



AN INFORMAL PROGRESS REPORT
ON SOME OF OUR PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

MARCH 2016 – MAY 2017

Background to current projects

The Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR) was designated by UNESCO on the 9th June 2015 as South Africa's 7th biosphere reserve.

The GCBR was established in terms of section 21 of the Companies Act (61 of 1973) as an association incorporated not for gain to manage the biosphere reserve in terms of the requirements of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.

In the wake of its official designation, the GCBR embarked on developing a coherent strategy to guide it over the next 5 years. The first strategy workshop was held on 19-20 July 2015, where agreement was reached on a basic set of parameters around organisational identity, ways of working, organisational design, and priority areas for practical action. The latter, whilst not framed in the conventional language of goals and objectives, provide the following pointers as to where GCBR's efforts will be prioritised between now and 2020:

Our Priority Practical Efforts

Practical work for the domain is already underway, focussing on three priority areas.

1. **Flagship initiatives** which (at scale):
 - i. Restore degraded landscapes while creating employment
 - ii. Convert alien biomass into economically viable products
2. **A suite of smaller scale (peri-)urban and rural projects** to catalyse ecologically sustainable livelihoods, for example:
 - i. Stimulate employment opportunities through development of tourism related to our scenic beauty and unique biodiversity
 - ii. Promote enterprises that contribute to ecological gains
3. **Knowledge generation and communication** about innovations and practices that have a positive impact on the domain's ecology and all its populations. Examples may include:
 - i. Environmental education involving schools and youth
 - ii. Collaboration with (inter-)national research initiatives
 - iii. Testing new models of financing restoration at scale on privately owned degraded land

(Source: GCBR - The Organisation in a Nutshell – July 2015)

Alignment with Provincial Strategic Goals (PSGs)

1. Create opportunities for growth and jobs
2. Improve education outcomes and opportunities for youth development
3. Increase wellness, safety and tackle social ills
4. Enable a resilient, sustainable, quality and inclusive living environment
5. Embed good governance and integrated service delivery through partnerships and spatial alignment

The three priority areas in the table above show clear convergence with Provincial Strategic Goals, with particular emphasis on PSG1, PSG2 and PSG4. Programme 5 is supported particularly through the Flagship initiatives (Priority 1) and by catalysing ecologically sustainable livelihoods (Priority 2).

The Green Club Project

Environmental Education is one of the focal areas of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme. The Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR) has therefore adopted an active stance towards engaging youth – as tomorrow's leaders – in influencing public opinion, perceptions and behaviours towards a healthier planet.

A partnership between the GCBR and the Landmark Foundation (LMF) is spearheading the formation of *Green Clubs* in disadvantaged schools. These clubs form an important part of changing communities and their attitude toward the environment; working with a small group of learners within a school will grow and expand outward into the community and into the environment. Built around 4 pillars, the programme endeavours to achieve its outcomes by transferring SKILLS, imparting KNOWLEDGE, changing ATTITUDES, and instilling VALUES.

The GCBR-LMF partnership embarked on this approach in March 2015 with the Vanwyksdorp Primary School (Kannaland Municipality) as a pilot project and built it out during this past year, 2016 -2017, as a model for other schools in the GCBR domain, with very limited funds wisely spent.

The GCBR introduced the Green Club project at the Herbertsdale School on 12 August 2016, with a hike to a nearby koppie and a waste management program. The Green Club was established during May 2017. The GCBR also introduced the Green Club project to Ruitersbos Primary during April 2017 and will roll it out in the near future. The Garden Route Casino Community Trust made funding available in support of our outreach to these two outlying rural schools in the Mossel Bay district. Gondwana Game Reserve also support and is a partner involved in these two projects.

