

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands SA

Bojanala Platinum District Municipality “Wetlands in the Municipal Context” Workshop

Date: 21 June 2016

Time: 10.00 – 16.00

Venue: Borakalalo National Park, North West



Workshop Report

SUMMARY:

On 21 June 2016, Bojanala Platinum District Municipality (BPDM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) co-hosted the “Wetlands in the municipal context” wetlands awareness-raising workshop at Borakalalo National Park, North West as part of BPDM’s involvement in the Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) project.

The workshop was aimed at raising awareness of the value of wetlands in the local landscape and aimed to highlight the links between wetlands, climate change and legislative requirements with the goal of highlighting the need for the prioritisation of wetland management and preservation within the landscape thereby ensuring the sustained provision of key ecosystem services in the district.

The workshop was structured and conducted by means of presentations and activities as well as discussions between speakers and participants. Presentations emphasised the importance of wetlands and ecosystem services, the impacts of climate change in BPDM and the role of wetlands in adaptation planning as well as the role of legislation in land-use planning and wetland management.

The workshop was well attended with approximately 20 participants from various parts of the district ranging from municipal environmental officials, Dept. Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ), North West Parks Boards and the national Dept. Environmental Affairs. From discussion sessions throughout the workshop, it was clear that there is a need to enhance partnerships moving forward to allow for better collaboration on local initiatives and thereby enhance wetlands

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

The workshop forms part of the LAB: Wetlands South Africa programme (for background, see *Annex 1*) which seeks to improve awareness and management of wetlands at the local level. Based on previous discussions with BPDM, the key aims of the workshop were to:

1. Increase knowledge and understanding of the types, value and importance of wetlands and ecosystems services and why this is important at a local government level.
2. Increase knowledge and understanding of climate change and of potential climate change impacts in the BPDM and highlight the role of wetlands in climate change impact adaptation.
3. Increase knowledge and understanding of the role of legislation in the management of wetlands.
4. Facilitate initial discussions with the stakeholders regarding the impacts of development on local wetlands as well as the information needs and requirements in BPDM for better wetland management.

The workshop was an open forum for the stakeholders to learn about wetlands as ecological infrastructure and how biodiversity and wetlands management fit in with the environmental legislation. The workshop also provided a platform for stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and constraints relating to wetlands management within the BPDM.

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

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS & AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES

WELCOME BY THE HOSTS AND INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

Mr. Justice Baloyi, Biodiversity Coordinator at BPDM welcomed everyone to the workshop and introduced ICLEI to the participants. Ms. Roselyn Mkhondo then also welcomed everyone ICLEI and thanked them for coming from Cape Town for the learning exchange. Roselyn welcomed questions and stressed that it should be a learning opportunity for BPDM. Justice briefly went through the objective of the workshop and then opened the floor to ICLEI.

Introduction to LAB: Ryan Fisher

Ryan opened the floor and introduced himself and Kirsty Robinson to the room. Ryan then gave a brief overview of the agenda and advised changes to the agenda.

Ryan gave a brief presentation to introduce who ICLEI is and the LAB: Wetlands SA Project. Ryan emphasised that ICLEI focuses on working with local governments and local municipalities to provide technical support, tools, guidelines as well as provide information on biodiversity, climate change etc. Ryan introduced the internationally renowned LAB programme. It was highlighted that it is ICLEI's flagship programme and it started in 2006 with 21 local governments. A methodology was developed which has then been rolled out into municipalities throughout the world. Ryan advised that the LAB: Wetlands SA project is an off shoot of this international LAB Programme, in that it has been tailored for South African municipalities specifically. The focus of the project is on wetlands and emphasis was placed on why wetlands are important. Ryan went into detail on the LAB: Wetlands SA deliverables over the duration of the project and then highlighted the stage the project is in at this point.



Figure 1: Workshop participants engaged in discussion

ACTIVITY: Unpacking local perceptions of what a wetland is

The workshop participants were invited to share their knowledge of what they perceived a wetland to be based on their current knowledge and understanding. The purpose of this was to establish a baseline of collective knowledge regarding wetlands.

The workshop participants were encouraged to write down what his/ her understanding of wetlands is and was invited to share this information into the room. It was evident from the responses received that the basic understanding of the wetland was high however people would like more information on ecosystem services and what they can do for the municipality.

