



Working for Water

E-News

Welcome to the *Working for Water* electronic newsletter. This publication is aimed at keeping staff and stakeholders informed on the progress made towards controlling invasive alien plants (IAPs), the challenges encountered during implementation and the achievements of *Working for Water* nationally.

Volume 2 - Edition 3

May/June 2009

The month of June saw South Africa celebrate and honour its apartheid heroes with Youth Day on 16 June 2009 and also by honouring the planet and our ecosystems with World Environment Day (WED) on 05 June 2009. The theme for WED 2009 was 'Your Planet Needs You- Unite to Combat Climate Change'. The organizers say the theme "reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new deal at the crucial climate convention meeting to be held in Copenhagen later in the year, and the links with overcoming poverty and improved management of forests."

Working for Water has always been at the forefront of environmental conservation as well as poverty alleviation. In this issue we focus on some of the social work that WfW has been involved in and also how the youth within the programme are working towards creating sustainable futures. We are also introduced to the Kouga Nursery Project in the Eastern Cape where a partnership has been established exploring ways to further enhance skills and support the local community.

Finally, WfW has suffered a great loss with the passing of Laulau Ngqokoma who was a true beacon of light to all of us who were privileged to work with her and know her.

If you have any feedback as to what you would like to see in the E-News please contact us.

- E-News Team



From seedling to sapling, the Kouga Nursery houses many indigenous species supplying seeds and plants to surrounding nurseries

Kouga Nursery- Growing Plants, Growing People

By Leon Jamarie

A partnership between WfW and Wageningen University, based in the Netherlands has been initiated to help clear and rehabilitate the area along the Kouga Dam in the Eastern Cape. The area is managed by the Gamtoos Irrigation Board which supplies water to approximately 250 farms in the area. Kouga is the Khoi name for Hippopotamus.

The area has a huge plant invasion problem of Rooikrans and Black Wattle. WfW is funding the clearing effort as well as rehabilitating the cleared area. Mr Pierre Joubert (head of the Irrigation Board) said: "Ongoing rehabilitation of the area is taking place. We are grateful to WfW for helping to sustain the local communities. The clearing of IAPs improves the quantity of the water. With the rehabilitation of the area by planting Spekboom has also contributed to the supply of water".

The Kouga Dam Nursery had humble beginnings starting out as just a clearing team. It was in early 2000 that teams started eradicating Spekboom as part of the Eastern Cape rehabilitation programme. Through this clearing contractors built tunnels. Through the introduction of the nursery, workers were mentored and taught about the various plant species in the region.

Michael Ruka is a contractor with the Kouga project. The father of two and part time clergyman started out initially as a general worker helping to build the tunnels. During his time as a general worker he underwent training, attending many courses and eventually leading the group. The majority of workers in the teams are female with many being trained to read and record statistics and any issues arising.



General Worker Vuyiswa Mhlaza with Contractor Michael Ruka

The Kouga Nursery appropriates approximately 600 000 – 700 000 plants. These plants are provided to research facilities. The nursery is a tool for restoration, cultivation and development and empowerment of the workers.

Now, researchers from Wageningen University, a renowned international centre in Environmental and Agricultural Sciences, are in the area as part of a capacity building venture and seek to protect the biodiversity of the Baviaanskloof region. These "students" play a major role as their research is integral to the nursery. This partnership is a sharing of knowledge and ideas. Twenty two students who are largely self-funded have to date contributed towards the challenge of restoring the thicket.

Area Manager Vicky has been a driving force in the development of the Nursery into a fully fledged learning centre. She, along with the WfW Kouga Nursery project is trying to make the nursery more sustainable.

There is a lot of passion for the environment evident in the Kouga Nursery project. Vicky attributes this to their slogan for the proposed Learning Village which is "Growing Plants, Growing People".

"The idea is not to merely have a nursery but to develop it into a botanical garden, which is unique in that one would be able to see the entire process. One would also be able to see the staff in action and interact with workers" said Vicky.

The site is a biodiversity hotspot with possibilities of a succulent garden, food gardens, and hanging gardens possible with the help and participation of the International students. It is situated in a subtropical thicket which has various different biomes.

The idea of the "Learning Village" is to be a valuable resource for university students and the public. The focus will mainly fall upon research whilst training people and equipping them with horticultural skills. The central theme would be Education, Restoration and Propagate. It is Vicky's hope that the centre will help raise awareness by making it a tourist attraction whilst generating an income for the workers.

