

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands SA
**Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Wetland Strategy and
Action Planning Workshop**

Date: 6th and 7th October 2016
Venue: OR Tambo Environmental Education Centre, Benoni, Ekurhuleni.
Facilitator Ingrid Coetzee

Workshop Report

SUMMARY:

On **6th and 7th October 2016** Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Africa Secretariat (ICLEI AS) co-hosted the “LAB: Wetlands SA: Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Wetlands Strategy and Action Planning” Workshop in Benoni as part of EMM’s involvement in the Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) project.

The workshop aimed to facilitate the development of the Ekurhuleni Wetland Strategy and Action Plan. To this end, the workshop had four main objectives: (1) to identify and map the key stakeholders working within the municipality; (2) understand the current wetland management strategy within EMM and identify the gaps in wetland management; (3) identify and prioritise actions for improving wetland management and initiate the process for the development of a holistic strategy and (4) action plan to for wetland management. The workshop also provided an excellent opportunity to increase stakeholder engagement across the municipality.

The workshop structure followed the Participian facilitation methodology and was conducted by means of short presentations, break-away group activities and discussions between the participants. The workshop was well attended by approximately 22 key stakeholders including the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), The Blesbokspruit Trust, Mills and Otten, Delta Environ Centre, adjacent metro City of Johannesburg and officials from various department within EMM.

The Strategy and Action Planning Workshop was an extremely successful workshop with a clear vision along with guiding principles, focus areas and long term goals being established during the process. These will feed directly into the Ekurhuleni Wetland Strategy and Action Plan going forward.



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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

The workshop is one of the core outputs for LAB: Wetlands SA project municipalities (for background, see *Annex 1*); which aims to improve awareness and management of wetlands at the local level. Based on previous discussions with EMM, the workshop was aimed at establishing a clear vision, goal and actions for the holistic management of wetlands across the municipality that can feed directly into the Ekurhuleni Wetlands Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP).

The key aims of the workshop were to:

1. Identify and map the key stakeholders working within the municipality;
2. Understand and identify the current status and identify the gaps relating wetland management;
3. Identify and prioritise actions for improving wetland management;
4. Initiate the process for the development of a holistic strategy and action plan to mainstream wetland management into municipal policy, planning and overall function.

The workshop also provided an excellent opportunity to increase stakeholder engagement across the municipality as well as for key stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and constraints relating to the incorporation of wetlands and wetlands management into local land use planning within the EMM.

A copy of the workshop agenda is attached as *Annex 2*, providing insight into the workshop process.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The workshop was opened by Division Head within the Environmental Resource Management Department: Patricia Sithebe. She emphasised the importance of such an event and acknowledged the variety of the delegation present. Patricia mentioned the need for EMM to adopt a holistic approach in terms of pushing wetland management and emphasised how vital it is to have practical representation working together in developing a wetland strategy and action plan, which will not only be the responsibility of the municipality to drive, but every single person with vested interest in the wider metropolitan.

SETTING THE SCENE

1) Workshop Purpose and Expected Outcomes

Ulrike Irlich, the Project Manager of the LAB: Wetlands SA Project, gave a short presentation which outlined the purpose for the Wetland Strategy and Action Planning Workshop. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the Action Plan that is developed as a result of WSAP workshop should be realistic, measurable and most importantly attainable.

2) Highlights of the Wetland Report

Following Ulrike's opening presentation, Ryan Fisher, Project Officer at ICLEI AS, gave a short presentation highlighting the findings of the Wetland Report to date. The presentation noted that the Wetland Report is a core output of the LAB: Wetlands SA project and highlighted how the report is intended to pull together all the existing known wetland related information pertaining to EMM and subsequently provide a gap analysis regarding what is required moving forward in terms of the project. It was additionally noted that the Wetland Report is also intended to act as a stand-alone document to be used as a tool to raise awareness at a political level as well to inform better decision making among the land use planners within the municipalities.

The presentation showcased the identified ecosystem services which are pertinent to EMM as well as some of the key threats and impacts which have been found to be threatening wetlands within the municipality. The presentation then went on to highlight the gaps in wetland management, identified through the drafting of the Wetland Report process, which could be used as a platform to inform the subsequent strategy and action planning process going forward.

BUILDING A SHARED VISION AND ESTABLISHING GUIDING PRINCIPALS

1) Establishing a Vision Statement

According to the LAB: Wetlands SA Work Plan, the 'Vision' of the Wetland Strategy and Action Plan is intended to give direction to the plan as well as provide inspiration. The facilitator highlighted how the vision statement should embody the future desired state for wetlands within EMM. Emphasis was also placed on the fact that the established vision should be founded on realism but not be mundane, be ambitious yet achievable and have clear social and economic relevance.

