

Our Rivers, Our Future: Stakeholder Report



We would like to thank all of our stakeholders for attending the “Our Rivers, Our Future” workshop on the 5th of May at Hoekwil Primary School.



The workshop focused on the challenges our catchment is facing and on local people’s perspectives of problems and possible solutions. It included presentations from CSIR and NMMU scientists about the current state of the Wilderness Rivers as well as various stakeholder concerns and environmental issues.

After the presentations, a dialogue was held to think of common solutions, ensuring everyone had an equal say.

The most important outcome of the day was a widely agreed common vision for the Wilderness rivers:

“A healthy river system and healthy community through collective effort, beyond our own back yards.”

The dialogue was based on the World Cafe method where four to five participants take the **“Time to Think and Listen”**, to understand the views of others. The dialogues focused on participants views about the catchment’s problems and how to work together to solve these.

These principles are outlined to the right.



Brewing Solutions For The Garden Route

Outcomes

There were three main conversation themes addressed in the workshop:

- 1) Conversations for **awareness**
- 2) Conversations for **possibilities and choices**
- 3) Conversations for **execution and action**

Questions about awareness

What have we become aware of?

- The catchment system is currently fragmented. Both people and nature are disconnected across the entire catchment.
- Current research is useful and it is valuable to share the information. In turn, all stakeholders can be included in the problem-solving process to restore lost connections.
- Land use need not degrade catchments, if it is done responsibly. Modern farming in the catchment, for example, has less of an effect on the ecology than the traditional methods had in the past.
- The water quality of the Wilderness Rivers is poor and the amount of water runoff has been negatively affected. This has many causes and will eventually affect the profitability of farming, as well as ecosystem health, people's health and tourism.

How would we like our catchment to be?

- A healthy river that provides a healthy environment for future generations.
- Improved relationships amongst all stakeholder groups.
- Prioritisation of invasive plant and fish control.
- Innovative techno-solutions.



Questions about choices

What are our options?

- "Everyone called to action."
- Solutions backed by good science.
- Buffer zones along the river banks must be restored and rehabilitated.
- IAP intervention and eradication.

Amongst all these options, what are the best choices for us?

- An integrated strategic approach backed by a management plan which prioritises restoration and buffer zone projects.
- Ongoing research, communication and monitoring, followed by making information accessible to all stakeholders.
- Forums to address current catchment problems to promote collective action and a common vision. We need a credible champion to act as an umbrella to pool resources. Workshops like this one could help us get there.

Questions about execution

What can we do, with the resources we have?

We can share and acquire information and create awareness

- Inspire, motivate and encourage.

We can collaborate – take collective responsibility and create networking opportunities

- Identify tasks and champions so that we can pool, integrate and audit financial and labour resources.
- Develop a joint management plan which prioritises alien plant control and buffer zone repair.

We can experiment with innovative solutions

- Link problems to research opportunities so that we can have monitoring programs for successes and problem solving. Use this data to learn and adapt.
- Work together to repair buffer zones around streams.
- Implement an accreditation system to acknowledge and reward responsible ecosystem management.
- Adapt farming methods: use runoff water from fields for pivots; upgrade slurry dams; create biofuel from dairy waste.
- Install one-way valves for sewage leakage, and reporting water and sewage leakage.
- Use storage dams to trap pollution and stabilise the system.



Where to next for our rivers:

1. The Wilderness Rivers catchment needs a jointly developed management plan.
2. Officials from mandated organizations such as Water Affairs, municipalities, provincial authorities, parastatals and the Catchment Management Agency should come together and actively engage with stakeholders towards a legitimate joint management plan.
3. Land users, residents and organisations should link to existing initiatives such as the [Kaaimans to Touw Eco-restoration Forum](#).
4. A follow-up dialogue will be organized during the second half of 2015.

Please follow these links to be directed to a page where you can download the documents requested by the participants at the workshop:

- [All documents](#)
- [State of the Rivers](#)
- [State of Stakeholder Engagement](#)
- [Scenarios Presentation](#)
- [A Status Quo Review of Climate Change and the Agriculture Sector of the Western Cape Province](#)

For more information, please contact:

Corita Loubser

Corita.Loubser@nmmu.ac.za

044 801 5127