

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Wetlands South Africa Waterberg District Municipality



'Wetlands for Prosperity' Workshop Workshop Report

Venue: Mokgalakwena Municipality Council Chambers, Mokopane.

Date: 22 September 2015



Summary

On 22 September 2015, the Waterberg District Municipality and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability joined forces to host the “Wetlands for Prosperity” workshop as part of Waterberg District’s involvement in the Local Actions for Biodiversity (LAB) Wetlands SA project. The workshop was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of wetlands management and conservation on the local government level, with a primary focus on the links to economic development and service delivery. The workshop was structured and conducted by means of presentations and verbal interactions through panel discussion between experts and participants.

The workshop was very well attended. The delegation consisted of approximately 50 political representatives from the Waterberg district and associated local governments, focussing on how biodiversity, and wetlands in particular, support local economic development and service delivery. From discussions between experts and participants, it was clear that there is a link between local economic development and the rich biodiversity of the region. The workshop highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation and partnerships required in supporting biodiversity and wetland conservation.

The workshop also played host to the signing of The Durban Commitment: Local Action for Biodiversity by the Mayors’ of Waterberg District, Mogalakwena Municipality and Modimolle Municipality. By signing the commitment, the municipalities demonstrated their pledge to adequately manage and conserve its biological riches and wealth for current as well as future generations. The workshop concluded with a tree planting ceremony, in commemoration of the commitments, partnerships and desired way forward made during the workshop.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop was an interactive and open discussion process. It strived to enable Councillors and Mayors to learn about the importance of wetlands at a local level, providing a platform for participants to provide input to how wetlands conservation can support Waterberg District through enhancing economic development. The workshop objectives were to:

1. To explore the link between wetlands, local economic development and service provision for municipalities.
2. To better understand the role of stakeholders in aligning work in terms of wetlands management and conservation.
3. Understanding how municipalities can effectively manage these resources to maximum benefit in the future.
4. Provide an opportunity for Mayor to demonstrate their commitment to wetlands and biodiversity through the signing of the *Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity*.

Workshop summary

The workshop was very well attended by the district, local government's political leaders, provincial departments as well as stakeholders from the private sector. Waterberg District Municipality (WDM) is part of the LAB Wetlands SA project (see Annex 1), an initiative funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability in 11 district and metropolitan municipalities in South Africa. The "Wetlands for Prosperity" workshop in Waterberg was aimed at creating awareness about the essential importance of conserving and management of biodiversity, with a specific emphasis on wetland ecosystems. It was viewed important by WDM to drive this awareness raising on the level of the decision-makers in both the district and local governments, creating buy-in and interest into the project, ensuring successful implementation and prosperous action going forward.

The workshop was dominated by good presentations and discussions by specialists ranging from an Independent Economist to Biodiversity/Ecological scientists to municipal Councillors and Executive Mayors.

The opening address by Waterberg District Executive Mayor, the Honourable Cllr Mogotlane, set a positive tone for the day's proceedings, noting that WDM was honored to be part of the LAB: Wetlands SA project and fully support the implementation of the programme in the district. The Executive Mayor emphasized the importance of wetland ecosystems and the need to preserve and take care of it, saying: "*Wetlands are complex and dynamic ecosystems that are extremely important to society and provide significant economic, social and cultural benefits. Wetlands support our agricultural activities by providing a source of water for irrigation and livestock and for domestic consumption.*"

Ms. Liz Metcalfe of ICLEI and Ms. Nozi Molteno of Department of Environmental Affairs gave introductory presentations into the LAB Wetlands SA project and WDM's biodiversity related work respectively.



Figure 1: Wetlands for Prosperity workshop delegation

Dr. Chris Wagner of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve gave an insightful presentation and talk into the current status of water availability in the region. He also mentioned the complexities around the management and conservation of natural occurring water bodies such as wetlands and its important functionality in terms of basic water provision. Another key message from Dr. Wagner's session was the impact of us as humans primary objective; development, on natural ecosystems and contributing to climate change. The need for adequate management and conservation of the catchment landscape is critical going forward. The LAB: Wetlands SA project therefore provides the Waterberg District the opportunity to create a network of stakeholders in aid of exploring the possibilities of improved and sustained biodiversity management and conservation to ensure clean water, food security and improved livelihood for all inhabitants.

