started in 2007.

Questions/ Discussions

Mr Spoti (DEDEAT) approval of 27 afforestation projects in ANDM has taken place, and more applications are expected. Limited knowledge about the comprehensive reserve makes approval of projects very unsure. SFRA's is backlogging the process as need to be done properly before permits issued for afforestation. Nicky (ERS) indicated that EIA and WUL/water permit application Process often 'chicken and egg' and need to be aligned (Londi, Mr Spotsi, Nicky to arrange separate meeting to address this.) Clear reserve determinations will give baseline information and speed up permit application response process. Motivated for use of degraded areas e.g. jungle wattle instead of pristine grasslands.

Cobus Theron (EWT) asked about the availability of microchips from DEDEAT for Cycad. Dean Ricketts replied that some 30 'old' kind chips are available. They have submitted proposal to head office for more chips.

Mr. Spotsi said that there is a new project headed by DEDEAT: There is new establishment of new towns in Mzamba and Coffee Bay. Bizana is already threatened by human settlement. There is a summit on 14-15 October in East London for the project. Two districts to be involved in the preparation (OR Tambo and ANDM). To finalise the paper for the summit, there is need to have someone from the forum to prepare for the per-summit about climate change resilience. DEDEAT and ANDM are the leader for the preparation of the summit.

Sissie (ERS) indicated that the District EMF is not yet adopted which is hindering recommendation of some developmental projects: unless it's adopted, sustainable planning and development will be hindered.

Attending students asked whether the water monitoring data is available – Londi replied that they can request it through him.

b) Climate Vulnerability Assessment for Alfred Nzo District: ERS & CSA

Completion of EMF has been done (issues in Alfred Nzo that are affecting the four different municipalities). Mme Sissie urged everyone to look through the EMF. Umzimvubu LM area has the highest erosion status, followed by Matatiele, and we need to consider why there is erosion which is highly related to the land use and landscape situation. Matatiele has the highest wattle infestation (estimated 20 000 hectares) which is limiting resources in the area such as water and grazing. There is need to prioritise areas that need to be addressed regarding resource allocation: partners within UCPP already tackling this through DEA NRM funding in several areas of upper catchment.

Concerning hydrology, there are a lot of wetlands and river tributaries in Matatiele however people are building in the wetland, grazing and cultivating them thus degrading them, people are even using fertilizers which will result in pollution and reduction of available potable water hence making wetlands not able to perform their functions.

Mme Sissie noted that ignorance of leaders is also contributing to the problem of people building in the wetlands, because they are being allocated land for settlement in the wetlands.

There is limited network of streams in Ntabankulu, only two major rivers. The large Umzimvubu River should be critically taken care of because it passes through all the municipalities except Bizana.

Bizana has the highest spread of settlement hence conflicting with the wildlife and human being. Animals attack homesteads because they have no space to occupy (unplanned settlement) and natural habitat being destroyed. Case of baboons attacking goats in Bizana area was discussed.

There is also uncontrolled and unproductive livestock in Ntabankulu degrading grasslands, however there is indigenous vegetation and this natural land should be taken care of to improve its productivity.

Matatiele is the only municipality in ANDM that has protected areas.

Question: What is needed to address issues for climate change resilience in ANDM?

- Ecosystem restoration to build resilience to changes in climate and extreme events
- Properly planned land use and infrastructure planning
- Rehabilitation of landscapes
- Institutional capacity building
- Adaptive governance and responsive government
- Effective Application of legislation
- Realistic and compliant Water and waste management strategy.

c) Environmental Education Update: DEA & DEDEAT

Vulture awareness and tree planting was initiated by ERS, MDTP, CSA and DEDEAT in different schools in Matatiele Municipality. The EE was also happening in Underberg with the help of Joyce from MDTP. Students were so excited and fully participated in vulture discussions and tree planting.

There was also Environment Ward Education that took place in August. Schools were shortlisted for the provincial competition. Marine day will be on 5th (31st ?) October 2013 which will involve wetland awareness beforehand.

Arbor workshop will be on 25th September

Environmental business opportunities presentation at Mt Ayliff on 26 Sept 2013 discussions will involve Red Meat Naturally and Alien vegetation clearing.

d) Umzimvubu Source to sea expedition: ERS & SWC

Presented by Nicky (ERS). Objective is to develop a baseline story / biography of the river status and understand drivers of impacts along its entire corridor, with regards to quality, volume and threats. This will be essential before developing dams and other impounding and abstracting infrastructure on the river. We underestimate this valuable river which harbours several biomes and incredible biodiversity, and has largely untapped recreational and agricultural potential.

e) DEA Land User Incentives programme NRM implementation update:

i. Ward 14: ERS & CSA

ERS and CSA to start working in ward 14 (Motseng, Moiketsi, Thaba Chicha areas) on October. The objective of the project is to improve rangeland quality through restoration of grasslands, involving alien clearing and ecoranger support. This is done through working with the community. Currently the PSC is being drawn together before commencing the project in early October. 52 people are going to be employed as clearing teams and CSA will employ 20 Eco rangers for erosion fixing and wattle maintenance towards improved rangeland management. Project approved for 2,5 years.

ii. Ward 12 & 13: Fire wise

To clear alien plant infestation in ward 13 and 12 as means of fire threat reduction. Fire wise does fire awareness during winter. This has been done through collaboration with the community. Teams assist fire fighters from WoFire at Ongeluksnek.

