



MINUTES OF 10th QUARTERLY MEETING in MATATIELE on 23/09/2015

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Apologies received from (see emails???) And agenda

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- Climate change strategy approved by Alfred Nzo District Council (noted by Basetsana Khathali, ANDM)
- Joe Gqabi District Municipality (JGDM) representatives to please be added to mailing list: would like to learn from UCP experience after successful learning exchange held here in late August (records in UCPP website)
- OR Tambo Municipality (ORT DM) requested forms to join UCPP as formal member (Sinegugu and Nicky to arrange)
- Mention was made of poor response from Matatiele Municipality for fire awareness support, and several members agreed indicating similar frustration.
- Water factory stewardship initiative should flag the reason Ongeluksnek Reserve was proclaimed (pre NEMPAA) under Mountain Catchment Areas Act. Stewardship plan for Matatiele was endorsed: challenge is activating the plan without funding as CEPF support has ended (ERS to explore options with Matatiele LM Resource lobby committee and ECPTA)

3. DWS Umzimvubu resource classification project update (Lawrence Mulangaphuma)

Lawrence explained the process for the proposed catchment management classification and setting of RQOs (Resource Quality Objectives) once a professional service provider (PSP) is appointed later this year. The classification indicates current ecological categories or status of rivers (from highly altered to limited impacts), while RQOs aim to find a balance between use and sustenance of the resource, taking the full range of drivers and issues into account, including quality, quantity, biota, habitats, future use, etc. These will help to determine Resource Units delineation and prioritisation, and will be gazetted once agreed upon by the PSC (Project Steering Committee, set up for project lifespan) and the CMF (Catchment management Forum, within both of which UCPP should be a crucial roleplayer). The CMF is a mandatory part of the PSC. A Technical Task Group will also provide guidance for the process which should take 2 years to complete. The PSP will also have to transfer skills to the Department to implement the RQOs once gazetted. Two PSPs had requested ERS to partner with them as a local organisation to assist with this process if appointed.

The presentation will be made available on the www.umzimvubu.org website meeting records.

Questions for Lawrence included:

- Is groundwater included as a resource or only surface water? Step 1 will identify all the resources for inclusion in development of the RQOs
- Who owns the water to issue licenses, and can the RQOs be applied to individual licenses? DWS is custodian of water and the sector regulator to issue licenses. No, RQOs not applied to individual licenses, but they guide wider classification and reserve determination which guides licensing process.
- Forum requested an information session on water use license application and CMF establishment process clarity. Was suggested that this be arranged by Basetsana and Nicky after the WESSA leadership seminar on Capacity for Catchments, to allow for officials to first have a good grounding from the seminar.
- Was noted that we REALLY need support from and strong involvement of policymakers to make this effective!!

- Appreciation was extended to Lawrence for ensuring that UCPP is updated and included in this process, as many state run processes tend to work in parallel with civil society. His efforts were enormously and unanimously appreciated.

4. Feedback on learning exchanges held this quarter

a. SANBI Umgeni UEIP / UCPP exchange 24-26 August

A very successful 3 day sharing session was held with over 90 participants from a range of institutions including Umgeni Ecological Infrastructure Partnership (UEIP) and SANBI, plus a range of representatives from JGDM, ORT DM, DWS, CSIR, DEA, DEDEAT with excellent field visits by four groups, and valuable sharing of experience and networking. The UCPP was strongly praised and encouraged for its groundbreaking work both with institutional networking and collaboration, as well as technical restoration and livelihood impacts. Records of presentations and field visits are on the UCPP website under MEETINGS.

b. DAFF learning exchange 17-18 September, Matatiele

A two day exchange for DAFF, DRDLR, LandCare, Dohne Research Station and the Land Bank was hosted by UCPP, arranged by Rosie Stanway from CSA. A very interactive day was spent with Motseng grazing reps, and a visit made to ladies clearing team at Motseng. Participants had very productive discussions around ways to improve practise and collaboration, and commended the local implementers on the approach. They noted that no reps from local Agriculture offices attended, despite being invited. High level decision making officials travelled from Pretoria and Cape Town to attend, and provided very constructive feedback for local UCPP implementers, and were very impressed with the emerging model for restoration and livelihood benefit from the grazing programme.

5. Rhino Oil & gas exploration application in Matatiele: how do we respond?

The background information document (BID) refers: this was distributed and members were referred to the newly created MINING page on the website. The basic content of the proposed exploration was outlined: it is currently under the scoping phase as part of the EIA. Should viable shale gas deposits be located, a further application for production would be pursued by the applicant (Rhino Oil & Gas, based in Texas), and this would entail hydraulic fracturing / fracking to extract the gas. This poses high risks for ground and surface water depletion and contamination, as well as other medium and long term impacts.

We have registered UCPP as an interested and affected party, and demanded a proper consultation meeting (SLR Consulting the EAP held a non-public session with a few councillors and chiefs, and totally bypassed a public notification and consultation process). We all need to get up to speed on the process, risks and how we can stop, or at least delay the application. Need to pressure consultant to consider all the biodiversity and water risks through bombarding them with information and objections to the exploration, making public and local government aware of the process and risks.

Thando agreed to arrange for us to brief the Lobby team, Council and Traditional Leaders.

Mr Mtonjeni appreciated finding out about this application so early on, as DEDEAT is often frustrated by only being made aware of these processes very late in the consultation process, and can now engage properly.

Meeting agreed to take a stance against the proposed exploration based on potential impacts on biodiversity, water and livelihoods which goes against the vision we have been working towards since inauguration in March 2013.

Nicky to compile submission to SLR on behalf of UCPP, and Sine to request CER for legal support via CSA. Thando to arrange briefing sessions as above.

6. Updates from partner organisations on local initiatives

a. DEA NRM Land User projects: current and proposed

Several local partners (LIMA/INR partnership, plus Khusel'indalo(CSA)/ERS, and GroundTruth/ERS partnerships) have submitted proposals to DEA for ongoing ecosystem restoration work in the catchment. This amounts to a potential 132 new jobs in ward 14 (current project of 102 participants ending March 2016), 65 new jobs in ward 7 to add to current 67 people contracted until March 2017), plus 50 people for Khoapa wetland area restoration. LIMA, Gamtoos and FireWise figures to be confirmed (in region of 500?). This amounts to over 800 jobs in the restoration economy in the upper Matat catchment.

b. EGS monitoring: deferred to next meeting when Cobus Theron is available

7. Where to for UCPP now: well into our five year strategy

Opportunities and challenges: deferred to next meeting due to time constraints ...taken up by fracking discussion.

8. Upcoming events and announcements

a. Mehlosing and Mabenyeng Heritage day races:

These are being hosted by Mehlosing trust at Mpharane, and by Mabenyeng Horse Association at Moiketsi, respectively, tomorrow 24th September. All are welcome.

b. LOTTO funding applications

Applications close 11 October: ERS is submitting for stewardship plan implementation on behalf of Matatiele municipality.

9. Any other items and next meeting date

Set for Wednesday 2nd December, venue to be confirmed. Agreed that theme would be compliance with environmental standards and NEMA processes, as well as an update on the fracking situation.

10. Closure and lunch