Analysis of the responses as well as the discussion thereafter revealed that there is generally a high understanding of wetlands in BPDM in that wetlands are largely considered to be areas where the land is water-saturated and are areas that provide a unique habitat for aquatic life (insects, birds, fish and flora). Key ecosystem services identified by the majority of the room were water purification and filtration as well as flood attenuation and water storage capabilities. Whilst knowledge of wetlands and some of the ecosystem services was considered to be high, further discussion revealed that the knowledge base surrounding identification of wetlands and the various different types of wetlands was limited.

PRESENTATION: Climate change and the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation

Kirsty Robinson, Professional Officer from ICLEI, followed the introductory speaker with a presentation on the impacts of climate change in BPDM and the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation. The presentation was not intended to provide detailed downscaled information but rather to provide an overview of climate impacts in the district in order to better inform adaptation planning. Kirsty explained the climate change phenomenon, indicating that although it can be a complex to understand, it is important to note that climate change really encompass the change in rainfall,

temperature and shift in seasonality over time. Human activities contribute to the mass acceleration of climatic changes.

The presentation opened with a brief definition of climate change, its causes and the role of human activities in accelerating the process. Through the use of graphs and pictures, the current climate patterns in the region were also illustrated in order to set the scene.

In terms of climate change and associated impacts in BPDM, the presentation highlighted that general warming will undoubtedly occur and whilst future rainfall patterns are uncertain, there will be definite change in rainfall patterns including an increase of rainfall quantity and intensity in the summer months, a decrease in rainfall in the winter months and an increase in inter-annual variability. The presentation illustrated that the consequences of climate change in BPDM would most likely result in an increased risk of longer hot dry spells during the winter months resulting in an increased risk of drought and fires during this period; and an increase in the magnitude and frequency of storms would most likely lead to an increased risk of more severe flooding periods and flash floods during the summer months. Emphasis was therefore placed on the fact that the existing climate related impacts historically occurring in BPDM will be exacerbated and that climate adaptation planning should take into account historical climate related impacts as well as future projected changes (i.e. plan for an increase drying in winter and flooding in summer).

With regards to the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation, the presentation highlighted that healthy wetlands perform key ecosystem services such as flood attenuation and water storage and flow regulation which can assist the municipality with reducing the anticipated impacts of climate change. Emphasis was placed on the fact that only healthy wetlands can perform these services and as such investing in the maintenance of healthy wetlands and the rehabilitation and restoration of damaged or degraded wetlands can ensure that wetlands perform their ecosystem services to the maximum of their capabilities in order to increase resilience to climate change in BPDM.

PRESENTATION: READ Rivers for Health Programme

Mr Mashudu Nmutandani of READ presented on the provincial departments programme which focuses on data collection regarding rivers and other water bodies in the North West Province. The programme has a unique Community Research initiative component, which involves combining research done by communities and mainstreaming such information into greater scientific research, then identifying the links and gaps. Research done by communities include general information on utilisation and health of rivers, EWLT, Road Kill and the SA Bird Atlas project. The initiative also involves the outreach to schools, where pupils are neared to assist with the data gathering process.