Dr, Hugo van Zyl of Independent Economic Researchers addressed the workshop on the economic value and service delivery potential of wetland ecosystem services. His presentation provided insight into the functionality of wetlands, how water is regulated. This section was envisioned to inform the delegation of what exactly a wetland is, how it works and what benefits conserving, management and looking after it poses for improved quality of life. He also provided information on the role wetlands play in adapting to climate change (in terms of ecosystem services provided by wetlands i.e. flood attenuation and water provision/purification, food provision and security), and how critical this is, especially for vulnerable communities. Wetlands also provide municipalities with natural, basic service provision. An example being its ability to treat wastewater for increased accessibility.

Ms. Louise Stafford of the City of Cape Town's (CoCT) Green Jobs unit presented on the potential job opportunities from wetland related activities. This really resonated with the local and district government delegation as a critical insight into what can be done on a local level to boost economic activity and stability from action on the ground. Ms. Stafford gave a good insight into the regulatory requirements for local governments in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act – the new regulations was passed in October 2014 and local authorities are now required to submit Invasive Species Management Plans to the South African National Biodiversity

Institute and the Minister of Department of Environmental Affairs. This mandated obligation provides local governments the opportunity to really hone in on their natural resources and allocating budget and man-power to the management and conservation of these ecosystems. Funding is available through the National Working for programs to explore partnerships or create internal capacity to deal with Invasive species, which have a negative impact on example water availability and quality.

Panel Discussion



Figure 2: Panel discussion facilitator, Liz Metcalfe of ICLEI and panellists

The panel discussion session was an integral part of the workshop. It allowed the delegation and specialist to engage on both concerns, challenges as well as appropriate ways forward regarding environmental issues facing the inhabitants of the Waterberg District. The facilitated session witnessed participants highlight the following challenges:

- There is a lot of research done within the region, however information is not shared with local municipalities. It is not known what information exist that the municipality can use to inform decision making and municipal mandate.
- How can civil society continue to make an impact/get assistance/ look positively towards development? How can municipalities benefit from civil society?
- Waterberg district and other key role players in the district needs to start working in partnership
- The actual value of wetlands are not included in environmental assessments (EIA process). How can this be achieved?
- There is a need to start raising awareness particularly on the issues of the environment and information availability and sharing.
- Waterberg District's prosperity and efficiency in service delivery relies on the proactivity of the IDPs. Therefore there is need for IDPs to be more proactive.
- Ongoing debate from mining development and the municipal mandate and their vision, as well as the environmental management i.e. air pollution of water in river catchments
- Civil societies struggling with resources of dealing with EIAs, particularly funding.

Points of discussion and possible solutions:

- Wider stakeholder engagement needed to feed into municipal planning and decision-making. The Waterberg Environment and Biodiversity Conservation (WEBC) Forum was central to this.
- Existing tools and guidelines such as the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Toolbox for land use planning and development in Gauteng includes legislation and other tools to assist and inform civil society with environmental issues.
- National and provincial governments, NGOs and academic institutions can provide assistance to local governments.
- Funding can be secured from the Working For programmes for implementation. Local authorities are urged to start small, identify a small project and start from there. If successful, it will be easily to upscale and expand.

Signing of the Durban Commitment



Figure 3: Leaders posing with their signed Durban Commitments

The workshop was capped with the signing of the internationally-recognised *Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity*, by the WDM Executive Mayor, Honourable Cllr Tlotlanang Mogotlane, Mogalakwena Municipality Mayor, Honourable Cllr Sebatjane and Modimolle Municipality Mayor, Honourable Cllr Lekalakala. These leaders showed the commitment of their respective entities to biodiversity conservation and management.

