

**FOSAF
KWA ZULU NATAL CHAPTER**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017-2018

It gives me pleasure to present the Chairman's Report for 2017 -2018 for the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Chapter of FOSAF.

The KZN Chapter committee met 3 times during the year and the committee remains active and vigilant to address issues of concern and promoting our sport.

Whilst work is continuing on the NEMBA Alien and Invasive Species Regulations and Lists, recent proposed amending legislation sent out for comment has major implications for trout and other species. It seems the work that we have done and the agreements reached to date has simply been ignored and that in terms of the proposed legislation trout will be classified as invasive throughout the country. A strategy has been mounted to address these issues including the new proposed act. This may well result in some form of litigation in due course. Undoubtedly, this important work needs to be continued but the funding for the time spent on this work remains a major concern. Ian Lax, our National Chairman, continues to deal with it with assistance from Ian Cox. If we do not find a suitable and acceptable way forward, our sport will be seriously affected by it. We owe these gentlemen a great deal of thanks for the manner in which they have and continue to deal with the issues.

Donors who have donated money for the NEMBA Alien and Invasive Species Regulations work are regularly updated on the progress being made and problems being experienced. During the year, the Natal Fly Fishers Club donated R60000-00 for the work being done and I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for this very kind gesture.

FOSAF is now fully registered as a public benefit organisation, which assists with funding, and donations, as donors are able to declare donations as a tax deduction. Some certificates have been issued in the last year enabling donors to make tax deductions for donations made. I hope that going forward it will benefit donors and we should be able to raise more money.

During this year, we organised a meeting between the KZN based fly-fishing Clubs and the FOSAF KZN Chapter committee. This was indeed a fruitful discussion and various concerns identified by clubs are being dealt with in an

ongoing way. Decisions were taken to improve the communication and to hold further meetings of this nature in future.

Getting more people of colour on board remains a real concern. We review this regularly and explore people to approach but with no success. It is our view that unless we can draw in people of colour, our sport could be adversely affected.

There is both good news, as well as some adverse news about Umgano, the community-based initiative of the Mabandla Traditional Council. The adverse news relates to the drop in the price of timber which presently exists in KZN Province, which has resulted in a significant decline in its revenue stream. This has resulted in management having to implement rigid economy measures. Unfortunately, there are no indications of how long this problem will last, but for as long as it does last, management has no option but to curtail expenditure. Only essential management operations are being implemented and only key staff members are being retained. Therefore, the initiative continues on a maintenance basis.

The good news is that the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs (to whom Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife reports), has approved in principle the proclamation of the upper, higher lying portions of the project area, as a nature reserve. This represents a major feather in the cap of the Mabandla Traditional Council, under iNkosi Baleni, who made the initial proposal. The new nature reserve will have the same status as any other provincial nature reserve, such as iMfolozi. The new Umgano reserve was proposed to conserve the biodiversity within this portion of the internationally recognised Maputaland-Pondoland Albany Biodiversity Hotspot. From a fly fishing perspective, it will contribute to the long term protection of a portion of the watershed of the Ngwangwane and Gungununu Rivers. It will also contribute (as a primary tourism attraction) for the community based ecotourism plans of the Traditional Council. Proclamation of the proposed reserve is likely to attract the attention of both nature conservationists and ecotourists, including fly fishermen who enjoy angling in these remote near wild streams.

A very important development for the Umgano initiative was the graduation with a diploma in nature conservation by Zahninkosi Mtolo, the head Field Ranger. Umgano management two years ago had sent him to the SA Wildlife College, which is situated at the edge of the Kruger National Park. Not only did he have the opportunity to interact with students from the rest of SA but also the rest of Africa. This course provided him with all the knowledge necessary to manage an important candidate protected area such as Umgano. He will now

take charge of the management of the natural areas of Umgano under the CEO, Mr Zweli Baleni, son of Chief Baleni.