Van Wyksdorp Primary School- Extend the Day lights

Local representatives handed over the EXTEND THE DAY LIGHTS on behalf of J Lonseth, USA on the 18th August 2017. These lights are solar powered, and are to the benefit of the learners that don't have electricity at their homes, to study in the evening.

iALA Conservation Program

Iala is an International Academy for Leadership through Adventure. The academy is run as a one year course aimed at bridging the gap from high school to varsity. It is based in Stilbaai but the "classes" travel through South Africa. The outdoor adventure is aimed at developing leadership, transferring life-long skills and empowering the students with practical knowledge, and through the travel experiences, new values are instilled. The program is environmentally conscious. The GCBR involved LMF and connected them to the iALA program.

This year a Leopard and predator awareness program was introduced as it has become more defined. Landmark Foundation brings to the gap year program the value of Leopard conservation and its critical place in the preservation of biodiversity.

IALA, launched a cycle tour, “Berg 2 Baai” from Herbertsdale via Rooiberg Lodge and Riversdal to Stilbaai. The GCBR want to build this into an annual event, with a focus on environmental programmes at every overnight point.

Van Wyksdorp Development Institute

The VWI is a non profit company based in Van Wyksdorp with its main objective the development of skills of the underprivileged community members to enable them to become part of the active labour force and to promote entrepreneurial skills. The GCBR hosted a workshop between the Board of Directors of the VWI and delegates from the GCBR, to discuss the future relationship between the two organisations as collaborative partners.

Jobs For Carbon Project

The overall aim of the initial Jobs for Carbon project is *“To improve the rural economy and ecosystem health and resilience of the Little Karoo by developing carbon farming as a sustainable use of natural Spekboomveld.”*

The project has three objectives, including:

1. Restore natural vegetation on degraded thicket land through planting spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*).
2. Create sustainable employment for marginalised rural communities in land restoration work and carbon farming.
3. Develop carbon sequestration as a potential alternative income stream for land users through carbon farming.

The project objectives were broadly achieved, and certain targets were substantially exceeded.

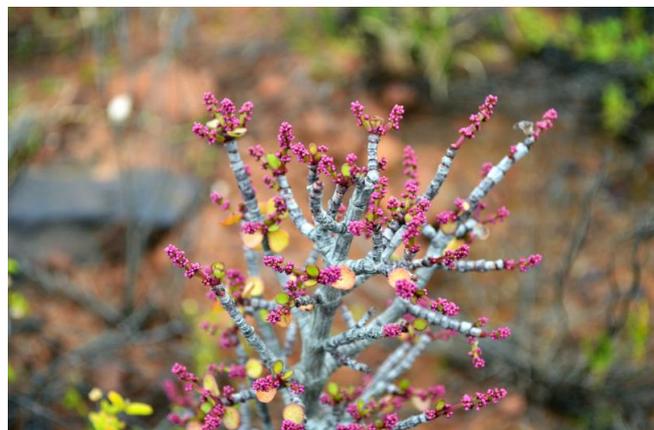
The project target of restoring 300 ha of spekboomveld was exceeded. Some 812 ha was initiated into a process of restoration through the project, either through replanting with spekboom or through the exclusion of grazing animals (or both). The plantings show above average survival in comparison to other localities.

The objective to develop three working teams comprising vulnerable people was achieved... There were sixty success stories! The human, social and institutional capital that has been built through the project is a key outcome that offers significant potential for securing and expanding the beneficial outcomes of the project on a long-term basis.

The first phase of the GCBR flagship project Jobs for Carbon was successfully completed in November 2016. The project received a clean financial audit and an excellent independent review of activities and outputs. The main results included rehabilitation of more than 300 hectares of degraded spekboom veld commenced through the planting of spekboom cuttings. 60 people were employed for the field work and received comprehensive training and capacity development throughout the project. Jobs 4 Carbon is a good example of partner-driven projects that will shape the future of the GCBR. Special thanks to the EU; National Department of Environmental Affairs; Rhodes Restoration Research Group; WESSA, land owners, numerous GCBR members, and the broader Vanwyksdorp community for making the project so successful.

Jobs for Carbon attracted interest from various other groups, including Provincial Environmental Affairs (the “Eco-Invest” reports), Wits Business school, and Leeds University. The latter institutions are currently using the project as an example of social entrepreneurship, and adaptation and development co-benefits respectively.

