



**Minutes of the meeting to discuss the issues pertaining to Yellowfish in
Sterkfontein Dam that were held on Thursday, 19 July 2012 from 09:00 till 13:00 at
the Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve**

1. Welcome and opening

L. Barkhuizen opened the meeting and welcomed all present. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss amongst others the issues raised by E. Dowd in the article in the July 2012 edition of "Stywe Lyne" on "Geelvis word bedreig in Sterkfonteindam". All are aware of the flood of emails that followed after the article was published with people agreeing or disagreeing with the statements made by E. Dowd. L. Barkhuizen informed the meeting that the Free State Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (FS DETEA) would like to see the matters that were raised and that will be raised during the meeting, be addressed as soon as possible. He requested that people be open and frank as to the matters they feel needs to be addressed and that constructive criticism be given. He further requested that all respect each other's opinions and that the meeting focuses on solutions to the problems pertaining to the conservation and protection of Yellowfish in Sterkfontein Dam. At the end of the meeting an action plan must be on the table coupled with a time frame to ensure the meeting is not a waste of time.

2. Present and apologies

An attendance register was circulated.

Present:	F.P. Fihlo, FS DETEA	J.J. Joubert, FS DETEA
	A. Burger, Fly Fisher Outfitter	D. Weaver, Zenzak charters
	H. van Zyl, local fly fisher	E. Dowd, Stywe Lyne
	E. Kriel, Stywe Lyne	A. Schlemmer, FS DETEA
	L. Barkhuizen, FS DETEA	D. de Klerk, Sterkies Experience
	M. Hayes, South African Police Service	
Apologies:	Frontier Fly Fishing Team	E. Kruger, Bank Angler
	G. Laubscher, Fly Castaway	W. Boing, FS DETEA
	T. Wilkinson, SA Fly Fishing Safaris	J. Hardy, FS DETEA
	Me. S. Carnie, Fly fishing Magazine	L. Jonker, local fly fisher
	K. Clover, Tourette Fishing	P. Ardene, FOSAF & YWG
	J. Kriek, Harrismith Angling Club	C. van Rensburg, landowner at dam
	P. Jacobs, The Complete Fly Fisherman Magazine	

3. Introductions

All present were requested to introduce them and to mention who they represent.

4. Setting of the Agenda

Two new matters were added to the Agenda:

- 6.1 Sponsors – E. Dowd
- 6.2 Competitions – D. Weaver

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L. Barkhuizen proposed that instead of following the Agenda point for point, that a workshop session be done that will eventually lead to the development of an action plan.

Session 1

All present were requested to list all the issues pertaining to the conservation and protection of Yellowfish at Sterkfontein Dam, as well as the threats and current problems been experienced. Before the discussion started, D. Weaver pointed out that all should take note that fly fishers are Nature Conservation's allies and conservation orientated individuals, committed to the conservation and protection of Yellowfish and the environment.

After the listing of the problems/issues and discussions, similar points were grouped together and the final issues, problems or threats that were identified, are:

- (i) The fluctuation of water levels, especially during the spawning season.
- (ii) Poaching in the streams.
- (iii) Black bass – the long term effect.
- (iv) Alien species (Grass carp present in Spioenkop Dam).
- (v) Commercial harvesting of Yellowfish.
- (vi) Walking on banks and through spawning beds / disruption of spawning fish.
- (vii) Bank anglers, boat anglers = “stywe lyne” anglers not aware of the threats to Yellowfish and correct methods of handling Yellowfish.
- (viii) Lack of policing/no action from Nature Conservation re selling of fish.
- (ix) Angling competitions.

For the purpose of the discussions and the minutes of the meeting it should be noted that when reference is made to “Yellowfish”, it refers to the more abundant Smallmouth Yellowfish, Labeobarbus aeneus that occurs in Sterkfontein Dam, but it does not exclude the Threatened and Protected Largemouth Yellowfish, Labeobarbus kimberleyensis, which seemingly does not occur in large numbers in Sterkfontein Dam.