The endangered Maloti Minnow is a sardine-sized minnow that has long been thought to be mainly present in that part of the in the Drakensberg Alpine Belt, that lies in Lesotho. The type locality (where it was first collected) was given as the Mkhomozana River, in the Sani Pass in Kwa-Zulu Natal. This record is, however, regarded as incorrect by some experts. Many searches have been made in the headwaters of KZN streams east-flowing rivers, and it had not again been found in KZN, until late last year when staff members of EKZN Wildlife ("EKZNW") reported in a recently published scientific paper, that they had rediscovered this minnow in the headwaters of the Mzimkhulu River, in eastern KZN. This was a complete surprise, but it is a matter that has relevance for those of us who enjoy trout fishing. Purists have touted trout as an invasive predatory fish that threatens indigenous species such as the Maloti minnow. However, trout have been introduced to most stretches of the Mzimkhulu River for many years. One wonders whether this is not an instance that shows that the minnow can co-exist with trout. We wait with baited breath for further developments.

Good work continues to be done on clearing of riverbanks on the Umgeni River by Andrew Fowler, current Chairman of the Natal Fly Fishers Club (NFFC) and his team. During the year the NFFC organised a gala dinner for fly fishers to raise funds. This was indeed a very successful venture and indeed a very good advertisement for fly-fishing. Part of the money collected was donated to FOSAF for the work on the NEMBA Alien and Invasive Species Regulations and part of it for the restoration work being done on the Umgeni River. The Riparian Owner, Mr Russel Watson, continues to be supportive of this initiative. It has certainly created a very positive image for fly fishers and it has spilled over to encourage other Riparian Owners to do similar work.

We have again this year tried to get a Yellow Fish representative onto our committee. A student studying at University of KZN (UKZN), Matthew Burnett, has been seconded to join our Committee as he is doing research on yellow fish under Dr Gordon O'Brien who remains a member of our committee and useful liaison person in this regard.

We continue to promote both fly-fishing and fly dressing at schools. It is however problematic as at some schools the teachers are very reluctant to introduce a further interest group, mainly because of learners being overloaded.

We continued with efforts to restore the Freshwater Fishing Liaison Committee Meetings at Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW). However, after many attempts it was decided not to continue as there are many pressing organisational issues being addressed at EKZNW. Until these organisational issues have been addressed, it was considered a futile exercise to continue our efforts. We are watching developments and as soon as we consider it appropriate, we will again make an attempt.

Although we continue to monitor progress at Spring Grove Dam in Rosetta there is no further progress to turn it into a public angling area. As reported last year, until the land surrounding this dam is expropriated to allow access for the public this will not be possible. It is not seen as a priority and is likely to take many years.

Two very successful trout festivals were organised; one in the Kamberg and another in the Boston area.

The Natal Fly Dressers Society and the Durban Fly Tyers are two very active clubs promoting fly dressing. Monthly meetings are held where fly dressers are given input from the more experienced fly dressers. Monthly evening get togethers are organised by the Natal Fly Fishers Club for fly fishers in Pietermaritzburg to promote fly-fishing and develop a fly fishing culture. This has been useful as it attracted quite a number of young fly fishers.

Arising from a meeting held with the publishers of FLYFISHING magazine a task team was formed to examine possible better marketing strategies of FOSAF. More work needs to be done in this regard.

FLYFISHING magazine have for many years been supportive of FOSAF for which we are indeed very grateful. The publishers announced recently that they would not be publishing any hard copies in future because of printing costs. Only electronic copies will be produced. The first edition of the electronic copies appeared recently and it continues to be a leading fly fishing magazine.

A start has been made with updating the fly-fishing ethics as well as FOSAF's Policies and Guidelines document. While some progress is being made more needs to be done in this regard.

My thanks go to those who have attended the Committee meetings and made a significant contribution to the activities of the KZN Chapter. Also to Maxi

Holder for looking after the Secretarial work so well and Kevin Culverwell who has for many years done our work as our Treasurer.

My best wishes to the incoming committee for the next year.

Jim Read
Chairman