

SANBI POLICY DOCUMENT

DIVISION: Biosystematics Research and Biodiversity Collections	POLICY NUMBER: A1
EFFECTIVE DATE: 1 February 2015	LAST AMENDED: 26 November 2014

PLANT COLLECTING TRIPS

Background

- Plant collecting trips are undertaken in order to build up a representative plant collection for the Flora of the southern Africa area and to truly reflect the distribution of southern African plant taxa.
- In order to carry out taxonomic, phytogeographic and morphological variation studies of meaningful scientific standard, a comprehensive collection of plant specimens is required. Ideally, this should represent the full distribution range and morphological variation of each taxon.
- Besides research being dependent on good, representative collections, the identification service of the Institute is also reliant on comprehensive collections.
- Plant collecting trips are linked to the Biosystematics Division Business Plan and scientists' research proposals.
- Herbarium staff also co-partner with other plant collecting programmes organised by outside individuals or organisations.
- Plant collecting trips present an ideal opportunity for sharing of expertise and training or capacity building.
- SANBI encourages its employees to collaborate with researchers both locally and internationally, provided the field work falls within the business plan.

Scope

- To standardise procedures for plant collecting trips.
- To provide guidance and information about policy and procedures to all staff in SANBI who collect plant material and are involved in the planning, organising and execution of plant collecting trips, as well as the processing of plant material after collecting trips.

Policy

There are two types of plant collecting trips namely:

- **Spatial collecting:** General plant collecting.
- **Thematic collecting:** Specialised collecting for research projects, targeted biodiversity surveys, bioprospecting, garden collections, Millennium Seed Bank Project and Alien Invasive Programme.

The prerequisites/conditions for plant collecting trips are:

- Approval for the trip from HOCC within reasonable time before departure.
- Compliance with all relevant permit requirements.
- Processing of plant material collected and associated data within a month after return from the trip.
- Submission of trip report to HOCC, permit officer and, where relevant, to appropriate stakeholders.

Process

ADDENDUM 1 outlines the procedures for undertaking a collecting trip.

ADDENDUM 1: Procedures for undertaking a plant collecting trip

1. Approval and justification

1.1. Approval

- 1.1.1. Discuss proposed plant collecting trip with line manager and brief HOCC.
- 1.1.2. Justify kind of plant collecting trip: spatial collecting (general plant collecting) or thematic collecting (specialist collecting).
- 1.1.3. Get written approval from HOCC before embarking on planning any plant collecting trip.

1.2. Budget

- 1.2.1. Ensure that there are enough funds available in the budget to finance your trip.
- 1.2.2. It is preferable to inform the HOCC of any planned plant collecting trip(s) at the beginning of the financial year, or even towards the end of the previous financial year, in order to ensure budget allocation.

2. Pre-trip arrangements

2.1. Organiser

- 2.1.1. The organiser must take responsibility for the trip.

2.2. Participants

- 2.2.1. The participants must all agree to all terms of the plant collecting trip and have the same priorities in mind before embarking on the trip.
- 2.2.2. In considering number of participants, space available in vehicles must be taken into account.

2.3. Duration

- 2.3.1. The duration of the plant collecting trip must be known and agreed upon by the participants beforehand.
- 2.3.2. While on the trip, any change in duration, such as a delay in return, must be negotiated with all participants and communicated to line manager and/or HOCC.

2.4. Area/route

- 2.4.1. Specify/identify the area and localities that will be covered by the field trip. This must be included in the discussions with the HOCC when approval is being requested.
- 2.4.2. Plan the route and be able to provide details to the HOCC when requesting approval for the field trip.

2.5. Timing

- 2.5.1. Determine the most suitable time to visit the study area by using PRECIS or other datasets.
- 2.5.2. Monitor rainfall in that area or make contact with people in the area to give you feedback on the state of the veld.
Note: So-called well-collected areas are not excluded as collecting in those areas are normally concentrated in and after the rainy seasons. However, those areas might have to be visited during the other seasons as well to collect taxa flowering or fruiting in different seasons. It is also important to visit the same area in different seasons to collect material flowering or fruiting after certain occurrences such as fire or unusual rain.

