

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands SA Overberg District Municipality Land Use Planning Workshop

Date: 16 September 2015

Time: 10.00 – 16.00

Venue: Council Chambers, Bredasdorp



Workshop Report

SUMMARY:

The workshop forms part of the Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Wetlands South Africa project which aims to improve awareness and management of wetlands at the local level. Based on previous discussions with Overberg District Municipality (ODM), the workshop was aimed at raising awareness across spatial and land-use planning departments of the value of wetlands in the municipal context.

The workshop was an interactive and open forum for the stakeholders to learn about wetlands as ecological infrastructure and how biodiversity and wetlands management fit in with the current planning legislation as well as the new planning laws and provided a platform for stakeholders to share their areas of expertise as well as discuss the opportunities and constraints relating to the incorporation of wetlands and wetlands management into local land use planning within the ODM.

From discussions, it was apparent that knowledge and understanding about wetlands within the ODM is fragmented and accurate, ground-truthed data is limited. It was found that data constraints limit accurate land use planning which effectively incorporates wetlands. What data is available is difficult to access; there are capacity constraints in terms of interpreting the data that is available (e.g. lack of GIS specialists); and data availability and accuracy varies across the ODM. In addition, it was also found that the district and local municipalities are currently working in isolation with the information that is available and that data and resource sharing does not occur. Further, local Spatial Development Plans (SDFs) vary across the ODM. As a result of this wetland management currently varies in its effectiveness across the ODM. In light of the above, it was identified that one data platform is required where all available data could be shared between the district and local municipalities. SDFs need to be streamlined so that they all speak to each other within the district. Finally, the district and local municipalities need to work together to achieve cohesive action.

The workshop was not expected to yield polished or concrete results/goals/actions at this stage, but rather form part of the first steps in improving local government and citizen knowledge and understanding (at the individual, organisation and policy levels) of the value of biodiversity and wetlands and identifying initial 'how to' mechanisms to integrate wetlands, ecosystem services and biodiversity into local government planning and decision-making moving forward.

PARTICIPANTS:

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

The workshop forms part of the LAB: Wetlands South Africa programme (for background, see *Annex 1*) which aims to improve awareness and management of wetlands at the local level. Based on previous discussions with Overberg District Municipality (ODM), the workshop was aimed at raising awareness across spatial and land-use planning departments. The key aims of the workshop were to:

1. Bring together key wetland management and land use planning stakeholders in ODM.
2. Increase knowledge and understanding of the value and importance of wetlands and biodiversity across municipal departments in ODM, and with local municipalities within the ODM.
3. Facilitate initial discussions with the stakeholders regarding what data/ information is currently available to inform land use planning and identify the current opportunities and constraints pertaining to incorporating wetlands management into land use planning.
4. Increase knowledge and understanding on how to integrate biodiversity and wetlands management with land use planning objectives in the future.

The workshop was an interactive and open forum for the stakeholders to learn about wetlands as ecological infrastructure and how biodiversity and wetlands management fit in with the current planning legislation as well as the new planning laws (Spatial Planning Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) and the Land Use Planning Act (LUPA)). The workshop also provided a platform for stakeholders to share their areas of expertise as well as discuss the opportunities and constraints relating to the incorporation of wetlands and wetlands management into local land use planning within the ODM.

A copy of the workshop agenda is attached as *Annex 2* of this report.

CONSIDERING WETLANDS IN A MUNICIPAL LAND-USE PLANNING CONTEXT

1. Wetlands as an Ecological Infrastructure:

Liz Metcalfe, Project Manager of LAB: Wetlands SA, opened with a presentation which illustrated how wetlands are a high-value ecological infrastructure, which provide essential ecosystem services (e.g. clean water, flood regulation, water storage, habitat for biodiversity etc.) and also play a role in disaster risk reduction. The presentation highlighted how wetlands have historically been degraded through lack of or ineffectual planning (e.g. building in wetlands or using them as rubbish dumps etc.) which limit the effectiveness of wetlands to perform their valuable ecosystem services. The presentation focused on how effective governance and land use planning could not only provide benefits in the 'here and now', in terms of ecosystem services and nature based solutions to a number of existing problems (e.g. flood attenuation, water filtration etc.) but could also lessen the negative effects of climate change (e.g. flood risk reduction, temperature regulation etc.). The presentation concluded that incorporating wetlands, biodiversity and ecosystem services into land use planning can help realise and capitalise on the benefits of conserving these systems.

