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The Braamfontein Spruit Trust Board of Management Annual Report for the year ending August 2006

Report from the Chairman

The past year has shown an increased volume of requests for assistance and information from various organisations, community groups, students and concerned citizens. The BST has assisted with problems ranging from

- General information e.g. where to walk, picnic etc.
- Sewage spills, pollution, dumping, assistance with cleaning rivers,
- Proposed development adjacent to or encroaching on public open space, as well as EIA's and EIA exemptions.
- Students from Primary, Secondary and Tertiary educational institutes requiring assistance and information

A good communication system is in place with

- Local, Regional and National Government Departments
- Local Government at the Ward/Councillor Committee level
- Utilities e.g. Pick it Up
- SAP Youth Desk
- WESSA NGO Forum
- Jukskei Catchment Forum
- Johannesburg City Parks Braamfontein Spruit Stakeholders forum
- City of Johannesburg Stakeholders Forum

We have participated in various seminars

- Integrated Development Planning
- Growth Development Strategies

- CAPEX proposals at local Ward level
- Deat and GDACE Regulations *Workshops*--
- Strategic Environmental Workshops

Objections have been lodged against building encroachment on public open space such as the

- Urgent application for the cancellation of the perpetual right of way servitude for park purposes over erven 792 & 793 river club ext 30
- Further discussions with the Developers of the Pick 'n Pay Shopping Centre off Nicol Highway adjacent to Forest Farm, the Braamfontein spruit and the Field and Study Centre are taking place
- The Application for exemption from an EIA for the installation of above ground diesel tanks in the Darrenwood Heritage area

Objections to EIA exemption for the pedestrian bridge at the confluence of the Braamfontein and Westdene/Montgomery spruits were not lodged by BST. After being approached by the Env. Consultants TRIVIRON, to discuss and explain to objectors our reasons for approval, their objection was withdrawn

Objection to the EIA exemption for the section of the Braamfontein Spruit from Rustenberg Rd to Conrad Drive should be submitted by 4th September. Whether an objection is lodged or not, depends on information available. Documentation is available for examination at the Delta Env. Centre.

Recent information received includes:

- The "**Green Scorpions**" who have a range of enforcement powers varying from routine inspections to search and seizure operations, setting up roadblocks and arresting suspects. They also issue formal notices to individuals or corporations who are breaking environmental laws or not complying with the terms of their licences. As part of the programme of enforcement, DEAT has also established
- A 24-hour hotline (0800 205 005) through which the public can report any offences in their areas
- A toll-free 24-hour tip-off line on 0800 701 701
- To report environmental crimes, mail Melissa Fourie at mfourie@deat.gov.za
- Report all Environmental Emergency Incidents to EmergencyReporting@deat.gov.za

A request from the Wilderness Foundation, WESSA-EC BCU and SANBI coalition for the UNDP to inform them about MUNICIPAL run reserves /open spaces within the NAR region.

They are putting together a document for major funding for capacity building in municipalities for running reserves – so what they need urgently (as always) from you are the following:

1. Name and size of Reserve (and position i.e. close to what town)
2. Biodiversity of reserve (preferably Bushveld – Bakenveld)
3. Municipality running reserve and contact person and contact details (if possible)
4. In your opinion what capacity building would be required in the municipality
5. What threats / barriers are there to capacity building.

YOUR URGENT HELP WOULD BE HIGHLY!!! APPRECAITED

Please contact **Carla Hudson** of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa at directly at

Tel: +27 011 462 5663 Fax: +27 011 462 8364 Cell: 083 756 0072

Public Participation

JCP Braamfontein Spruit Stakeholders Forum

Still no progress to report, proposed and diarised regular meetings have not taken place, the requested Memorandum of Understanding and Constitution are not available. The final Drafts, which we are awaiting, should have been ready for implementation by end May 2005

The proposed JCP booking form for the use of Parks and Reserves has not been finalised

City of Johannesburg Stakeholders Forum

A process is underway to develop a Growth development Strategy for the City and a new five-year IDP.

The Environment Sector Plan will form part of the IDP

At the third meeting of this Forum, seven people, not council officials, were elected to a steering committee of stakeholders. (Godfrey Giles, Paul Farrell, Kim Keiser, Wendy Carstens, Smokey and Ithumeleng from Soweto, Bongani from Alex, didn't give surnames) Judith Taylor has very kindly offered to receive all the emails for the forum. Apart from the Steering committee meetings, Wendy Carstens called a meeting of CoJ stakeholders and Pick it Up at which we were given a presentation of their aims and objectives leading to 2030. We learnt the Pick it Up is not just a refuse removal organisation!!

