

Capacity in government to manage inland waters from an ecological perspective

Summary of feedback from FEN delegates

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CAPENATURE

This presentation given at 2015 FEN and 2015 Wetlands Indaba

- Presentation focused on why aquatic capacity was necessary, on proposed aquatic capacity requirements and critical shortages on many provinces
- Presentation well received and provoked considerable debate at the FEN and WI
- I asked FEN delegates to critically evaluate the main findings of my presentation

Response from FEN delegates

1. Provincial environmental conservation agencies

- Responses received from Stanley Rodgers (Limpopo Environmental Affairs), Boyd Escott (KZN Wildlife), Andre Hoffman (Mpumalanga Parks Board). Many thanks.
- **Poor response from provincial environmental agencies which is disappointing – 3 of 8 provinces responded.**
- General support for presentation and proposals from provinces that responded.
- Andre Hoffman – “I am glad to see that you will be addressing a much needed issue! We still need an aquatic scientists forum”.
- Stan Rodgers – what about dedicated field assistants / rangers that support aquatic scientists and technicians? Suggested 4-6 field assistants per province.
- Boyd Escott – made corrections to KZN Wildlife current aquatic capacity

Response from FEN delegates

2. DWS

- Zanele Sishaba (DWS E Cape) submitted a valuable detailed report on the state of capacity in her region in the Resource Protection section
- E Cape split into PE office (monitoring 10 rivers) and East London/ Umtata offices (monitoring 15 rivers). Very good coverage of the major rivers with 8 rivers having >10 monitoring sites.
- 7 scientists and 3 scientific technicians and several graduate trainee's - focused on SASS (all accredited), Fish, Geomorphology and Ecstatus assessments
- DWS Resource Protection working with several stakeholders (Rhodes University, NMMU, SANParks, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality) in the region
- Noted that DWS is monitoring rivers in the province, not DEA E Cape
- Things are looking promising for the E Cape in terms of DWS contribution

Response from FEN delegates

3. The Association for Water And Rural Development (AWARD)

- Valuable response from its Director, Dr Sharon Pollard:

“I received your slides via Marilyn. You may be interested in work that we (AWARD) is doing under our RESILIM-Olifants programme.

The point is that we have raised concerns that a number of institutions like FRU (Freshwater Research Unit of UCT) have closed and key leaders (training) are leaving or have left the field. This dovetails with many of your concerns. In recognition of the increasingly ‘dire’ situation with regard to capacity within the freshwater sector, **we are undertaking two key actions that might be of interest:**

We are working with 4 institutes of higher learning. This work is co-ordinated by Prof Lotz at Rhodes for AWARD. We will be introducing an IWRM module for this.

We are undertaking training of the incoming OLCMA staff on IWRM and in particular, on monitoring water condition (RQOS) and water use conditions (authorization and licensing). As part of this we will run a water quality and bioaccumulation course.

In addition, we are in the process of developing custodianship initiatives around water (a slightly different emphasis).

We hope to have details up on our website within a month.

Kind regards

Sharon”

Response from FEN delegates

3. Mandy Uys (Aquatic Consultant, E Cape)

“Your presentation is excellent and as you can imagine, very welcome for an aquatic scientist in the Eastern Cape!! I will certainly endorse everything that you have to say in your presentation. I do have the sense that we need to be thinking along some new lines regarding the maintenance of healthy ecosystems – I think the **ongoing monitoring is only effective where it leads on to review and action.**”

The question thus remains: **Do we have enough aquatic scientists and technicians in provincial environmental conservation agencies for inland water management?**

- *Recommended by Impson and several others:*
 - Coastal provinces – Aquatic Manager, Aquatic scientist estuaries, Aquatic scientist rivers, Aquatic scientist fish, wetland scientist, three dedicated technicians i.e. 8 staff
 - Inland Provinces - Aquatic Manager, Aquatic scientist rivers, Aquatic scientist fish, wetland scientist, two dedicated technicians i.e. 6 staff
- *where do we stand?*
 - Coastal provinces (8 posts recommended): CapeNature - 1 manager, 2 scientists, 1 technician (4); KZN - 3 scientists, 1 technician (4); N Cape - 1 scientist; E Cape – 0 scientist
 - Inland provinces (6 posts recommended): Mpumalanga 4 scientists, 1 technician (5); Free State 2 aquatic scientists; Gauteng - 1 aquatic scientist, 1 technician (2); Limpopo - 1 aquatic scientist, 1 technician (2); North West – 1 aquatic scientist

Final Questions that remain unresolved – please debate these:

- Do we have a crises in terms of aquatic capacity needs in govt?
 - Is there general agreement about the proposed provincial aquatic capacity needs?
 - Does there need to be adequate capacity in both DEA and DWS in each province?
 - If we have a crises whose job is it to take the issue to the highest levels of government by way of a formal submission to enable change to happen?
- One accepts that govt is under major funding constraints at present.