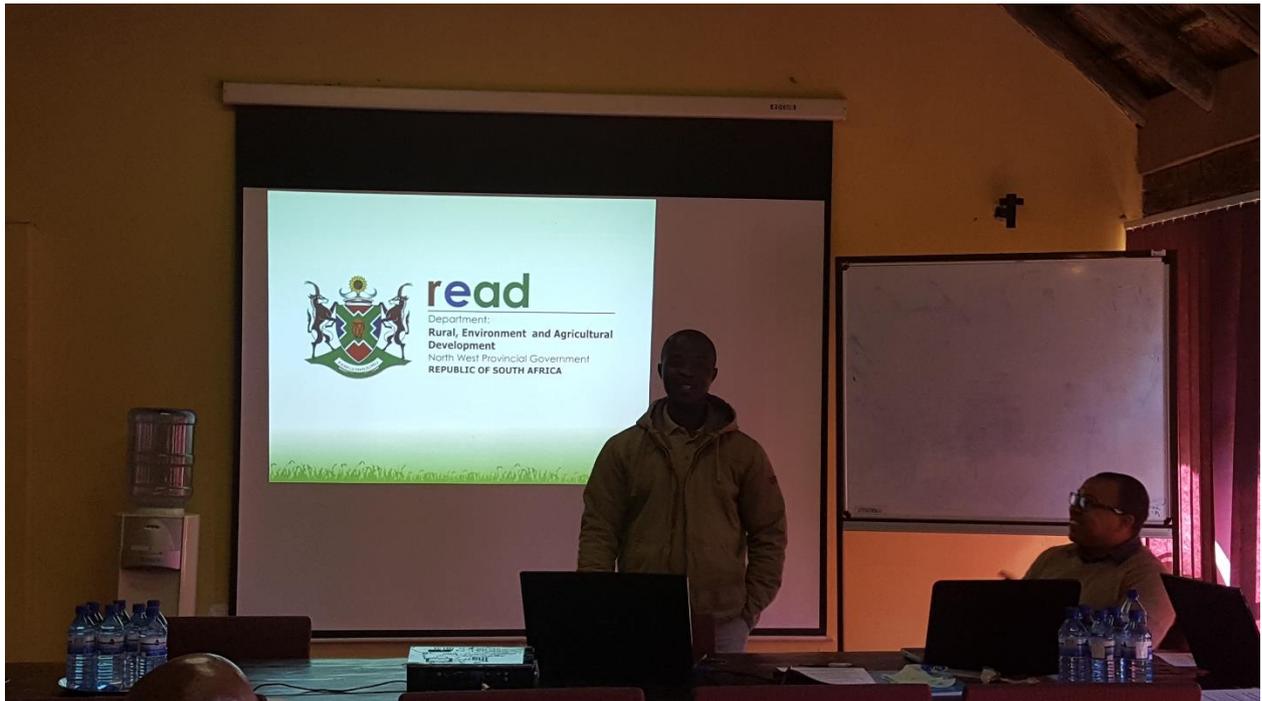


Figure 2: Mr Mashudu Nemutanani of READ presenting on the Departments River Health programme

Mr. Nemutandani emphasised that wetlands in the North West province are being degraded and lost at an alarming rate, with agriculture and mining tipped to be the two sectors with the biggest impact on the ecosystems. To that end, READ have embarked on wetland research initiatives which include verification of wetlands, identification and delineation as well as mapping, though the department experience a huge lack of capacity and knowledge regarding wetland management.

The session was brought to a close by participants agreeing that the mining industry in particular should be addressed regarding wetland management and protection. Such an engagement might have to be planned strategically, involving all relevant stakeholders in both the district and wider province. The wetland report currently developed under the LAB Wetlands SA project, together with the foreseen Wetland Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP) can inform and strengthen this, especially for BPDM.

PRESENTATION: Role of legislation in wetland management

Kirsty Robinson gave a brief presentation on the role of the National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and the National Water Act (Act No. 36 of 1998) (NWA) in the management of wetlands.

The presentation highlighted that in order to ensure effective management and protection of the South African environment, certain activities/ developments require an Environmental Authorisation (EA) prior to commencement in terms of NEMA. Obtaining the EA involves undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

It was highlighted that activities triggering the need for an EA are contained in Listing Notices 1, 2 and 3 of the NEMA. The presentation noted that as per the Listing Notices, any development/ activity occurring within a watercourse or within 32 metres of a watercourse (if no development setback line

exists), or any development or activity occurring within 100 metres of a watercourse outside of urban areas would require an EIA process to be undertaken and the issuing of an EA prior to commencement. With regards to the NWA, it was emphasised that the key aim is to ensure that the nation's water resources are protected, used, controlled, managed, conserved and developed in a sustainable and equitable manner, for the benefit of all.

The presentation highlighted that in order to achieve this mandate, any proposed activity listed in Chapter 4, Section 21 of the NWA, requires a 'Water Use License Application' (WULA) prior to commencement. The two key activities pertaining specifically to wetlands include **Section 21 (c)** – Impeding or diverting the flow of a watercourse and **Section 21 (j)** – Altering the beds, banks, course or characteristics of a watercourse.

In closing, it was highlighted that NEMA and NWA are key pieces of legislation currently in place to manage the local environment. Emphasis was placed on the fact that proceeding with any activity/development listed in either NEMA or NWA prior to obtaining the required EA or WULA is illegal and consequences could result in a steep monetary fine and/ or imprisonment.

DISCUSSION: Identifying wetlands information available for BPDM/Gap analysis

This session was aimed at information gathering for the development of a Wetland Report for Bojanala Platinum District Municipality. The aim of the report is to compile all existing information on wetlands into one document, acting as a gap analysis which can inform and feed into a great Wetland Strategy and Action Plan for the district.