2.6. Permits

- 2.6.1. Consult 'Permitting' in the SANBI Policy and the Permitting Process and Procedural Manual when applying for a permit or obtaining landowner permission. Available on MySANBI, Team Site – Permitting.
- 2.6.2 It is advisable to contact the permits officer – Ms Karin Behr, telephone no: 012 843 5095, Fax no: 086 555 9868 or e-mail address: K.Behr@sanbi.org.za – when a collecting trip is being planned to ensure all legal requirements are met before finalising the trip. Some permit issuing authorities take several months before issuing a permit and SANBI does not have jurisdiction over them to force them to speed up their internal processes. Hence, permits cannot be obtained at the drop of a hat.
- 2.6.3 It is required by law that land and property rights be respected.
- 2.6.4. Collectors are obliged to obtain written landowners permission before collecting on any property within South Africa (refer to 'Permitting' in SANBI Policy and the Permitting Process and Procedural Manual (See Annexures E and M). A 'Landowner Permission' template is available for use. All landowner permission documents can be filed after your trip with the Permits Officer.
- 2.6.5 Should you wish to collect in any nature reserve or other property managed by a governmental institution, permission to conduct research can be applied for via the Permits Office.
- 2.6.6. Issued permits must be taken with to be presented to any law enforcement officer should you be asked for it. The same applies to landowner permission.
- 2.6.7 On your return you are required to supply the permit holder (person in whose name the permit was issued) with the following reports: (a) species list report and (b) a project progress report before the expiry date of the permit or if issued for more than 1 year, before 31 December of each year. Standardised templates can be obtained from the permitting team site on MySANBI or you could request it from the permits officer.
- 2.6.8 Please keep the permit supplied to you safe at all times and return it to the original permit holder on your return.

2.7. Finances

- 2.7.1. Comply with all relevant finance procedures and policies.
- 2.7.2. If money is needed in advance, the staff member should complete a cheque requisition form at least two weeks in advance and submit for processing. The money should be deposited into your bank account before the trip.
- 2.7.3. When collecting with non-SANBI staff:
Costs of such trips should be carried by visitors or shared between the collaborators depending on the relationship (e.g. where a staff member primarily acts as a guide, all costs should be paid by the visitor; where there is a formal research agreement in place, costs can be shared).
Overseas collectors should make arrangements for postage of their specimens before leaving the country.

2.8. Accommodation

- 2.8.1. Arrangements must be made well in advance or alternatively arrange camping equipment in time.

2.9. Official vehicle

- 2.9.1. Consult 'Policy on Official Vehicles'.
- 2.9.2. Book the vehicle in advance.
- 2.9.3. Check that the vehicle is in good condition and roadworthy.
- 2.9.4. Check that all the tools are present and that they work properly.
- 2.9.5. Take a fire extinguisher.
- 2.9.6. Take the logbook, the petrol card and your valid drivers' license.

- 2.9.7. The driver of a SANBI vehicle must always comply with traffic rules. Read 'Road safety guidelines for employees during official travel' under 'Finance' on MySANBI.
- 2.9.8. Non-SANBI participants travelling in any SANBI vehicle should sign a copy of the volunteer/associates indemnity form, available on MySANBI under 'Finance'.
- 2.9.9. In the case of an accident, the driver must
 - 2.9.9.1. Not admit liability.
 - 2.9.9.2. Record all details.
 - 2.9.9.3. Report the accident immediately, no matter how trivial (within 24 hours).
 - 2.9.9.4. Not authorise repairs until approval is obtained from the claims manager at the Cape Town Office or the Director: Finance. Refer to 'Finance Policy 38/2004: SANBI Official Vehicle and Maintenance Policy, Accidents' for details.

2.10. Equipment

- 2.10.1. The herbarium issues equipment in a clean state, in working order and entrusts the equipment to the care of the collector/s. It is expected that all employees shall use the equipment in a responsible manner and return it to the herbarium stores clean and undamaged.
- 2.10.2. The officer in charge of stores is responsible for the issuing of equipment.
- 2.10.3. Assess what equipment is available well in advance and book what will be needed. Make an appointment with the officer in charge of stores to collect equipment.
- 2.10.4. Everything leaving the storeroom must be signed out. Pack plant presses or arrange for them to be packed well in advance.