Apart from harvesting and planting spekboom, the teams also harvested olives at Mount Rouge and Blue Sky Organics. We started with Jobs for Carbon, phase 2, on 6 March 2017.



#spekkies

#spekkies is a successful by-product of the Jobs for Carbon project and has gone from strength to strength in the last 12 months. Having started as a small idea of selling spekboom cuttings in pots to the public in order to create awareness and promote the Jobs for Carbon project, #spekkies has become a project in its own right within the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve structure.

Discussions and planning regarding the #spekkies product began in early 2016, however the roll out of the first prototypes was only around mid March of 2016. The early planning for #spekkies was focused on a partnership with a cancer support PBO, with distribution focused on a prominent South African grocery retail franchise. This option however did not come to fruition, and it became clear that the GCBR would need to carry the established momentum on its own for the foreseeable future. The relationship and communication channels with the PBO remains good and is still considered an option should the opportunity arise.



First prototypes of #spekkies



Second prototype - PBO partnership

#spekkies Enterprise development

The partnership with the cancer support PBO would have seen the product branded and marketed under the logo of that organization. With the move away from the partnership towards a solely-GCBR product, a new name and logo were developed: #spekkies (keeping the "healthy people, healthy planet slogan from the initial prototype). The name "#spekkies" represents the GCBR's attitude about spekboom and what it stands for: "spekkies" being a term of endearment for *Portulacaria afra*, a seemingly unassuming shrub that, through its unique and proficient carbonstoring abilities has the potential to significantly reduce atmospheric carbon and by so doing help with the fight against climate change!

The hash tag (#) follows the customs of social media, whereby it indicates a *word or phrase used to identify messages on a specific topic* - the topics in this case are climate change, community upliftment and ecosystem restoration (to mention but a few!).



The final #spekkies logo



The final product – spekkboom in a biodegradable (compost) pot

Rietkraal

Rietkraal is a property owned by the WWF and the GCBR. The provincial contract Nature Reserve is under custodianship and management of the GCBR. It is situated approximately 7 km south of Vanwyksdorp, in the Little Karoo.

Erosion Training at Rietkraal

The Jobs for Carbon workers, 45 people, received a two-day training course at Rietkraal in erosion management. The course was presented by Ken Coetzee, director of Environmental Affairs. They created hollows that act as water traps. Mulch was placed in each basin. They also rehabilitated some gullies. Ken indicated that with a little more reinforcement of the methods learnt the teams would be in a position to undertake this type of work on their own. Materials were supplied by CapeNature.

Fencing at Rietkraal

The Board approved the use of funding from Environmental Affairs budget for fencing at Rietkraal. The GCBR made use of some of our skilled Jobs for Carbon workers to upgrade the eastern, southern and western fences of the Rietkraal reserve.

GCBR and Oasis Food Gardens - Church Ground

The GCBR signed contracts with Cassidra, on behalf of Landcare, for irrigation systems at the church ground and Oasis. The works/goods, are part of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and Land Reform programme for the Klein Karoo. The GCBR installed two reservoirs and the irrigation systems. The assets were handed over to two of the Jobs for Carbon members on the 10th March '17. The food garden will be managed by Jobs for Carbon members and members of the Community to produce healthy food for the community.

Kos In Die Klein-Karoo

Kos in die Karoo is a sister project of KOS EN FYNBOS which runs in the George area. Kos en Fynbos is a groundswell movement initiated by members of the George community in 2014. It aims at creating a community that is independent, self-sustained, creative, loving and sharing, a community that desires to improve themselves and their environment by taking the first steps in creating that change. Food, water and waste are the key elements totally interwoven in changing the environment people live in.