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Session 2: Proposed action plan

Problem identified	Caused by	Effect of problem	Proposed solution/s	Responsibility	Time Frame	Expected outcome	Notes / applicable legislation
Fluctuation of water levels especially during spawning season	Eskom when generating electricity through the pump storage scheme	Eggs and fish fry die on spawning beds	Meeting/correspondence with Eskom to highlight problem	L. Barkhuizen	Before next spawning season	Eskom aware of the effect of fluctuating water levels on fish and spawning beds	With SA facing an electricity crisis, Eskom is under pressure to supply enough electricity during peak hours. SA energy needs vs. Yellowfish spawning – the challenge!
Poaching in the streams.	Local community from Qwaqwa; foreigners employing local people	Spawning in streams is disrupted. Large, breeding fish is killed. May on long term cause a decline in the number of Yellowfish in the dam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Stop to allow the harvesting of wood in northern part of the reserve. ii. Establish a gate and control point on the road to Qwantani. iii. Fly fishers to be the eyes and ears for Nature Conservation iv. Erect more visible sign boards with short, clear messages. 	All fly fishers to report illegal activities to J. Joubert (079 464 2008) and P. Fihlo (083 547 0238) immediately.	Ongoing with main focus during the spawning season	Decrease in illegal fishing methods and poaching in the streams	New offices for Nature Conservation personnel are been built where tar road leading to Qwantani starts. This can assist with improved control in future of all people and vehicles using this road.

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				L. Barkhuizen to investigate the development of new sign boards	Before November 2012	Greater awareness regarding the protection and conservation of Yellowfish	
Black bass – the long term effect.	Illegal introductions – Black bass numbers have increased rapidly since the first Bass Masters competition was held at Sterkfontein Dam two years ago.	Effect on Yellowfish currently unknown but as bass is an aggressive predator species, its long term effect especially on juveniles of indigenous fish, is a matter of concern.	In future all Black bass been caught at Sterkfontein Dam, must be killed and not returned to the dam. Include this message in education and awareness pamphlets and posters.	All anglers at Sterkfontein Dam.	Ongoing.	Less Black bass in dam	According to Section 28 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance no. 8 of 1969 (<i>and the new Nature Conservation Bill of 2012 to be promulgated during September 2012</i>), it is illegal to import, transport and release any fish species without a valid permit in the Free State.
				L. Barkhuizen to develop pamphlets and posters. J. Joubert to inform management of Qwantani resort that all bass caught should be killed in future.	September 2012	All anglers at Sterkfontein Dam aware about the threats of Black bass to the indigenous species.	

Alien species (Grass carp) present in Spioenkop Dam)	Illegal releases of this species in KZN. Concern that this species can be translocated through pump storage scheme to Sterkfontein Dam	Unknown	Contact Aquatic Scientists in KZN to determine the extend of the presence of Grass carp in Spioenkop Dam.	L. Barkhuizen	September 2012	Action plan to prevent introduction of Grass carp from KZN	
			Develop a questionnaire for anglers at Sterkfontein Dam to determine exactly what fish species are currently been caught at Sterkfontein Dam.	J. Joubert	September 2012	To know what fish species are currently been caught at Sterkfontein Dam	
Commercial harvesting of Yellowfish	Entrepreneurs catching large numbers of Yellowfish	Can cause a decline in numbers of Yellowfish	According to the Nature Conservation Ordinance no. 8 of 1969 this is an illegal activity without a permit. Only 10 Smallmouth Yellowfish may be caught and kept per day but no Largemouth Yellowfish. Stricter law enforcement	FS DETEA	Ongoing	Stop commercial harvesting in its totality at Sterkfontein Dam	
Walking on banks and through spawning beds / disruption of spawning fish.	Fly fishers and bank anglers especially from December to February walking on banks.	May disrupt spawning fish but after long discussion this seems not to be a major problem as when fish is	Ask all fly fishers and anglers not to beach near areas or walk on banks where fish are spawning. Include this information on pamphlets and posters	All L. Barkhuizen	Ongoing Before November 2012	Uninterrupted spawning of Yellowfish	According to Section 25 (2) of the Nature Conservation Ordinance no. 8 of 1969 (<i>and the new Nature Conservation Bill</i>)