WESSA NGO Forum and Darrenwood Heritage area

This forum is of great benefit to its' NGO members. Meetings occur on a regular basis and minutes are circulated. The amount of expertise and knowledge amongst the members is of great value to environmental management. Their assistance and advice is greatly valued. Legal aid has been given to the Darrenwood Heritage development and letters have been sent to the following departments/persons

- *The Gauteng Department of Development Planning and Local Government ("GDDPLG") for the attention of MEC Q D Mahlangu
- The Provincial Heritage Resources Authority for Gauteng ("PHRAG") to Mr. P. Mashabane and Dr. Pallo Jordan
- The Minister of Arts & Culture requesting why the order to stop development in the Darrenwood Heritage was never implemented. What PHRAG has done to ensure that the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 ("NHRA") are enforced and the continued degradation of the heritage area is stopped
- *The CJC for the attention of Mr. A. Masondo, enclosing a copy of the letter addressed to the GDDPLG requesting whether investigations have been undertaken in respect of the Darrenwood Heritage Area, a copy of the development management plan

submitted by the developer and if same has not been submitted, what the Council has done in this regard

- The Gauteng Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture for the attention of MEC Barbara Creecy, enclosing a copy of the letter addressed to PHRAG requesting why the order to stop all developments was not implemented
- The SAHRA for the attention of the CEO: Mr. P. Buthelezi, enclosing a copy of the letter addressed to PHRAG and requesting What PHRAG has done to ensure that the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 ("NHRA") are enforced and the continued degradation of the heritage area is stopped; why a heritage area, entitled to protection in terms of the NHRA continues to be allowed to degenerate and a copy of the conservation management plan that SAHRA was requested to draft
- The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism ("DEAT") for the attention of M. Fourie and requesting what findings and/or enforcement action has been undertaken by the Department,
- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry ("DWAF") for the attention of Thyer Pather/Jabu Maluleke, requesting the following: What remedies are currently being instituted, with particular reference to the damage to the dam wall and the detrimental impact that the development and the lack of management of the area is having on a water resource.

A few almost non-committal responses have been received

Report from BoM Members

Webpages

From a small beginnings, our website has grown into a fairly comprehensive tool that can be used by BST members and interested parties alike. Although part of the much bigger Footprint Hiking Club website, the pages are run separately and have their own particular 'feel'. The main advantage that there is to being part of the popular Footprint website, is that many visitors arrive at the BST pages through the main website which is listed on all the main international and local search engines. Pages included are Events, Archives, Membership, Environmental concerns etc. Input would be welcome as to what else members would like to see.

See www.footprint.co.za/bst.htm to access the site

Tim Hartwright

State of the Braamfontein Spruit and Tributaries

Pollution

With the high rainfall that the catchments area has received this year has come the corresponding high level of **pollution** incurred along the spruit.

The worst areas are:

Braamfontein Spruit

- Tributaries and areas above the waterfall at Waterfall Palace,
- The Parkview Golf course down to the confluence of the Braamfontein/Westdene/Montgomery Spruits
- Downstream - the lower reaches of the **Outspan Spruit** tributary and where the spruit crosses underneath the highway (N1) at Paulshof

Montgomery Spruit

- Areas along **Montgomery Spruit** are also polluted with a lot of litter.

Recreational use

There has been a notable upturn in the use of the spruit for **recreational use** from hikers, mountain bikers, casual walkers, runners and others and this is most encouraging.

Security

Security is a major problem and we look to the council to help solve this. Some areas are very overgrown and present a risk to users. Vagrancy is an ever present problem and is unlikely to go away completely despite action by City Parks officials and the local police.

Erosion

Erosion of the banks of the spruit, caused by the high rainfall is a source of major concern but the main centres of concern are isolated and could be controlled by the use of unobtrusive means that could promote the area for wildlife.

Tim Hartwright

Zoo Lake Users Committee

Zoo Lake turned 100 years old this year and we are proud that for all that time the Park has been open to all races. Several events have and are taking place during the year.

The past year has been a very busy one for the Zoo Lake Users Committee. On June the 5th we celebrated World Environment Day by completing the Rehabilitation of the Island and the Conservation of the Heronry at Zoo Lake.

David Singer a local attorney donated the money for the project and Geoff Lockwood guided us through the whole process with the assistance of the hard working team from City Parks.

On the 2nd of August we held a successful fundraising concert at moyo to raise funds for the intended Information Security Centre. Tessa Ziegler was our soloist.

