

THE FIRST TSITSA PROJECT

SCIENCE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY MEETING

Maclear Town Hall– 16th October 2018



environmental affairs
Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

NEWSLETTER

The first Science Management Society meeting was held in Maclear on the 16th October 2018. Invited attendees included: traditional leaders from Hlankomo (Batlokoa), Upper and Lower Tsitsana, Northern Mpondomise, Lower Sinxaku (Elangeni) and Upper Chulunca villages and traditional councils; municipal officials from Joe Gqabi District Municipality and Elundini and Mhlontlo Local Municipalities; representatives from various government departments including Department of Environmental Affairs Chief Directorate: Natural Resource Management (DEA: NRM), Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF); implementing agents (Gamtoos Irrigation Board, Take Note Trading and LIMA); and the Rhodes University research team.

Welcome

Dudu Soginga from DEA: NRM chaired the meeting, which was predominantly conducted in isiXhosa. After the welcoming, including respectful greetings to traditional leaders, and the opening song and prayer, Dudu explained the mandate of Natural Resource Management of Environmental Affairs. This mandate includes clearing invasive aliens, preventing and managing erosion, and managing bush encroachment. She went on to explain that although our research approach takes time, it is very important, as they realise that local residents need to be involved in decisions and actions concerning all natural resource management and planning.

Alleged poor consultation

The first issue raised, concerned the ongoing complaints about poor engagement regarding the proposed dams. There were deep concerns expressed by two traditional leaders in this regard. A recent media statement said that construction would begin in January 2019, yet they felt residents had not been properly or fairly consulted. As a consequence, Senior Traditional Leader Mabandla was not in favour of a catchment management forum, nor indeed supported the continuation of this meeting as he felt it implied support for the dams. Senior Traditional Leader Mabandla did not stay for the duration of the meeting. There were also complaints about lack of consultation with DEA contractors, specifically the implementing agents.

Meeting Chair Dudu Soginga from DEA: NRM.



Clarification of Department of Environmental Affairs' position

The Chair reiterated DEA's mandate and pointed out that DEA had sent several messages to DWS at a senior level. Dudu reminded the audience that the DEA had been working in the area since 1998 and like elsewhere in the country, would continue trying to uplift livelihoods through its mandate - dam or no dam. If the dam went ahead it would naturally mean that DEA and community efforts would not only improve local livelihoods, but may result in less sediment clogging up the dam over time. The DEA took responsibility for lack of consultation with the contractors and met after the meeting with certain aggrieved parties.

Mrs Eddie from Elundini Local Municipality introduces RAFI (Rural Agricultural Industry Finance Initiative)

Mrs Eddie made us aware of Argentinian partners who will focus on implementing no-till agriculture for sustainable use of land in various parts of the country, including 30 000 ha in Elundini Local Municipality and in close co-operation with the municipality and local residents. Mrs Eddie stressed that it would be critical that this be done in conjunction with Tsitsa Project's restoration efforts. Pilot projects are scheduled to start in November, where she stressed that alignment with municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) will be crucial.

The Chair responded positively about the contact link within the municipality and RAFI, and emphasised that without empowering and upskilling local people, persons trying to aid in development would be bluffing themselves.

Discussion from the floor on Mrs Eddie's presentation took place with several questions being raised:

- Where would profits go?
- What would the Argentinians expect in return?
- How long would people be trained?
- How long would there be money to support the project?

Michael Kawa from DEA gives animated discussion on DEA's aim with local restoration

Evoking iconic images (the yellow clothing of Working for Water everyone knows) and then chairs to represent alien plants, Michael gave a lively talk on why the mantra of "job creation" is not working well for land management. He developed the idea that if the aim was seen to be that of supporting livelihoods, then local residents could become more directly involved and take responsibility for sustainable land management.



Michael Kawa from DEA: NRM

Community of Practice (CoP) co-ordinators introduced

The Rhodes University cohort of scientists and managers working within the Tsitsa Project have structured themselves into subgroups of Communities of Practice (CoPs). It is hoped that local officials and some farmers might join these groups in the future. Each CoP was briefly introduced by their co-ordinators, saying a few words about what their CoP does, with photos of each from left to right:



Bennie van Der Waal: Sediment and Restoration CoP, who also asked **Grace Saunders** to explain her work as a citizen technician in the catchment. **Laura Conde-Aller:** Livelihoods & Ecosystem Services

CoP; **Ryana Johnson:** Grazing and Fire Management CoP; **Nosi Mtati:** Participatory Governance: Community Engagement CoP, which includes **Margaret Wolff's** integration of governance into Nosi's community engagement component; **Hanli Human:** Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation Reflecting and Learning (PMERL) CoP; and **Kyra Lunderstedt:** Knowledge Management CoP.

General discussion

These discussions resulted in consolidations about previous points made:

- The dams.
- DEA's mandate.
- Issues or misunderstandings around appointment of and interactions with DEA contractors.
- Gratitude and pleas for genuine opportunities in consultation and collaboration.

A few issues were raised, such as poor roads and predators eating livestock. While not in the DEA mandate, they could point people in a direction to find help.

During lunch, an introductory colour brochure of the Tsitsa Project in English and isiXhosa were made available. After lunch, the meeting ended on a positive note with some repeat of points above but also further points not already mentioned:

- Requests from residents to also point out other livelihood opportunities, such as fish farming.
- Repeated recognition of the need to look after and repair the land.
- The hunger for relevant knowledge of catchment residents.
- Requests for action, not just good words by government.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, and called the meeting to a close.

The meeting ended with prayer and song.



The Chair reflected on the recent passing of late **Minister Edna Molewa**. A minute of silence was observed by the meeting, after which the Chair shared with the meeting that the late Minister was buried in a casket made of wood from invasive alien trees, processed locally and employing local people.

How did the organisers feel afterwards?

DEA and the Rhodes group, as is customary in Tsitsa project, reflected on this meeting afterwards. Generally, the reflection results showed that:

- The organisers were pleased at the attendance and had a generally constructive attitude. Although this was an invited meeting, the organisers would like to see more female and younger people present – this may happen more easily at open meetings which may form part of future plans
- Given the controversy of the dam as we hear it from some quarters in the catchment, the organisers were pleased that they were able to both allow those voices but also have a chance to discuss moving on with the DEA mandate.
- The fact that the meeting was held in isiXhosa was seen as positive, though time-efficient modes of translation would help mutual understanding and discourse. It was important and humbling for the Rhodes group to understand the articulation and context of the bigger group whose goals they aim to serve.
- The biggest positive was mutual recognition of the need for communication and building a future together. Although scientific knowledge is important, there must always be respect for experience and other modes of knowledge.
- There was reference in various ways to the multi-use landscape and how we need to make joint sense of it (“sewing the overall patchwork together sensibly”)
- This first meeting was necessarily a bit “bumpy” but this was to be expected in what the organisers felt was a big step forward in overall trust-building.

Group photo of attendees at the first Science Management Society Meeting for the Tsitsa Project.



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**Thank you,
see you next
time!**

For further information please feel free to contact:

Michael Kawa (Regional Programme Leader)

Chief Directorate Natural Resource Management, Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA-East London)
mkawa@environment.gov.za

Nosi Mtati (Community Liaison Officer)

Rhodes Restoration Research Group (RRRG)
Institute for Water Research
Environmental Learning Research Centre (Grahamstown/Makhanda)
sisekomtati@gmail.com