	(Fly fishers know to never wade through spawning beds.)	disturbed, they are replaced by other fish or just return later to continue spawning.	Article to be written for Fly Fishing Magazine regarding this.	D. Weaver	Before November 2012	Greater awareness re effect of disruptions on spawning fish	<i>of 2012 to be promulgated during September 2012</i>), it is illegal to wilfully injure or disturb any spawning bed, bank or shallow whereon or wherein the spawn of any fish is deposited.
Bank anglers, boat anglers = "stywe lyne" anglers not aware of the threats to Yellowfish and the correct methods of handling Yellowfish.	"Stywe lyne" anglers' lack of knowledge re Yellowfish	Many Yellowfish are killed unnecessarily	Articles to be written in Fly fishing and other angling magazines. Education and awareness through pamphlets and posters – also to be put up at entrance gates and in chalets	Editors of magazines. L. Barkhuizen	November 2012	All anglers at Sterkfontein Dam is aware of the correct methods of catching and handling Yellowfish as well as the legislation	L. Barkhuizen has already developed an information pamphlet re the legislation pertaining to the catch and keeping of Yellowfish. All fly fishers and anglers are motivated to become a member of OVRYCMA.
Lack of policing/no action from Nature Conservation re selling of fish.	Lack of funding and personnel shortage. <i>(Note should be taken that it is not illegal to sell dead fish. The issues applicable</i>	Illegal fishing is continuing	Cooperation amongst all role players and stakeholders. Re-instate and revitalize the Honorary Nature Conservators corps in Harrismith	All J. Joubert and J. Hardy	Before December 2012	Improved and effective policing	All should take note that there are two separate sections at Sterkfontein Dam: the RESORT and RESERVE. J. Joubert is the Reserve

	<i>here are when threatened or protected fish species are sold and if illegal fishing methods were used to catch the fish)</i>						Manager, and L. Johnson the Resort Manager. All matters relating to biodiversity and the environment must be referred to only J. Joubert or P. Fihlo.
Angling competitions.	<i>After a lengthy discussion, it was confirmed that this is not a problem at Sterkfontein Dam as the three competitions been held here annually (note TCFE's does not hold a competition, but it is a festival), are done under strict control measures and according to conservation guidelines. For any angling competition to be held, the organisers need to apply for an official permit, and seemingly none are aware about this. L. Barkhuizen will send out the necessary permit application form that must be completed for permission to present an angling competition.</i>						According to Regulation 13 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance no. 8 of 1969 it is illegal to organize or hold an angling competition without a valid permit.



