

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

14 May 2003

Erwat Head Office



No	Item	Action
1	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">The chairperson, Marc de Fontaine, made a special welcome to everyone present at the meeting and he further thanked Dries Louw of Erwat for organizing the venue. Apologies were made for the disruption to the power supply.	Marc de Fontaine
2	Introduction of Attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none">The attendees introduced themselves. An attendance register was circulated.	All
3	Apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none">Apologies were received from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">F. Savvas (Rolfes)Louis de Wet (Waterlab)David Kleyn (Department of Agriculture)Pieter Venter (Ergo)Hennie Geldenhuys (Ergo)	
4	Minutes of the Previous Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">The minutes of the previous meeting were checked for correctness.	All
5	Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">It was noted that the minutes have no list of attendees.Page 6 item 10: Hazardous Waste site was changed to Zincor Waste Site.Items 8.8: The latest information is that the post of the Ramsar site Manager, as advertised by DACEL in December 2002 and February 2003, has not been filled yet.	All
6	Additions to the Agenda <p>The following additions were made to the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Trip to AustraliaPresentation by Department of Health, Francis MasenyaWater use licences <p>The following items were removed from the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Item 4.7Item 4.13	Dries Louw Francis Masenya Marc de Fontaine
7	Items for Presentation	
7.1	Developments and clean-up at Petrex, Grootvlei Mine <ul style="list-style-type: none">The consultants found that the canal option to divert mine water was not a feasible one. Other alternatives to consider include the sealing of underground workings, closing of holes, etc. This study is due by end of May 2003. In parallel to the mentioned options, the water treatment technologies are being looked at, and this study is due to be finished at the end of 2005.Open cast mining. Two open pits exist in Benoni. Their combined EMPR has been approved by DME, amid fierce resistance by neighbouring residents regarding dust and noise pollution.Rehabilitation. The rehabilitation on the westerly side of the West pit is underway and is due to being completed within 8-9 months. Backfilling of voids in the 1:50 year flood line is being done. Mining might be continued after selling of surface rights to East Rand Gramma Stone.	Irene Lea

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question: The issue of public participation and its co-ordination was raised.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: The process was/is co-ordinated via mail and extended to public representatives, local councils, etc. There is no date yet for next public meeting until the results of the current feasibility studies are completed.• Question: Why is there dumping of waste material within the wetland area?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: Material to be cleared up.• Question: What is Petrex doing to address bursting of pipes and slime spillages?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: Petrex intends to clean up the spills by involving local communities, repairs to a berm and to replace pipes. Envisage finishing these tasks by October 2003.• Question: What are the problems at the plant?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: The increased plant capacity has resulted in large volumes of high-density slime thereby overloading the clarifiers. Corrective measures include sealing off of the area from stormwater canal to the emergency dams. Regular monitoring is taking place. There is no ground water data available.• Question: Did Petrex investigate the effect of increased capacity of the plant before increasing its throughput?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: The process operation has been modified to a zero effluent process. Pollution dams have also been created. The modifications would be completed by the end of January 2004.	
7.2	Mining of Cowles Dam <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The company has submitted an EMPR to DME. A licence application would be given to DWAF on 16 /05 / 2003. The gold price is creating doubts with regard to the continuation of the project. However, the project will go ahead irrespective of the gold price.• Question: How is the project affecting Sappi?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: Steve mentioned that Sappi is waiting for ITC before Sappi can continue with its rehabilitation plans for Cowles Dam.	Roelof Barnard
8	Items for Discussion	
8.1	FMC Feedback	
8.1.1	Blesbokspruit Open Day 2002 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A list of people who attended the open day was compiled and those people with fax numbers were invited to this forum. A lot did not attend because there seems to be transport problems.• Question: How many people attended?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: About 200 people.• It was recommended that the next forum meeting be held at Grootvaly Centre to address the question of transport.	Riana Munnik
8.1.2	Water quality guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The in-stream water quality guidelines for Blesbokspruit were reviewed and the document would be available at the Monitoring Committee meeting on 23 July 2003. It was noted that only Erwat commented on the new guidelines.	Marc de Fontaine All
8.1.3	VBCEC and the Upper Vaal Reference Group <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annemarie gave a brief background of VBCEC. The Upper Vaal Water	Annemarie Mauritz

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

14 May 2003

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Management Area is divided into 3 sub-catchments, namely, Vaal Dam, Vaal Barrage and Kromdraai. Vaal Dam and Kromdraai each have 4 forums while the Vaal Barrage has 5. A Forum Management Committee (FMC) consists of a representative from a particular sector, e.g. mining, agriculture, industry, government or non-governmental organization (NGO). The VBCEC consists of the members of the FMC's and was established in 1999. The 3 sub-catchment's executive committees (CEC) together form the Upper Vaal River Reference Group (RG). The RG amongst other task co-ordinates the activities of the CEC's, decides on appointments of consultants, initiate proposal for CMA establishment and embarks on public awareness campaigns.