Other projects have been the repainting of the Coronation Fountain in the Centre of the Lake and the cleaning of the Peace Statue.

Corobrik donated 10.000 bricks for a remaining wall to be built and City Parks kindly supplied the labour and an extra wall.

In September we will be celebrating Arbor week when Advocate George Bizo will plant the first of a 100 trees we will be planting with the community and the year will end with the ever popular Carols by Candlelight.

Lucy Taylor

Delta Park Users Committee

The fencing of the park along Road No 5 has been completed. Signage is needed urgently at the northern end of Zonda Avenue, Victory Park as well as in the scout hall park in Hamilton Avenue, Craighall Park in order to eliminate motorized traffic along the banks of the Spruit.

The pedestrian bridge a few hundred metres upstream of the western end of Rothesay Avenue, Craighall Park has been completed. This will be of tremendous advantage to many workers who cross the river daily between Craighall Park and Blairgowrie as well as to walkers, joggers and cyclists who have been unable to use the park since the original pedestrian crossing were washed away in January 2005.

Johannesburg City Parks has paved the parking area outside Trefoil Park, the home of the Guides. They have also provided a paved pathway to the bird hide, making this accessible to wheelchairs. JCP have provided a ramp to a viewing mound on the western side of the sanctuary. A bench has also been provided.

The University of the Witwatersrand continues with its research into the eradication of water hyacinth. This is part of a national research project and involves both biological and chemical control. It is a long term project that, if successful, will provide us with open water to enhance the bird habitat in the park.

The two bird hides were rehabilitated by Sandton Rotary and were officially opened in June 2006.

The Spotted Eagle Owls that occupy a breeding box on the roof of the Delta Environmental Centre are nursing two chicks and it seems that a pair of Ovambo Sparrowhawks is permanently resident in the park. Geoff Lockwood has recorded around 249 bird species in the park – 180 in the past four years!

The Delta Users Committee continues to conduct a walk around the park on the third Sunday of each month followed by tea/coffee served by the guides. This has become a hugely popular activity especially by dog lovers and attracts people from all over Johannesburg.

Clive Fletcher

Report of the Activities Committee.

The Activities Committee are responsible for organising our monthly walks, compiling and distribution of the outings list and fund raising events.

The members are; Margaret Boy, Mary Lipniki and Colm Burns.

Monthly Walks

2005

October Phalangwe Nature Trail

This has always been a lovely trail, but sadly, this time, there was much neglect of the trail and trail markers. We had phoned the week before to confirm the walk and the grass on this seldom used trail had been cut in anticipation of our visit. This rather a long, difficult walk, worth the effort though, was enjoyed by all. Preller House, (Museum and Restaurant) was unattended and unlocked, one shudders to think of what might happen to this historical home of Gustav Preller.

November Private Game and Nature reserve North of Pretoria

It is such a privilege to visit Dave and Marie Howcroft on their beautiful game farm. where they make us feel so welcome. We did not see many animals this time – we talk too much! A wonderful place to have an afternoon braai and to relax and enjoy the trees and birds.

2006

January West side of Melville Koppies

We met at one of our members homes and had a long walk down to the entrance of the koppie. Here we met Wendy Carstens who very kindly led the walk. This is a very pretty side of the ridge, with wonderful views to the North. The flora is very varied and at this time of the year very interesting to examine. Some edible wild fruit was tasted by a few adventurous walkers. Wendy is doing a stirring job at the Koppies and we thank her for her dedication and enthusiasm and for always being willing to help out as a guide.

February Miss Loves Cottage and historical tour of Auckland Park

This was a most enjoyable morning. Katherine Love gave us a jolly good insight into the area, history, showing us homes of important early Johannesburg businessmen. The tour of her Victorian house was fascinating. The tea served by Katherine and Pierre was superb. She has plans to open the rest of the house soon, but sadly, insufficient funds are available at present.

March Ezemvelo

Due to bad rains, flooded trails and a questionable state of the road, this walk was Cancelled

April Norscot Koppies Nature Reserve

I was unable to go on this walk, but believe that despite the weather there was a good turn out of members. Due to rain, they had to shorten the route.

May Tswaing Crater – new trail

This had to be cancelled as the bridge to the crater had been washed away. Thanks to Wendy for letting us know. Instead, we walked at Klipriviersberg on the monthly walk, guided by the informative members of the KNR committee.

