

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands SA Eden District Municipality Wetland Strategy and Action Planning Workshop

Date: 23rd and 24th August 2016
Venue: Loerie Guest Lodge, 91 Davidson Road, George
Facilitator Mary Jane Morris

Workshop Report

SUMMARY:

On **23rd and 24th August 2016**, Eden District Municipality (EDM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI Africa) co-hosted the “LAB: Wetlands SA: Eden District Municipality Wetlands Strategy and Action Planning” Workshop in George as part of EDM’s involvement in the Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) project.

The workshop aimed to facilitate the development of the Eden Wetland Strategy and Action Plan. To this end, the workshop had four main objectives: (1) to identify and map the key stakeholders working within Eden District Municipality; (2) understand the current wetland management strategy within Eden District Municipality 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 mainstream wetland management into land use planning. The workshop also provided an excellent opportunity to increase stakeholder engagement across the municipality.

The workshop was structured and conducted by means of presentations, break-away group activities and discussions between the attending participants. The discussions were facilitated by Mary Jane Morris, a highly experienced facilitator who has worked throughout Eden District Municipality for some time. The workshop was well attended by approximately 20 key stakeholders including the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP), South Africa National Parks (SANParks), CapeNature, Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (BGCMA), Garden Route Biosphere Reserve, Department of Environmental Affairs: Local Government Support and several of the local municipalities within EDM.

The Strategy and Action Planning Workshop was a highly 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 Eden Wetland Strategy and Action Plan going forward.



WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

The workshop is one of the core components of the LAB: Wetlands SA project (for background, see *Annex 1*) which aims to improve awareness and management of wetlands at the local level. Based on previous discussions with EDM, the workshop was aimed at establishing a clear vision and goals for the holistic management of wetlands across the district to feed directly into the Eden Wetlands Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP).

The key aims of the workshop were to:

1. Identify and map the key stakeholders working within Eden District Municipality;
2. Understand the current wetland management strategy within Eden District Municipality and identify the gaps in 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 land use planning.

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 EDM.

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Vernon Gibbs-Hall, the former Biodiversity and Coastal Manager of EDM, opened the workshop with a short speech to welcome the workshop participants and ICLEI Africa. The speech highlighted the importance of working together in a cohesive manner and aligning the visions of the individual stakeholders in order to synchronise priorities for wetland management throughout the municipality. Stakeholders were encouraged to actively participate in the WSAP workshop to support the development of a holistic wetland management strategy plan to be used going forward.

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 LAB: Wetlands SA project as well as the purpose of the WSAP workshop. The presentation illustrated what progress has been made with project implementation in EDM to date, noting particularly the completion of the awareness raising workshop in November 2015 and the development of the Wetland Report in August 2016. The presentation then 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, Kirsty Robinson, Professional Officer at ICLEI Africa, gave a short presentation highlighting the findings of the Wetland Report to date. Kirsty 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 EDM 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 have been found to be pertinent to EDM as well as some of the key human activities and impacts which have been found to be threatening wetlands within EDM. 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 EDM. 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 EDM WSAP, the participating stakeholders were broken up into three groups to discuss the dream vision for the district as well as ideal outcomes associated with the vision. After the break-away session, stakeholders were invited to present their thoughts to the room. Following extensive discussion relating to goals and subsequently semantics on Day 1, as well as further discussion on Day 2 the final vision for the EDM WSAP was finalized as:

“Eden District Municipality has ecologically healthy wetland systems that are valued for the diversity of life they support and the benefits they provide to their communities”.

2) Guiding Principals

Once the Vision was established, the participating stakeholders were encouraged by the facilitator 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 there is a strong need for alignment of guiding principles with the national legislation, particularly the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA). As such, rather than formulating unique and

individualized principles, it was decided that the principles should be drawn directly from Section 2 of NEMA and adjusted to fit to the EDM WSAP. In light of this, the guiding principles were established as follows:

- **Information:** To provide credible information that is accessible to all and that is used to inform wetland management.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** To create partnerships that will assist in effective wetland management and to share information and ideas.
- **Open Communications:** To facilitate community feedback mechanisms and build knowledge, awareness and appreciation of wetlands within the community as a whole.
- **Ecological Integrity:** To promote wetland conservation and restoration so that ecosystem services are maintained in the long- term.
- **Sustainable Livelihoods:** To recognise the inter-dependence between communities and wetland resources in all the work undertaken by Eden District Municipality.