In order to establish a relevant vision for the EMM WSAP, the participating stakeholders were broken up into three groups to discuss the dream vision for the metro as well as ideal outcomes associated with the vision. After the break-away session, stakeholders were invited to present their thoughts to the room. The workshop delegation came to a consensus and agreed that the appropriate vision for wetland management in EMM can be stated as:

"Ekurhuleni celebrates the uniqueness of healthy wetlands for the benefit of water security, nature and people".

2) Guiding Principals

Once the Vision was established, the participating stakeholders were encouraged to discuss and decide on key guiding principles that would underpin the WSAP. The facilitator emphasized that guiding principles should represent the broad philosophy and values that underpin the approach of the WSAP in all circumstances. Guiding principles should therefore express a set of values or beliefs that set the tone for the WSAP.

Initial discussions with the participating stakeholders highlighted that the focus of the strategy should focus on wetland management that in turn addresses the issues and needs of biodiversity,

Responses were then grouped and prioritized according to relevant themes. Following extensive discussion and debate as well as valuable input by the participating stakeholders, the identified key focus areas for the EMM WSAP were established as follows:

- **Monitoring, research and reporting**
- **Compliance enforcement and pollution prevention**
- **Education & awareness**
- **Operational management plan**
- **Stakeholder engagement**
- **Resources & institutional collaboration**

MEASURING SUCCESS

1) Developing Strategic Priorities into Goals

Goals are well defined targeted statements that give clarity, direction and focus. Emphasis was placed on the fact that they serve to add to the vision as well as the focus areas and strategic interventions. In other words, goals are the expression of what is to be achieved in order to give effect to the established vision. Additionally, the facilitator also highlighted that goals also provide the basis for measuring successful progress and performance, thereby enabling the stakeholders to assess whether the vision is being achieved.

With this in mind, the goals for the Ekurhuleni WSAP as per each Focus Area were established and will be incorporated into the final WSAP document.

PRIORITISING ACTIONS FOR WETLAND MANAGEMENT

1) Generating high level actions (targets) for implementing the goals

The facilitator advised that actions going forward would need to be achievable and a clear understanding of how these would be implemented, by whom, by when, and using what resources would need to be established. The actions would also need to link to the vision, guiding principles and focus areas. Key actions identified during the WSAP workshop as being priority focus areas in EMM will be added to the final WSAP document.

WRAPPING UP and WAY FORWARD

The facilitator requested the participants to share their expectations for the workshop on Day 1. A recap of the expectations were done at the end of Day 2 to ascertain whether or not participant's expectations were met. All expectations were met as indicated by the participants. Some of the key expectations include:

- *"Understand how EMM will implement the WSAP and how wetlands can be considered in EIA's."*
- *"A strategy which is a result of a collaborative effort between all stakeholders and is implementable."*
- *"Understand how to go forward in managing rehabilitation; have clear strategy to guide us to improving implementation, identifying loopholes."*
- *"Understand which wetlands are polluted and have strategy to guide wetland monitoring and pollution prevention."*
- *"Clear and practical action plan that pulls the strategy together and identifies gaps and the dis junction between strategy and the ground action."*

Following the development of actions for wetland management within EMM, Ryan thanked all participants for attending and participating in the workshop and providing much needed input. He also highlighted in closing that the next steps for EMM in the LAB Wetlands SA project is the compilation and development of the Wetland Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP). ICLEI will compile the first draft of the EMM WSAP pulling together all the relevant information included in the Wetland Report as well as all the key outcomes captured during the WSAP Workshop. It was noted that the WSAP is scheduled for completion by December 2016. Ryan also outlined the project key deliverables for 2017, namely the development of Wetland Management Guidelines, an Awareness Raising Video as well as the development of bankable projects on the ground, where ICLEI will assist the EMM in drafting of business plans for possible funding aimed at wetland management in the municipality.



Figure 3: Ekurhuleni WSAP participants still had time for a quick photo session after the conclusion of Day 2

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 AS), and funded by the USAID. This programme works in partnership with 9 District Municipalities and 2 Metropolitan Municipalities throughout South Africa.