Fire wise has healthy and safety specialist to ensure that workers are safe on work site. Employing 220 people currently.

iii. Ntenetyana & Mafube: LIMA

Also covered by DEA Land Users Incentives programme, building on catchment clearing and restoration work started by ERS and ANDM in 2011 and 2012. Targetting Ntenetayan dam and Mafube, involving 6 villages.

Management of grazing areas through development and implementation of grazing system, Improved livestock Management, and rehabilitation works.

Contract finalised in April. Community facilitator appointed in July. Team leaders started 4 September, 112 workers

Ntenetyane: initial clearing and follow up previously cleared areas funded by DWA through ANDM & ERS.

Mafube: initially working along accessible streams and will later work where grazing Management plan focuses.

Assistance from ERS for identifying workers and supervisors, maps, initial practical training in clearing methods.

Possibility of disabled persons also working to produce wattle products (besides managing toolsheds).

Mr. Spotsi suggested the wattle fencing screens as material for fencing gardens, homes, toilet screens at schools.

Ntenetyana progress: Initial 2 teams 2.83 ha; Follow up 4 teams, 8.35teams

Mafube progress: 2 teams 3.5 ha

Detailing plan for grazing management is a next step to be taken – currently engaging with communities to see how this can be done

Challenges include supervisory issues over cleared areas, some equipment not robust enough.

Forthcoming activities: Disciplinary protocol. Diversification of alien clearing teams.

Procure seed for re-establishment cover on cleared areas. WRC research project a possibility for additional funds.

Discussions

The community needs to identify wood lots, however this will need to be properly managed and also be demarcated to ensure there it does not spread. Need also bio monitoring.

f) Bike race: Mehlooding Trust and Freedom Challenge Scholarship Fund (FCSF)

Children from disadvantaged homes along Freedom challenge bicycle route get the opportunity to get tertiary education through the fund, co-ordinated by Tsepo and Nicky. Dr. Thusi (local practitioner) is kindly funding 2 full positions.

Hosting an event at Mpharane on 24 September 2013 and Firewise is the sponsor for the event. Email will be circulated to the UCPP stakeholders.

g) Conservancy progress on farms: EWT

Stewardship in EC on private land 3000 hectares that have applied for stewardship which will be recognised legally. Cedarville Conservancy management plan being drawn up, and there is a Nature Reserve aspect that could be declared.

Opportunities for bee keeping

MDTP proposal done to CEPF by ERS and partners including EWT and CSA - Link Ongeluksnek Nature Reserve (ONR) to uKhahlamba Drakensberg near Swartberg. After obtaining funds, working with communities along the escarpment can be done to see how this link can be done for long-term conservation and improvement of livelihoods.

h) Other research items:

Candice Greenland introduced herself as a MSc student from UKZN. She will be investigating bio-turbation as method to restore cleared wattle infested land, working with ERS and Motseng community.

Two post grad students from Germany linked to UKZN also attended, supporting general hydrology research in area.

i) Logo update: CSA

Sinegugu presented the logo options:

Most people opted for the green logo; birds were removed to make it clearer. Some discussion around logo being too like that of WfW? Participants to help on deciding which logo to be adopted: Mme Sissie, Meghan Ellis and Sarah Frazee to assist Sinegugu.

j) Prospecting application for mining in Matatiele Municipality: CSA

Sinegugu gave a presentation on the coastal mining application experience: What does it mean for Matatiele?

The current mining proposal has lack of consultation with civil society and the communities on MPRDA (Minerals Act): overall feeling of resistance to access to information, mines without water use licences, absence of community voices and a challenge to the mining Indaba. The planned mine dams will also pollute water which is against section 24 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa which states that every South African is entitled to healthy environment.

Cobus noted that UCPP is generating a conservation economy. This is only one prospecting application in one area – there could be many more. The involved applicant/consultant was also not very transparent as no one has heard anything from them since the last meeting.

Mme Sissie also added against mining as it is a short term attractive event to communities, but mostly has long term implications. Anybody receiving information on the matter must please share with the partners;

Mr. Spotsi added that the mining proposal is still in early stages trying to apply for a licence and more still they are not sure of what minerals they want.

Mr. Mlondolozu Mbikwana said that mining would not be a compatible activity for the area as no mining has proven proper rehabilitation in terms of hydrology. UCCP is promoting a green economy and this has its eye on the long-term well-being of all people and the natural support system. Current studies are being done and they should be used to advise future development which is linked to sustainability.

5. Closure and Lunch

The chairperson thanked everyone for their efforts to attend the meeting.

The date for the next meeting will on 4th December 2013.

Lunch served by local ladies group.