

GCA - Ear to the Ground...

Gauteng Conservancy Association newsletter: June 2004 (No 1)

Hi!

There is so much happening in Gauteng conservancies that we need to know about - new initiatives, battles, successes, growth - that we decided to send an e-mail newsletter to keep everyone in the loop. Please feel free to send in news. The Karee Chronicle covers as much as possible but it appears every two months only, and life in conservancies moves much too fast for that! If you don't want to receive this newsletter, pop back a note saying No Thank You. (*Helen Duigan, Communications and Media: GCA and NACSA*)

In this issue: *The Landbouweekblad interviews At Kruger ; Jean Lindsay of KZN conservancies on Radio 702; A new township conservancy on the East Rand, GCA and the Launch of the Environment Report; New look for the website; A woman takes on Goldfields about pollution on the West Rand. Budget available for projects. And lots more!*

At and the Landbouweekblad

At Kruger (De Tweedespruit and NACSA chairman) had a two-hour interview with Landbouweekblad's Isabel Stoltz this week. "She got quite excited about what is happening with conservancies and has asked to be kept updated regularly. She wants to attend the NACSA AGM as well as next year's national conference in Mpumalanga," At said. He also referred her to Jean Lindsay (KZN) for more info on industrial, township and landfill conservancies and that got her even more interested. We will let you know when the article appears, but keep an eye open in the meantime.

Dumps, landfills and Radio 702

One of the intriguing topics at the second national conference at Ithala in KZN dealt with landfills (not to be confused with "dumps"!) The Marianhill Landfill is situated in a residential area and because it's so well-managed, meeting all environmental legal requirements, it has actually been declared a conservancy. Even education has been factored in and hundreds of learners visit it yearly.

Radio 702's John Robbie broached the subject of the proposed landfill on Northern Farm (Joburg Water's purification works) next to Diepsloot and Zevenfontein informal settlements. This sounded like a dump, not a landfill, judging by the problems Joburg has had with its waste. The public outcry was huge - it will bring disease, rats and flies, please put it somewhere else (where?!). So we sent him details of the Marianhill Conservancy and Jean Lindsay's contact details, which resulted in a brilliant 10-minute interview with Jean this past week. Ivan Parkes has it on CD, if you're interested.

Talking about dumps, Ivan reports total non-compliance from the Midvaal Council regarding the site in Thorntree Conservancy, Walkerville. It's a mess and he is now on the warpath - involving the Council, the press, GDACE and DWAF (Water and Forestry), which were supposed to

approve the site but nothing has been done to date. "The matter of licensing has been referred to DEAT (Environment and Tourism)!" he says. "Thorntree has now called for closure of the dump."

Ivan is putting together a Power-Point presentation on the different landfill approaches of KZN and Gauteng. They are managing it and we're messing around. Why?

Battle of the blonde

Mariette Liefferink, a diminutive blonde, has challenged Goldfields on their management of Wes-Driefontein mine: lack of rehabilitation, poisoning of underground water, broken agreements with the original owners, and a whole string of other allegations. Goldfields did the usual - tried to shake her off, offered her a job - but she stuck to her points. She has made a detailed study of environmental laws and a meeting was set for her, Goldfields, GDACE etc. last Tuesday. GDACE pulled out at the last minute, citing a crisis meeting somewhere. Carte Blanche has now taken it up and Radio 702 is also investigating. Mariette says she "campaigns for social justice" and has offered us her help when it comes to environmental laws and their application and implications. That could be most useful...

New conservancies

- Ollie Olwage from Benoni Agricultural Holdings Conservancy reports the launch of the first conservancy in a black residential area, called Thuthuli Park. He will let us have details soon.
- Lammermoor (next to the Cradle of Humankind) has elected a steering committee to look at forming a conservancy. First on their agenda is taking responsibility for the two water courses which feed into the Crocodile River.
- African Products' industrial conservancy has its constitution in place and are awaiting approval from GDACE.
- GCA has had requests for assistance in forming conservancies from Farmall (bordering on the R512 near Kya Sands) and from an area near Hekpoort.
- Broederstroom Conservancy is progressing and Drift Wetlands (near Muldersdrift) is holding its own against some really messy developments nearby. (See **Uphill Battle** below)

If all these conservancies happen, it will form a chain across the north-west: Hennopsvallei, bordering on Rhenosterspruit, touching on Broederstroom, close to Lammermoor, which borders on Kromdraai, with Drift Wetlands in the south.

