

**FOSAF
KWA ZULU NATAL REGION**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019-2020

It gives me pleasure to present the Chairman's Report for 2019 -2020 for the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Region of FOSAF.

The KZN Region committee met 3 times during the year. We as a committee remain active and vigilant to promote our sport and to deal with issues of concern.

The work is continuing to oppose the draft NEMBA Alien and Invasive Species Regulations and Lists. Regular updates on progress are sent out to all donors and other interested and affected persons and parties. FOSAF's case against the Minister is ongoing and our Heads of Argument prepared by our legal team has been filed in court. The Department has now also filed their Heads of Argument and we are now applying for a court date. Hopefully once the COVID 19 crisis is over this can be finalised.

A decision was taken some time ago to meet with the clubs in the region to keep them updated on matters dealt with in the committee and FOSAF generally. We have made some changes in terms of minute distribution. These now go to all the clubs. More attempts were made to call further meetings without success. Clubs are kept fully in the picture through the minutes distribution and this may be reason why clubs do not appear to be eager or willing to attend such a meeting. However, this will again be followed up. Our committee meetings are now held in Gillits on a Saturday morning so that members are not required to travel at night from Durban.

Our hardy annual of trying to get more people of colour on board remains a real concern and we have not made any progress in this regard. Furthermore, of concern is that we are not attracting younger people to serve on the committee. Many of the current committee members have been members for many years and are getting on in years although they all remain very active. Younger folk on the committee are likely to be able to put more energy into the committee. In addition, it would assist with future succession.

As reported last year, FOSAF remains a supporter of the Umgano project. Unfortunately, the negative national economic situation previously reported, coupled to the depressed price of timber, continue to exert a negative impact on this initiative. This has resulted in lower returns from the plantation

of the initiative and the rigid economy measures previously reported remain in force. According to Drummond Densham, who mentors the Field Rangers, however, the main players, Peter Nixon of Rural Forest Management who started the initiative, together with the Manager, Mayford Jaca, who is well qualified, continue to exercise effective overall control of the initiative, under the watchful eyes of Nkosi Baleni and the Traditional Council.

Other good news is that Zaninkosi Mtolo, Field Ranger Supervisor, continues in his role, with the support and assistance of Drummond Densham. It may be recalled Zaninkosi obtained both a Certificate and an Advanced Certificate in Nature Conservation at the SA Wildlife College over two years, and was the first Mabandla Community Member to obtain such a qualification. He is also the first qualified person to be appointed to implement scientifically based biodiversity management of the area. This probably sets a new national record for the appointment of a local community member to not only attain such a qualification, but also to be appointed to manage such a community-based protected area, within the jurisdiction of his own community.

The endangered Maloti Minnow is a small minnow that has long been thought to be mainly present in that part of the Drakensberg Alpine Belt that lies in Lesotho. The type locality (where it was reputedly first collected) was given as the Mkhomozana River, in the Sani Pass in Kwa-Zulu Natal. This record is however, regarded as incorrect by some experts since the term "Sani Pass" is used loosely and local people tend to include Sani Top at least as far as the Sani River. The minnow, which has only been reliably confirmed as occurring in certain headwaters of the west-flowing Orange River, is known to exist there. Many searches have been made in the headwaters of KZN streams east-flowing rivers, and it had not been found in KZN, until late last year when staff members of EKZN Wildlife ("EKZNW") reported in a scientific paper, that they had rediscovered this minnow in the headwaters of a tributary of the Mzimkhulu River, in southern KZN. This was a complete surprise, but it is a matter that has relevance for those of us who enjoy trout fishing. Purists have touted trout as an invasive predatory fish that threatens indigenous species such as the Maloti minnow.

The presence of the fish was confirmed by a team consisting of Ian Cox, Andrew Mather and Jake Alletson. After obtaining the correct chemical solution to preserve tissue specimens, fin clips were taken from 10 individual fish and were sent off for genetic analysis. The results were tantalising but further analysis is to be done. Therefore, at present there is little new to report on this discovery. However, the KZN Committee feels that it is of such significance that further searches should be made. Jake Alletson has developed a plan for this and is

presently waiting for river levels to drop as winter approaches. He will then do a survey in the wider catchment of the river and, if the fish are again located, will then expand the search area to look for new populations in other catchments. In doing so he will investigate rivers that probably have never yet had any surveys done on them. The sentiments of the group are that this study is in keeping with FOSAF's policy on conservation of indigenous fishes and that the organisation can play a useful role in this regard.

Significant work continues to be done on clearing of riverbanks on the Umgeni and Firth Rivers by Andrew Fowler, current Chairman of the Natal Fly Fishers Club (NFFC) and his team. Once completed these will no doubt be prime fishing rivers. Currently the NFFC is also looking at furthering this initiative onto other rivers higher up in the Drakensberg area for which funding is being sought. The Natal Flyfishers previously negotiated an agreement with the amaHlube Community near Giants Castle for access to the Bushmans River for fly anglers and it has been very successful. Many fly anglers regularly make use of these waters for angling. This is open to the public thereby also bringing in much needed income for this community.

We attempt to promote both fly-fishing and fly- dressing at schools. It is however problematic as at some schools the teachers are very reluctant to introduce a further interest group, mainly because of learners being overloaded. Despite this, interest remains high among scholars at some schools.

The current situation in establishing the Freshwater Fishing Liaison Committee Meetings at Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) has not been progressed as the current organisational, resource, capacity and governance issues at Ezemvelo, has not improved. We are watching developments and as soon as we consider it appropriate, we will again make an attempt.

Our attempts to gain access for fly fishing at the Spring Grove Dam in Rosetta has not borne any fruit at this stage but we are continuing with attempts. As reported last year, until the land surrounding this dam is expropriated to give the public access this will not be permitted. Unfortunately, it is not seen as a priority by the authorities and is likely to take many years.

Two very successful trout festivals were organised; one in the Kamberg and another in the Boston area and these attracted anglers from all over the country.

The Natal Fly Dressers Society and the Durban Fly Tyers are two very successful and active clubs promoting fly dressing. Monthly meetings continue to be held

where fly dressers are given input from the more experienced fly dressers. Monthly social get togethers are also organised by the Natal Fly Fishers Club for fly fishers in Pietermaritzburg and also by group of fly fishers in the Durban area to promote fly-fishing and develop fly fishing camaraderie. This has been useful as it attracted quite a number of younger fly fishers.

FLYFISHING magazine has for many years been supportive of FOSAF for which we are indeed very grateful. We are indeed pleased with the way the new publishers of the electronic copy has been done by Andrew Mather, Ian Cox and Andrew Savides. Like before they continue to be supportive of FOSAF and I would like to thank them sincerely for their efforts in this regard. They have indeed maintained the very high standard previously set by the publishers.

Regrettably, one of the stalwarts on the Committee Ian Cox resigned from the Committee and from Fosaf for personal reasons.

The stocking of rivers is being given further consideration. Ilan Lax has been tasked by the NFFC to produce a document outlining a policy that would be submitted to EKZNW.

The National AGM and Exco meetings were held in Dullstroom and the KZN Region was well represented at both meetings.

My thanks to those who have attended the Committee meetings and made a significant contribution to the activities of the KZN Chapter. Also to Maxi Holder for looking after the secretarial work so well and Kevin Culverwell who has for many years done our work as Treasurer.

My best wishes to the incoming committee for the next year.

Jim Read
Chairman