KOS IN DIE KAROO is a project aimed at Van Wyksdorp residents, to teach the Jobs for Carbon team members and the community, to create their own food gardens. The launch of the KOS IN DIE KAROO took place on Friday 23rd September in a gathering of community members of Van Wyksdorp interested in food gardens. During the presentation the core values and "spirit" of the project were explained. Four coordinators of KOS EN FYNBOS from George were able to give personal accounts of their involvement with the project and the importance of food gardens. They inspired the community to become self-sustaining and to look after their environment. There was a very good turnout considering the size of the town.

KKNK GCBR Stall

The GCBR saw the KKNK as a very good opportunity to showcase the work of the GCBR. On request, the Board approved and pledged its support to us to proceed with arrangements for a stall at the KKNK. The stall was managed by two of our star workers from Jobs for Carbon, directors and members. The GCBR donated three #spekkies as decorations on the *Praat Saam* stage. These three were auctioned at the end of the festival with *Die Burger Children Fund* as beneficiary.

Save the Drip

A small grant (R20 000.00) from Eden Municipality was spent to repair leaking pipes, taps, toilets and all other leaks in 110 houses. Two communal water taps were also repaired (the leaks at these communal taps were on average 1000 litres per day).

23 houses were installed with new toilet cisterns using 3 litres only.

This is an ongoing project to monitor the water usage.

Learning for Lights

85 squatter shacks were fitted with motorcycle batteries and 2 meter strip lights, to provide clean, safe light power for students to do their homework.

Wonderbag Factory

Two groups of women, from Oudtshoorn and De Rust, was assisted to set up informal factories to manufacture 2 250 wonderbags, providing employment for 8 women for 8 months.

Environmental Awareness Workshop

An Environmental Awareness Workshop was developed and rolled out to 30 communities in the GCBR. This workshop topics included water, climate change, rubble and waste.

Shark & Marine Conservation Puppet Show

The roll out for the pre-school English version is in full swing. Done with passion and fun by Keep Fin Alive. Awaiting the approval of funding for the Afrikaans rendering to Grade 6 learners.

.Unlocking a Spekboom-based Economy in the Klein Karoo

This project builds on the Jobs4Carbon Project, through mapping, capacity building and developing institutional models for carbon trading. A study on carbon economy systems and opportunities has been completed and findings published in a technical report. Following the publication, two workshops were held for dissemination and learning purposes. The first on 7 November was aimed at Vanwyksdorp landowners participating in Jobs4Carbon. The second was aimed at professionals in the field and was held on 9 November in Oudtshoorn. Both occasions provided an opportunity to share the report findings and discuss options for the collective marketing of carbon from spekboom-restored properties as well as other conservation agriculture approaches.

Citizen Science in Mossel Bay

The GCBR organised a series of “*Walking under the Rocks*” beach workshops. This was a ‘citizen science’ effort to involve members of the public in learning about intertidal ecosystems and organisms – the species that live between the two tidal levels. In partnership with Oceans Research, four Walking under the Rocks sessions

were held and they have grown in popularity: 21 May in Gouritsmond (13 participants), 4 June in Stilbaai (25 participants), 18 June in Tergniet (>40 participants). The final event was held on 16 July.

Strategic partnership exploration

Across 2016 the GCBR has engaged in a dialogue with a private philanthropic foundation in the Netherlands, with a view to developing a medium to long-term strategic partnership. A dialogue paper was prepared for this purpose, setting out a potential agenda focusing on programme and organisational development needs of the GCBR. Following a very successful 4-day exploration visit in November, the GCBR was invited to submit a funding proposal for two projects for implementation in 2017: Jobs4Carbon in Vanwyksdorp and De Rust Wetland WaterWise. A grant of ca R4 million has been secured for this work. Prospects for a medium to long-term strategic partnership with this foundation are also favourable. A planning process has commenced to define the overarching programme goals and results areas the GCBR will commit to over a 15-year timeframe. Within this overarching programme framework, a medium-term (3-year) funding proposal will also be developed. Target date for completing the initial proposal is September 2017. A programme development team has been formed comprising 14 people, combining Board and Advisory Committee members and external experts.

