

# Matatiele Learning Exchange Visit

Conservation South Africa hosted a learning exchange visit from 14 to 17 September 2015 at the methodist hall in Matatiele, eastern cape province. The event was attended by 24 participants from different institutions. In attendance were officials from the department of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, representatives from the land bank, officials from the eastern cape department of agriculture, representatives from SANB, officials from the research station in Maluti, representatives from CPF media from Australia, representatives from conservation south africa and officials from the Matatiele municipality. The purpose of the event was to share knowledge and experience which showcases innovative rangeland management practices.

Mr Sinegugu did a presentation on an overview of the catchment area; the exchange of information and the database of the catchment area play a significant role and how proper management improve the its condition. We should also engage the community on how to maintain the natural ecosystem for future generations. The aim of conservation south africa is to create a positive enabling environment from government and industry.

Mr Nicky McLeod did a presentation on climate change adaptation and ecological infrastructure that we want functioning ecosystems which deliver valuable services to people, e.g Fresh water, soil formation and climate regulation. He mentioned that we should create resilient farming landscapes in order to address climate change as global concern worldwide and veld restoration is very important for catchment ecosystem services for natural and human benefits. Rehabilitation of groundcover and wetlands can reduce high- season flooding, reduce disasters and allow better rainfall absorption and storage and release over the drier winter months. South Africa has abundant ecological infrastructures that provide opportunities to support development and unlock economic potential.

Mr Mark Botha facilitated discussions about policy alignment; the outcome from the discussion was that there is an opportunity to revise the policy and engage the community. The balance of power within government departments and NGOs was discussed with recognition and therefore budget was allocated to crop production rather than animal production and even less so to communal livestock production. Grazing is down-played in policy; it does not feature in the national development plan. The CSA and UCPP partners were asked to continue to lobby for sustainable grazing practices to be given attention. The cara policy should not focus on communal areas but also on the commercial area. There is a need to translate our policy from English for the community to have contributions and better understanding of the policy. We should have a specific court which will understand the natural resources issues for compliance and collaboration of policies from different departments will enhance sustainability of the landscape. Cooperative governance plays an important role in ensuring proper implementation of the policy at the grass roots level.

The Motseng communal grazing land was visited for rotational grazing and alien clearing demonstrations. The rotational grazing was done by a mobile electric net kraal in conjunction with ECO rangers who herd the village's animals together according to an ecologically designed rotational grazing system. The ECO rangers sleep out at night with the herd. The mobile kraal is extremely useful in a communal setup: it is light easy to erect and is highly effective in keeping livestock contained overnight. It is slightly electrified through the use of a solar-powered Energiser.

Where the animals are enclosed during the night and the next day, the electric net kraal will be switched off, after which the animals will go out and graze in the area. After one month the animals will be rotated to another area where the electric net kraal will also be constructed to keep the animals from grazing during the night. The electric net kraal also plays a vital role in the regrowth of the grasses, especially after the clearing was done, the electric net will be constructed around the clearing area. The animal will be tripling in that electric net kraal and after two weeks the grass will start germinating.



**Electric net kraal**



**Grasses regrowing after clearing**



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Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





***Debarking as the method of clearing the wattle invasive species***

Ms Maria Lekgotla did a presentation on the participatory community engagement process. The essential components for the community engagement process should maintain a high level of consistency and flexibility, have specific measurable components to be able to determine if progress is being made, build trust and timing is very important so that specific components of intervention can be related to specific events on the community calendar. She said that we should organise the community for action and build relationships. We should be mainstreaming biodiversity into production patterns, increasing awareness and the local communities' voluntary participation and improve buy-in and participation in conservation stewardship.

Miss Nompandolo Ngwail did a presentation on wetlands. They are extremely important for erosion control, flood attenuation, winter grazing, streamflow regulation, attracting tourists, carbon storage, toxicant removal and phosphate trapping and are habitats for many animal species. The wetlands sustain annual base flow and surface water flow which nourishes the tributaries, feeding and supplying water for domestic and agricultural use to thousands of people.



***Umzimbuvu wetland***

Ms Rosanne Stanway did a presentation on market access for sustainable livelihoods. She indicated that the key barriers to markets for communal farmers are distance to the market, animal health, animal condition and animal age. She said that we should expand the programme's scope from vegetables and fruit to sourcing red meat and eggs. She concluded that only 5% of the farmers from the communal area have access to the market, while 95% of the commercial farmers do.

Mr Gerbrand Nel did a presentation on the rotational resting model, which indicates rotational resting is another way of improving the grazing capacity of the veld. The resting period for the grazing land should be three years and it is important to engage the local communities and officials from the Department of Agriculture to strengthen partnerships in all aspects.

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