- **Concerns/Comments**

- There is a question of sector representivity on the CEC.
- Members of the Blesbokspruit FMC poorly attended the last CEC meeting.
- Possible candidates to represent were Irene Lea (mining), NGO's (no candidate), Steve Lurie (agriculture) and other government departments (no candidates, DACEL would be represented once the post of a Ramsar Manager has been filled).
- Gender equality must not be forgotten when electing sector representatives.
- Another CEC workshop will possibly be held in June 2003.
- Work of the FMC is purely voluntary.
- Three sector representatives, which are still outstanding on the FMC, are mining, agriculture and NGO's.
- FMC to ask Johan van Niekerk to attend on behalf of the agriculture sector.

8.1.4 **Progress on establishment of effluent treatment plant at Impala Platinum**

Dave Smith

- With eminent closure of Ergo, Impala must establish their own effluent treatment plant. A plant utilising reverse osmosis is a potential option. The plant will be up and running by December 2003.

8.1.5 **Launch of the Gauteng River Health Programme Poster**

Marc de Fontaine

- A poster on the ecological state of Southern Gauteng rivers was presented. The general state of the Blesbokspruit River is poor in terms of water quality and fish population. The Suikerbosrant River's riparian vegetation and aquatic invertebrates are good. Further questions on the state of these rivers can be directed to Piet Muller of DACEL.

8.1.6 **Establishment of the Gauteng Wetlands Interest Group**

Anne Mearns

- Greater Benoni Environment Society has launched an awareness programme. An Action group was formed in January 2001 and a Steering Committee was established in April 2002. The Action Group met in February 2003 with a mission to ensuring effective management of all Gauteng wetlands, through the functions of education, administration, monitoring and legislation. The Action Group has launched a web-site, newsletter, stakeholder forum, registration of about 101 wetlands, the compilation of a species database and the wetland hotline, through its educational wing. There are schools awareness and the University of Pretoria research programmes that form part of the Action Group's activities.

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

14 May 2003

Erwat Head Office



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comment: The activities of the Action Group must be coordinated with the functions of the Blesbokspruit forum.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Action: The Action group must in future be invited to the Monitoring Committee meetings	Dave Smith
<p>8.1.7 Comments on bird numbers in the Ramsar site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General bird population has improved since 1994 from R555 down to the R42 in Nigel. At the end of 1994 and early 1995 there were about 3400 birds, against a figure of 6400 in January 2003. The respective counts for July 1994 and July 2002 are 2900 and 6900. This was largely due to effective spraying. However a more holistic and integrated approach in managing the bird population is needed.• Question: How is the information distributed to the authorities? How does spraying affect the aquatic life?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: Meetings are being held with DACEL. The appointment of the Ramsar site Manager will also help with the co-ordination of tasks. Test conducted show the effect of spraying has been satisfactory, and DACEL has now adopted spraying as a management tool.• Question: Why is there a decline in bird population in Benoni tributaries?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: The Action group has had meetings with Brick works companies in the area. Working Group one of the Monitoring Committee must investigate this matter.	Stan Madden
<p>8.1.8 Report back from Grootvaly Blesbokspruit Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Links with the Department of Education have been established. There was a spillage of slimes from Grootvlei, which was attended to. Security guards are being deployed over weekends. The road has been extended toward the centre.	
<p>8.1.9 Report back on developments at Karan Beef</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plans are in place to address problems with effluent from the abattoir. He also highlighted problems facing the Dipaliseng municipality in managing the Siyathemba sewage works. The problems are due to lack of effective controls, curtailing of weekend work, lack of communication between Karan Beef and the municipality, etc. The Siyathemba sewage works is overwhelmed with problems like the spillage of sludge into the farm's cattle drinking water dams. Non-action on the part of the municipality has resulted in a court case.• Question: What is DWAF policy/action in the matter?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Answer: DWAF cannot resort to court action, instead it should try all avenues of co-operative governance.	Johan van Niekerk
<p>8.1.10 Problems associated with Balfour water works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The problem in Balfour is two-fold, domestic water supply and sewage water treatment. A meeting with the MEC (local government and housing) was held on 23 April 2003. The ongoing upgrading of the Fortuna purification plant was discussed and it was resolved to speed up the project to address domestic water problems. There is a general lack of WSDP in most municipalities and DWAF has to capacitate local authorities in this regard. Samples of drinking water taken on 5 May 2003 showed a vast improvement.	