2.11. Health and safety

- 2.11.1. SANBI complies with the Health & Safety regulations of OHASA for the health and safety of its employees.
- 2.11.2. Trip organiser to check that a fully equipped first aid kit is available for the trip and replace any expired or depleted items. Participants on medication or with allergies are responsible for carrying their own specific medication.
- 2.11.3. Collectors to ensure personal field wear are compliant with Health & Safety regulations, and should include hiking boots, hat, jacket, water bottle and sun protection. Staffs are to be aware of risks and to ensure safety and protection of themselves.
- 2.11.4. Ensure that the trip organiser has all relevant emergency phone numbers stored in his/her phone and accessible on a card in the vehicle.

3. Procedures to be followed during a trip

3.1. How to collect and process specimens

- 3.1.2. Refer to Policy A3 for guidelines on collecting and pressing herbarium specimens.

3.2. Health and Safety

- 3.2.1. Have the first aid kit with you or near while working in the field.
- 3.2.2. It is recommended that when out on extended trips, the trip organiser contact his/her line manager or HOCC at least once per week to report on wellbeing and progress.
- 3.2.4. In an emergency regarding injury that requires medical attention, refer to HR procedure.

4. Procedures to be followed after a trip

4.1. Equipment

- 4.1.1. The officer in charge of stores is responsible to check and sign the equipment in on return.
- 4.1.2. Report any problems or damages and make suggestions for improvement.
- 4.1.3. No dirty equipment will be accepted.

4.2. Vehicle

- 4.2.1. The SANBI policy on vehicle usage should be followed.
- 4.2.2. Check that log book is up to date.
- 4.2.3. Return keys, log book and transaction records for usage of garage card to responsible officer.
- 4.2.4. Report any problems or damages.

4.3. First Aid

- 4.3.1. Return the first aid kit to the responsible officer on the first day of reporting to work.
- 4.3.2. Report what was used and needs replacing.
- 4.3.3. Report all hazards encountered or injuries that occurred.

4.4. Specimens

- 4.4.1. The herbarium has well-defined procedures that should be followed by every collector collecting for the Herbarium. See Policy A3.
- 4.4.2. On arrival back from the trip, put specimens in the dryers. Succulent specimens like *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe* and grass aloes should be placed in the freezer before pressing and then in the dryer.
- 4.4.3. The collector is responsible for specimens while in dryers or arrangements must be made with the personnel in charge of freezers and dryers.
- 4.4.4. After drying, put specimens in freezer for at least 48 hours or more to kill insects.
- 4.4.5. Submit specimens for processing, with an accompanying list, to the responsible officer as soon as possible.
- 4.4.6. Process other material as soon as possible e.g. live plants for the nursery.

4.5. DNA samples

- 4.5.1. Collectors are encouraged to collect plant material in silica gel for storage in a DNA bank. Refer to Policy A2, 'Collection and storage of material for phylogenetic analyses'.

4.6. Trip report

- 4.6.1. It is required that a report be submitted to the HOCC, the officer responsible for plant collecting programmes, line manager/s and the permit officer by the organiser of the trip after every plant collecting trip.
The report must be submitted within three months of return from the collecting trip.
- 4.6.2. The report should be brief but comprehensive, and should include the purpose of the trip and an indication of whether the purpose was achieved, the area covered, the number of specimens collected and a list/description of all exciting discoveries made during the trip (e.g. new records of species in that grid area.). As identifications will not be finalised within the timeframe for the report, a provisional list of plants collected should be attached to the report.
- 4.6.3. A copy of this report should be sent to the relevant authorities in the area visited.

4.7. Acknowledgements

- 4.7.1. If any outside organisation or individual assisted in making the trip possible, they should be thanked or acknowledged through official correspondence. Copies of any publications resulting from the sponsored trip should be forwarded to them.