June Kensington Historical Walk

I felt a little uneasy planning and leading this new walk, but once we got going it went very well. Maybe a little too far for some as it was 10km. I hope that I did not put anyone off for future walks. Peggy Laws has summarised the walk for our next newsletter. (Well done Margaret for taking this initiative! Val)

July Wonderboom Pretoria

This was a very interesting walk up a koppie, pretty steep, but with well laid out paths and steps. On approaching the top, one comes across the old fort built during the Boer War, it is just a ruin. It is just so wonderful to see and one gets a pretty good idea of what it was like. The Tree was fascinating, and we will return as we want to see the waterfall and cave. There is a very good picnic area.

It was good to see Betty Urri (Wright.) now living in Pretoria.

Fundraising

Thanks to all those members who have supported us with fundraising and donations in the past year.

The most well supported shows were The Pantomime, Merry Widow, Tango Fire and We will Rock You. Coming up, with tickets still available, are Simply Ballroom and the Pantomime Aladdin.

Thank you Val for all the help given to the Activities Committee over the past year

Margaret Boy

EIA Exemption on the Spruit

An exemption application has been made for the “upgrading” of the banks of the Braamfontein Spruit. The proposal for the upgrading is currently at Delta Environmental Centre, and is open for public comment. It is recommended that members view the document and determine if an objection should be lodged against the exemption application.

In assessing the document, impacts on the riverbank should be considered. We should at all costs avoid the future canalisation of the river, and while the river course is dynamic there are certain structures where stability is important. The powerlines are a case in point, and should these fall the canalisation issue will be relatively unimportant!

This said, it is important that diversity along the bank is maintained. The current crop of weeds growing in area may be stabilising the bank, but are certainly adding to ecological problems downstream. The weeds have various sources, with the river having been treated as a waste disposal mechanism by some local residents and businesses, and the ideal would be to reintroduce indigenous vegetation.

Water volumes in the river have changed due to the densification of the catchments area. We have lost much of the porous grass in gardens to high density housing in upmarket establishments, and high water events are more frequent and of higher intensity than in the past. The current crop of Pampas and other weeds will lead to deterioration in the bank and river, and will need to be managed. This will hopefully be taken into account in the proposal put forward, which hopefully does not only address civil engineering options for stabilisation. Erosion of the bank is a natural process, and is important in the life of the river. Full stabilisation will reduce future biodiversity options.

An in-depth assessment of the proposal will be needed, taking into account river flows, erosion control, habitat restoration, flood control, accessibility to the river and use of the bank, as well as aesthetic implications, and of course expenditure.

Improving the quality of the river is a responsibility of all, and proposals such as have been put forward are an important part of the river management. Readers will however need to be confident that the proposals put forward have been sufficiently researched and that a full environmental impact assessment is not required should they accept the current proposal.

Peter Nelson

Feedback on strategic objectives.

During the workshop held last year, four strategic objectives were identified.

The BOM has addressed these objectives with various levels of success.

The objectives were as follows.

1 Improve communication

The website is up and running, thanks to Tim Hartwright. A communication strategy is currently being implemented.

2 Improve representation on the BOM

This matter remains a challenge to the Board

3 Help stake holders achieve objectives

Success in this area is covered in the above report

4 Development of conservation plan for the rivers

Ongoing issue

5 Raise funds

See Treasurers report

Peter Nelson

Thanks

I would like to give my sincere thanks to the BoM members

Millicent Kingon for the Secretariat and Treasury

Peter Nelson for his assistance and knowledge in the Environmental area

Lucy Taylor and **Clive Fletcher** for sharing their knowledge and expertise in looking after the Zoo Lake and Delta Park

Margaret Boy, **Mary Lipniki** and **Colm Burns** for organising the walks and for their contributions to funds from the block bookings for theatre events.

Tim Hartwright for our website and enthusiastic networking abilities.

Also to

Georgina Isaacs for her assistance with Minutes and especially her attendance and reports on conferences and workshops from which valuable knowledge is passed on to our colleagues. This past year these have included courses and seminars on:

- Biodiversity and Mining
- The South African Earth Observation Network Conference

- The Environmental Evaluation Unit of UCT and the United Nations Training Institute (UNITAR) workshop of Peoples Experiences of Public Participation in Environmental Decision making in South Africa

Peter Mullan for assistance when needed

WESSA who have provided funding for legal action against errant development

Tandina Nykamp of Cameron Cross Inc. for her enthusiastic legal assistance

Deirdre Mullan for arranging discounted hire of a projector and screen from Spartan Tech. Rentals

Annette and Lesley of the Girl Guides Association For refreshments and use of the hall

Merlin Metals (Pty) Ltd. For continued support in providing office space, equipment, stationary and paying telephone bills, and ongoing support for the chairman.

***Val Kleyn
Chairman***