Annex 2: Agenda



EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY WETLANDS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLANNING WORKSHOP AGENDA

Date: 6th and 7th October 2016
Venue: OR Tambo Environmental Centre, Benoni, Ekurhuleni.
Facilitator: Ingrid Coetzee

Day 1		
09:00 – 09:30	<i>Registration (Signing of the Attendance Register)</i>	
Welcome & Introductions		
09:30 – 09:40	Welcome by the hosts	Pat Sithebe - EMM
09:40 – 09:50	Introductions	Facilitator
Setting the Scene		
09:50 – 10:10	Workshop purpose & expected outcomes - What is the WSAP	Ms. Ulrike Irlich (ICLEI Local -Governments for Sustainability)
10:10 – 10:30	Highlights of the Wetland Report	Mr. Ryan Fisher (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability)
10:30 - 10:45	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>	
Building a shared vision & establishing guiding principles		
10:45 – 11:00	Workshop process & housekeeping rules	Facilitator
11:00 – 13:00	Visioning exercise (Brainstorm in small break away groups with feedback to plenary to cluster small group contributions into common themes & vision statement.)	Facilitator
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
14:00 – 14:45	Guiding principles (Visual mapping exercise with plenary group)	Facilitator
14:45 – 15:00	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>	
From Vision to Strategy		
15:00 – 16:30	Prioritising strategic interventions / focus areas to support the Vision (Brainstorm in small break away groups with feedback to plenary)	Facilitator
16:30	<i>Day 1 closes</i>	

Day 2		
09:00 – 09:30	Registration (Signing of the Attendance Register)	
Recap from Day 1		
09:30 – 10:00	Reflecting back on Vision and strategic priorities	Facilitator
Goal setting		
10:00 – 11:00	Developing the strategic priorities into goals (Brainstorm in small break away groups with feedback to plenary)	Facilitator
11:00 – 11:15	Tea/Coffee	
Prioritizing Actions for wetland management		
11:15 – 12:30	Generating high level actions (targets) for implementing the goals (Brainstorm in small break away groups with feedback to plenary)	Facilitator
Wrapping up & way forward		
12:30 – 12:45	The WSAP so far	Facilitator
12:45 – 13:05	Filling the gaps	Facilitator
13:05 – 13:15	Way Forward	Mr. Ryan Fisher (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability)
13:15	Lunch and Departure	



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Strategic Planning Definitions and Purpose:

Biodiversity Action Plan: Identifies the priority actions and clearly outlines how these will be implemented, by whom, by when, and using what resources.

Biodiversity Strategy: An overarching vision of what will ideally be achieved in terms of biodiversity, including a statement of principles, clearly defined priorities and defined short, medium and long-term goals, as well as a set of targets to help guide implementation.

Goals: Goals are well-defined, targeted statements that give clarity, direction and focus. They serve to add content to the vision and strategic priorities / interventions. They are an expression of what is to be achieved (i.e. forward looking) in order to give effect to the vision. Goals also provide the basis for measuring progress and performance, thereby enabling the organisation to assess whether the vision is being achieved, achieved to some extent or whether it is not being achieved at all. Goals should be formulated in relation to each strategic priority. It is important not to overload the strategy with strategic interventions / priorities and goals. For example, if the strategic intervention / priority is: Degraded wetlands in areas of conservation priority, then possible goals are:

- To restore priority wetlands that are degraded.
- To facilitate the re-establishment of species of that have been lost in wetlands of conservation priority.

Guiding principles: These represent the broad philosophy and values that underpin the approach of the programme or organisation in all circumstances. Hence, guiding principles serve to express a set of values and beliefs that set the tone of an organisation, programme or plan and provide important parameters for specific goals, targets and actions. Examples are:

- Publicise and Promote Biodiversity - To regularly publicise and promote the work being undertaken to manage biodiversity.
- Effective Implementation - To ensure that plans, strategies and actions relating to biodiversity are being achieved.
- Partnerships and Collaboration - To build partnerships, where appropriate, that will assist in achieving effective resource utilisation and share information and ideas.
- Raising Awareness - To increase the community's understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues that affect the City and can impact on the lifestyles of residents.

Strategic interventions / focus areas: These are the planned, deliberate, and focused efforts required to achieve the vision. These should reflect the priorities of the organisation / project / programme within the context of the vision. Examples are:

- Degraded wetlands in areas of conservation priority.
- Alien vegetation control.
- Community involvement / support in wetland conservation.
- Mainstreaming wetland conservation into land-use planning.

Strategic Planning: The process of defining the direction of an organisation (path the organisation would like to follow) – this serves to assist decision-making with respect to allocation of resources such as budget and personnel. Typically strategic planning consists of setting of

goals, determining actions to achieve the goals, and mobilizing resources to execute the actions. A strategy describes how the ends (goals) will be achieved by the means (resources).

Vision: Vision statements give direction and should provide inspiration. The vision should define the desired future state. Effectively it is the 'mental picture of what an organization wants to achieve.' The vision should be founded on realism but not be mundane. It should be ambitious yet achievable, with clear social and economic relevance. It should be succinct / concise, clear and easy to understand.