

FOSAF activity in the Eastern Cape over the last year has been focused mainly on two issues:

1. Fish supplies

The number of fish available for stocking from hatcheries in the Eastern Cape has reduced substantially with the reduction in capacity of the hatchery at Rhodes University, associated primarily with the retirement of Martin Davies.

Since then there has been an attrition of staff/expertise from the hatchery and it was almost closed in July by the Dean. It is still going though, but it is no longer focused on production and is mainly to be utilised for teaching purposes now. Trout are a winter spawning fish, as opposed to our indigenous summer spawners, so it is a good species option for mid-year student activities, rather than in the summer, outside of the semesters. So while we have met with them a number of times, and are committed to assisting them, and have an agreement to help with supplying eggs from club waters for hatching and rearing, we can no longer rely on this hatchery to supply significant quantities of fish, necessarily.

Sandile's Rest, operated by Grant Wylie, is a good hatchery still operating near Stutterheim, and Martin Davies, together with a farmer, Matthew Morgan, is trying to get another hatchery established near Tarkastad, though it has had limited success thus far, due to challenging conditions. Certainly, no EC hatchery can produce yearlings anymore, so we are henceforth going to be dependent on sourcing fish from outside the area for quite a few clubs and lodges.

2. FOSAF membership

We have been concerned about the membership numbers of FOSAF so we have had considerable dialogue about this, mostly at club level. The concern mostly is about the fact that membership of FOSAF is voluntary and that this has resulted in too few people taking the option to join up. At our last AGM we resolved to take the lead on this and develop a proposal for a new membership model for FOSAF, over which we could at least largely agree, and to take this to the national body for consideration. At our EXCO meeting tomorrow I will be presenting a proposal which I believe is workable, and which has substantial support from clubs in the EC, making for a much broader participation in, and support for, FOSAF, both financially as well as morally. In essence it boils down to numbers, and everyone contributing, rather than just a few, making the organisation much stronger.

3. Others

a. River Health Programme

Other issues that have been touched on, but which need further attention and energy, are the implementation of river health projects. Two rivers are in our sights, namely the Cata and the Wolf rivers, in the Keiskammahoek region. These rivers are historically important, being the old stomping ground of Sydney Hey, when he lived in Keiskammahoek 100 years ago, and were stocked around 1900-1903. Both these rivers still hold good populations of fish, the Cata holding browns believed to be one of the purest remaining strains of the original Loch Leven fish, and the Wolf holding rainbows. Both of these are quite badly affected by black wattle infestations, making the lower Wolf almost unfishable. The community at Cata village, where a tourism project involving fishing was initiated some years ago, have done work on the river, replacing wattles with indigenous yellowwoods in many areas, but they need help, or they will probably eventually lose the battle.

The problems we have faced are twofold, mainly involving finding a champion to drive the projects and money. We have had discussions with DEA's Working for Water and with Amatola Forest Company so far, with limited interest in assisting us.

We'll continue to work on this.

b. Fishing

On the fishing front, our clubs remain strong and good fishing is available both in fresh water and in saltwater estuarine environments.

In the western areas around PE, in the Bankberg and in the Winterberg we are still under severe water supply constraints due to the ongoing drought, with dams generally low, but the fishing is still good in some Bankberg waters and in Thrift. In the southern Drakensberg, Stormberg and Amatola areas around Barkly, Rhodes, Maclear, Dordrecht and Stutterheim, the drought is a thing of the past for now, and the fishing is as good as we've seen it in years. Queenstown Club has some new waters they started stocking last year so their club looks forward to having even more waters available in the future.

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