

NORTHVAAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE 2012 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

1. Finances

The 2012 budget for Northvaal and the 2012/3 budget for Flyfishing Publications are attached. As may be seen we are anticipating a cumulative loss of about R31K in the coming financial period primarily due to a substantial decline in book sales while costs of running the website have increased, and we also have the added expense of the new Steenkampsberg Environmental Initiative.

Our total reserves have also declined. At present we have about R230K in the FOSAF Money Market and the Flyfishing Publications Investment Accounts.

2. Millstream

Once again we must single out Millstream for their very generous support of Northvaal. This very successful and well managed destination in Dullstroom continues to help us finance many of the projects that Northvaal undertake.

3. Membership

At present 50% of FOSAF ordinary members reside in the Northvaal area and 60% -70% of club and Affiliate members are also from Northvaal.

We must recognise that whereas in the past much of the strength of FOSAF was derived from clubs many of these same clubs have seen a sharp decline in membership and this has impacted on our membership. In addition, in certain parts of the country competitive fly fishing has made advances and the organisation SAFFA is seen as competing with FOSAF for members and funds. Even so Northvaal has accepted that we must cooperate with competitive fly fishing and the SAFFA National president attended our last committee meeting. In addition we donated 48 FOSAF Guides to the Protea team to be handed out to other teams participating at the World Championship in Tasmania.

4. Environmental Issues

In Mpumalanga we are very concerned about the increasing impact of mining and particularly the threat to the 'Trout Triangle' and hence our participation in the SEI (see under 'Projects').

5. Legislation

The review/revision of NEMBA and its Regulations has dragged on for long enough with no resolution in site. Expectations have been raised amongst members who must have started wondering about what the outcome of this whole process might be. The backlash and negative impact on an already thinning membership of a NEMBA resolution that maintains its current stance on aliens is likely and will be dire. FOSAF needs to review its strategy in dealing with this matter. A proactive approach in collaboration with the local Conservation Departments is

proposed.

6. Northvaal Projects

Favoured Flies Card Collection.

This project, supervised by Geoff Taylor, was taken on to provide a benefit for paid-up members in the absence of a new book this year. For the last 10 years a new FOSAF book has been offered at a much reduced price as a benefit to members.

Work only commenced in late June which gave very little time for proper planning as stocks were required by end-October. Response to the finished product has been mixed with the average flyfisher fairly enthusiastic and the “experts” somewhat ambivalent. We believe that we should continue with the project and follow up with subsequent sets of cards as most of the work has been undertaken and the majority of costs have been incurred. Furthermore there appears to be little else we can offer as a member benefit in this category.

FOSAF Books

As noted above and in the budget which forecasts a turnover of only R75K for books/cards in the 2012/3 period, our sales have dropped dramatically since 2007/8 when they still exceeded R200K. Most disappointing is the poor performance of the FOSAF Guide which is without a doubt a fine product and an improvement on the highly successful Nedbank series. Main reasons for the decline are:

- A decline in interest in flyfishing with fewer new entrants (a number of general tackle dealers have noted this trend).
- A general decline in book sales in the face of increased use of ebooks, DVD's and the internet.
- The current recession and a sharp drop in business at specialist fly tackle stores.

Currently 50% of our sales go through the tackle stores, 30% via PSD and 20% to National who then sell on to members. Most worrying is that some specialist stores indicate that they may discontinue stocking books while the space allocated to flyfishing books at Exclusive Books stores is much reduced.

Website

During the second half of 2011 we undertook a major update of the website and added the presence of Facebook to reinforce our position in the market. Although the costs have been relatively high visits have climbed substantially and we have at last reached Page 1 of Google for those searching for “Flyfishing – South Africa”.

Although this is considered a national project there is still a lack of input from other chapters.

Yellowfish Working Group.

This is also considered a national project and Northvaal believes that its achievements do much to enhance the image of FOSAF, particularly among conservationists, aquatic scientists and researchers.

We have been able to re-issue the well known “Sustainable Yellowfishing” pamphlet thanks to donations made by a number of ordinary fly fishers who are concerned about the state of the Vaal and the impact made by poor behaviour on the part of certain anglers using the river.

The chairmanship of OVRYCMA (Orange/Vaal River Yellowfish Conservation Management Association) has been taken over by Leon Barkhuizen of Free State Government who has injected new enthusiasm into the organisation. He also appears to have the support of his Department of Environmental Affairs. Considering the importance of this river system as a flyfishing resource and the ever increasing pollution problem Northvaal intends to give OVRYCMA increased backing by attending all their quarterly meetings.

The 2012 National Conference will be held in Stellenbosch 13-15 April and preparations are well underway.

SEI (The Steenkampsberg Environmental Initiative)

This organisation was formed in May 2011 in response to an increase in the number of prospecting licence applications, mainly by smaller miners, in the Trout Triangle. FOSAF Northvaal has entered a coalition with EWT, Birdlife SA, EEPOG, Mpumalanga Wetland Forum with the objective of supporting Mpumalanga Parks Board (MTPA) in eventually having at least 200 000 hectares of the Steenkampsberg from just south of Belfast to north of Dullstroom declared a ‘Protected Area’. The first step in the formal process was taken in August when the MTPA submitted a Section 49 application to the DMR to exclude this area from prospecting/mining for at least 3 years.

Fortunately the other members of the coalition have gained considerable experience and some success in similar projects aimed at protecting substantial tracts of environmentally sensitive land in Wakkerstroom and Chrissiesmeer. However, the Steenkampsberg project promises to be significantly more difficult as we are dealing with a much larger number of landowners and a fairly large town by way of Belfast and the large village of Dullstroom. In addition it is evident that some of the landowners wish to exploit their mineral rights or sell out to miners.

For these reasons a 10 year plan is in preparation and in the meantime (possibly for at least 2 – 3 years) we will have to oppose prospecting/mining permit applications until the Section 49 is granted whereafter we proceed with the application for a Protected Area. At the moment most of the costs involve the large amount of travel to SEI meetings, meetings with DMR, site meetings, public participation meetings and presentations to farmers and ratepayers. Fortunately Middelpunt farm, Dullstroom, is available at no cost on week days for meetings and participants take their own food and bedding. As costs are expected to be considerable at a later stage we will have to find a major funder in the next year.

Until the Section 49 application is either favourably accepted by the DMR or its submission becomes common knowledge we have been asked not to divulge the details of the application to the main media. However, we may mention that it is the intention of the coalition to eventually have the Steenkampsberg declared a Protected Area.

Other

Northvaal is also responsible for supplying content to the FOSAF page in ‘Flyfishing’ magazine every second month and material for the first magazine, ‘Flyfishing Tails’ which appears monthly, and who have kindly also made a page available to us.

We have been invited to participate in the Fly Fishing Expo, the first of its kind to be held for a number of years. This will be in Pretoria on 14/15 April while we are at the YWG conference. However, several YWG members have volunteered to attend and promote FOSAF & the YWG. Encouraging is the fact that members are willing to represent FOSAF at such events. Some people seem to understand the true value of a FOSAF.

Estimated allocation of time to projects etc in 2012

SEI : 30%
Website: 25%
YWG: 25%
Book sales: 15%
Other: 5%

Peter Mills