

Summary Report

Freshwater Ecosystem Network

Monday, 16 and Tuesday, 17 September 2013 @Pretoria National Botanical Garden

In attendance : See Annexure 1 for list of participants

Apologies : Bonani Mdikizela – Water Research Commission, Chantel Petersen – CSIR, Thomas Gyedu-Ababio – Inkomati CMA, Wilma Lutsch – DEA

Programme : See Annexure 2 attached, for the full two day programme

Day One:

Welcome and Purpose

The workshop was convened by the South African National Biodiversity Institute's (SANBI) Freshwater programme in partnership with the Department of Water Affairs (DWA).

SANBI's Chief Director of Biodiversity Planning and Policy Advice, Kristal Maze and Ndileka Mohapi, Chief Director of Resource Directed Measures at the Department of Water Affairs; welcomed participants to the first meeting of the Freshwater Ecosystem Network. John Dini, SANBI's Director of Ecological Infrastructure provided the overview and purpose of the network and the workshop, emphasizing that this Network is an emerging concept and that it will be the responsibility of all present to shape it into a useful vibrant platform. He put forward a tentative set of aims for the Freshwater Ecosystem Network (FEN):

- Provide a platform for joint learning, coordination and networking around freshwater ecosystems
- Identify key needs in the sector and what SANBI can do to support these

A decision was made to focus the first meeting of the Network on how the sector can strengthen the incorporation of freshwater ecosystems into the classification of water resources, recognising the significance of this process for the conservation and sustainable use of freshwater ecosystems. Although the potential for Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (FEPA) maps to feed into classification has previously been recognised, this was the first opportunity for the sector as a group to engage with this potential, examine what has been learned from the incorporation of FEPA data into classification to date, and discuss how we as a sector can best engage with classification going forward. Therefore the purpose of this workshop was to:

- strengthen the technical ability of biodiversity champions to participate effectively in the water resource classification process; and
- build links with biodiversity peers who are playing similar roles in classification processes in other catchments, in order to share experiences, seek advice in dealing with challenges, and support other members based on shared experiences.

Setting the Scene

Ndileka Mohapi chaired the first day's proceedings during which several presentations were made by representatives from DWA and SANBI, providing background and more information into the key policies, processes and tools currently active in the Freshwater biodiversity sector.

National Water Policy Review (NWPR) – Marie Brisley (DWA): the policy review is not comprehensive, with only 12 proposals being dealt with, mostly relating to developmental and equity aspects. The NWPR is underpinned by the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation (1994), the White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa (1997), the White Paper on Basic Household Sanitation (2001), and the Strategic Framework for Water Services (2003). The intention is to combine the National Water Act and Water Services Act into a single seamless piece of legislation. The necessary legislative amendments will follow once the policy positions are approved by Cabinet subsequent to the consultation process. DWA is currently in the process of holding regional consultations which will take place during the month of September and October 2013. For a schedule of the consultations please see Annexure 3.

National Water Resource Strategy 2 (NWRS2) – Marie Brisley: The NWRS2 is the legal instrument for implementing the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) and sets out the vision, principles, goals and strategic actions for achieving effective water management. Aligned to the National Development Plan, the NWRS2 is centred on three key objectives, namely ensuring that water supports development and the elimination of poverty and inequality; that water contributes to the economy and job creation; and that water is protected, used, developed, conserved, managed and controlled in a sustainable and equitable manner. Specific focus was placed on core strategy 5 of the NWRS2, which is key to the freshwater biodiversity sector as it focuses on 'protecting water ecosystems', highlighting the impact of development on the water generating capability of catchments and associated impacts on water availability, groundwater recharge and downstream water quality. The NWRS2 is also the first national government policy that is using the phrase "ecological infrastructure".

The Water Resource Classification System (WRCS) – Tovhowani Nyamande: The WRCS is a set of guidelines and procedures that aims to assist in the process of determining the balance between the protection of a water resources such as rivers, springs, wetlands, lakes, surface water, estuaries and aquifers, and using them to meet economic and social goals. The classification of South Africa's water resources is required by the National Water Act (NWA) (No. 36 of 1998) (Chapter 3 regarding the protection of water resources). Regulation 810 published in Government Gazette No. 33541 dated 17 September 2010 defined the water resource management classes and a procedure (the WRCS) for assigning management classes to water resources. The presentation noted that the Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas (FEPAs) are but one of the sources / tools that are providing information into the WRCS.

FEPAs and their relevance to water resource classification – Mandy Driver (SANBI): The National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas Project (NFEPA) identified FEPAs and proposed an institutional basis to enable effective implementation. FEPAs are designed to support the implementation of both water and biodiversity mandates. NFEPA include three products, namely the **atlas of FEPA maps** providing guidance on how many rivers, wetlands and estuaries, and which

ones, are needed for protecting representative diversity and ecological functioning of South Africa's freshwater ecosystems; an **implementation manual** which shows how to use the maps, and **GIS layers**. FEPAs need to remain in a natural or near-natural condition in order to achieve biodiversity goals and protect water resources. The FEPA maps are tools that feed into various documents and policies such as the Biodiversity Act, bioregional plans, the Protected Areas Act, etc.

Lessons learned to date:

Jeanne Nel presented on "Integrating Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas into Classification of Water Resources. The presentation covered the background and context to classification of water resources; the underlying technical concepts for understanding classification; a review of the 7-step process of classification; the use of FEPAs in classification in theory and practice; and shared the perspectives from previous classification.

Discussion session:

What does DWA need from freshwater biodiversity sector to implement the classification?