As the workshop was designed to be an interactive forum, throughout the presentation, the attending stakeholders asked questions relating to ICLEI Africa's role and what will the main focus be in terms of this programme and also added their feedback where relevant throughout the presentation. A summary of feedback and comments is given in table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of feedback and comments received during the “Wetlands and Ecological Infrastructure” Presentation.

| Comment/ Feedback |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further information is required regarding how to incorporate management of wetlands into the planning at a local municipal level. • Not necessarily possible to conserve all the wetlands within the district as well as achieve required development mandates. • A system/ map should be developed which indicates key areas for conservation (i.e. pristine wetland areas) and areas which could potentially be developed in (i.e. wetlands which have been severely impacted in the past and may not be able to be rehabilitated). • Current available information is not ground truthed. Ground truthing needs to be undertaken in order to accurately inform development. |

2. Biodiversity and SPLUMA, LUPA & Municipal By-Laws:

Derek Chittenden, an environmental planning consultant, gave a presentation which key focus was to highlight which legislation currently pertains to the management of wetlands and complex natural systems; as well as highlight the roles of the new SPLUMA and LUPA legislation in managing these systems.

The Constitution (Section 24), the Conservation of Agricultural Resources (Act No. 43 of 1983), the National Water Act (Act No. 36 of 1998), the National Environmental Management Act (“NEMA”) (Act No. 107 of 1998) and the Land Use Planning Ordinance (“LUPO”) currently govern and regulate land use development. Whilst LUPO is currently being phased out, the remaining legislation will remain in force. In addition to these, the Spatial Planning Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) as well as the Land Use Planning Act (LUPA) are currently being phased in, with LUPA replacing LUPO.

SPLUMA and LUPA include more focus on protection of natural and ecological resources (including wetlands and flood plains) as well as increasing resilience and adaptation measures to climate related shocks and impacts. In compliance with the new regulations, each municipality across the country is required to prepare and adopt a land use plan as well as have a credible SDF which speaks to the local land. With the introduction of the new legislation guidance is becoming available for district and local municipalities to revise their local SDF and land use planning priorities to align with these new priorities in land use planning.

Following the presentation, stakeholders were invited to add their comments and feedback. A summary of feedback and comments is given in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Summary of feedback and comments received during the “Biodiversity and SPLUMA, LUPA and Municipal By-Laws” Presentation.

| Comments/Feedback |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New legislation (LUPA) is currently still being rolled out and currently only in force in the City of Cape Town, George, Swartland and Berg River. LUPA will be implemented in the Overberg District Municipality shortly. • At this stage, municipal planning is informed by the local municipal by-laws as well as the local municipal SDFs and Environmental Management Frameworks (EMFs). • SDFs typically contain information regarding ecological corridors and general sensitive areas. |

- The content and scale of the local SDFs used within each local municipality vary throughout the local municipalities based on what data was used to inform the SDF (obtained from private consultants). Land use planning throughout the district varies accordingly.
- It is an issue to integrate planning and environmental issues. Environmental planning at this stage is national and provincial whilst land use planning is local. Sometimes it is necessary to obtain additional input (e.g. from Cape Nature) to ensure land use planning aligns with environmental objectives.
- The introduction of the new SPLUMA and LUPA regulations offers an opportunity to align environmental and planning objectives within the SDFs which will better inform land-use planning on the ground.

3. Opportunities and constraints in integrating environmental legislation into land-use planning:

The discussion session of the workshop aimed to identify the opportunities and constraints relating to the incorporation of wetlands and wetlands management into local land use planning within the ODM. From these discussions, it was apparent that knowledge and understanding about wetlands within the ODM is fragmented and ground-truthed, accurate data pertaining to wetlands is limited. It was found that data constraints limit accurate land use planning which effectively incorporates wetlands. What data is available is difficult to access; there are capacity constraints in terms of interpreting the data that is available (e.g. lack of GIS specialists); and data availability and accuracy varies across the ODM. In addition, it was also found that the district and local municipalities are currently working in isolation with the information that is available and that data and resource sharing does not occur. Further the local Spatial Development Plans (SDFs) vary across the ODM. As a result of this wetland management currently varies in its effectiveness across the ODM.

