



PROGRESS REPORT

GRASSLANDS PROJECT

August 2006

What is the Grasslands Project?

This bioregional project is being developed to sustain and secure biodiversity and associated ecosystem services of the grassland biome for the benefit of current and future generations. The mission is:

- To ensure that the wise management of biodiversity contributes to sustainable development in the grasslands biome
- To ensure that production and development activities are appropriately located and managed, so that the deliver of ecosystem services is not impaired
- To mobilize and empower land users and landowners, including companies, to be effective stewards of the landscape.

The strategic approach of the programme is mainstreaming biodiversity in production sectors and the chosen sectors are agriculture (rangeland and cultivation), forestry, coal mining and urban development in Gauteng.

When did the Grasslands Project begin and how far has it progressed?

The importance of protecting the grasslands, both from a biodiversity and economic development perspective, was recognised some years back with NGOs and government undertaking various projects. A Grasslands Forum, that brought the various government role-players from across provincial boundaries together, was initiated by the Gauteng Provincial Department responsible for the Environment and Conservation in 2003. This Forum requested that the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI¹) lead the development of the grassland programme. SANBI established a Programme Management Unit staffed by a Programme Developer and Programme Coordinator to run the design phase of the programme. The design phase begun formally in May 2005 and ends in June 2007. Initially it was hoped that the core funding form UNDP-GEF for programme implementation would have been secured by January 2007 but this has

¹ On the 1st September 2004, the National Botanical Institute (NBI) became the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

been postponed due to developments within the GEF. Implementation is now planned to start in July 2007 and run until June 2012.

What has the Grasslands Project achieved over the past year?

The Grasslands Project has made significant progress over the past year having achieved the following:

1. Agreement amongst stakeholders from six provinces and the private sector within the forestry and agricultural sectors on the vision, mission, objectives and strategic approach of the programme. The focus of the programme is on mainstreaming grassland biodiversity into the forestry sector; agricultural sector with a focus on cattle/game but including bio-fuels and the grains; coal mining and the urban economy of Gauteng
2. Drafted the initial Project Document required by UNDP-GEF to raise the core funding for implementation including the Project Logical Framework that has received a favourable internal review from GEF
3. Submitted a Full Project Document for GEF STAP Review and final submission is expected once comments have been received and incorporated into the Project Document.
4. Established partnerships with key institutions within the identified sectors; set up cooperative structures for the design phase that can be built into structures that will provide the required stakeholder strategic direction and oversight required during implementation; and identified the key institutional through whom implementation will occur².
5. Raised co-financing to the value of R37.26 million over five years from government, the private sector and NGOs in support of programme implementation
6. Appointed detailed planning work that will deliver five year implementation roll out plans in the following areas:
 - a. Agricultural demonstration intervention in Wakkerstroom/Luneberg area to deliver conservation stewardship with private and communal farms, biodiversity best management practices on commercial and communal cattle ranching, and piloting of red meat green certification
 - b. Inland water ecosystem demonstration intervention in the Free State
 - c. Forestry sector plan for securing forestry owned land that is unplanted and will be secured as part of a private sector stewardship approach in KZN, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape
 - d. Piloting of market mechanism such as wetland mitigation banking
 - e. Appointed a grassland urban consultant to drive forward the Gauteng aspect of the work where important biodiversity sites, such as the proposed Walter Sisulu Wildlife reserve, are under significant pressure
 - f. Strategic feasibility review of developing a viable green beef/lamb/game certification system

² Programme coordination will rest with SANBI, the urban sector will be managed through GDACE, the forestry sector through ForestrySA, and the agricultural sector through SANBI and appointed agencies at a demonstration district level

In addition, the Grasslands Project has commissioned work on the following:

- a. Branding and communication for both the umbrella programme and GEF wedge
- b. Institutional mainstreaming effectiveness scorecard

How do stakeholders participate in the Grasslands Programme?

The **Grassland Steering Committee** provides strategic direction to the programme and consists of the following institutions: DWAF, DEAT, DoA, AgriSA, Forestry SA, GDACE, UNDP/GEF, WWF The Green Trust and SANBI.

The **Grasslands Forum** meets annually to provide a forum for stakeholders to discuss key strategic issues facing the grasslands biome. The November 2005 Forum was attended by over 70 participants from seven provinces

The **Grasslands Urban Team** was born out of the Gauteng Urban Development and Biodiversity workshop that was attended by 74 people from 31 institutions held in July 2005. There are 13 members (GDACE, 3 metros, 3 DMs, 3LMs, 1 NGO, 1 professional association, SANBI). The Team has identified 12 priority sites in Gauteng for conservation action and has designed the log frame for the urban component of the programme. An Urban Coordinator, Anthea Stephens, joins the team in July to take forward work in this pressurised sector.

The **Forestry Design Team** was formed out of the Forestry Development and Grasslands Biodiversity workshop that was held in September 2005 and consists of representatives from: SANBI, DWAF, Forestry South Africa (FSA), large timber growers, small/emerging timber growers, private timber growers, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, the E Cape Dept of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism, MDTP, civil society and research institutions. The design team has developed a high level log frame for the forestry component of the programme with the following areas for intervention:

- Industry wide interventions to mainstream biodiversity
- Securing permanently unplanted forestry land that are priority sites for biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Expansion of new plantations

The **Agriculture Task Team** has representation from the Agribusiness Chamber, AgriSA, NAFU, Red Meat Producer's Organisation (RPO), National Emerging Red Meat Producer's Organisation (NERPO), Grain SA, Wildlife Ranching SA and the national Department of Agriculture. Efforts are underway to involve the National Wool Growers' Association and civil society organisations working with agriculture and relevant research institutions.

What is the funding situation?

The programme is presently supported by the following institutions:

- The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)
- The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)
- Provincial governments through their conservation plans
- The United Nations Development Programme Global Environment Fund (UNDP GEF)
- WWF The Green Trust

Due to the six month delay in the starting date for implementation SANBI has made arrangements to cover the costs of the programme management unit until the UNDP-GEF funds for implementation are available.

What documents are available from the Grasslands Programme?

The following documents generated as part of the design phase can be accessed either from the SANBI website or through contacting Florence Nazare:

- De Wit M.P. & Blignaut J.N. 2006. Using monetary valuation results with specific reference to grasslands in South Africa. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
- Kirkman K. 2006. Strategic review of the coal mining industry with regard to grassland biodiversity and identification of opportunities for the development of interventions with the coal industry to address biodiversity. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
- Murray M.I. 2005. Grasslands comparative agricultural economic and trends assessment. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
- O'Connor T.G. & Kuyler P. 2005. National Grasslands Initiative: identification of Compatible Land Uses for Maintaining Biodiversity Integrity. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
- O'Connor T.G. & Kuyler P. 2005. National Grasslands Initiative: identification of Compatible Land Uses for Maintaining Biodiversity Integrity. Mining Addendum. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
- Reyers B., Nel J., Egoh B., Jonas Z., & Rouget M. 2005. National Grasslands Biodiversity programme: Grassland Biodiversity Profile and Spatial Biodiversity Priority Assessment. Report for the South African National Biodiversity Institute's National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme

Who can be contacted for more information?

You can contact

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