- DWA requested that the freshwater biodiversity sector work with DWA, and share information relevant to the classification process. The full range of stakeholders and views is needed, but commonly this has not happened.
- Just like other sectors, ecosystems need a voice in classification and specialists need to be visible and participate in the process.
- The FEN has the potential to assist DWA in identifying potential stakeholders for classification processes to be undertaken in particular WMAs
- It can sometimes be difficult to determine on what basis individual FEPAs were identified, by looking at just the maps. There is a need for the involvement of people familiar with FEPA maps in supporting the incorporation of these datasets into the classification process, rather than just handing the data over to DWA
- It is however a challenge to build capacity and sustainability into classification, so that the knowledge does not only reside in the heads of a few key people. A role for FEN going forward could therefore be to broaden this base of expertise on freshwater ecosystems

Feedback from the freshwater biodiversity sector participants:

- At a provincial level the participants expressed willingness to be involved and to engage meaningfully. However capacity constraints make this challenging. To address this issue, the freshwater biodiversity sector must be re-capacitated.
- Communication between DWA and provincial departments was also raised as a concern, together with the need to improve regional coordination.
- Potential also exists for FEPA maps to inform the setting of Resource Quality Objectives, in addition to how they are using in determining management classes.
- We need to reflect on good examples of how FEPAs were incorporated into classification, in order to export these learnings to classification processes in other WMAs.

The first day's proceedings were closed by Ndileka Mohapi.

Day Two:

Recap of Day 1: Done by John Dini

Discussion session: facilitated by Christine Colvin. Participants were asked to reflect on day 1 of the Network and share any surprises or new information they acquired, as well as their key issues and concerns.

Some participants indicated that all the information they received yesterday was a surprise, while others were already familiar with water resource classification. Some did not understand the information that was shared. This suggested that, for future meetings, it may be worth separating a training component from the other components of the meeting, rather than trying to do both together.

Other emerging themes from feedback received include the issue of the language that is being used to communicate information; capacity constraints; the need to expand the current FEN participant base, with some specific comments on the stakeholder consultation component of water resource classification; and the FEPAs. A bullet point list summarising the session is available under Annexure 4. The key issues that emerged were grouped under four themes namely: data management (baseline ‘real’ data, data accessibility), capacity and training, parallel process integration (standardisation), and communication. A full list of the issues is available under Annexure 4.

While unpacking the “capacity” theme, participants agreed that this is not just a DWA and DEA problem but a sector wide problem. SACNASP’s lengthy registration process and the inability to motivate for aquatic ecologist positions in provincial departments and agencies were highlighted as two key concerns that obstruct the process of getting capacity into the sector. Participants requested that those who have been successful in motivating for aquatic positions in their organisations share the lessons and process with others. It was further suggested that the focus be placed on MinTech Working Group 1 and CMAs for interventions to improve capacity. For example, Inkomati CMA has contracted Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency to provide an aquatic ecology service. In the Western Cape, monitoring responsibilities have been divided between CapeNature and the Breede-Overberg CMA.

Due to the time constraint participants could not unpack all four themes but formed working groups responsible for each.

THEMES	WORKING GROUP MEMBERS
<p>Building aquatic capacity within government Tackling the need for recognized minimum number of positions for aquatic ecologists within provinces, municipalities and catchment management agencies/DWA</p>	<p>John Dini, Dean Impson, Glenda Raven, Eleanor McGregor</p>
<p>Parallel process integration Tackling the need to coordinate DEA and DWA processes, and perhaps processes in other government sectors (e.g. agriculture)</p>	<p>Christine Colvin, Francois Roux, Ndileka Mohapi</p>
<p>Data management Tackling the need to significantly improve the NFEPA data for the next round of freshwater ecosystem planning in 5-7 years’ time.</p>	<p>Jeanne Nel, Namhla Mbona, Ashton Maherry, Heidi van Deventer, Hermien Roux, Nadine Slabbert</p>

<p>Communication This is viewed as an ongoing task that may not be tackled systematically initially, but was kept in as a place-holder</p>	<p>Christine Colvin</p>
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Some topics for discussions that emerged:

- When looking at shared mandates for the management of freshwater ecosystems, can we look broader to take into account non-statutory regimes for resource management? For example, little provision is made for community based water governance in the water sector. Is this a potential issue for this platform to discuss?
- Session on Resource Quality Objectives for FEPAs and how they will be managed into the future
- Practical nuts and bolts on the integration of biodiversity plans into policy
- What should version 2 of NFEPA look like, if indeed we think an iteration is necessary? How do we improve the quality of data? What systems do we need to put in place to allow the constant updating of the base data underlying the FEPA maps? What kind of stakeholder processes will be required?

Taking forward the Freshwater Ecosystem Network

Participants reflected and evaluated the two day Freshwater Ecosystem Network (detailed list available under Annexure 4) and agreed that more organisations should be invited to future meetings, including SAIAB, EWT (critical rivers component), WESSA, representatives from the International Association of Impact Assessment, wetland scientists, other provinces, Glenda Raven, SACNASP, GreenMatter, etc.

The general consensus of participants is for this Network to meet once a year. Participants proposed that the next meeting take place in July 2014 rather than later. Pretoria is a central location to host the meeting, especially for people travelling from the different provinces. Ideas for agenda items will be circulated. Participants also suggested that a training session be held a day before the Network, separate from the Network’s discussions, with the aim of ensuring that all freshwater biodiversity entrants are capacitated to engage and contribute meaningfully in the Network.

Ndileka Mohapi closed the proceedings and thanked John Dini for making this gathering possible; thanked the presenters for taking the time to prepare and share their information; and the participants for attending and participating in the first Freshwater Ecosystem Network.