This project has already seen some fruition for the local community. Vuyiswa Mhlaza is one of the many previously unemployable females working on the project. "I've learnt how plants can be treated and grown. I've learnt a lot and acquired many skills which have empowered me to help other workers. I want to use the skills I got and use them to someday open my own business."

If you would like to have more information on this project you can contact Michael Kawa at kawam@dwaf.gov.za or 041 586-4884. Alternatively visit the website www.livinglandscapes.co.za to access more information on the Wageningen researchers' efforts to restore the land of the Eastern Cape.

Change Your World

By Anelisa Zwelendaba

The *Working for Water Programme (WfW)* recently participated in the Take a Girl Child to Work Day – a Cell C initiative held annually. Learners were taken to the Berg River Dam in Franschoek (Western Cape) which was recently inaugurated by the former President Mr Kgalema Motlanthe.

With this year's theme "Change Your World", *Working for Water* hosted three different schools with a total number of 65 learners which consisted of previously disadvantaged girl learners and introduced them to the department's scarce skills. The day was mostly based on inspiring young girl learners to take advantage of opportunities and to raise awareness regarding the specific scarce and technical skill-related issues that the department faces. In addition, the day also raised awareness around the fact that although there were many opportunities available, there are still low numbers of women and black people in technical positions in the Department.

Different presentations of what subjects to study, further courses available and how to obtain a Department of Water and Environmental Affairs (DWEA) bursary formed part of the day's activities. Speaker Ms Verena Meyer from the Learning Academy of DWEA delivered a presentation that dealt with the advice and guidance offered by the Learning Academy to a girl child in order to pursue these scarce skills in the department and how one can obtain a bursary.

The highlight of the day was when Ms Anne Siroky – a motivational speaker with an impressive background, gave her presentation. The girl learners were really inspired by her stories and determination to achieve something in life and the learners were encouraged to make something of themselves like taking opportunities that came their way. "If Ms Siroky can achieve so much with all the obstacles she has faced, today, *Working for Water* has shown me that I can do so much more and has given me opportunities to do so", said one of the learners.

Over the years, *Working for Water* has continued to support the "Take a girl child to work day" initiative because the department believes it will help increase the number of female employees who will one day occupy critical decision-making roles within the department and industry.



Head of Talent Management in DWEA, Ms. Verena Meyer



The dynamic Ms Anne Siroky had everyone moving and grooving



Some of the girls couldn't wait to show off their skills



Learners learn all about the pumps at the Berg River Dam



Raising the roof in harmony, the girls sing "Lean on Me" led by Anne Siroky

Environmental and Resource Economics Conference

By: Anelisa Zwelendaba

The *Working for Water Programme* (WfW) recently participated in an Environmental and Resource Economics Conference, a Cape Action for People and the Environment (C.A.P.E.) initiative hosted by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

THE International Environmental and Resource Economics Conference was held in Cape Town at the Ritz Hotel in Cape Town on the 21st and 22nd of May. With international guests in attendance, this conference created a platform for people in the sector to share ideas, research and hear presentations about what other countries are doing. It also provided a platform where environmental challenges could be raised in order to formulate economically sound solutions by people in the same sector. The conference provided space for delegates to share their results on recent research and to discuss issues relevant to the practical application of environmental resource economics.

Dr Carlos Manuel Rodriquez, who is well respected in this sector was one of the international speakers at the conference. Dr Rodriquez, a Conservation International's Regional Vice President and an Environment and Energy Minister for Costa Rica amongst few other achievements gave a keynote address where he mentioned that "Payment for Environmental Services" (PES) is that those who provide environmental services should be compensated for doing so and those who receive the services should pay for their provision. This approach often has the further advantage of providing additional income sources for poor land users, helping to improve their livelihoods by generating new mechanisms for national income redistribution."

Dr Christo Marais of the *WfW* programme also gave a presentation where he spoke of four effective tiers of water charges in South Africa. "Currently some of the Working for Water invasive alien plant management programmes funds are being generated through these charges", said Dr Marais in his presentation.

The conference took place for two consecutive days and to celebrate its success, a gala dinner hosted by Working for Water was held on the evening of the 21st of May. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Director General, Ms Nosipo Jezile attended the conference and the Deputy Director General, Mr. Fundisile Mketeni delivered the keynote address. Mketeni mentioned the importance of research and the sharing of information within the sector, at an international and national level in order to achieve a common goal.

The hosting of this conference was perfectly timed as the 22 May 2009 marked the celebration of the International Day of Biodiversity „with this years theme being "biodiversity and invasive alien species" which happens to be *WfW*'s key focus initiative.