FROM VISION TO STRATEGY

1) Focus Areas

Focus areas were defined by the facilitator as the planned, deliberate and focused efforts required to achieve the vision. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the focus areas established by the stakeholders should reflect the priorities of the stakeholders within the context of the established vision. Following extensive discussion and debate as well as valuable input by the participating stakeholders, the identified key focus areas for the EDM WSAP were established as follows:

- **Conservation and protection of wetlands;**
- **Research and mapping of wetlands throughout EDM;**
- **Awareness raising and education;**
- **Coordination of wetland management between multiple stakeholders;**
- **Mainstreaming wetland conservation into land use planning; and**
- **Sustainable use of wetlands.**

2) Prioritising Strategic Interventions

A number of stumbling blocks were identified by the stakeholders as barriers to achieving effective intervention around the desired focus areas. These include:

- No specific designated authority within Eden District Municipality responsible for wetland management;
- No formal ground-truthed wetland map clearly depicting the wetlands located within EDM;
- Limited funding availability to implement private mandates relating to wetlands maintenance and rehabilitation and
- No prioritizing strategy for the management of wetlands currently exists.

In light of this, whilst not strictly on the agenda, it was also additionally discussed that interventions need to be prioritised in a strategic manner to have any impact on the ground. As such, it was decided that the WSAP would need to focus on either:

- **Developing a wetland management plan** similar to the existing EDM estuary management plan; or
- **Developing wetland related input for inclusion in the EDM Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP).** To this end, it was noted that largely once information adopted into the SDF and IDP, it is secured and must be implemented on the ground.

MEASURING SUCCESS

1) Developing Strategic Priorities into Goals

The facilitator highlighted that 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 EDM WSAP were established as follows:

- 1) **No further loss of wetlands due to land transformation or inappropriate development;**
- 2) **Spatial layer in place which includes the best available information easily accessed by all.**
- 3) **Each municipal IDP includes the wetland vision and guiding principles;**
- 4) **Each municipal SDF includes a wetland layer and associated guiding principles;**
- 5) **Through the regular updating of the aforementioned wetland layer, develop a clear understanding of the extent of wetlands within EDM including their status;**
- 6) **Steering Committee in place that is functional and oversees the implementation of a Wetland Management Plan.**

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. Actions preliminary identified as being priority focus areas in EDM include:

- 1) **Compile the best available spatial information into a map for inclusion in the SDF as well as to facilitate a clearer understanding of current status quo of wetlands within EDM.** This could be driven by ICLEI/ CSIR/ SANBI with support from SANParks.
- 2) **Compile guiding principles and objectives for wetland systems within EDM.** This could be lead by the environmental department of EDM and should be closely linked to the SDF timeframes.

- 3) **Contact the coordinator of the EDM SDF development unit to gain a clear understanding of timelines for including information into the SDF.** This should be done by either EDM or one of the local municipalities.
- 4) **Obtain information from Working for Wetlands, Department of Agriculture and local municipalities regarding wetlands in need to rehabilitation.** This should be driven by the environmental department of EDM and feed into the SDF where possible.
- 5) **Identify and prioritise pilot projects for inclusion in the IDP.**
- 6) **Include wetland management in the IDP.** It was suggested that to ensure this occurred, it would be important to liaise closely with the EDM IDP Manager.
- 7) **Develop/ package material for municipal departments to raise awareness (and subsequently build buy-in).** ICLEI could drive this as part of the LAB: Wetlands SA project deliverables (capacity building and awareness raising). These should be completed however by March 2017.
- 8) **Review the legal home/ rational for the Wetland Management Plan to give it weight.** It was suggested that the WPM could either be incorporated as part of the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (BGCMA) Catchment Management Strategy or EDM could put the WMP forward to Council for approval.

WRAPPING UP & WAY FORWARD

Following the development of actions for wetland management within EDM, facilitated by Mary Jane Morris, Ulrike highlighted in closing that the next step for EDM in the LAB Wetlands SA project is the compilation and development of the Wetland Strategy and Action Plan (WSAP). The EDM WSAP will pull 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. Ulrike 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.

Both Ulrike and Kirsty thanked the stakeholders for attending and for participating so actively in the workshop. The workshop was then closed.

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



EDEN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY WETLANDS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLANNING WORKSHOP AGENDA

Date: 23rd and 24th August 2016
Venue: Loerie Guest Lodge, Davidson Road, George
Facilitator: Mary Jane Morris

Day 1		
09:00 – 09:30	<i>Registration (Signing of the Attendance Register)</i>	
Welcome & Introductions		
09:30 – 09:40	Welcome by the hosts	Eden District Municipality
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	Ms. Kirsty Robinson (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	<i>Registration (Signing of the Attendance Register)</i>	
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	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>	
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	Ms. Ulrike Irlich (ICLEI)
12:45 – 13:05	Filling the gaps	Facilitator
13:05 – 13:15	Way Forward	Ms. Ulrike Irlich – (ICLEI)
13:15	<i>Lunch and Departure</i>	



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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.