Tree planting ceremony



Figure 4: Workshop delegates combining for the tree planting ceremony

The day's proceedings was ended in sublime style. The delegation all gathered in the open section behind the Mogalakwena Municipal Council Chambers to commemorate the day by planting a tree indigenous to the Waterberg region.

Way forward

A real comradeship and fellowship arose from the workshop as there was a real need expressed to ensure the successful implementation of the LAB Wetlands SA project in the WDM. The general consensus in the room was the need for improved communication within the district and local municipalities, also with external stakeholders and other relevant provincial and national entities, for a combined effort in ensuring the Waterberg region's natural state is sustained. Informed political will stand the Waterberg District in good stead. Environmental management should be considered in municipal decision making and hopefully the success of the workshop will have ignited this importance going forward.

The next steps for WDM in the LAB Wetlands SA project is the compilation and development of a Wetland Assessment Report, pulling together existing information relating to biodiversity/wetlands in the district, which will then feed into the next phase of developing a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Engagement between WDM and ICLEI will continue and foreseen to grow, specifically upon receiving approval by the WDM Council for the implementation of the project in the district.

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 facilitated and lead by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Africa Secretariat, and funded by the USAID. This programme works in partnership with 9 District Municipalities and 2 Metropolitan Municipalities throughout South Africa.

Annex 2: Agenda



WATERBERG DISTRICT 'WETLANDS FOR PROSPERITY' WORKSHOP

Tuesday 22 September 2015, **09:00am – 3:30pm**,
Mogalakwena Local Municipality Council Chambers.

Program Director: Mrs. Molala, *Manager Social Services, Mogalakwena Municipality*

09.00 - 09.50	<i>Registration (tea & coffee)</i>
10.00 – 10.30	<p>National Anthem</p> <p>Welcome by the Mayor of Mogalakwena Local Municipality: Cllr P.Sebatjane</p> <p>Introductions: Speaker of Mogalakwena Local Municipality: Cllr A. Matsemela</p> <p>Opening Address by the Honorable Executive Mayor of the Waterberg District: Cllr N.R. Mogotlane</p>
Introduction: setting the scene in the Waterberg District	
10.30 – 11.00	<p>Purpose of the Workshop</p> <p>Ms. Liz Metcalfe <i>ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability</i></p> <p>Introduction of the Workshop: Local Governance and Environmental Management</p> <p>Ms. Nozi Molteno, <i>Department of Environmental Affairs Local Government Support and Waterberg District Municipality Environmental Management</i></p>
11.00 – 11.30	<p>Water scarcity in the Waterberg Region</p> <p>Dr. Chris Wagner, <i>Waterberg Conservation Forum</i></p>
11.30 – 12.00	<i>Questions and discussion</i>
12.00	<i>Lunch</i>
Wetlands for prosperity – local solutions	
13.00 – 13.25	<p>Wetlands and local economic development</p> <p>Dr. Hugo van Zyl <i>Independent Economic Researchers</i></p>
13.25 – 13.50	<p>Creating 'green' jobs from wetland management</p> <p>Ms. Louise Stafford <i>Head: Green Jobs, City of Cape Town</i></p>
13.50 – 14.50	<p>Panel discussion: how can wetlands support Waterberg moving forward?</p> <p>Facilitator: Ms. Liz Metcalfe, ICLEI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ms. Budu Manaka, <i>Deputy Director: Municipal Support, South African National Biodiversity Institute</i> – Mr. Maholdi Tau, <i>US Agency for International Development, Southern Africa</i> – Dr. Hugo van Zyl, <i>Independent Economic Researchers</i> – Ms. Louise Stafford, <i>Head: Green Jobs, City of Cape Town</i> – Dr. Chris Wagner, <i>Waterberg Conservation Forum</i>
14.50 – 15.00	Signing of the Durban Commitment – Local Governments for Biodiversity
15.00 – 15.30	<p><i>Tree Planting in Mogalakwena Local Municipality: Councillors</i> <i>(Mogalakwena Indigenous Tree)</i> THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT</p>