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

14 May 2003

Erwat Head Office



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The sewage works is operating without a licence. Rand Water was contracted to assist with technical operations for a six-month period, which has since expired. The licence technical report has not been submitted to DWAF. This report will determine as to how much information is outstanding for the completion of the licensing process.<ul style="list-style-type: none">Action: The FMC should write to the municipality.Erwat can/should get involved to assist with technical capacity. This suggestion would be brought up at the Erwat board meeting.Local Department of Health must also intervene. A contact person from the department who is responsible for Balfour area must be identified to become involved.	
8.1.11	<p>Sappi Enstra Mill lime dams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Calcium carbonate is produced from the lime slurry, which is pumped to the dams. The solids settle and decant water is recycled to the plant. Lime dam has a permit from DWAF to comply with.There is a water balance problem. During summers the factory experiences oversupply of water, which results in stormwater overflowing into Cowles dam. The permit requires 1: 50 year floodline dams to curb this overflow.There is also a problem with groundwater pollution.Some solutions to address problems:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sell lime to other industries to use in neutralization or give it to farmers. The idea would be to set up a lime drying plant (<i>high cost!</i>).Lime dams to be phased out and the area to be rehabilitated.GDACEL requires that Sappi go through an EIA process if they intend constructing a lime drying plant.	Steve Walker
8.1.12	<p>Sewage sludge challenge at the Welgedacht works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">There was an electrical cable problem as a result of lightning. The sludge system consists of a clarifier, presser, drying bed and disposal to farmers. 67 hectare of farm area are sprayed with sludge. The nearby McCombs works is now closed.Question: Any measurement of the sludge temperature?<ul style="list-style-type: none">Answer: There is no measurement of the temperature of the sludge.Action: Next forum must arrange for an hour-long site visit to Welgedacht works.	Johan Hendriksz Johan Hendriks
8.1.13	<p>Quarterly water quality status of the Blesbokspruit catchment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The quarterly report on the water quality status of the Blesbokspruit for the period April to June 2003 was circulated and discussed.	Marc de Fontaine
9	<p>Discussion of Additions to the Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Trip to Australia<ul style="list-style-type: none">Australian Water Management System in a nutshell: Good water quality, hence focus mainly on environmental conservation, local government by-laws, and efficient water treatment technologies.Lessons for SA: Good sludge handling to maximise extraction of water and high use of sludge by-products by farmers.Presentation by Department of Health, Francis Masenya<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr Masenya gave an overview of the departmental structure in view	Dries Louw Francis Masenya

MINUTES: Forum Meeting

14 May 2003

Erwat Head Office



	<p>of the current restructuring of government departments. There is an environmental health services section that puts emphasis on community participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water use licence authorizations<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A detailed document will be produced giving a general outline as to all water use licence authorizations within the Blesbokspruit catchment• Blesbokspruit Forum terms of Reference<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A draft copy of the Blesbokspruit TOR was circulated. Comments to be forwarded to the FMC within two weeks of the current Forum date.• Blesbokspruit newsletter<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ All forum members were requested to send any newsworthy documents to the FMC for inclusion in a catchment newsletter.• Web site<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Rand Water has developed and will host a web site for the Upper Vaal Water Management Area. All documentation pertaining to the activities of the Blesbokspruit Forum will be kept on this site. The site address is www.reservoir.co.za.	<p>FMC Members</p> <p>All</p> <p>All</p> <p>Marc de Fontaine</p>
10	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>The next Blesbokspruit Forum meeting was scheduled for 12 November 2003 at 09:30. Venue to be advised.</p>	
11	<p>Closure</p> <p>The chairperson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the fruitful contributions. He wished everybody a safe journey to their respective destinations. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30.</p>	<p>Marc de Fontaine</p>