Website

The conservancies website, www.conservancies.org is being revamped and updated. We held back giving the website details to Radio 702 until its ready. Individual conservancies will be able to access and update their own details - so it's up to each of us whether we look good or not up to scratch.

GDACE: Launch of the State of the Environment Report

On Thursday June 17 GDACE launched their State of the Environment Report to 300 delegates from all sectors. The new MEC, Khabisi Mosunkutu made some strong statements regarding waste and pollution, which he said would be tackled forcefully. He would also not tolerate non-compliance to minimum standards. He said "no" to rampant development without regards to the negative effects it caused and said he would not support development on prime agricultural land.

The Report was handed out and we took a few copies. It contains very valuable, relevant information and is worth getting. I suggest you contact Mary-Jean Gabriel, our GCA contact at

GDACE to ask where you can get a copy (082 555 8064). Under the Biodiversity section on "What are we doing about it?", **GCA is listed as one of the associations taking initiative.**

GCA was asked to give a presentation on Biodiversity (other talks covered, Air, Water, Waste, etc), which I presented as well as I could, supported by Ollie Olwage. All our GCA leaflets plus the little green handbook (**How to form a conservancy**) compiled by Ivan Parkes, were taken. The booklet is very "user-friendly", taking aspirant conservancies through, step-by-step, and is available from Ivan: (016) 590-2312. It covers how to start and includes a draft constitution, a management plan and useful advice.

By the way, DACEL has now lost (or discarded?) Land Affairs and has become GDACE: the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment.

Uphill battle

Cassie van der Walt (Drift Wetlands Conservancy) paints a bleak picture of "development" on the N14 in Muldersdrift, near their conservancy. The present Pinehaven Estates cluster consists of 540 houses, with a shopping and medical centre being planned. There is no provision for a sewage pipeline and the tanks are currently emptied **16 times a day** by "honey suckers"! Ground water tested nearby gave a 23 000/100ml e-coli count - the "legal" level is 1 000/100ml. So where does that leave Drift Wetlands further downstream? "So, things don't look so good," says Cassie, "But they're hell-bent on more building. A further 500 clusterhouses behind the present Pinehaven are being planned up against the ridge, blatantly ignoring the ridge line legal requirements."

Should "development" not be renamed "destruction"? How do developers push these things through? Where is GDACE when these things happen?

Crossing the N14

Three "developments" on the border of the Rhenosterspruit Conservancy near Lanseria Airport are also raising concern. One is called Stonehaven, cut up into 1 ha plots and selling merrily - we have no idea whether an EIA has been done but intend finding out. Blair Atholl (Gary Player's property) has been sold and the plans are for 300 upmarket residences, a golf course and a hotel. At present the idea is to use boreholes (!) because they have not had an OK from Rand Water to supply water. Right next to it, straddling the Jukskei is Monaghan Farm which is planning another estate of 260 houses, stables, farming activities etc. They claim they'll get water from Tshwane.

Ten years ago the Demarcation Board ruled that land "north of the R28/N14 would be kept for agriculture, conservation and recreation". Attempts to get the new Spatial Development Framework from Tshwane were fruitless - having spoken to 14 different people who simply passed you on to the next. The final "voice" said, sorry, it's not completed yet. So, while they are "completing it" all kinds of proposals appear on the table and some are going ahead. What does that bode for the future?

Offer of help

Yolan Friedman (Endangered Wildlife Trust) has offered to contact people who can help conservancies understand and utilise the processes governing development proposals, comment/objections from interested parties, how to make sure you're registered as an interested party and how to spot when developers try to fast-track plans or circumvent the law. We'll follow up on that.

Ithala Conference

The GCA committee attended the second national conservancy conference hosted by KZN. The topics were most interesting and very down-to-earth - congratulations to the KZN team who

organised it. There are now five provincial associations under the NACSA umbrella compared with only two last year: KZN, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Western Cape. The groundswell is becoming a large wave. It may become a tidal wave. The 2005 conference will be held in Mpumalanga.

Budget for projects

A considerable budget is available from GDACE for "greening projects" in informal settlements. If you are involved in such, forward a detailed proposal for funds via the GCA to GDACE.

END

Groete!

Helen

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