Cape St Francis Thatch Project

By Leon Jamarie

Large areas of the Cape St Francis area are being rehabilitated by the local community in an effort to achieve economic sustainability.

The Working for Water Programme's St Francis Thatch project was created as a means to combat the growing problem of Rooikrans in the area.

The project started in the year 2000 with an initial clearing team, clearing the Rooikrans and replanting the area with Thatch for which workers were employed from the Kouga community.

It was decided in 2002 that in order to supplement the income of the workers and to ensure long term sustainability that thatch would be planted in the area.

The project also speaks to the social development needs of the community. Eighty percent of the workers are women with most contractors being female. Liziwe Spekboom is one of the first female contractors to have benefited from the Project. Having started with the initial clearing

in 2002, the previously unemployed mother started as a general worker but quickly progressed to becoming a contractor. "This project has changed my life tremendously. I couldn't take care of my family before now I can. I can even send my siblings to school now because of WfW" said Ms Spekboom.



The story of Liziwe Spekboom is remarkable as she is HIV positive and has not allowed this to hinder her though but has used her HIV and Social Development training to help educate her fellow workers and the community. She plans to open her own business with the skills she acquired by leading a team of thirteen workers the majority of which are females.

In 2007/2008 approximately 31500 bundles of thatch was harvested and a tender process was followed to facilitate the sale of this harvested thatch. The revenue generated is being used to recoup the cost of planting and harvesting, with a local trust established to manage the funds.

The project is demonstrated exciting new ways where sound environmental practices can lead to sustainable business opportunities.





Tribute to Nokuzukisa Lau-Lau (The Lauzer)

We met Lau-Lau 6 years ago when we worked together in Cape Town for the *Working for Water Programme*. Most of our time is spent at work and during this time we develop relationships and grow to love the people we work with, indirectly we touch each others lives and Lau-Lau had a huge impact on the lives of staff at the *Working for Water Programme*. On Thursday a memorial service

was held for Lau-lau in Cape Town, in the six years that I have been in the Department I have never seen staff mourn the loss of a colleague as they have with Lau-Lau passing, .

In the communications unit where she worked we were like a family, there is saying that goes: "friends are the only family that we can choose", when Lau-Lau left the unit to join GDEAC it was a loss to us because she was valued not only for her professional contribution but for the love that she showed each one of us, but today we feel the real loss. Because even after she left *WfW* in we still found ourselves saying: "if Lau-Lau were here".

We all knew after the holidays or when Lauzer took leave that we could expect stories from back home. These stories would run for weeks on end, because that is the love that Lau-lau had for her family. She was very dedicated, committed and loyal towards her family, friends, and colleagues.

Aunty Florence the mother of the unit had this to say: "I came to know Lau-lau as someone who was very caring and always put the needs of others before her own needs. She was a pillar of strength to her family and I know that they are going to miss her dearly. Her relatives were very important to her, she had a love for them that was very rare amongst families especially her niece Latita. The love and admiration that she had for Latita is indescribable. She loved her as her own, Latita also brought great joy and laughter to Lau-Lau's life. Lau-Lau had a unique and wonderful laugh, you could recognize it in a room full of people and it will always make you smile."

In the week of Lau- lau's passing, Ramona said it best in an email when she said: "Lau-Lau was love in action; she made the word real..."

The most precious thing about her was her heart and her capacity to love, to love unconditionally and with great tolerance. She invited people into her life and gave of herself freely without boundaries. She made her friends love her without realizing it.

Forthcoming themes for the next 3 issues...

Month	Theme
<i>July/August</i>	National Womens Month Luyolo Ngwenya Community Project Launch
<i>September/October</i>	September is National Heritage Month October is WeedBuster Week & the launch of the Aquatic Weeds Campaign
<i>November/December</i>	5 – 7 Nov – the visit of the Dutch Minister for Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality who will visit Baviaanskloof on Sat 7th November 2009 25 Nov – 10 Dec – 16 Days of Activism (including World AIDS Day on 1 Dec and International Day for Persons Living with Disability on 3 Dec)

Please forward contributions to
FaredT@dwaf.gov.za or JamariL@dwaf.gov.za
 For more information contact the *Working for Water* toll free information line on 0800-005-376
 or visit our website www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw/ or send your queries to: wfw@dwaf.gov.za
 To see pictures of invasive alien plants go to <http://www.agis.agric.za/wip/>