

# **NORTHVAAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE 2014 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

## **1. Finances**

The 2013 accounts for FOSAF were submitted to the auditor in January 2014 while the Flyfishing Publications audited accounts for 2012/13 were circulated in June 2013.

Our total reserves in the FOSAF Money Market and the Flyfishing Publications Investment Accounts have declined to R200K in Feb. 2013 this year. FOSAF Northvaal & Flyfishing Publications cc is funded solely from book sales (approx. R33K), a very generous grant of R36K from Millstream in 2013 and donations amounting to R10K from John Grun and loans from the FOSAF investment account. No monies are received from member's subs or from Affiliate subs in the Northvaal area, but the Northvaal secretary's stipend was reduced in October 2013 to contain expenses.

## **2. Millstream & John Grun**

As noted above Northvaal is very appreciative of the grant/donations from these two sources.

## **3. Membership**

Membership in 2013 showed a 3,7% drop on 2012. Although there is general appreciation of FOSAF's work on the NEM:BA issue and our efforts to halt mining in environmentally sensitive areas this does not translate into an increase in membership. More worrying is the waning involvement of clubs in our Northvaal meetings which is possibly a result of the drop in membership in most flyfishing clubs in the Northvaal area. Dullstroom and the RPA are flourishing and Sabie and Machadodorp are stable but there is a reluctance all round for club members to serve on committees.

We have established good working relationship with the Mpumalanga branch of SAFFA and have spoken to Linda Gorlei about establishing links with SAFFA's national and KZN website once these have been updated. With regard to competitive fly fishing there is only limited interest among the Northvaal clubs apart from Belfast and the RPA.

## **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**

This item is to be covered in a report by the Environmental Committee.

## **6. Northvaal Projects**

### FOSAF Books & Card collection

The downward trend in sales continues with only R33K in total forecast for the 2013/14 year and this figure will probably drop to R15K in the coming year.

### Website & Facebook

This is a national project which is managed by Northvaal who are almost solely responsible for the content. It remains a matter of concern that with a few exceptions little material is contributed apart from Northvaal sources.

There is general agreement that the website now needs a facelift and quotations have been received. No decision has been taken pending the outcome of the Marketing exercise.

The website is currently the most effective way to communicate with our members. Society in general and clubs, more specifically, are making greater use of the internet and social media to stay in touch with trends and to debate issues. Since the last website upgrade and the introduction of Facebook traffic to the FOSAF page has increased exponentially. To capitalise on this trend a facelift is now overdue. A truly interactive page is needed but will require more participation by the executive members than is currently the case.

### Yellowfish Working Group.

This is also considered a national project and the main activity this year has been the holding the 2013 conference at Deneysville and the preparation of the conference proceedings which are on the website. Northvaal are also responsible for the monthly YWG newsletter which is emailed via the website to a circulation list of 350 with another 9 receiving via the post.

Attendance of this working group has declined gradually over the past four years. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the original objective of popularising the catching of yellowfish has been realised resulting in less anglers attending the conference. Secondly, NV no longer has the funds to subsidise the venue. Attendees now have to fund themselves and with the economy as it is, few people have the funds to attend an informal conference of this nature. Researchers are also finding it difficult to raise funds to attend the conference. Finally, the backbone of the conference has been the ongoing support by the Provincial Conservation Agencies. Unfortunately most provincial departments are no longer prepared to sponsor their officials while the same holds true for state institutions and business. In addition to this decline in support most of the provincial agencies have lost almost all the aquatic expertise leaving few officials throughout the country that can be mandated by their organisations to attend.

This general decline of the provinces capacity to promote their biodiversity conservation mandate should be cause for concern for all of us involved in recreational angling.

Cost of the conference to FOSAF totalled R959.

The 2014 YWG conference will now be held on June 22 which is the day prior to the start of the annual SASAQS conference which is normally attended by a reasonable number of aquatic

scientists. At this stage it appears that by doing this we should attract a sufficient number of delegates.

#### 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 Environment". The first step in the formal process was taken in August 2012 when the MTPA submitted a Section 49 application to the DMR to exclude this area from prospecting/mining for at least 3 years.

It now appears that for reasons of their own the DMR in Witbank have failed to forward the Sec. 49 application to the Minister. In response to this the SEI, supported by Mpumalanga provincial environmental department is about to gazette a much smaller 12 000 ha area comprising most of the vulnerable Lakenvlei wetland. We expect several miners to submit objections but we should win on appeal and have this area declared before the year-end. In the meantime the group is already working on several other PE's in the Steenkampsberg which are considered most vulnerable. It is pleasing to note that recently a number of PE's have been declared, mainly on the escarpment between Chrissiesmeer and Wakkerstroom, totalling 70 000 ha which comprise important water sources for the upper Vaal and Phongola.

Much of the SEI's time is taken up with submitting objections to the 8 prospecting applications in the area and the one open cast coal mine right that has been issued. With regard to the latter this is now the subject of three separate appeals and a letter to the minister regarding the water se licence application. The SEI is also very concerned with a proposal by the DMR that the recommendations of the EMF for the Emakhazeni municipality (Dullstroom plateau and surrounds) to be reversed in favour of mining.

The UJ tourist study commissioned by FOSAF has been widely used in our objections and appeals and this report has triggered a further study by UJ on the impact of mining on tourism in the Dullstroom area. The results of this study should be available in the second half of 2014.

#### Other

Northvaal is also responsible for supplying content to the FOSAF page in 'Flyfishing' magazine every second month. The monthly eMagazine Flyfishing Tails which was first issued in 2011 and to which Northvaal contributed FOSAF news ceased publication in early 2013.

#### Estimated allocation of time to projects etc in 2013

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