GCBR Forum/members meetings

Four formal GCBR member meetings were held, including the AGM of 2016:

- AGM at Diaz Museum, Mossel Bay – 10 May 2016
- Forum meeting at Môreson, Barrydale–16 August 2016
- Forum meeting at Calitzdorp Wine Cellar, Calitzdorp– 15 November 2016
- Forum meeting at Community Hall in Boggomsbaai – 14 February 2017

A total of 20 presentations on a variety of topics relevant to the GCBR area were presented at these forum meetings.

Each of the meetings attracted new people who have not attended any of the previous meetings. The GCBR Forum meetings provide a platform to institutions, researchers, project managers, etc. to inform the stakeholders about projects, research, initiatives or programmes that are taking place within the GCBR domain. The positive spin-offs from these meetings cannot be measured, as it is in the networking, knowledge-building and information-sharing during and afterwards that the value and strength of the meetings lie. An average between 65 – 70 people attended each meeting.

Gouritz Enterprizes Pty Ltd

As part of the strategy group discussions the GCBR realized that it cannot indefinitely rely on donations for operational funds and need to follow another route. A for profit company known as Gouritz Enterprizes Pty Ltd was registered with the GCBR as the sole shareholder. The idea is to find opportunities to do business from which profits can be derived. These profits will be paid to the GCBR to build up an unbound fund which can be used as the need arises. #Spekkies is the first of these projects. This is in line with the workshop discussions in Lima at the 4th World Congress of Biospheres and several other developments on social enterprise worldwide.

Spatial planning

A Western Cape Biosphere Workshop was attended on the 2nd of August 2016 where the Specifications for Biosphere Reserves Framework Plans were discussed in order to provide the specifications and purpose of such a framework plan:

The purpose is:

- (a) Provide a spatial vision for the biosphere reserve that strives to balance economic, social and environmental considerations;
- (b) Promote implementation of land use planning principles (e.g. spatial sustainability, efficiency, spatial resilience);
- (c) Assist with the coordination, integration and alignment of provincial and municipal land use in the rural areas;
- (d) Address specific economic, social, natural or unique features;
- (e) Provide spatial implementation of the UNESCO requisite zonation pattern of a biosphere reserve; and
- (f) Identify programmes and projects.

The Spatial Development Framework Plans of the 8 local municipalities that falls within the GCBR domain are currently either in process of amendment or revision of a new plan. These framework plans must be adopted with the new generation IDP's and be finalised by end of June 2017. In order to start with the framework of the GCBR spatial plan these SDF's should be scrutinised and used as the base of the GCBR plan. Concept draft plans have been received and will be used for the compilation of the spatial plan.

The Eden District Municipality is currently in process of compiling a new SDF for the Eden region. Task team meetings have been attended by the GCBR and the GCBR is registered as an Interested and Affected Party of this process. The Eden SDF will form a strategic part of the spatial plan of the GCBR's plan and to take the spatial plan forward, this Eden SDF needs to be finalised.

A new project in order to compile the SDF has been identified as a priority project for the GCBR :

Compilation of a Biosphere Reserve Spatial Plan for the GCBR
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Implementation of this project will take place by the incorporation of the 8 local municipalities' Spatial Development Framework Plans as well as the two District Municipalities' Spatial Development Framework Plan within the spatial plan of the GCBR. The objective and goals towards biodiversity planning within each of these local domains should be represented within the spatial plan.

Public relations and Marketing

In addition to the above-mentioned formal projects, the Directors and members of the GCBR:

- Chaired (and hosted) two Kammanassie Protected Area Advisory Committee (PAAC) meetings – CapeNature partnership.
- Participated in the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (B-GCMA) Visioning Workshop. This workshop used the expertise of the various participants to develop a situation model reflecting the present and expected outcomes of water extraction on the environment. Facilitated by Myles Mander.
- Attended CIC meeting in October.
- Participated in a Honeybush tea workshop and the inaugural Honeybush tea Community of Practice meeting. The development of best practice guidelines for the wild harvesting of *Cyclopia*.
- Assisted with developing a Cape Mountain Zebra (CMZ) conservation project in partnership with CapeNature. The purchase of land for the GCBR with donor money. Range expansion for the Kammanassie and Gamkaberg CMZ populations, which make up two-thirds of the world's CMZ gene-pool.
- Assisted the department / museum to assess and then compile a proposal for the registration of the Dias museum Botanical Garden, the Natural Fountain, the Munro hoek Cottages, the Malay Graves and the Field Garden as part of the Cape Nature Stewardship program. The first phase proposal is for a Conservation Area – the flexible option with no defined period of commitment (includes conservancies). Ongoing.
- Delivered the Women's Day presentation at Dias Museum Mossel Bay and discussed the role of females in the biosphere, with the focus on food gardens and worm farming as entrepreneurial initiatives.

- Four worm farms and one tray of vegetable seedlings were donated to school to initiate their project. Attendees: St Blaize Primary School learners, Teachers, DAFF representatives, DAC representatives, Museum management, members of public.
- Assisted in coordinating the World Fisheries Day presentation in conjunction DEA and DAFF in Mossel Bay. The talks and workshops were presented on behalf of the GCBR. The presentation topic was: “Ocean and Coastal pollution from domestic and industrial activities have a great effect on the fishing stocks”. Attendees included local fishing community, fishing companies’ representatives, TNPA, DAC, DAFF, learners from Mossel Bay schools.
- Planned and coordinated fire awareness training on behalf of the GCBR, at shelter for street kids in response to the veld fires which were affecting all during that period. Formal training was provided by BSD Consulting (Pieter Zaayman). Awareness included short course on first aid. Sessions were attended by 17 participants from shelter.
- Planned and coordinated the GCBR stall for the Dias festival (with assistance from Luami Zondagh). Undertook GCBR marketing, general environmental awareness, encouraged new members to sign up, sales of products from GCBR projects. Various GCBR members worked shifts to man the stall over this period.
- Involved the Mossel Bay branch of Social Welfare by providing training to kids in the Agape Street Kid programme to assist at the stall. This informal training involved soft skills in personal presentation, communication, marketing skills, etc. The 2 kids involved over the 3 day period are proud wearers of their GCBR T-shirts and are using the GCBR education materials to continue “Morning Talks” at the Agape centre.
- Compiled GCBR specific and related articles for local newspaper publishing. Example: Articles for GCBR Forum meeting, Women’s day, Fisheries day, Agape training, etc.
- Ongoing collaboration efforts with Thembelani Thanda (Fynbos Enterprise) regarding worm farm project. 4 Completed worm farms were delivered to 2 primary schools in Mossel Bay as part of the schools greening projects. The learners were tutored on worm farm management and use thereof; including the subsequent worm tea and compost that can be used to generate income for the schools.
- Bi-weekly beach clean –ups coordinated together with Oceans Research. The GCBR coordinates the community and lifesaving clubs participation and also provide the gloves and some of the plastic bags.
- Assisting the Mossel Bay Municipality and business with an assessment of the amount of polystyrene being disposed by businesses in the Mossel Bay area. The data collection is necessary for the justification of the purchase of a polystyrene compressor. Three tons per month is suggested to be a feasible volume to substantiate the acquisition of such a compressor. In process with submissions to municipality.
- Creating continuous awareness of the GCBR at community level by coordinating, providing breakfasts and providing transport to members of public to attend the Gouritz Forum meetings. Marketing during the KKNK event, this brought about some great interest from other like-minded organisations to get involved with the GCBR.
- Active contact, support and attending meetings or function when possible:

Botanical Society of SA, WESSA, the various Conservancies in Mossel Bay, Oceans, Southern Cape Weed Forum, CREW, Sasol Solar Car Challenge, Keep Fin Alive, Dias Museum, Mossel Bay Municipality, Southern Cape Herbarium, Radio SFm, Garden Route Casino Community Trust.

WF Botha

Chairman