5. **Matters for discussion:**

- 5.1 *The illegal catching of Yellowfish in the mountain streams***
Was discussed during the development of the action plan.
- 5.2 *The disturbance of spawning fish by anglers and fly fishers***
Was discussed during the development of the action plan.
- 5.3 *Wading and walking through spawning beds***
Was discussed during the development of the action plan.
- 5.4 *Proposed control measures and law enforcement actions***
A. Schlemmer informed the meeting that a major Law Enforcement Operation in cooperation with the SAPS and SAPS Water Wing will be carried out during the next spawning season at the dam. This was welcomed by all. Understandably the exact date and time for this action cannot be given. Also refer to the action plan for more actions.
- 5.5 *Identifying/mapping the spawning areas of Yellowfish in Sterkfontein Dam***
Seemingly the spawning season for Yellowfish at Sterkfontein Dam is from December till the end of February, but it is dependent on the water temperature. According to D. Weaver spawning usually takes place from 05:00 till ± 09:30 and then again in the late afternoon. D. Weaver provided L. Barkhuizen with a map and indicated where the major spawning beds of Yellowfish in Sterkfontein Dam are.
- 5.6 *The impact of Black bass on the Yellowfish population in Sterkfontein Dam***
Although discussed during the development of the action plan, there is concern regarding the rapid increase in the numbers of Black bass in Sterkfontein Dam during the past two years and since the first Bass Masters competition were held at the dam two years ago. As Black bass is an alien invasive and aggressive predator, the exact impact on the Yellowfish at this stage is unknown. The presence of this species may have a detrimental effect in the long term on not only the Yellowfish population in Sterkfontein Dam, but all other indigenous species. Through the angling methods for bass, during which treble hooks are used, in some cases Largemouth Yellowfish is caught as a by-catch and these hooks cause severe injuries to the mouth of the Largemouth Yellowfish. It needs to be noted that Sterkfontein Dam is a Yellowfish Sanctuary and that all Black bass that is caught in future, must be killed and not returned to the dam.
- 5.7 *The new Free State Nature Conservation Bill (2012) and proposed new regulations pertaining to the protection of Yellowfish***
L. Barkhuizen and A. Schlemmer informed the meeting that the new Free State Nature Conservation Bill will probably be promulgated during September 2012. In terms of freshwater fish, the FS DETEA's focus is amongst others on the conservation and protection of the Largemouth Yellowfish, which is listed as a Threatened or Protected species, as well as the more abundant Smallmouth Yellowfish. In terms of the Nature Conservation Regulations that will be promulgated after the new Bill has been passed by the Free State Legislature, specific protection measures have been listed for both of the Yellowfish species.

L. Barkhuizen handed out an information pamphlet regarding the correct control

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measures pertaining to the catch and keep of the two Yellowfish species that occur in the Orange and Vaal River systems and also mentioned that note should be taken that the information on the back on the Free State Angling licenses is incorrect.

5.8 The Orange Vaal River Yellowfish Conservation and Management Association (OVRYCMA)

OVRYCMA was established during 1996 by the FS DETEA, the Windknot Fly Fishing Club in Potchefstroom, FOSAF and landowners whose farms and resorts border rivers where Yellowfish occur. The main aim of OVRYCMA is to get as many people as possible involved in the protection and conservation of the two Yellowfish species that occur in the Orange and Vaal River systems. L. Barkhuizen is the current chairperson of OVRYCMA and handed out the information brochure on OVRYCMA as well as the application form for free membership. He invited all present to become a member of OVRYCMA. L. Barkhuizen is also planning to establish an Eastern Free State Chapter of OVRYCMA involving all outfitters, fly fishermen etc. in this part of the Province.

6. New matters

6.1 Sponsors (E. Dowd)

It was noted that there are possible sponsors from various companies that might be willing to sponsor some of the actions e.g. notice boards, posters, patrol boat etc. to assist in the protection and conservation of the Yellowfish at Sterkfontein Dam. D. Weaver mentioned that the possible sponsors need to be approached as soon as possible however J. Joubert mentioned that there is a process in government that needs to be followed before any sponsor may be sought or received by a government department.

6.2 Competitions (D. Weaver)

The possibility of arranging angling competitions and raising funds needed at Sterkfontein Dam was mentioned but then again the money raised cannot be donated to government as a certain process needs to be followed.

7. Summary of discussions and the way forward

The minutes of the meeting and proposed action plan will be forwarded to all interested and affected parties. L. Barkhuizen will investigate the possibility of combining a follow-up session to be held in combination with the next OVRYCMA meeting scheduled to be held in August 2012 near Vereeniging.

8. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed by L. Barkhuizen but the *preliminary* date is Thursday, 16 August 2012.

9. Closure

All present were thanked for their inputs and contributions and for taking the time to attend the meeting. The passion from all for the conservation and protection of the Yellowfish, not only in Sterkfontein Dam, is much appreciated and it is sincerely hoped that all matters and issues that were raised will be addressed and solved as soon as possible. The meeting closed at 13:00.