Although no tangible information (in the form of actual documentation) were shared at the workshop, relevant contact details were shared of stakeholders whom are in possession relevant information and can add value to the process.

The final report will be shared with the wider stakeholders once complete.

Points of discussion and comments made throughout the workshop

It was noted that mining and agriculture practices are two of the major contributors towards the degradation of wetlands in the BPDM. There is a real need for creating awareness, particularly in these two sectors, on the importance of managing and protecting wetlands. The Wetlands Report can add value in this regard.

Delegates wanted to know to what extent and on what level Dept. Water and Sanitation (DWS) is part of the project, as activities related to, or posing potential impacts on wetlands is DWS mandate. Specifically relating to WULAs.

- Kirsty explained that DWS are not an official partner on the project. DEA's Working for Wetlands (WfW) programme is, and being a national entity, too require relevant authorisation for any activity relating to wetlands (water use licence from DWS is critical). The above will apply for BPDM, though ICLEI can provide support.

Can wetlands be created?

The issue of artificial and constructed wetlands is common amongst municipalities. Extensive research has been conducted by several institutions, including CSIR, who has in-depth knowledge on and understanding of the topic.

- In relation, Kirsty explained that wetlands can be constructed but are not overly ideal because they are limited in the services they can provide (water purification, flood attenuation etc.)

General Comments

The workshop participants felt strongly that in order to make adequate progress in the environmental sector of BPDM, an Environmental Forum needs to be established where all issues can be discussed and addressed on a monthly basis, new relationships can be established and issues can be tackled in a cohesive manner by multiple stakeholder with a range of expertise. Political awareness and buy-in is another critical issue to be addressed in the district.

From overall discussion sessions throughout the workshop, it was clear that there is a need to enhance partnerships moving forward to allow for better collaboration on local initiative and thereby enhance wetlands management and conservation within the district. Immediately

WRAP UP & WAY FORWARD

In closing, Ryan Fisher summarised the presentations and discussions and emphasised how wetlands need to be considered in decision-making moving forward in a manner that speaks to local economic development but also protects these natural resources. Emphasis was placed on the importance of working together both across departments as well as with different organisations, NGOs and other key stakeholders within BPDM. It was highlighted that creating and maintaining a strong partnership with BPDM and ICLEI is key to the LAB: Wetlands SA project moving forward.

Ryan advised that the next steps for BPDM in the LAB Wetlands SA project is the compilation and development of a Wetland Assessment Report which will pull together all the existing information pertaining to wetlands in BPDM and act as a gap analysis of where efforts need to be focused. It was highlighted that the report, along the outcomes of the workshop and future workshops and engagements with other stakeholders in BPDM, will feed into the next phase of the project which

entails the development of Wetlands Strategy and Action Plan. Ryan thanked the speakers and participants for attending and closed the workshop.

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

BOJANALA PLATINUM DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

WETLANDS AWARENESS RAISING WORKSHOP AGENDA “Wetlands in the municipal context: Natural solutions to local issues”

Date: 21 June 2016
Time: 10:00 - 16:00
Venue: Borakalalo National Park
Facilitator: Ryan Fisher: ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

09.30 – 10.00	<i>Registration (Tea & Coffee on arrival)</i>
10.00 – 10.10	Welcome by the hosts (10 mins) <i>BPDM Representative</i>
10.10 – 10.30	Introduction to the day (20 mins) <i>Ryan Fisher: ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
10.30 – 10.50	Activity: Unpacking local perceptions of what a wetland is (20 mins) <i>Ryan Fisher: ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
10.50 – 11.15	What is a wetland? (15 mins & 10 mins Q&A) <i>Dept. Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ)</i>
11.15 – 11.40	Defining climate change and the role of wetlands(15 mins & 10 mins Q&A) <i>Kirsty Robinson: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
11.40 – 11.55	<i>Tea break</i>
11.55 – 12.20	Wetland policy and legislation (15 mins & 10 mins Q&A) <i>Kirsty Robinson: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
12.20 – 12.50	Discussion: Identifying wetlands information available for BPDM/Gap analysis (30 mins) <i>Facilitated by Ryan Fisher: ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
12.50 – 13.00	Wrap up and moving forward LAB: Wetlands SA Project (15 mins) <i>Ryan Fisher: ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability</i>
13.00 – 14.00	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00 – 15.50	Field trip exhibition to local wetlands/s <i>Led by NW Parks Board</i>
15.45 – 16.00	Feedback questionnaires and close.