From discussions outlined above it was identified that one data platform is required where all available data could be shared between the district and local municipalities. These SDFs need to be streamlined so that they all speak to each other within the district. Finally the district and local municipalities need to work together to achieve cohesive action.

MOVING FORWARD

The workshop was not expected to yield polished or concrete results/goals/actions at this stage, but rather form part of the first steps in improving local government knowledge and understanding of the value of biodiversity and wetlands and identifying initial 'how to' mechanisms to integrate wetlands, ecosystem services and biodiversity into local government planning and decision-making.

In concluding the workshop, Liz Metcalfe informed participants that the discussion outcomes of the workshop as well as the outcomes of the inception meeting and the conclusions of the baseline Wetlands Assessment Report are anticipated to be taken forward into the Wetland Strategy and Action Plan Workshop to be held in early-mid 2016 and thereafter, into the development of the ODM's Wetland Strategy and Action Plan itself.

All were thanked for their attendance and enthusiasm for attending the workshop and engaging with the programme moving forward.

Annex 1: Project background

Wetlands are high-value ecological infrastructure, providing essential ecosystem services such as clean water, clean air, food, medicines, flood regulation, water storage and habitat for biodiversity. Wetlands also play a role in disaster risk reduction, and their effective governance could lessen the negative effects of climate change through, for example, flood risk reduction, temperature regulation and water and food security for communities.

However, wetlands are South Africa's most threatened ecosystems, with 48% of wetland ecosystems critically endangered, resulting in an urgent need to increase awareness of wetland importance; and to develop the capacity of local governments to incorporate natural wetland resource objectives into municipal governance mechanisms and Integrated Development Planning, as well as to implement and fund projects on the ground.

In South Africa, there is a wealth of national environmental policies, however, mechanisms for mainstreaming biodiversity through all spheres of government needs to be strengthened. Lack of staff capacity, budget constraints, absence of participatory governance, lack of political leadership and public awareness and support, as well as deficiencies in relevant guidance, tools and resources, make wetland biodiversity planning and management a neglected component of our country's municipal governance.

The Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) programme's key goal is to protect priority natural wetland resources, thus enabling the supply of ecosystem services, and promoting resilient communities and sustainable local economies under a changing climate within South African local governments.

The key objectives of the LAB Wetlands SA programme are as follows:

1. To improve local government and citizen knowledge and understanding (at the individual, organisation and policy levels) of the value of biodiversity and wetlands.
2. To initiate the process of integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into local government planning and decision-making in a coordinated, multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive and participatory way.
3. To implement and pilot on-the-ground wetland projects and promote the development of bankable project proposals.

The LAB: Wetlands SA programme is implemented by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – Africa Secretariat (ICLEI Africa), and funded by the USAID. This programme works in partnership with 9 District Municipalities and 2 Metropolitan Municipalities throughout South Africa.

Annex 2: Agenda

Overberg District Municipality Land-use planning workshop: Effectively including ecological infrastructure in municipal planning

Wednesday 16 September, Council Chambers, Overberg District Municipality, Bredasdorp.

Programme Director: Liz Metcalfe, ICLEI Africa

Agenda

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|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 09.30 | <i>Registration (tea & coffee on arrival)</i> | |
| 10.15 | Welcome | ODM, Liz Metcalfe, ICLEI |
| Why do we need to consider wetlands in municipal land-use planning? | | |
| 10.45 | Wetlands as ecological infrastructure: an introduction | Derek Chittenden Liz Metcalfe |
| 11.30 | Biodiversity and SPLUMA, LUPA and Municipal by-laws. | Derek Chittenden |
| 12.00 | <i>Lunch</i> | |
| Proactive decision-making: integrating environmental legislations into land-use planning | | |
| 13.00 | Integrating environmental legislation with Spatial Development Plans | Derek Chittenden |
| 13.30 | Discussion: what data/information is required to include make evidence-based decisions? | Facilitator: Liz Metcalfe |
| 14.30 | <i>Tea break</i> | |
| Solving conflicts: strategic solutions to multiple issues | | |
| 14.45 | Examples of working with nature for strategic solutions | Derek Chittenden |
| 15.15 | Discussion | Facilitator: Liz Metcalfe |
| 15.45 | <i>Meeting closed</i> | |



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